

Press Release: Embargoed until 2 September 2011

## NEW BIODYNAMIC LAND TRUST LAUNCHED TO SECURE FARMLAND FOR TABLEHURST COMMUNITY FARM NEAR FOREST ROW, EAST SUSSEX

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The new Biodynamic Land Trust (BDLT) will be launched following the Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm AGM, at 2.15 pm on 10 September 2011 at the Tablehurst Sheep Barn. People will be invited to join as founder members, who can invest in the BDLT in non-profit shares. This will help the BDLT buy the 37 acre Brambletye Fields for Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm as the first land to be put into the new land trust. The launch will be followed by a Brambletye Fields walk led by farmer Peter Brown.

The aim of the BDLT is to secure farmland in trust in perpetuity for affordable access to young farmers, for biodynamic agriculture, conservation and for community-connected, family farming. The benefits will include supporting family farming, preserving the countryside, conservation, supporting local food growing and helping entrant farmers and growers get access to affordable land.

Says Martin Large of the BDLT, 'This is an exciting invitation to invest in a non-profit share to secure Brambletye Field for Tablehurst Farm in Forest Row, East Sussex, and also to become a founder member of the BDLT.'

Brambletye Fields will be the first farm land in Britain to be put into trust by the newly founded BDLT. This new land trust aims to increase biodynamic acreage for farmers, growers and communities. The £190,000 purchase price for the 37.74 acres will be raised from community shares, loans and gifts, with the BDLT matching this with seed capital. The BDLT is an open membership society for the benefit of the community, working nationally to secure farmland into trust.

The BDLT has chosen Brambletye Fields as their first land to put into trust because Tablehurst Community Farm is such an inspirational farming model of good practice. Why? Tablehurst is unique — a 550-acre farm business owned by a community co-op. It produces award-winning, (e.g. Soil Association organic award winner) biodynamic food sold locally to minimize food miles, offers open public access, trains young farmers, organizes community activities and cares for nature.

Brambletye Fields have a story. They were bought in 2002 by two Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Co-op members, to lease to Tablehurst Farm. The farmland is in a beautiful setting close to Forest Row, nestling between the land to Weirwood Reservoir and the River Medway. The land went into organic and biodynamic conversion in January 2003. Hedges, scrapes and widened field margins were introduced, with the community planting the hedges. These features enhanced wildlife and biodiversity. Tablehurst has now farmed the land for eight years, secured biodynamic certification, rebuilt the soil's fertility, ensured sound fencing and improved the landscape. The owners now need to sell Brambletye Fields, but want the land to continue in biodynamic stewardship through the sale to the BDLT.

Martin Large will make a presentation on Saturday 10 September at 2.15-3.30pm after the Tablehurst AGM, Sussex, about how other land trusts and community farm buyouts have worked, as with Fordhall Farm where 8500 people raised the £800,000 purchase price in 2005-2006 and how this can work for the Brambletye purchase by the Biodynamic Land Trust. It will be followed by a Brambletye walk led by farmer Peter Brown.

Peter Brown: *'The main land and buildings of Tablehurst are secure in a charitable trust. About half of the land we farm is still rented from private landowners, including these Brambletye fields. I see it as very important that this land is secured into the future and can no longer be bought or sold. These fields, directly adjoining others which we farm, are a very important part of the Tablehurst Farm organism. They provide pasture, arable land and a wonderful diversity of streams, wetlands, hedges and trees.'*

Neil Ravenscroft, Chair Tablehurst Farm Ltd: *'We very much welcome the launch of the Biodynamic Land Trust and its decision to purchase Brambletye Fields. These fields are very important to Tablehurst Farm, and to our community who have participated in improving them. But the real significance of the Trust's decision is in securing the fields in perpetuity for biodynamic farming – which will be of enduring benefit to everyone.'*

Sebastian Parsons, Chair, Biodynamic Association: *'Biodynamic farmers work to universal principles that unite man and nature, which when applied to society as a whole reveals that even greater health comes about when we free up the ownership of the means of production from the process of producing. In other words, it is highly desirable for farmland to be locked in perpetuity in to trusts which then, whatever the economic climate, frees up the farmer in focussing on the task of producing food. So the Biodynamic Association is incredibly proud to have been able to found the Biodynamic Land Trust and, as its inaugural project, to be supporting one of the UK's flagship biodynamic farms, Tablehurst in Forest Row.'*

Notes for Editors .....

1. More information about the Biodynamic Land Trust and the Share Offer can be found at [www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk](http://www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk), or ring Martin Large on 07765 006829 or email him at [biodynamiclandtrust@gmail.com](mailto:biodynamiclandtrust@gmail.com)
2. Photos are available on request and some are on the website from Tuesday 6 September
3. More information about the 2011 Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm AGM, at the Sheep Barn, can be obtained from Oliver Fynes Clinton: [oliver@fynes-clinton.com](mailto:oliver@fynes-clinton.com), 01342 823966
4. Biodynamic agriculture, founded by Rudolph Steiner, is currently well known for producing award-winning wines. Biodynamics offers a unique approach to organic farming, which enhances soil fertility using natural preparations, planting by the stars and treating the whole farm as an organism. It is based on local self-reliance and sustainability, and treating the land as a commons to be stewarded. Biodynamic farms are special, each with a unique story and sense of place and the potential to animate the local rural community through the shared sense of trusteeship. See also: [www.biodynamic.org.uk](http://www.biodynamic.org.uk)
5. More information about Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm can be found at [www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk](http://www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk)