



Agricultural & Development Consultants, Chartered Surveyors, Auctioneers & Estate Agents
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Professional Ponderings – April 2026

Agricultural Land Market – Spring 2026

Now more than ever, the need for an Agent with knowledge of the local rural property market is essential. There is only one opportunity to have an initial launch of land or a farm on to the market and following the impact of that launch, to then conclude the sale successfully. Landowners should ensure they appoint a Agent who knows who the potential buyers are within a geographic location, and an Agent who will promote the property in the best possible light. This includes strong marketing with an advertising campaign including thorough social media coverage to raise awareness of the sale, together with the production of good quality sales particulars and adverts to encourage potential purchasers to view the property and to submit their best offer.

As a result of careful preparation and working closely with clients intending to sell and providing positive support throughout the process, we have successfully concluded a number of sales in recent months across the region, including 182 acres of arable and grassland at Woodnewton in Northamptonshire; 135 acres of Grade 1 Silt land at Kirton in Lincolnshire; 39 acres of permanent pasture at Barnwell; a substantial modern farmhouse and buildings set in 40 acres near Stanwick; and an attractive grass paddock of 6.61 acres at Hallaton in Leicestershire. In addition, we are assisting retained clients with the purchase of several hundred acres of land in the locality.

Some sellers understandably want a discreet approach, and we are equally proactive and positive about working closely with clients to achieve private sales and purchases of rural property.

Looking ahead, we are talking to landowners regarding bringing land on to the market in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire. If you are interested in acquiring a rural property, please do ensure your details are registered with Bletsoes so that you are one of the first to hear of land coming onto the market. If you would like to understand current rural land values in your area and talk through how Bletsoes could work with you to maximise the value from your rural land assets, please contact Nicola Clayton-Bailey or Chris Templar on 01832 732241 in the first instance.

Maximising Property Assets – Permitted Development

With all the changes that are currently affecting the farming sector, it is essential for farmers and landowners to take stock of their existing assets on the farm and assess the potential for maximising the earning potential from these opportunities. As an example, Permitted Development Rights are available to most farms in the country, except if the property is in 'designated areas', and they are a useful alternative to full planning permission, which may allow farmers and landowners to utilise particular assets on their farm, without the need to invest a significant capital outlay.

You may have some farm buildings, which have become surplus to farming requirements; a paddock that is currently not being utilised; or part of an arable field that might not generate such high yields in comparison to the rest of the farm, and there may be an opportunity to generate a greater return from an alternative use instead.

Permitted Development Rights can include:

- Class Q – change of use of agricultural buildings to residential dwellings
- Class R – change of use of agricultural buildings to commercial uses; this could include uses such as caravan storage, a gym, offices, or even following the latest trends and diversifying to pádel courts, which continues to be popular.
- Class A – the erection of new agricultural buildings
- Camping and Caravan Pitch Sites
- The '28 Day Rule' – a temporary use of land for any purpose up to 28 days in any calendar year.
- Extensions to agricultural buildings

Permitted Development Rights are often a cheaper way of securing permission for alternative uses on the farm, as opposed to full planning permission, and avoids the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain, which is increasing the cost and complexity for even the most basic planning application.

If you think that a building or a field on the farm could be used in an alternative way and may have potential for re-development, please do contact Alexandra Abrahams, who would be very happy to discuss the options that may be available.

Current Government Grants

Following a quiet period of having no new government funding or grants available since August 2025, there are now a number of options available:

Farming Equipment and Technology Fund

The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund provides funding under 3 sections, namely: improving productivity; managing slurry; and improving animal health and welfare. It is a competitive grant, and there are various items available under each section. Please note there is a minimum grant of £1,000 and a maximum of £25,000 per section per application. The grant typically contributes a set amount per item, rather than a percentage reimbursement of actual cost. If you are interested in any items, the application has to be completed online through the government's portal and applications need to be submitted before midday on 28 April 2026. A couple of key points to note are that items must be bought brand new; they must be bought after the grant has been issued and accepted; and you need to keep the required evidence to submit with your claim.

Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier and Higher Tier Annual Declarations

Although the Countryside Stewardship is now closed for new applications, there will be many businesses who still have an active Countryside Stewardship Agreement, either Mid-Tier or the Higher Tier ongoing, a reminder that the Annual Declaration needs to be completed by the 15 May for the 2026 year claim and is completed through the Rural Payments Agency's website with annual payments paid from December 2026, as per previous years.

Sustainable Farming Incentive

If you are not currently in a Countryside Stewardship Agreement, it may be beneficial to register in advance of the roll out of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) streamlined scheme with a reduced offering of seventy-one actions. Window 1 is opening in June 2026 for smaller farms of up to 50 hectares who have not applied before, and Window 2 will be opening in September 2026 for those over 50 hectares, or with an existing Environmental Scheme agreement. As per the last SFI scheme roll out, there are a number of options limited to 25% of the area and several of the payment rates have been reduced including Herbal Leys. It is therefore worth looking at the most suitable options in advance of the windows opening.

Capital Grants for Environmental Land Management (ELMS)

The Capital Grants are due to open in July 2026 with funding of £225 million available, offering support for environmental targets, long term resilience and one-off investments through four groups; inequality, natural flood management and water quality, which have a £25,000 maximum grant, and boundaries, trees and orchards, which have a £35,000 maximum grant as per previous rounds. A number of the water grants require Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer approval, which will need to be carried out before the grants will be given and it is believed that the grants will be based off the previously offered items.

Overall, it is important that if you are interested in applying for any of the grants or environmental options, we would strongly recommend starting to look now in preparation for the opening, making sure the field parcels are up to date and any supporting documentation is ready for submission, to ensure that you are able to make the most of the limited funds available.

If you need any assistance with any of the above grants, then please do contact Rob Russell or George Pullin in the Agricultural Team.

Inheritance Tax – Update

From the start of this tax year, the new rules on Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) have come into force.

In simple terms, full relief is now capped at a combined £2.5 million, which can be shared between spouses. Anything above that will be subject to inheritance tax at an effective rate of 20% where APR or BPR would previously have applied in full.

If tax is due on these assets, it can be paid over 10 yearly instalments, interest-free, provided the first payment is made on time. Miss that, or for anything outside these rules, interest will be charged at 4% above base rate.

If you need up-to-date valuations to support planning or decision-making, do get in touch with David Bletsoe or Chris Templar in the first instance. Bletsoes offer practical, whole-farm valuations, covering land and property as well as livestock and machinery.

The Agricultural Team