



FRESH PRODUCE

**S&A PRODUCE & MARDEN COMMUNITY  
LOCAL LIAISON COMMITTEE**

**BUSINESS UPDATE – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the avoidance of face to face meetings, it was not possible to hold the pre-season meeting previously scheduled for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020. In its place, the Company circulated this business update to all Committee members during w/c 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

1. **Minutes of last meeting**

- The minutes of the previous meeting have been taken as read and approved, with all actions completed and no matters arising from the minutes during the period since the last meeting to date.

2. **Brook Farm up-date**

- Activity to date
  - Imported fruit -
    - Due to the recent cooler weather we are still importing strawberries and will continue to do so for the next couple of weeks. We do however expect to move to 100% British supply of strawberries from the first week of June, which is about two weeks later than last year.
    - The supply of raspberries and blackberries continues from overseas until also around the first week of June. Whilst blueberries are imported all year round, we will also begin harvesting our own British blueberries in mid-July.
  - UK strawberries -
    - Current strawberry volume for the total S&A group is at its peak, with the Hereford & South Wales farms now in peak production. Over the next couple of weeks, production at these peak sites will dip down slightly as the Kent farm takes over on volume.
  - Asparagus -
    - We have been harvesting throughout April and the warm weather forecast for next week will probably take us to our peak. Volume should then gradually start to tail down with the season drawing to a close around 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> June.
  - Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic the Company has strived to operate as 'business as usual', feeding the nation and supporting customers and consumers.
- Planning
  - Nothing to report.

3. **Seasonal worker update**

- Today's headcount of seasonal workers on the Brook Farm campsite stands at 420. More arrivals (c20) are expected at the beginning of June. At the peak time (June) there will be 440 seasonal workers living on the Brook Farm campsite. The majority of residents are Bulgarian.
- Over the winter the Company disposed of 14 caravans and replaced them. With recruitment being challenging, there is more pressure this year to maintain benefits and provide even better facilities for seasonal workers. Currently all social events are suspended.
- In general, recruitment of seasonal workers is becoming more challenging. The Coronavirus pandemic has made this more so. Our early strawberries and labour requirements meant that we were well underway with our recruitment before the pandemic impacted; therefore most of our workers have been recruited directly by us, in our traditional method. As our season

progresses and the pandemic progresses, we may find ourselves needing to utilise the “land army”.

- In order to safeguard our employees, local residents and the business, we have introduced a number of measures with regard to Coronavirus, which include the following:
  - Government social distancing guidelines have been communicated and adopted across the farm and campsite.
  - All buses have had seats limited as per HSE guidelines and have hand sanitisers on board. This includes shopping buses, that are limited to 20 people per bus.
  - Marshalls at the entrance gates from 1-9pm every day, reminding people to socially distance and limiting visits to essential shopping/daily exercise.
  - Field Marshalls 7 days per week ensuring social distancing whilst people are working.
  - Locally sourced meat boxes and community boxes (which include vegetables, fruit, milk and bread) have been made available to workers at cost price.
  - On site shop prices have been reduced to be the same/similar to supermarket prices and a reasonable supply of goods has been maintained.

#### 4. **Local community issues**

- Public footpaths –
  - We would like to request please that any members of the public utilising the footpaths in and around Brook Farm, do so by taking care to keep to the designated footpaths and avoid walking in any fields which are not on the footpaths, particularly if accompanied by dogs not on a lead. Should any issues be observed in respect of these footpaths, please let us know.
- Brook House –
  - There is nothing further to update at this stage.

#### **Next meeting**

Jude will contact the Committee members in early September, with a view to scheduling the post-season meeting in October.