



Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

Capability Statement

who we are

We are a team of lawyers specialising in agriculture, estates and rural property matters. As part of Muckle LLP, a leading independent commercial and private client law firm, we're focussed on building lasting relationships with clients and other professionals, so that we deliver exceptional advice and service.

Our office is based in Newcastle upon Tyne and we have a hub in Cumbria. We act for clients all over the country. We offer hands-on support and prefer face-to-face meetings on site to understand and work through your legal needs.



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An aerial photograph of a lush, green valley. The hills are covered in vibrant green grass, with some areas appearing slightly more yellowish-green, possibly due to sunlight or different grass types. In the center of the valley, there is a small farmstead with several buildings, surrounded by trees and a fence. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Chambers & Partners

“David is an intellectual talent, he’s able to manage multiple highly complex transactions with charm and good humour. He takes ownership and delivers accordingly.”



how we help

Our support is underpinned by our technical excellence and proficiency as lawyers, but it's how we help that is genuinely different. Although North East based (and very proud of it) we relish being out and about, meeting clients around the country, because often it's much easier, quicker and more cost effective to talk over legal issues in person.

Professional, practical and personal

We roll our sleeves up and work closely with other professional advisers to really understand clients' circumstances, aims and objectives. Many lawyers are far too reluctant to leave the comfort of their desks, but we're happiest when we are on site visiting a client and we are renowned for our "muddy boots" approach.

As well as being highly skilled, down to earth professionals, all our rural lawyers are members of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), the Agricultural Law Association (ALA) and the Northern Farmers and Landowners Group (NFLG)

When we're not out and about, our team works together in one office, side by side with all our other commercial law and private client specialists, so clients can count on swift responses and seamless service for virtually all their business and personal legal needs.

Clear and simple costs

Everything we do is designed to make life easier and less stressful for our clients, and that goes for our pricing too.

Our pricing is bespoke, upfront and totally transparent. Wherever possible we offer fixed fees for our work, and we will always recommend a practical solution over a costly legal one, if it serves a client's needs better. Why? Because as a dedicated team of rural legal specialists, we are big enough to handle large, complex matters but small enough to care.

Value for money is really important, and with our team clients get strong personal relationships, lots of our time and attention and a genuine commitment to understanding and helping them achieve their aims.



what we do best

While we act for a wide variety of individuals, families, farming partnerships, trusts, landed estates and national institutional and charitable landowners, we are happy to work with anyone who lives, works or owns property in the countryside.

We have an impressive collective experience of day-to-day rural property and estate management work, together with specialist in-depth knowledge of agricultural issues and the more idiosyncratic kinks of rural property law.

Our core competencies include:

- landed estate management including succession and tax planning
- farm, land and property sales and purchases
- country house and rural residential property sales and purchases (including mortgage financing)
- rural property secured lending
- commercial tenancies for rural properties
- mining, minerals and aggregates
- energy projects including hydro, solar and wind schemes and anaerobic digester plants
- sporting rights (shooting and fishing) including buying, selling, letting and registrations
- farming partnerships, contract farming agreements and other business models
- grazing licences and profits and other similar agreements
- agricultural tenancies AHA and FBT (contentious and non-contentious issues)
- secured lending
- land registration and related issues
- residential tenancies
- forestry and woodland
- planning and development, including options and promotion agreements
- easements and wayleaves
- manorial waste, village greens and common land issues



at your service

David Towns

Partner and Head of Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

David is one of a handful of truly expert landed estates and rural property lawyers operating in England and Wales. Recognised by Chambers & Partners as having “an exceptional ability to problem-solve”, he represents numerous rural landowners, families and national and regional charities and other organisations across the country, on matters from general estate management to complex restructuring and refinancing.

David leads our Agriculture, Estates and Private Client team and is nationally renowned for his work on mines and minerals, including extraction and minerals trespass. He assists landed estates, charities and other organisations, such as the Church Commissioners for England, to manage their mineral portfolios. His clients agree that he “is an absolute expert” in this sector (Chambers and Partners, 2022).

Discussing the issue of manorial rights, David appeared on national radio and was asked to give evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry. His expert opinion was crucial in shaping the recommendations that followed.

More recently, David has acted for farmers and other landowners in granting options for leases for solar farms and other energy projects, including battery storage facilities, substations and stability services assets. He has a strong reputation for dealing with matters promptly, but robustly, recognising the long-term commitments such matters represent.

With significant experience, pragmatism and good humour in all client matters, David often becomes a trusted adviser, embedded as part of external management teams. He is a member of the Agricultural Law Association and the Northern Farmers and Landowners Group.



Charlotte Patterson-Ryan
Partner | Agriculture Estates and Rural Property

Experienced in all areas of agricultural law, Charlotte is recognised by Legal 500 UK as a 'Rising Star' and Chambers & Partners as an 'Associate to Watch'.

Specialising in rural property and landed estates has brought breadth to Charlotte's overall practice and lends weight to her ability to deal with issues arising from such diverse property portfolios – including complex first registrations, estate sales, mineral leases, options, conditional contracts, commercial leases and all types of agricultural tenancies.

Her clients vary from institutional landowners, private individuals, farmers, charities, and banks and she has also held a key role as legal advisor to several multi-disciplinary trustee teams on landed estates across the entirety of England and Wales.



Charlotte Patterson Ryan is an exceptional solicitor. Her ability to quickly scrutinise matters to ensure that the most appropriate and robust strategy is adopted has proven to add value in each case.'

Legal 500 UK, client quote



Kathryn Boyd
Solicitor | Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

Kathryn is a Legal 500 UK 'Recommended Lawyer' and advises landed estates, private individuals, trusts and parish councils on all types of rural property and estate management.

Her experience extends to complex first registrations, commercial leases, solar developments, historic title issues and agricultural tenancies. She manages the team's residential rural property work with a focus on high-value and complex rural property transactions.



Sarah Barratt
Partner | Real Estate Dispute Resolution

Recognised as a 'Rising Star' by independent legal directory Legal 500 UK, Sarah is known for her work advising on a broad spectrum of real estate disputes, including agricultural and rural property matters. Her expertise covers residential and commercial property disputes, providing support to social housing providers, private landlords, commercial landlords and tenants and dealing with agricultural tenancies, including contested and uncontested succession claims.



'Sarah Barratt has an incredible legal mind and is an absolute star – I cannot speak highly enough of her. She provides excellent advice. In the event that any ambiguities arise, she removes them to go straight to the core of the legal issue.'

Legal 500 UK, client quote



Lois Dokubo

Solicitor | Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

As a solicitor in our agriculture team, Lois works across all areas of agricultural law. This includes landed estate management work (such as deed of easements and commercial leases), rural property finance, rural sales and purchases, forestry, minerals extraction and partnership agreements. She also assists clients with conveyancing advice.



Ben Evans

Senior Solicitor Apprentice | Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

Ben joined Muckle as a solicitor apprentice in 2017, and currently sits in the Agriculture team where he assists with residential purchases and sales, commercial leasing, acquiring probates, dealing with estates, drafting wills, handling registrations with the Land Registry and assisting with bigger projects like solar farm leasing and refinancing land.

With experience in the Corporate, Real Estate, Education and Employment teams, Ben has also assisted clients on a range of subject matters, including property transactions, academy conversion projects and tribunal hearings. He has also provided support on academy projects, football club incorporations and charity governance, and advises on intellectual property matters, data protection queries and in drafting agreements.




Jake Thompson

Solicitor Apprentice | Agriculture, Estates and Rural Property

A solicitor apprentice in our Agriculture, Estates and Private Client team, Jake joined Muckle in 2019.

He assists with residential purchases and sales, commercial leasing, acquiring probates, dealing with estates, drafting wills, handling registrations with the Land Registry and assisting with bigger projects like solar farm leasing and refinancing land.



Muckle LLP is a 'truly modern law firm' that 'is respectful but not constrained by the conventions of a traditional commercial law firm which can needlessly delay progress'.

Legal 500

expert advice - always

We have specialists in virtually every area of commercial law and whatever your legal needs are, large or small, we're likely to have an expert who can help.

Corporate

Independent researchers at Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners rank our corporate team top in the North East and we have won Corporate Law Firm of the Year at the Insider North East Dealmakers Awards more times than any other firm.

Banking and Restructuring

Top ranked in Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners, our award-winning team can support any debt finance raising, from a simple working capital facility to a complicated bond issue or multi-bank arrangement. They also provide advice on debt restructuring and any insolvency and creditor issues.

Real Estate

Large and highly respected, our award-winning real estate team has the specialists to handle every property issue from acquiring new premises to asset management and property development, as well as property disputes.

Commercial

Top ranked in Legal 500, our commercial team knows everything there is to know about intellectual property and commercial contracts big, small, bespoke or standardised, on or offline.

Technology

From data breaches to development and procurement, IT is a rapid growth area in business with many legal implications. That is why our specialist technology team is a huge asset to the region.

Dispute Resolution

Our dispute resolution team is regularly engaged in multimillion pound national and international litigation as well as smaller local disputes. It offers strategic advice and alternative dispute resolution, emergency remedies and a highly successful debt recovery service.

Employment

Our employment team has a broad range of expertise. It is renowned for its communication skills and for handling highly sensitive senior team changes. In addition to day-to-day legal work, our lawyers regularly give talks and training on employment law, ideal for in-house legal teams and HR professionals.

Private Client

For business owners, directors and senior executives we offer a personal private client service to advise on all aspects of estate planning, including wills, succession, inheritance tax, family trusts, powers of attorney and probate.

Procurement and Subsidy Control

We support contracting authorities and bidders on all procurement needs and subsidy control issues. From subsidy control advice needed to unlock grant funding, to procurement challenges and processes, contentious or strategic, we assess every potential risk before it becomes an issue, to give practical legal support that makes regulated procurement and funding happen.

This is just a snapshot of the expertise Muckle offers, with many more specialist practice areas available. Speak to anyone in our team to find out more.

being a responsible business

We care passionately about having a positive impact on our local community and environment. We encourage all of our people to take on roles and responsibilities in the community and over 40% of us regularly volunteer for charitable causes outside work.

We donate a percentage of our profits to the Muckle Charitable Fund each year, which we distribute to worthy causes across the North East. Our Let's Think Green Team also helps us keep our carbon emissions as low as possible, and each year we donate the cost of our carbon footprint to local charities dedicated to improving the region's environment.





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