**Date: 26/01/2023**

**Ambitious grain cooperative strengthens its leadership team**

In a bold mission to be more responsive to emerging market opportunities and reflective of the quality and location of its southern English farmer suppliers, Trinity Grain has made changes to its executive team.

Formed five years ago from the merger of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Ridgeway Grain, the cooperative has appointed Richard Williamson as its Executive Chairman and David Evans as Managing Director.

Trinity’s three storage depots handle and market 220,000 tonnes of grains and oilseeds for its 300 farmer members extending across nine counties – Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, East and West Sussex and Wiltshire. Pool marketing is undertaken by Openfield.

“We have some of the best grain-growing land in England and produce some of the country’s best malting barley and wheats and a membership of incredibly enterprising and independently-minded members,” says Richard Williamson.

“Trinity Grain’s board has been immensely progressive in recognising the quality and story behind its members and their crops, and, importantly, how new markets with local food and drink makers could be created. Hence the need for executive leadership team with the skills and connections to put Trinity Grain on the map as the south of England’s grains supplier of choice,” he adds.

“Our farmer members are exceptional in their technical competence, levels of digital adoption and environmental management, which, along with local, southern-England provenance, is at the heart of the differentiation that we are highlighting within our crop marketing,” he notes.

Richard’s passion for the region, in which he has lived for over 20 years, coupled with his extensive agrifood experience in roles within Velcourt and leading Beeswax Dyson’s farming business, appealed to Trinity’s board.

Managing Director, David Evans, adds, “we have a clear business case to build on the quality of both the crops and the storage facility here for the region’s farmers, building on the stories of their land, crops and their care for some of the UK’s most diverse and ecologically rich landscapes.

“We are open to any local food and drink manufacturers, or processors, who want to talk about partnerships – whether that’s based on the core cropping of wheat, barley and oilseeds, or serving the increasing demand for niche products,” he says.

Board member Tom Coleman farms at Lower Norton Farm near Sutton Scotney in Hampshire. In partnership with his wife, Alison, they farm a total of 1,150ha of combinable crops on their own and four contract farms and run a cut flower business.

He says that the board had planned to further invest in its leadership team since the merger of the three original cooperatives. “We have spent a lot of time focused on the nitty gritty of the merger – for example, the HR, health and safety and administration, providing the necessary structures to take the business to the next level, and to recruit at executive level for the future direction of the business.

Tom’s family have been members of Trinity Grain, formerly Hampshire Grain, for 35 years, seeing the investment into the cooperative as making practical and economic sense.

Being part of the cooperative has suited his family well after a move from a farm in Devon to Hampshire 35 years ago. “When we took on Lower Norton Farm it was a dairy farm, so we have no grain storage and drying facilities; as we took on more contract partnerships, many of these farms also had either had no, or out-of-date grain handling facilities., so it made sense to use the coop from a capital, health and safety and quality of storage perspective.

“I’m also a firm believer in the ethos of collaboration and working with others to retain value within the coop and add value for members, as well as delegating the responsibility of crop handling, blending and marketing to a professional business,” he says.

Tom points out the opportunities that arise from freeing up sheds from crop storage: “For our contract farms, the freeing up of their buildings has enabled them to diversify into other enterprises, as we have on our own farm.”

Looking to the future, Trinity plans to focus on increasing farmer membership, forging local food chain partnership and creating a unique value-based identify for the coop’s crops in the local food and drink economy.

“Southern England has an incredible food and drink scene, which builds on the heritage of the region and its landscape, we want to be a part of its future, embedding our farmers and their fine produce into the mix,” Richard Williamson says.

Richard takes on his role as Executive Chairman following Trinity Grain’s recent board meeting. David has been in post since January 2022.

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**Notes to Editors**

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**About Trinity Grain**

Trinity Grain is a grain cooperative service its 300 farmer members in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, East Sussex, and Wiltshire. Trinity Grain has three sites – Micheldever, Membury and Shrewton - where the team dries, processes, stores, blends, and separates grains and oilseeds, it runs its own fleet of lorries. Pool marketing is undertaken by Openfield.

**About Richard Williamson**

Richard graduated from the Royal Agricultural College whereupon he joined the Velcourt’s Management Training Scheme and progressed through the company to become Farms Director for the South of England. Richard joined Beeswax Dyson Farming Limited as Managing Director in November 2014.Richard now holds several executive and non-executive positions as well as providing strategic business advice.

**About David Evans**

David grew up on a family farm in South Africa, after completing a Master of Science degree at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, he returned to take up the position of farm manager, managing 2,000 hectares of combinable crops. Later David was appointed Managing Director of the business overseeing and arable and beef enterprise, as well as an abattoir and peanut processing business. Under his leadership he strategically and systematically restructured the business, repositioning it in a challenging political, economic, and environmental climate, achieving greater efficiency, profitability and sustainability. In 2020 David and his family emigrated to the UK and he joined Trinity Grain as Managing Director in January 2021. He holds a Master of Business Administration from the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. David is a Trustee of a not-for-profit organisation that is a leader in early childhood development in rural South Africa. David is 35 years old, married to Claire, a qualified solicitor, and has a daughter (3) and a son (16 months). He and his family live in Stockbridge, Hampshire. He describes himself as A young, energetic agricultural business leader with a demonstrated ability to create and execute strategic plans and actions with a proven track record of business change management.