

btf

LAND SPHERE

**THE RENEWABLE
MARKET IS
MOVING AT PACE**

**AN UPDATE ON THE
LOWER THAMES
CROSSING**

**MAXIMISING
AGRICULTURAL
GRANT OPPORTUNITIES**



Message from the Chairman

Richard Thomas



All the small talk in the pubs and clubs seem fixated on geopolitics, Donald Trump; the Epstein files and political unrest at home. Coupled with the appalling January and February weather, (the less said about the Ashes the better!) it's all been a bit gloomy! Here in the office however, we try and focus on upbeat developments in the rural surveying world.

That can be hard of course, after nearly 40 days of continuous rain, compliance and regulatory issues around every corner and a residential property market which is not yet firing on all cylinders. However, for us old stagers who have seen it all before, the drive and enthusiasm of the younger team members is refreshing and keeps us all focussed on the work in hand.

This has been typified by the hard work of Millie Palmer-Pilc, Jack Sadler and Katie Brook who all qualified with the RICS last Summer and to Joe Hearnden who passed his final CAAV exams.

Our younger surveyors are engaged in all sorts of positive voluntary work in the south-east from ploughing match committees to RABI and farmers clubs. Our sponsorships extend to local sports clubs including Cranbrook RFC and Marden Sports Club where we have just agreed a further 2-year package with the cricket club.

The "in-tray" remains plentiful with valuations of all shapes and sizes to challenge our

experienced qualified team of valuers and pleasing new instructions for the spring for our commercial and agricultural agency offices in Challock, Canterbury and Heathfield.

Sales over the winter included Tanyard Farm nr Heathfield, and 450 acres of arable and grass land near Lamberhurst. Purchasers continue to vary and the land market remains firm.

Things will continue to improve as we move into the summer and as confidence returns, the mood will be more positive, with possibly more government U-turns to come to help businesses and the hope that the politicians of every party begin to recognise the vital contribution that farmers and all in the rural sector make to this country's wellbeing.

In positive news the Snow Drops, Daffodils and Primroses are out at last so spring is nearly here and we are looking forward to meeting you all at Agri-Expo in early March, with continued enthusiasm and confidence.

Onwards and upwards!

Making Hay Whilst the Sun Shines

(but on the right terms)

Ambitious net zero targets and increasing demand for clean power means the renewable energy sector is moving at pace. Grid reforms have shifted the grid connection model from "first come, first served" to "first ready, first served" and developers are racing to secure viable sites.

More landowners than ever are being approached by companies exploring the possibility of renewable development on their land. To secure sites, developers try to grab attention with headline rental figures but, the devil is in the detail as this rent is

not guaranteed and it could be years before a spade is anywhere near the ground.

For landowners, the Heads of Terms stage is critical. It sets the commercial and legal framework for what may be a 30–40 year agreement. Engaging a land agent familiar with this process can materially affect the long-term outcome and ensure your interests are properly protected.

Our top 5 considerations are:

1. Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)

The letter which landed on your doorstep may have come from a household name energy supplier but this is unlikely to be who your agreement will be with. Instead, it will probably be with an SPV which, during the option period, has no assets or capital. If the political landscape changes, funding is removed or the developer wishes to sell/assign their interest, they can do so easily. We can help you negotiate sufficient guarantees or securities to adequately protect your reversionary interests should the worst happen.

2. Land Take and Unused Land

Developers often seek control of more land than they ultimately use. We

can scrutinise red line boundaries, proposed cable routes and site layouts to minimise unnecessary land take. We can also include provisions for the release or taking of unused land once the final layout is confirmed, ensuring you are not encumbered longer than necessary or; prevent you from being left with unusable and unfarmable areas.

3. Decommissioning Security

The Tenant will have the obligation to decommission and reinstate the premises at the end of the Term or if the lease is broken. Clear, funded decommissioning provisions are therefore essential. Its imperative to negotiate security mechanisms, timings, and robust reinstatement standards, ensuring the land is properly restored and any damage fairly remedied.

4. Planning Obligations

The tenant may obtain planning permission before their grid connection date, yet any planning obligations are between the Landlord and the Local Planning Authority; not the tenant. So what happens if they need to implement their permission to 'bank' it and therefore trigger any Section 106 obligations? Without proper security, the Landlord is potentially exposed to

these costs. We can help navigate these scenarios.

5. Various Agreements

Renewable energy projects involve several agreements:

- Option to Lease
- Lease with the SPV
- Lease to UKPN or other District Network Operator
- Easements or Wayleaves
- Direct Agreement between Landowner and Funder

How these agreements work in practice and interact with one another are important considerations, that if not managed correctly, could result in frustrating circumstances. These agreements need to align and knowing the limits to which the terms can be amended is of vital importance when it comes to current and future uses of the property.

In a fast-moving, competitive grid environment, the detail within Heads of Terms matters more than ever. We can navigate the technical and commercial aspects of the agreement and our fees are typically covered by the developer. We can help to protect value, reduce risk and ensure that when your project is ready, it is ready on the right terms.



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LOWER THAMES CROSSING: PROJECT UPDATE

Surveyor Joe Hearnden examines the progress of the UK's largest road scheme and explains the steps which BTF is taking to protect affected landowners and businesses.

In March 2025, after 10 years of planning, the Lower Thames Crossing ("LTC") Development Consent Order ("DCO") was granted, clearing the legal path for what is heralded as the largest road scheme of a generation. LTC is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP") which will link Kent and Essex by way of a 14-mile dual carriageway and the longest road tunnel in the United Kingdom. Its opening is projected for the early 2030s, costing £10 billion (according to current estimates). It is also intended to serve as a proving ground for low-carbon construction techniques and the use of hydrogen-powered plant, both of which are untested at this scale. However, this engineering challenge is only part of the story.

Following Chancellor Rachel Reeves's Spending Review in 2024, the Government confirmed that the scheme would proceed under a private finance model, although no funding partner has yet been secured. In the meantime, the Chancellor remains committed to delivering the project. At the 2025 Autumn Budget, Reeves pledged an additional £891 million of Government spending towards the project, allowing LTC to advance its detailed design and enabling works,

ready for construction to begin later in 2026.

For those living and working along LTC's route, the project may present an existential challenge. Since 2015, BTF's specialist compulsory purchase & compensation team has acted for affected homeowners, landowners, farmers and businesses, with a broad and comprehensive remit to help affected parties navigate the complexities of this scheme, focussing on delivering practical solutions to mitigate loss, alongside robust valuation and compensation advice.

National Highways has now appointed delivery partners, Skanska, Balfour Beatty, and Bouygues Travaux Publics – Murphy Joint Venture, who are beginning to give physical effect to the powers granted under the DCO by taking possession of land to carry out preliminary enabling works, including the translocation of protected species, the clearance of vegetation, the creation of replacement habitats, and the diversion of essential utilities. Some land will now not be handed back until the road is complete, other parcels, where the project requires, will be requisitioned permanently. BTF is helping clients to ensure that this process runs as smoothly as possible, it is important to ensure that

claimants' livelihoods can continue on their retained land, throughout construction and end-use. More importantly however, so far as money can achieve it, claimants should be kept in the same financial position as if their land had not been taken. These outcomes do not arise by accident; they depend on a host of practical matters being identified early and resolved properly.

For farmers affected by LTC, the period prior to entry is critical. Practical issues such as land drainage, irrigation systems, access, and relocation of displaced stock and tenants need to be resolved, so that the retained holding remains viable as an agricultural unit. Then, annual losses and compensation need to be properly evidenced, quantified and recovered efficiently, to minimise strain on cashflows during a disruptive time. BTF is also currently managing the relocation of local businesses to new premises, handling all compensation matters relating to site procurement, site preparation, and relocation, whilst maintaining business continuity wherever possible. Therefore, BTF's role is twofold, to help clients to anticipate and overcome practical obstacles, finding ways in which financial losses can be prevented; and to assess compensation where they cannot.

BTF continues to represent several homeowners impacted by LTC. According to National Highways' DCO Application published in December 2023, a total of 35 residential dwellings need to be compulsorily acquired for demolition and construction of the new road – at the time, they had already acquired 23 of those. However, it is often the case that properties situated outside of the project's Order Limits can be negatively impacted to such an extent that they cannot be sold on the open market. According to the BBC, data released in December 2025 showed that National Highways has now acquired 71 residential properties at a cost of approximately £50 million, indicating the far-reaching impact of the scheme. In several cases, BTF has compelled National Highways to acquire Blighted properties for their full, no-scheme market value, and are currently working to obtain proper compensation

for our clients' losses while keeping them in control of the process during the time which is left before properties are requisitioned using compulsory purchase in September 2026.

"The Lower Thames Crossing represents a fundamental threat to our farm and will have a lasting impact on our business and our future as food producers. Having BTF as our agents has been critical to ensuring that our family and business interests have remained protected and their guidance has helped us navigate complex challenges and uncertainty"

Jeremy Finnis, Partner, C.H. Cole & Sons

Ultimately, one of the key ways to protect claimant's interests is to ensure that National Highways have a detailed understanding of the comprehensive scope and complexity of the challenges imposed by LTC, we have achieved this through proactive collaboration and engagement on behalf of all of our clients. Our clients benefit from our tailored advice and have been able to negotiate with National Highways throughout the Development Consent Order process, including outside of statutory timeframes.



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AGRICULTURAL GRANTS AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES: AN UPDATE FOR SPRING 2026 AND BEYOND

The agricultural support landscape continues to evolve at pace, and with further change expected over the coming year, it has never been more important for farmers and landowners to stay informed and prepared.

While new schemes offer opportunity, the reality is that funding is increasingly targeted and competitive, particularly in the context of wider economic pressures and the UK's growing national debt to GDP ratio. With this in mind, early planning and professional advice will be key to securing support.

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier applications are now open, with many new agreements due to commence in early 2026. However, access to this scheme is more selective than ever. Higher Tier is now firmly focused on high priority farms and those delivering the greatest environmental benefit in areas such as biodiversity, water quality and historic environment protection. For eligible holdings, the scheme remains a valuable long-term funding mechanism, but successful applications will depend on strong evidence, well-designed proposals and alignment with national and local priorities.

Alongside this, the **Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)** is expected to reopen later this summer, in June for 'small farms' and those without existing ELM agreements and September for all farmers. SFI remains a cornerstone of the government's Environmental Land Management (ELM) approach, offering more flexible options that can fit alongside commercial farming operations. While further refinements to the scheme are anticipated, it continues to provide an accessible entry point for farmers looking to be rewarded for sustainable land management practices. However, Defra have been clear that they are reviewing payment rates, available actions, and limits. Being ready with up-to-date land data and a clear understanding of which actions suit your business will help ensure a smooth application process when the scheme reopens.

The **Countryside Stewardship Capital Grant Scheme** also remains an important funding route, particularly for infrastructure and practical measures aimed at

improving environmental outcomes. However, for many water quality-related items, support from a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer is often required. Early engagement with advisers and local officers is essential to avoid delays and to ensure applications meet scheme requirements. We expect this scheme to reopen for applications later this year.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) continues to offer valuable opportunities for farms and estates located within National Parks and National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The scheme supports projects that deliver environmental, cultural and climate benefits, while also supporting farm viability. Demand remains high, and funding decisions are locally driven, making early discussion and well-structured proposals particularly important.

Meanwhile, **delinked payments** are now firmly in the final stages of the transition away from the Basic Payment Scheme. The first £30,000 of a claimants payment is reduced by 98%, any amount over that will have a 100% reduction.

If you would like to discuss how these schemes may apply to your land or how best to prepare for upcoming opportunities, our team would be pleased to help. Early advice can make all the difference between a missed opportunity and a successful, well-funded application.



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FARMING AND WILDLIFE: AN 'AND', NOT A 'BUT'

Insights from the GWCT annual conference highlight how profitable farming and biodiversity can work hand in hand – proving that environmental gain need not come at the expense of commercial success.

Where possible, BTF endeavours to align its charitable work with the interests of many of its clients which is why the GWCT (Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust) has been supported by us consistently since our foundation in 1991. Several members of the BTF team have chaired the Kent branch of the charity and, following a visit to their annual conference, we wanted to take the opportunity to share some of their research and the dominant take-away message from the day.

Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. As any farm manager, landowner or estate trustee will know, different elements of a farm, estate, or rural business cannot be treated as though they do not affect each other. The arable enterprise, the livestock, the shoot, the environmental schemes, the wildlife, the glamping pods, and so on, cannot be treated in isolation if the business, as a whole, is to be as successful as it can be, both in terms of profitability and biodiversity.

The point which was laboured heavily throughout the conference was that farmers and landowners must resist the temptation to assume that the action of creating habitat on their farm automatically has the reaction of restricting or reducing their agricultural or commercial operations. At their 750-acre research farm in Leicestershire, the GWCT operates a mixed system which focuses on

maximising yields where the land is most productive, and maximising habitat where the yield is at its lowest. For example, corners of their arable fields which have fallen victim to heavy compaction in recent years have been put into schemes which included winter bird food, wildflowers, and hedgerows. It is important to emphasise that, in many instances, the areas of ground in question constituted a very small proportion of the field. Their research showed that these scraps of 'spare ground', previously thought to be virtually useless, had not only improved soil health into the field, but provided refuge for indicator species which included linnets, yellowhammers and even grey partridges. In addition, an improved soil biome around the field edge resulted in better drainage and caused parts of the farm which would previously have been totally impassable at this time of year to become solid enough to carry out winter jobs using an ATV.

At the same research facility, the GWCT have also been able to debunk some of the partisan attitudes towards released pheasant shooting. For context, it has been surmised by many environmental groups that released game shoots (particularly on a commercial scale) can cause more harm than good in terms of biodiversity and habitat. However, the GWCT have conducted research to test this preconception by closely

monitoring the songbird population at their farm over the course of 15 years. The findings were rather striking. In the first and last five years of this period, a substantial pheasant shoot was in operation but, during the intervening five years when there was no pheasant shoot, songbird numbers across the holding almost halved. Many of the species monitored were considered good indicator species for the wider biodiversity on the farm. Part of the reason why the biodiversity was so vastly improved by the addition of the shoot was that the cover crops which were drilled for the pheasants were Stewardship or SFI options, rather than monoculture maize which offers far less in terms of habitat and cannot be entered into a scheme which would contribute to the farm's income. This is another clear instance of increased farm biodiversity without detriment to other commercial and agricultural interests.

In summary, no landowner is being asked to drop everything and rewild their holding. At a time of global instability, political uncertainty, and when government support for farms has yet to return to pre-Brexit levels, the bottom line must come first. What the research of charities such as the GWCT serves to demonstrate, however, is that wildlife conservation can follow on from the previous sentence with an "and", not a "but".



FOR SALE BY PRIVATE TREATY

Lot 1 Blackhurst Farm, East Sussex

Blackhurst Farm is located on the outskirts of Rushlake Green, approximately one mile from the village centre with its general store and public house. A residential and grassland estate located within the High Weald National Landscape. Four/Five-bedroom farmhouse. Ring-fenced pasture fields with woodland shaws. Range of modern and traditional outbuildings.

Approx 124.19 acres
Guide Price OIEO £2,300,000

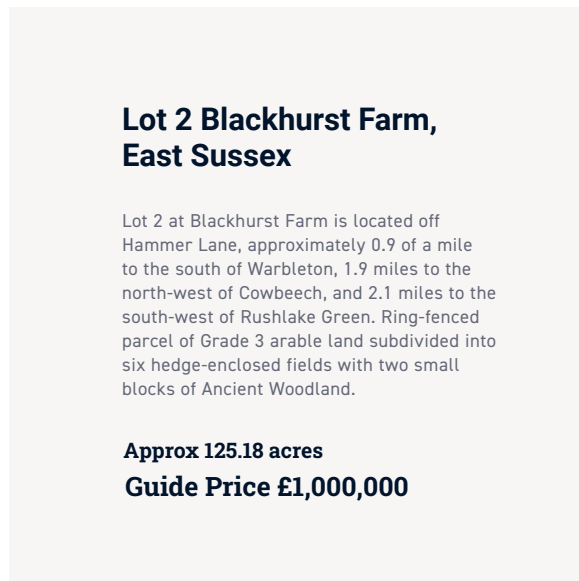


FOR SALE BY PRIVATE TREATY

Lamberhurst Farm Faversham, Kent

A multi-use commercial site with 5 residential dwellings, over 40 let units, producing a significant rental income with future opportunities still available. All residential and commercial tenants on written agreements. Total income circa £430,000 per annum.

Approx 7.94 acres
Guide Price OIEO £4,995,000



FOR SALE BY PRIVATE TREATY

Lot 2 Blackhurst Farm, East Sussex

Lot 2 at Blackhurst Farm is located off Hammer Lane, approximately 0.9 of a mile to the south of Warbleton, 1.9 miles to the north-west of Cowbeech, and 2.1 miles to the south-west of Rushlake Green. Ring-fenced parcel of Grade 3 arable land subdivided into six hedge-enclosed fields with two small blocks of Ancient Woodland.

Approx 125.18 acres
Guide Price £1,000,000



Little Southernden Farm Headcorn, Kent

A smallholding with potential located in rural yet accessible location at the end of a private drive. Includes a detached 3 bedroom farmhouse, a significant range of farm buildings, barns & stables, riding arena, ponds, grazing and arable land.

Approx 51.77 acres
Guide Price £1,500,000



FOR SALE BY PRIVATE TREATY

Hylands Field Faversham, Kent

A parcel of Grade I arable land with road frontage to Porters Lane. The land extends to a total of 17.70 acres and has deep well drained silty soils that are renowned for their productivity. The property is offered for sale by Informal Tender as a whole with a closing date of 12 noon on Wednesday 11th March 2026.

Approx 17.70 acres
Guide Price £275,000



FOR SALE BY PRIVATE TREATY

Mount Hall Farm, Benenden, Kent

A rare residential development opportunity available as a whole or in three lots. The property includes Listed Farmhouse & Listed Barn, Oast and Agricultural Building and approximately 6 acres of land. Additional land may be available by separate negotiation and further potential for residential conversions on the barns with positive pre apps received.

Approx 6.07 acres
Guide Price £1,400,000
(As a Whole)



FOR SALE BY INFORMAL TENDER





DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2026:

We're looking forward to another busy year supporting clients, industry partners and the wider rural community. If you're attending any of the events below, do come and say hello.

04 MARCH

FARM EXPO 2026 AT
DELTING SHOWGROUND

07 MAY

COUNTRYSIDE CAREERS AT
DELTING SHOWGROUND

23 MAY

HEATHFIELD SHOW AT
TOTTINGWORTH FARM

18 JUNE

CLA AGM AT GODINTON

26 JUNE

BTF GWCT CLAY SHOOT
HAWKHURST

03-05 JULY

KENT COUNTY SHOW AT
DETLING SHOWGROUND

09 JULY

CLA EMSDEN TROPHY EVENT &
FARM WALK AT THANET EARTH

15-16 AUGUST

TRACTORFEST BIDDENDEN

12 SEPTEMBER

WEALD OF KENT PLOUGHING MATCH

16 SEPTEMBER

LAUGHTON & DISTRICT
PLOUGHING MATCH

19 SEPTEMBER

GRAVESEND & ROCHESTER
PLOUGHING MATCH

26 SEPTEMBER

NORTH KENT PLOUGHING MATCH

30 SEPTEMBER

EAST KENT PLOUGHING MATCH

04 NOVEMBER

NATIONAL FRUIT SHOW
AT DETLING SHOWGROUND

TEAM NEWS.

Welcome to the latest team update from BTF Partnership. We're thrilled to celebrate exam success for Millie, Jack and Katie who all qualified in the last round of APC Assessments. We have also welcomed Will Pierce who joined us from a national firm and plans to take his exams in the Autumn 2026.

Our New Surveyors



MILLIE PALMER PILC
Chartered Surveyor

Millie works within our Agency team assisting Richard Thomas and Alex Cornwallis with a range of work. She also undertakes Valuations across the county along with general rural professional work.



JACK SADLER
Chartered Surveyor

Jack is principally involved in negotiating Renewable Energy option agreements and Telecoms lease renewals on behalf of landowners. He also undertakes a range of rural professional work.



KATIE BROOK
Associate Director

Katie has a wealth of experience in Property and Estate management and she also undertakes a variety of commercial private client work including Valuation and Landlord and Tenant.



WILLIAM PIERCE
Trainee Surveyor

Will assists with a wide range of professional work including Valuation, Landlord and Tenant, and Planning. He also undertakes various Estate Management work.

Sporting Achievements



BTF SUPPORT EMMA CARLTON AS SHE TAKES ON 630-MILE COASTAL CHALLENGE

Local runner Emma is preparing to take on an extraordinary endurance challenge, running 630 miles around the Dorset, Devon and Cornwall coastline - in support of two charities close to her heart: Dementia UK and YoungMinds.

Although Emma is not part of the BTF team, as a local individual undertaking such a significant and inspiring challenge, BTF Partnership is proud to sponsor her journey and support the important causes she is championing. We will be cheering her on every step of the 630 miles. If you would like to support Emma's fundraising efforts, please consider making a donation ■

The logo consists of the lowercase letters 'btf' in a bold, sans-serif font, colored dark blue, set against a light blue rectangular background.

FROM THE GROUND UP.

BTF Land & Property Experts offer the guidance you need to succeed in today's farming & property landscape.

With over 30 years of experience, we provide expert advice in **Viticulture & Agriculture, Environmental Consultancy, Estate & Farm Management, Farm, Land & Property Sales, Planning & Development, Renewables, HR and more.** We help secure grants, manage compulsory purchase schemes and navigate complex regulations to unlock your farm's fullest potential.

*Call us
for a chat*
→

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