

# HOW I GOT HERE

## When did Redhill Farm Free Range Pork begin?

Nearly 15 years ago in response to the cheapest, lowest grade imported pork being legally sold in the UK as British. The lack of honesty and transparency in labelling meant that there was so much confusion for the customer to really know what they were buying. I saw an opportunity to ensure customers were genuinely getting exactly what they thought, and that was for them to be able to buy direct from us, the producer. We had to sell it ourselves and give customers something that they couldn't guarantee they were getting anywhere else.

## What were the early days like?

It was the most exhausting, hard work I had ever done – and I'd already been farming so I was used to long hours and hard physical work. But this was mentally, physically and emotionally hard due to having three children under 5 years old at the start – the youngest being only 3 months old. I was determined to start a business but at the same time protect my small family and make sure it didn't impact on their lives growing up on the farm. I literally worked all night sometimes; when the children were in bed and the phone stops ringing you can get a lot done.

## What came next?

Managing the growth of the business – there were so many different ways the business could have developed and a lot of outside pressure to get bigger, faster. I resisted all this and had a very clear aim to build a solid

JANE TOMLINSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF REDHILL FARM FREE RANGE PORK, WITH HER HUSBAND TERRY, PRODUCES THEIR NATIONALLY ACCLAIMED FREE RANGE PORK TO THE HIGHEST WELFARE STANDARDS ON THEIR FREEDOM FOOD ACCREDITED FARM IN LINCOLNSHIRE. AS WELL AS RUNNING THE BUSINESS, JANE HAS THREE CHILDREN AND IS FOUNDER OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE FARMERS' MARKETS AND A FOUNDER MEMBER AND AMBASSADOR FOR SELECT LINCOLNSHIRE.

foundation based on quality, honesty and reliability. Any new opportunity that came along had to 'fit in' with what we were doing so that we didn't jeopardise our quality of product and we could look after the customers we had already. We still do that now – no matter what new business comes along, even Jamie Oliver, we have to ensure that it is manageable and we don't put any downward pressure on our business and employees.

## What has been your biggest challenge?

All of it! It was such a steep learning curve for someone who was a mum and a farmer's wife – I'm the sort of person who needs to make sure I learn and understand everything about my business so that I can make informed choices and decisions. As far as how I run the business and employ people I just instinctively do what I feel is the right thing to do, and keep things as simple as possible. From the start I could only do what was manageable, especially with a young family. We still do this now – we keep things as simple as possible, and make the business fit around what is really important to us.

## What are you most proud of?

Starting the Farmers' Markets in Lincolnshire. I set up and ran 6 Farmers' Markets completely from scratch – no funding, little or no assistance, totally



Jane Tomlinson

voluntary, my own time and resources – and often with no thanks, lots of problems and negative responses. If you go back 15 years there were no Farmers' Markets outside of London and one in Bath – no-one new what one was and certainly no-one would dream of being able to buy the best quality food from a market stall! I dealt with councils, producers, EHOs, Trading Standards and even DEFRA – persuading, organising, encouraging and informing about the benefits of Farmers' Markets for farmers and producers, the customer and most importantly the rural market towns within Lincolnshire that were under threat from aggressive supermarket development. I'm happy that I've created a real alternative for people to have access to local food and for the people that produce it.

### If you had your time again would you change anything?

No not really – you can only learn by making mistakes and doing what you think is right at the time. Even when I wasn't always sure about what to do I did know what 'not to do' – either from my own mistakes or taking note of other people's.

### What's the best piece of advice you have been given?

It's not so much advice, for me it's more about when people say that you 'can't do this' that really gets me motivated! There is usually a way to achieve what you really want and there will always be negative people trying to stop you. I like to deal with people face to face in business, I love small businesses and independent thinking people – whoever said 'people buy from people' is right so I concentrate on the type of people I like to be around and keep out of the way of negativity.

### If you could say one thing to the Prime Minister what would it be?

Do everything you can to help and support small businesses – we're creative people, with the new ideas, new products and services – the job creators, the taxpayers, we are the ones supporting and keeping the wealth in our local communities. We employ locally, buy our goods and services locally and sell locally. It's so expensive to own a small business, most of us are in it for the lifestyle but we work harder, longer hours than our employees to save costs, build the business and create the growth.

[www.redhillfarm.com](http://www.redhillfarm.com)

**REDHILL FARM**



*The Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce Team. L-R: Rachel Mooney, Charlotte Goy, Natasha Clegg, Charlotte Baxter, Helen Tomkinson, Chris Brown and Simon Beardsley*

## LINCOLNSHIRE CHAMBER WINS SELECT LINCOLNSHIRE FOR FOOD CONTRACT

**T**he Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce has won the contract to deliver the Select Lincolnshire for food membership project which represents the county's £1 billion food and drink industry.

Select Lincolnshire for food is a Lincolnshire County Council project. It gives the county's food, drink, tourism, hospitality, agriculture and horticulture sectors a unified brand.

The project highlights the quality of Lincolnshire's produce to residents, visitors and businesses looking to invest.

Talking about the project win, Simon Beardsley, Chief Executive of the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce said he was looking forward to working with the County Council and bringing new ideas to the project.

"Lincolnshire has a rich food and farming heritage and the industry is worth more than a billion pounds to the local economy and supports thousands of jobs.

"We feel privileged to be working with Lincolnshire County Council on the Select Lincolnshire for food project, and have spent the last couple of weeks talking to its members about what support and development they want to see moving forwards.

"At the heart of the Lincolnshire Chamber's plans is the long-term sustainability of Select Lincolnshire for growers and producers, plus the ability to work more closely with the county's tourism and hospitality industry.

"There is no denying that what we have in Lincolnshire is among the very best in the UK, and that businesses deserve the right support to make the next step in their growth plans. And this is what the Lincolnshire Chamber will

deliver through Select Lincolnshire for food."

One of the key priorities for the Lincolnshire Chamber will be growing the Select Lincolnshire for food membership. This will be done through a range of activities, including new business development packages brought exclusively to the project by the Lincolnshire Chamber.

These include international trade, business training, brand management, marketing, PR, social media, events at a local and national level, funding opportunities, links to tourism and hospitality programmes, networking, and money saving offers.

Mary Powell, Tourism Development Manager, Lincolnshire County Council, said: "The contract to deliver Select Lincolnshire came up for renewal, and after a competitive application process the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, who put in an excellent proposal, were awarded the contract to deliver the project for 10 years.

"Having worked with the Lincolnshire Chamber in the past, I am confident that it is the right organisation to lead Select Lincolnshire in the future. It has proven experience in helping hundreds of county businesses of all shapes and sizes, and will bring new ideas and extra value to the membership, whilst maintaining the focus on the wider needs of Lincolnshire's tourism, hospitality, food and farming sectors.

"Lincolnshire County Council will remain a key partner within the project, and I am looking forward to working with the Lincolnshire Chamber in the future".

