



Property Issues

Funny how what might appear a small thing can have a significant effect upon the value of a property. Here are one or two issues which our valuation department have recently come across whilst valuing property in the North West.

Septic Tank Issues: Septic Tanks and Sewerage Treatment plants are governed by the General Binding Rules 2015 which came into force on 1st January 2020. These state that if a septic tank discharges to surface water such as a ditch, stream, or other watercourse the system must either be upgraded to a sewerage treatment plant, or works carried out to ensure that the surface water discharges into a field herringbone system of drainage or a soakaway system. Responsibility lies with the homeowner but many don't even know where the septic tank is, when it was last emptied or to where it discharges. The problem is that if a sewerage system isn't up to specification then mortgage lenders may add redemptions, and solicitors commonly advise not to complete on a purchase before an agreement is in place for the owner to replace or upgrade the system to conform with the rules. Alternatively, a renegotiation of the purchase price has to take place.

Invasive Weeds: Despite being a nation of garden lovers, we can overlook plants such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, and Ragwort, but all can significantly affect the value of a property. Weather conditions over the last two years have massively favoured Japanese Knotweed in particular. This fast growing plant can lie dormant for long periods and then suddenly appear, passing through concrete, building foundations, cabling and piping causing huge damage to property which is often very costly to remedy.

It is not actually illegal to have Knotweed growing on your land, but it is an offence to allow it to spread onto neighbouring land. Penalties can be fines up

to £5000, or up to 2 years in prison. One property recently inspected by our valuation department had an excellent example growing within the garden rockery! Inspection and identification are crucial, followed then by treatment by a reputable contractor. This may include full excavation and/or chemical treatment over a number of growing seasons. Japanese Knotweed can grow out 7 metres from one rhizome, so close inspection is necessary to check that it has not spread to another part of the garden or to the garden next door, followed by an insurance backed guarantee to cover any future infestations.

However, even with a guarantee some banks and mortgage companies will not lend on property which has had an infestation or even where Knotweed is growing on neighbouring land. Even fully treated Knotweed can make the gaining of building insurance problematic for a considerable time. Any past infestation must also be declared when selling a property.

These issues were identified whilst our fully qualified, RICS approved, registered valuers were undertaking surveys for Home Condition Reports, on behalf of a purchaser. Such an inspection can uncover structural and other issues which affect value, and provide a no holds barred approach to your property purchase. Would you buy a car without an MOT without having it looked over by a qualified mechanic?

For further information on Home Condition Reports or any other element of professional valuation please contact the Valuation Department on 01995 603180 or James@abarnett.co.uk



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UTILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 have not slowed down the infrastructure projects across the Northwest, with water, flood embankment and road schemes all being full steam ahead. Two schemes currently taking place and to be aware of are detailed below:

Alston/Spade Mill to Broughton Pipeline – United Utilities (UU) have served notices under the Water Industry Act 1991, and as of Spring 2021, they have taken access to approximately 9km of predominately privately owned agricultural land in the north Preston area. Over the coming months, UU are aiming to construct a new 630mm diameter plastic mains water pipeline, running from Alston, Longridge, to Broughton, in order to transfer raw water from the existing reservoirs at Alston and Spade Mill and to connect to the existing pipework at Broughton Water Treatment Works for later treatment. The route and works sever numerous agricultural holdings, having potential large scale impacts on businesses.

M6 Junction 33 Link – The Lancaster Local Plan sets out large scale development for South Lancaster and this will see a significant increase in vehicle journeys to and from the area. To support such development, transport infrastructure serving south Lancaster needs improvement. A new highway

termed the 'M6 Junction 33 Link' aims to connect the new development area to the existing road network, improve the M6 junction 33 and reduce traffic on the A6 and Galgate. The scheme represents a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and final approval will be needed by the Secretary of State.

If a scheme is taking place on or near your land, it is imperative that you understand both the legal situation (governed by numerous Acts) and the practical considerations. Schemes may involve compulsory purchase schemes, licence and tenancy agreements, new easements and wayleaves, whilst factors such as timings of the work, access to the site, services locations, the installation of compounds or welfare areas, fencing, drainage, the removal of excess spoil and the final site reinstatement all need to be considered. If you have land which will be affected, Armitstead Barnett can act on your behalf in negotiating with the relevant company involved, with costs usually covered for all representation.



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SOLAR PUSH AS PLANS TO DELIVER 40GW SOLAR PV CAPACITY BY 2030

It has been quiet for a few years since Solar parks fell out of favour following post subsidy. However, we are now increasingly busy working with and advising a growing number of clients seeking to take advantage of approaches from developers looking to create large solar parks. We believe demand for our advisory services will grow even further as a new report predicts that the industry is set to double in size by 2030.

The latest report issued by Solar Energy UK, an association representing the entire solar and energy storage value chain, sets out a plan to deliver the 40GW of operational capacity needed by the end of the decade for the UK to remain on track for a net-zero carbon economy. It predicts that delivery will see the industry double in size, creating 13,000 new jobs, £17bn in additional economic activity, and a 4.7 per cent cut in total UK carbon emissions.

There is certainly a shift away from the smaller 20 to 30 acre 5MW solar parks which were developed with subsidy payments at the forefront of the calculations, and we are now looking for sites which are typically 100 acres plus and upwards of 20MW. Developers are switching their attention to delivering these much more substantial sites which can produce significantly more electricity, and benefit from economies of scale. Funding is now available and commercially, the "green" electricity

produced is highly sought after by larger energy consumers.

We are working with an increasing number of landowners taking advantage of large solar parks and energy storage developments, and there are even more in the pipeline. They represent a fantastic diversification opportunity for farmers looking for alternative ways of generating additional income, particularly as the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) phases out over the coming years, until it is eventually closes in 2027. They also present opportunities for the industrial and commercial sectors which are very much driven by government targets as they look to reduce their carbon footprints in the move towards "net zero."

Our advice would be that anyone approached by developers or speculators should be very careful in selecting the right party, as even signing a simple consent form allowing them to approach the local energy network can be a mistake. We would strongly recommend the taking of professional advice at an early stage.



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THE ENVIRONMENT BILL

The UK's Environmental Bill promises to cut air pollution, protect the country's nature spots and reduce waste. The Bill is expected to play a pivotal role in the UK's fight to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Bill has passed through Parliament and is currently at committee stage in the House of Lords, with Royal Assent expected to be received in Autumn 2021.

The Bill has a wide scope and introduces many new policies, from biodiversity net gain to conservation covenants and the creation of a new regulator, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

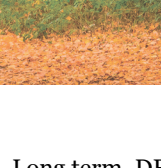
Whilst the contents of the Bill are exhaustive, further notable points include:

- Nature & Biodiversity – amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act requiring a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain on new developments.
- Water – more collaboration between water companies, reductions in storm overflows with greater penalties and the creation of new, or expansion of existing, internal drainage bodies.
- Air quality – an improved clear framework for local action and collaboration on air pollution.
- Waste and Resource efficiency – proposals to extend producer responsibility schemes making producers responsible for the full net costs of managing their products when they are ready to be

thrown away. The Environment Bill will work alongside the Landmark Agriculture Bill which became law itself in November 2020, and sets out how farmers and land managers in England will be rewarded in the future with public money for 'public goods' – such as better air and water quality, thriving wildlife, soil health, or measures to reduce flooding and tackle the effects of climate change, under the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme.

Collectively, the incentives from the Agriculture Bill and the new requirements to be imposed by the Environment Bill will provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and our commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

For further information on either the Agricultural Bill or the proposals of the Environment Bill, how they might affect your business, or consequent funding opportunities, please do not hesitate to give the Land Agency team a call.



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THE WOODLAND

Following a vote in 2019, the UK Government committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050: an ambitious target, but a necessary one to slow the advance of climate change. In order to achieve this target, many industries will have to pitch in, and trees, woodlands and forests will play a pivotal role. To reach the recommended 30,000 hectares of yearly afforestation leading up to 2050, the Government has launched the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) to encourage positive action.

The scheme replaces the Woodland Carbon Fund (WCF) and boasts improved incentives to ensure targets are met, with £15.9 million allocated for the first year alone. Whereas under the WCF the minimum size of woodland was 10 ha, under the EWCO an application can have a minimum woodland size of just 1 ha with a minimum parcel size of 0.1 ha. The payment rates are more generous too, paying up to £8,500/ha, covering the full cost of establishment of new woodland, with annual maintenance payments of £200/ha available following the completion of capital works for the subsequent 10 year period.

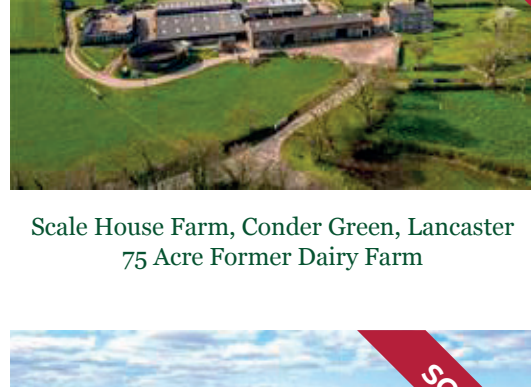
Long term, DEFRA's intention is that the EWCO will be incorporated into the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme after 2024. In the meantime, however, there appears to be support for a variety of schemes with emphasis on "the right tree in the right place for the right reason", whilst also providing a route for landowners to access green finance opportunities, including the future sale of carbon credits providing a scheme is registered under the Woodland Carbon Code.

Trees and woodlands generate a plethora of benefits, improving physical and mental health alongside flood mitigation, carbon sequestration and habitat provision to name just a few. For more information on how the EWCO could benefit you, feel free to get in touch and our professional team would be happy to discuss.

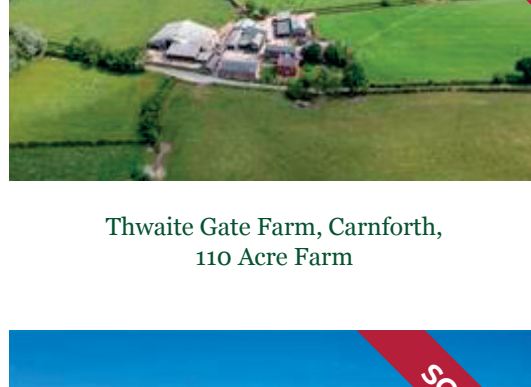


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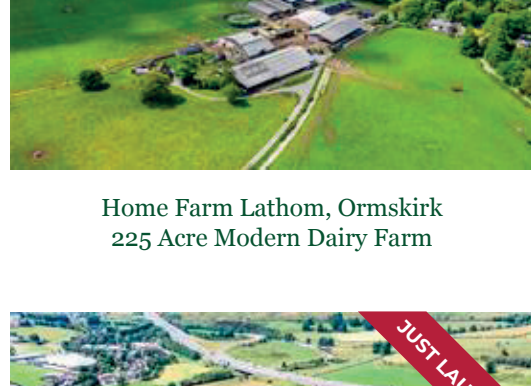
RECENT PROPERTIES



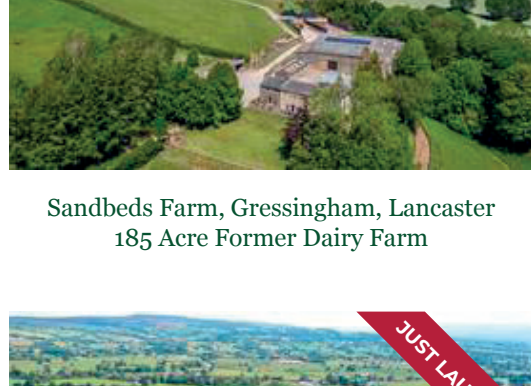
Scale House Farm, Conder Green, Lancaster
75 Acre Former Dairy Farm



Thwaite Gate Farm, Carnforth,
110 Acre Farm



Home Farm Lathom, Ormskirk
225 Acre Modern Dairy Farm



Sandbeds Farm, Gressingham, Lancaster
185 Acre Former Dairy Farm



Bybeck Farm, Tebay, Penrith
60 Acre Farm with Poultry Unit



Butcher Fold Farm, Hothersall, Preston
110 Acre Farm

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