

Farming Newsletter



WELCOME!



Welcome to the July 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.

CAPTIAL GRANTS 2026 UPDATE

Capital grants 2026 opened on the 30th of July, after just 2 days of being open 75% of funds have been allocated.

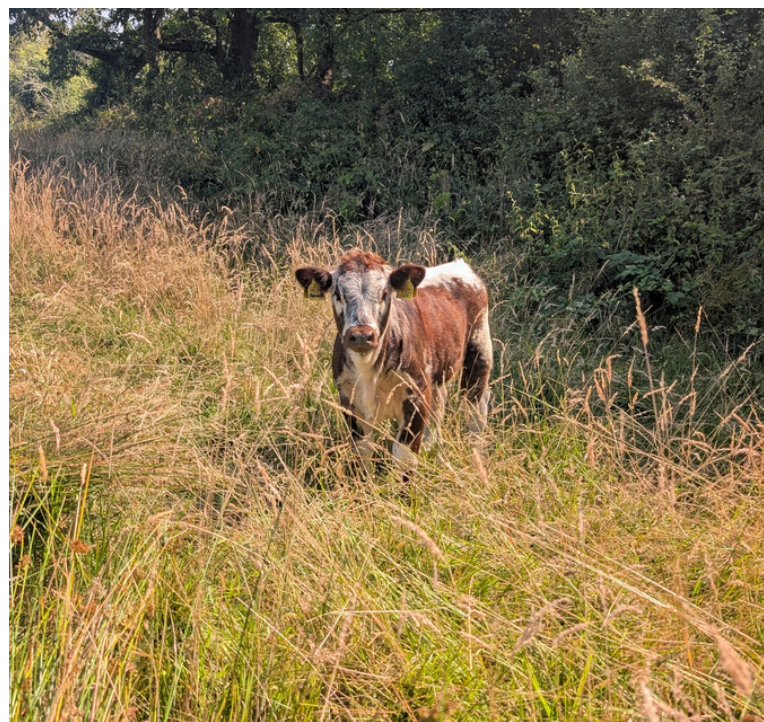
If you plan to apply, DEFRA encourages you to submit your application as soon as possible. With a significant proportion of the available budget now allocated, funding is becoming more limited.

If you're interested in learning more and applying:

- read the [Capital Grants 2026 guidance on GOV.UK](#) to explore the full range of available items and eligibility requirements
- use the [Capital Grant Finder](#) to identify the items that could work best for your farm, landholding or business
- [watch the Capital Grants webinar](#) for practical advice on making an application and getting the most from the offer.

For more information click [here](#).

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





Wilder Cheshire AWARDS

Led by Cheshire Local Nature Partnership

**WHO IS
MAKING
CHESHIRE
WILDER?**

Enter or Nominate Today

Scan the QR code to enter
Entries close 13 September 2026



www.wildercheshireawards.co.uk

WILDER CHESHIRE AWARDS

Across Cheshire and Warrington, thousands of people are creating habitats, protecting wildlife, improving landscapes, inspiring communities and helping more people connect with nature. Many of these stories go unseen.

The Wilder Cheshire Awards have been created to shine a spotlight on those individuals, schools, businesses, farmers, community groups and organisations making a genuine difference.

Nominations can be made up until the 13th of September. For more information scan the QR code or click [here](#).

FARMER WELFARE GRANT

Farming plays a vital role in feeding the country and caring for the environment. It can be incredibly rewarding, but we also know it comes with huge pressures.

Farmers face a range of challenges, including changing weather conditions, business costs and the day-to-day demands of running a farm. These factors can affect wellbeing.

Through the Farmer Welfare Grant, £1.5 million will be available over 3 years to support farmer mental health and wellbeing. Rural and agricultural charities and organisations across England will be able to apply for funding, so support can be delivered by the groups that already know and work closely with farming communities.

This fund will open for applications on the 6th of August. The new funding will support targeted interventions to help farmers with personal wellbeing and business resilience.

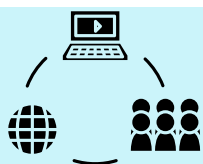
For more information click [here](#).



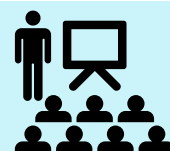
BLUE TOUNGE UPDATE

In the 2026 to 2027 bluetongue season, there have been 92 confirmed cases of bluetongue (BTV-3) in England and 3 cases in Wales, while Scotland and Northern Ireland have reported none. Where animals with suspect clinical signs are reported, Defra funds the cost of diagnostic testing for up to three affected animals.

Although all current cases have been identified in the south of England looking out for symptoms in livestock is still very important. For more information on the current situation click [here](#).



TRAINING AND EVENTS

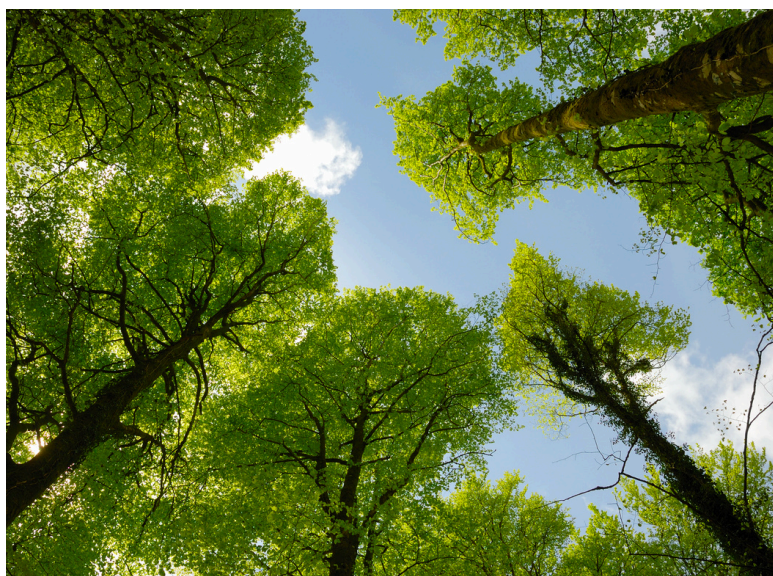


WOODLAND CREATION WEBINAR

The Forestry Commission are hosting a FREE online webinar about managing new woodland. The first few years of life can be critical to establishing a healthy tree. If you're planning to plant new woodland, join us for this practical session aimed at landowners and land managers who are new to woodland creation.

This webinar will be chaired by the forestry commission South East and London Area Director, Peter Coles, speakers will include Chris Watson, Woodland Resilience Advisor, who'll discuss how to give your trees what they need to survive and thrive.

Presentations will be followed by a Q&A. To sign up for this free webinar click [here](#).





WATER FRIENDLY FARMING DIRECTORY



ORGANISATION	DETAILS
	Offers free, confidential advice and support focused on water quality, soil health, and sustainable farming. Develop tailored Water Management Plans for farms in specific catchments, identifying funding opportunities (such as small grants for capital works), and supporting natural flood management as well as pond and wetland creation or management. Also offer workshops, demonstration days and training. The Trust offers services across the Mersey Basin, with targeted projects in the Upper Weaver, River Bollin, and Alt-Crossens catchments. farming@merseryrivers.org.uk / 07920 095 753
	Provides practical environmental advice to protect nature and boost sustainability, focusing on water quality, soil health, and habitat creation. This includes supporting farmers with hedge planting, woodland creation, reconditioning compacted soils, and implementing sustainable drainage systems through catchment specific projects. info@groundwork.org.uk
	Catchment/Environmental Advice: Free advice is available for farmers in specific catchment areas regarding water quality, pesticides, and nutrient management. Southcatchmentteam@uuplc.co.uk Agricultural Water Supply: For new troughs or farm connections, call 0345 072 6067 Biosolids Usage: For information on biosolids, contact UUBioresource@uuplc.co.uk / 0345 672 3723
	Advice, guidance, and support aimed at helping farmers comply with environmental regulations, reduce pollution, and protect natural resources (soil, water, and air). enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk / 03708 506 506
	Provides a map identifying the best locations for nature recovery, which informs Biodiversity Net Gain delivery and ELMs, farmers can add their land to this map. Future Farmer Group - A dedicated group to showcase ways to boost wildlife while improving profitability. Support for regenerative farming methods including action plans promote low-carbon, agro-ecological methods and soil health improvement - naturerecovery@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
	Cheshire wildlife trust have a number of schemes running and available to support you with up to 100% grant funding to plant trees or hedges, create or enhance meadows and establish ponds. - naturerecovery@cheshirewt.org.uk / farming@cheshirewt.org.uk or call 07394 568564
	Political lobbying, expert legal and technical advice (via NFU CallFirst), and business-specific guidance. Membership includes the Legal Assistance Scheme, a free Legal Health Check, and access to specialised advisers. Also offer networking, sector reports, and discounts on insurance and services. - nfu_north@nfu.org.uk / 02476 939401
	Can provide significant grants, expert advice, and financial incentives for planting trees, creating woodland, and implementing agroforestry, notably through the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) which covers up to 100% of capital costs and 15 years of maintenance payments. These schemes aim to increase farm income, improve biodiversity, and provide livestock shelter. North West and West Midlands team, based at Delamere Forest, reachable at 0300 067 4340 or delamere@forestryengland.uk
	Works collaboratively with farmers, water companies, and regulators to ensure water sustainability in the North West and Midlands, particularly focusing on water security for agriculture in the face of climate change. Provides advice on long-term investments in on-farm reservoirs and water storage, promotes Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR), increased rainwater harvesting, supports funding for farmer-led groups to identify options for improving water supply resilience, gives advice on water rights trading and water transfers. waterresourceswest@outlook.com
	A partnership between Defra, Natural England, and the EA, this program offers free, one-to-one advice from local advisers to reduce water and air pollution. Can offer visits to provide advice, refer to technical experts where needed, advice ahead of inspections or submitting applications for capital grants. csf.northwest@naturalengland.org.uk
	Free, expert, and tailored advice on tree planting, agroforestry, natural flood management and woodland creation. Provide significant funding, often covering up to 100% of project costs and maintenance through the Trees for Climate grant scheme. Their support includes designing projects for biodiversity, shelterbelts, and increased, sustainable productivity. 03033 300 410 / mail@merseyforest.org.uk

The Farming Advice Service (FAS) provides free, confidential advice for farmers and land managers in England to help protect people, livestock and the environment, Technical advice line: 03000 200 301 | Email: advice@farmingadvice.service.org.uk

This is produced by the Weaver Gowry Agricultural Group. For more information please email farming@merseyrivers.org



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 - 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.

