Outlook

CURRENT NEWS & VIEWS ON ISSUES AFFECTING LAND AND PROPERTY FROM HOBBS PARKER WINTER 2026/27

Investing in Nature

New Opportunities for the Rural Sector?

How private finance could help shape the future of our countryside.

Nature recovery is increasingly recognised as essential to the long-term health of our countryside, rural economy and communities. From restoring habitats and improving soil health to protecting rivers and reducing flood risk, investing in the natural environment is becoming an important part of building a more resilient rural landscape.

However, delivering nature recovery on the scale required needs significant funding. In its recent publication, Growing Places: Mobilising private finance for local nature recovery, DEFRA sets out its ambition to encourage greater investment from businesses and private investors, alongside existing government funding. ***Continued on page 2***



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Investing in Nature

How private finance could help shape the future of our countryside



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It has been another busy year for our Planning Consultancy team

AMC AGENT

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The underlying principle is straightforward: nature provides benefits that extend well beyond the environment itself. Healthy soils, clean water, thriving ecosystems and functioning landscapes support farming, businesses and the wider economy. There is therefore an opportunity to attract investment from those who benefit from these natural assets.

Creating opportunities for landowners

For farmers and landowners this could create opportunities to generate additional income by delivering environmental improvements alongside existing agricultural activities.

Potential projects include woodland creation, habitat restoration, wetland creation, improved soil management, carbon storage and measures to improve water quality and reduce flooding.

The intention is not to replace food production or existing environmental schemes, but to develop additional funding streams that reward land managers for the wider benefits their land can provide.

Working together locally

An important theme of Growing Places is that nature recovery needs to be coordinated at a local level. Individual farmers and landowners may find it difficult to attract private investment independently, particularly where projects require specialist expertise, substantial funding or long-term commitments.

Bringing together landowners, businesses, local authorities and environmental organisations could help develop larger projects that deliver benefits across entire landscapes or river catchments.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies can help identify priorities and opportunities, ensuring investment is directed towards areas where it can make the greatest difference.

Building confidence and looking ahead

For private investment to succeed, businesses need confidence that the environmental benefits they are funding are genuine, measurable and lasting.

Clear standards, transparency and appropriate safeguards will therefore be essential to building trust in emerging nature markets.

For farmers and landowners there are exciting possibilities, but also practical considerations. Projects must offer fair financial returns, have clear contractual arrangements and recognise the long-term responsibilities involved.

Ultimately, Growing Places represents an important shift towards recognising the economic value of the natural environment. By combining public funding, private investment and the expertise of those who manage the land, there is an opportunity to create a countryside that is environmentally richer, economically stronger and more resilient for future generations.



Matthew Sawdon
Director
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SFI 26'- Is this the new normal for environmental funding?

After a rather frantic application session, I am pleased to report that the majority of SFI applications were successful with clients receiving agreement ranging from £2-3,000 all the way up to £80,000.

So, where to next for SFI?

The recently published Farming Roadmap gives some indication. Defra envisages the gradual withdrawal of financial support with more emphasis being placed on private funding, combined with the regulation of many of the actions currently supported.

A good example of this is the soil management plans, previously funded under SAM1, however due to the Farming Rules for Water, soil and nutrient management plans are already a regulatory requirement meaning that DEFRA identified funding these as "regulatory duplication". In plain English: why pay farmers for paperwork they are already legally obliged to do?

With the increase in regulation further to the UK's exit from the EU (see Management of Hedgerows Regulations 2024), it is envisaged that more actions may accompany SAM1 on DEFRA's rubbish mound of discarded options.

The facts, however, are that at the time of writing, no details of SFI 2027 have been released, merely a confirmation that it will happen, however a mix of speculation and industry noises have led me to make some (rather) bold predictions about where SFI 2027 might go…

First come first served to end - *An objective look at the merits of each application*

The window to open as early as possible *Spring window to ensure any funding gaps are minimised*

Targeted actions - *Certain actions prioritised for certain environments and landscapes*

Stricter audits and controls - *return on environmental investment to be analysed and stricter checks on record keeping.*

If you are looking to apply for SFI next year, get in touch with me for a no-obligation discussion.



Cameron Gleed
Graduate Rural Surveyor
01233 506201



Meet the Team

In this issue we meet...

Jessica de Camborne Lucy

Graduate Rural Surveyor

Jess joined us back in September after graduating from Nottingham Trent University with a first class honours degree with a BSc (Hons) in Property Development and Planning. She is looking forward to continuing her professional development as she works towards completing the APC final assessment to obtain RICS Chartership and the CAAV examinations to become a fellow of the CAAV. Jess will predominantly assist Matthew Sawdon with valuations, agency and tenancy advice.

Outside of work, Jess enjoys socialising with family and friends, competing horses, going for walks in the countryside, and travelling to new places, her favourite so far being Vietnam.

Autumn Budget 2026: Implications for the Rural and Property Sectors

The Chancellor's Autumn Budget, delivered on 28 October, introduced several measures with implications for farmers, landowners, landlords and rural businesses.

One of the most significant changes for the property sector is a two-percentage-point increase in income tax rates on rental income from April 2027. This will increase the tax burden on private landlords and property investors, potentially affecting investment decisions and portfolio returns.

For farming families and rural estates, Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) remain important considerations.

The existing reforms, including the £2.5 million allowance for 100% relief on qualifying assets, remain in place, meaning succession and inheritance tax planning continue to be important.

There was some welcome news for rural businesses, with the temporary 5p fuel duty reduction extended until July 2027. This should provide some relief for businesses and land managers reliant on vehicles and machinery. The extension of the reduced red diesel duty rate will also benefit eligible agricultural users. Employment costs will also rise, with the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage increasing by 3.9% from April 2027, adding pressure for businesses employing seasonal and permanent staff.

In the housing market, additional funding for affordable housing and new support for first time buyers aim to improve access to home ownership.

Overall, the Budget presents a mixed picture. While some measures offer welcome support, increased taxation and operating costs reinforce the importance of careful financial, property and succession planning across the rural sector.





Matthew Sawdon
Director
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National Landlord Registration Scheme - what you need to know

Another change to the rental sector is on the way and this time, it will cost landlords £65 per property, each year.

From December 2026, the Government will begin rolling out a new national landlord registration scheme.

Landlords will need to register themselves and their rental properties on a new government database. The information is expected to include property details, landlord contact information and relevant safety certificates, including gas, electrical and EPC records. Registration is primarily a landlord responsibility but governing bodies are lobbying for agents to gain authority to act on landlords' behalf.

The registration is required for all landlords with Assured Tenancies, which effectively covers most residential tenancies including Agricultural Occupancies and Rent Act 1977 tenancies.

The scheme will be introduced region by region, with landlords given a three-month window to register at the appropriate time. Kent landlords can register their properties from 15th March 2027.

For landlords with rural property, it is worth getting records in order now rather than leaving everything until the deadline arrives, as failing to register before the deadline could result in a fine and being unable to obtain a possession order.

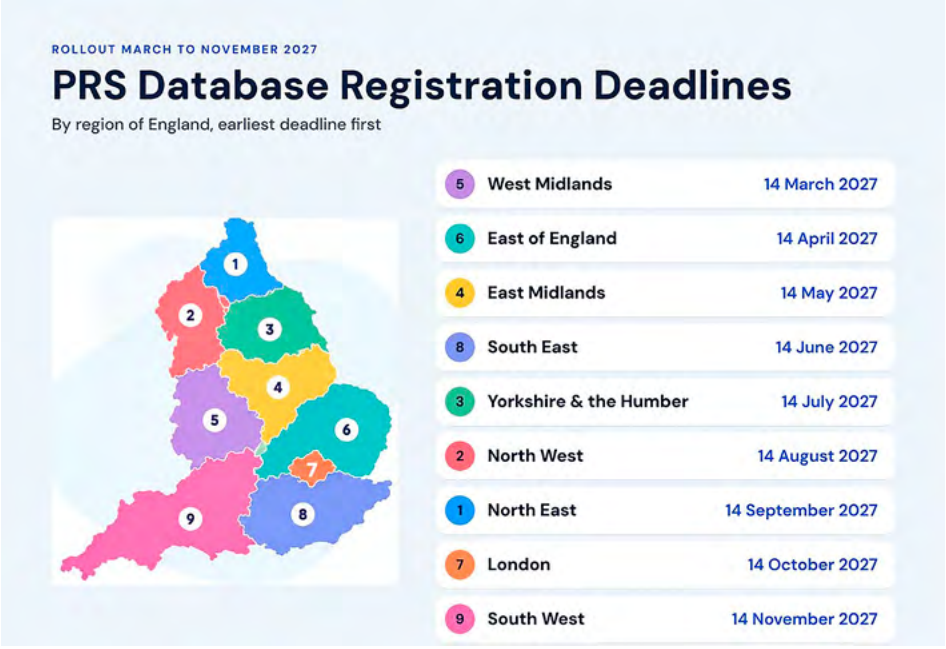
At Hobbs Parker, we would encourage landlords to review their residential lettings ahead of the rollout to ensure compliance.

A little preparation now could save time, hassle and cost later on.

If you own rural property and are unsure how the changes will affect you, our lettings team can help you understand what you need to do.



Toby Rolfe
Business Development Manager
01233 506240



Planning Successes of 2026



Existing livestock building granted planning permission for conversion to storage and light industrial uses with mezzanine floors.

It has been another busy year for our Planning Consultancy team who have been working on a range of planning applications across Kent and East Sussex, including developments for residential and commercial uses, farm diversification projects and solar schemes.

Our Associate Director, Elizabeth Welch, has secured planning permission for a variety of developments this year. Standout projects include working with architects to secure a contemporary replacement dwelling in the National Landscape and gaining consent for a permitted development scheme under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R scheme to convert a rural building in Tunbridge Wells to 990 square metres of B8 storage use.

The value of early engagement with the Local Planning Authority has continued to be proven this year. Elizabeth has secured planning permission for a single contemporary dwelling in the Dover district after receiving positive pre-application advice and has also recently submitted a planning application for a residential scheme of 46 units following positive discussions with the Council, with the decision expected in the coming weeks.

A highlight this year for Isabelle Adaway, Senior Planning Consultant, has been securing planning permission for the change of use of a livestock building in north Kent to circa 1,250 square metres of light industrial and storage floorspace.

The project had its challenges, being in the Green Belt, adjacent to a Conservation Area and closeby to neighbouring residents but through robust justification with supporting technical reports from external consultants we work with, we were able to secure planning permission within the statutory timeframe.

Other notable work this year includes a successful appeal in Ramsgate for a new dwelling, the granting of several Certificates of Lawfulness for breaches of restrictive occupancy conditions, a new solar panel development in Rother, new dwellings, removal of agricultural occupancy conditions and numerous submissions of parcels of land to various Call for Sites openings across Kent.

Grace has had a busy first year at Hobbs Parker, with a particular highlight being supporting rural business and farming clients with diversification and expansion projects, including securing permission for a new commercial kitchen to facilitate the growth of an established café business, and securing prior approval for a new agricultural lambing shed, helping to support the continued development of a local farming enterprise. Other successful projects this year include securing Certificates of Lawfulness for householders.

Grace has also recently completed the assessment process to become a Chartered Member of the RTPI (MRTPI), marking an important milestone in her professional development.

The planning profession has certainly kept the team on their toes this year, with significant changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, evolving Biodiversity Net Gain Requirements, and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Local Government Reorganisation.

Looking ahead to next year, we expect councils to press ahead with their local plans under the new 30-month process, and we will continue to work closely with landowners to represent their submitted sites throughout the local plan process.

Should you need assistance with any planning matter, please do get in touch with our Planning Consultancy Team.



Elizabeth Welch
Associate Director and Chartered Town Planner
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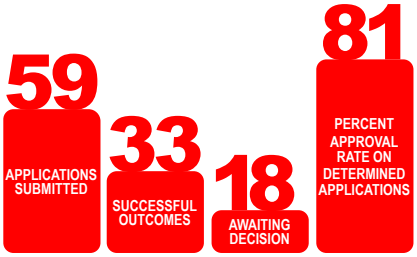
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A Year in Numbers

An overview of our planning activity in 2026



The articles in this edition should not be relied upon or regarded as a substitute for advice. Hobbs Parker Property Consultants LLP would be pleased to provide further information or advice on any particular issue.

Outlook is brought to you by Hobbs Parker Property Consultants - a team of experienced Rural Chartered Surveyors and Planning Consultants dedicated to providing professional advice and services to farmers and property owners. Part of the Hobbs Parker Group of companies proudly serving the people of the south east since 1850.

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