

Livestock Technology Centre – Abingdon & Witney College



Abingdon & Witney College's new Livestock Technology Centre project which includes the construction of a new indoor riding school will extend the College's potential to integrate technology into their courses. It features both a large practical space, changing and bio-security areas and a theory teaching room.

The £1.900,000 facility at Common Leys Farm, was funded through a grant of £1,139,000 from the Local Growth Fund through the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). It is an innovative technology building for students to develop the latest skills and knowledge and establish a career in the agriculture industry. This centre of excellence and innovation comprises of a research centre, employer engagement hub and training facility for agricultural related apprentices and full-time students. It helps to provide a solution to the agritech skills shortage problem in Oxfordshire. The Centre was opened by Robert Courts MP on the 17th May 2019.



Within surroundings optimised for agritech and farming careers, students can use a [NEDAP Pig Performance Testing](#) station, Shearwell Data for sheep stock analysis and a live feedback system through the large screen installed on the wall. This enables theory to be taught within the livestock area alongside the practical tasks, giving students a unique learning experience. The building also houses a classroom, student changing areas with ample room for their equipment, and a range of animals, including sheep, pigs and goats.

The centre has successfully joined the North East Cotswold Farm Cluster Group ([North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster CIC - Farmer Clusters](#)). This comprises of over 100 local farms that collaborate on farmer led conservation projects. In addition, the Centre continues to work with a further six (6) agricultural employers.

As part of Landex (Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence), each year the Centre has a curriculum and a quality peer review. Feedback this year was very positive and commented that:

***“The practical duties they do on site at the farm campus each week is critical in supporting students to develop safe working behaviours ready for a successful industry placement. Additionally, students develop a strong work ethic, highly sought after in land based industries. As such the programme offers a planned step into work with technical skill development planned to enable students to be work ready at the end of their studies.*”**

Anecdotally some strong achievement has been gained by students with non-land backgrounds, some of whom entered the college with high needs, celebration of these successes has proved effective in supporting the next generation to envision their own future.”

The Centre is currently part of a pilot project bid for Landscape Recovery, one of the three (3) Environmental Land Management schemes being developed as successor to the Government Common Agricultural Policy. The Centre is working with the Farm Cluster Group in putting together a bid for flood management.

In the past 3 years from 2019/20 to 2021/22 the Centre has enabled the following number of students to gain experience and qualifications:

	Total students from 2019/20 to 2021/22
Full Time students	329
Higher Education students	153
TOTAL	482

Achievement rates within the Land Based Industries in 20/21 overall = 93%, well above National Average (Pre Covid) of 80%, with the achievement rates for 21/22 expected to exceed this.

Due to the additional learner numbers, to date 3.6 jobs have been created compared to a target of 2.5