Land Business Update

Week commencing 16th November 2026

Farming & food

Yields on headlands / field edges

Given the pressure on arable profitability, there is increasing focus on only growing crops where they can make a profit.

The UKCEH carried out some research, published in 2022, that looked at precision yield data across a large sample of fields. The researchers concluded that, 'proximity to the field edge was associated with reduced yields in 85% of wheat and 87% of oilseed fields. This translated to an approximate average reduction of 10% in wheat and 18% in oilseed yields lost due to field edge effects.'

A previous paper from UKCEH, this one published in 2015, makes the same point, stating, 'All three crops [winter wheat, beans and oilseed rape] showed consistent and marked reductions in yield at the field edge (0–9 metres) compared with the rest of the field … Yield of winter wheat was reduced by a mean of 10.1% (±1.1%), beans by 25.9% (±7.5%) and oilseed rape by 38.2% (±3.8%).' The paper demonstrates that by taking the least productive land out of production, and boosting yields on the rest [by supporting more beneficial insects to prey on pests], adding field margins was net positive on total yield.

This difference in yields is the difference for many farms between making a profit and making a loss. If you would like to discuss headlands, yields and hedgerow management, please contact our head of farming, Natalie Gaibani.

Prospects for refilling agriculture storage reservoirs this winter

Many storage reservoirs remain at low levels and some river flows are still below normal for the time of year. This is limiting the ability for abstractors to refill storage reservoirs. The Environment Agency has issued assessments of the prospects under three scenarios:

- If winter rainfall (November to March) is 100% of the long-term average across each of the EA's geographic areas, reservoir refill prospects are generally expected to be good across most of England, with the majority of storage reservoirs projected to refill sufficiently ahead of spring. However, the refill prospects are 'moderate' (or below average) across East Anglia, the west Midlands and the South West. This means that some controls on surface water abstraction are possible, controls on abstraction from groundwater are possible in sensitive areas or where there has been insufficient groundwater recharge, and that some irrigation reservoirs may not be completely refilled and irrigation may be at risk ahead of spring.
- If winter rainfall is 80% of the long-term average, refill prospects only remain good in the North East and North West. They are moderate across southern, central and eastern England (see above for the implications of 'moderate' prospects). They become poor in the West Midlands, South West and East Anglia, which means that more significant abstraction restrictions may be required.
- Under a 60% scenario, all regions other than the North East and North West have 'poor' prospects. This means that winter hands-off flow restrictions on licences are likely to be widespread and many storage reservoirs are unlikely to have refilled sufficiently to meet irrigation demands for the growing season. It would mean conditions worse than those experienced at the start of spring this year.

While October saw rainfall at around the long-term average, the long-range forecasts for both river flows and ground water levels are that by March 2027 they are most likely to be below normal. The message is to start preparing now, for next year and the future.

Natural capital & environment

EFRA Committee report calls for clear wildfire strategy

The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has said that this summer was one of the most severe wildfire seasons experienced across the UK and that it exposed weaknesses in preparedness. The Committee's report identified gaps in specialist capability, access to aerial firefighting resources, securing reliable water supplies and a heavy reliance on local arrangements for resources that are increasingly needed at a national scale. It calls for policy co-ordination and a clear strategic direction, with wildfire treated as a national resilience challenge.

Ireland joins COP31 initiative to rescue world's peatlands

The Peatland Breakthrough initiative aims to raise $100 billion to support projects around the world. By 2030, it wants to have succeeded in halting the loss of healthy peatlands and to have at least 30 million hectares of degraded peatlands under restoration. Ireland, Germany, Peru and Uganda are the first countries to make the commitment, while Canada has endorsed the initiative. Ireland said that it would take on the role of being a 'champion country' to share Irish experience and expertise in peatland restoration with other countries. Around 21% of Ireland's land is considered to be peatland although most has been converted into farmland and forestry.

A positive from climate change – dormouse numbers increase due to warm summers

Dormouse numbers increased by almost 10% between 2020-2025, which scientists believe may be due to warmer springs and summers, which could help their food supplies and reduce the time they spend asleep, so giving them more time to breed and build up fat reserves. However, overall populations are 60% lower than they were in 2000 and they have disappeared from 20 English counties. Protecting the woodlands and hedgerows where they live remains essential to their long-term survival.

Rural economy & property

House sales and prices expected to fall in 2027, according to RICS survey

The RICS produces a large-scale and well used survey of surveyors' expectations for the housing market. The survey measures the difference between the proportion of surveyors reporting increases and decreases in housing market activity, with negative readings indicating that more respondents expect falls than rises.

Expectations for the number of house sales are the most negative for three years (a -17 net balance of surveyors), and have moved sharply downwards since September (which was +1). Expectations of price changes have followed a similar pattern, with more surveyors expecting price falls (-17 now, 0 in September). The RICS attributes the change to expectations that mortgage rates will stay elevated, which is reducing demand. The current negative expectations are not the most negative of recent times, as there were even lower readings in late 2022 after a period of interest rate rises to manage inflationary pressures, so a similar but more inflationary situation to now. Please contact Matthew Henderson, residential research, if you would like to discuss house price prospects.

A long-term vision for tenant farming

The government has committed to gather the views of anyone with an interest in the tenanted sector, including through workshops, to feed into a long-term vision for the sector; it is likely to include confidence to invest, encouraging more land to be let, collaboration and sustainable farming practices. Contact agriculturaltenancies@defra.gov.uk if you would like to contribute. The ambition has been welcomed by the Tenant Farmers Association and the CLA. Contact Nick Watson, our head of private client, if you would like to discuss let farming.

Visitor accommodation registration –

Anyone who takes bookings for overnight stays in Wales must register with the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) by 31st March 2027, even if their local council does not introduce the new visitor levy. This is part of the Visitor Accommodation Act, which includes the visitor levy, which will be used by councils to invest in tourism infrastructure like toilets, footpaths, beaches, and visitor centres.

Renters' Rights Act - Register Your Rental Property Service opens in December for the West Midlands

As part of the Renters' Rights Act reforms, all landlords will be legally required to join the service. The idea is that this will give renters more confidence that a landlord is genuine and following the rules. The register will initially only apply to properties that are let to a tenant, but unoccupied rental properties will be added to it in the future. The service will launch with the following three-month regional registration windows:

- West Midlands (15th December 2027 – 15th March 2027)
- East of England (15th January 2027 – 15th April 2027)
- East Midlands (15th February – 15th May 2027)
- South East (15th March – 15th June 2027)
- Yorkshire and Humber (15th April – 15th July 2027)
- North West (15th May – 15th August 2027)
- North East (15th June – 15th September 2027)
- London (15th July – 15th October 2027)
- South West (15th August 2027 – 15th November 2027)

A landlord can register earlier if they own property in more than one region. There will be a £65 per property per year fee for being on the register. A landlord will need to provide property, tenancy and rent details, including the address, number of bedrooms and occupants, rent charged and whether utilities are included. The entry will also ask whether a property needs HMO, additional or selective licensing, and for copies or details of gas safety records, electrical safety reports and EPCs. Once registered, a property's registration number should be included on any adverts. Early preparation and checking to ensure information and certificates are accurate is strongly recommended. Please contact Matthew Scott, our lead on the Renters' Rights Act, or your local office if you would like to discuss this.

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