

You've got the power...

...to diversify



"Use your 'power' to engage the right 'power' from the beginning."

...to become more self-sufficient



"Get your planning right and you could find yourself well on the way to diversifying your power."

With high production costs, low values obtainable at the point of sale and with agricultural transition well underway, diversification is a realistic option for many.

Get it right and diversification can be a powerful tool for generating additional income, adding value, reducing waste, creating employment (often for family members), improving biodiversity, spreading risk and much more.

There are many considerations when it comes to diversification, for example; staffing, capital investment, payback periods, how this works alongside existing revenue streams etc. However, one issue that is often overlooked is the matter of planning law and how to apply it. Without this knowledge you could find yourself spending unnecessary monies on consultants, or worse, having invested time and money in something that cannot be implemented or has to be stopped.

With this in mind, it is good advice to ascertain early on whether you need planning permission or whether you may be able to capitalise on permitted development rights. **BUT**, please be mindful as permitted development rights require certain criteria to be met, whilst some are only applicable where you inform the Council first.

If you are unsure on planning matters, you should engage the services of someone who is RICS or RTPI regulated and who understands and has the relevant experience of working with rural businesses. Get planning wrong and it can be difficult to unravel.

If you are thinking about how to diversify your farming operations to add value, reduce risk or capitalise on a market trend; maybe you ought to be considering diversifying your power? Making yourself more self-sufficient, more environmentally friendly, more cost effective; perhaps even money generating.

It should be no surprise that planning has a major role to play in the realities of delivery. After being told "don't worry we take care of the planning" by renewable installers/agents make sure you ask "**who is actually taking care of the planning?**", and don't be afraid to ask for their planning qualifications. Getting the right consultant makes planning less of a burden, and you may even be able to utilise permitted development rights. Get it wrong and you may have jeopardised your renewable potential, or even limited your planning opportunities in the future.

If you're told by your renewable representative "it's covered by permitted development rights", consider obtaining a Certificate of Lawfulness from the planning department. Without this, you could be looking at preparing a full retrospective application which can often require additional consultants reports (noise, landscape, flood risk, land classification, ecological assessments etc) and plans. In the worst case situation you'll be investing monies to appeal refused applications or enforcement notices.

It is dangerous to presume that because logic would appear to support renewable energy provision that your application is a sure thing – the reality is, landscape designations, site constraints, neighbours, agricultural land quality, ecology and more, all have to be weighed up. But, get planning right and you give yourself a 'positive' chance of being able to diversify your power.

Contact our planning professionals for expert help and advice

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