

Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? Complete Land Management (CLM) has just had its fifth birthday and the changes have been constant, writes Mark Weaver CLM's managing director. Now that I have completed the Business Growth and Development Programme at the Cranfield School of Management, the focus on the success of our own and our clients' businesses and a robust approach to change is sharper than ever.

The evolution of any business is as much about people as the economy and the acceptance by all the people within that business that 'the only constant is change' applies to large or small, corporate or family enterprises.

Like any growing business, CLM has developed and changed. Our reputation for farm and estate management developed initially from my own career in farming and has been more than reinforced by bringing Matthew Berryman to CLM in October 2007. Matthew's experience has assisted us in building a world class farm and business management team.

We have an equally strong reputation for farm environment work. In fact with Anthony Weston leading that team, we are proud to be number one in our field in the South East if not the country.

Despite all the fun, there is no denying that things are tough. Tough decisions need to be taken and taken early. We have all seen that it is possible to avoid those decisions right to the point that the truest measure of any business – cash – runs out. Do not delay – grasping the nettle of a difficult decision early will show a reward, whether it is in terms of increased profit or increased efficiency leading to profit.

CLM's acquisition of Humberts Edenbridge in June 2008 was all about grasping nettles! A clear opportunity but one that included risk and naturally required tough decisions and change. The first change was to resurrect the old name Fox & Man-

# Five years of CLM

The only constant has been change for the business and the industry



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waring. Established in 1872 this mighty little firm sold farms and land to Churchill when he acquired Chartwell. In 2009 it is the leading lettings agent in the area, sells a range of property and offers synergy to CLM with its management team.

Farming businesses that grasp those nettles are more than bucking the trend. We are proud to be involved with ice cream makers, cheese makers, juicers and wine makers. Innovative risk takers embrace change, face the lows and enjoy the highs.

The straight forward farming business equally demands openness to change: in crop, plant product, machine, man or

method. We often need to remember that big is not always beautiful and both big and small require skilled management; without it, whatever the business, it will struggle to find success. It is a privilege to work with both amazing, small, single-enterprise farms and the challenge of the larger agribusinesses.

In terms of change, the grant system that our industry functions within, is a classic example. The Single Farm Payment Scheme has significantly changed our industry and the scheme will change in 2012. We need to be thinking about post-2012 now. Entry Level and Higher Level Schemes may be the precursors of what is to come. Certainly DEFRA policy points in that direction. But as CLM has written in these pages many times the balance between environment and production is a fine one.

And finally what do we all find ourselves doing on our fifth birthday?

- Farm and Estate Management**
- Farm Business Appraisals** – for purchase or enterprise change.
- Business Management** – unrelated to agriculture
- Business Change Management** – restructuring existing, creating new
- Project Grant Applications**
- Project Management**
- Farm Environment Services**
- Environmental Impact Assessments**
- Accounting and Book-keeping**
- Fox & Manwaring**

Slightly more than running a farm and completing a few Countryside Stewardship Schemes each year, which was the plan in 2004. The only constant is change and it's fun!

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