

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release**

COLLIERY SITE USED TO HOUSE 'DIGGERLAND YORKSHIRE'

In 2003, Mick Robson, Director for Acorus Rural Property Services North, took a telephone enquiry from a prospective buyer who was interested in the purchase of 10-20 hectares of land, in and around the Leeds area with good access to the motorway system. With a network of farmer, landowner and local authority clients, Acorus was able to offer a site finding service to meet the requirements of the client. This conversation sparked a working relationship over a number of years which has just reached its conclusion.

The client was revealed as Diggerland which is part of the HE plant hire Group in Kent. They required a site for what would be their fourth Diggerland Themepark and it needed to be large enough to house the 'Diggerland experiences', admissions building including indoor play area, shop, the 'Dig Inn' with its restaurant, bars, etc, a corporate hospitality area and a maintenance building.

With the client brief and criteria in place, Mick and a representative of Diggerland set about searching the area for an appropriate site. Having previously worked closely with Local Authorities in the North of England who owned large areas of land including a number of redundant colliery sites, Mick felt these sites would provide the solution. With this knowledge and network of contacts, he introduced Diggerland to 26 former colliery sites owned by Wakefield Council, 7 of which were shortlisted.

Whitwood Colliery, Castleford, West Yorkshire was chosen as the most appropriate and Mick sealed the deal with the Council for the HE Group. The client was delighted with the outcome and further instructed Acorus Rural Property Services to act as their planning agents throughout the whole process, taking on the role of leading professional consultant on the project. Mick and his team went on to co-ordinate the design and planning inputs including a full topographical survey of the site; design of the site access in consultation with specialist highway engineers and the design of the public park and site landscaping. Acorus also designed the new maintenance building and arranged the design of the site drainage system and water features.

The planning application for the site was not straight forward but the difficulties faced were not new to Acorus. Leading the consultation with the Local Planning Authority and community groups including statutory consultees, over a period of eleven months, the submission was approved. Acorus then negotiated the purchase of the site from Wakefield Council on behalf of the HE Group.

Diggerland Yorkshire has now been launched as a 'Taste of Diggerland' whilst the final building work has been completed. The Company Chairman, Hugh Edeleanu commented 'We are very excited about the opening of our new site, which brings the number of Diggerland parks in the UK up to four'.

Acorus is an independent firm of Chartered Surveyors and Planning Consultants with extensive experience and expertise in rural planning, diversification and property consultancy.

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