

# COUNTRY

SPRING 2013

The magazine for National Grid grantors



## The impossible dream

... and how one man is making it a reality

nationalgrid

### Muddy marvel

The mum-of-two leading the way in a man's world

### LOOK OUT FOR THE LEEK

Hardy and hearty, it's always a winner

### Sheep farming made easy

Self-shedding breeds. Are they the future?

PLUS: Robots in the sky • Taking care of pests... safely • Grantor's Olympic agony • Win a country house break

# WELCOME TO GRIDLINE

We're committed to playing a big part **in our communities** so feedback and dialogue from our **grantors is crucial** to ensure we're getting it right

**A** quick look at some of the stories in this edition's news pages spotlights just how highly National Grid values its role in being a part of the communities it serves.

As you'll see, we are joining forces with decision-makers to take part in a national debate on the future of energy supply in Britain (p6), as well as looking at other innovative ways of making sure we impact less on the environment and our grantors. On p7 you'll discover we're even turning to robots now to carry out vital checks on overhead lines so that the more traditional work done by our grantors can carry on unaffected.

To that end we've taken a trip to a leek grower (p10) to see why this hardiest of vegetables remains a year-round staple for Brits whatever the weather.

Always on the lookout for grantors with unusual tales to tell, we visited Marge Clarke, the Kentish queen of motocross (p8), while on p18 we meet a West Country farmer who is putting his feet up thanks to a flock of self-shedding sheep. Well maybe not!

Middle England isn't forgotten either because that's where National Grid is



taking part in a revolutionary new project to build the first greenleaf forest for more than a century. We're sponsoring a section of the new Heart of England Forest, the brainchild of philanthropist and publishing guru Felix

Dennis. Read more on p14.

Don't forget to get in touch if you're a grantor with a story to tell or if you think your business is worth a mention. You could be in the next edition.

In the meantime, enjoy the read.

**Dawn McCarroll**  
Editor, Gridline

## GOT A STORY?

Please contact Gridline if you have any news or stories that you think would be of interest to other grantors.

**Tel:** 01926 656 325

**Email:** [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com)

**Write to:** Gridline,  
Summersault Communications,  
23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street,  
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5LA.

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## National Grid's Land and Development Group

The Land and Development Group is responsible for acquiring all rights and permissions from statutory authorities and landowners needed to install, operate and maintain National Grid's electricity and gas transmission networks. The Group acts as the main interface for landowners who have gas and electricity equipment installed on their land. Your local contacts are listed below.

### ELECTRICITY AND GAS

- North-west and Scotland 0161 776 0706
- South-east 01268 642 091
- South-west 01452 316 059
- East 0113 290 8235.

### WAYLEAVE PAYMENTS

- For information on wayleave payments, telephone the payments helpline on 0800 389 5113.

### CHANGE OF DETAILS

- To inform National Grid of changes in ownership or contact details, telephone 0800 389 5113 for electric and 01926 654 844 for gas, or email [grantorservices@nationalgrid.com](mailto:grantorservices@nationalgrid.com).

### ELECTRICITY EMERGENCY

- Emergency calls to report pylon damage to National Grid can be made on 0800 404 090. Note the pylon's number – found just below the property plate – to help crews locate it.

### ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

- For information on electric and magnetic fields, call the EMF information line on 08457 023 270 (local call rate). Website: [www.emfs.info](http://www.emfs.info).

### GAS EMERGENCY

- 0800 111 999.

### DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

- Before carrying out any work in the vicinity of gas pipelines, overhead power lines or underground electric cables, you should contact Plant Protection on 0800 688 588 so that searches can be made to determine the exact position of any National Grid assets.

### CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- Write to Land & Development, National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6DA. Or email [ld.customercomments@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:ld.customercomments@uk.ngrid.com).



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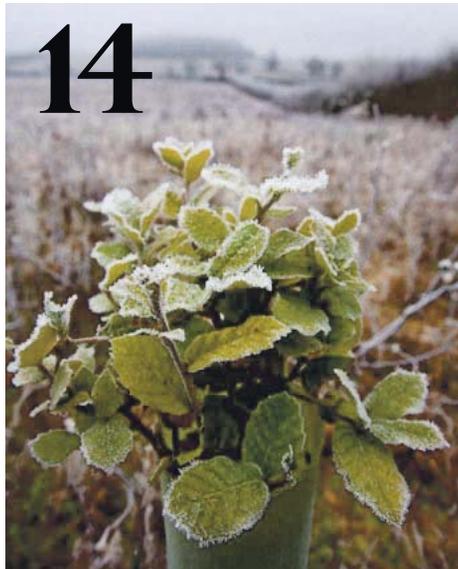
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## The cat's whiskers

That's what one reader thinks of Gridline after winning £150 in shopping vouchers for this purr-fect snap.



## Competition winner

Congratulations to Katharine Screeton from Goole in East Yorkshire, who won the luxury gourmet getaway featured in the last edition of Gridline with the answer that Charlecote Park covers 250 acres. She said: "I'm absolutely amazed as I've never won anything before. What a lovely surprise."

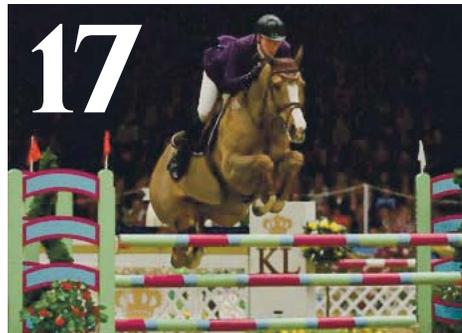
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## Going, going, gone!

A LOCAL LANDMARK HAS disappeared from the Lancashire skyline after engineers completed a 12-month project to dismantle a National Grid gas holder.

The structure in St Helens was built in 1972 and, at 85 metres high and with a capacity of 3 million cubic feet, was the largest gas holder of its kind in the UK at the time of its construction.

Because the site is surrounded by business premises and the internal mechanism had been damaged by a fire last year, contractors had to develop an ingenious technique for removing the structure piece by piece.



Engineers give the St Helens skyline a new look

The roof of the holder was cut free and its weight supported by cranes mounted on the upright pillars around the holder. This was used as a working platform by engineers and was slowly lowered as they cut the holder down,

section by section.

New methods of storing gas mean that National Grid no longer needs to use gas holders and the company is close to completing a programme to demolish those still remaining in the north-west.

### Project watch

## Western HVDC Link project

**WHAT?** A new 385km subsea cable link will enable the power generated by wind farms and other renewable sources to be transferred from Scotland to areas of higher demand in England, helping the nation meet its climate change targets.

The Western High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Link between Hunterston, on the west coast of Scotland, and the Wirral, in north-west England, will be one of the world's longest subsea cables.

**WHY?** At present, the Scottish transmission system is linked to England by two 400kV overhead power lines, but these are at full capacity. The Western HVDC Link, a National Grid and Scottish Power joint venture, will provide 2,200MW of capacity on the transmission system and will be bidirectional.

"HVDC subsea and underground cables over the significant distances involved in this project are a cost-effective and innovative solution," said Graham Edwards, project director. "It will also be the first subsea interconnector to use a

DC voltage level of 600kV, which enables a higher transmission capacity and reduces power losses by a third."

A converter station at each end of the link will change the electricity from direct to alternating current, for onward grid transmission.

National Grid is responsible for negotiating planning consents for the southern converter station in Flintshire, as well as for arranging easements on the 32km underground cable, from the landing point at Leasowe Bay on the Wirral to the converter station.

There are 52 grantors on the cable route, which also crosses the River Dee.

**WHEN?** Preparatory construction work is starting in the Wirral, with operations due to commence in 2016.

### THE ENERGY CHALLENGE

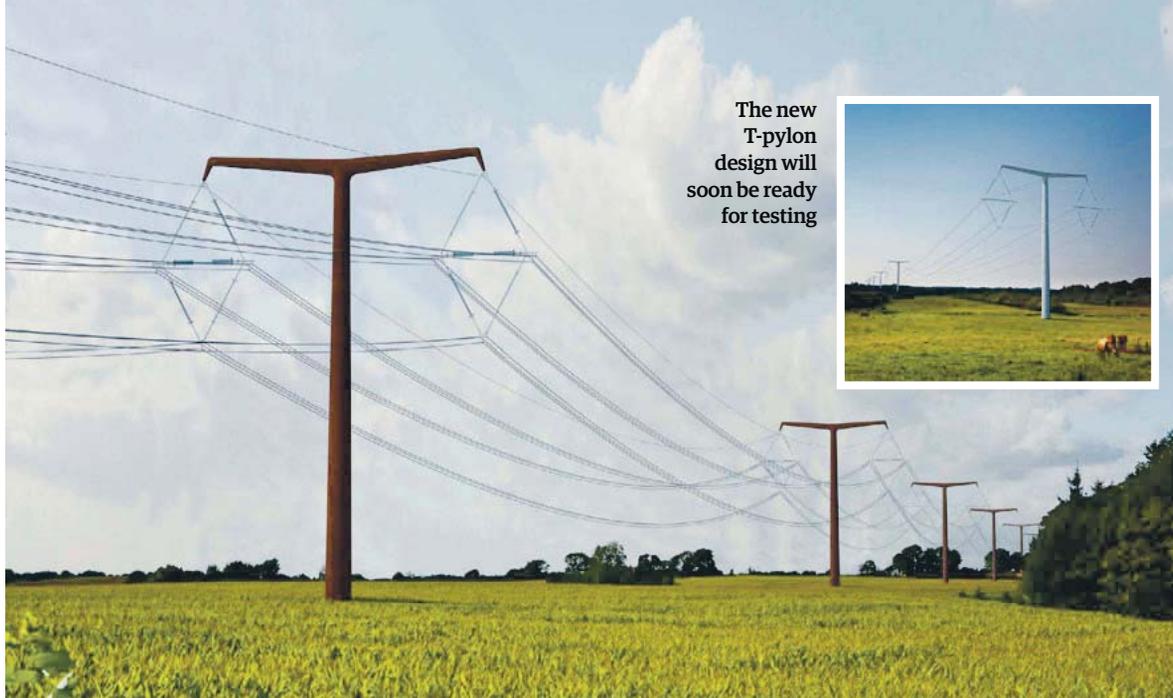
The European Union has set a legally binding target for the UK to ensure that 15% of its energy comes from renewable sources by 2020.



### For more information...



... on this project, visit [www.westernhvdclink.co.uk/](http://www.westernhvdclink.co.uk/)



The new T-ylon design will soon be ready for testing



# T time gets closer

THE INNOVATIVE T-PYLON IS about to take the next step from drawing board to reality.

A prototype of the new design, which won an international competition in 2011, has been built in Denmark by designers Bystrup for strength and durability testing.

National Grid is now awaiting planning permission to construct a test line of six T-ylons at its National Training Centre in Eakring, Nottinghamshire.

The two-year project will develop and test the pylon,

refining it to the point where it can be offered alongside traditional lattice versions. Engineers will also receive training on how best to construct and maintain the new structures.

## Environmentally friendly

The T-ylon presents National Grid with another alternative when it comes to connecting new sources of low-carbon energy in environmentally sensitive areas.

The new design is 15 metres shorter than the traditional lattice pylon and makes less of a visual

impact on the landscape. The reduced height is largely due to an innovative diamond configuration for the conductors.

With fewer than 10 parts, each T-ylon should take just a day to bolt together using a crane.

"It's easier to build so construction timescales will be shorter, and there will be less of an impact on people living and working in the vicinity of new overhead power line projects," said Ben Pirie, investment delivery engineer.

"As part of our commitment to sustainability, we're also looking at minimising carbon footprint by reusing steel no longer needed in other parts of the business."

## News in brief

### NEW HUMBER CROSSING

National Grid is planning to replace a natural gas pipeline under the river Humber, connecting the important gas import terminal at Easington, on the East Yorkshire coast, with the wider network.

Over time, tidal patterns have eroded the riverbed and parts of the existing pipeline have become exposed.

In the short term, an innovative solution has been adopted where gravel-filled bags and concrete frond 'mattresses' are being used to cover the exposed parts.

These incorporate plastic fronds to mimic seaweed, and help sand and silt to settle.

National Grid is now exploring the options for a replacement pipeline as a long-term solution – whether by tunnel or excavated trench – in a similar route to the existing pipeline between the above-ground installations at Paull and Goxhill.

### £50-MILLION TEES PROJECT

Two new 145-metre-high pylons will be built across the river Tees as part of a £50-million project to refurbish sections of overhead line in the Middlesbrough area during the next two years.

A total of 14 pylons will be dismantled and new ones built to replace them. This will enable National Grid to divert the overhead line between Salthorne Substation and Lakenby Substation away from its current route through a petrochemical plant.

Engineers will replace existing conductors, and repair and renew steelwork, foundations and other equipment. Work starts in April and is expected to be completed in late 2013.

National Grid has worked closely with the Environment Agency, Natural England and others in planning the works.



It's child's play for Spurs legend Ledley King as the Energise scheme kicks off



## Big kick-off

NATIONAL GRID HAS JOINED forces with Premier League giants Tottenham Hotspur to launch a community engagement project.

The Energise scheme is bringing sport and physical activities to charities in London's Haringey.

Three good causes will receive up to 450 hours of Tottenham Hotspur Foundation support worth £75,000, which is being funded by National Grid, currently working in the area on the London Power Tunnels project.

### For more information...



... on this scheme, visit [www.tottenhamhotspur.com/foundation](http://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/foundation)



**One-minute interview**



**Chris Newitt, business support manager**

**BACKGROUND:** I joined Land and Development in October 2012 after three and a half years working on National Grid's preparations for the London Olympics.

**CURRENT FOCUS:** Leading the Business Support team, who provide services to the regional teams, for example managing grantor information and payments to grantors.

**LEISURE INTERESTS:** Playing squash, golf (badly) and travelling.

**SOMETHING I'VE LEARNT FROM MY CAREER:** The importance of face-to-face communication.

**DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS:** Relaxed, motivated, inquisitive.

**WHO WOULD PLAY YOU IN THE HOLLYWOOD FILM OF YOUR LIFE?** Kris Marshall (My Family, BT ad) – people say I look like him.

**IDEAL DINNER GUEST:** Winston Churchill. His wit and anecdotes would certainly keep everyone entertained.

**FAVOURITE BOOK:** Anything by Ian Rankin or Michael Connelly. Their style of writing and lead characters are engaging, and I also really enjoy Ben Elton's satirical books.

**MOST PRIZED POSSESSION:** My wedding ring, for what it symbolises.

# Looking at the bigger picture

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC are being asked to join a national conversation to find a balance between delivering infrastructure and reducing impact on the environment and communities.

National Grid's Powering Britain's Future campaign aims to raise public awareness of the scale of the energy challenge facing the UK. Then people can make informed choices about the infrastructure they would accept.

"Over the next decade, National Grid faces an unprecedented challenge to ensure the country continues to enjoy secure and affordable energy, while also meeting ambitious carbon-



reduction targets and connecting new sources of energy," said public acceptability manager Alan Price. "We know building power lines to connect new sources of generation with light, heat and power to homes, factories and

offices will inevitably involve trade-offs to minimise costs while reducing impact on local communities and the environment."

Representatives from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, National Trust, Which?, industry and politicians said building trust with communities would boost dialogue with consumers.

A report due to be published later this year will summarise the feedback and next steps.

**For more information...**



... and to have your say about Powering Britain's Future, visit [www.poweringbritainsfuture.co.uk](http://www.poweringbritainsfuture.co.uk)

## Sparking an interest in energy

IT WAS BACK TO THE classroom for National Grid volunteers who helped give youngsters an illuminating lesson in the wonders of electricity.

Children at Manuden primary school, near Bishop's Stortford, enjoyed a hands-on lesson from the Mad Science team, thanks to funding from National Grid.

Experiences included some fantastic static electricity stunts and the opportunity to become human pylons and light bulbs.

They also received tips about construction site safety, and tried on some protective clothing and safety goggles.



Barry Cullimore (back row, second from right), senior lands officer east, joins in the fun at Manuden primary school

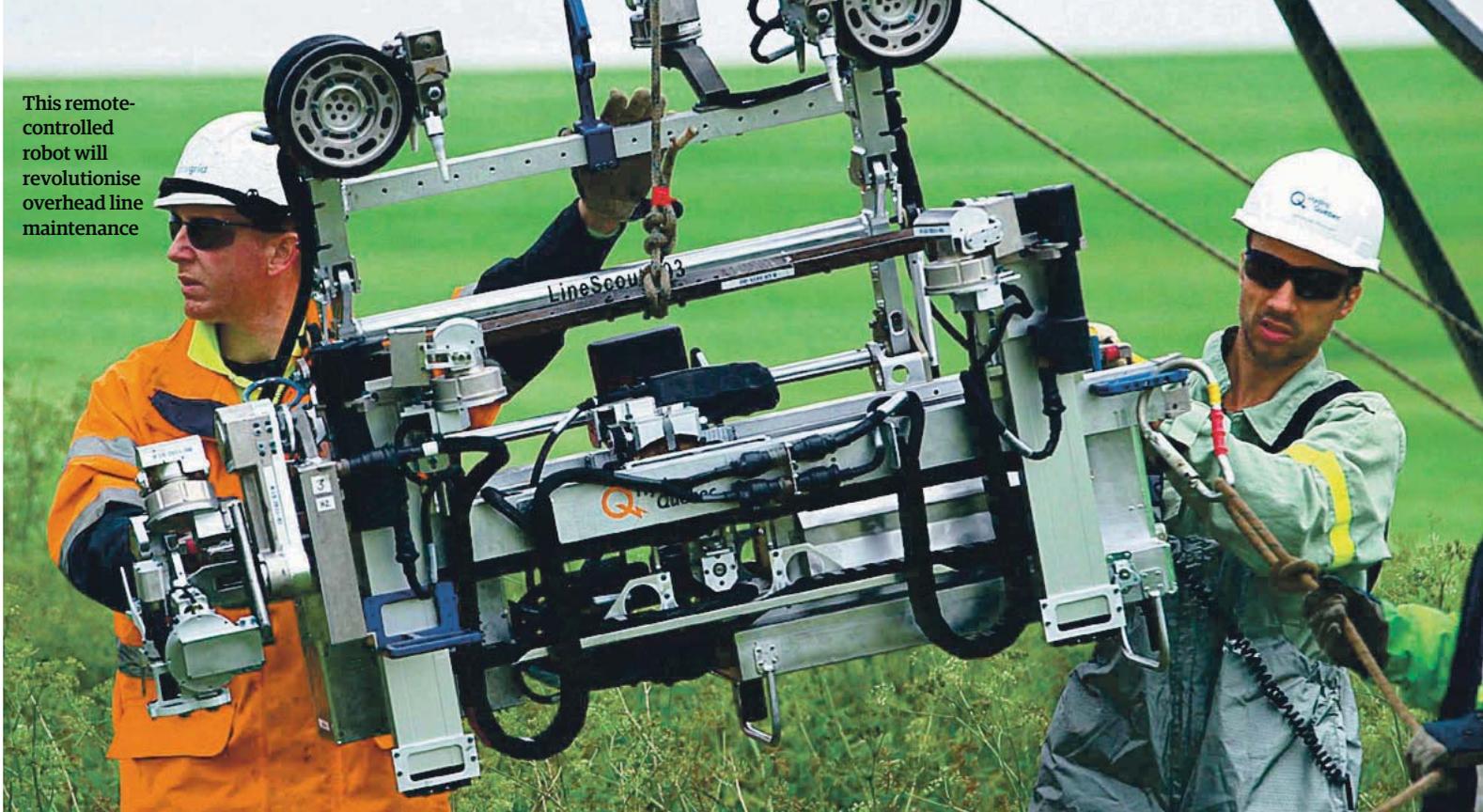
"It was fun to work with the children and hopefully we've shown them how interesting electricity can be," said Barry Cullimore, lands officer east.

Head teacher Peter Randall added: "Electricity is something that we all use every day, but take

for granted. This made the subject really interesting and exciting for teachers and pupils."

Manuden primary school is close to an overhead line that is being re-conducted as part of a programme of electricity network reinforcement in East Anglia.

This remote-controlled robot will revolutionise overhead line maintenance



# Robot in the sky gets ready to roll

A REMOTELY OPERATED overhead lines inspection and maintenance robot will make it easier and safer to maintain the network's 7,000km of high-voltage overhead lines.

National Grid has been working with Canadian company HydroQuebec for two years on the battery-powered LineScout, which works by rolling along the conductors on two wheels and employs four movable, 360-degree cameras to inspect power lines.

"The robot enables live images to be transmitted so detailed inspections can be carried out, while the operator remains safely

on the ground," said Phil Haywood, a benchmarking and best practice team leader at National Grid.

## Unobtrusive

Phil, who suggested using the technology after seeing it in action at a conference in Canada, said: "The robot can be used on live power lines so circuits don't need to be switched off and customers aren't inconvenienced. It will be particularly useful for difficult-to-access locations, including motorway crossings, rivers and housing estates."

It can also carry out simple tasks such as conductor strand

repairs and can step round obstacles such as spacers or suspension insulators.

Phil said: "It's unobtrusive in operation. A single point of access is required for its installation and it can travel remotely for distances of up to 6km, negotiating obstacles."

The near-silent robot will complement existing overhead power line inspection - linesmen using binoculars on foot patrols, and HD video cams and infrared scanning equipped helicopters.

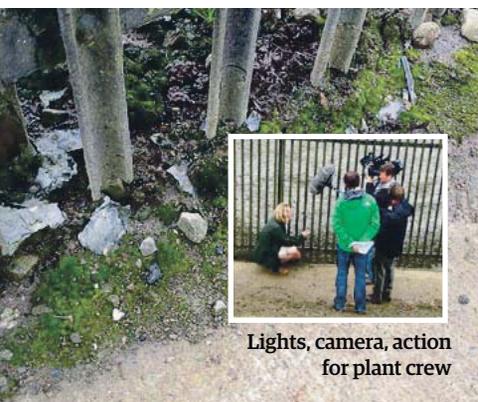
National Grid is also working with HydroQuebec to develop a thermo infrared camera, to detect power problems.



The LineScout footage is reviewed

## See a video clip...

... of the LineScout in action at [www.nationalgrid.com/uk/electricity/features/line-scout.htm](http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/electricity/features/line-scout.htm)



Lights, camera, action for plant crew

# Meet the small-screen substation star

A RARE MOSS FOUND AT A National Grid substation was the star of a TV series about how plant life has adapted to Britain's changing landscape.

The moss is a special type called metallophyte, which flourishes in areas where there are metals present in the soil, such as near disused lead mines.

At Rainhill, near St Helens, it is growing beneath a galvanised steel perimeter fence. Rainwater runs down the grooves in the fence to provide the ideal habitat for the moss.

A five-man TV crew led by presenter Chris Myers spent an afternoon at the substation capturing footage of the moss

against the transformers and circuit breakers for Channel 4's Wild Things programme.

"A substation with pylons, concrete and steel fences would be the last place you'd look for rare plant life, but it shows that things can flourish even in the most hostile environments," said series producer Arwyn Evans.

# HITTING THE HEIGHTS

**Mud, sweat and tears...** Marge Clarke has seen the lot in her **four decades** of helping to run a club that's **proud of its roots** and is keeping **traditional family values** alive through sport



Marge is an observer at the trials events in the shadow of a National Grid pylon

**W**hen a twenty-something Marge Clarke first visited what she affectionately calls The Heights, it was love at first sight.

Now 40 years on and happily married to the young biker she met back then, she's still in love... with motorcycling.

Obviously husband Alan gets a look-in, but it's Canada Heights, the home of Sidcup and District Motorcycle Club, that demands almost as much attention.

Club secretary Marge spends much of her spare time at the 50-acre site, which overlooks the M25 at Swanley in Kent.

The venue is one of eight that host British Grand Prix and 21 other events each year, so maintenance of the 2.2km track is constant.

## Old-fashioned

That's where Marge, who combines owning a preschool nursery with evenings of club paperwork during the week, is the oil in the machine.

The mum-of-two - Jamie, 28, and Nicola, 26, both compete - takes calls from riders as far afield as the USA and Finland, in a container building that doubles as the club HQ. The metal nerve centre might not look much, but the club is one of only a handful in Britain that own their own land after a share issue raised the £25,000 in 1983.

Marge said: "Since we bought the land instead of renting, we've been able to plough anything we make back into the club. It's unusual in this commercial world to still have a club run by volunteers not trying to make profits. It's old-fashioned and we hope it can continue."

The club boasts 400 members and 35 volunteers, many with their roots deeply entrenched in the motorcycle world like mud-soaked Kurt Pringle and Ivano Chieso, both preparing to help rebuild some wooden perimeter fencing.

Mechanic Kurt, whose father Jack moved to England



Riders face penalties if they 'foot' or touch the floor

from Australia to compete, said: "It's a young man's game, but once it's in the blood, you want to stay involved however you can."

## Physically demanding

Ivano runs a hotel in London's West End when he's not sliding his way around the winding clay/sand Auto Cycle Union affiliated track.

"If I'm not doing off-road motocross I'm helping with track maintenance, land management and preparing everything for the big day," said Ivano.

The big day in question is the 24 March British Motocross Championships, when up to 8,000 spectators will flock to The Heights for an event that buoys the club's accounts for the year.

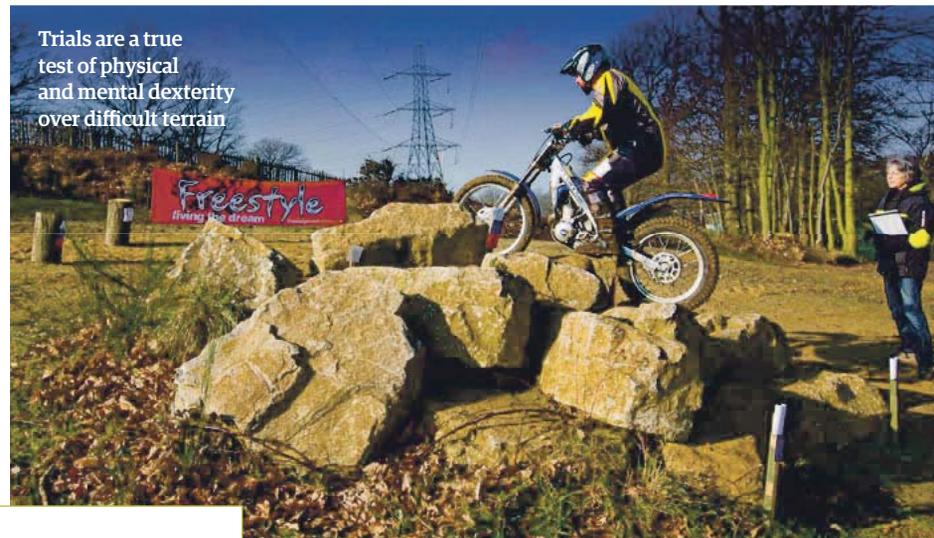
While finances are a part of Marge's role - the club has just bought a barn to store its three tractors, dump truck and grass cutter - it's the family feel that injects the passion.

"At dusk you often see lads hanging around on street corners with nothing to do, but you rarely spot teenagers from our club doing that because they're either indoors working on their bikes or in the gym," Marge said.

"They have to be focused to be successful and it's a very physically demanding sport, but one that creates a

## What's it all about?

- Enduros - a marathon event over obstacles and challenges, often through a number of stages in a time trial.
- Trials - a non-speed skill-based event using lightweight motorcycles ridden standing up, with penalties for riders who 'foot' (touch the ground).
- Motocross - competitions on the 2.2km track consist of two races called motos, with a duration of 35 minutes, plus two laps. There are four classes ranging from 450cc machines to 650cc machines.



Trials are a true test of physical and mental dexterity over difficult terrain



Carefully landscaped circuits need constant maintenance

### Timeline

**1928**

club formed, moving to Swanley in 1948

**1983**

the club buys the land with help from the Sports Council and members who bought £100 shares

**1990**

an adjoining 17-acre site for car parking is bought for £90,000



Accidents are all part of the sport... and are not uncommon

true family feel at events, even among rivals."

A National Grid pylon stands over the heart of the track, which is churned and scarred by the 45 motocross riders who pit their wits in a series of heats around potentially treacherous bends, jumps and chicanes.

### Positives

The races consist of enduros - long-distance tests of stamina and skill - and sprints. "We do have accidents," admitted Marge. "The most common are broken collarbones where the helmet cracks down. Some of the bends are named after the less serious accidents."

Despite the danger, Marge, who acts as an observer on competition days, insists it's a lifestyle she'd never swap: "There are risks attached with everything, but the positives far outweigh the negatives and I just love being involved."

Marge's youthful enthusiasm for the two loves of her life belies her age: "There are some cold, rainy mornings when I think 'what am I doing?', but most of the time I feel like I did all those years ago."

### For more information...

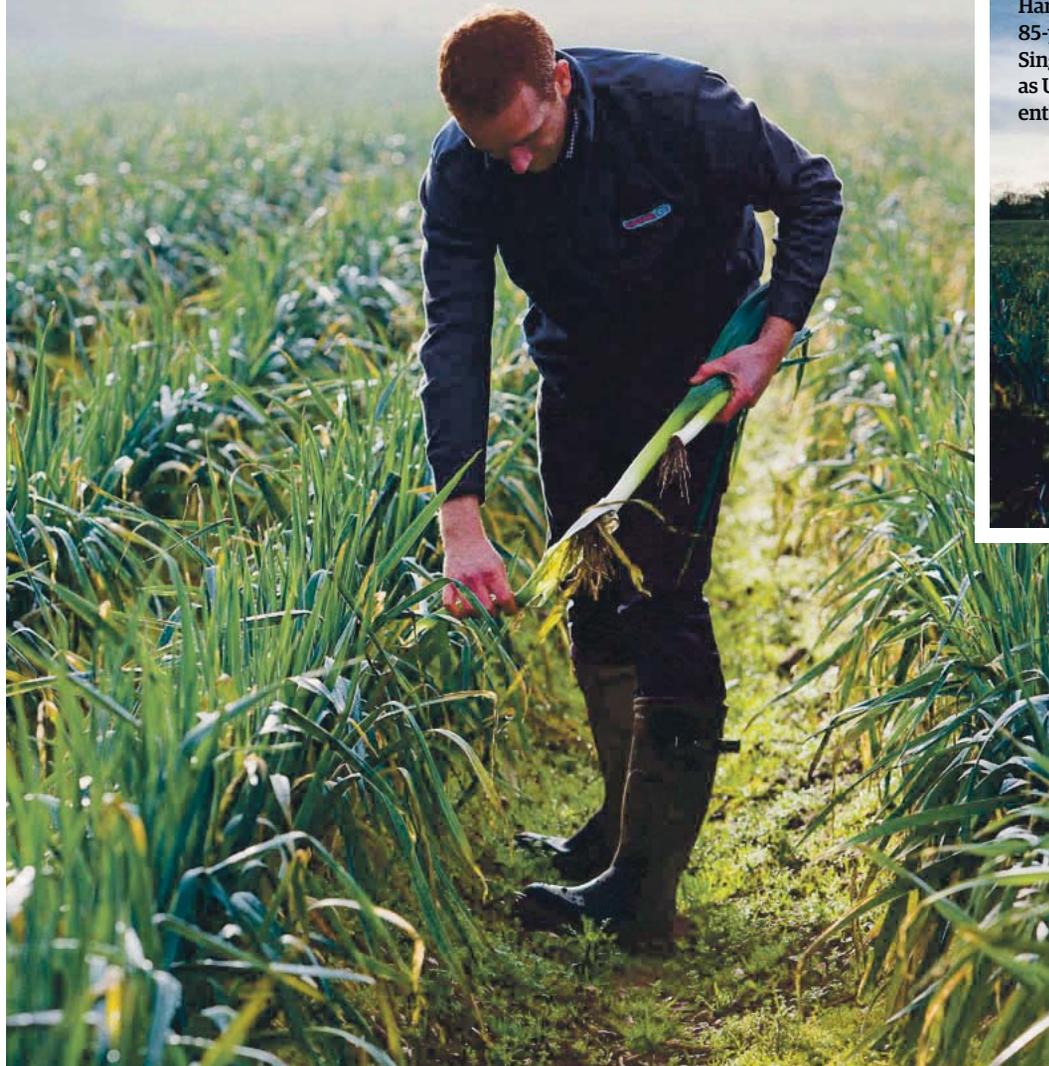


... visit the club website at [www.sidcupmotorcycleclub.co.uk](http://www.sidcupmotorcycleclub.co.uk)



Riding is a young man's game, but Marge's husband Alan (above) was once a star





Harvesting stalwart, 85-year-old Akattar Bahia Singh (affectionately known as Uncle) has endurance and enthusiasm aplenty



# A PLUG FOR LEEKS

For **Staffordshire grantor** Richard Shropshire, producing **fresh organic leeks** is a year-round job

**T**he humble leek is one of the UK's few native vegetables to provide taste and nutrition through the cold winter months before the arrival of spring and the promise of warmer weather.

Hardy and frost-tolerant, home-grown leeks are available every month of the year, apart from June, and are grown in many different parts of the country, ranging from East Anglia to the Welsh Borders and Kent.

"It must be a good all-round performer because there never seems to be a good time to go on holiday," joked grower Richard Shropshire, farm manager at Woodhall Growers, near Wolverhampton.

The largest organic leek grower in the country, the firm

**Inspecting the crop (above left and right), Richard says that British leeks are at their best in the cold winter months when few other native vegetables are available**

delivers 650 tonnes of the vegetable each year to Sainsbury's, Tesco and Morrisons. That's an astonishing 7.5 million leeks.

### **Organic approach**

Richard's father Keith converted to organic farming in the late 1990s and was named the Soil Association's Organic Farmer of the Year in 2006.

"He was attracted to the idea of a more sustainable approach to farming, which is kinder to animals, humans and nature," said Richard.

Organic sales enjoyed double-digit growth until 2007, when the recession and price inflation hit consumer



Fieldworkers harvest the leeks and place them in trays ready for the packhouse

## It's a fact

- The leek (*allium porrum*) is a member of the onion family. Close relatives include shallots, chives, garlic and spring onions.
- Leeks help maintain healthy heart and circulation, protect against cancer and boost the immune system.
- Leeks are found in famous soups including vichyssoise (leek and potato) and the Scottish cock-a-leekie soup.
- The Romans introduced the cultivated leek to Britain.
- In Europe they are referred to as 'poor man's asparagus' (asparagus is a distant relative).
- Leeks are the Welsh national emblem after soldiers in 640AD tied the vegetable to their helmets to distinguish themselves from the enemy.
- The Emperor Nero believed leeks would improve his singing voice.

## In numbers

**4.2%** of UK farmland is managed organically (718,345 hectares)

**3.7%** decline in UK organic sales in 2011

**7.5 million** organic leeks produced by Woodhall Growers

“Organic sales enjoyed double-digit growth until 2007, when the recession and price inflation hit consumer confidence”

confidence and started a dip that continues to this day.

In addition to organic leeks, Woodhall Growers produces organic potatoes and beetroot, as well as conventional salad onions as a counter to the declining market for organic vegetables.

Produce is marketed through the G's Growers co-operative, a business that was established by Richard's

great-uncle, Guy Shropshire, in the early 1980s.

Leeks are grown on 160 acres of land in a five-year organic rotation, including a two-year break crop of clover leys to build fertility, prevent disease and improve soil structure.

To maintain this rotation, and the conventional crop, requires a land bank of more than 1,000 acres, including rented land near Cannock and Shrewsbury, 25 miles away.

Leeks need a ready supply of water (either from boreholes or irrigation reservoirs) and do best on deep, free-draining, fertile soil.

With artificial fertilisers forbidden, soil fertility is boosted in February by ploughing in farmyard manure, pasteurised to kill any pathogens. After the seed beds are ➤➤



“Leeks grown from seed are cheaper to purchase and plant, and tend to overwinter more reliably”

formed, any small weeds are flamed by gas burners. The leek crop is grown either from seeds planted in late February onwards or from plantlets grown under glass and transplanted under fleece in March and April.

“We’re currently the only commercial leek growers in Europe to direct-drill seeds into the soil,” said Richard.

“Transplants get you into the market quicker for harvesting in late July and are more resilient to weeds, but leeks grown from seed are cheaper to purchase and plant, and tend to overwinter more reliably.”

Weeds are among the biggest challenges faced by organic farmers. Richard’s armoury includes two camera-guided mechanical hoes that continually alter the position of the hoe to work the ground 10-20mm from the plant.

“The problem is that if the ground becomes too waterlogged, you can’t get machines into the field and you have to hand-weed the crop, which is labour intensive and costly,” said Richard.

### A crop for all seasons

Different varieties of leek are grown in sequence according to the season, ranging from faster-growing cultivars, mid-season, frost-resistant specialists and, finally, varieties that recover well after winter.

“Many of the fieldworkers, who mostly come from eastern Europe, have been with us for more than 10 years,” said Richard. “They do a fantastic job in all weather conditions, including once on Christmas Eve when there was snow on the ground and it was -12 degrees.”

The crop is entirely hand-harvested, with workers cutting

(above, top right) Richard and packhouse manager Anna Bizub check the production line, where the leeks are stripped, washed and packed in bundles

(above, second row) Organic leeks are usually sold with a portion of their blue-green upper ‘flag’ intact

the plants loose from their roots, then placing them in trays.

“We use serrated knives for harvesting, but these blunt quickly and have to be replaced on a regular basis to avoid damaging the surface of the plants,” said Richard.

Harvesting tails off in May when the plants begin to bolt (go to seed). A natural stage of the plant’s reproduction cycle, it causes the flesh to become woody and less edible. For a brief period from mid-May to the end of June, imported leeks from G’s Growers’ operations in Spain fill the gap in home-grown produce.

### Ready for sale

At the height of the season, leeks are picked daily, with up to 12 tonnes a week passing through the packhouse at Langley Lawn Farm, near Wolverhampton. Here they are stripped and washed in a conveyor belt system, well away from the muddy environment of the fields.

The 20 or so workers in the packhouse work quickly, processing and packing up to five bundles of leeks a minute. Organic leeks are not usually sold loose in supermarkets because of the difficulty of distinguishing them from conventional produce at the till.

Each 420g bundle is fitted with a price tag and barcode, and loaded into 10kg boxes ready to go out on the supermarket shelves.

“On average, our leeks are processed within three days of harvesting and go on sale within five days, guaranteeing a fresh home-grown product every time,” said Richard.

### For more information...



... on leeks, their health benefits and recipe suggestions visit [www.britishleeks.co.uk](http://www.britishleeks.co.uk)

# LITTLE PESTS BIG HAZARDS

Grantor Mark Ward has a **zero-tolerance** approach to **bugs and pests**, but takes a similar line on **unsafe practices** to tackle them

**M**any reported incidents of damage to pipelines, as well as near misses, involve third-party contractors working on a grantor's land.

Whether it's construction or harvesting operations, or installing new drainage, a failure to check for the location of buried services or to observe simple precautions is often to blame.

Mark Ward, owner of Command Pest Control and a grantor himself, said that his firm always risk assesses a site for potential hazards when visiting for the first time.

"Our 40 mobile technicians serve around 6,000 farms in an area ranging from East Anglia to North Yorkshire," he said. "Every farm is a unique case."

"National Grid provides all grantors with maps that pinpoint the exact route of gas pipelines on their land and we consult these before starting any fieldwork."

"Our staff follow common-sense precautions, like not using shotguns for rabbit control anywhere near gas pipelines or overhead power lines."

## What's eating you?

Command Pest Control uses a range of traditional and hi-tech methods in the war against rabbits, rodents, pigeons and a host of other rural pests.

The firm also eliminates beetles and weevils that can contaminate grain stores, as well as various flies, mites and other insects that affect poultry and livestock.

"Rabbits alone cost agriculture more than £100 million annually," said Mark. "Rats were a big problem in 2012 because many moved into farm buildings as a result of fields and ditches becoming flooded."

Apart from causing damage to structures and machinery, rats gnaw through cables (creating a risk of fire), contaminate stored grain and animal feed, and can potentially spread disease to livestock and farm workers.



As a farmer, Mark Ward has a good knowledge of the needs of landowners when it comes to pest control



Risk assessment is vital to ensure hidden hazards of pest control are picked up before work begins

## For more information...



... or advice on pest control visit [www.commandpestcontrol.co.uk](http://www.commandpestcontrol.co.uk)

## Some points to remember

- Routine agricultural activities such as ploughing (to a depth of about 0.5 metres) do not normally pose a threat to gas pipelines, which are usually buried at a depth of between 1 and 1.5 metres.
- No work should be carried out in the vicinity of a gas pipeline without the written consent of National Grid.
- No mechanical excavators should be used within 3 metres of a high-pressure gas pipeline.
- Consult gas pipeline location maps provided by National Grid to all grantors before starting fieldwork and when briefing contractors.
- Contact National Grid before putting in new drainage using deep excavation methods.
- Take care with gateposts, which are often driven in deeper.
- Do not stack anything directly under or near to overhead power lines.
- Ground cover should not be reduced or increased, or materials stacked or stored above gas pipelines.
- Remember: gas marker posts can be accidentally moved and pipelines change direction between posts.
- To ask about proposed work near pipelines, email [plantprotection@nationalgrid.com](mailto:plantprotection@nationalgrid.com) or call 0800 688 588.

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

Very **slowly**, but very **surely**, there's a historic **transformation** taking place on a giant swathe of land in a project branded the **impossible dream** by cynics



Felix Dennis making the impossible dream come true

**“W**hosoever plants a tree, winks at immortality.” The final line of an eponymous poem by publisher and poet Felix Dennis provides a clue to the inspiration behind The Heart of England Forest Project.

The charity's vision is to turn the 'impossible dream' of a new and joined-up forest in the heart of England into a breathtaking reality.

And the all-consuming quest to plant the largest native broadleaf forest in England is taking shape, as fenced-off field upon field of saplings testify.

Standing in the shadow cast by a wintry sun through Windmill Wood, it's hard to imagine you're 20 miles south of the urban chaos and bustle of Birmingham.

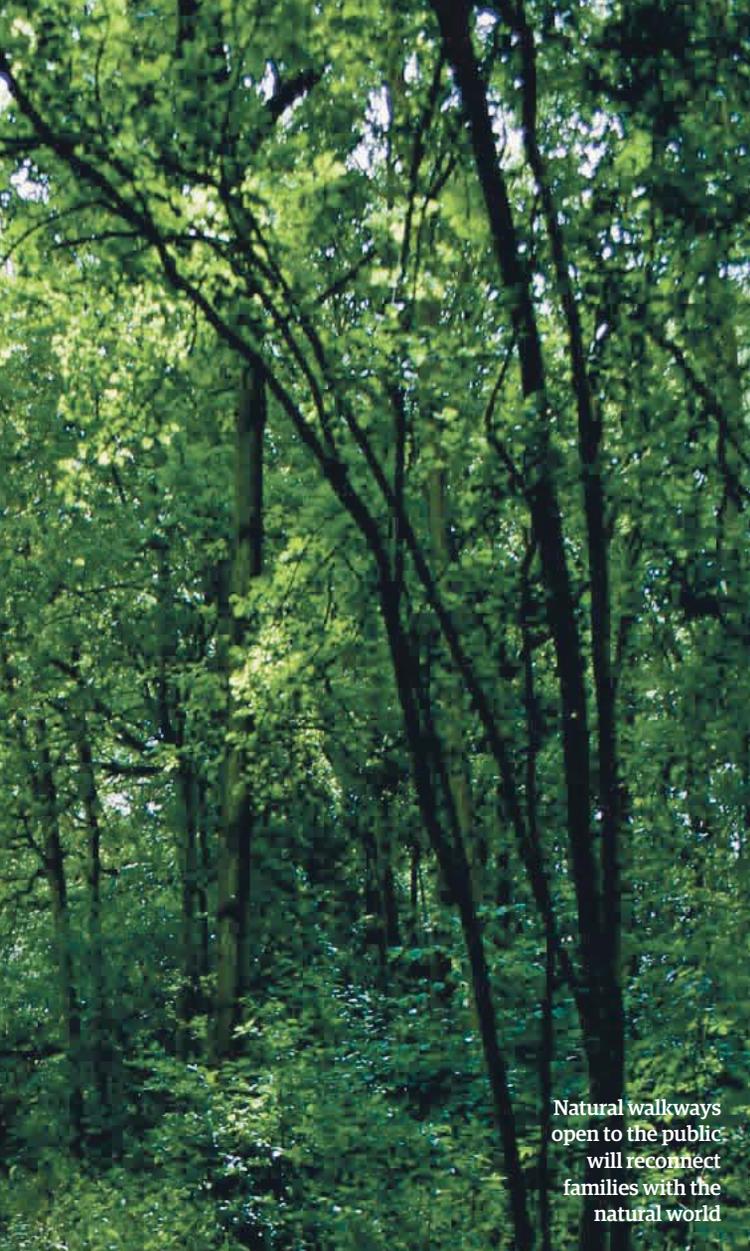
## **Light and air**

But that is exactly the point, insists The Heart of England Forest charity trustee David Bliss - the reason why a dedicated team are transforming a patchwork quilt of fields into a blanket of forest stretching from the Forest of Arden to the Vale of Evesham.

“The aim of the charity is to create an extensive forest for the benefit of the public. A large part of what we do is aimed at educating people about forests and trees. We want a forest full of light and air - above all, we seek to create a place of tranquil natural beauty - and one which will endure for centuries,” said David.

The special partnership between self-styled poet, entrepreneur and landowner Felix Dennis and The

“We want a forest full of light and air... we seek to create a place of tranquil natural beauty - and one which will endure for centuries”



Natural walkways open to the public will reconnect families with the natural world

### In numbers

# 2,000

acres planted so far - that's the equivalent of five Hyde Parks

# 14m

is the target number of trees in linear fields that will be dependent on land availability and cost

# One tonne

of carbon is absorbed by a single tree, making the forest an attractive investment for firms

Heart of England Forest charity will, they insist, prove the doubters wrong.

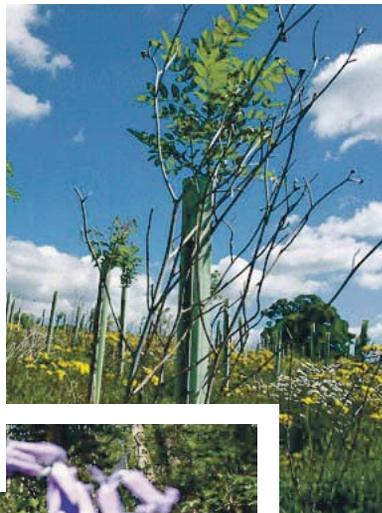
### Thriving wildlife

The visionaries have been planting 300 acres of native broadleaf saplings every year since Felix began in 1995 and won't stop until three separate areas of forest covering 30,000 acres become one green corridor.

Early this year they hope to plant the one millionth tree and hit the 2,000-acre coverage mark, so there's a long way to go and a lot of land still to be acquired yet.

A 25-year plan drafted by the estate team and approved by the Forestry Commission will ensure a scientific mix of trees from oak to ash, lime and birch - planted dependent on soil type - to help wildlife flourish.

Location is crucial as the charity strives to reconnect the public, many of them in cities, to their roots - pardon the pun.



### Reconnecting with nature

The charity's education centre at Great Alne near Stratford-upon-Avon plays host to regular visits from inner city schoolchildren, who forget themselves in the nearby Wild Wood.

David said: "For centuries there's been little but talk about reforestation Britain. We have one of Europe's lowest percentages of native high-tree cover - scarcely a quarter or a third of the percentage of native tree cover in France or Italy. We want to create a space where people can reconnect with nature."

Longevity is the watchword and David is keen for everyone, from big businesses to individuals, to grasp the project's time element.

The charity is delighted that National Grid has 'thought big and got it' when it comes to understanding the need to support a venture so dependent on faith.

Haydon Way Wood, a pocket of land near one of the pylons on the horizon, will become a wildflower meadow with 1,000 trees thanks to National Grid's sponsorship.

David said: "This type of project has never been done in England before so we need companies like National Grid, ➔





“We want to create a space where people can reconnect with nature”

with imagination and foresight, to help us achieve it.”

Opportunities for employee involvement in a project that sits neatly within most carbon-offsetting corporate social responsibility schemes are also limitless, with employees encouraged to plant their own trees or hold corporate events in the forest.

### Supporting the project

Individuals too can support the project, with a £10 donation paying for the planting, nurturing and maintenance of a sapling for generations to come.

“We have families sponsoring new woods or copses in memory of loved ones and they can visit whenever they wish. It captures perfectly the essence of what we are trying to achieve,” continued David.

That’s where the design is so important, with carefully landscaped walkways creating a low-density forest alive with wildlife, air and natural light.

“There are constraints, such as the wayleaves around pylons, but we work very closely with all agencies including the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Tree Council and other voluntary organisations to make sure we have consensus,” said David.

Buying and maintaining land once the 30,000-acre target is reached will mean a minimum of £200 million in capital expenditure, which is why National Grid’s support counts.

David said: “We are undoing the destruction wrought upon our woodlands by centuries of exploitation. The ‘impossible dream’ is becoming more of a reality each day.”

Steve Coffey and ball of energy Tinker are constantly monitoring the growing forest



### “Come into my office”

“This,” head forester Steve Coffey explains, with a modest sweep of his head, “is my office.”

He’s in the midst of a natural avenue of frost-lined mature oak trees, content despite temperatures tumbling to a bone-chilling minus four.

But the man – and his Jack Russell Tinker – tasked with bringing The Heart of England Forest dream alive is in his element. He’s comfortable enough with an iPad for the admin, but concedes he does still occasionally touch the screen of his PC in error.

But it’s only when he’s pointing out polypores (leathery fungi for the uninitiated) forming a series of steps on a lying birch tree or proudly showing off the dormouse nesting boxes dotted throughout this silent space that he comes alive.

After a previous unfulfilling career, Steve retrained for a forestry degree at the age of 28, and knew instantly he’d done the right thing.

“I spend half my time in the forest and feel totally connected to it. There’s something very primal about walking in natural woodland and that’s an emotion we want more people to feel,” he said.

“I know I’m just the custodian of what we are working to achieve at the moment and there will be more who follow me because this is a 100-year project.”

Steve freely admits to a feeling of wonder as he looks out over the spindly oak saplings planted four years ago.

He said: “They will transform the feel of the area in 50 years’ time when we’ll have joined up these fields to create something that has never been done before in this country.”

### For more information...



... contact the charity on 01789 491 391,  
email [info@heartofenglandforest.com](mailto:info@heartofenglandforest.com)  
or visit [www.heartofenglandforest.com](http://www.heartofenglandforest.com)



Guy enjoys success on the Grand Prix circuit, but it has always been family first

# BEEN KNOCKED DOWN? THEN GET BACK IN THE SADDLE

Whether it's **in life**, business or **sport**, that **old adage** is one that grantor **Guy Williams** adheres to more than ever these days

**A**fter four decades in the saddle, the physical and emotional rigours of competitive sport have pushed showjumper Guy Williams' fighting spirit to the limit.

The most recent, potentially devastating, low in a career of highs came as he narrowly missed out on a place in Team GB's 2012 all-conquering Equestrian team.

Tipped by those in the know as a shoo-in to complete the gold-medal-winning quartet, 41-year-old Guy's Olympic dream was shattered by the selectors.

But now the Greenwich dust has settled up the road from the Kent stud he has called home for the past 12 years, Guy has managed to put the disappointment behind him.

## Getting on with it

"In all areas of life it's how you react to those setbacks that defines you," insisted the father-of-two. "I thought I had a good chance of making the cut, but it wasn't to be. It was hard to take, but you just have to get on with it."

Guy, who has 15 horses at his 16-acre yard near Canterbury, excelled in Grand Prix events around the world in the run-up to 2012. But he sold one of his best mounts, Titus, just before the Games to keep food on the table for

the family he dotes on - a decision he would not reverse even with the benefit of hindsight.

Guy, back home after an event in Leipzig, always puts family first: "When I was a kid growing up in a working-class family in Bromley, family was all that mattered."

He talks with a strong south-east London accent about the importance he places on where he came from, and his optimism for the future.

Alongside wife and fellow rider Rebecca, Team Williams - including six-year-old Maisy and two-year-old George - have the world at their hooves.

## Grounded

"It's important that you keep perspective, and children help you do that. Competitive sport keeps you grounded too," said Guy. "There's more disappointment than joy, but you keep working hard for the missus and kids."

Guy's professional jumping career began in his teens, but he made his mark when he won the Showjumper of the Year title at the Horse of the Year Show in 2003. The past few years have seen him tour the world, winning a string of Grand Prix medals and all-important ranking points.

When he is home, preparing horses at the yard - bordered by National Grid pylons - takes up a lot of his time.

He said: "Showjumping is an older man's game so I have plenty of years left in me. As long as I can keep clocking up points and look after my family, I'll carry on."

## For more information...



... on Team Williams and Guy's successes, visit their website at [www.teamwilliamsgr.com](http://www.teamwilliamsgr.com)



Peter Baber's flock of 1,000 wool-shedding ewes on his farm in Christow, near Exeter

# EWES BETTER

**Self-shedding sheep** are the way forward, according to breeder **Peter Baber**, who farms **300 acres** on the edge of **Dartmoor National Park**



**Peter Baber**, former chairman of the National Sheep Association

**B**reeder Peter Baber is among a group of farmers embarking on a quest to breed the ultimate easier to manage sheep.

He joined eight other farmers in the West Country to form the Sheep Improvement Group (SIG) in 2006, with the aim of reducing two of the highest costs in commercial sheep farming - wool production and disease control.

"Farmers have traditionally sought to produce more and more of something, but it's the cost of production that often has a greater impact on the bottom line," said Peter, who keeps 1,000 ewes on 300 acres at Weir Park Farm near Exeter.

In the search for a more easily managed animal, SIG has developed a so-called 'self-shearing' breed called Exlana (without wool) that naturally loses its woolly coat in spring, when the weather gets warmer. The Exlana is a composite breed, combining the best attributes of 14 other breeds from around the world. The nucleus flock was formed using natural wool-shedding sheep (also known as hair sheep). The SIG breeding flock today numbers 4,200 wool-shedding

ewes, based at several independent farms across Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire.

## **Less wool, increased cost savings**

The value of wool as a product has been low for decades, and for many breeders it has become an expensive and time-consuming nuisance. Any potential returns from the wool are far outweighed by the cost of shearing and other expenses.

"Originally, all wild sheep were hair sheep. It was only after they were domesticated 5,000 years ago that they were bred for wool and, in the process, many of the traits that help sheep look after themselves were compromised," Peter said.

The Exlana produce only 1lb of wool - 19lbs less than a woolly sheep - and Peter and his colleagues estimate their ewes save them around £5-8 per animal a year in labour and other costs.

The sheep have a coat that resembles wool in winter, but it rarely exceeds 2cm in length. The wool begins to fall out in spring, leaving a short-hair coat. The shed wool quickly

“The term self-shearing was coined by the media... it’s actually more accurate to say the sheep are self-shedding”



The performance recording system, which scores sheep based on a number of desired traits for breeding purposes



# BELIEVE IT

disperses, composting into the soil or picked up by birds.

The absence of a woolly fleece makes the sheep more resistant to fly strike (parasitic infestation) and vastly reduces the danger of them getting cast (stuck on their backs).

## The best possible traits

But the self-shedding habit is not the only trait that Peter and his colleagues are seeking to develop in the Exlana. The SIG breeders are using a sophisticated performance recording system, based on electronic tagging and data capture technology, to score their animals according to a number of desired traits. Only the animals with the best traits are selected for breeding. The Exlana that graze Weir Park Farm are raised entirely on grass, are able to give birth outdoors unaided, and produce healthy, vigorous lambs.

“Sheep farmers in the future will increasingly gravitate to managing larger flocks to remain profitable so it becomes critical to have a breed that requires less input and is genetically more robust,” said Peter.

The Exlana breed operates as a closed flock. All the female replacements (ewes) are sourced from within the group, with genetic diversity introduced through the rams.

Each year half of Peter’s Exlana flock is sold - both ewes and rams - to improve the quality and commercial profitability of other breeder’s flocks. The sales also provide room in the flock for the new improved breeding replacements.

“The genetics in the flock is continually improving and at quite a pace,” said Peter. “Even the worst-scoring rams that are born now are better than almost anything we originally brought in.”

The Exlana at Weir Park Farm only eat grass and can give birth on their own outdoors

## In numbers

**1 billion** sheep worldwide, of which 10% are self-shedding, and 900 different breeds

## For more information...



... on self-shedding sheep, and Peter Baber’s farm and stock visit [www.baber.co.uk](http://www.baber.co.uk)

# Lastword

Your chance to enter two great competitions



**Photo competition**

## PUSS IN BOOT

Glyn Jones, from Welsh St Donats in South Glamorgan, took this winning shot of kitten Zoe, and said: "I've just turned 70 so the prize was a lovely present."

## DON'T BE SHY...

If you do something different on your land, have diversified or have a story to tell, let Gridline know and your success will be shared with 35,000 other grantors. Think of it as free PR!

Email Dawn.  
McCarroll@  
nationalgrid.com  
or call Gridline on  
01926 656 325



**WIN!**

## SPRING SPREE IN THE SHOPS

Banish the new year blues completely with a £150 shopping spree just for taking a few minutes to enter the Gridline photo competition.

Gridline has got a bundle of Love2shop vouchers to give away, which can be redeemed at more than 20,000 stores around the UK. That means there will almost certainly be something for everyone to indulge themselves with, whether it's clothes or technology, food or plain old pampering.

If you fancy a shopping trip on Gridline, then get your camera out and snap a winning shot for Gridline's photograph competition.

The theme for this issue's competition is a seasonal 'spring into spring'.

Send in your photo to Gridline Photo Competition, 23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5LA, or email it to [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com).

The competition closing date is 26 April 2013. Only National Grid grantors are eligible to enter and, regrettably, prints cannot be returned.

**WIN!**

## A classic country house break

Ever fancied being Lord or Lady of the manor for a night or two? Well now's your chance to live it up in luxury with a Country House Escape for two from Buyagift.

Take your pick from a selection of country houses around Britain, complete with roaring log fires and traditional luxury.

There are scores of properties to choose from, whether you want a one or two night stay at a castle, or a romantic or gourmet stay.

All you have to do is answer this simple question.



**Q** In which year did Sidcup and District Motorcycle Club buy the land to become National Grid grantors?

Send your answer to Gridline Bikers Competition, 23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street, Leamington Spa,

Warwickshire CV32 5LA. Please note you must be a grantor to enter. The closing date is 26 April 2013.

## Contact Gridline



Tel: 01926 656 325  
Email: [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com)  
[www.nationalgrid.com](http://www.nationalgrid.com)

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