

Land Business Update

Week commencing 20 April 2026

Farming & food

Area of let farmland continues to fall

The latest data from Defra on land ownership and tenure shows that the area of land let out (for one year or more) continues to fall (to ~28% of land, from around ~33% in 2010). The data comes from the June Survey of Agriculture, a large sample survey of commercial farm holdings in England. The area of land that is owned on the holdings has stayed constant at ~60-61% over the past 15 years but the area of Agricultural Holdings Act tenancies has fallen annually. The areas that are either rented in or let out each year have grown, both by a few percentage points, but they remain relatively small proportions (6% and 5% respectively) compared with owned and land let out for longer. Just over 50% of holdings only use land that they own, while the balance use a mix of owned and rented land. Please contact [Nick Watson](#), our head of private client, if you would like to discuss farms structures or tenure.

Farming Innovation Investor Partnerships – grant opening on 11 May

The next round of this grant, which aims to speed take up of innovation on land, will open on 11 May and close on 17 June. The £5m of government funding will cover up to 45% of costs for micro or small organisations and up to 35% of costs for medium-sized organisations. More details are [here](#). Please contact [Natalie Gaibani](#), our head of farming, if you would like to discuss.

Lowland Peat Water Discovery Grant – grant open now

This grant encourages collaboration between land managers and other stakeholders to explore what changes to water management could mean for farmland on lowland peat. Projects can receive between £50,000 and £300,000 in funding. Each project will produce a practical plan to show how water tables could be raised safely and sustainably. They can include land used for conventional farming, wetter farming and paludiculture, or peatland restoration. The grant is seen as a pump primer for the Water Implementation Grant, which funds infrastructure set out in the practical plans. More details are [here](#).

Natural capital & environment

New agroforestry principles launched

Natural England has produced a set of [five ecological principles](#) to support the recovery of nature through agroforestry. They seem very sensible and pragmatic – and can equally apply to any tree or hedge planting. In fact, they were adapted from the original six [principles of woodland creation](#).

- Respect What's Already There. Before planting, take stock of what's already thriving. Protect and enhance existing valuable habitats.
- Get Better connected. Design with connectivity in mind, as small connections can make a big difference for birds, insects and mammals.
- Go Native, Get Diverse (and Fruity!). Choose species that evolved alongside local wildlife: oak, hazel and hawthorn offer food, shelter and nesting sites. Aim for a mosaic-effect with a mix of canopy trees and flowering scrub. Fruit trees benefit nature.
- Get edgy! Messy margins are magic for wildlife. Agroforestry naturally creates edges between trees and open ground, mimicking glades and rides rich in biodiversity. Include open areas, shrubby understoreys and wildflowers.
- Stay Wet. Wet areas are valuable, don't drain them. Ponds, seepages, ancient ditches and seasonal floods support unique wildlife. Take a long-term view and let natural processes guide decisions.

British Woodlands Survey 2025 - awareness of environmental change increasing but more to do



This is the [third survey](#) on the theme of environmental change and more than 500 respondents took part. The respondents reported increased damage from pathogens (+79%), wind (+67%), drought (+63%) and invertebrate pests (+63%). There were clear differences across the country, with land managers in eastern England concerned about drought, whilst those further north were more concerned about wind damage. Despite these and other threats to tree health, only one-third of land managers took steps to improve biosecurity. More than half of land managers reported expanding tree cover in the last five years, showing a preference for native tree species. The Sylva Foundation, which completed the research with Forest Research, said that the woodland sector needs to urgently address the disappointing levels of management planning and take steps to improve biosecurity, particularly in the face of increasing environmental change.

Rural economy & property

UK government makes changes to try to reduce electricity prices

The government is planning to try to break the link between electricity and gas prices by increasing the windfall tax on power generators that are not signed up to contracts for difference and by encouraging them to move onto fixed-price contracts for difference, and off the current price model that is linked to wholesale gas prices.

Scottish housing update – start of the implementation of Awaabs Law on damp and mould

The first set of regulations for the implementation of Awaab's Law are The Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026, which come into effect on 6 October 2026. They introduce new duties on landlords to investigate reports of damp and mould and to start any repairs needed within tight set timescales. While Scottish landlords are already required under the Repairing and Tolerable Standards to repair damp and mould problems in their properties, the new law introduces clear timescales - 18 working days from the reporting of issues to undertaking all of the prescribed processes from inspection to instructing any required works. Detailed guidance is expected by late summer. Please contact [Gillian Ferguson](#) if you would like to discuss.

Scottish housing update – new rent control framework

The Scottish Government and local authorities can ask landlords and tenants for information about rented properties and the rent charged, under The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 which comes into force in April. The local authorities will use the information as part of the assessments of rent conditions in their areas that they are required to submit to the Scottish Government (by 31 May 2027). The assessments will inform decisions on whether to designate a rent control area, within which rent increases will be capped at CPI + 1% (up to a maximum increase of 6%). Landlords who fail to supply rent data within 28 days of such a request, or provide false information, can be fined up to £1,000.

Scottish housing update – new housing agency

A new national housing agency, called More Homes Scotland, is expected to be launched in 2027 to provide strategic leadership to the sector and help speed up the delivery of new homes, according to industry leaders. It aims to bring together different parts of the housing sector to improve coordination across land, planning, infrastructure and finance.

Biodiversity Net Gain changes and consultation

The exemption for sites less than 0.2 hectares will be introduced this summer, subject to parliamentary time. The government is also proposing an additional exemption for residential brownfield development, which it says would support the brownfield first approach and, again, speed up housing delivery. The consultation closes on 10 June.

Peatland restoration scheme extended

The Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, which has funded the restoration of 23,000 hectares since 2020, has been extended for a year (although only to existing grant holders who responded to Defra). The scheme, and the Forestry England Restoration Scheme, contributes to the target of restoring 40,000 hectares by 2030 and 280,000 hectares by 2050. A new grant scheme for peatland restoration skills and equipment will open in June to anyone in the sector. More details to follow when available.



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