

# Press Release



**29 April 2016**

## **Planning opportunities and tackling the cash flow squeeze: topical advice from Brown & Co at Cereals 2016**

Opportunities to promote land for development could increase for some landowners over the next few years, a fact Brown & Co will be highlighting at Cereals 2016.

The government is committed to encouraging more development in rural areas and to make small schemes more economically viable, says Charles Birch, head of land agency at Brown & Co.

To meet these aspirations, all councils will have to establish local plans by 2017. More locally, parish councils are being encouraged to prepare neighbourhood plans.

“If you have proposals then it will be important to engage in the preparation of these plans – these will be key documents in directing development,” says Mr Birch.

How big the opportunities are very much depends on location and how this fits with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out what constitutes sustainable development.

“Ideally the land you wish to promote should be close to or within an existing settlement that has certain facilities, which might include a school, pub, church or community/village hall and some form of bus service.”

Further opportunities may arise where a council cannot provide a five-year housing land supply, says Mr Birch. If landowners can submit a site that can show the delivery of sustainable development, then it should be approved.

Obtaining planning permission can be expensive, however, but there are numerous alternatives to make the process more affordable, he advises. “Examples include entering option agreements with house builders, where they obtain permission, or working with promoters who take a share of the proceeds in return.”

This continues to be a very good time to consider developing land, says Mr Birch. “We look forward to speaking to visitors at Cereals to help them identify the best opportunities, whether that be a barn conversion or a major allocation for housing.”



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## Tackling the cash flow squeeze

Brown and Co staff will also be on hand to discuss options to help offset the current cash flow squeeze that is gripping many farming businesses.

“Proactive business management is very much the order of the day,” says Philip Dunn, head of agribusiness at Brown & Co. “There are three key steps to this – review performance, identify the problems and consider the options.”

A detailed budget is vital to measure current performance and to highlight problem areas, as well as to predict cash generation. It will also provide credibility if more liquidity is required, he adds.

Comprehensive machinery and labour costings are also key to identify potential problem areas in what are the two largest overheads for most farm businesses.

Short-term fixes such as locking down spending, negotiating loans, changing the machinery policy or tweaking the business structure can help alleviate immediate problems.

Alternative business models, such as contract farming agreements or machinery sharing arrangements can also be set up fairly quickly, provided expert advice is sought, says Mr Dunn.

Longer term fixes can prevent a cash shortage from recurring. For example, with money available at around 4% for 30-year loan, new enterprises, perhaps for a third-party operator, should not be ruled out.

Letting areas of land for alternative enterprises, renewables or planning opportunities are other examples that could help improve and smooth future cash flow, he adds.

“Which course of action to take will vary from business to business, and we look forward to meeting customers old and new to talk through the options,” says Mr Dunn.

- Brown & Co is exhibiting on stand 608 at Cereals 2016, which takes place on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June, at Chrishall Grange, near Duxford, Cambridgeshire.

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