



Press Release – April 2015

New CFO for Countrywide Farmers

Countrywide Farmers, one of the UK's leading suppliers of products and advice to the rural community has appointed retail finance professional Julie Wirth as Chief Financial Officer with immediate effect. Julie replaces interim CFO Steve Payne who has been successfully covering the role for the last twelve months.

"We are delighted to welcome Julie to the board," says Chief Executive John Hardman. "It is an exciting time for Countrywide Farmers as we implement our strategy to be the leading multichannel rural retailer in the UK. Julie has a wealth of retail finance experience bringing knowledge from senior finance roles at Home Retail Group, Musgrave Retail Partners GB and Conviviality all of which will be invaluable as we roll out our strategic growth plans."

Countrywide Farmers recently announced its updated retail strategy. The implementation of Microsoft Dynamics AX will provide the platform to become the UK's leading multichannel rural supply business. This new trading platform will allow customers to shop seamlessly across all formats; Country stores, specialist sales teams, on line and catalogues making Countrywide the first choice for customers working and living in the rural community.

The company's loyalty card programme already the largest of its kind will also benefit from some significant improvements, which will accelerate the growth in membership and provide a unique opportunity to tailor product and service offers to individual customer needs.

“Julie has a very clear vision for her teams,” concludes Mr Hardman. “To deliver great support to their commercial colleagues as Countrywide delivers its new strategic plan.”

Ends

Julie Wirth, FCCA

Julie has held previous Finance Director roles at Conviviality (Bargain Booze/Wine Rack), Musgrave Retail Partners GB (Budgens/Londis) and senior finance roles at Home Retail Group (Argos/Homebase). Julie brings with her a wealth of retail finance knowledge and will be responsible for Finance, Audit, H&S, Property and ICT within Countrywide Farmers.

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Notes to editors:

Countrywide Farmers is the UK's leading supplier of products, services and advice to the rural community. With a 100 year heritage, we are at the heart of the countryside, appreciate the rural way of life and understand the challenges faced by all those who live and work in rural communities.

From agriculture, equine and rural business to pet, garden, clothing and energy, we reach our customers via a multichannel offer: including 53 country stores, a successful on-line operation and a team of dedicated telephone traders.

The true value of Countrywide Farmers resides in the skills, knowledge and expertise of our staff, many of whom are smallholders, riders or pet owners and live within rural communities. They include 200 plus AMTRA qualified animal health, pet and equine specialists and in store Account Managers; all dedicated to delivering a strong, competitive advantage to our customers.

Responding decisively to current economic and industry challenges and meeting core customer requirements, Countrywide Farmers has invested in strengthening core agricultural, equine and retail operations, with outstanding results:

- Over 900 people with wide ranging skills and relevant industry qualifications.
- 53 Retail Stores offering a refreshed look, layout and wider range of products.
- The launch of “ClubLPG” to our existing LPG customer base of 8,000 customers giving them the benefits of the Countrywide Farmers “Countryclub” along with added rewards for their LPG purchases. Our reward card now has over 145,000 members and includes a unique partnership with NFU Countryside “Countryclub Plus” and is fast becoming the largest loyalty scheme within our marketplace.
- An industry leading equestrian catalogue offering over 7,500 products.