# Land Business Update

## Week commencing 9 November 2026

## Farming & food

### 'Brexit reset' will reduce red tape on food trade between the UK and EU

The UK and EU will discuss changes to the existing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement at the UK-EU summit on 11 November. Some of the main food related changes being proposed are:

- Exports of some products from the UK, including fresh sausages, burgers, shellfish and seed potatoes, will resume.
- Export Health Certificates, which cost @ £200 and take time and can cause delays, should no longer be required.
- The same applies to phytosanitary certificates, which cost @ £25 and show that plants or plant products are free from pests and diseases, and to inspector fees, organic certificates, some port fees and other checks.

The food changes will be particularly important for Northern Ireland, which has been affected by export and certification controls since Brexit due to its remaining within the EU's single market for goods due to its physical border with the Republic of Ireland.

If agreed, the government claims the UK economy will eventually benefit by £5bn a year due to more trade at lower administrative cost. While the changes have been broadly welcomed, including by the shellfish and seed potato sectors, as well as the British Chamber of Commerce, some organisations (and the Conservative Party) have expressed concern that the commitment to adapting to existing EU regulations on plant, animal and food trade standards - a process called 'dynamic alignment' – will slow down the adoption of gene editing and other technologies in the UK. However, it is unclear what the timetable for dynamic alignment will be and the EU is already moving towards the UK's freer position on genetic manipulation.

The changes are part of a wider package of changes to the Brexit agreement, which includes emissions trading, a youth travel and work scheme, and reinstating pet passports.

### CSHT – submit expressions of interest for traditional orchards and wet grassland

The Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier scheme has opened for expressions of interest on these two actions. This adds to the option to apply for single-focus agreements for species-rich grassland and scheduled monument management, which has attracted over 1,100 expressions of interest since opening in July. It is unclear what the budget is and how many applications might be funded.

## Natural capital & environment

### Environmental Market Governance Scheme proposed to build confidence in high integrity nature markets

Defra is asking environmental market participants and stakeholders to help develop this new voluntary, industry-led scheme over the next six months, with the aim of launching it in mid-2027. The development programme will look at existing governance gaps in markets and how the Scheme could increase confidence and reduce complexity and cost of participation in environmental markets. The Scheme will be independently administered by the not-for-profit Environmental Markets Board Limited, through arrangements with The Broadway Initiative.

### Alternative productive tree species

Forest Research has published a series of videos on five lesser used tree species that could be useful to UK land managers who want to increase the resilience and diversity of their forests and woodlands in the face of a greater range of climatic (droughts, storms) and pest challenges. The five species are presented as alternatives to go-to species like sitka spruce, Scots pine or larch:

- Coast redwood

- Douglas fir
- Maritime pine
- Red oak
- Western red cedar

The videos show the species' origin, silvicultural characteristics, site requirements, timber properties, and a short comment on their anticipated place in British forestry. Fuller data is available in Forest Research's Tree Species Database and in the data dashboard, which is a new tool to compare data on the early growth and survival of a range of different species currently in species trials.

https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/news/spotlighting-five-alternative-productive-tree-species/

### New regional water councils

The eight new councils will give communities and local leaders a stronger voice over priorities including sewage and water quality, flooding, drought and future water supplies. Areas have been asked to submit proposals on how they want to run the new bodies by the end of the year, and they will then draw up a plan. Separately, as part of the government's devolution drive, mayors will also receive new powers through the Water Bill to hold water companies to account for their performance. The proposals have been cautiously welcomed by environmental organisations.

### National woodland bat survey

The survey, led by the Bat Conservation Trust and Forest Research, used AI for the first time to collect acoustic recordings between 2021 and 2024. The results highlight the exceptional importance of woodlands for bats. Of the 310 woodlands surveyed, common pipistrelles were detected in all of them, soprano pipistrelles at 99%, Myotis bats at 98%, noctules at 94% and brown long-eared bats at 90%. The Bat Conservation Trust said that bats can indicate the quality of the habitats they rely on for survival, whether feeding, breeding or just getting from A to B. Therefore, understanding how bats are faring in woodlands, allows greater understanding of how pressures such as climate change and changes in the management of landscapes may impact woodland and how best to manage them.

### COP17 biodiversity conference

The COP biodiversity conference, which happens every two years, unlike the annual climate change COP meetings, aimed to make progress on reducing the impact of subsidies across the world that damage biodiversity and expand incentives for conservation. The conference concluded that unless action is "rapidly accelerated" the goal to reverse nature loss by 2030 "will not be achieved". Some of the key outcomes from the conference, according to Finance for Biodiversity and others, are:

- Global Review – countries remain far off track to achieve the targets to reverse nature loss and meet a set of 23 targets by 2030. However, the conference demonstrated the value of multilateral cooperation, identified important finance-related priorities, including reforming harmful incentives, aligning national budgets and economic decisions with biodiversity objectives, and strengthening implementation, monitoring, and accountability.
- Finance for biodiversity - developed countries have failed to meet their commitment to raise 'at least $20bn a year by 2025' for nature. Sadly, aid levels are expected to fall by 27% in the 2026-30 period.
- Biodiversity mainstreaming – this decision proposes that businesses and financial institutions have plans for becoming nature positive and reporting on it.
- Incentive reform – this is a positive from the conference. Known as 'The Friends of Target 18 initiative', it is an agreement to accelerate implementation of Target 18 which aims to reform environmentally harmful incentives. BNP Paribas, which Strutt & Parker is part of, was one of 130 businesses and financial institutions which supported this.

## Rural economy & property

### Renters' Rights Act – the headlines say that tribunals have rejected 70% of proposed rent rises but...

The Telegraph has reported that rents have been set below the levels proposed by landlords in 70% (466 out of 668) of cases that have been assessed by the first-tier tribunal following the introduction of the Renters' Rights Act in May. This is based on analysis by Landlord Sums of HM Courts and Tribunals Service data of decisions made between 1 May and October 2026. Based on the data, the 70% is correct but there is much more nuance:

- 4% of all cases – rent reduced from current level.
- 10% of all cases – rent kept at same level.
- 86% of all cases – rent increased *(NB S&P calculation based on data published in articles).*

Although this is a high proportion of cases where the rent was increased, in only 26% of (all) cases was the rent increased by the proposed amount.

| Region | Number of tribunal decisions | Typical (average) Increase sought | Typical (average) increase awarded | Decisions where proposed rent not awarded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| London | 208 | 16.7% | 9.5% | 66% |
| South | 102 | 10.9% | 5.3% | 75% |
| East of England | 70 | 8.8% | 5.1% | 74% |
| Midlands | 109 | 15.8% | 8.4% | 72% |
| North | 176 | 13.3% | 7.5% | 67% |
| Total | 665 | 13.1% | 7.2% | 69% |

*NB The percentages in the total row are simple averages of the data above and are not weighted by region or individual case and so may differ from a more sophisticated analysis. The data is as quoted in various articles on 2 November.*

A reason for the high proportion of proposed rents that were not supported by the tribunal is the level of increase asked for:

- The rents proposed by landlords varied from a 'typical' / average increase of 8.8% in the East of England to 16.7% in London. *These proposed levels of increase are above typical annual rental increases that we (S&P) are seeing in the market but they may include tenancies where the rent has not been reviewed for a number of years.*
- Where landlords proposed increases in rent of over 50%, the tribunal decided a lower rent in 88% of cases.
- Where a 25-50% increase was proposed, the tribunal decided a lower rent in 83% of cases.

*NB S&P has not independently validated the analysis by Landlord Sums.*

## Energy independence bill laid before parliament

The wide-ranging Bill, with different elements for England, Scotland and Wales, includes a number of measures in relation to renewable energy schemes:

- Communities will get the right to buy up to 20% of a renewable energy project near them, up from the current 5% maximum. This right will also apply to smaller schemes of 1MW or more for the first time.
- Community benefit funds will be mandatory (they are currently voluntary) for all schemes over 5MW, with the communities deciding how to spend the fund. Minimum fund / compensation levels are proposed of £5,000 per megawatt of power for wind projects and £700 for solar.

In terms of energy 'structure', the Bill will make Great British Grid, a new part of Great British Energy, a statutory body so it can compete with National Grid and other network owners to delivery grid upgrades. It will also expand regulatory / enforcement powers for Ofgem and introduce measures to regulate energy brokers and third-party intermediaries.

For consumers, it aims to remove gas standing charges from domestic bills, establish the Warm Homes Agency to coordinate home upgrades, and strengthen the compliance and enforcement arrangements of the minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector.

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