

Pioneering farm project stepped up

A pioneering local project has been stepped up with the support of a Newport college, a well known British actress and HRH the Prince of Wales.

The Fordhall Community Land Initiative, which is jointly run by Harper Adams University College student Ben Hollins, 21, and his sister Charlotte, 23, is holding a charity ball at the Edmond college.

And a tour of Prince Charles' Gloucestershire home, Highgrove - for which there is a three-year waiting list - will be auctioned among other items at the ball on Saturday, May 13. The Prince of Wales wrote to farmers Charlotte and Ben, telling them how inspirational he thought the farm on the outskirts of Market Drayton was.

And actress Prunella Scales, one of the farm's patrons, is holding another fundraising event, an evening with Queen Victoria at the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme on Monday, May 15.

The events will help raise the £800,000 needed to secure the future of the Market Drayton business, and follows a recent initiative to place the farm under community ownership.

Ben and Charlotte hope that by allowing the community to own Fordhall, they



Charlotte and Ben Hollins.

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will secure its future and be able to use it as an educational and social resource helping to reconnect people to food and farming.

The siblings are sell shares in the farm and have so far raised £60,000, which includes a £20,000 grant from the Shropshire Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, distributed by Shropshire County Council. They also have a bid in for a £450,000 landfill tax grant.

Charlotte said: "The charity ball is an opportunity for people to come together to

support Fordhall, whilst having a fantastic evening of fun and entertainment.

"We are extremely grateful for the generous support that Harper Adams have offered for the event. It is encouraging to know that local people are supportive of our project and understand its importance to the area and to future generations.

"By securing Fordhall Farm, the initiative is committing to building a sustainable future whilst guaranteeing that farming

will be an affordable way of life for generations to come."

Once the future of Fordhall is secured, organisers plan to open an organic cafe and construct an education resource centre and bunkhouse for use by education groups, care groups and activity weekends.

More information on the Fordhall Community Land Initiative can be found at www.fordhallfarm.com or by calling the Initiative Office at 01630 638696.