

Farming Newsletter



WELCOME!



Welcome to the May 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 with our [Farming Hub](#) online.

CAPITAL GRANTS 2026: GUIDANCE NOW AVAILABLE

A total of £225 million will be invested through Capital Grants this year to help farmers and land managers carry out environmental improvements across England.

Applications open in July, with funding available for a variety of capital items to support hedgerow and tree planting, restore boundaries, improve natural flood management, and support better air and water quality.

Funding limits will continue to apply to 4 of these groups:

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

For more information and further guidance click [here](#).

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



RB209 2026: OUT NOW

The Nutrient Management Guide (RB209) helps farmers make the most of organic materials and balance the benefits of fertiliser use against the costs – both economic and environmental.

This year's update includes:

Section 1: Improved pH and liming guidance.

Section 2: Better accounting for nutrient cycling, with enhanced data on crop-available nutrients from organic materials and two new tables on nitrogen availability from anaerobic digestate (food- and farm-based).

Section 3: More examples of nitrogen recommendations for different grazing and silage management patterns.

Section 4: Data refinements and layout improvements for arable crops.

For more information click [here](#).

APPLY NOW FOR A WATER SCREENING STUDY

Groups of farmers in England can now apply for a [Local Resource Option \(LRO\) screening study](#).

An LRO is a local water project designed to improve the reliability and resilience of water supplies in an area.

The studies help neighbouring farmers explore and rank practical options for improving water supply resilience and securing reliable access to water for the future.

To apply, groups need to nominate a lead farmer or contact to coordinate the application and gather information from the participating farms.

For more information click [here](#).





FREE WATER MANAGEMENT PLANS IN THE RIVER BOLLIN CATCHMENT

Farmers in the River Bollin and Dean catchments (including Mobberley, Sugar, Birkin, Pedley and Marthall Brooks) are all eligible for a FREE farm water management plan produced by Mersey Rivers Trust. To chat to a Farm Advisor about this, please contact us via our farming mailbox - farming@merseyrivers.org or call Amber on 07837098293.

UPPER WEAVER SMALL GRANTS SCHEME 26/27

For farmers with existing water management plans in the Upper Weaver Catchment. We have small grants of up to £5,500 available to help with capital works on farms to reduce water pollution.

We can fund capital works including:

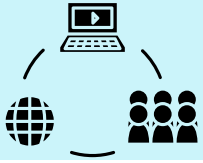
- Guttering & downpipes
- Rainwater harvesting tanks + pumps & filters
- Water course/body fencing
- Ditch maintenance
- Trees, Hedge creation/gapping up
- Soil Aeration & sward lifting
- Pond/wetland creation/maintenance
- Buffer Strips
- Cover Crops/winter cover for maize

Please note this year these grants will be tailored towards more water efficiency items rather than concrete items. Please note the availability of these grants is limited.

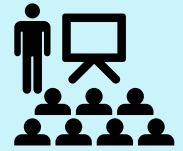
To register interest and discuss your chances of securing funding for capital grant items in 2025/2026.

Email us at farming@merseyrivers.org or call Amara on 07554900045.





TRAINING AND EVENTS



**THURSDAY 18TH JUNE
1PM TO 3PM, SY10 7BG**

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REDUCING DIFFUSE POLLUTION ON FARMS

Join the soil association and Bristol Avon Rivers Trust to discuss practical ways to reduce diffuse pollution from farms and relevant funding that is available. We'll discuss on farm interventions, nutrient management, and the role of farm clusters in landscape scale approaches. To reserve your place click [here](#).

MAIZE UNDERSOWING TRIAL WITH DRONE

United Utilities will be hosting a demonstration of drone undersowing of maize with grass. This event will take place near Chirk with refreshments provided.

This demonstration will showcase new drone technology designed to distribute grass seed onto standing maize. The aim is to establish green cover over winter, while also providing additional forage in the spring.

Please note that the event is weather dependent and may need to be cancelled at short notice.

If you are able to attend, we kindly ask that you RSVP to help us estimate attendee numbers. Please confirm your attendance using the following form:

[Drone Maize Undersowing Demo - Fill in form](#)

If there are any questions, please contact Or contact Matt via:

Email: matthew.turner@uuplc.co.uk

Tel: 07345 442073

**WEDNESDAY 17TH JUNE
1PM TO 2.15PM, ONLINE**





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

1st - You must not cut or trim a hedgerow that is covered by the Hedgerow management rules between 1 March and 31 August. You must not cause or permit another person to cut or trim such a hedgerow.

31st - If you hold a winter or all-year-round water abstraction licence (authorising abstraction outside the period April to October). 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.

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. For more information click [here](#).

JULY

Capital Grants 2026 applications open (Date TBD). For more information click [here](#).

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.

