

# THE RURAL REPORT

— AUTUMN WINTER EDITION —

2025/26



Marketing

Beth Lake  
Chloe Dignum

Public Relations

Jane Craigie Marketing

Copywriting

AS Editorial

Sub-Editing

NM Editor

Design and Direction

Quiddity Media

Photography

Darryl Snow Photography  
VisualX

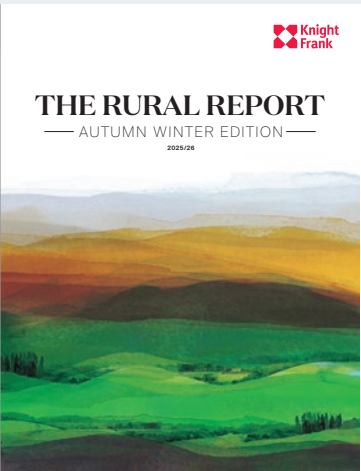
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HOW WE CHOSE OUR COVER

The cover design for this edition was chosen to reflect the quieter, more introspective mood of the autumn and winter seasons. With its abstract depiction of the rural landscape; layered fields and hills rendered in earthy greens, browns and muted yellows, it captures the subtle beauty and complexity of the countryside at this time of year. The slightly moody tone speaks to a sector in seasonal transition, while the warmth in the palette suggests resilience and continuity. As rural businesses navigate evolving environmental, economic and political landscapes, this cover mirrors both the groundedness and adaptability that define the sector today.

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Will Matthews & James Farrell

# Own the narrative

Welcome to *The Rural Report*  
Autumn Winter 2025/26

*James Farrell – Head of Rural Consultancy*

*Will Matthews – Head of Farms & Estates Sales*

If you don't tell your own story, somebody else will. That sentiment resonates throughout this edition of *The Rural Report*, where we explore the power of storytelling in shaping the future of rural estates and businesses.

In an increasingly digital age, it's tempting to wonder if storytelling still matters. At Knight Frank, we believe it's more vital than ever. The rural sector faces unprecedented challenges – political ambivalence, economic pressures and shifting societal priorities all demand a compelling story if the sector is to remain relevant. These challenges present opportunities for innovation, partnership and growth.

This edition of *The Rural Report* brings together a collection of thought-provoking articles and case studies that showcase how estate owners and rural businesses are navigating change. From harnessing the power of data to unlock new opportunities, to championing natural capital and sustainable practices, the stories within these pages highlight resilience and adaptability.

We shine a spotlight on estates that are redefining traditional relationships, such as Hatch Park in Kent, where innovative letting agreements have fostered genuine partnerships. We also celebrate the Yattendon Estate's investment in its local community, creating a virtuous circle that benefits everyone involved, and we point to a future where nature-based digital coins turn stewardship into market recognised currency.

Throughout the report, a common thread emerges: the strength found in collaboration. Whether it's clusters of farmers sharing experiences, estates working closely with their communities, or businesses embracing new models of conservation, partnership is at the heart of rural success.

As you read, you'll discover practical insights on restructuring finance, succession planning, policy updates and the changing world of planning and development. Our aim is to provide clarity amid complexity, helping you make informed decisions for the future of your estate or business.

These are challenging times, but by working together and telling our stories, we have the power to shape a positive future for the next generation of rural leaders. If we can be part of your story, please get in touch, we'd love to help.



# Key themes

This edition is in three sections; Business Success, Sector Insights and On the Market, each exploring these key themes.

## Estate Strategy & Leadership

From Suffolk to Oxfordshire, estate leaders share how bold decision-making, community investment and modern governance structures are helping them navigate uncertainty and build long-term resilience.

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## Technology & Data

Whether it's cloud-based systems, AI-driven analytics or geospatial tools, estates are increasingly using data to inform strategy, improve compliance and unlock new opportunities for growth and sustainability.

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## Government Policy & Planning

With reforms to Inheritance Tax, planning legislation and agricultural support schemes

on the horizon, estates are reassessing their structures and land use strategies to stay ahead of change.

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## Natural Capital & Conservation

From biodiversity and carbon markets to large-scale rewilding and regenerative farming, estates are embracing nature-based solutions that deliver both environmental and financial returns.

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## Diversification & Innovation

New ventures in food, hospitality, tourism and brand partnerships are helping estates reduce reliance on traditional income streams and create more resilient business models.

## Farmland & Property Markets

Demand for farmland remains strong, with standout properties, from working farms to landmark estates, highlighting the diversity and opportunity across the UK's rural landscape.

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## Succession & Finance

With tax reforms approaching, succession planning is more urgent than ever. Estates are exploring refinancing, gifting and governance strategies to secure their legacy and protect future generations.

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# Business Success

How can you build a resilient, relevant & sustainable business for the future?

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# The unexpected President

Catching up with Norfolk farmer, Gavin Lane, as he takes over the presidency of the Country Land and Business Association with a strong belief in the power of partnership.

*James Farrell – Head of Rural Consultancy*

Sitting in one of the boardrooms at the CLA's Belgrave Square headquarters, just a few weeks before his new role is set to be officially confirmed, Gavin Lane happily admits it's not a position that he expected to find himself in.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Lane hasn't come from a landed estate background. He started his career in agriculture by contracting at one of his father's farms and then became a tenant on land owned by his family and the Crown Estate. "I never saw myself as a natural fit for the CLA because I didn't own land."

He now owns two farms in West Norfolk totalling around 1,200 acres, both of which are contract farmed, and a holiday cottage business. He also runs a residential and commercial property portfolio around King's Lynn in partnership with his three siblings.

"I have been a tenant. I have been a landlord. I have been on both sides of a contract farming arrangement and both sides of various cropping licences."

## **Gavin, how has that wide range of experience helped you prepare for your new role?**

I don't think it's unique, because I know an awful lot of our members have tenanted land, but I do think it gives you a perspective on best practice in tenancies and contract farming arrangements. You've got to have partnerships that are trusted partnerships.

The key is collaboration. Not necessarily joining up with your neighbouring farmer or sharing machinery, but being part of a cluster group, or a landscape recovery project, or even just having a really good team of advisers around you to say: Have you thought about this? Have you thought about that?

**"In terms of the wider vision, it's about selling the idea that private land ownership and the transfer of businesses between generations is a good thing for the wider economy."**

Ultimately, it's about adaptability. It's about being receptive to change and being able to make that change. But I don't think trying to do that in isolation really works.

## **What do you think your biggest challenges will be in your new role?**

Every CLA President must sit there and think, "the political situation that I'm getting myself into is the worst that anybody has ever had to deal with", but the present situation we're in is not rosy at all.

I think we've got some immediate issues to deal with. How do rural businesses adapt to the end of the Basic Payment Scheme, and how do we get the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and Environmental Land Management as a whole, back on stream?

And then we've got the challenge of Inheritance Tax. I want to make sure that our members have the best advice to make sure that the effects of the changes to Agricultural and Business Property Relief do not wipe their businesses out completely.

In terms of the wider vision, it's about selling the idea that private land ownership and the transfer of businesses between generations is a good thing for the wider economy. Every time you upset that, all you see is a reduction in investment and therefore, a reduction in growth.





Image credit: Tori Hancock Photography

No government has yet sold to me what the alternative to private land management and private land ownership is. Nobody seems to have really articulated what their vision is for the countryside. There is no end of consultations, but there's not really a clear, defining vision.

If it's nature, what is going on with the SFI? If it's about food production, where are the incentives for the fruit and vegetable sector that we so desperately need?

### **Is it a lack of understanding of the countryside?**

I think that's a lazy trope. When Keir Starmer was talking about his missions, there was literally nothing about rural areas. And that's not a lack of understanding; that's just a lack of any interest.

### **Given all these issues, are you still optimistic about the future?**

I love the phrase, 'optimism is a discipline, and pessimism is a luxury'. We don't have the luxury of pessimism; we must solve these things. There aren't easy answers, but yes, I'm really optimistic that we can solve problems for ourselves, and we can solve problems for the greater good.

### **What do you want the legacy of your two-year tenure as CLA President to look like?**

If we can demonstrate that private land ownership can deliver on growth and investment for the country, for me, that will be a win. It's trying to navigate through what is quite a complex part of history for the rural economy and making sure we don't lose good people along the way.





Investing in the community is a driving force of Yattendon's estate strategy. Image credit: Yattendon Estate

# Great estates

The managers of two diverse and forward-thinking landed estates share their recipes for resilience.

## JAMES HOLE, MANAGING DIRECTOR YATTENDON ESTATE, WEST BERKSHIRE

### Community

The local community has been at the heart of the estate since it first began to be assembled by the Iliffe family 100 years ago. We are quite unique because we still own virtually every residential and commercial property in the village. That level of control provides lots of opportunities, but also comes with responsibilities, too. My aim is to bring those two things together to deliver mutual benefits for everybody. For example, we took the village shop back in hand, bought a successful local wholesale butchery and farm shop business, took a brewery run by a former tenant out of administration and have invested heavily in the village's two pubs, which are let to a tenant under a profit-sharing agreement.

Ensuring residents have access to fantastic local amenities is a great selling point for our let residential and commercial portfolio. It also sustains a lot of local jobs, which helps create



a virtuous circle for the local economy. We have a lot of rooftop and small-scale ground-mounted solar, but I'd probably only be interested in large-scale ground-mounted solar if it could provide cheap energy for the villagers.

## Trading income and diversification

While producing food from our land still very much lies at the heart of what we do, I'm very conscious that the returns from farming are pretty slim, and we need to make money to put back into the estate. That's why we've chosen to invest in diversified opportunities such as our pubs, the brewery and the butchery, and why our Christmas tree business is so important to the estate.

The unfortunate changes to Inheritance Tax reliefs make having a good trading income even more crucial, although I'm not sure that the government understands just how much the uncertainty they have created is dampening the enthusiasm of family-owned businesses to make significant investments. In the future, I'd like to diversify a small proportion of our houses into holiday lets, as that would provide new income for our food, drink and retail businesses.

## Governance, values and data

Because the Iliffe family has several other business investments, the estate has a very mature governance structure, which really attracted me to Yattendon when I was looking for my first in-house estate role five years ago. We have a central senior management team that can make decisions very quickly, which is not the same on all rural estates. However, it's not so big that it feels too corporate. We have become increasingly data-led

100,000 Christmas tree sales a year provide valuable income to the estate  
Image credit: Yattendon Estate



when it comes to planning for the future, but because of our community-first ethos, we do make some decisions perhaps more from the heart, such as buying a tenant's brewery out of administration, although there always has to be a good business case.

The estate has very strong values and culture that have become so ingrained, I've never felt the need to write them down anywhere. We haven't done much around branding outside the village; perhaps we should do more, but we prefer to whisper rather than shout.

### At a glance – The Yattendon Estate

- 3.9 million pints brewed in 2024
- 100,000 annual Christmas tree sales
- 9,142 acres in total
- 360 residential tenants
- 158 people directly employed
- 100 years in the Iliffe family
- 5 food and beverage outlets

[yattendon.co.uk](http://yattendon.co.uk)

## JESS WADDINGTON, KNIGHT FRANK THE NETTLEBED ESTATE, OXFORDSHIRE

### Bridging the past with the future

The Nettlebed Estate has a fascinating history. It was bought by the banker Robert Fleming, grandfather of the James Bond author Ian Fleming, in 1903 and is now jointly owned by several of his descendants and various family trusts.

Our ethos is to maintain a vibrant estate based on the principles of the past, but one that uses modern technology and data. Given the complex ownership, the estate could easily become a sum of its parts, so what we are really trying to do is to make something that is unified and more easily managed for future generations.

To streamline the estate's complex financial reporting structure, we have put in place what I like to call transformative estate office systems. A cloud-based terrier system takes care of all the property management, which previously was just a lot of spreadsheets that made it very hard to have proper oversight of things like residential property compliance.

We've also just gone live with a cloud-based accounting system that links everything together and allows us to run Nettlebed as a cohesive estate, whilst also splitting out the various ownership elements. We use some of the data provided to inform the energy-efficiency programme for the estate's residential portfolio. This means we know if measures such as installing solar panels and air-source heat pumps are delivering material returns for the estate.





Nettlebed sits within the beautiful Chiltern Hills in Oxfordshire

## Productive partnerships

Dairy farming has existed on the estate since the time when farm holdings traditionally ran on a mixed livestock and arable system. While there aren't many herds left in this part of Oxfordshire and indeed the Chilterns, we've made the decision to continue with the cows, which have been organic for almost 25 years. They are part of the owners' and the estate's heritage; the herd supplies some of its milk to the award-winning Nettlebed Creamery, which is owned by a family member.

We firmly believe in innovative partnerships and have just started working with a new contract farming partner after receiving 45 expressions of interest when we put the farm out to tender. We provide the land and cows, and they bring the machinery and labour.

An innovative tenancy agreement has resulted in continued success of the organic dairy herd



By retaining ownership of the land and livestock, we stay closely involved in decision-making whilst benefiting from the expertise and resources of a dedicated farming partner. This model allows for greater alignment on sustainability goals, animal welfare standards and long-term land use. It also encourages collaboration, shared investment and flexibility, offering a more responsive alternative to traditional tenancies.

## Community and the environment

Nettlebed is unusual in that it comprises 560 acres of common land protected by Robert Fleming via its own Act of Parliament in 1906. Much of our day-to-day forestry effort goes into ensuring tree safety on the commons, but we are focused on the longer-term biodiversity of the land with projects in place to maintain the rare acid wetland, improve heathland habitat, restore ponds and protect the ancient beech woodland which characterises the Chilterns.

We are delighted that the estate is now home to two Forest Schools; one on the common and the other within the estate's woodland. Nature-friendly farming is also important across the rest of the estate, which is why the farm is organic. Much of the land is entered into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the Sustainable Farming Incentive, and the farm has wildflower fields and margins, bird seed plots and winter feeding, a lapwing plot, barn owl and swift boxes. Current plans include creating a chalk scrape and restoring hedges along former lines. The owners are very involved in their local farm cluster.

Looking ahead, as we continue to focus on building resilience through new and diverse income streams, we hope to re-use some redundant buildings to create unique places for work and leisure activities.

**Find out more at [nettlebed.org](https://nettlebed.org)**



# Succession planning

Succession isn't just about the future; it's about getting it right today.

*Patrick Beddows – Rural Consultancy, Midlands*

With the government's reforms to Inheritance Tax (IHT) on agricultural and business property set to kick in from April 2026, as well as wider concerns about the upcoming budget, I've never been busier helping estates understand exactly what they own and how things may be structured efficiently and successfully passed to the next generation. The following are my top five tips for a successful succession.

## 1. Plan ahead

Although the proposed IHT changes have injected a new urgency into succession planning for many, careful preparation and planning have always aided a smooth transition to the next generation. Every family's succession journey is different, shaped by individual goals and circumstances. For more historic or complex estates, it is crucial to work out exactly what is owned, by whom, and what its value is. Consider all business structures and have honest family conversations about what each generation understands and expects from succession. Purpose, values and a sense of the responsibilities that come with succession play into this.



## 2. Be equitable

Most issues around inheritance and succession arise when one of the parties feels as if they have been treated unfairly. Primogeniture has for long been the basis of succession, but times are changing. If you want each of your children to have an equal share of your estate, work out how best to do that based on their needs, values and interests. You may need some creative thinking to achieve parity across different asset classes. If you would prefer one sibling to take over a farming business in its entirety, discuss this with everybody and explain your rationale; communication and clarity is everything.

## 3. Protect the assets

Rural property owners often aspire to leave some kind of legacy for multiple generations, not just their children. But whilst we hope our successors will look after any inherited assets – divorce, bad habits, lack of interest and even, sadly, early death do happen more regularly than we care to imagine. Putting assets into trust can be a good way to protect them from unforeseen or unexpected circumstances. Whilst trusts might not remove IHT liabilities, they can help spread the risk, and they allow for planning to pay the 10-year IHT charge. Consider what other governance structures might help in the future.

## 4. Think about risks ahead

Mitigating IHT risk is obviously top of mind for everybody at the moment, but it's important to know which IHT reliefs and lesser-known exemptions apply to which assets. There may still be time to get full relief on farmland, woodland and trading assets, but residential and commercial property are more difficult to transfer. It's also worth considering taking out insurance cover in case you don't live for the full seven years after making a gift. You can read more about this on page 32.

## 5. Look after yourself

During the succession process, the focus is often naturally on the next generation. But if you are planning to make gifts to your children, you need to ensure that you have kept sufficient resources back to ensure that you have the means to continue living the lifestyle that you aspire to. You must also bear in mind the tax implications of continuing to benefit from any gifted assets. You cannot, for example, live rent-free in a property that you have gifted to somebody else to mitigate IHT liabilities.

Time is running out to beat the April 2026 deadline, but it's not too late to make changes. Move fast and surround yourself with a good professional team to help guide you through this complex process – an experienced agent working collaboratively with your solicitor or accountant will make all the difference.

**Our teams are here to help should you need it.**





A historic landscape ready for the future

# Profitable partnerships and trusting talent

How the Knatchbull family are leading the way in setting up innovative joint ventures on their historic Kent estate.

*Bryony Heaven & Katie Bundle – Rural Consultancy, South East*

Connection runs deep at the Hatch Park Estate. The majority of the 2,700-acre estate near Ashford has been owned and stewarded by the Knatchbull family since 1486, during the reign of Henry VII.

But the current generations of the family, led by talent agent Kelly Knatchbull and her father, film producer Michael-John Knatchbull, are certainly not stuck in the past when it comes to creating a resilient future for their stunning estate.

In 2019, a strategic review led by our team helped Kelly and Michael-John articulate a clear ambition: to see the estate become a vibrant springboard for other local businesses, a place where ideas could take root and the wider community could thrive.

This developed from a sense that Hatch Park had become quite passive in the local landscape, particularly following a shift from in-hand to contract and tenant farming in the early 2000s.

Kelly was keen to identify how Hatch Park could begin to reappear in the local community, in ways that would have a positive impact in the context of modern life.

We understood that this required authenticity, avoiding performative gestures, instead focusing on real-life experiences. So, we looked at which groups of people interact with the estate and the ways in which we could make their experience really positive.

Significant financial reinvestment has been made throughout the residential let portfolio so that the estate can, hand on heart, say that it is letting high-quality, appealing rental properties to its 60 residential tenants.

## Environmental journey

Kelly and Michael-John wanted to be able to say the same thing about the farmed environment and the landscape contribution that Hatch Park makes.



Creating a legacy by managing the farm and woodland in a more environmentally informed way has led to the return of species like dormice, the presence of which, excitingly, has just been confirmed for the first time in years.

With Kelly's aspirations in mind, a chance encounter at the Groundswell regenerative farming event led to an unusual arrangement developing between the estate and livestock farmer Chris Woodhead and his wife, former London hairdresser turned shepherdess, Zoe.

**“Kelly was keen to identify how Hatch Park could begin to reappear in the local community, in ways that would have a positive impact in the context of modern life.”**

Rather than offering a traditional tenancy agreement, the couple have moved to a house on the estate and brought their sheep and cattle with them to graze the pasture, while Chris is employed three days a week to work on the estate's agri-environmental projects.

Their livestock will play a crucial role in the planned farming system change, and their collective arrival on the estate brought authenticity to the aspirations.

Evidencing the estate's commitment to landscape-scale change also justified a successful application for over £100,000 in grant funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) scheme.

Zoe has also joined the estate team to help us develop visitor experiences with an initial focus on educational visits that are funded through stewardship payments. Her role will be crucial for bringing a new generation of local people onto the estate.

Kelly had emphasised that she wanted Chris and Zoe to be at the heart of the whole process of change on the estate and that they could make the estate their 'home farm'.

We're excited to work with them moving forward to deliver these aspirations.

## Ice cream treat

Another successful venture for the estate began when local entrepreneur Sally Newall, founder of the thriving home-based business Simply Ice Cream, approached us about renting one of the estate's buildings to support her expansion plans.

We knew Sally would be a perfect fit as soon as we met her and jumped at the chance to offer her a solution. Again, we tried to think beyond the scope of traditional tenancy arrangements.

As ice cream is quite a seasonal product with irregular monthly sales, we didn't think a fixed rent made sense for either party.

With the help of the estate's legal advisers, we adapted a share-farming model. The estate buys some of the inputs and pays some of the fixed costs, and a profit-sharing arrangement is in place instead of rent.

Sally has said it's worked well for her, because during the months when turnover has been low, so have her costs. It does mean the money that the estate receives fluctuates, but Sally isn't just a tenant; she's become an important ambassador and community builder on the estate.

The ability to build the kind of relationships we are establishing between Zoe, Chris, Sally and the estate really shows the value of working with talented people in your community. It is a key part of writing a new chapter for historic estates like Hatch Park.

## Follow Chris, Zoe and Sally's journeys

Instagram: [thechiefshepherdess](#)  
[simplyicecreamkent](#)

YouTube: [thesuperseriousfarmer](#)

Livestock are playing a key role in the farming changes at Hatch Park



# Communicating beyond the norm

The leader of one of the UK's most innovative natural capital firms explains why storytelling and branding are so important for creating resilient rural businesses.

*Rich Stockdale – CEO, Oxygen Conservation*

When we founded Oxygen Conservation, our mission was ambitious yet simple, to 'Scale Conservation'. We set out to prove that nature could be investable, that by valuing natural capital correctly, nature could pay to protect itself.

In just four years, that idea has grown into a natural capital portfolio worth over £300 million, transforming 12 estates across 50,000 acres of the UK and helping to connect over 500,000 acres of space for nature.

Yet if data, capital and the land itself are the bricks of our model, brand and storytelling are the mortar. They bind everything together, ensuring our story isn't just told, but heard, believed and acted upon.

Image credit: Oxygen Conservation



## Reimagining the business of nature

At Oxygen Conservation, we are building something entirely new: a natural capital portfolio delivering both environmental restoration and strong financial returns.

Our foundation is land. From carbon credits verified under the Woodland and Peatland Carbon Codes, to rewilding projects creating Biodiversity Net Gain units, to renewable energy and sustainable tourism, each estate provides tangible value and resilience while offering a canvas for landscape-scale conservation.

This is conservation at scale, guided by the belief that profit and purpose aren't opposites, but increasingly correlated.

## Building our brand

From the outset, we knew that to change the way people think about nature, we couldn't rely on the same old language and image of conservation. Too often, the sector has been cloaked in clichés with green logos or bureaucratic jargon, leaving people disengaged.

Our brand is deliberately different: clean, minimal, modern. It doesn't distract from nature but frames it. World-class photography showcases the beauty of the landscapes. The writing in our articles and books is designed to be honest and ambitious. Our podcasts and vlogs open the door to conversation, rather than closing it.

"This is conservation at scale, guided by the belief that profit and purpose aren't opposites, but increasingly correlated."

The Shoot Room Sessions podcast was born from a desire to share big, often difficult conversations authentically, bringing together voices focused on environment, impact and adventure. We've now released over 120 episodes, partnering with Knight Frank to tell the stories of people changing what it means to be in conservation and in business.

## People connect with people

We know people connect with people. If we want to inspire the next generation of conservationists, we must show them the individuals already changing the world. That's why we write so consistently about our team, a group of extraordinary, driven





The Leighon Estate, Devon, is part of Oxygen's portfolio

Image credit: Oxygen Conservation

and completely unreasonable (in the best possible way) people who make Oxygen Conservation what it is.

We've built a high-performance culture, made up of people committed to scaling conservation in bold new ways. By telling their stories, we demonstrate that this new model of conservation isn't an abstract idea, but a lived reality powered by incredibly talented people.

Through podcasts and our first book, *Scaling Conservation: the business of restoring the wild*, I've tried to show that being an environmentalist and a business leader are inseparable in the natural capital economy. Personal brand for me is about sharing honestly and inviting people into the conversation. Combined with the voices of our team, it creates a brand rooted in authenticity, transparency and quality.

## Storytelling brings results

So, how does this investment in branding and storytelling help us to 'Scale Conservation'? Firstly, it secures investment. Investors don't just study spreadsheets; they back belief.

Our brand demonstrates ambition, integrity and professionalism, giving confidence that Oxygen Conservation is both commercially credible and mission driven.

Secondly, it inspires and motivates. Great stories move people to act. Whether it's young people seeking purposeful careers, the communities we've built both locally and digitally, or businesses looking for impactful partners, our storytelling makes conservation exciting and urgent.

Finally, it builds the sector. By shaping the conversation around natural capital, we're helping to establish the market itself. Every podcast, post and press piece challenges the outdated notion of conservation as philanthropy, proving it is the next great asset class.

At Oxygen Conservation, branding multiplies our impact, extends our reach and accelerates our mission to make nature investable. For others, whether you're rewilding or running a rural enterprise, the way you present your work determines who believes in it, who funds it and how far it can go.

The Leighon Estate sits on the eastern edge of Dartmoor National Park  
Image credit: Oxygen Conservation







Patrick (right) with Ali and Elin from our Rural Consultancy team

# Demystifying data

A bespoke approach to data analytics delivers dividends for rural estates, but what does ‘data’ actually mean and how do you apply it?

*Patrick Dillon – Senior Analyst, Research Analytics*

It’s hard to escape the term data these days. Whether it’s information about carbon baselines, biodiversity surveys or customer patterns, there’s more of it at our fingertips than ever before, and it’s changing the way rural estates do business.

Research and analytics are now viewed by many as a fourth advisory pillar alongside land agents, solicitors and accountants. However, getting a basic understanding of what’s even possible can be very daunting, especially when ‘data’ has become a blanket term, with it being hard to find an explanation of what it all means.

Every generation of landowner has faced change; political upheaval, shifting markets and even the seasons themselves. What makes ‘now’ distinct is the sheer speed and intensity of transformation. Technology, data, climate, AI and regulation are rewriting the rules at a pace that neither the best instincts nor your filing system alone can keep up with.

Telling a clear story about who you are, what you contribute, and where you’re heading, with an evidence-backed narrative, is one

of the most powerful tools we have to ensure resilience on estates. If you don’t own your story, someone else will write it for you.

For many of the rural landowners I’ve helped, I get the sense that they often feel they’re not doing enough with their data, interpreting it in the wrong way or, heaven forbid, hoping AI models will deliver silver-bullet solutions for their businesses. Every farm, estate or rural business is unique, which means they likely need bespoke solutions.

## So, what is data?

Different businesses will be at different stages in understanding their data and what is possible when this data is analysed.

In practice, data is often grouped into two types. The first is quantitative: counts and measurements such as yield per field, rainfall, kilowatt-hours, visitor numbers and till receipts. The second is qualitative: notes and accounts that capture behaviour and context, from tenant conversations and manager logs to patterns you notice when walking the land. Used together, quantitative data analysis helps reveal trends and issues, while qualitative data helps explain them. This interplay makes local knowledge indispensable. The lived understanding held by land agents, estate managers and owners provides the on-the-ground context that should underpin any further data analysis.



Estates will all be at different stages on this journey. Those just setting out may focus on 'digitising the estate office', getting properties digitally mapped, tenancy information catalogued, and moving accounting systems into the cloud so everything is visible and consistent. Others, further along, will use data analysis in a more strategic way, for example to forecast rental income over time or to inform asset-retention and investment decisions.

## Information Value Chain

The Information Value Chain illustrates how information progresses from raw data to informed action. These same principles underpin an estate's journey through data and analysis. Until it's analysed, data remains information without meaning.

1. **Data collection and generation** (sensors, maps, surveys, records).
2. **Data management** (storage, governance, standards, quality control).
3. **Sense making and analytics** (interpretation, modelling, pattern detection).
4. **Decision making and application** (tools and automation that support informed action).

## Artificial intelligence

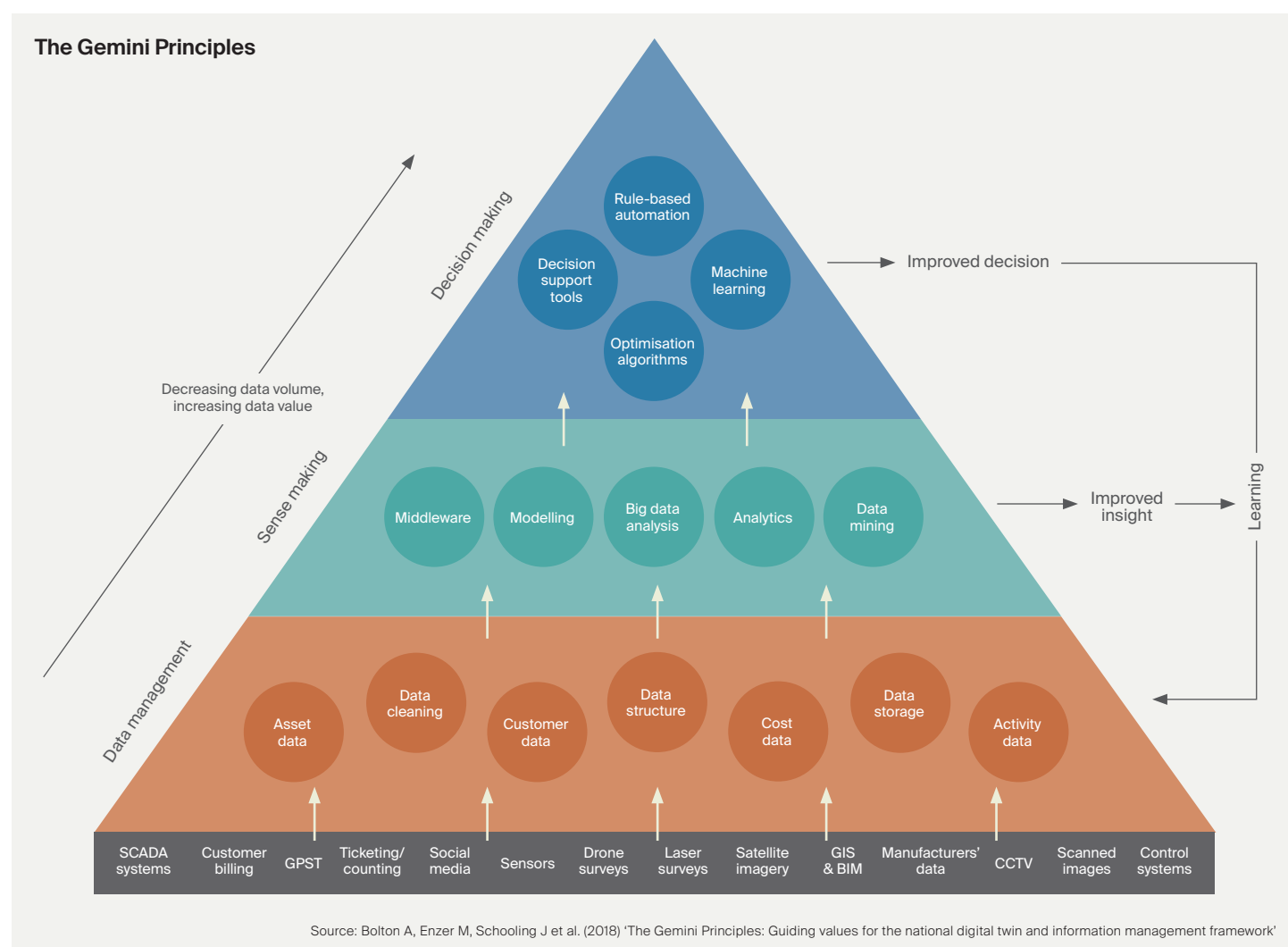
AI can undoubtedly be extremely useful, and some of the things it can do are mind-blowing, but businesses are often just overselling simple machine-learning techniques that are now ubiquitous in most software packages.

Aside from the terminology, part of the problem with AI solutions is that they are often a one-size-fits-all package. 'Garbage in, garbage out' is a well-understood concept, but even when the best data has been used, analysis by an adviser who can incorporate the local context and understanding is crucial.

A good example of this was when we were recently asked to sense check an external report produced for a client that was looking for new business opportunities across their estate.

Many of the recommendations turned out to be quite generic, and our own analysis revealed some quite basic flaws. For example, specific enterprises had been suggested that, on the face of it, looked quite appealing. However, no account had been taken of existing and well-established competitors in the locality.

Good data analysed in the right way can boost the resilience of estates by providing support for complex long-term decision-making, but the human element remains vital.





# Management matters

Andrew Blenkiron, the Managing Director of Elveden, one of England's largest commercial farming estates, shares his plans for a successful future.

*Alastair Paul – Rural Consultancy, East*

At almost 22,500 acres, The Elveden Estate in Suffolk is not only the largest ringfenced lowland estate in England, but also one of the country's biggest vegetable growers.

Around 1,200 acres of potatoes, a similar area of onions and 700 acres of carrots are set to be lifted this year.

"We grow cereals as a break crop," laughs Andrew Blenkiron, who has been Managing Director of Elveden Farms Ltd since being recruited from another of the region's leading estates in 2024.

Having looked after farms and estates in every English region over the course of his almost 40-year career, Andrew is considered one of the country's most experienced land managers.

That he can refer to over 3,700 acres of barley, wheat and rye, with 12,000 tonnes of grain storage, not to mention 100 acres of peas and 370 acres of sugar beet, as a break crop, highlights the scale of his latest role.

The investment in kit and infrastructure required to sustain such an operation is staggering, not least because the estate's Breckland soil is so sandy it just runs through your fingers. "We have to work really hard to make sure it doesn't blow away," says Andrew.

A 240,000-metre network of pipes feeding 46 irrigation reels and 24 linear systems, maintained by 12 full-time workers, keeps the crops growing, while a fleet of 32 tractors is constantly ferrying crops from field to refrigerated storage facilities. Along with careful management, these allow the estate to sell onions for 11 months of the year.

Although they might not be the most expensive item in the shopping basket, onions are not cheap to grow. "Our new grader cost £3.5 million. Every onion is scanned 30 times."

The reservoirs at Elveden are crucial to running the estate efficiently





## Investing in resilience

With irrigation playing such a crucial role in Elveden's farming enterprise, safeguarding access to water is a key part of Andrew's job. The estate already has two large reservoirs, but it still relies on nine boreholes to top up supplies, especially during prolonged dry spells such as experienced this summer.

"Because of climate change and the ongoing water shortage in this part of the country, I'm pretty sure we are going to see the amount of water that we are allowed to abstract reduced significantly in the not-too-distant future."

To prepare for that, the estate has just invested £3 million in building another large reservoir. "One of my main aims is to de-risk what we do here as much as I can. Without water, this land would be completely unproductive. The water is almost more valuable than the soil to us here."

"It's crucial to engage with the people living around you. It's important that it's not a faceless developer who represents the estate. I take on that responsibility because the people know me, and hopefully they respect that we want the best for the local community."

Diversification is also an important part of Elveden's land-based de-risking process, with the estate's 4,200 acres of woodland home to a successful Christmas tree operation, which specialises in large trees for corporate and municipal customers, and a unique 150-acre, 17 species instant-hedging business.

## People management

Nevertheless, it's working with people, whether in the local community, those employed by the estate, or the tenants living in Elveden's 250 let houses spread across four parishes, that Andrew sees as the most important aspect of his role.

"It's crucial to engage with the people living around you. Whenever we are planning a new project, I go to parish council meetings to explain what we want to do, ask for input and answer any questions."

"It's important that it's not a faceless developer who represents the estate, especially when you are dealing with issues like renewable energy schemes or housing developments that can be quite controversial."

"I take on all that responsibility because the people know me, and hopefully they respect that we want the best for the local community."

Andrew also ensures that all the estate's 220 employees are fully briefed on what is happening across the business. "It's just good staff management. It's about engaging with everyone so they feel involved."



Elveden is host to four species of deer; Fallow, Roe, Muntjac and Red deer

"Over the summer, for example, we've taken people from the pubs and the farm shop out around the farm to better understand where some of the things they sell come from."

His approach to people management was partly inspired by John Giffard, the owner of Chillington Hall, one of the estates he previously managed.

"He was the Chief Constable of Staffordshire, in charge of about 2,500 policemen and women, but he knew all their names. He taught me a lot about chains of command and the responsibility of office."

## Future plans

As part of the strategy to diversify and de-risk the estate, several large new projects are in the pipeline.

An AD plant, partly supplied with muck from a tenanted pig-rearing business, will eventually deliver liquid digestate fertiliser around the estate via a new network of pipes, while a deal has been struck to build a garden centre in the old walled garden.

"It's certainly a very exciting business to be involved in."

### Elveden in numbers

- **£3,000,000** spent on new reservoir
- **240,000 metres** of irrigation pipe network
- **22,286 acres** total size of estate
- **6,008 acres** of protected heathland
- **800 deer** shot each year
- **250** let residential properties
- **200** red list species on heathland
- **2** pubs and hotels
- **1** farm shop with two restaurants

[elveden.com](http://elveden.com)





The fascinating, detailed history of St Paul's is matched only by its architecture. Image credit: Graham Laddao / St Paul's Cathedral

# Rooted in history

The Tillingham Estate, linked to St Paul's Cathedral and one of the longest single owned pieces of land in English history, is exploring a new chapter. Our team is lucky enough to be supporting the estate on the next stage of its journey.

*Katie Bundle & Ali Fell – Rural Consultancy, South East*

It may not be as well-known as the likes of Blenheim, Badminton and Burghley, but even these great estates can't match the deep historic roots of the Tillingham Estate on the Essex coast.

The estate, which today is made up of three let farms totalling 1,200 acres of arable marshland on the Dengie Peninsula and a portfolio of let homes, has been in the hands of the same owners for over 1,420 years – the longest single ownership in Britain.

Tillingham's history stretches right back to the birth of Christianity in Britain. In 604 AD, it was gifted to the Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral by King Æthelberht of Kent, the first Anglo-Saxon king to convert to Christianity.

Æthelberht had earlier been converted by the monk Augustine, who had been sent in 595 AD by Pope Gregory to disseminate the word of God to the then pagan British Isles. His earthly reward was to become the first Archbishop of Canterbury.



Augustine was followed by Mellitus, who established St Paul's Cathedral and was the first Bishop of London. Initially, the Cathedral was a wooden structure that burned down and was rebuilt several times.

Following the Norman conquest in 1066, however, St Paul's was reconstructed in a grander style and became London's central ecclesiastical institution. Estates like Tillingham provided a crucial income stream for the Cathedral via agricultural production, rents and other feudal dues.

Unlike the monasteries, whose lands were seized by Henry VIII during the Reformation, St Paul's was under the control of the Crown and was allowed to hold onto its estates, such as Tillingham.

After St Paul's was destroyed during the Great Fire of London in 1666, income from the estate played a critical role in funding Sir Christopher Wren's Baroque masterpiece replacement, which was completed in 1711 and still induces awe in the millions of worshippers and tourists who visit every year.

**"The estate, which today is made up of three let farms totalling 1,200 acres of arable marshland on the Dengie Peninsula and a portfolio of let homes, has been in the hands of the same owners for over 1,420 years – the longest single ownership in Britain."**

## A new role

Fast forward 300 years or so from the rebuild and it's clear that an estate the size of Tillingham can't make a significant financial contribution to the upkeep of a heritage building like St Paul's, whose annual running costs, let alone restoration projects, come to £17 million.

But that doesn't mean the estate won't continue to play an integral role in the ongoing partnership between city and countryside.

"Today, the Tillingham Estate remains a tangible link to St Paul's long history, embodying centuries of ecclesiastical, agricultural and social development," explains Rebecca Thompson, the Cathedral's Director of Property.

"The continued stewardship of the estate ensures that it remains a vital part of the Cathedral's legacy, supporting its role as a religious, historical and cultural landmark in London. Our vision is for the estate to contribute to the cathedral's mission through sustainable farming practices and heritage conservation efforts."

"Income from the estate could support education and community outreach programmes, heritage craft skills, preservation of the Cathedral's historic fabric and a more diverse and sustainable use of the land and properties."

"Our master planning project with Knight Frank will lead us to a sustainable, resilient estate with a positive legacy for future generations."

**"Unlike the monasteries, whose lands were seized by Henry VIII during the Reformation, St Paul's was under the control of the Crown and was allowed to hold onto its estates, such as Tillingham."**

## Master-planning

Joining St Paul's at this point in their journey and being entrusted with the management of such an historic property is not only a great privilege, but it is also incredibly exciting given the range of natural capital, food production and sustainable land-use opportunities that we can now deliver for our client.

While the estate may be off the beaten track for now, that could change. Walkers looking to take time out for spiritual contemplation are increasingly following in the footsteps of those who undertook the great pilgrimage routes across Europe.

Perhaps one day we'll see people walking between St Paul's and Tillingham. Its role as one of the country's most iconic buildings certainly warrants more attention.

St Paul's, with its world-famous dome, is an iconic feature of the London skyline  
Image credit: Graham Lacdao / St Paul's Cathedral



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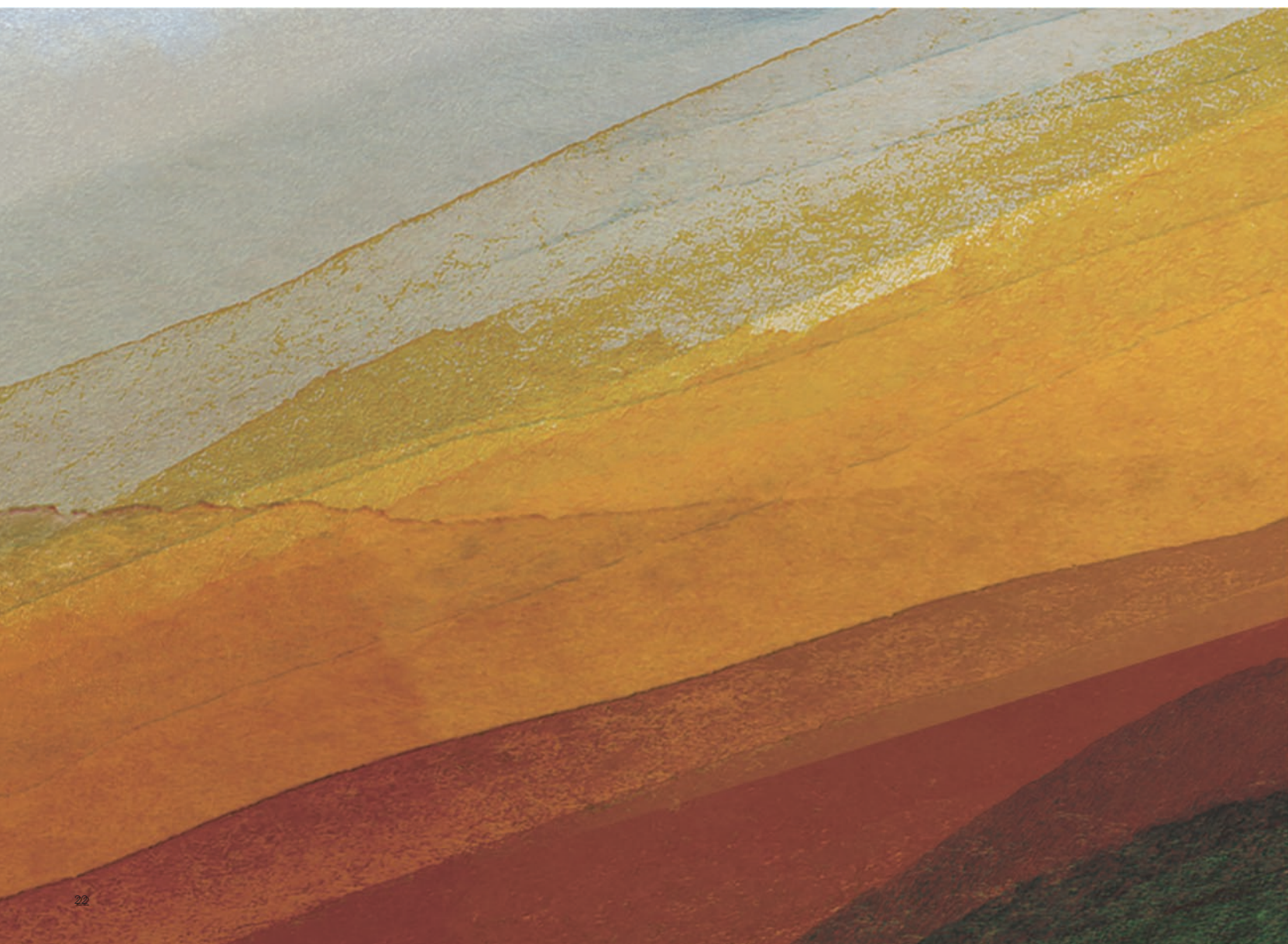
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# The future of food

Our food industry is systemically flawed. Serial entrepreneur, educator, charity founder and former government adviser Henry Dimbleby has dedicated his career to changing it.

*Claire Whitfield – Rural Consultancy, North East*

Henry Dimbleby's CV is full of seriously impressive achievements, all of which have played a role in delivering solutions to the damage that he says the food chain is doing to our health and the environment.

Two of the biggest issues he identifies are the “junk food cycle”, which incentivises companies to produce unhealthy, calorie-dense food, and the “invisibility of nature”, where biodiversity is damaged by modern farming methods.

The restaurant chain Leon, which he jointly set up and then sold, introduced a healthier way to eat out, while his review of school meals for the Department of Education led to a significant shift in government policy, meaning millions more free lunches for children.

He was the lead non-executive director at Defra between 2018 and 2023, and his National Food Strategy, written for Michael Gove, is widely regarded as the definitive soil-to-fork solution to the food-related health, environmental and resilience issues facing the UK today.

In fact, many have criticised the previous government for not following enough of the report's recommendations, and the current administration for delaying the launch of its own food strategy when Henry's is ready and waiting to be implemented.

“I think we're at the beginning of a golden period for food investing, because people have realised that food is the new climate... So, there's money to be made as well as impact to be created.”



Henry himself is more sanguine. “I think it's really important to understand the difference between an independent review and a government strategy. I am not a democratically elected person. Governments ask experts for advice, and then it's up to them to respond and say what they're going to do.”

“On the environmental side, this government and the previous one have been slowly acting on the recommendations. We've got a land use framework coming in, which I recommended, and there's the expansion of environmental land management schemes. I think, broadly, the direction of travel for health is also moving in the right direction.”

He does, however, admit to frustrations. “I do wish that between governments, they'd move faster and quicker.” He is also critical of this government's Inheritance Tax reforms. “That's really made things difficult.”

## Profitable solutions

Henry's latest venture, Bramble Partners, is very much focused on enabling the private sector to deliver innovative and profitable solutions to the issues he's identified in the food chain.

Bramble is split into two sections: Bramble Intelligence, an advisory service, and Bramble Investments, which is a £100 million fund that is just about to close its first round of fundraising.





Public health is slowly improving as more attention is being placed on the effects of UPFs within diet

Henry says the fund will invest in businesses that are improving the food system via biodiversity, climate, food security and health and wellbeing.

“We are about to close the investment in our first two chosen companies. One is a really interesting shelf-life extending technology that could save a lot of waste in the food chain and remove harmful preservatives.”

“Bramble Intelligence will help food businesses break out of the junk food cycle and manage the transition to more environmentally and climate-friendly agriculture.”

“The other is a new device to measure and diagnose what’s going on in your gut via your breath, something that normally costs thousands of pounds.”

“I think we’re at the beginning of a golden period for food investing, because people have realised that food is the new climate. It’s more complex, but it’s a huge sector, and it needs a huge transformation. So, there’s money to be made as well as impact to be created.”

## Junk food cycle

Bramble Intelligence will help food businesses break out of the junk food cycle and manage the transition to more environmentally and climate-friendly agriculture.

The timing is right for two main reasons. “With the huge acceleration in appetite-suppressing drugs, the aversion to ultra-processed foods and more regulation, big food companies are now saying, ‘this portfolio that we’ve got, it’s not going to be profitable in the next two to five years.’ The second piece is that climate change is causing real concerns about the way we farm.”

A key initiative is the 1M Hectares Coalition. This will bring together the UK’s largest estates, landowners and smaller farms, to pilot, accelerate and scale practices, inputs and technologies that will “catalyse the UK’s transition to a resilient, profitable and purposeful food production system.”

Given his influence, Henry is modest about the leadership role he has played.

“I wouldn’t argue to have been the world’s greatest entrepreneur, the world’s greatest government adviser or the world’s greatest charity founder. But I am one of the few people who have seen [the food industry] from so many different angles. I think that gives me a perspective that is unique.”



# Turning complexity into clarity

A new platform promises to revolutionise the valuation, management and market for natural capital.

*Dr Hosein Khajeh-Hosseiny – Founder & Chairman, Trinity Natural Capital Group*

Two worlds now define the global balance sheet. In the first, the financialised economy, asset values have expanded rapidly, with global wealth approaching \$600 trillion. This world enjoys high valuations yet is vulnerable to asset-price swings, inequality and cross-border liabilities. In the second, the real economy of natural capital (soils, water, biodiversity), assets remain largely outside capital markets, chronically under-invested and under-valued, despite being the foundation of productive growth and resilience.

Agriculture sits at the frontier of the real economy, converting soil, water and biodiversity into food, income and security. Farming has long been an exercise in managing uncertainty, but today's scale and speed of change and feedback loops have made clarity a scarce asset.

Traditional approaches that rely on prediction and control no longer suffice. The future belongs to those who can prepare, adapt and lead through complexity. By bringing natural capital into the language of finance, we translate stewardship into resilience, margin and bankable value.

This is a new era. Real science and rigorous analytics, not box-ticking, are the ticket to the field. Anything less risks your farm's reputation, your partners' trust and the value you've worked so hard to build. Where evidence is robust, that same clarity can even support the minting (the creation of new digital currency e.g. bitcoin) of trusted, digital coins (see panel).

This clarity now results in credibility. In a market that rewards proof, relying on unchecked, first-generation natural capital

platforms creates outsized risk for every stakeholder in the chain.

Around the world, a new kind of leadership is emerging in farming: leaders who don't try to control the unpredictable but navigate it. They turn uncertainty and complexity into clarity.

At the heart of this shift is a quiet revolution, Trinity Natural Capital Valuation and Management (NCVM), a way of seeing the farm not just as land, but as a living portfolio of strength, resilience, financial value and capital growth.

## Rethinking resilience

We need to rethink how resilience is built by creating a new paradigm where instead of trying to predict and control events, we prepare and adapt. And where, instead of merely surviving shocks, we regenerate stronger.

In times of uncertainty, preparation beats prediction. Resilient farms design systems that can pivot. They diversify rotations, maintain flexible equipment use, and keep multiple marketing paths open. The goal is not to forecast perfectly, but to stay ready for any season.

In complex systems, control is an illusion, but clarity is achievable. You cannot control the market or the weather, but you can understand your own system deeply. Leaders succeed by understanding what matters most and what is changing fastest.



## Nature-based digital coins

NCVM does more than measure resilience; it underwrites market-grade assets. When farm-level outcomes are quantified to ISO-aligned standards, verified and registered on a tamper-evident ledger, they can be minted as coins, a nature-based cryptocurrency that can be tracked, traded, or retired with confidence.

Using Trinity natural capital registry records, NCVM projects on a blockchain for traceability and immutability, raising integrity and reducing transaction risk for both farmers and buyers.

Spain's 'Cool Farming', a founding member of the Trinity Natural Capital Pro Council, has already illustrated the minting of nature based coins on Trinity's platform. In short, credible measurement and analytics lead to minting currency. That's another way your stewardship becomes wealth.

Making the invisible visible

NCVM helps by quantifying soil health, water retention and biodiversity value so you can see which assets truly underpin resilience, and where hidden risks sit.

Clearly track and monitor the performance and health of your soil, biodiversity, water protection, nitrogen-use efficiency and carbon storage, to understand why some fields thrive while others tire.

More than a report, NCVM is a strategic instrument for navigation that gives you three essential powers: visibility, comparability and credibility.

With these, you can move from reactive firefighting to proactive steering, navigating complexity with confidence.

Translating understanding into action, NCVM guides everyday calls such as which field to prioritise this week, which practice really pays on this soil, and which investment builds both yield and resilience.

By integrating agronomic, ecological and financial data, NCVM turns invisible patterns into visible intelligence, replacing guesswork with grounded confidence.

True resilience isn't about bouncing back, it's about bouncing forward. Healthy soils recover quicker after drought, diverse rotations steady margins after price swings, and biodiversity buffers risk.

NCVM measures this regenerative power in financial terms; the value of healthier soils, the protective worth of biodiversity and the "insurance" of clean water, showing that stewardship and

profitability can rise together. Regeneration is resilience and profitability in motion.

Think systems, not silos

A farm is a complex living network. Every decision ripples outward, one practice in a field can affect soil carbon, biodiversity, water, markets and profits, and then inwardly through feedback. Leaders map these interconnections.

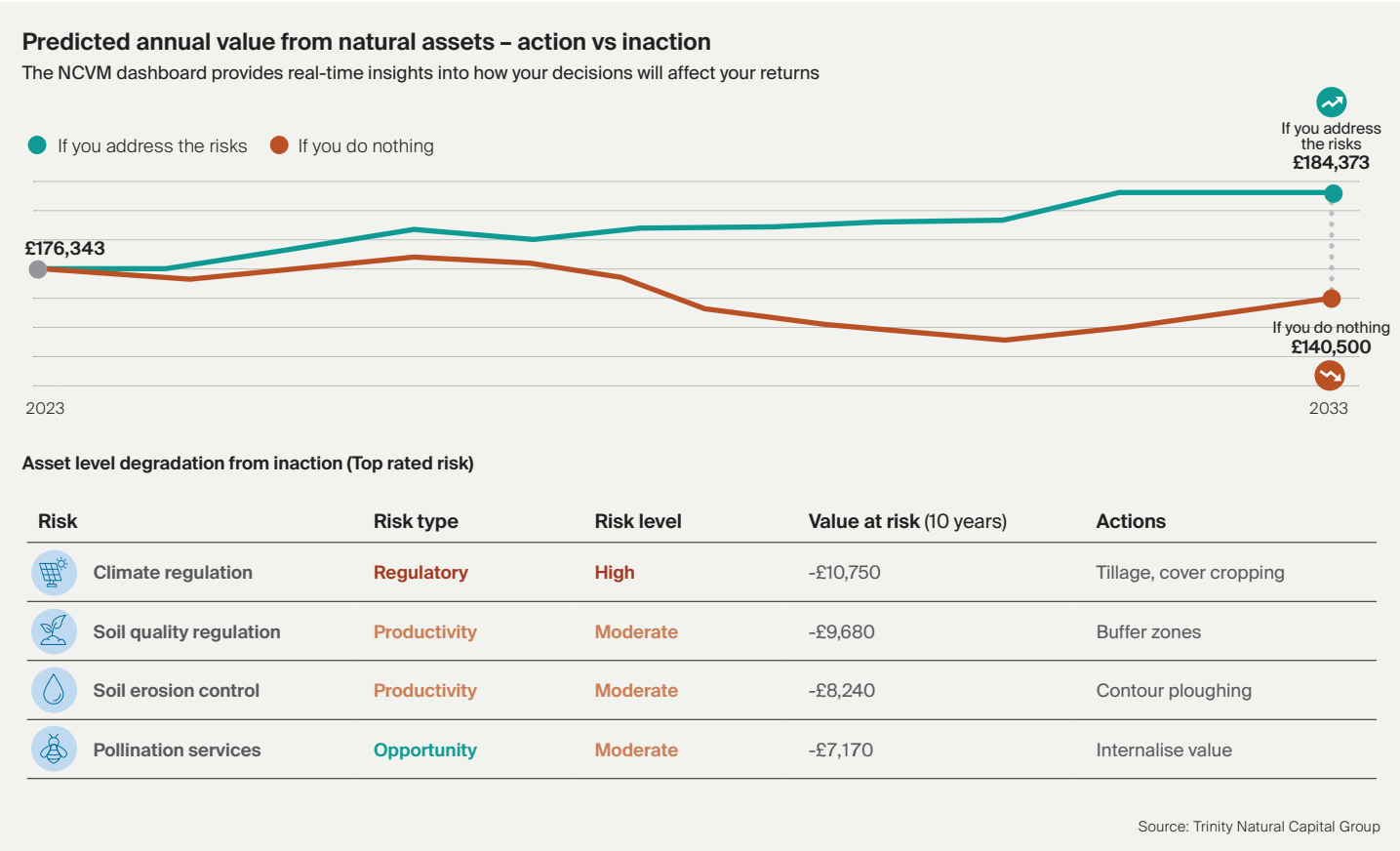
That's why NCVM doesn't simplify the system; it helps you see it and identify leverage points where small changes create outsized results, showing you how decisions ripple across ecological and financial outcomes.

Data should inform judgment, not replace it. Your experience remains the most powerful sensor. Combined with NCVM's evidence base, intuition becomes sharper and faster.

In stable conditions, focus on high efficiency wins; in turbulence, adaptability wins. Flexibility is the new high efficiency. The farms that endure are ones that systematically strengthen their natural capital and reduce hidden risks, thereby adapting with confidence to changing conditions.

Shared intelligence

Farming has never been a solo act, but now it's a networked intelligence. Agronomists, ecologists, buyers, lenders, land managers and technologists are all part of the same ecosystem. They each hold part of the picture.





## Impact of Natural Assets Management on profit margin

The NCVM system provides the financial return and value of investments made to your business

### Who's benefitting?

# 81%

of natural capital benefits this year stay on farm-boosting yield and efficiency



Contributed to your **farm** this year:

## £112,217

This is yield uplift, input savings and risk protection without spending extra. Imagine what you could unlock further.

#### Top drivers:

- Crop product provision: **£96,764**  
Yield uplift **10%** ▲
- Soil quality regulation: **£13,280**  
Yield uplift **10%** ▲
- Pollination services: **£16,564**  
Yield uplift **10%** ▲



Contributed to **society** this year:

## £26,520

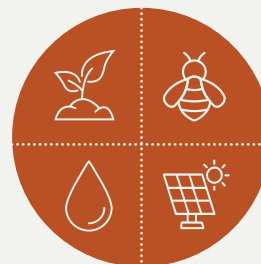
Your farm provides pollination and climate benefits to the wider landscapes and environment – they may be monetisable.

#### Top drivers:

- Crop product provision: **£20,692**  
Provision of public amenity
- Soil quality regulation: **£3,909**  
Improved water quality
- Pollination services: **£1,919**  
Improved neighbour pollination

### Your profit after nature

Your practices are paying off – protect soil and cut emissions to keep profits growing



## £26,967

70% business loss  
30% external loss

Carbon emissions & nitrogen loss are cutting into your bottom line



## £64,575

70% business gain  
30% external gain

Soil & carbon are adding value – keep building to grow your returns

Source: Trinity Natural Capital Group

NCVM creates a trusted common language of translating biological realities into financial metrics and decision dashboards that farmer, adviser and investor can trust and share.

This is not merely a market preference; it's a phase change. ISO, BSI, IPCC tier 2/3 aligned-standards, block chain registration, scientific transparency and analytical excellence are now the price of admission.

The first generation of light-touch, pseudo-scientific schemes that helped some 'tick a box' now represent outsized liability for growers, processors, brands and financiers. A minority of mercenary offerings persist, but they are increasingly screened out by buyers and lenders who require decision-grade, verifiable evidence.

## Shaping your future

The world will stay unpredictable. The challenge is not to predict the future but to shape it: read signals earlier, invest smarter and show the value of stewardship in language the market recognises. When nature, knowledge and credibility move together, prosperity follows.

This alignment of ecology with economics – and analytics with judgment – makes NCVM agriculture's compass: a guide through volatility and uncertainty, a bridge between stewardship and prosperity, and a symbol of leadership in the age of intelligence.

By quantifying what truly matters, NCVM delivers the *resilience dividend*, the extra stability and value that come from nurturing natural capital. It's not a theory; it's numbers that tell a story of strength.



**Dr Hosein Khajeh-Hosseiny**  
holds a number of Public Service  
Trusteeships, including:

- Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE)
- National Oceanography Centre (NOC) & Chairman of NOC Innovations
- Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
- The Productivity Group
- Royal Albert Hall Trust
- The Brookings Institution (Washington DC, USA)

**For more information on Trinity Natural Capital Valuation & Management (NCVM), please refer to [www.trinityagtech.com/NCVM](http://www.trinityagtech.com/NCVM)**





Enfield, an area of North London that sits just within the M25

# Rewilding London

Private investors are being offered a unique opportunity to get involved with one of the world's most ambitious urban-fringe nature-restoration projects, right on the edge of London.

*Mark Topliff & James Shepherd – Rural Consultancy, Natural Capital*

The numbers are big, they are bold, and they are very exciting.

Within the M25 in North London, the Borough of Enfield is starting to deliver not only one of the largest rewilding projects in the capital, but also one of the very few large-scale rewilding schemes adjacent to a major city anywhere in the world.

As part of the 1,500-hectare Enfield Chase landscape recovery scheme, over 750 hectares of new woodland and woodland pasture will be created, 23,000 metres of brooks and rivers will be re-naturalised, and 40 hectares of new ponds and wetlands dug.

Many of the Borough's tenant farmers have also committed to taking part in the project, and they will be supported to farm in more sustainable and nature-friendly ways.

It is predicted that these environmental enhancements will draw an extra one million visitors to an area that was once a formal royal hunting forest, which has been transformed significantly over the years due to more intensive agriculture, with only fragments of the forest remaining.

“This scheme will deliver sustainable benefits that will be felt locally and more widely. The mosaic of woodlands, wetlands and grasslands over hundreds of hectares will improve biodiversity, creating new and expanded habitats for wildlife.”

“Importantly, it will provide enhanced accessibility for many people who, in the past, did not have the benefit of living near open, green spaces,” said Enfield Council’s Executive Director for Environment and Communities, Brett Leahy.

## Natural benefits

The biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing benefits delivered by the scheme, which will undoubtedly become an international exemplar for urban rewilding to the UK’s capital and its population, will be manifold.

Increasingly volatile weather patterns, coupled with the destruction of natural flood defence mechanisms, have made cities far more vulnerable to flooding.

In Enfield Chase, for example, the Salmons Brook River has been so modified that it no longer connects to its natural floodplain. Instead of mitigating the effects of heavy rainfall, it sends water rapidly downstream towards flood-prone urban areas in the Lee Valley.

“By co-funding the project, partners will gain a unique opportunity to contribute to a transformative environmental initiative with measurable impact.”

By holding back the equivalent of 36,000 litres of water every hour, the Enfield project will protect over 1,800 properties from the impact of extreme weather events.

Mental and physical health will also receive a boost from nature prescribing and wellness initiatives, whilst new jobs and pathways into the green economy will be created via school engagement, citizen science and green skills training.

Local communities will become more empowered as under-represented groups, such as young people, disabled people and ethnic minorities gain a far more inclusive access to nature through grassroots partnerships and volunteering initiatives.

## Partnership requirements

Defra has funded the development of the project. However, much of the funding for its delivery, which could total up to £68 million over the next 20 years, needs to be secured. The project is keen to offer private organisations, individuals and investors the opportunity to share the benefits of this ground breaking initiative via partnership opportunities.

By co-funding the project, partners will gain a unique opportunity to contribute to a transformative environmental initiative with measurable impact. Benefits include enhanced

brand reputation through visible climate and biodiversity action, access to data-driven insights on ecological improvements and alignment with ESG goals.

Partners will also help shape a pioneering model for urban nature recovery, which aligns to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and supports community wellbeing, education and green job creation. This collaboration offers long-term social, environmental and economic returns, positioning partners as leaders in sustainability and innovation within one of the world’s most ambitious urban rewilding schemes.

“By holding back the equivalent of 36,000 litres of water every hour, the Enfield project will protect over 1,800 properties from the impact of extreme weather events.”

To help measure the return on investment, the recovery project will be data-led from the outset. Partners amongst other organisations will monitor and evaluate habitat creation, improvements in water quality, carbon sequestration and the boost in biodiversity, which will be hugely beneficial in supporting the investment partners’ sustainability objectives.

## Data-led monitoring

Partnerships like those in the Enfield Chase project represent the future of nature recovery because they unite public ambition with private innovation and investment. Collaborative models allow for larger-scale, longer-term environmental impact, leveraging diverse expertise and resources.

They also ensure accountability through data-led monitoring and shared goals, making outcomes more transparent and measurable. As climate and biodiversity challenges intensify, these partnerships foster resilience, inclusivity and community engagement. They empower organisations and individuals to be active agents of change, aligning environmental stewardship with social and economic benefits. This integrated approach is essential for restoring ecosystems and building a sustainable future.

We are excited to be taking part in this pioneering project that will transform a large part of North London and look forward to working with others who share the same ambition for the environment and the local community.

## Get involved

If you are an organisation or individual that wants to enjoy the benefits of investing in nature, please contact James or Mark to find out more.



# Planning, development & renewables

Experts from across our teams share their insights on four themes critical to the UK's rural infrastructure and residential development sectors.

As the UK's rural landscape continues to evolve, the intersection of policy, planning and market dynamics is reshaping how land is used, developed and protected. The shifting planning landscape, the realities of renewable energy deployment, the

pressures facing development land markets, and the growing complexity of Biodiversity Net Gain are things we all need to consider. We are at a pivotal moment as the government prepares to launch its Future Land Use Framework; a strategic initiative aimed at guiding how land is allocated and managed across competing priorities. Together, the following perspectives offer a timely snapshot of the challenges and opportunities facing landowners, developers and policy makers alike.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

*Mark Topliff – Natural Capital*



England's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) market is expanding, though demand remains localised. Over 4,500 hectares of off-site area habitat are now registered nationally, with around 830 units allocated to developments, averaging 1.33 units per transaction.\*

Policy, however, is still evolving. Defra's recent consultations aim to refine BNG delivery for both small-scale developments and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Proposed changes include simplifying the Small Sites Metric, extending exemptions and improving access to off-site markets. NSIPs that include the biodiversity net gain standardised statements have now had their implementation date moved to May 2026.

The government seeks to balance nature recovery with development efficiency. For rural landowners, this presents both opportunity and complexity. Our team is supporting clients with site baselining, habitat bank partnerships and unit matchmaking.

As the BNG framework matures, clarity and proportionality will be critical. The next phase of policy must enable practical delivery whilst maintaining ecological ambition, especially for estates positioned to benefit from nature-positive development.

\*Figures taken from the Natural Asset Partners' BNG Data Insights Dashboard  
Source: [bgs.bristoltrees.space/statistics](https://bgs.bristoltrees.space/statistics)

## Renewable energy

*David Goatman – Global Head of Energy & Sustainability*



Solar is at the heart of the government's mission to make the UK a clean energy superpower, aiming to treble solar output from the current 18GW. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Ed Miliband has just approved the biggest solar project to date. Tillbridge Solar in Lincolnshire will cover about 3,000 acres and power about 300,000 homes. The scheme takes approvals made by Miliband's department to 3GW and further towards his goal of 57GW.

However, there are growing headwinds, with investor enthusiasm being dampened by political concerns.

With Reform UK promising to scrap net-zero targets and stop solar projects, investors are beginning to question the sense of starting the long planning process, especially when grid capacity is already stretched. There is also growing concern over the lack of spatial planning and the amount of good quality agricultural land being lost to solar development in some parts of the country. One assumes that this is something that the government's proposed land use framework will address.

Sites that can bypass the grid and connect directly to an end user have the most potential.

The planning pipeline for new battery storage sites is also oversupplied, and landowners with consented sites that might not be needed may want to assess alternative uses.

Storage sites, by definition, generally have good grid access, so tapping into the burgeoning demand for data centres could be an option worth considering, although only a limited number of sites will be suitable.

## Planning

*Ryan Caldon – Senior Planner,  
Residential Development*



‘Build, baby, build’ is new Housing Secretary, Steve Reed’s rallying slogan for a nationwide push to accelerate housebuilding and infrastructure development as part of the government’s much talked about plan to deliver 1.5 million new homes within the current Parliament.

Whilst many are sceptical about the government’s ability to meet its target, what is clear is the need for development land and the opportunity that this presents for landowners. With a significant number of local planning authorities unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, every landowner should be engaging in a review of planning opportunities and taking an active interest in existing Option and Promotion Agreements and local plan preparations. The time to act is now.

With the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework last year, the introduction of the ‘grey belt’ and the arrival of a new plan-making system in 2026, much is changing in the world of planning.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB) is currently making its way through Parliament. In concert with the other measures, the government hopes the PIB will streamline our overstretched planning system and unlock development by removing perceived barriers, including environmental concerns. Part 3 of the Bill focuses on environmental mitigation and includes the setting up of a national Nature Restoration Fund that developers can pay into to offset any environmental damage their projects might cause. However, campaigners claim this will actually reduce environmental protection and have been lobbying hard to have it amended.

The government has also recently accepted the findings of its New Towns Taskforce, which included a shortlist of 12 locations for new settlements of at least 10,000 homes.

They have committed to breaking ground on at least three new towns before the end of this Parliament, with Tempsford in Bedfordshire, Crews Hill in Enfield and Leeds South Bank currently seen as front runners.

## Residential development markets

*Robert Mitchell – Residential Development Land*



Despite the UK government’s ongoing focus on boosting housebuilding, average values for residential development land have come under increasing pressure in recent quarters.

According to the Q3 2025 results of the Knight Frank Residential Development Land Index, average values for both greenfield and brownfield sites have fallen by 5% over the past 12 months, reflecting wider challenges across the housebuilding sector.

The downward trend stems from a combination of factors: a growing supply of sites coming to market, persistent delays in the planning system and the limited capacity of the UK construction sector to deliver homes at the pace required. Financing constraints and cost inflation across labour and materials have also played a role in dampening developer appetite.

However, the development land market remains highly granular. In locations with strong demand fundamentals – particularly urban extensions near major regional cities such as Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester – appetite for well-located sites remains resilient. Areas earmarked for release from the ‘grey belt’ near existing infrastructure continue to command a premium where planning prospects are clearer and values are higher.

By contrast, more remote or rural sites are increasingly exposed in the current market. With housebuilders facing tighter capital discipline and increased scrutiny around project viability, the trend is towards more selective land acquisition. Sites that carry greater planning risk, infrastructure costs, or limited resale value are more likely to struggle to find buyers or to be reprioritised.

Looking ahead, whilst headline values may continue to face pressure, the strongest demand is expected to remain focused on high-quality, well-connected sites in proven markets, especially where planning risk is minimised and local demand is strong.



# Financing the future

There’s more to refinancing debt than just finding the best interest rate.

Bradley Smith & James Jones – Knight Frank Finance

Although persistent levels of inflation mean we are likely to see fewer base rate cuts than hoped for this year from the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee, that doesn’t mean lenders don’t have some tempting products on offer. Whilst rates may be higher than one would like, the margin that banks are prepared to lend at has reduced, and there is every reason to review current borrowing and restructuring opportunities. For many, there are some interesting ways of restructuring things and some very worthwhile savings to be made.

Tracking down cheaper borrowing is just the beginning of the refinancing journey. Starting this can also be a useful inflection point that allows estates to take an overarching view of ownership structures and succession planning.

“Insurance policies can be tailored to match the value of the estate and the duration of the gifting risk.”

This has become even more imperative following the UK government’s proposed changes to Inheritance Tax reliefs. For many, the transfer of assets before death has now become a key strategy to mitigate future tax exposure.

For a client that we helped recently, the refinancing process was the trigger to shift the ownership of their estate, and the debt, into the name of their successor. This was not a straightforward exercise, with many things to think about, including the lifetime gifting rules, the challenges around reservation of benefit, and the need for the person transferring the assets to live for seven years before the gift becomes completely exempt from IHT liabilities.

To mitigate the risk of an untimely death during the next seven years, undoing all their sensible planning, our clients took out a fixed-term life insurance policy that would cover any IHT bills that might be incurred. Some typical premium rates for this kind of cover are included in the table to the right.

Insurance policies can be tailored to match the value of the estate and the duration of the gifting risk. Whole-of-life insurance offers a guaranteed lump sum on death regardless of age, typically saving 50% on the IHT bill, and can be placed in trust to keep the payout outside of the estate. Joint life, second death policies are particularly useful for couples planning succession together and offer significant savings over first death policies.

However, insurance is just one part of the puzzle. Estate owners should also be aware of several common pitfalls when refinancing and planning for succession:

- **Debt and ownership misalignment:** Keeping debt in the older generation’s name can complicate succession and tax planning.
- **CGT exposure:** Lifetime asset transfers may trigger Capital Gains Tax, especially for diversified estates.
- **Outdated paperwork:** Wills, partnership agreements and trust deeds must reflect any changes in ownership or gifting.
- **Liquidity gaps:** Understanding whether the estate can meet the future IHT bills is vital. Insurance, asset sales or borrowing may be part of the solution.

Life insurance to mitigate inheritance tax on lifetime gifts			
Costs for £1 million of cover on a lifetime gift of £2.5 million			
Policy Year	Sum assured	AGE 40	AGE 70
		Annual premium	Annual premium
1 to 3	£1m	£461	£7,592
4	£800k	£371	£6,172
5	£600k	£282	£4,748
6	£400k	£192	£3,321
7	£200k	£98	£1,743
Total premiums over 7 year period		£2,326	£38,759
Effective IHT rate		0.09%	1.55%

Source: Knight Frank Finance



# On the Market

Discover more about the properties we have on the market across the UK.

**34 A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS**

Turning a page in history, the story of Venthams Farm could be yours to write

**36 PROPERTY PORTFOLIO**

Browse our latest rural estate opportunities for sale





The 745-acre farm is now completely arable

# A new chapter begins

Discover the rich history of Venthams Farm, a wonderful family estate currently on the market in Froxfield, Hampshire, and the role it continues to play in the local community.

*Jennifer Toomer – owner of Venthams Farm*

My family's history at Venthams starts in 1909 when the farm, forming part of the Nicholson Basing Park estate, was let to Noel Baxendale, my grandfather.

William Nicholson had been chairman of J&W Nicholson & Co, the successful London gin distillery and alehouse business. He was also an MP and keen amateur cricketer, playing for the Marylebone Cricket Club.

Nicholson invested in diverse interests, acquiring his farming estate in 1863. Then in 1866, along with his cricketing neighbour, Thomas Lord, he spent over £18,000 to enable the purchase of the freehold for the Lord's cricket ground, plus a large loan for the new pavilion.

Venthams farmhouse is thought to have originally been Tudor but was enlarged by Nicholson in 1890. Further expansion by my grandfather around 1910 was in the Arts-and-Crafts Lutyens style, incorporating the vernacular exterior brick and flint walls into a galleried hall surrounding an oak staircase. Where we now have polished parquet, my mother recalled "an area of nettles and chickens".

Amazingly, Venthams has escaped being listed, offering any new owner rare licence to create a home suited to their own taste.

From 1909, Noel Baxendale farmed Venthams as a tenant farmer, until the success of the family's Pickford's removals business enabled him to buy the farm outright in 1945. Having been part of the Home Guard, he painted his Rolls Royce in camouflage, with a gunshot shattered windscreen bestowed by the ballistics of a low flying pheasant.



A feature of Venthams that I particularly love is the stunning hilltop views over the Hampshire countryside. Noel was an early importer of a Friesian dairy herd, but no one at the time kept dairy herds on top of a hill as a river was needed for their drinking water. This explains the huge subterranean water tanks under the farmyard for catching water, whilst the large semi-circular pond originally fed a lower pond for cattle. The 745-acre farm is now arable, including 250 acres of woodland.

In 1952, Noel Baxendale offered the farm to his middle daughter Ruth Lucas, my mother, so we moved to Froxfield. Eventually my husband, Hugh Toomer, took the reins in the mid 70's, farming until he died in 2014, and Venthams is now farmed by my nephews, Jonathan and Charles Lucas.

“A feature of Venthams that I particularly love is the stunning hilltop views over the Hampshire countryside.”

## The role of farms in the rural community

Any of our farm buildings and spaces not suitable for modern agriculture are let to local skilled artisanal businesses such as Parks Joinery and the internationally renowned Blenheim Forge knives. Whilst providing invaluable diversified income to the farm, we see it as a priority to enable local firms to flourish, with easy access and ample space.

The house offers ideal hospitality spaces around the central hall. Hugh and I were once inspired by a restaurant in Madrid where the waiters burst into operatic arias and the waitresses sang back, so we replicated this at Venthams to raise funds for a local hospice. Guests bought tickets for a table, bringing wine, flowers and candles and we would provide the dinner. A baby

grand piano supported opera singers moving from room to room, and these magical evenings became an annual event for over ten years.

## Sporting times

The Baxendales were keen country sport people and several family members can be seen in the background of the huge hunting scene hanging in Venthams' dining room, a portrait by Charles Lutyens of the Hon Francis Scott, MFH of the Surrey Union Hunt. Venthams' yard is still used for meets.

Hunting and shooting historically played a key role in rural communities, creating employment and income, as well as a strong sense of community.

The topography here is ideal for shooting pheasant and partridge, with a mix of elevated and low-level roosting copses, plus a variety of drives and cover. Hugh, along with a friend, started the shoot at Venthams. The first ever entry in the game book proudly records “5 pheasants and a pigeon”.

With a game conservancy booklet in one hand and a poult in the other, they built an excellent small shoot for syndicate and let days for 40 years, until Covid-19 and avian flu called a halt.

Venthams has been a wonderful family home, providing happy memories to generations of our family. Our fervent hope is that whoever buys it will continue that tradition for many years to come.

If you would to know more about the property, please contact Will Matthews, 07795 238559, or scan the QR code.



The interior & exterior of the main house at Venthams





## Carlshead Farm

Sicklinghall, North Yorkshire

A rare opportunity to acquire a ring-fenced 502-acre block of Grade 2/3 arable land, pasture and woodland. In addition, the farm includes modern agricultural buildings, the Carlshead Business Centre, three residential properties and around 10 acres of wetlands used by a local angling club and a woodland retreat.



Guide price £6,575,000 for the whole, or available in lots



## Ebberly House

Roborough, Devon

Set around an elegant nine-bed Grade II\* listed Georgian house with delightful formal gardens, a tennis court, swimming pool and woodland walks, this 249-acre estate includes seven additional residential properties that generate significant rental income. There is also a 17,000 sq ft range of farm buildings with their own access.



Guide price £6,950,000 for the whole





## Fawley House Stud

Wantage, Oxfordshire

With a long and distinguished racing pedigree, Fawley is a versatile 165-acre equestrian facility overlooking the Lambourn Downs that includes 52 boxes, an indoor school and 20 paddocks. The main accommodation is a stunning 10-bay timber-framed, five-bed barn conversion. There is also a four-bed secondary house and a two-bed flat.



Guide price £4,900,000 for the whole, or available in lots



## West Ditchburn and Hagdon

Alnwick, Northumberland

Agricultural, sporting, natural capital and carbon opportunities are all available on this upland livestock farm, which includes 1,095 acres of commercially managed pasture and 915 acres of moorland. There is a Grade II listed farmhouse with far-reaching views, while a two-bed house with buildings on Hagdon Moor provides some exciting renovation options.



Guide price £9,500,000 for the whole, or available in two lots





# Contacts

**Our UK teams cover all regions, so no matter where you are and what you need, we're here to help.**

**Head of Rural** | 07702 317221

**JAMES FARRELL**

james.farrell@knightfrank.com

**Head of Farms & Estates Sales** | 07795 238559

**WILL MATTHEWS**

will.matthews@knightfrank.com

## **Regional Rural Offices**

**North East** | 07815 461229

**CLAIRE WHITFIELD**

claire.whitfield@knightfrank.com

**North West** | 07929 385008

**ROSS HOULDEN**

ross.houlden@knightfrank.com

**Midlands** | 07977 713700

**PATRICK BEDDOWS**

patrick.beddows@knightfrank.com

**Central** | 07815 461221

**JESS WADDINGTON**

jessica.waddington@knightfrank.com

**East** | 07768 232922

**ALASTAIR PAUL**

alastair.paul@knightfrank.com

**South East – Kent** | 07974 861094

**ALISTAIR FELL**

alistair.fell@knightfrank.com

**South East – Sussex & Surrey** | 07977 072901

**JAMIE EVANS-FREKE**

jamie.evans-freke@knightfrank.com

**South West** | 07816 214757

**JOHN WILLIAMS**

john.williams@knightfrank.com

## **Wider Rural Services**

**Rural Client Finance** | 07817 445865

**ELIN JONES**

elin.jones@knightfrank.com

**Viticulture** | 07815 465494

**ED MANSEL LEWIS**

edwardmansel.lewis@knightfrank.com

**Agri & Grant Funding** | 07977 834223

**MARK TOPLIFF**

mark.topliff@knightfrank.com

**Compulsory Purchase** | 07776 858532

**TIM BROOMHEAD**

tim.broomhead@knightfrank.com

**Valuations** | 07798 571081

**TOM BARROW**

tom.barrow@knightfrank.com

**Land Development** | 07971 791601

**ROBERT MITCHELL**

robert.mitchell@knightfrank.com

**Agri Finance** | 07811 035505

**BRADLEY SMITH**

bradley.smith@knightfrankfinance.com

**Insurance Services** | 07918 561771

**JAMES JONES**

james.jones@knightfrankfinance.com

**Energy & Renewables** | 07825 120534

**DAVID GOATMAN**

david.goatman@knightfrank.com

**Natural Capital** | 07770 013150

**JAMES SHEPHERD**

james.shepherd@knightfrank.com

**Planning** | 07977 034279

**NICK MADDEN**

nick.madden@knightfrank.com

**Farms & Estates Sales** | 07814 294327

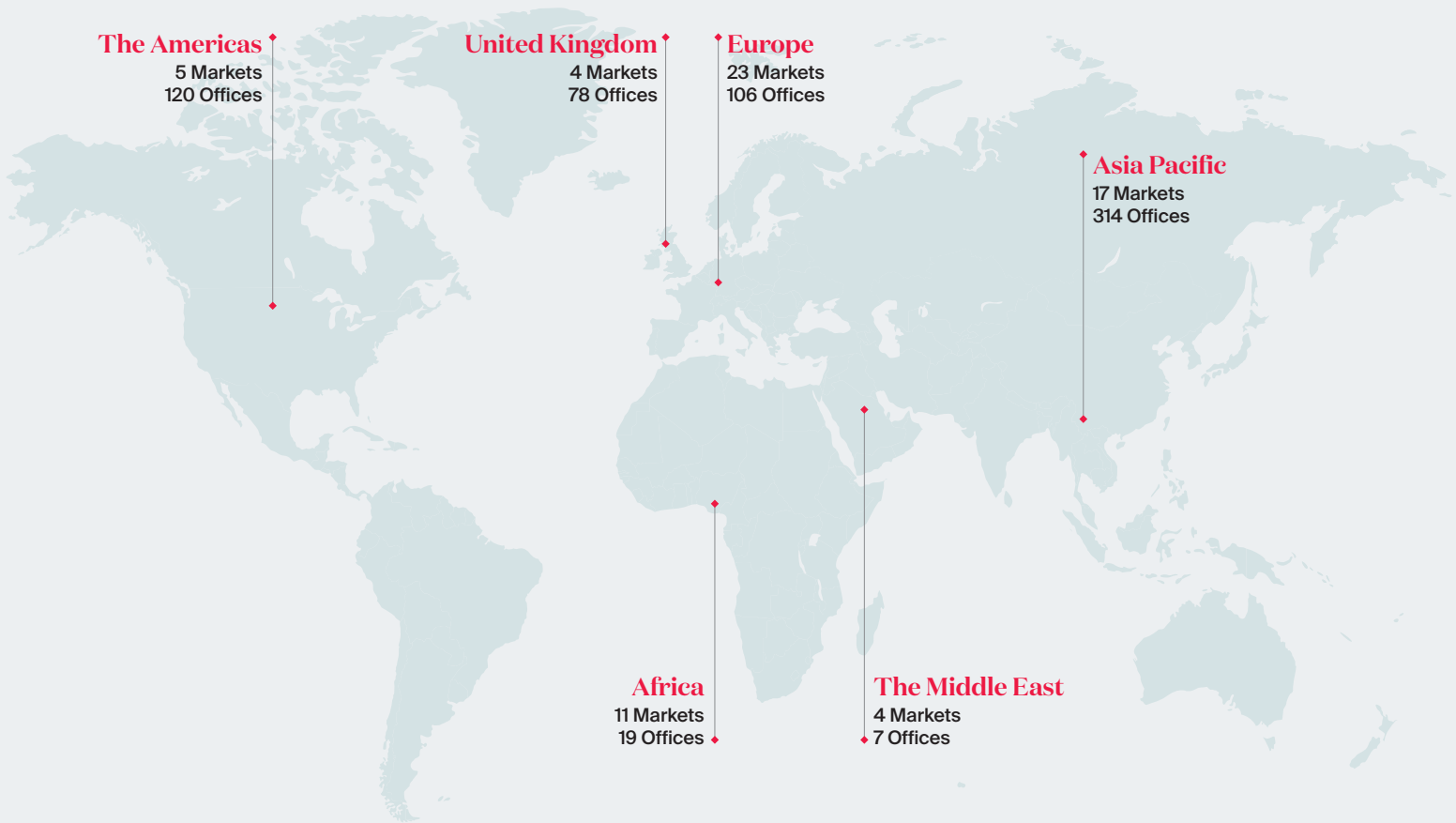
**ALICE KEITH**

alice.keith@knightfrank.com

# Our global network

Our local experts are globally connected. Supported by a network of 600+ offices across over 50 territories, we are present as your partner, to support all your property needs.

If we can help, our client services phone number is +44 203 869 4758. Alternatively, you can contact us at [clientservices@knightfrank.com](mailto:clientservices@knightfrank.com)



## Where we operate

### Africa

Botswana | Egypt | Kenya | Malawi | Morocco | Nigeria  
South Africa | Tanzania | Uganda | Zambia | Zimbabwe

### The Americas

Bahamas | Barbados | Canadas | St Barts | United States of America

### Asia Pacific

Australia | Cambodia | Chinese Mainland | Fiji | Hong Kong SAR | India  
Indonesia | Japan | Macau SAR | Malaysia | New Zealand | Philippines  
Singapore | South Korea | Taiwan | Thailand | Vietnam

### Europe

Austria | Belgium | Bulgaria | Czech Republic | Denmark  
Finland | France | Germany | Greece | Hungary | Iceland  
Ireland | Italy | Monaco | Netherlands | Poland | Portugal | Romania  
Serbia | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | Turkey

### The Middle East

Kingdom of Bahrain | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Qatar | United Arab Emirates

### United Kingdom

England | Scotland | Wales | Jersey



