

J. R. Stideford and Son – Est 1887
Lunnon Farm, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0NZ



Proposed New Agricultural Barn at Lunnon Farm

Agricultural Justification.

The proposal is for the erection of a new agricultural barn at Lunnon Farm, St. Mary's, within the current farmyard area, in order to better process increased numbers of both flower bulbs and stems, and store equipment and machinery.

Current Operation.

Lunnon Farm remains one of the last few active bulb and flower farms on the Islands, currently producing and exporting around three million flower stems annually each winter, and 30 tonnes of bulbs over the summer months. The agricultural element of the business supports at least six full time positions throughout the year and up to ten during the busier winter months. Although the Farm supports some diversified additional enterprises, the core of the business revenue is very much agricultural, with in excess of 82% of turnover being generated specifically from agriculture in the latest set of accounts.

The Rogers family have lived and worked in this area of St. Mary's for many generations; their ancestors were noted as farming at "Lower Normandy" (probably this site) in the 1651 Parliamentary Survey of the Islands and the part of the Farm in question is occupied under a 1986 Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy with succession rights.

In recent years, both flower and bulb volumes have been increased to match demand, and this has been in parallel with additional emphasis on quality in order to command higher retail prices, and ensure the essential sales to supermarkets and other retailers are strengthened and increased. The Farm is one of the few local farms that is externally audited annually by GLOBAL GAP – an international body which examines and certifies good agricultural practice.

Despite an increase in output and production, the Farm is very much mindful of the environment and remains under Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme and Lunnon is one of the few farms locally whose environmental credentials are externally audited annually by the LEAF organisation (Linking Environment and Farming).

The Need.

Currently, over the summer months, the Farm lifts and processes approximately 70 tonnes of flower bulbs each year. Around 30-40 tonnes of these are planted back each year, and around 30 tonnes are exported to retailers and wholesalers, as well as some direct sales.

The processing line itself is a series of conveyors, a round cleaner followed by a grader which sorts the bulbs into size by circumference. The bulbs are then bagged at this point and stacked on a pallet.



It is essential for the bulbs to be kept dry whilst the processing is being undertaken – this includes bulbs being stored ready for processing, the processing itself and also the bulbs for re-sale post-processing, prior to shipment. Mostly, bulbs are stacked in half tonne loads on pallets; this means that there may be up to 140 pallets needing to be stored in the dry in addition to the area required for processing. If the bulbs get wet, it can mean they spoil and rot and are not saleable.

Because of this significant demand for dry storage areas for the processed bulbs, the actual grading process is currently being undertaken outside, as shown in the photos below:

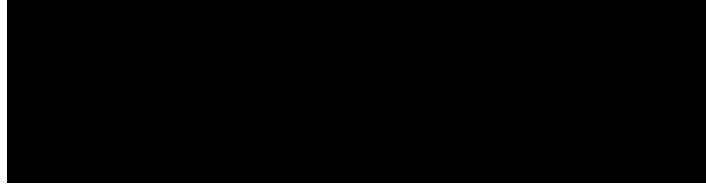




This is problematic for a number of reasons: firstly, grading cannot then take place during wet periods; secondly, unpredicted showers can spoil the bulbs; thirdly the expensive equipment (much of which is electrical) deteriorates rapidly outside in our damp climate.

A supporting letter from our largest bulb buyer (D R Simmonds) is included within this application, and discusses the buyer's need for dry and well processed bulbs.

In addition to this, much of the bulbs for sale and export have to be stored in the machinery, equipment and workshop shed, which not only means other very expensive equipment has to be left outside during these months, it also means that maintenance and repair jobs are hard due to the lack of space, as shown by the pictures below:



To remedy these issues, it is therefore proposed that this new shed would house the bulb grading line and equipment, and enable this work to carry on regardless of the weather, and also the dry bulbs for processing and sale. The size and design of the proposed shed reflects this need.



In the winter months, it is intended that a large flower length grading machine which is currently stored in the packing shed can be set up in the proposed building, freeing up much needed space. In addition to this, the shed would provide much needed additional winter storage for agricultural equipment, much of which is stored outside at present.

In summary, a new shed will help us to continue to expand our operation and provide important winter and summer employment, to improve the efficiency of our operation due to days lost to rain in the summer months, to continue to provide a mixed economy for the Islands, to improve the quality of the products we export and finally to reduce depreciation on expensive and specialist equipment.