# ASPECTS OF LAND

Special report: your guide to the Government's 25-year environment plan. p10 Make your land work for the public good – and reap the rewards. p18 Are you doing everything you can to use energy sustainably? p24





# Farming for the future

o far this year, the Government has published A Green Future: A 25-year Environment Plan followed by an Agricultural Command Paper. These documents mark a major shift of emphasis in the way in which subsidies for the countryside will operate and could well turn out to be the most important harbingers of change for the rural sector that we will see in our lifetimes.

It's fair to say that very few industries receive public money any more, and even if we weren't leaving the EU, a change is needed. With the average age of a British farmer now 59, however good they are at the job, it's time that the farming model was reinvigorated so that it attracts the next generation of entrepreneurs to take the industry forward.

These documents see the Government moving away from tinkering around the edges, showing instead that it is ready to fundamentally shake up how rural policy should operate.

The proposed shift in subsidies, which will offer greater transparency and a wide range of public benefits, is absolutely the right way to go, whether that's by farming in a way that benefits the land or by offering public goods. We need to find ways to achieve this without undue upheaval to businesses while at the same time assessing the value of the benefit to the public. These are questions that Savills is working on and it will be responding to the Government's current consultation.

My main concern with the Green Future Plan is that food production itself seems to be very low down on the agenda. Food production has to be the principal land use of the countryside and it needs to be given more prominence both by the Government and in the nation's conscience.

The UK is the gold standard for food production, not just at the top end of the market, but throughout the industry. There are fantastic examples of food producers in the UK but there isn't the public awareness around this that there should be. At a time when Brexit trade negotiations could unwittingly open the floodgates to lower standards of production we need to become

better at championing our successes. Just look at how David Attenborough's "Blue Planet" has raised awareness of the issue of single-use plastics. How can the rural sector do the same for the value of food - and I don't mean the price. Knowing where our food comes from and what has gone into its production is of huge value. The Sustainable Food Trust recently calculated that for every £1 that is spent on food, there is another £1 of hidden costs. These range from the cost to the environment to the costs of poor health such as antibiotic resistance and obesity. The greater awareness consumers have about food production, the better placed they are to decide on what they value.

This issue of *Aspects of Land* looks at many of the ideas raised in the

Government's proposals and some of the ways farmers and landowners could adapt to and benefit from them. I hope you enjoy the publication.

Philip Gready
Head of Savills Rural
020 3107 5470,
pgready@savills.com



COVER IMAGE: NUTTAWUT UTTAMAHARAD /
SHUTTERSTOCK LEFT: ZORAN MLADENOVIC

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# INTELLIGENCE

News and views from the rural sector



### **NOT SO VEGAN**

The charity Veganuary saw a 183% rise in the number of people signing up to go vegan for the month. And 28% of the population claim to have cut back their meat consumption since 2016. However, the figures don't tell the whole story as sales of fresh meat and poultry for 2017 were up by 1.8% – even though the population rise was only 1%.



Inspectors will be checking that manure is being applied in the right ground conditions

# ENVIRONMENT

# Rules for water

As of March this year, a new process for renewing a permitted water abstraction licence has been introduced. An historic link to a water source is no longer enough for an abstraction licence to be automatically renewed.

"Now, farmers wanting to renew their licence will receive details of water quantities they have used in the past and will subsequently have to justify why they should have this licence again," explains Peter Bennett of Savills Food and Farming.

The motivation for the change is to update the system to a digital one, as well as to more closely monitor how much water is being taken from catchment areas.

Other changes are being introduced as well. "People who haven't used the water they were entitled to will lose their right to a licence and certain activities, such as trickle and drip, that were previously exempt will now need a licence," says Peter.

Defra will also be running four pilot schemes that will be testing out the concept of licence trading within a catchment area.

"Landowners need to fully understand what licences they have and when they need renewing. And they need to factor in enough time for the renewal process – it's

not a two-minute job," he warns.

Rules were also introduced this month regarding how farmers should be applying manure and fertilisers to reduce the risk of water pollution.

Farmers will be expected to take account of weather and ground conditions before applying manure or fertiliser and there will be restrictions on how close products can be applied to waterways.

"It's just good practice, really," says Peter. "But farmers should be aware that inspectors will be checking up on them."

■ If you have queries about water regulations, contact Peter Bennett, Cambridge, 01223 347 221, pbennett@savills.com

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society has conducted a new survey of hedgehog numbers. It found that the number of hedgehogs in rural areas is declining, while those in urban areas is levelling off. A separate report in the European Journal of Wildlife Research found that these notorious slug eaters choose gardens and buildings as their preferred habitat, over woodland and arable land.



# £23,500

has been raised so far for county air ambulance charities by Savills Rural, Energy and Projects. Teams across the country have been holding cake sales, Christmas jumper days, running half-marathons and even jumping off jetties to reach this impressive figure. Each regional area is supporting its local air ambulance charity as they are regionally operated and receive no Government funding.



# WHO NEEDS SPECIES SURVEYS?

with Lee Scott, Savills Rural Planning

What is a species survey? Species surveys are carried out to make sure that no harm comes to any protected species in the course of a building project. They fall into two parts. A "Phase 1" survey will look at what habitats a proposed building site covers and whether that might mean more detailed surveys are needed to check for any protected species. Depending on what is found, further surveys might then happen, such as an "emergence" survey where an ecologist comes to the site and counts bats flying in and out of the building.

Who needs to carry out this type of survey? Most projects that need planning permission will need to carry out a species survey. Some councils won't look at a planning application until the relevant surveys are done. However, you may also need to do this if you're knocking down

or renovating an old building, cutting down trees or just building on a fresh piece of land, any activity that could disturb a habitat. There are times when even if you don't need planning permission – such as re-roofing a rural home – you'll still need to notify Natural England.

Likewise if no protected species are found, there might be restrictions, such as not cutting down trees when birds are nesting in them.

What are the costs involved with this type of survey? The costs will vary depending on the size of a project and where it is. But for most small building work, such as converting a barn, you'd be looking at between £500 and £2,000 for Phase 1 and then anything from £3,000 to £5,000 for more detailed surveys.



# What happens if protected species are found on a proposed development site? It is rare that the existence of a protected species will prevent

anything happening on a site. If a protected species is found then the usual solution is to provide an alternative habitat. The ecologist carrying out the survey will make recommendations. These could involve putting up bat boxes or might require the translocation of a species to a new site.

What do people often overlook regarding species surveys? The timing is important for these surveys. Counts of different species can only happen when those species are active, so generally they need to happen in the spring, summer or autumn, outside of hibernation periods. This can cause delays to when you are able to submit your planning application. And then, of course, there's making sure you've included all the survey costs in your budgets.

■ To find out more about species surveys on projects you're considering, contact Lee Scott, Petworth, 01798 345 971, lrscott@savills.com



Farming in Denmark is leading the field

# GLOBAL

# FARMLAND VALUES AROUND THE WORLD

Savills has updated its Global Farmland Index to include figures for 2016. It reveals that over the last 14 years, the average annualised growth in farmland values has been 13.3%.

The Index tracks values in 15 countries and there is a significant difference in the rate of growth between them. In France, for example, the annualised rate is less than 5%, while in Romania it is over 25%.

"With higher returns, generally come higher risks,"

says Ian Bailey of Savills Rural Research. "But Savills has tried to quantify these risks with our Opportunity v Risk Matrix."

To construct this matrix, Savills research department took a detailed set of metrics and combined these with their experience and knowledge of the markets to give each country three separate scores.

"The first of these scores relates to potential risks such as political and economic instability, the weather and the country's infrastructure. The second is for benefits such as agronomic advantages and investment returns. And the

third, is the score balance that subtracts the risk from the benefit score."

At the bottom end of the score balance sheet were Ireland, where large scale farming opportunities are rare, Hungary and France, which are both restrictive to foreign ownership. While leading the field were Denmark, with its recent lifting of foreign investment restrictions, and Australia and the USA, which both offer great opportunities for large scale farming.

■ For more about global research, speak to Ian Bailey, London, 020 7299 3099, ibailey@savills.com

# 24%

The total value of the UK forestry market during the 2017 forest year is £112 million, which represents a 24% increase on the 2016 market figure.

### ALL CHANGE ONLINE

If you've visited Savills website recently, you might have noticed that it has a fresh new look. But it's not just the look that has changed, it is now easier to search for what you want whether that's Savills latest research, a new property in Norfolk or a recognised expert. The website received more than 15 million visits in 2017 and is the most visited national estate agency website in the UK.



### DID YOU KNOW...?

Since 1961, the global area of arable land per person has halved from around 0.4 hectares per person to

0.2

# **Viewpoint**

JAMES HIGHAM SAVILLS LEISURE AND TRADE



# ESTATES AND EDUCATION

chools and estates have gone together since the early days of feudal land ownership. And there is many an estate today that still provides the building for the local parish school.

It works well for everybody – an estate needs a vibrant community for its tenants and workforce and they need a school for their children. A good school is an asset that attracts people to the local area.

Estate owners do need to be aware of a potential issue, which has cropped up in the past, when a local authority announced that a parish school was merging with another local school and the building would be sold off for development.

It took a lot of digging through the paperwork to show that the school was only given over by the estate as long as it was used for education. It might have been hundreds of years ago that the original deal was made, but the building, in that case, was not the local authority's to sell.

There are many other estates that have found that leasing a large building and extensive grounds for a private school has been a very good use of assets. But these too need to make sure they're utterly on top of their paperwork. Many of the leases might date back to the 1950s – when there was a glut of country houses available – and rent reviews can be complex affairs.

Tenants invest millions of pounds in making sure that they have the right facilities to attract pupils and this can lead

to odd situations where the estate owns and leases the main building to the school, but the school owns the newly built swimming pool or theatre.

There is never a bad time to check the paperwork and untangle any complicated situations that might be hidden within.

Estate owners need to review everything regularly and have an idea of where they want their business to go. That way they can make sure that they and the school are making the best use of assets.

It might be that the school is looking to lower overheads, for example, which could open up opportunities for the estate to put the land to another use. Regular reviews and discussions will help keep a feel for what's happening on both sides of the coin.

It's a tough market for schools and many don't survive the on-going race of

"Review everything

regularly and have

an idea of where

you want the

business to go"

keeping up with the school down the road. However, there's still plenty of scope for educational lets. Take Cranborne Estate in Dorset. One of its principal houses had

housed a boarding school for pupils with learning difficulties since the 1960s, but in 2014 this closed. Savills marketed the property and, following a £2.5 million refurbishment (paid for jointly by the new tenant and the landlord) it has just re-opened as a specialist further education college for 16-25 year olds with a variety of learning needs.

There's certainly plenty of opportunities for estates with large houses to move into the schools' market – especially in the south east where international schools are growing in popularity. Education is a fascinating area and it's never going to go out of fashion.

■ To learn more about letting a property for educational purposes, speak to James Higham, Oxford, 01865 269 023, jhigham@savills.com



In 2017, its second year of operations, The Country Food Trust charity passed the 100,000 mark for the number of meals it produced. For every meal it sells, the charity donates another which goes directly to those in food poverty. And why Country? Its meals are game-based, either pheasant casserole or partridge curry. the country foodtrust.org



# 151,000

acres of farmland were publicly marketed across the UK in 2017. This is lower than it has been for many years and 8% below the 10-year average. This acreage was comprised of 725 different holdings, which is 5% under the 10-year average. The fall in supply is attributed to sellers feeling cautious in the run-up to Brexit.

SOURCE: SAVILLS SPOTLIGHT 2018 GB AGRICULTURAL LAND





# APRIL

20-21 April

■ Property Investor and Homebuyer

**Show** Excel, London propertyinvestor. co.uk

### MAY

2-3 May

■ All Energy
Scottish Exhibition
and Conference
Centre, Glasgow
all-energy.co.uk



# 2-6 May

■ Badminton Horse Trials

Badminton, Gloucestershire badminton-horse. co.uk

# 22-23 May ■ Utility Week Live

Birmingham NEC www.utilityweek live.co.uk

# 22-26 May

■ Chelsea Flower
Show Royal Hospital
Chelsea, London
rhs.org.uk/Chelsea
\*\*Look out for
the David Harber
and Savills garden
designed by Nic

# JUNE

Howard

7-9 June
■ Royal Cornwall
Show Wadebridge,
Cornwall
royalcornwallshow.
org

### 10 June

■ Open Farm Sunday farmsunday.org



# 13-14 June ■ Cereals

Chrishall Grange, Duxford, Cambridgeshire cerealsevent.co.uk

28 June - 4 July
■ Masterpiece
The Royal Hospita

# The Royal Hospital Chelsea, London masterpiecefair.com

# JULY 10-12 July

■ Great Yorkshire

## ■ Great Yorkshi Show

Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire greatyorkshireshow. co.uk

# 23-26 July

■ Royal Welsh Show Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Powys rwas.wales

# 27-29 July

■ Game Fair Ragley Hall, Warwickshire thegamefair.org

# AUGUST

2-5 August

Countryfile Live
Blenheim Palace,
Oxfordshire
countryfilelive.com



# WHERE ARE THE FIELDS GOING?

According to the Campaign to Protect Rural England, developers are building 15% fewer homes than they were a decade ago, yet they are using twice as much greenfield land to build them.



# WHY RHUBARB IS JUST THE TONIC

Last December, *The Telegraph* reported that rhubarb farmers were seeing a boost in demand for rhubarb, fuelled by the drinks industry. One company that produces a rhubarb-flavoured gin notched up a 355% increase in sales in 2017, while others reported a trend for rhubarb-flavoured mixers.

### BUSINESS

# Appealing Scottish sporting rates

For many Scottish landowners who received the first batch of Deer Forest and Shooting Rights Valuation Notices from their regional assessor, the "Phase 1" appeal window closed at the end of March. If they hadn't lodged an appeal to contest the valuation before this date, the opportunity is now lost until the next national revaluation in April 2022. However for many there is still an opportunity to appeal.

In many cases Small Business Bonus Scheme relief is available but it is subject to annual review, and it may not be there in the future. "Those who are eligible should put in a claim," advises Peter Wilkinson of Savills Rural Rating Services. "But that in no way excludes them from also appealing their assessment."

Peter has been advising clients to review and, where appropriate, appeal their assessments, as apart from anything else, uncontested valuations risk providing the assessors with more evidence for future valuations. "The assessors did not have the time nor the resources to do a thorough exercise before they had to issue the first tranche of valuation notices," he explains. "So in many cases, they haven't taken disability allowances, area exclusions and regional or geographical differences into account. Nor have "factors relating to deer management' been addressed, which were supposed to be part of the legislation."

All of these areas could have a very material effect upon a sporting rights valuation. "As the appeals process develops, it is hoped that many rateable values will be reduced and in some cases re-assessed to a nil value," says Peter.

■ For information on how Savills could assist you, contact Peter Wilkinson, Perth, 07866 976 135, peter.wilkinson@savills.com or Hugo Struthers, Perth, 07967 555 608, hstruthers@savills.com

### **SPORTING**

# Survey reviews the costs and profits of comparable shoots

Following the end of the 2017-18 shooting season, Savills is encouraging all those who have run shoots to take part in the Shoot Benchmarking Survey.

This unique survey, which is run in conjunction with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, is now in its eighth season and analyses information from the cost of each bird released to average salaries of

those working on shoots, to what environmental projects shoots are involved in.

Last year more than 150 shoots took part in the survey, which revealed that although demand for shooting was on the up, turning a profit was still a challenge.

"The survey is a really useful management tool," says David Steel of Savills Sporting Group. "Estates that take part receive a bespoke report with tailored information that enables them to compare their shoot with similar ones. It can help identify their areas of strength and which parts of their operation need tightening up."



Although shooting grew in popularity in 2016, it's still a challenge to turn a profit

# MORE SHOOTING LEADS TO MORE GAME MEAT

With the rise in the popularity of shooting has come a rise in the number of birds shot. This has led to an imbalance in the market, as consumption of game meat hasn't kept up with the growing supply.

It has become a hot topic of conversation on many shoots over the last few months and there is a strong desire from within the shooting community to address the issue. "Nobody wants to see good meat go to waste," says David. "But we don't accurately know the scale of the problem. Before we can address the issue, we need to know more about what is happening to birds after they've been shot."

To this end, Savills joined forces with the Countryside Alliance to run an e-survey on the subject. More than 500 shoots completed the survey and the results will be published later this year.

"The analysis of the information we've gathered will help to frame future debate and discussion," says David. "As well as give examples of best practice that others can follow."

■ For more information on either survey, contact David Steel, Clitheroe, 01200 411 051, dsteel@savills.com

was the average value of UK farmland in US\$ per hectare in 2016. This was up from US\$20,005 in 2008 and US\$7,283 in 2002. Although UK farmland is the highest priced farmland globally, its growth in value is tenth in Savills index of 15 countries. Romania has seen the greatest leap in value over the last 14 years, starting at US\$262 in 2002 it is now averaging US\$6,372. SOURCE: SAVILLS SPOTLIGHT GLOBAL FARMLAND INDEX



### **NEW PRESIDENT AT NFU**

In February, Minette Batters was elected as the new President of the National Farmers' Union (NEU) Batters, who was previously Deputy President, is the first woman to hold the office in the organisation's 110year history. She runs a beef, sheep and arable farm in Wiltshire and has diversified into weddings, events and horse livery. She has been an NFU member from the grassroots up.

# Viewpoint

**CLIVE BEER** HEAD OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



# ALTERNATIVES TO COURT BATTLES

have been involved in enough litigation to know that it can be a ludicrous process, protracted, prescriptive and very expensive. Happily, there are alternatives. There are four main methods for settling disputes, collectively known as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). These are: arbitration, expert determination, early neutral evaluation (ENE) and mediation. But what are the merits of each?

Arbitration requires an independent arbitrator to hear evidence and arguments from all sides before reaching a decision that is binding for all parties. It is close to litigation, with two principal differences: the ability to appeal is extremely limited; and the hearing is held in private. The arbitrator's decision is as binding as a legal judgment or order.

The argument in favour of arbitration has always been that it is quicker and cheaper than litigation, but in my experience this is not so (although with court fees set to increase significantly, the cost difference may swing in arbitration's favour). It is also narrow and rigid, as the arbitrator can only determine the issue in question, with no flexibility to consider other factors.

Expert determination is when you put the issue before an expert in that area. It works well when the parties can appoint an expert they both trust, or agree on the qualifications and experience he or she must have. It is particularly suited to disputes that rest on professional opinion, such as how a document should be interpreted. It is not possible to appeal against an expert determination (although



challenge it). Therefore great care should be taken in choosing the expert and defining the remit.

In ENE, an independent third party (often a retired High Court judge) is appointed to look at the relevant facts,

technical matters and law of a particular issue and then to give their opinion. This opinion is usually not legally binding, but it often helps the parties to arrive at a resolution. ENE is worthwhile where there are opposing views about the law, or the factual or expert evidence. It can help to clarify the important issues and it can be quick. On the other hand, it can be expensive, a resolution might not be reached and

And so we come to mediation. Potentially suitable for any case (unless a binding decision is required in order to set a precedent), this is a process whereby the parties meet privately and attempt to settle their dispute with the assistance of a neutral mediator, who helps to identify issues and explore options for resolution. The mediator does not determine the outcome; it is up to the parties how - or whether - they resolve the issue. The process is therefore particularly helpful when positions have become entrenched and emotions are running high. In my

the evaluator's opinion may encourage

intransigence.

experience, mediation provides the best chance of preserving long-term relationships between parties. If a dispute involves several parties, mediation is a quicker and more cost-effective way of settling or narrowing issues than litigation.

Mediation allows far greater creativity and flexibility than any other form of ADR: parties can explore any issues they wish and reach an agreement that covers matters that a court could not order. Following a session where each side hears the other's position, the mediator explores the issues and potential solutions in private sessions with each party. The mediator then facilitates negotiations between the parties, often via shuttle diplomacy.

Even if a settlement is not reached, in most cases the parties will have gained something from the process. And unlike

"In my experience,

mediation provides

the best chance of

preserving long-

term relationships

between parties"

litigation, where there can only ever be a winner and a loser, mediation allows parties to remain in control of the case, as a settlement is not

Mediators do not need to be an

expert in a specific field - much more important is their talent for interceding between parties. There is a surprisingly small number of truly successful ones: it is estimated that 90% of cases are settled by just 10% of mediators. A successful mediator will vary their modus operandi according to the parties involved. This bespoke approach is crucial to the success of the process.

Each form of ADR has its benefits and its suitability should be assessed according to circumstances. But in my opinion, mediation is the one to aim for.

■ If you are looking for clarification on a legal issue, contact Clive Beer, London, 020 7877 4724, cbeer@savills.com

imposed.

GREG BLATCHFORD / ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK







In January the Government revealed its long-term plan for tackling environmental issues. It covers air, rivers, coastlines and countryside and is hugely relevant to rural estates and farmers

Green Future: Our 25-Year Plan to Improve the Environment is what the Government has called its new, long-term plan for the environment. It is designed to be the blueprint for sustainable development, cutting-edge environmental science, clean growth and increased resource efficiency that will simultaneously nurture and protect Britain's wildlife, the environment and the economy. When Prime Minister Theresa May launched it in January, she described it as: a "national plan of action, with international ambition".

The timing of the plan is not coincidental. "When the UK leaves the EU, control of important areas of environmental policy will return to these shores," May said. "We will use this opportunity to strengthen and enhance the protections our countryside, rivers, coastline and wildlife habitats enjoy, and develop new methods of agricultural and fisheries support which put the environment first."

The plan outlines ways to tackle climate change, reduce plastics' pollution and encourage recycling and better use of resources, while working in harmony with the UK's natural environment.

It addresses land management by introducing new farming rules for water, as well as protecting crops while reducing the environmental impact of pesticides.





Defra Secretary of State Michael Gove has also spoken about the plan, which includes the vision of connecting habitats into larger corridors for wildlife, as recommended eight years ago by Sir John Lawton in his review of wildlife sites. Gove reiterated the Government's support for farmers and rural landowners who dedicate fields to wildflower meadows, plant more trees and attract wildlife back to natural habitats.

He addressed the issue of new housing in rural areas. "Population growth and economic development will mean more demand for housing and this Government is committed to building many more homes," he said. "However, we will ensure that we support development and the environment by embedding the principle that new development should result in net environmental gain – with neglected



New housing should link to the environment



# GOALS OF THE 25-YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN

- Clean air
- Clean and plentiful water
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Minimising waste
- Managing exposure to chemicals
- **■** Enhancing biosecurity



Farmers' contribution to the environment, such as planting wildlfowers, will be recognised

or degraded land returned to health, and habitats for wildlife restored or created."

The plan also aims to improve social justice by cutting pollution "in less favourable areas" and by widening the mental and physical health benefits of nature to those who don't have easy access or close links to the countryside, such as urban families on low incomes or those from ethnic minority groups.

Some aspects of the plan will apply to the whole of the UK, but where environmental policy is devolved to the Scottish and Welsh Governments and Northern Ireland Executive, the plan's proposals will apply only to England. The Government, however, has said it will work closely with devolved administrations as the UK leaves the EU "to uphold environmental standards"

and go further to protect our shared natural heritage".

Many of those connected with the countryside have welcomed the Government's vision and its recognition of the contribution farmers and landowners make in maintaining the natural habitat and the greater role they will play under the future proposals.

Guy Smith, Deputy President at the National Farmers' Union (NFU), says a coherent approach is key for success. "It's vital that a holistic approach is taken. The plan must go hand-in-hand with a future food policy, where measures for protecting the environment are joined up with policies to improve productivity and manage volatility to ensure that we have profitable, productive and progressive farm businesses post-Brexit."



However, although the NFU and other organisations have welcomed the broad strategy, they have noted that although the plan is big on ideas, it is short on clear action points and a funding strategy.

In the words of the Wildlife Trust's Chief Executive Stephanie Hilborne, although the plan contained "some very encouraging words and ambitions", its lack of legal underpinning was "a fundamental flaw". She says she would like to see the plan followed up with an ambitious Environment Act in the next Queen's Speech. "Without real Government leadership our wildlife and wild places will continue to decline."

There has been no comment from the Government about a new Environment Act. However, given the current challenges of the Brexit negotiations many believe it is unlikely that this Government will broach any additional large pieces of legislation.

Christopher Price, Director of Policy at the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) is keen to see more detail on the funding. "Much of what is proposed will require significant investment consistently delivered over decades," he said.

It's a concern that was brought up in parliament by Green Party co-leader Caroline Lucas. In response to her question, the Government admitted that only an extra £15.7m of funding had been set aside for the plan.

Donna Collier of Savills Rural Planning is watching out for developments. "The plan sets out the Government's aspirations and indicates a direction of travel. Those aspirations have the potential to impact on a wide variety of different rural landowners and it will be important for them to stay up to date. We are currently monitoring how the greater emphasis being placed on the environment will affect planning guidance and regulation."

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, which is currently undergoing consultation and due to be implemented later this year, suggests development will have its role to play in meeting the plan's objectives. "Although the proposed draft changes have broadly been described as an 'evolution' rather than a 'revolution'," she says.



Clean water is included in the ambition



"The United Kingdom is blessed with a wonderful variety of natural landscapes and habitats and our 25-Year Environment Plan sets out our comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing them in England for the next generation. Its goals are simple: cleaner air and water; plants and animals which are thriving; and a cleaner, greener country for us all."

THERESA MAY

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Over the next year the Government will meet a range of stakeholders to identify what contribution each can make to the goals set out in the plan.

It plans to set up an independent body that will hold the Government to account on its environmental measures and form a set of principles to underpin policy-making.

It is establishing a set of metrics to assess progress towards the 25-year goals.

There will be a new green business council and the Government is looking at the potential for a natural environment impact fund.

■ To register as a stakeholder in the plan, visit gov.uk/ government/publications/ 25-year-environment-plan

# FARMS IN THE FUTURE

With the need to feed an expanding global population, a growing emphasis on the environment and rapid developments in technology, there's no doubt that farming in the future will look very different from farming today

t's 2050. A farmer sits in a room with computer screens ablaze with data. At his fingertips are controls for drones and self-driving vehicles. Sensors tell him if fields need irrigating or cows need milking. He hasn't put on wellies in weeks. Reality? Or the stuff of farfetched science fiction? "Definitely the future," says Tom Brunt of Savills Food and Farming, who also chairs Savills Rural Innovation Group. "The direction of travel is very much to agritech and smart systems, and that will only continue."

Last year, Harper Adams University ran a Hands Free Hectare (HFH) project where it farmed a hectare of land using only autonomous vehicles and drones to plant, tend and harvest a spring barley crop. Throughout the growing season, not a single person entered the hands-free zone.

"The weather can be an issue for farming, providing only small windows for work to be completed. This is part of the reason why machines have been getting so much bigger over the years," explains Project Researcher Jonathan Gill, a Savills-supported Nuffield Scholar. However, he believes this will change in the future, with farmers managing fleets of smaller, autonomous vehicles.

"These will be able to work unmanned, allowing farmers to use their time more effectively and economically instead of having to drive up and down the fields."

Not only will they free up a farmer's time, but smaller vehicles are healthier for the soil and the wider environment as they cause less compaction, which leads to less run-off. In a world where environmental concern takes centrestage, agritech has many of the answers.

HFH Agronomist Kieran Walsh says that there's a lot of "blue sky thinking" about how UK farming will look in the next 30 years, but one thing that's certain is that there will be massive steps in robotics and sensor use.

"We attached a standard HD camera under a drone and flew it a foot above the crop. It was possible to slow that footage down and watch it in my office – the view was as good as physically walking the crop.

"There's the potential to combine this with real-time data from in-field sensors and weather stations. We're also seeing the development of robotic variable rate sprayers that will use sensors to identify and spot spray weeds, and the idea of 'e-noses' attached to your wellies for 'sniffing' diseases has also been suggested," says Walsh, adding that tech capability currently runs ahead of existing mechanical delivery systems.

It's clear politicians in England, Wales and Scotland see agritech as fundamental to delivering their visions for farming and the environment, as laid out in the 25-year Plan and the Scottish Government's five key action areas in relation to climate change mitigation. Defra Secretary of State Michael Gove, speaking at the NFU Conference in February, said: "Whether it's automation and machine learning, data science or gene-editing, improved tracking and traceability of livestock or new plant bio-security measures, there are specific innovations that will increase productivity across farming, bring food





costs down for all, help us improve human and animal health and ensure we better protect the environment."

Investment in to agritech has seen quantum leaps forward, with the US doubling investment from 2014 to 2016 and Europe more than tripling it during the same period. Already there are signs this is reaching farm level.

Dutch company 30MHz opened offices in the UK last year in response to the surge in interest from farmers and growers here for its microclimate sensors.

"The need to innovate to make best use of resources is driving this, as well as concerns over labour supply post-Brexit. Sensors in greenhouses or fields remove the need for people to physically go out there for monitoring – that information is sent straight back to your computer," says 30MHz's Joanna Madej.

The company is working with Londonbased vertical salad grower Uprooted Farms, using sensors to monitor temperature and humidity. The aim is to ensure uniform temperatures vertically, and experiment with changing the flavour of crops by adjusting conditions.

They're also getting increasing interest from arable farmers. "The monitors are very robust, so field-scale use isn't the issue. A bigger challenge is connectivity, but we've developed a 3G solar-powered gateway specifically for use in large areas like this.

"The information is then linked to notification alerts, and can also be integrated with other technology like GIS systems, drones and automatic irrigators."

The emphasis on environmental protection is also driving a new green revolution in crop protection. While biological pest control such as the use of parasitoid wasps is well established, the next step is integrating biopesticides into pest management systems no longer

solely reliant on conventional pesticides (see below).

Speaking at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's Agronomists Conference last year, scientist Dr David Chandler of Warwick Crop Centre at the University of Warwick said there are a wide range of biologically-based crop protection agents coming through onto the market.

"They will dramatically change crop protection. We can't continue relying on conventional pesticides as the silver bullet; those days have gone," he said, adding that around 600 species of pests now have resistance to insecticides.

This approach is also using cutting-edge gene technology in the fight against pests. Spear-T is a greenhouse bioinsecticide licensed in the US that uses a peptide toxin isolated from spider venom and genetically engineered into yeast to target the pests including thrips, whiteflies and spider mites.

"A lot of the work to develop new products is coming through the States at the moment, but it will make its way to Europe," said Chandler.

The Government has made it clear that farm payments in the future will be linked to sustainable farming that enhances the environment.

As a result, Tom Brunt says there will undoubtedly be challenges post-Brexit. "But this also offers enormous opportunities for farms and estates that are willing to restructure and diversify using new technologies. Supported investment in agritech allows forward planning in smart farming methods that will be increasingly important in the future." §

■ To find out more about how you could use agritech, contact Tom Brunt, Winchester 01962 857 407, tbrunt@savills.com



# THE FUTURE: WILL WE BE FARMING INSECTS?

The idea of eating insects, known as entomophagy, might give most UK consumers the creepy-crawlies, but edible insects are a staple part of the diet in 80% of countries worldwide. There are a number of UK companies encouraging people to consider insects as an alternative protein source with lower environmental costs, says Joshua Spink of Savills Rural.

"They have a very high capacity to convert feed to body mass, and use very little water and land area compared to beef production or crops like soya," says Joshua.

Several species of insects are used for human consumption in the UK, including crickets, grasshoppers, buffalo worms and mealworms, either whole or powdered for use in cooking and baking. Most whole insects are coated in flavours to make them more palatable. "The main stumbling blocks are legal, the energy requirements for heat and also there are issues with consumer

perception," says Joshua.
"Insects such as crickets tend
to be more appealing visually,
whereas mealworms have faster
growth rates and require lower
temperatures, so are less heat
intensive during production."

So are insects a serious food of the future? A qualified yes, is the answer.

"Considerations around water and land use are likely to fuel growth in insect production. Questions still remain, however, around when and how big that growth will be. It's an emerging area and there are still legislative hurdles around the use of waste products to feed insects for human consumption, and about the use of insect protein in animal feed," Joshua warns.

# WHERE NEXT FOR PEST MANAGEMENT?

Biopesticides, which are natural biological solutions for pest control, are being touted as the next wave of green technology.

They include microorganisms such as bacteria and fungus being used to interfere with pests' life cycles or even employing insect sex pheromones to upset natural breeding cycles.

Biopesticides are considered minimal risk products that produce no toxins harmful to human populations and can be used in a wide range of situations against insect and mite pests, plant pathogens and weed species.

They are already being used in protected crops in the UK.

The bacterium *Bacillus* subtilis, which is used against plant pathogen botrytis on strawberries and other crops, is currently the most widely used biopesticide in the UK. Bioherbicides based on fungi such as *Chondrostereum* purpureum can infect multiple weed species, and their use is set to increase in the future as herbicide resistance in species

such as blackgrass becomes more problematic.

"We're starting to turn our attention more to biologically-based control in field crops," says Dr Chandler of the University of Warwick. "The idea is to use new sources of resistance to slow down pest development rates and thereby speed up susceptibility to biopesticides."

Key approaches to healthy soil ~ "There's a growing realisation that we need to focus on soil health as part of farming sustainably. Declining soil health has been a major factor in the levelling off in yields in recent years, especially where organic matter levels have significantly declined," says Tom Brunt of Savills Food and Farming. He gives his key approaches to creating healthy soil:

Get a firm measure of soil **health** There is now the technology to capture a huge amount of data (for example pH, organic matter, electroconductivity and topography) in one pass of a field. This information can be used to create zone maps for optimum planting, nitrate leaching, nutrient lock up, water capacity, pH and organic matter, and integrated into decisions on inputs and management.

"Knowing where your soil health is now is key to any strategy for improving it in the future. If you don't measure, you can't manage," says Tom.

Increase organic matter The organic matter in soil allows nutrients to be utilised by the crop, aids water retention and drainage and creates soil with good structure for root development. It can be improved in a number of ways, including management practices such as no-till, the use of farmyard manures, and rotations with high residue or cover crops.

Paul Temple of Wold Farm in Driffield, East Yorkshire is gradually moving to a no-till system. A mixed beef and arable business, the farm utilises farmyard manure and direct drills most crops.

"We have fields now showing organic matter of almost 8.5%, compared to the national average of 3%," he says.

"We view soil as our number one natural capital, and since starting to make the move to a no-till system we are more aware of biological activity that enhances soil function. Our agronomist has been impressed by how well the winter crops dook even after such a wet winter."



Use agritech to help improve soil health

Reduce run-off and erosion Soil is a farm's most valuable natural resource. Erosion and run-off can result in valuable nutrients being lost, as well as sediments, pesticides and disease organisms reaching watercourses.

Adjustments to management can have a significant impact on reducing erosion, for example grassing natural drainage pathways and establishing buffer strips. Changes in cultivation strategy can be crucial in reducing erosion and creating a more stable structure.

Research has shown that cover crops reduce run-off, improve soil structure and retain nitrogen in the system. Once more than a third of the ground is covered, there are substantial benefits.

Develop and adopt new technologies There has been a surge in investment in agritech in recent years, and this is translating into improved technologies available at a farm

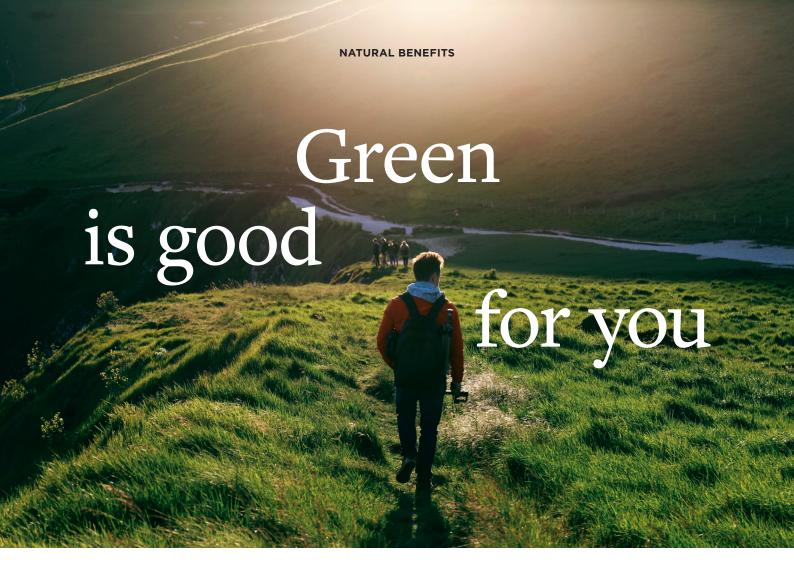
level. New "on-the-go" soil scanners, such as the Veris U3, use sensors to deliver detailed information on a field-by-field basis, which can then be used to aid management decisions.

There's also the prospect of autonomous vehicles and drones, such as those used in the Hands Free Hectare project run at Harper Adams University in 2017 (see page 14), coming over the horizon. This envisages a future with farmers using a fleet of smaller, lighter vehicles that cause less soil damage.

Keep up with education and training One of the Sustainable Soils Alliance's eight "soil policy asks" is to "embed the science and understanding of soil and good soil care into the further and higher education curricula for agriculture and other land-based courses". The Alliance is also working to address the need for more soil scientists.

"It's clear that UK agriculture will rely increasingly on the understanding and uptake of technology, which will help deliver key issues such as soil health. The education of existing and new generations of farmers is essential to achieving that," says Tom. s

■ To learn more about improving soil health on your farm, contact Tom Brunt, Winchester, 01962 857 407, tbrunt@savills.com



For many people, it's nothing new to hear that spending time surrounded by nature is good for you. But as more and more studies back this up with statistics about the benefits of the great outdoors on mental and physical health, the Government is taking notice

ncouraging the public to spend time in the great outdoors has become a political priority. Defra Secretary of State Michael Gove has proposed that subsidies should shift from what he calls an "unjust and inefficient" area-based system towards ones that reward those providing "public goods". Although the exact definition of "public goods" has yet to be clarified, providing access to the countryside will be included.

"This will bring opportunities for farmers and landowners," says Rupert Clark of Savills Rural Estate Management. "Connecting people with the natural environment will be a way of generating income on farms and estates, because if it is to happen on the scale that the Government and the electorate desire it will either have to be incentivised or funded through private or corporate means."

The general drive to get more visitors out into rural areas results from an increasing recognition of the health service provided by the land, nature and green spaces.

Whether it's combating cardiovascular disease, lowering blood pressure or pushing back the onset of dementia, the benefits of regular outdoors activity are diverse, especially in an era of sedentary lifestyles.

Research by Professor Jules Pretty of the University of Essex has shown the value of even short periods in the outdoors to mental and physical wellbeing. "It's like having a vaccination," he says. "It switches on a range of hormonal cascades in the brain in a particular kind of way – the 'rest and digest' system that is the opposite of the stressful 'run away from

the tiger' response that we had as an early hominid. If you encourage that, it has demonstrable health benefits."

The World Health Organisation, meanwhile, suggests that as many as one in four adults are not active enough and that pursuits such as walking and cycling can reduce the risk of stroke, diabetes, various types of cancer and depression.

Outdoors experiences are good for you and the high demand and the huge variety on offer reflects the fact they're also enjoyable, says Terry Robinson, Chairman of the UK and Republic of Ireland Outdoor Recreation Network.

Whether it's long-established pursuits such as fishing or walking or more modern ones such as zip-wiring or drone-flying, recreation is big business – and land managers are well placed to capitalise on this, he says.

As well as recreation businesses, land managers can also work with education and health providers to get people into the outdoors.

The charity Care Farming UK, for example, currently works with 250 farms to provide health, social or educational care through a programme of farming-related activities. It is encouraged as a therapy for people with learning disabilities, dementia or a history of druguse, and is set for a big expansion, with the Government's 25-year Environment Plan committing to trebling the number of places to 1.3 million a year for children and adults in England by 2022.

In the educational arena, too, it can be "life-changing" for youngsters to visit farms and estates, says Gary Richardson, Chief Executive of the charity Countryside Learning.

"Within school communities, there is a greater appreciation of the benefits of the outdoor classroom," he says. "It's not just a day out – it aids attainment.

"Giving children opportunities to see first-hand where their food comes from will become ever-more important and the farming community is aware it has an ageing workforce so inspiring the next generation to work in farming is vital."

A desire to build bridges between town and country is also a key aim of those who participate in LEAF Open Farm Sunday (OFS), which sees farmers and landowners UK-wide open their gates one day a year to welcome the public.

OFS manager Annabel Shackleton says: "It is more important than ever to show the public all the great work that farmers do. It needn't be costly," she points out. "You can make an event as elaborate or as simple as you want. Opening does take time and planning, but it is so worth it."

Many farmers and landowners already do great work in terms of public access and engagement – and more are likely to go down this route, with the new subsidy system set to support such endeavours, says Philip Gready, Head of Savills Rural.

"There are certainly 'customers' nearby. After all, the countryside is really close to all our urban centres – it's right there on the public's doorstep."

■ For ways to explore diversification on your estate, contact Rupert Clark, Petworth, 01798 345 999, rclark@savills.com



Connect people to food

# ENCOURAGE PUBLIC ACCESS ON TO YOUR FARM

**OPEN FARM SUNDAY** Managed by the charity LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), this is an annual event that has brought two million people through farm gates since it started in 2006. Over this time, more than 1,600 farmers have welcomed the public for one Sunday each year. Businesses of all sizes take part - and activities are as diverse as farm walks, nature trails, tractor-and-trailer rides, demonstrations and mini-farmers markets. farmsunday.org



FILM ON A FARM
An outdoor cinema experience created by farmer Chris Horn in 2015 as a way to combine his passion for agriculture, films and the great outdoors. Founded in Hampshire, it has worked with farmers elsewhere, allowing film fans to enjoy the great British countryside and



Encourage involvement

have an experience where "everyone gets the best view in the house".

If filmonafarm.co.uk

# FARMING AND COUNTRYSIDE EDUCATION (FACE)

A charity that helps children and young adults "understand the connection between farming and their daily lives". By equipping teachers and the education profession, supporting farmers and partnering with agri-food organisations, it created learning experiences for more than 26,000 children in 665 schools in 2015-16.

■ face-online.org.uk



Studies show the benefits that being outdoors has on physical and mental health

**20** million UK adults are "physically

UK adults are "physically inactive" costing the UK health service as much as £1.2bn each year, according to the British Heart Foundation

69%

of those who took part in an "ecotherapy" project funded by the mental health charity MIND experienced significant increases in wellbeing 5 minutes

is long enough for people to be active in nature (doing "green exercise") to benefit their physical and mental health, according to a University of Essex study





Tree planting has been on the Government's agenda for a while, but how will the 25-year Environment Plan change things?

he Government has made no secret of its determination for this generation to be the first to leave the environment in a better state than it found it. A key part of this is their manifesto pledge from 2015 to increase tree cover across England by 12% by 2060. However, quite how this was going to be achieved has been uncertain. In order to meet this target, 180,000 hectares (444,790 acres) of new trees must be planted by the end of 2042; this amounts to 5,000 hectares (12,355 acres) every year but 2016 figures only reached 700 hectares (1,730 acres).

A drastic change is essential and the Government hopes that the plans put forward in the 25-year Environment Plan will generate a passion for tree planting across the country. Creating new forests, providing the incentives to carry out extra

planting on private land and appointing a national Tree Champion are all measures designed to support the goal of planting 11 million trees.

But is the plan feasible? Reaction following the announcement agreed that the Plan is a welcome step in the right direction but most agreed that it still lacks mechanisms to promote delivery and drive the change through.

James Adamson of Savills Forestry Investment says: "There are some very laudable targets but as always the devil will be in the detail as to how these individual measures are going to be delivered. The objective to get to 12% woodland cover is a fantastic goal, but recent evidence shows that whether or not the planting required to meet this



Support of domestic timber is crucial

target will be achieved often comes down to simple economics."

There is no doubt that planting trees brings with it multiple benefits. Timber is currently experiencing a renaissance and is being used more and more in construction. "Trees don't require particularly great land, so farmers could put woodland on underperforming areas," James says. "Very few farms aren't improved somehow by woodland planting; from reducing soil erosion by cutting down wind and providing shade for livestock, to providing a potential source of diversification. All of our rural agents would agree that farms with some element of woodland are generally more attractive than those without."

However, there is a pinch point where forestry simply cannot compete on land values. "A lot of England has land values that don't make converting to forestry an easy choice," James says. "There is a lot more planting taking place in Scotland because suitable land is less than £2,000 an acre – the average land price in England is just under £8,000 an acre, or £5,000 an acre for poor livestock land, where there is perhaps most scope for tree planting."

Grants including the Woodland Creation Grant Scheme and the HS2 Woodland Fund, which aims to increase planting of native woodland within the buffer zone along the new railway line, are



More than eight million trees were planted to create the National Forest

# PLANTING THE NORTHERN FOREST

A key element of the 25-year Environment Plan's proposal to increase tree planting is backing the creation of a new Northern Forest, with £5.7m of Government funding.

Stretching across the country with the M62 at its centre, the scheme, led by the Woodland Trust and The Community Forest Trust, will incentivise landowners and farmers to plant trees on their land and also increase the long term supply of English grown timber.

Austin Brady, Director of Conservation at the Woodland Trust belives that a new tactic is necessary in order to prevent stalling tree-planting rates falling any further. "A new Northern Forest could accelerate the benefits of community forestry, support working for nature at a landscape scale, deliver a wide range of benefits - including helping to reduce flood risk - and adapt some of the UK's major towns and cities to projected climate change," he says.

"The North of England is perfectly suited to reap the benefits of a project on this scale. But this must be a joined-up approach. We'll need to continue to work with the Government and other organisations to harness new funding mechanisms such as those promised in the Clean Growth Strategy to plant extensive areas of woodland to lock up carbon. This will ensure we can make a difference for the long term."

Marc Liebrecht of Savills Forestry says that the previous success of the National Forest in the total market value of the UK forestry market

284% of all new housing in the UK was timber framed buildings in 2016 and this is predicted to rise to around 32% by the end of 2018

was invested in wood processing in 2016-17

the average 5-year forestry capital value growth forecast (2017-21)

substantial but not always enough of an incentive to tempt farmers away from more profitable pursuits. "In Scotland there is less incentive to continue to farm marginal land due to the lower values so the economic model of planting conifers, with support from schemes such as the Forestry Grant Scheme, starts to look better," says Marc Liebrecht of Savills Forestry.

However, the Plan may contain reasons

other than grants to plant trees. "I was pleased to see that the Government would be working with Grown in Britain on ways to get more homegrown products into the construction marketplace," Marc adds. "Developing new markets and maintaining existing markets are both key in order to ensure there are other incentives for planting trees." There are also opportunities that will arise from water catchment management and the creation of "natural spaces" for public health and wellbeing.

Another key factor could prove to be Brexit, as farmers and landowners prepare for subsidies to change. "If subsidies are reduced or disappear, the sums for planting trees might start to stack up," Marc said. "The fact that farmers won't necessarily be paid by area means it might be beneficial from a management point of view for them to look at diversifying and planting woodland as an alternative stream of income."

Overall the aims of the Plan are to be admired; planting more trees can only be seen as a positive ambition and success will largely depend on the attitude individuals take. "Landowners who want to plant trees will do so anyway, either speculatively, driven by a belief that the future timber price will be hugely greater than the current price providing some long-term upside, or because they have their own holistic reasons that mitigate



There is a drive for more "natural spaces"

the potential devaluing effect of changing the land from farmland to forestry," James concludes. "In an environment where agricultural values in England trump woodland values it is very difficult to justify planting trees unless you strip out the economics and take the view that we need more. If more people take this view then wonderful. Alternatively, enhanced funding is needed to provide a suitable carrot, which is a mechanism that has proved successful elsewhere."

■ To find out about tree planting, contact James Adamson, Perth, 01738 477 510, james.adamson@savills.com or Marc Liebrecht, Lichfield, 01543 261 999, mliebrecht@savills.com

Central England shows that such a project is possible and that it can make a huge difference; tree cover in that area has risen from just 6% to 20% in 20 years.

To encourage long-term sustainability, Savills James Adamson adds that it is essential future timber production is woven in as an important thread, as previous examples of this type of woodland creation have often focused too much on planting an area, and not enough on the future utility and commercial value of the woodland being created. "Ultimately with any land management strategy, economic sustainability is the key to success," he says.

The projected area of the new Northern Forest, providing a belt of trees across the country



# NOWLEDGE IS POSSESSED FOR THE SECONDARY SECON

Changes in the energy market mean that for farmers and estate owners, the focus should move from energy generation to energy optimisation

n the rush to produce subsidised renewable energy the last 10 years have seen far less interest in "energy hierarchy" (see box, far right), which is a far more holistic route to sustainable energy as it addresses energy use as well as energy production.

However, a number of changes – including the disappearance of green energy subsidies, the Government's determined roll-out of smart meters by 2020 and the introduction of minimum energy efficiency requirements in rented properties from 1 April this year – mean that farmers and estate-owners can no longer afford to ignore energy hierarchy.

"We jumped straight into energy generation," admits Nick Green of Savills Energy. "It was a big opportunity to create revenue, so everyone leapt in and forgot about the precursor, which is energy usage."

It doesn't help that energy-saving measures are not perceived to be particularly "sexy". Nevertheless, as operating margins on farms and estates become tighter, nobody can afford to ignore any potential financial savings.

"When returns are under pressure, energy savings matter much more in a bid to reduce overheads," notes Thomas McMillan of Savills Energy. "The number of new energy developments peaked about three years ago. But since the end of the coalition government, not only have subsidies for renewables dropped back, there has also been no real mechanism to encourage energy efficiency. At least when the Green Deal was in place, there was an awareness of more efficient energy usage."

Now, says Thomas, renewables are being considered in tandem with energy savings. "Farmers embraced renewables because they love 'kit', whereas energy-saving systems tend to be software-based. So the farmers who have undertaken energy-efficiency measures tend to be younger and more technology-focused."

Mike McLaren of Cronan Farm in Perthshire fits this description perfectly. Cronan Farm is power-hungry: it grows potatoes, broccoli and cereal crops across 2,600 acres; stores up to 6,500 tonnes of potatoes a year, and chills some 30 tonnes of broccoli per day. In 2013 and 2015, McLaren installed two solar PV systems on the roofs of Cronan's cold store sheds, creating a combined

output of around 250kW, along with a custom-built, computer-based energy management system.

"Investing in renewables was a way of becoming more energy efficient because we use around 70% of the power we generate," explains McLaren. "The more power you can use internally, the more quickly the investment will pay off."

McLaren also considered battery storage at one point but has decided against it. "We're exporting roughly 60,000 kW a year at around 4p per kW; the same electricity costs around 14p per kW to buy in so there's a differential of about 10p per unit. That adds up to potential savings of about £6,000 a year, which, although not insubstantial, isn't enough to justify investing in battery storage right now."

Instead, McLaren uses his energy management system to fine-tune how, where and when his energy is used. The system monitors the temperature of the cold stores and then adjusts the amount of solar energy being produced. Mike can also look at previous energy use, analyse the areas of the farm that use most power and adjust the system accordingly.

"With any kind of energy-management system, knowledge is key. And the only



Investing in solar PV systems is a way of becoming more energy efficient



Smart meters are key to reducing energy use

way to understand how to make your energy usage truly efficient is with smart meters," he says. "Any large pieces of equipment need to be metered so that you can make more informed decisions on how to deploy your energy."

The system at Cronan Farm is on track to pay for itself within seven years and, in the meantime, McLaren has installed LED lighting in some of his larger sheds: "A potato grading shed can have its lights on for 10 continuous hours a day, five days a

week, nine months of the year, so I expect to make considerable energy savings there."

Every farm or estate is unique but almost all will have ways they could optimise energy use and generation. These include battery storage, heat distribution networks, ground source heat pumps, energy management systems, thermal screens in greenhouses and wavelength-specific LED lighting. Estateowners with tenanted properties should also consider insulation, LED lighting and smart meters in these houses.

For farmers in England, there is a new grant available through the Government's RDPE Countryside Productivity Scheme. These grants are worth up to 40% of the eligible costs of an energy efficiency project, from £35,000 to a maximum of £1m. They cannot, however, be used to fund renewable generation equipment such as solar panels, wind turbines or biomass boilers. There are also grants of up to £32,500 for owner-occupiers and some private sector landlords in Scotland who want to make energy-efficiency improvements or install home renewables systems.

Finally, don't forget the obvious.

"Installing a smart meter in a very visible position can substantially reduce energy use," says Thomas. "Human behaviour works in exactly the same way, whether it's on a domestic scale or when you're running a business."

■ To investigate ways you could optimise your energy strategy, contact Nick Green, Perth, 01738 477 518, ngreen@savills.com or Thomas McMillan, Perth, 01738 440 886, tmcmillan@ savills.com



LED lighting is much more efficient than conventional systems

# **UNDERSTANDING ENERGY HIERARCHY**

ENERGY SAVING

Switch appliances off and eliminate waste

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Install better appliances and reduce energy losses

Produce your own sustainable energy

LOW EMISSION

Install high efficiency technologies

When nothing else can be done, use conventional energy and offset to compensate





# Focus on... REVESBY ESTATE

From farming to lettings, it is being true to their ideals that drives everything they do on this Lincolnshire estate or Peter Wiggins-Davies, CEO of
Revesby Estate,
his family home in
Lincolnshire, an
essential part of the job is
identifying what he calls the
estate's "golden threads".

"The golden threads are what gives an estate its unique sense of identity and purpose – and they must be understood, protected and fostered if the estate is to prosper," he says.

One of the golden threads at Revesby is its place at the heart of its community.

"We've always had a strong relationship – and very positive ties – with the local community and we take that responsibility incredibly seriously," says Peter.
"Involvement and inclusion is really important. They are your community and indeed your customers. Recognising that this is an integral part of what we do and who we are has helped us shape our decision-making in all aspects of the business."

The Wiggins-Davies have enjoyed more than 300 years of unbroken ownership of this ring-fenced estate between the sea and the city of Lincoln.

It is known for its beauty and history, having gained its identity for the first time in 1143 when a monastery was built by Cistercian monks. Later, when Henry VIII dissolved the monastery and gifted it to his brother-in-law, it became a private estate.

Peter joined his father, Gavin Wiggins-Davies, in the estate's management after finishing his degree at Harper Adams University in 2005.

While agriculture remains the estate's "engine" (about 50% of the estate is farmed in hand with the remainder by tenants), the family and estate team have restructured and diversified significantly since Peter's arrival.

Peter describes their approach to agriculture as focusing very much on maximum efficiency, while operating sympathetically with the environment.









1 Revesby Esate with the main house seen through the parkland.
2 The Wiggins-Davies family own and run the estate. 3 Events are an important part of diversification.
4 Classic car events are always popular. 5 The estate has two lakes that are popular for fishing.
6 These lakes are a valuable commodity for leisure activities for the local community.





AT A GLANCE

**6,320** acres

enterprises. Mainly arable farming, but also includes lettings, forestry, energy and fisheries

2005
The year when Peter
Wiggins-Davies joined the
family business and
diversification began
to gear up

35lbs
The size of some of the carp in one of Revesby's two fishing reservoirs

and deciding on the best use for them.

"We've done a lot with turning derelict properties into habitable ones and converting barns into houses," Peter says. "You learn a lot from the process especially how important it is to involve officials and other interested parties early on in the proceedings. Whether it's planners, building regulations' officers or heritage experts, the sooner we talked to them the better. When they see you're trying to do the right thing, they get behind you and work with you."

When it comes to the shows and events that Revesby hosts, such as point-to-points and country fairs, Peter always uses these as an opportunity to promote the rest of the estate's businesses. "We've invested in the idea of brand strongly and that helps us a lot in getting the message out there and finding the right customers and tenants," he says. Having a brand identity also helps them focus on what is important.

"Any new venture has to be sustainable and you want that fit – so that you keep the estate's identity, which is unique and so difficult to build.

"One of the lessons I learnt from my Nuffield Farming Scholarship (see boxout on page 28) was that diversification will help you

"We're between economies of scale at present, so we're looking at ways to grow the arable unit," he says. "We've got a very good team with great knowledge and modern machinery with state-of-theart technology so we've got a good chance of success."

After agriculture, lettings is the second string to their business, with others such as fisheries, firewood and venison playing an increasingly important role. The main motivation driving their diversification is to make better use of all the estate's assets.

The team grew the lettings side of the business by looking at the buildings on the estate





7 Forestry and firewood is another string to Revesby's bow. 8 Agriculture is the estate's main income.
9 Keeping up to date on farming developments makes sure profits are maximised.
10 The estate sells venison from its deer herd. 11 Rental properties on the estate range from one-bedroom cottages to an eight-bedroom farmhouse.











grow, but before you do anything, you need to go back to basics and understand what you want from your business and make sure you've got strong foundations in place.

"You need to understand what you're hoping to achieve from diversification at the start, otherwise you may very quickly become either a busy fool or, even worse, create a raging success that sacrifices what you really want from your business."

The general approach at Revesby is to avoid investing in ventures that could prove a constraint on the core business – for example, by taking land out of agricultural production; enterprises that can be scaled are favoured, and investing in too much depreciating plant is avoided. Making sure a business is cashflow positive as quickly as possible is also important, as is having an exit strategy.

"We've tried to find a golden thread in terms of utilising the assets that we've got and making them fit in with the economics of the local community and we wouldn't ever pursue diversifications that might compromise this," says Peter.

"To me, Revesby is more than an asset – it is akin to a beloved relative who needs caring for." S

■ revesbyestate.co.uk

# THE VALUE OF LEARNING

Peter Wiggins-Davies recently completed a Nuffield Farming Scholarship titled "Rural Estates - Objectives, Governance and Growth".

Sponsored by Savills and The Worshipful Company of Farmers (WCF), it allowed him to spend time abroad learning from estates in Germany, Greece, USA and Australia.

His travels, he says, helped him realise that estates are often characterised by six building blocks – custodianship, visual and historic responsibilities, social impact, environmental responsibilities, a complicated family involvement and diversified income streams.

"To deliver on these building blocks, you need a strategy," he says. "At Revesby, we approach this by splitting it into four areas: succession, keeping the family together, non-financial objectives and financial objectives."

Peter is a big proponent of lifelong learning. He recently attended an Advanced Agricultural Business Management course run by the WCF and is also closely linked with the University College of London, having completed their Growth Hacker course and allowing them to use Revesby as a case study.

He describes both the Nuffield and the WCF course as "life-changing" and says how much they helped him realise the importance of objectives, strong foundations and growth within a complex business.



Land prices in uncertain times ~ There's no doubt that Brexit is affecting market sentiment, but there is a wide range of prices achieved with average values steadying over the next five years



Values for prime arable land are suffering in the Brexit uncertainty

quieter in 2017 than they have been for the last couple of years and fell below the 10-year average both in the number of acres and number of farms coming to market. The fall is being attributed to caution among sellers linked to the uncertainty of Brexit.

and markets were

"It's a similar pattern to what we saw after the global financial crisis of 2007-08," says Alex Lawson of Savills National Farms and Estates. "Both events prompted an initial increase in activity as certain sellers decided to leave the asset class pretty swiftly, followed by a lull in new launches, which for the financial crisis lasted until 2015."

Most of the sales in 2017 came about due to retirement or death or other personal circumstances. However, there has been a rise in the amount of farmland coming to the market because of debt, which now accounts for more than one in five sales.

"The proportion of debtrelated sales could rise even higher in the short to medium term as the potential effects of Brexit on both trade and farm support are felt," warns Alex.

The profile of buyers, on the other hand, has remained largely unchanged over the past three years. Almost half of transactions involve a buyer wanting to expand an existing farm. Farmers are behind around 40% of purchases and there has been a rise in interest from institutions.

Meanwhile, the average capital value of arable land has been under pressure ever since the downturn in commodity prices in 2014. However, there are signs

of hope in Savills quarterly Farmland Value Survey that suggest that the rate of any decline is now slowing.

Prices for some types of land have shown greater resilience than others, linked in no small part to how they might fare if subsidy and trade rules alter post-Brexit. For example, poorer quality arable land, which is heavily dependent on subsidy for its productive value at the moment, recorded the largest drop in value of 2.8% in 2017. Prime arable land dropped 2.5%, but was still commanding close to £9,000 per acre, while the land type showing the greatest resilience is lower quality grazing land. "Prices in this sector only fell 1%," explains Alex. "This is because demand has remained strong for lifestyle holdings with a higher amenity value."

It is the amenity value of property that is going to be the driving force for higher land prices over the next five years, according to Savills forecasts.

"For purely commercial farmland, much will depend on the outcome of trade negotiations and subsidy changes, but there is likely to be some pressure on average values for these holdings over the next five years," savs Alex.

"However, for the best properties with lifestyle benefits or diversification opportunities, we are going to be seeing positive growth of around 2% a year."

This is below the growth figures of the last decade or so, but set in a historical context, over the last 100 years, the value of farmland in the UK has risen at an average of 6% a year. S

■ To read more about UK land prices and predictions, visit savills.co.uk/research





# PROPERTY ON THE MARKET NOW



# WYKE FARM, DORSET PRICE: £10.5m

A large commercial arable farm between Yeovil and Sherborne with a very charming Grade II\* listed farmhouse. With its river frontage, numerous traditional farm buildings and eight rental properties, it offers plenty of potential for diversification.

- 726 acres of arable land
- Two sets of modern farm buildings on separate sites
- A range of traditional farm buildings including a large Grade II\* listed tithe barn
- Eight houses and cottages
- Grade II\* listed farmhouse (in need of modernisation)
- About 884 acres available as a whole or lots
- Contact Alex Lawson, London, 020 7409 8882, alawson@savills.com







# RAINTHORPE FARMS, LINCOLNSHIRE

PRICE: £25m

This highly commercial Lincolnshire arable farm has been created over several generations. It extends to over 3,200 acres, which are available as seven principal and sub lots. The majority of the farmland is seven miles to the north of Lincoln.

Commercial farming operation on grade 2 and 3 arable land, suitable for flexible cropping

- Abstraction licence for 5,683 cubic metres
- Extensive modern farm buildings
- 9,300 tonnes of grain storage including a new 5,000 tonne on floor store
- Five cottages let on residential tenancies
- Established shoot
- **■** Contact Andrew Pearce, Lincoln, 01522 508 933, apearce@savills.com



# KILDRUMMY ESTATE, **ABERDEENSHIRE**

PRICE: OFFERS OVER £11m

A company sale incorporating this Scottish estate that includes a wide variety of assets and diversified income.

- 5,500 acres
- Principal house and 12 estate dwellings
- Commercial assets including hotel, inn and the leasehold interest in the Kildrummy Wind Farm
- In hand and let farms
- Commercial

forestry and amenity woodlands

- Fishing on the River Don
- Driven pheasant and partridge shooting
- Walked up grouse shooting
- Red and roe deer stalking
- Contact Evelyn Channing, Edinburgh, 0131 247 3704, echanning@ savills.com











# A FAIR PRICE

The Land Reform Act in Scotland has led to many changes for rural landowners. One of these is the way in which agricultural rents are set and Savills has been advising on the best way to make the new system workable for all

he history of land ownership and agricultural rents in Scotland is long and complicated. Since 1948, there has been legislation that has given long-term agricultural tenants a security of tenure. However, the flip side to this is that it reduces the capital value of the land. As a result, landowners tend to let less land on a long-term basis preferring to use short-limited duration tenancies or grazing lets.

In addition, the way in which rents are reviewed in Scotland has relied on an open-market basis. This takes information about rents on comparable properties into account, but is not directly linked to the economic conditions of different farming sectors.

Since the current Scottish Government came to power, it has been looking to find a way to change how rents are set based on a farm's productive capacity rather than the land's market value.

Last year it commissioned Savills, along with consultants Hamish Lean and Watson Bell, to analyse the process and to suggest the best way to calculate a farm's productive capacity in a way that was fair to all involved.

In January, the Scottish Government published this report: Testing of the Rent Review System. It makes several key suggestions, one of which is that the landowner and tenant should agree key factors from the outset before they start discussing figures. This would streamline the rental agreement process and potentially reduce the need for disagreements to be resolved in the Land Court (the Scottish court that deals specifically with disputes between landlords and tenants in farming).

Hannah Guild of Savills Rural Estate Management was one of the report's authors. "We suggest a model that uses accountancy practices based on the land's capable output, to calculate how much profit the farm can make," she explains. "This figure is then split equally between landlord and tenant to give a rental value."

To limit conflict, the landlord and tenant would have to agree a statement of facts about the land in advance. This would include factors such as the likely yields of each field and what the most appropriate farming system would be for the land. It would also cover areas such as residential accommodation and diversified land use so that all the ways the farm is generating a profit are taken into account. And both parties would need to agree who owns any fixed equipment and be clear on the lease's obligations to ensure transparency. Only when those elements are agreed, should financial figures be put together.

While it's a new way of operating, Hannah says the report's recommendations, which will be debated by parliament later this year, don't have to bring added complications to agreeing rents.

To help the review process run smoothly, her advice is for tenants and landowners



to start making preparations now. "For those gearing up for a rent review, the best route to agreeing a fair rate is to start with a farm inspection six months in advance, followed by a negotiation period," she says.

"From a landlord's perspective the thing to be aware of is that you can only base rent on fixed equipment and land provided in the lease. Good maintenance and renewal of fixed equipment is therefore the best way of generating a good rent," she says.

"For tenants the main thing is knowing exactly what improvements you have put in place – regular correspondence between parties and up-to-date records are key."

It's also important for both landlords and tenants to be clear on the lease that is in place, as different leases can have different obligations, she says.

"And also, make sure that rent reviews are carried out regularly. Because farming's had some hard times, some landlords have sometimes missed rent reviews," she says. "When they are eventually carried out, the increase can then be far higher than the tenant is prepared for. A steady increase is much better, as it allows the tenant to account for it in their business."

The report also suggests looking at comparable rents in the area as a sense check. "This is because it would be unfair to have extreme discrepancies in rents where holdings are similar," says Hannah. "The sense check should be based on comparisons on rents over the last three years to make sure it's up-to-date."

To help agree the fairest rent, Hannah also recommends making use of the amnesty on tenant's improvements – a three-year period introduced by the Scottish Government last June that allows tenants to have improvements they have made during their tenancy formally recognised by their landlords.

"There's not been a huge uptake in terms of formal agreements under the amnesty since it began, but in terms of helping rent reviews, making use of the amnesty should be a priority," Hannah says.

"It doesn't have to be a formal process—it can be carried out over the kitchen table—as long as the agreement is recorded and each party gets a copy of the agreement. Above all, it's about finding a way to come to an agreement that everyone's happy with, and if these approaches can help reduce conflict and create a fair rent, then it's worth doing them."

■ For more advice on agreeing fair rents, contact Hannah Guild, Aberdeen, 01224 971 135, hguild@savills.com

# HOW TO AGREE A FAIR RENT

- Begin the process at least six months before the rent review is due
- Start with a farm inspection to document all the assets and their condition
- Agree a statement of facts about the property
- Carry out any maintenance or renewals that are needed
- Document any improvements that the tenant has put in place
- Look at comparable rents in the area over the past three years

# AGRICULTURAL RENTS IN NUMBERS

£40

Average rent per hectare of Scottish farmland. Although figures vary from £137 per hectare on better quality land to £27 per hectare for Less Favoured Area land

30%

The average that Scottish farmland rents have increased each year since 2008 taking inflation into account

3 years
Rent reviews should be carried out every three years





# "By helping to encourage greater use of our natural capital, everyone benefits – including our clients"



Sophie Tidy, who leads Savills Natural Capital Group, describes the scope of its work

# Can you define the role of Savills Natural Capital Group?

The Government's definition of natural capital is "those elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people, such as the stock of forests, water, land, minerals and oceans". So, our group is looking at all aspects of natural capital – including the wider social focus and the commercial impacts – to fully understand how the natural capital-based approach will affect our clients and create opportunities.

# Is natural capital a new area for Savills?

No, our focus on natural capital goes back a long way, although the terminology has changed. The expertise within Savills stretches far beyond our small group. The team I'm now leading comprises a core group of eight, plus wider technical and research input, particularly from the Rural, Energy and Projects Division. The launch of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan is a really positive development as there's now a vision that stretches beyond the current political horizon. For us, successful land management is about long-term investment. A number of Savills colleagues are already helping clients to produce their own 25-year environment plans, because our clients want to speak the same language as the Government. The challenge for my group is to help develop a common approach to natural capital in the industry and across Savills.



Peat bogs are valuable natural capital

# How tricky is it to put a value on natural capital?

There's been a lot of debate about how you value and monetise natural capital, but now we need to start thinking practically. In the future, it's going to affect our valuations and how we market our estates and properties. For example, where previously an area of community woodland may only have been of value to a private owner, in the future, there could be a way of generating income from that. It's our job to help our clients look at the natural capital potential of their land in a more holistic way.

# Can you describe some typical projects?

We've been looking at biodiversity offsetting on behalf of developers where there is a planning requirement to find alternative land to replace lost biodiversity. My colleagues have been identifying appropriate landowners and

developing the contracts. Another project involved water companies who want to reduce the use of metaldehyde slug pellets by farmers, which in turn will reduce water-processing costs. And one of my colleagues was at Westminster recently, speaking to Michael Gove about how to approach the management of peat bogs. So, we're feeding into environmental policy, not just responding to it.

# Does natural capital touch the general public too?

There is significant leisure and tourism on many of the estates we manage. Getting people out into the countryside is crucial to their mental and physical health so by helping to encourage greater use of our natural capital, everyone benefits, including our clients.

# What do you enjoy about your role?

I studied geography and I now specialise in rural estate management so natural capital brings all of that together. I'm personally motivated to protect the environment, and I want to make sure it's left in a healthy state with thriving ecosystems, biodiversity and communities. In the UK, we do have problems with soil degradation, water quality and loss of woodland. But we can't be anti-growth. Instead, we need to be creative about enabling appropriate houses to be built in sustainable locations and allowing industry to thrive. Many of our clients are committed to sustainability and environmental improvement, and that helps to motivate me and my colleagues every single day. S

■ To discuss natural capital, contact Sophie Tidy, Oxford, 01865 269 162, sophie.tidy@savills.com

# SAVILLS RURAL SERVICES

Savills is deeply involved in the rural economy at every level and offers a range of services for landowners, farmers and rural businesses

# **ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING SURVEYING**

Specialist advice on a range of services, from country house renovation and the adaptation of farm buildings through to new-build projects.

■ Contact: Chris Batterby 01543 251 221 cbatterby@savills.com

# **CLIENT ACCOUNTING**

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# **COMPULSORY PURCHASE** AND COMPENSATION

Tracking problems for landowners, occupiers and acquiring authorities.

■ Contact: Richard Asher 020 3320 8258 rasher@savills.com

# **COUNTRY HOUSE CONSULTANCY**

Advice on a wide range of property issues, in many different locations, from the relatively modest to the very grand.

■ Contact: Philip Eddell 01635 277 709 peddell@savills.com

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■ Contact: Patrick Moseley 020 7409 9491 pmoseley@savills.com

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Help in dispute resolution for all aspects of property management.

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Marketing the complete range of rural land and buildings, from single fields to the largest estates.

■ Contact: Alex Lawson 020 7409 8882 alawson@savills.com

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■ Contact: Stuart Jeffries 01904 617 826 sjeffries@savills.com

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# IN ADDITION...

Savills also provides a wide range of services across all property sectors globally.

■ Visit savills.com

"The Government's long-term strategy for the environment puts farmers and landowners at the heart of many of the changes"

