Outlook

CURRENT NEWS & VIEWS ON ISSUES AFFECTING LAND AND PROPERTY FROM HOBBS PARKER AUTUMN 2026

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier

Navigating the new Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier

Defra and Natural England are launching a major update to the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) programme later this year, introducing "single-focus agreements" designed to bypass the traditionally long and complex full application process.

Targeting landowners managing species-rich grassland or scheduled monuments, this fast-track funding offers a simplified route to secure payments, with priority given to expiring agreement holders and a strict 300-holding cap for the "Ambition" pool.

The biggest headline? The introduction of "single-focus agreements" designed to bypass the traditionally long, complex full CSHT application process.

Here is exactly what you need to know and the steps you must take right now to prepare.

1. What Are Single-Focus Agreements?

Single-Focus Agreements offer a streamlined, non-invited route into Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) for 2026/2027, focusing on species-rich

grassland (CGS22) and scheduled monument conservation (CHS2-9). Backed by £50 million, this initiative allows up to 1,200 applicants to secure funding for targeted environmental actions without submitting a full, multi-action application.

2. Who Can Join In?

The first wave is aimed at landowners managing both species-rich grassland and scheduled monuments (historic features), with more to come following the planned introduction of wet grassland and traditional orchards.

3. Who Is Being Prioritised for 2026/2027?

- Expiring Agreement Holders (HLS and CSHT)
- The "Ambition" Pool funds land managers to upgrade existing Countryside Stewardship agreements for priority habitats.

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When somebody who owns property unfortunately dies, a valuation is normally required.

AMC AGENT

hobbs parker

Nationwide spaces are strictly capped at 300 due to advisor capacity limits.

- Mid-Tier holders.
- Those who want to start managing species rich grassland or scheduled monuments (but aren't currently in an agreement) can submit an expression of interest via the RPA portal. The RPA aims to contact those who have submitted an EOI within 10 weeks.
- Those who farm common land.

Defra plans to trial separate application routes for common land later this year.

4. Action Plan: What Landowners Need to Do to Apply.

Your application path depends entirely on your current situation and land.

For species-rich grassland & scheduled monuments.

Wait for the EOI to be available on the portal, and once you can submit an expression of interest, do so!

For New or Complex Habitat Creation.

Apply for Planning Grants Immediately, PA1 (Implementation Plan) and PA2 (Feasibility Study) grants are open all year round.

5. My 4 Main Key Takeaways...

- Submit your Expression of Interest as soon as possible. Currently, the RPA have received over 300 expressions.
- Extensions Are Available: If you have a split-timeline CSHT agreement (where some actions expire now but others run until 2031), Defra will offer extensions to ensure you don't suffer a funding gap.
- Utilise Year-Round Funding for Planning: If you aren't ready for a full agreement this year, use PA1 and PA2 grants to guarantee you a stronger, application next year.
- And as always, ensure your maps and details are up to date on the RPA portal.

Cameron Gleed
Graduate Rural Surveyor
01233 506201

Changes to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements now in effect

Back in 2024, the Government introduced a statutory requirement for new development to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Over the past two years we have seen how this requirement has put biodiversity at the forefront of planning, ensuring the impact on biodiversity is given due consideration from the outset.

However, in August 2026 the Government published new BNG regulations which sought to ease pressure on smaller schemes.

The key changes that came into effect were:

- A new 0.2ha exemption for the smallestdevelopments (unless priority habitat is affected);
- Exemptions for certain temporary developments (with restoration within 5 years);
- More flexibility for minor schemes to use off-site gains earlier;
- Removal of the self / custom build exemption.

The reality is, although in some circumstances BNG rules have relaxed, for the majority of development proposals, it remains key that the need to factor in ecology and BNG requirements in the early stages of the design process is essential. Many local planning authorities also have planning policies requiring BNG in excess of statutory requirements which must be adhered to, despite some relaxation of the rules from the Government.

We have experience working closely with ecologists across Kent and East Sussex and a track record for successful outcomes for schemes requiring BNG. If you have a project in mind, please get in touch with our planning team on 01233 506201 to see how we can assist.

Isabelle Adaway
Senior Planning Consultant
01233 506201

Meet the Team

In this issue we meet...

Cameron Gleed

Graduate Rural Surveyor

Hobbs Parker is delighted to announce the arrival of Cameron Gleed, who joined as a Graduate Surveyor this June.

After graduating with a degree in Rural Land Management from the Royal Agricultural University in 2024, Cameron qualified as a Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) in 2025 and joins us following valuable experience at small rural practices.

Cameron brings a wealth of hands-on expertise to Hobbs Parker.

He will be advising clients on a wide array of rural matters including rural grants and stewardship schemes such as SFI and CS. He is also currently preparing to sit his RICS APC assessment this October.

When he isn't out in the field advising clients, Cameron enjoys spending his spare time in the countryside, working on machinery, and catching up with friends and family.

Farms and Land Market Spring Review 2026

Land at Home Farm, Hothfield. Former parkland. Sale agreed.

After a steady start to the year, mainly due to heavy rainfall (when did we last see that!) in January and February, activity picked up in the Spring with a number of significant farms and blocks of land coming to the market.

The escalation in the Iran conflict, together with renewed concerns around inflation, energy costs and supply-chain disruption, weighed on confidence. That wider uncertainty has not removed demand, but it has made purchasers more cautious and, in some cases, slower to commit. This caution is consistent with renewed volatility following the March oil price shock and higher input-cost pressure, including fertiliser supply concerns linked to disruption in the Middle East.

A consistent theme is that the market has become more selective. Well-located commercial farms and productive blocks continue to attract interest and can still command premium pricing, whereas secondary, isolated or poor-quality land is encountering less demand and prolonged marketing periods.

Buyers remain active, but more price-conscious, with quality, scale, location and alternative income potential all carrying greater weight in decision-making than at the peak of the market.

We are pleased to report a number of sales proving that the market remains resilient here in the South East.

Land at Home Farm, Hothfield, a 135 acre block of former parkland, was marketed as a whole or in two lots with a guide price of £1,125,000 – £1,175,000 and is now sale agreed after a competitive bidding process.

Further afield within the M25, Ashmore Farm at Keston, a 114 acre grass farm with a 5 bedroom modern farmhouse and a collection of agricultural and equestrian buildings with views towards the City, is sale agreed in region of the £2,750,000 guide price.

In East Kent, a block of productive Grade II arable land extending to about 210 acres, with a guide price of £2,200,000 was sold and contracts exchanged within a week.

Also, in East Kent, we are marketing Newlands Farm, an interesting property comprising farmhouse, farm buildings with potential and 30 acres of productive arable situated on the urban fringe of Ramsgate.

Following more than 30 viewings and multiple offers, we are now seeking best and final offers.

The guide price is in excess of £1,000,000.

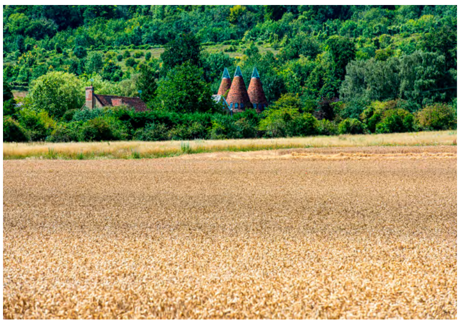
In addition, smaller blocks of amenity land continue to attract good interest from lifestyle purchasers.

With our local knowledge and expertise of the local farm and land market, our dedicated farm agents are well placed to advise on the best method of sale and how to maximise value.

Please contact a member of the team in confidence.

Matthew Sawdon
Director
01233 506201

Inheritance Tax Changes and the Importance of "Redbook" Probate Valuations



When somebody who owns property unfortunately dies, a valuation is normally required so that the executors of the will can apply for probate, before that property is released to the beneficiaries of the estate.

This can prove complicated and difficult for the executors, particularly where it includes farms and rural property which can comprise a range of dwellings, land, buildings, livestock, deadstock, and diversified assets and which need accurately assessing for value and any applicable tax reliefs.

The tax planning of rural estates has been at the forefront of attention, since the Autumn 2024 budget when planned reforms to Inheritance Tax Reliefs were announced. Since April 2026, Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief which provide tax reliefs on qualifying agricultural and business assets respectively are now restricted to 100% full relief only on the first £2.5 million of qualifying agricultural and business assets (with spousal transfer).

Above this £2.5 million allowance, impacted individuals and businesses will only receive 50% relief from inheritance tax on qualifying assets essentially meaning an effective tax rate of up to 20% on qualifying assets.

Many farming businesses are now facing a potential Inheritance Tax liability which did not exist prior to April 2026.

With increasing scrutiny from HMRC with regards to agricultural property, it is important to obtain a well-prepared, detailed valuation report.

A "Red Book" valuation is a professional standard recognised throughout the property industry and can be relied upon for Inheritance Tax valuations.

Hobbs Property Consultant valuers are all RICS Registered Valuers accredited to provide RICS "Redbook" valuations and Fellows of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) a specialist professional body for agricultural and rural valuers.

Our team can provide professional advice and valuation expertise on issues affecting probate valuations of rural property including the availability and values relating to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) with detailed commentary within our Valuation Reports to support our position.

To discuss your valuation requirements please don't hesitate to speak to Matthew, Vicky or Karen.

Karen Ross
Chartered Surveyor
01233 506201

Kent's Local Government Reorganisation: A New Opportunity

The Government has confirmed that Kent and Medway will move to four new unitary authorities from April 2028, replacing the current County and District Council structure. While much of the discussion has focused on governance, the changes could also have significant implications for plan-making and future development opportunities across the county. Similar reforms are also being progressed across Sussex, meaning many landowners and developers are facing the prospect of a changing planning landscape.

Many councils across Kent are currently progressing Local Plans, and for some landowners and developers, recent promotion outcomes may not have gone as hoped. However, Local Government Reorganisation could create a fresh opportunity.

As the new authorities become established, they will need to develop planning strategies and, ultimately, prepare new development plans to guide growth across their enlarged areas.

With priorities, evidence bases and housing requirements likely to be revisited, sites that have not been allocated through current Local Plan processes may yet come back into consideration.

For landowners, this reinforces the importance of taking a long-term view. If your site has not made the cut this time around, all hope is not lost. New opportunities are likely to emerge as Kent's future planning framework takes shape.

If you own land and would like to understand its development potential, now is the time to start the conversation. Early site promotion can help ensure your land is well-positioned when the next generation of Local Plans begins to emerge.

Grace Edmunds
Graduate Planner
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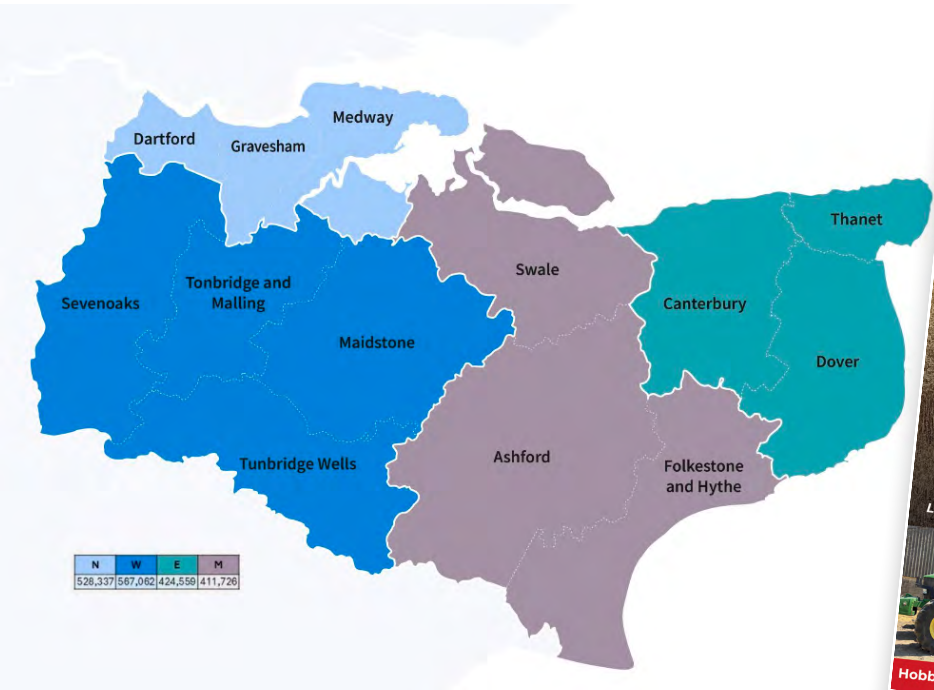

Dates for your Diary

SHOWS

Romney Marsh Ploughing Match

Sunday 6th September 2026

Shingle Hall Farm, St Mary's Road, St Mary in the Marsh, TN29 0BS

Weald of Kent Ploughing Match

Saturday 12th September 2026

Hengherst Farm, Shadoxhurst Road, Woodchurch, Ashford, TN26 3PP

East Kent Ploughing Match

Wednesday 30th September 2026

St Nicholas Court Farms, Monkton, CT12 4AU

FARM DISPERSAL SALE

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