

**Agriculture, Estates
and Rural Property
Capability Statement**

Any queries and correspondence should be addressed to:



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Who we are

We are a team of lawyers specialising in agriculture, estates and rural property matters. As part of Muckle LLP, a leading independent commercial and private client law firm, we're focussed on building lasting relationships with clients and other professionals, so that we deliver exceptional advice and service.

Our office is based in Newcastle upon Tyne, but we act for clients all over the country. We offer hands-on support and prefer face-to-face meetings on site to understand and work through your legal needs.

David is an intellectual talent, he's able to manage multiple highly complex transactions with charm and good humour. He takes ownership and delivers accordingly.

Chambers & Partners





How we help

Our support is underpinned by our technical excellence and proficiency as lawyers, but it's how we help that is genuinely different. Although North East based (and very proud of it) we relish being out and about, meeting clients around the country, because often it's much easier, quicker and more cost effective to talk over legal issues in person.

Professional, practical and personal

We roll our sleeves up and work closely with other professional advisers to really understand clients' circumstances, aims and objectives. Many lawyers are far too reluctant to leave the comfort of their desks, but we're happiest when we are on site visiting a client and we are renowned for our "muddy boots" approach.

As well as being highly skilled, down to earth professionals, all our rural lawyers are members of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), the Agricultural Law Association (ALA) and the Northern Farmers and Landowners Group (NFLG)

When we're not out and about, our team works together in one office, side by side with all our other commercial law and private client specialists, so clients can count on swift responses and seamless service for virtually all their business and personal legal needs.

Clear and simple costs

Everything we do is designed to make life easier and less stressful for our clients, and that goes for our pricing too.

Our pricing is bespoke, upfront and totally transparent. Wherever possible we offer fixed fees for our work, and we will always recommend a practical solution over a costly legal one, if it serves a client's needs better. Why? Because as a dedicated team of rural legal specialists, we are big enough to handle large, complex matters but small enough to care.

Value for money is really important, and with our team clients get strong personal relationships, lots of our time and attention and a genuine commitment to understanding and helping them achieve their aims.

What we do best

While we act for a wide variety of individuals, families, farming partnerships, trusts, landed estates and national institutional and charitable landowners, we are happy to work with anyone who lives, works or owns property in the countryside.

We have an impressive collective experience of day-to-day rural property and estate management work, together with specialist in-depth knowledge of agricultural issues and the more idiosyncratic kinks of rural property law.

Our core competencies include:

- landed estate management including succession and tax planning
- farm, land and property sales and purchases
- country house and rural residential property sales and purchases (including mortgage financing)
- rural property secured lending
- commercial tenancies for rural properties
- mining, minerals and aggregates
- energy projects including hydro, solar and wind schemes and anaerobic digester plants
- sporting rights (shooting and fishing) including buying, selling, letting and registrations
- farming partnerships, contract farming agreements and other business models
- grazing licences and profits and other similar agreements
- agricultural tenancies AHA and FBT (contentious and non-contentious issues)
- secured lending
- land registration and related issues
- residential tenancies
- forestry and woodland
- planning and development, including options and promotion agreements
- easements and wayleaves
- manorial waste, village greens and common land issues



At your service

David Towns Partner and Head of Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

David is one of the region's foremost experts in rural property matters and leads our team of specialists. He's worked with clients throughout the UK and understands the North East, Cumbrian and Yorkshire rural property sectors particularly well.

David is also nationally renowned for his knowledge in sporting rights and mines and minerals, having featured as an expert commentator for numerous national news outlets including The Times, The Independent and the BBC.

Recent work

- Managing the £11m refinancing of a large landed estate, acting for both the estate and lender.
- Acting for numerous landed estates across England and Wales in identifying and registering historic manorial and minerals interests.
- Successfully completing the voluntary first registration of over 4,000 acres of foreshore, estuarine and creek beds where ownership had been in dispute for over 800 years.

Hobbies

David enjoys travelling in Europe with his wife and young daughter, cooking, art and bingeing on Netflix boxsets.

Libbie Henderson Partner

Libbie is an expert in all aspects of rural property development. She has lots of experience advising on the sale of agricultural land and has considerable land acquisition expertise, particularly for mines and minerals quarrying and energy related matters.

In fact, Libbie is considered as one of the few, true energy legal specialists in the region. Her experience includes the regeneration of greenfield and brownfield sites and land-based energy projects, including wind, solar and nuclear.

Recent work

- Advising on the acquisition of significant North East quarry from a company in administration, identifying mines and minerals issues that affected the valuation and helping the buyer to renegotiate the price and acquire the site.
- Acting on the acquisition and disposal of various quarries.
- Acting on windfarm, biomass, solar farms, roof mounted solar schemes and associated PPAs and connection agreements.
- Acting on coal bed methane extraction schemes, landfill gas exploitation schemes and coal mine methane schemes.

Hobbies

At home Libbie can be found getting her hands dirty, merrily baking something scrummy for her twins, or (not-so-merrily) helping her husband with various automotive 'restoration projects'.



At your service

Elizabeth Earle Senior Associate

Elizabeth has extensive specialist experience working in the rural sector, including contentious agriculture work. She has considerable experience looking after a number of privately owned landed estates, advising on all of their property work and working closely with owners and advisers.

Elizabeth has also acted for large, institutional landowners and charities, including the National Trust. She has written a series of articles for Country Life magazine on buying and selling rural property and has trained other rural property professionals, including trainee RICS surveyors. Elizabeth also leads our rural property conveyancing and secured lending work.

Recent work

- Advising the lending bank on a loan secured on a portfolio of tenanted farmland and other rural property worth over £70 million.
- Advising on the strategic restructuring of seven historic agricultural tenancies on a landed estate for tax planning purposes, ensuring that 100% Agricultural Property Relief from IHT was available to the landowner in each case and maintained good relations between all farmers.
- Obtaining the voluntary first registration at the Land Registry of several thousand hectares of open common land, based on manorial titles dating back to approximately 900AD.

Hobbies

Elizabeth enjoys road running, fell running, cycling, triathlons and then cooking and drinking wine to recover from them. She also spends quite a lot of time running after her two dogs and two sons.

Richard Nixon Associate

Richard has acted for numerous landowner clients, advising on secured lending, landlord and tenant issues, estate management, energy projects and housing developments. He also acts extensively within the charities and education spheres throughout the North East and beyond.

Recent work

- Acting for a bank on the refinancing of a large rural estate with holdings in North East and South East England.
- Ongoing work for property developers including housebuilders working on rural and greenfield sites.
- Advising Port of Tyne on its ongoing estate management and lettings work.
- Acting for a landowner on a battery energy storage facility including negotiating option agreements and dealing with funders.

Hobbies

Richard can be found cajoling, dragging and, as a last resort, carrying his wife and two sons up hill and down dale in the wilds of Northumberland and Cumbria. He also loves running, canoeing and rock climbing.

Beth Thomson Solicitor

Beth acts for a number of clients with rural property interests and has close links to the rural and farming community. A talented commercial property lawyer, Beth is committed to getting underneath clients' legal problems and providing solutions that suit individual's needs. Outside of work, Beth loves walking, running and travel.



Expert advice - always

We have specialists in virtually every area of commercial law and whatever your legal needs are, large or small, we're likely to have an expert who can help.

Banking

Top ranked in Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners, our banking team can support any finance issues, from a simple working capital facility to a complicated bond issue or multi-bank arrangement.

Corporate

Our large corporate team looks after businesses of all sizes, from family companies to large corporates. Whether you want advice on buying or selling a business, partnerships, succession planning or gaining investment, we can help.

Commercial

Top ranked in Legal 500, our commercial team knows everything there is to know about intellectual property and commercial contracts big, small, bespoke or standardised, on or off-line.

Technology

From data breach to blockchain and development to procurement, IT is a rapid growth area in business with many legal implications. It's why our specialist technology team is a huge asset to the region.

Dispute Resolution

Our dispute resolution team is regularly engaged in multimillion pound national and international litigation as well as smaller local disputes. It offers strategic advice and alternative dispute resolution, emergency remedies and a highly successful debt recovery service.

Employment

Our employment team has a broad range of expertise and is renowned for its communication skills. In addition to day-to-day legal work, our lawyers regularly give talks on employment law and provide NCFE accredited training, ideal for in-house legal teams and HR professionals.

Construction & Engineering

We have one of the largest construction legal teams in the region. It specialises in contentious and non-contentious issues and is working on some of the biggest building projects in the North East.

Private Client

For business owners, directors and senior executives we offer a personal private client service to advise on all aspects of estate planning, including wills, succession, inheritance tax, family trusts, powers of attorney and probate.

This is just a snapshot of the expertise Muckle offers, with many more specialist practice areas available. Speak to anyone in our team to find out more.



Being a responsible business

We care passionately about having a positive impact on our local community and environment. We encourage all of our people to take on roles and responsibilities in the community and over 40% of us regularly volunteer for charitable causes outside work.

We donate a percentage of our profits to the Muckle Charitable Fund each year, which we distribute to worthy causes across the North East. Our Let's Think Green Team also helps us keep our carbon emissions as low as possible, and each year we donate the cost of our carbon footprint to local charities dedicated to improving the region's environment.



Muckle LLP is a 'truly modern law firm' that 'is respectful but not constrained by the conventions of a traditional commercial law firm which can needlessly delay progress'.

Legal 500



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