

MDCV UK/VINEYARD FARMS LTD – APPLICANT STATEMENT

MDCV UK has a vision to bring the finest English and Provençal wines to the UK market. We have a long history of producing award-winning Provence Rosé and English Sparkling Wines, with an extensive infrastructure, both in France and the UK. We will be the largest producer of wine in each of these regions by 2027, with a combined production of over 10 million bottles annually.

Our French estates span over 1000 acres and are already established in many global markets, with sales of over 6 million bottles. In the UK, we are establishing the largest single vineyard site, based in Kent, and plan to be in full production from 2024.

As a business, we strive for innovation and use many cutting-edge techniques in our vineyards and winemaking. The ambition and scale of what we do allows us some of the most efficient operations in the world, while still producing high quality wine of award-winning standard.

We have a passion for sustainability and manage all our vineyards organically, while also employing pioneering techniques to minimise our impact on the environment, such as composting organic waste, harvesting rainwater and heating our sites using natural sources, such as ground source heat pumps.

While learning from our history and building for our future, we plan to revolutionise the English wine industry for the better.

MDCV UK are the parent company of Vineyard Farms Ltd. We (Vineyard Farms Ltd) are based in Luddesdown, Kent, and are the largest organic vineyard and the largest single vineyard site, with some 1600 acres of vineyards, woodland and pastureland. Our estate is known as *The Silverhand Estate*.

Our vision is to become the UK's largest producer of English sparkling and still wines. In order to do this, we have invested significant sums in infrastructure vineyards and people. At the heart of our vision is operating in the right way, and this means farming organically, sustainably and creating the right environment for their people and workforce.

It is our intention, as part of a 'Brexit good news story', to improve the English economy by creating jobs, providing investment and putting Kent on the map for the fast-growing industry of English wine.

The Silverhand Estate covers 632 hectares of land, of which 217 hectares is under vine and a further 161 hectares will be planted in the next two years making us the largest organic wine producer in the country. The rest of the estate is comprised of chalk downland habitats such as SSSI broadleaved woodlands, grazing and species rich meadows and hedgerows to be managed from next year under the High Tier Stewardship Scheme which will last at least 10 years.

Our aim is that within a decade, increase the vineyard productivity by putting emphasis in nurturing and restoring soil health while maximising the benefits for biodiversity and minimising our carbon footprint. We are at the beginning of this process and at the moment the vines and soil require additional nutrients in the form of organic compost. Our plan is to be carbon neutral within 10 years.

We estimate that for the next three years we'll need to import around 8,000 tonnes of organic compost per year. Our intention is to reduce the amount of compost we buy in and start making our own using discarded grape skins from wine making (pumice) mixed with woodchips made from damaged chestnut end posts. We estimate that when our operation is fully up to speed, we could produce 2,000 to 3,000 tonnes per year making a significant contribution to reducing our carbon footprint and processing on site as much of our biodegradable waste.

Currently we have 65 permanent employees based in Luddesdown and Upper Bush and through the year this number increases with the arrival of seasonal workers required during key periods such as harvest or to carry out maintenance tasks such as trellising. This year we are likely to reach 100 people working across the estate and this figure is likely to increase next year as our grape production grows. At full production, the number of employees is expected to reach 300 full time equivalent.

Over the last two years, we have made considerable efforts to improving biodiversity across the site.

- We have planted around 21,000 mixed species native hedgerows across the estate. This is part of increasing habitat connectivity across the estate and enabling species movement across the landscape.
- We also have around 12 kilometres of historic hedgerows managed with biodiversity in mind - cut on a 3-year rotation.
- Approximately 150 new trees (broadleaf) have been planted as a woodland shaw to reconnect two woodlands.
- A woodland management plan for the 41 hectares of woodland in the estate is being drawn up. Biodiversity conservation and enhancement is the main driver for the plan.
- We are currently improving the condition of 17ha of species rich meadows and managing this through conservation grazing with ancient sheep breeds.
- Late last year (2022) we restored another 1.5ha of species rich grassland that was in decline.
- VFL are managing key verges around the estate specifically for wild orchids and monitor their extent and condition.
- This year, VFL will be improving nesting habitat for predator birds, bats and various protected invertebrates by constructing 5 Wildlife Towers, recently approved by Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council.
- VFL are also working on entering the estate into High Tier Countryside Scheme and as part of it, several of the pasture fields will be re-seeded with species rich grassland plant species and more set aside areas created within the some of the vine blocks.