

Farming Newsletter



WELCOME!



Welcome to the March 2026 edition of the Mersey Rivers Trust farming newsletter!

Read on to find out more about farming news and what's on offer this month, you can also keep up to date through our [Farming Hub](#).

FARM NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING TOOL



Good nutrient planning helps to get the best from your crops, keep costs down and reduce harm to the environment.

To help with this DEFRA has developed a new nutrient management tool. This tool hopes to:

- Save you time and money.
- Help you comply with environmental regulations.
- Help protect the environment.

Your plan will be based on:

- The crops you grow and their nutrient requirements.
- The nutrients available, soil nitrogen supply and other soil analysis results.
- The organic materials and inorganic fertilisers you use and how you apply them.

For more information and to access the tool click [here](#).



Defra regularly updates their [Farming Blog](#). To subscribe to the blog and ensure that you receive their latest farming updates click [here](#).



HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY INSPECTION

Before your inspection the EA will

- Contact you via phone, email, or post to arrange a time.
- Send a confirmation letter which will include inspection details.
- Ask you to provide documents in advance to save time such as: nutrient management plans, risk maps, drainage plans and slurry store calculation.

During your inspection the EA will check the following for compliance (this may vary based on farm type and activity)

- Fuel storage
- Silage clamps
- Slurry & manure storage
- Fields
- Yard drainage
- Chemical storage
- Pesticide handling

After the inspection you will receive a report, it will outline actions and deadlines required to bring you into compliance.

For more information click [here](#).

2026 IRRIGATION FORECAST

The Environment Agency currently believes irrigation prospects for this spring are good across most of England. The irrigation prospects reflect the water situation using current rainfall, river flows, groundwater conditions, latest available weather forecasts and Met Office seasonal outlooks.

The water resources situation has significantly improved through the winter with sufficient refill of most irrigation reservoirs. To read the full report click [here](#).



MOSAICS OF MEASURES NEEDED FOR MOISTURE MANAGEMENT

Long-term research project shows that effective soil moisture management requires a mosaic of combined measures rather than a single solution.

In this study a new subsurface drainage system successfully handled over 100 mm of heavy January rain on a 4-hectare field, while undrained areas stayed saturated and prone to runoff.

A combination of minimal tillage, cover crops, beetle banks, low-pressure tyres, and edge-of-field buffers and wetlands offers the best results for healthier soils, reduced flooding, and greater climate resilience.

To read the full article click [here](#).

UPCOMING GRANT OPPURTUNITIES

FARMING EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY FUND 2026

Applications are open for the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) 2026 grant to help invest in equipment and technology for your business. That improves productivity, animal health and welfare, and slurry management.

This year funding is available across 3 themes:

- Productivity equipment
- Animal health and welfare
- Slurry management

You can apply for grants between £1,000 and £25,000 per theme, with a maximum of £75,000 available if you apply across all 3 themes.

The application window will close at midday on Tuesday 28th April.

For more information and guidance on eligibility/how to apply to this fund click [here](#).



CAPITAL GRANTS 2026

Capital grants are due to open in July 2026. These grants will fund a range of items from the full list will be published in May alongside further guidance.

In the same way as last year's offer, the items will be organised into the following groups:

- Boundaries, trees and orchards
- Water quality
- Air quality
- Natural flood management
- Assessments
- Improvements

Funding limits will continue to apply to 4 of the 6 groups in the offer:

- £25,000 for the water quality, air quality, and natural flood management groups
- £35,000 for the boundaries, trees and orchards group.

For more information on how to prepare for this grant opportunity click [here](#).



SUSTAINABLE FARMING INCENTIVE 2026

This grant scheme will be offering 71 environmental actions (down from 102) to support farmers in delivering nature benefits alongside food production.

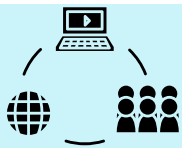
Key changes include no management payments, shorter 3-year actions for easier access, a £100,000 annual payment cap per farm business, one agreement per farm, and a 25% area limit on certain actions.

Applications open in two windows:

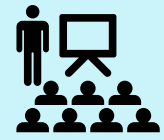
- **June 2026** (priority for small farms up to 50 ha and those without existing ELM agreements)
- **September 2026** (open to all).

Exact dates are yet to be announced. Minimum eligibility is 3 hectares of agricultural land. For more information click [here](#).





EVENTS/WEBINARS



FAS IMPROVING WATER RESILIENCE ON FARM WEBINAR RECORDING

This free 1hr online webinar recording from the Farming Advice Service explores practical strategies to reduce your vulnerability to future water risks and improve on-farm water management. For more information and to access the recording click [here](#).

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE PATHWAY: MANDATORY PROPOSALS WEBINAR

Defra are hosting a webinar consulting on new mandatory measures to raise livestock health and welfare standards for cattle, sheep and pigs in England. Key proposals include an annual Animal Health and Welfare Review (vet visit), mandatory flock health plans for sheep, and disease eradication programmes for BVD in cattle and PRRS in pigs. To access the recording click [here](#).



No fuss. No judgement.
Just people who get it.



If things are getting heavy, don't tough it out alone. We're here to listen.

Support 07967559554/talk@agchap.com
/agchap.com





DATES FOR THE DIARY

**JANUARY**

16th - For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), this is the date from which you can apply manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland and tillage land if conditions are suitable.

FEBRUARY

1st - For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), you can apply organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content to grassland and tillage land on all soil types if conditions are suitable and you adhere to the quantity application restrictions.

MARCH

31st - If you hold a winter or all-year-round water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction outside the period April to October), the Environment Agency will ask you to submit your record of actual abstraction. You have 28 days to submit your record of actual abstraction to the Environment Agency.

APRIL

1st - This is the end of the burning season for heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium. The burning season is from: 1 October to 15 April in upland areas & 1 November to 31 March in other areas.

28th - Applications for the **Farming Equipment and Technology Fund** closes at midday on 28 April 2026.

30th - If your farmland is located within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), by 30th April each year you must make a record of: the numbers and type of livestock you kept in buildings or on hard standing during the previous slurry/manure storage period & the dates for the start and end of use and locations of any field sites you use for storing solid manure.

JUNE

SFI 2026 application window 1 opens exact date TBD - and will remain open for around 2 months – although it may close sooner if demand is high and the Window 1 budget is fully allocated.

JULY

Capital Grants 2026 applications open (Date TBD)

SEPTEMBER

SFI 2026 application window 2 opens

1st - in NVZs, closed period starts for high-nitrogen organic manure on grassland (shallow/sandy soils); manufactured nitrogen on tillage land.

1st - You may now cut and trim hedges until the 28th of February.

