

# iFarm – Ikigai Farm Limited

## Annual Report to Blo Norton Parish Council

Annual General Meeting – 19 May 2026

**5 Years**  
on iFarm land

Keys received:  
**9 April 2021**

10.5 acres | Fen Road, Blo Norton, IP22 2QJ

## 1. Introduction & Five-Year Milestone

This report covers the period May 2025 to May 2026, the fifth year since Ikigai Farm Limited (iFarm) took possession of the land at Fen Road, Blo Norton on 9 April 2021. We submit it in advance of the Blo Norton Parish Council Annual General Meeting on 19 May 2026, and warmly thank the Parish Council for its continuing support of our work in the community.

Five years in, iFarm remains a Community Benefit Society operating not for private profit, with an asset lock in place to protect all holdings for future generations. Our registered office is The White Horse Public House, Hopton Road, Thelnetham, IP22 1JN.

This has been a year defined by practical challenges — chiefly the absence of mains water on site — but also by significant progress in infrastructure, tree management, the ongoing success of The White Horse pub, and renewed planning for residential and agricultural development. We set out each area in turn below.

## 2. Water Supply: The Year's Central Challenge

The single greatest operational constraint during the past year has been the lack of a mains water connection to the farm site. Without a reliable supply, horticultural activities — planting, irrigation, food production — have had to be significantly scaled back from original plans.

### 2.1 Temporary Measures

To keep essential plants and seedlings alive, the team has been transporting water to the site in canisters from The White Horse pub in Thelnetham. While this has been a considerable effort for volunteers, it has allowed limited cultivation to continue.

The site does have a natural well, however groundwater from this source cannot be used for vegetable production under food hygiene standards, and its yield is insufficient for meaningful irrigation in any case.

---

## 2.2 Standpipe Installation – Completed March/April 2026

We are pleased to report that the on-site standpipe has now been installed (March/April 2026). We extend our sincere thanks to the team who made this happen:

- John Grayling
- Kilty Flynn
- Simeon Allen
- Dylan Porter
- Brian Gibb
- David Oliver



Standpipe installation in progress, March/April 2026 – connecting the mains supply to the farm site

## 2.3 Mains Connection – Due June 2026

Anglian Water have confirmed the mains connection will be completed in early June 2026. We apologise to local residents and the Parish Council for any disruption: Anglian Water will need to close the road temporarily to complete the connection to the standpipe already installed on site.

#### Road closure notice

Anglian Water will close the road temporarily in early June 2026 to connect the mains supply to the standpipe already installed on site. We apologise in advance for any inconvenience to residents and road users.

Once mains water is live, the majority of our planned horticultural activities will move forward in earnest. We ask the Parish Council and local community to bear with us through this final step.

## 3. Land, Horticulture, Tree Work & Farming Activities

### 3.1 Re-evaluation of Planting Programme

Due to the water supply constraints described above, we have had to re-evaluate our planting timetable. Crops requiring regular irrigation have been deferred. Low-maintenance and drought-tolerant species have been prioritised in the interim. Once the mains connection is in place in June, we expect to accelerate planting significantly across the growing season.

### 3.2 Tree Work & Hedge Management

A significant amount of tree and hedge management work has been carried out on and around the farm during the past year. We are particularly grateful to Adam Elvin Yates, who has undertaken a considerable amount of tree work over the course of the year, and to Tim Robson, who came back specifically to help with this work.

We also wish to record our thanks to Clair and Gary Bowes, who put in vital physical effort digging trenches and moving pebbles as part of the infrastructure works on site.

Of particular note: John and Cuthbert Grayling felled a tree on Thelnetham Road, adjacent to the farm, which had been identified as a danger to road users by the District Council. We are grateful to the Graylings for responding to this concern promptly and safely.





Tree work and land clearance on the iFarm site – volunteers hard at work

### 3.3 Volunteers & Practical Support

We are grateful to all those whose hands-on contribution to the site has been invaluable over the past year:

- Pat Murray – significant assistance with land movement and rotivating, preparing beds for when water is available
- George Roth – leading preparations for a solar energy setup on site, supporting off-grid power needs
- Adam Elvin Yates – extensive tree work across the year
- Tim Robson – returned to help with tree management
- Clair and Gary Bowes – digging trenches and moving pebbles during infrastructure works
- John and Cuthbert Grayling – felling the dangerous roadside tree on Thelnetham Road, and continued care of the beehives
- David Oliver – assistance with the waterworks and standpipe installation

### 3.4 Beehives

John and Cuthbert Grayling continue to look after the beehives on site. There is currently one colony with the queen to be found in early-season development. We hope to see the colony strengthen through the summer.

### 3.5 Rewilding

Up to 40% of the site continues to be managed with rewilding in mind, in line with our founding principles and in cooperation with the Little Ouse Headwaters Project (LOHP). Environmental stewardship of the fen edge landscape remains a core commitment.

## 4. Rural Housing & Residential Use of the Land

### 4.1 The Rural Affordability Problem

One of the most pressing issues facing our community — and rural communities across England — is the ability of young people and working families to afford to live in the countryside. High property prices relative to rural wages are forcing people away from villages like Blo Norton and Thelnetham, reducing the pool of people available to work the land, staff local services, and sustain community life.

iFarm takes this issue seriously. A thriving farm and community enterprise requires people on site and nearby, and the current housing market makes that increasingly difficult.

### 4.2 Proposal: Residential Use of Western Land

The iFarm management committee is actively considering the use of land to the west of the site — which is outside the flood zone — for residential purposes. This would be integrated with the barn building that the farm requires for storage and operations.

We are at an early stage of exploring options and will engage fully with the Parish Council and local planning authority as plans develop.

### 4.3 The Existing Caravan

There is a static caravan on the site that has been in situ since approximately 2012, if not earlier, and which was historically used as residential accommodation by the site manager. We note this for the record, as it may be relevant to any future consideration of permitted development rights or change-of-use applications in relation to residential use of the land.

#### Note for the Parish Council

We raise the caravan and residential question openly in this report as part of our commitment to transparency with the Parish Council. We welcome any early views or guidance from the Council as we explore these possibilities.

## 5. The White Horse, Thelnetham

The White Horse public house in Thelnetham — located just across the Little Ouse from the farm — continues to perform well and remains the operational and community heart of the iFarm enterprise.

### 5.1 Operations

The pub now employs four paid members of staff, supported by a dedicated team of volunteers. This staffing base has allowed the pub to operate consistently across its opening hours and deliver a reliable offer to the local community.



## 5.2 Recognition

- Named Runner-Up for CAMRA Mid Anglia Pub of the Year 2025, and this year 1st prize — a prestigious recognition from the Campaign for Real Ale.
- Awarded Cask Marque accreditation in January 2025 and again in 2026, recognising consistently excellent cask ale quality.
- Lithuanian Dancers returned for a second visit in May 2025, reflecting the pub's role as a cultural hub.



The White Horse, Thelnetham – receiving the CAMRA Mid Anglia Pub of the Year 1st prize award 2026

## 5.3 Community Events

- Meet-Up Mondays continue every week (except bank holidays) — free tea, coffee and cake for local residents, tackling rural loneliness
- Friday food vendors provide a rotating selection of cuisines
- Open mic nights, folk music, and seasonal celebrations including the Maypole event
- Annual Members' Meeting held at The White Horse — minutes available at [ifarm.org.uk](http://ifarm.org.uk)

## 5.4 Camping Licence

As demand for overnight stays increases — particularly in summer — iFarm is considering an application for a camping licence to allow more guests to stay on site beyond the current

permitted number of days per year. We will keep the Parish Council informed as this progresses.

## 6. Governance & Society Matters

iFarm remains registered as a Community Benefit Society (No. 8304) with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, using Plunkett Foundation model rules.

All surpluses are reinvested into the society's land, facilities, and community activities. The asset lock remains in place: no assets can be distributed for private gain, ensuring the land and pub remain held in the community interest in perpetuity.

|                            |                                                    |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Society name</b>        | Ikigai Farm Limited (iFarm)                        |
| <b>Registration number</b> | CBS No. 8304                                       |
| <b>Regulator</b>           | Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)                  |
| <b>Registered office</b>   | The White Horse PH, Hopton Rd, Thelnetham IP22 1JN |
| <b>Farm site</b>           | Fen Road, Blo Norton, IP22 2QJ                     |
| <b>Website</b>             | ifarm.org.uk                                       |
| <b>Pub website</b>         | thewhitehorse.org.uk                               |

## 7. Plans for the Year Ahead (2026–2027)

The coming year, with mains water finally arriving, marks the beginning of a new phase for the farm site. Our priorities are:

- **Full irrigation and expansion of the growing programme — market gardening, organic vegetable production, and community-supported agriculture**
- Solar energy installation with George Roth — providing off-grid renewable power for site operations
- Further development of the barn/workshop building and exploration of planning options for residential use of the western land
- Beehive development — supporting John and Cuthbert Grayling as the colony builds through the season
- Camping licence application for The White Horse / farm site if appropriate
- Continued engagement with LOHP, the Parish Council, and other local partners on rewilding and environmental stewardship
- Growing the volunteer base and creating further training and employment opportunities for local people

---

## 8. Acknowledgements

---

iFarm would not exist without the extraordinary generosity of volunteers, shareholders, neighbours and community members. We particularly wish to thank, for the past year:

- Pat Murray – tireless work preparing the land
- George Roth – leading the solar energy preparations
- John and Cuthbert Grayling – felling the dangerous tree on Thelnetham Road, and care of the beehives
- Adam Elvin Yates – extensive tree work throughout the year
- Tim Robson – returning to help with tree and land management
- Clair and Gary Bowes – digging trenches and moving pebbles for site infrastructure
- John Grayling, Kilty Flynn, Simeon Allen, Dylan Porter, Brian Gibb and David Oliver – completing the standpipe installation
- Marc Bartram and the entire White Horse team, staff and volunteers – keeping the pub thriving
- Sharon Riches and the MeetUp Monday team.
- The Pub cleaning team, Bev, Stef, Bettina, Claire, Jan, Amanda, Susan and Kathy.
- Martin Johnson, Theo Morris and Mike Sanders for the excellent weekly line cleaning.
- The shareholders and members of Ikigai Farm Limited – whose investment and commitment makes everything possible
- Blo Norton Parish Council – for continued support and for the opportunity to report to you today

---

Submitted on behalf of the Management Committee

Bernie Barclay

Brian Gibb

Chris Cook

Claire-Marie Fox

John Grayling

Kilty Flynn

Sharon Riches

Susan Alps

Thomas Hoepfner

**Ikigai Farm Limited – Community Benefit Society No. 8304**

[ifarm.org.uk](http://ifarm.org.uk) | [thewhitehorse.org.uk](http://thewhitehorse.org.uk) | [blonortonpc.norfolkparishes.gov.uk](http://blonortonpc.norfolkparishes.gov.uk)