

# michelmores

## agrilore

**Summer 2025**

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# Summer 2025

## Welcome to this Summer edition of AgriLore.

As expected, the Spring Statement did not bring any major surprises from the government. Farmers and rural business owners are still grappling with the profound changes to Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief. Consequently, there is huge uncertainty regarding succession planning for future farming generations. For many, succession plans will need rethinking - time is of the essence – and waiting for greater certainty from the government may in fact risk further tax changes. Charles Frost discusses some of these issues on pages 4 and 5.

Farmers continue to grapple with the repercussions of the sudden termination of the Sustainable Farming Scheme and the delays for unresolved Sustainable Farming Incentive (**SFI**) applications. On 12 May the government offered some respite to approximately 3000 farmers who started an application within the two months leading up to the closure – these farmers now have 6 weeks to submit their

SFI applications (albeit with some restrictions on the agreements offered). However, many with unresolved applications, will have had little choice but to abandon the hope of SFI and use the land another way for example for spring crops or leaving it fallow. The announcement of the revised scheme by DEFRA is, hopefully, imminent.

The government remains focused on investing in infrastructure whilst also regulating biodiversity and conservation, with the two often seen as going hand in hand. This autumn will see Biodiversity Net Gain (**BNG**) become mandatory for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (**NSIP**). On pages 8 and 9 Will Dyer explains the progression to this change and the significance of NSIP applications demonstrating BNG uplift.

Looking to the future, AI's impact is multifaceted and the impact it will have on farming is no exception. On pages 10 and 11 Iain Connor sets out how technology is shaping the farming of the future. Farmers who embrace the sophisticated integration of technology and

farming will be best placed to excel, in turn improving the sustainability and the security of the UK food industry.

Across our team, we continue to see the rise of natural capital projects but often the confidence to enable debt finance is a challenge. On page 7, Karen Williams discusses options for a blended finance approach - using both private and public funding.

We are delighted to be sponsoring the Young Farmers stand at Cereals in June. The team are out and about over the summer at many of the Agricultural shows and hope to catch up with you.



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# Succession Planning:

## Inheritance Tax changes - it's time to act

There continues to be uncertainty surrounding the proposed changes to Inheritance Tax for rural businesses and landed estates, partially fuelled by the lack of draft legislation implementing the changes announced in the October 2024 Budget. Despite this, succession planning strategies should be reviewed and progressed, particularly as the risk of further tax changes cannot be ignored.

### The October 2024 Budget

Much has been said about the profound changes to Inheritance Tax (**IHT**), particularly the reliefs given by Agricultural Property Relief (**APR**) and Business Property Relief (**BPR**), announced in the October 2024 Budget. Despite ongoing campaigning, including by the Country Land and Business Association (**CLA**), the government does not appear to be reconsidering its position.

Draft legislation is expected and HMRC recently concluded a

consultation on the reforms to APR and BPR as they apply to trusts (the **Consultation**). A response to the Consultation and a technical consultation on the draft legislation is expected later this year, although no publication dates have been confirmed.

Draft Finance Bills are typically published in July, but the CLA has rightly raised concerns about whether such complex legislation will be ready in time.

### Risks of waiting for draft legislation

Normally, it would make sense to wait for draft legislation to assess its impact. However, with the proposed changes due to come into effect in April 2026, and the risk of further changes this Autumn, the timeframe for considering and implementing effective planning strategies is narrowing.

Since the changes were announced, the focus has been on the need

to implement planning before April 2026. However, there may be changes announced in the 2025 Autumn Budget, particularly to Capital Gains Tax (**CGT**) and the lifetime giving regime which could limit planning strategies.

Changes to CGT were a major driver for much of the planning undertaken prior to the October 2024 Budget. Although the CGT changes were less drastic than anticipated, the government has not categorically ruled out further changes.

Hypothetically, if changes to CGT or gifting rules are introduced this Autumn, and take effect immediately (as some CGT changes did last October), they could limit the window for planning ahead of April 2026.

### The size of the challenge

The following steps illustrate the task which many farming families are now facing.

### Step 1: Understand the current position

Not always as straightforward as it sounds and often requires gathering up-to-date information. This step can involve:

- **Obtaining valuations** - Current business and property valuations are essential. In many cases, such valuations have not been undertaken in years and valuers are in high demand.
- **Considering the current structure** - Correctly understanding the current business structure is imperative.
- **Assessing available relief and IHT exposure** - Considering the current eligibility for BPR and whether the business is wholly or mainly trading. Once confirmed, current IHT exposure can be assessed.
- **Non-tax considerations** - These include family dynamics, business continuity, asset protection, and long-term goals. All should have a significant bearing on any decisions.

### Step 2: Assess the increased IHT exposure

Once the current picture is clear, the potential increased IHT liability needs to be assessed. This will have to be based on the proposed changes set out in the Budget and the Consultation - pending publication of draft legislation.

### Step 3: Consider the options

Options which may exist to mitigate an increased IHT exposure include:

- **Lifetime gifts** - Transferring assets to the next generation (although accelerated gifting can come with risk).
- **Trusts** - The Consultation confirmed that there is a 'window to opportunity' to transfer assets into trust before April 2026, 'banking' BPR at 100%.

- **Corporate structures** - Family Investment Companies, including restructuring existing companies, may help in passing value to the next generation.
- **Transfer of assets between spouses and family members** - To utilise the £1 million allowance for property qualifying for BPR at 100%.
- **Life insurance** - Policies can help manage liquidity to pay for future tax liabilities.
- **Wills** - Review and potentially revise will structures. Leaving everything to a surviving spouse may no longer be the most efficient approach given the £1 million allowance is not transferable.

### Step 4: Decision time

Business owners must then make difficult decisions – often under compressed timelines.

These choices usually take years of consideration, but the timeframe now forces rapid assessment. Retaining income and control, preserving family harmony, and ensuring business viability are all key considerations.

### Step 5: Implementation

Once a path is chosen, implementation may take time. The complexity of some plans will require sustained work from advisers and legal professionals.

As the April 2026 deadline approaches - and with another Autumn Budget potentially looming - professional capacity will be stretched.

### Act before further uncertainty

The 2025–26 tax year may prove to be one of the most challenging in decades for business owners. Succession plans will need rethinking across the board. Given the scale of potential exposure and risk of additional policy shifts, waiting for greater certainty may carry even greater risk. Now is the time to act.



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# Finance:

Debt funding for nature based projects





Notwithstanding the growth of the Green Finance sector, the availability of debt funding for nature-based projects remains a challenge and a significant hindering factor to the acceleration targeted for the proliferation of such schemes. This article explores the barriers to funding and outlook for change.

## Funding

With the growing recognition and legislative support for the need to restore, protect and enhance biodiversity and natural resources, the key question as projects with such aims scale up is how they will be funded and the inevitable need for private investment to dovetail with hard pressed public resources.

As it stands, the funding for nature-based projects is largely government grants and subsidies.

There is also a limited pool of philanthropic, impact and private investment funds providing a mix of debt and equity investment for such schemes.

## Debt finance

For project developers, debt finance is attractive due to the advantage of providing access to potentially substantial capital without the need to give up ownership of the project. However, the mainstream debt

market has yet to get to grips with this new asset class and credit risks presented by it.

The key issues for bankability are:

- **Formative nature of the market.**

The market makes understanding the projects, the likely returns and predicting the impact challenging, particularly given the absence of universal metrics that inform funding to more traditional asset classes.

- **Volatile regulatory and political landscape.**

Government policy and incentives are constantly evolving and are vulnerable to shifts in both public opinion and priorities.

- **Investment costs.**

Initial investment costs are often very high. Often projects require decades of support for sufficiently attractive financial returns. For example, landscape recovery schemes, rewilding schemes and biodiversity focused projects all have typically long recovery periods.

- **Prominence of projects.**

Projects can often be high profile and this carries high stakes for investors in terms of reputational

risk if, for any reason, they do not achieve the stated environmental impact.

None of these issues will be remedied in the immediate future. It will require time and the development of the nature-based credits market and more innovative financial instrument structures to address them.

## Blended finance

Pending the changes needed to enable confidence in debt finance, a blended finance approach looks likely to play a pivotal role in providing the funding platform for such projects, where public and private money is combined. The public element being used to de-risk the investments and attract the required additional private debt funding.

While funding natural capital projects with debts remains challenging, there is no doubting the significant potential of this market in terms of both funding need and the evolving supportive regulatory frameworks.

For the early entrants in the market, there may be a significant march to be stolen in terms of understanding the asset class and forging key partnerships.



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# Planning:

## Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects required to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act 2021 (EA) modified the frameworks under both the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning Act 2008 (PA) to make Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) a precondition for development consent. However, recognising the timescale and complexity of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), the government delayed implementation of the changes to the PA, to allow NSIP developers time to integrate BNG into their designs. In November 2025, the changes will take effect, and NSIPs in England will be required to deliver BNG.

### Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is an approach to development that includes creating and improving natural habitats, so that development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity. The aim of BNG is to reverse the UK's declining biodiversity by ensuring that development not only mitigates ecological harm but contributes to nature recovery.

For an overview on BNG, see [our previous article linked here.](#)

### Biodiversity Gain Statements

From November, the Secretary of State must refuse Development Consent Order (DCO) applications that do not meet the objectives of an applicable 'biodiversity gain statement'.

A biodiversity gain statement sets out the 'biodiversity gain objective' for the relevant development type and requires that DCO applications are determined according to whether the objective is met.

The default objective is that the biodiversity value of a development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value (of the onsite habitat) by at least 10% and is maintained for at least thirty years.

Biodiversity gain statements must describe whether and how the biodiversity gain objective applies to irreplaceable habitats; must

specify evidence required in support of DCO applications; and confirm how biodiversity value should be calculated, with reference to a prescribed metric. Biodiversity gain statements will be found in the National Policy Statement (NPS) for each NSIP category, or published separately where no NPS applies to a development, or the relevant NPS has yet to be updated.

### BNG and compulsory acquisition

In [its response](#) to a 2022 consultation on implementing BNG, the government addressed uncertainty over whether the new regime would permit compulsory acquisition of land for BNG purposes.

The government stated that it would "consider providing guidance or reference in biodiversity gain statements that outlines the reasonable alternatives developers should explore to deliver net gain before they consider compulsory acquisition of land." This essentially confirmed the established principle that compulsory purchase should



be a last resort. We therefore expect that it will be necessary for NSIP promoters to apply the **Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy** in site selection, and to make the usual reasonable efforts to reach an agreement on purchase.

The point is made more explicitly in the current **NPS for Electricity Networks**, which confirms that applicants may apply for DCOs where land is needed to provide “mitigation, landscape enhancement and biodiversity net gain”; and that established DCO principles would apply. This was explicitly relied on in a **recent DCO approval**, which stated that acquisition “for the provision and maintenance of the BNG elements of the Proposed Development is consistent with policy and guidance”.

### Where is the new policy?

If the government intends to honour its commitment to apply BNG to NSIPs by November 2025, we should expect a raft of revised NPSs (or standalone biodiversity gain statements) to be published in the coming months.

The government opened a consultation on three revised NPSs for energy infrastructure on 24 April 2025. The updates consolidate and clarify much of what is published elsewhere but contain no biodiversity gain statements.

### What should we be doing now?

Though the changes described above have yet to take effect, the policy is clear that DCO applicants should already be accounting for BNG.

The suite of **Energy NPSs** published since November 2023 “encourage” applicants to use the latest biodiversity metric to calculate BNG outcomes. The Secretary of State “should give appropriate weight” to BNG and consider what requirements should be attached to any consent to ensure that BNG measures, *if offered*, are delivered and maintained.

The draft **revised NPS** (April 2025) reiterates these points, and adds that “where possible”, development proposals should seek opportunities to provide BNG, and the Secretary of State should use planning obligations to maximise such opportunities.

### Key takeaways

- In November 2025, amendments to the PA will require DCO applications to meet biodiversity gain objectives set out in biodiversity gain statements.
- The default biodiversity gain objective is that NSIPs deliver an increase in the biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least 10%, secured for a minimum of 30 years.
- Land may be acquired for BNG purposes alongside the primary purpose of the scheme, but developers must demonstrate a compelling case, following the ordinary principles of compulsory purchase.
- Though BNG is not yet mandatory for NSIPs, it is clear that DCO applicants should account for BNG while NSIP planning. There is a policy expectation that developers seek opportunities to provide BNG, and the Secretary of State will use planning obligations to support this.



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# Tech:

## How tech is helping to deliver the farming of the future

The future of farming in the UK is inextricably linked to the increasing integration of technology across all aspects of agricultural practices. Faced with challenges such as the shortage of workers, environmental regulations, climate change, and the need for increased efficiency and sustainability, UK farmers are increasingly turning to technological innovations to navigate these complexities and ensure the long-term viability of their operations.

Many of these practices are underpinned by data and protected by intellectual property rights and confidential information. Here, we set out a few of the practices being adopted.

### Precision Agriculture

This approach utilises a suite of technologies to optimise resource use and improve crop yields.

Key components include GPS-guided equipment, Variable Rate Technology (VRT) for the precise application of fertilisers and pesticides, soil and weather sensors, and data analytics platforms.

By collecting and analysing data on soil conditions, nutrient levels, moisture, and crop health, farmers can make data-driven decisions, applying the right inputs at the right time and in the right place. This minimises waste, reduces environmental impact, and maximises productivity.

Drones and satellite imagery provide valuable aerial perspectives for crop monitoring and field analysis, enabling early detection of issues like pest infestations or nutrient deficiencies.

### Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Analytics

AI algorithms can analyse vast amounts of agricultural data, including weather patterns, soil data, crop yields, and market trends, to provide farmers with actionable insights. This can lead to improved decision-making in areas such as planting schedules, irrigation management, pest and disease control, and harvesting times.

Predictive analytics can forecast yields and potential risks, allowing farmers to proactively manage their operations. Machine learning can also be used to optimise machinery performance and predict maintenance needs, thereby reducing downtime.



## Automation and Robotics

Automation, although some way off, is set to revolutionise farming tasks, reducing reliance on manual labour and improving precision. Autonomous tractors and other machinery, equipped with GPS and advanced sensors, can perform tasks like ploughing, planting, and harvesting with greater accuracy and efficiency, operating around the clock and in varying weather conditions.

Robotic systems are being developed for more delicate tasks such as fruit picking, weeding, and even livestock management, offering the potential for increased productivity and reduced waste. For instance, robotic milking systems are already streamlining dairy farming operations.

## Internet of Things (IoT) and Sensor Technology

The deployment of interconnected sensors across farms will provide real-time data on a multitude of parameters, from soil moisture and temperature to livestock health and environmental conditions within controlled environments. This constant stream of information enables continuous monitoring and allows for immediate responses to changing conditions.

Smart irrigation systems, for example, can automatically adjust water application based on soil moisture levels, conserving water resources. Wearable sensors on livestock can monitor their health and behaviour, enabling early detection of illness or distress.

## Controlled Environment Agriculture

Vertical farming and advanced greenhouses represent a significant technological shift, allowing for year-round production of crops in controlled environments. These systems utilise technologies like hydroponics, aeroponics, and precise climate control (temperature, humidity, lighting) to optimise growing conditions, minimise water usage, and eliminate the need for pesticides.

While currently focused on high-value crops, advancements in this area could contribute to greater food security and reduce the reliance on traditional field-based agriculture, particularly in urban or land-limited areas.

## Sustainable Technologies

Technology will play a crucial role in promoting more sustainable farming practices. Precision agriculture techniques inherently contribute to

sustainability by reducing the use of chemicals and water.

Furthermore, technologies that support renewable energy generation on farms, such as solar panels and wind turbines, can reduce reliance on fossil fuels and lower carbon footprints. Innovations in waste management and nutrient recycling will also contribute to a more circular agricultural economy.

## Conclusion

The future of UK farming will be characterised by a deeper and more sophisticated integration of technology. From autonomous machinery and precision agriculture to AI-powered analytics and controlled environment systems, these innovations hold the key to enhancing efficiency, improving sustainability, ensuring food security, and making UK agriculture more resilient to the challenges of the 21st century.

Farmers who embrace these technological advancements will be well positioned to thrive in an evolving agricultural landscape.



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# Proprietary Estoppel:

Promises, reliance and undesired consequences



**C**lear and structured succession planning requires both professional advice and honest communication with family members. Poor succession planning and a lack of communication with family members can result in misunderstandings and undesirable proprietary estoppel claims.

### Proprietary estoppel

Proprietary estoppel is a legal principle that prevents someone from acting inconsistently with promises that they have given to someone else who consequently relies on that promise to their detriment.

The principle of proprietary estoppel is not a new concept. All too often relationships between families or farming businesses break down over alleged assurances made by parents to children in relation to the future of the family farm(s). When an estoppel claim is brought the implications for the family cannot be underestimated. There can be high emotions, an uncertain and costly court process, and delays to the administration of an estate whilst the court decipheres the intentions of the deceased.

### Armstrong v Armstrong

The recent case of *Armstrong v Armstrong* [2024] highlights many common issues seen in proprietary estoppel disputes. This case involved the estate of Alan Armstrong, who passed away in October 2020, and his wife Margaret, who died in 2018. Alan and Margaret owned two farms, North Cowton and Allerton Grange. Their sons Richard and Simon worked on the farms, with Richard managing North Cowton and Simon overseeing Allerton Grange.

In 2017, the two farms were separated. Alan's January 2020 Will left Allerton Grange to Simon and North Cowton to Simon's son, leaving Richard with nothing. Richard brought claims against the estate, alleging he was promised North Cowton throughout his life.

The court decided:

- It was more likely than not that Alan promised Richard he would inherit North Cowton. The numerous discussions between Richard and his parents over the years indicated that it was reasonable for Richard to expect to inherit North Cowton. Furthermore, there were various meeting notes from professionals documenting Alan's assurances and this evidence proved crucial.
- Richard did rely on the promises to his detriment. He chose not to study engineering at university. He had relied on the continuing promises and as a result only received a modest income.
- Alan had broken the promises made to Richard. Richard lived and worked at North Cowton for many years, and it was unconscionable for Alan to make a new will to cut Richard out of his inheritance.

The case serves as a reminder for families to have clear succession plans. Transparent discussions with all family members should help to avoid the very significant financial and emotional fallout of a contested court action.

### How to mitigate risks

- **Early planning** - many farmers delay succession planning for fear of disrupting the current business or due to the emotional strain of discussing the future. However, starting early enables the family to adjust to changes without the pressure of a sudden event like the death or illness of a key figure. If plans have been established many years in advance, claims in proprietary estoppel become weaker.
- **Clear and honest communication** - good communication among family members helps to avoid misunderstandings and manage expectations. Open conversations are vital to allow family members to express their concerns and

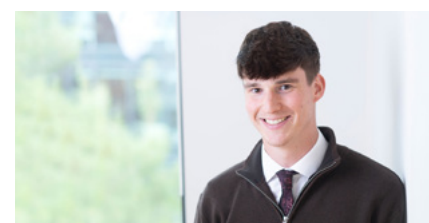
ambitions. Any potential conflicts can be identified early in the process and managed.

- **Professional advice** - consulting with solicitors, accountants, and surveyors is essential. These experts can provide the necessary legal and financial advice to ensure that succession plans deal appropriately with all assets, valuations and tax concerns, as well as complying with relevant regulations. Records of discussions with professionals will be documented and this can provide invaluable evidence.
- **Consistency** - ensuring all documents complement each other will provide clarity. Conflicting documents can lead to confusion or disputes after a plan is implemented. For example, if a will contradicts a partnership agreement, it could create legal complications and disrupt the intended succession.

Claims in proprietary estoppel are arguably avoidable with open and honest conversations and careful succession planning. If farming families and businesses can be proactive and not reactive when it comes to succession planning, then time, money and emotions can all be spared.



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# Forestry:

Commercial opportunities for forestry and financial resilience





**M**ichelmores is a sustainable, forward-thinking law firm. We evolve with changing social and economic demands, adapting our practice and supporting clients in diversifying their business to build and maintain lasting economic resilience.

### **Commercial opportunities**

Over the last five years we have acted for the largest forester and creator of woodland in the UK. We have supported them throughout their expansion into a number of commercial enterprises, including, for example, in-forest concerts, open-air cinemas, off-grid cabin installations and extreme sport experiences. We have also supported their establishment and growth of different environmental service lines, such as nutrient neutrality and Biodiversity Net Gain (**BNG**). While some of the more tangible commercial opportunities, like large-scale concerts, will be unrealistic for smaller, privately owned forests, there is real scope for (and we have seen forward-thinking clients undertake) diversification of their forests for ecological and profitable gain.

One such client is the Cabilla Valley Temperate Rainforest; a rare temperate rainforest and an official ancient oak woodland.

### **Cabilla Valley**

Cabilla Valley sits in the heart of Bodmin Moor and spans 300 acres

of upland hill farm and rainforest valley. The land consists of 100 acres of woodland, including both secondary and ancient rainforest, and 200 acres of degraded grazing land. In January 2023, the owners of Cabilla Valley founded the Thousand Year Trust; a charity dedicated to the restoration of temperate rainforest landscapes and with its mission to catalyse the movement to triple the amount of temperate rainforests in the UK over the next 30 years.

The Thousand Year Trust is supporting research into the true value of temperate rainforests for the benefit of biodiversity, climate and people. To increase engagement with the rainforest and support of the charity, individuals and groups can visit Cabilla Valley overnight, stay in a Koyt cabin and have full access to the 300-acre site. The owners have collaborated with local partners to create unique experiences for visitors.

### **Supporting diversification**

We have the legal expertise to support diversification and growth to ensure the interests of individual landowners are best protected. This could include the incorporation of special purpose vehicles to ring-fence risk; clearly written contracts with commercial partners so that the expectations, rights and obligations on everyone involved is understood from the outset (and the risk of disputes are minimised); and the implementation of tax efficient structures. We also have

an expansive and growing network of organisations that can provide further support, such as ecologists, land agents, brokers and technology businesses.

### **Reporting tools**

If you are a forester considering diversification but don't know which areas of your landholding to put to which use, data-rich reporting tools, such as those developed by Map Impact, can help you to make initial decisions on an informed and empowered basis.

Map Impact screens sites using geospatial satellite imagery to help end-users identify which areas of their landholding would best align with early-stage BNG requirements and other nature-based markets. Using UK Habitat Classification, Map Impact maps over 60 different habitat types in detail to identify and analyse ecological characteristics. This detail can inform landholders as to how and where to diversify their holding.

We are always happy to share our expansive network with our clients.

If you would like to learn more about efforts to protect and restore temperate rainforests, please visit Thousand Year Trust.

For more information about the Cabilla Valley Temperate Rainforest click [here](#).

To find out about Map Impact click [here](#).



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# Careers:

Branching out into Law



Just over a year ago, I made a pivotal decision that would change the next phase of my life. I accepted the opportunity to become a legal apprentice with Michelmores.

### Why law?

I had worked for eight years as a rural chartered surveyor for a large estate. Whilst I had always enjoyed my work, the matters that consistently drew my interest were those that focused on legal arguments for example, boundary disputes and drafting tenancies. I had considered retraining, but always persuaded myself out of it, usually due to the cost. It was always just a pipe dream.

As a surveyor, I would often interact with solicitors, sending instructions and seeking professional advice. I attended a CPD event hosted by the Agricultural Team at Michelmores, where I met lawyers who had previously practised as rural surveyors and had made the leap. This inspired me and I remember telling my wife that evening "I am going to do it! I want to be a solicitor!" However, the image I had of being a lawyer was heavily influenced by Netflix, so I decided I needed to do some research before diving in with both feet.

I spoke to a solicitor I had met from Michelmores and asked about the prospect of doing some work experience. They kindly invited me to shadow the Agricultural Team for a week. They treated me like a member of the team. They assigned me work on live matters, invited me to client meetings and even took me

out for lunch! I knew from the end of the very first day that this was where I needed to be. At that point my desire to retrain as a solicitor evolved from being a pipe dream to an absolute necessity.

### Apprenticeship schemes

Although I was certain this was the right move for me, I still had to overcome the financial challenges of retraining. I spoke to the early careers team at Michelmores, and they explained to me that a new apprenticeship scheme had just emerged in the legal sector, which was open to those with and without law degrees. Dubious, I thought there had to be a catch, but learning that I would be paid throughout the entire apprenticeship and would be given the time I needed to study, I realised this was a golden ticket opportunity. I just had to ensure that I was Charlie Bucket!

I applied for the Michelmores apprenticeship scheme. Whilst it is ill-advised, I only applied to Michelmores, as I was sure that they were the firm I wanted to work at. The nature of the work was interesting and diverse. Their culture was like no office I had ever worked at. Everyone worked extremely hard, but they all pulled together, assisting each other, and always willing to support a colleague to go the extra mile for their clients. The application process was challenging and involved several interviews. There was also an assessment day with strength tests and a debate over an article with a partner - all more enjoyable than it sounds!

### A year on

I am now entering my third placement in the firm. Do I have any regrets about my decision? Just one I suppose - I wish I had done it sooner. The apprenticeship has not been easy, but I have been surprised how valuable my background as a rural chartered surveyor is. There is also no escaping the fact that law underpins the foundation of our lives. When I began to study, I realised I knew more than I thought I did and lots of the subjects were easier to understand than I thought. If you are looking to branch out into law, don't be disillusioned by thoughts that you aren't capable, as you might surprise yourself.

### The importance of work experience

For those of you interested in a career in law, my advice is to get some work experience. Reach out to firms to see if they will offer work experience and apply for mini-pupillage opportunities. I have generally found that solicitors are very friendly. Not only will this give you some vital work experience to bulk up your CV, but it will allow you to determine if this is the career for you.

I chose Michelmores because of the culture and because they have one of the most recognised Agricultural Teams, in the country. They advise on a vast range of matters in the agricultural and forestry sphere - from partnership disputes to emerging natural capital markets. So, whilst I may have hung up my wellies for a pair of brogues, I am still in touch with my roots, just now in a different capacity.



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If you are interested in apprenticeships opportunities at Michelmores contact us at [gradrecruitment@michelmores.com](mailto:gradrecruitment@michelmores.com).



# Landed Estates & Rural Businesses:

## Our offering

Our dedicated Landed Estates team looks after a number of significant landed estates across England and Wales. We work collaboratively and effectively with other professional advisers on the estate to give coordinated and comprehensive advice.

### The Landed Estates team

Our Team comprises lawyers and other qualified professionals who have wide ranging expertise in advising rural clients. These include Chartered Surveyors in the Rural Division of the RICS, a Chartered Accountant, and a KC, all of whom understand the issues and demands affecting rural landownership. We appreciate our clients want to value the relationships they have with their advisors, and as such we encourage our clients to select a lead partner they feel best fits with their values and objectives. We do not have a landed estates 'person', we are landed estates people.

### How we advise

A lead partner is the main point of contact with responsibility for service delivery, cost control, full knowledge of the estate, the client and their strategic objectives and goals. Working closely with the other professionals the advice takes into account practical aspects or local sensitivities, in a joined up approach. Whether our clients are wealth generators or entrepreneurs, landowners or wealth managers, it's an arena where the best advice is as commercial as it is practical, and it is very rarely just legal.

**Contact any of our team to learn more or set up a meeting to discuss how we can help.**



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# Natural Capital:

## Overview

Our market leading Natural Capital team are at the forefront of advising on all elements of natural capital. We have built a wealth of knowledge and experience in recent years through our work with Land Managers, Developers, Investors & Funders, and Local & Central Government.

### Natural Capital team

Ben Sharples, a dual qualified solicitor and Chartered rural Surveyor and Valuer, leads our team of professional advisers covering areas such as environmental law, regulation, commercial law, corporate law, real estate, planning law and tax.



**Ben Sharples, Partner**  
**Head of Natural Capital**  
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### How we advise

We partner with our clients to help them to navigate their way through BNG, Nutrient Neutrality, landscape scale recovery and more. We work collaboratively across our legal teams within the firm and with other professionals involved in these often groundbreaking projects.

We appreciate that this is a novel and complex area, which carries both risks and opportunities. We are well placed to assist our clients as they innovate and work to support a more sustainable economy.

We are proud to have a large team of leading lawyers with experience in the agriculture sector. Your key contacts are:

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#### Contentious Planning, Environment & Administrative Law



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#### Banking, Restructuring & Insolvency



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