

As you will appreciate, my involvement with Blackheath has been very short, and only took over from Giles officially from 1st February. However, I will provide as good of an update as I can, which may be more agricultural industry related, as opposed to specific to Blackheath.

From my knowledge of what has been ongoing, the Estate suffered with the drought last year, putting a lot of pressure on the growing crops, with some crops failing, or considerably underperforming. This, as you can imagine, had a significant impact on the financial performance of the farm.

As always, the Environment Agency are threatening to reduce water availability in the future, which causes Blackheath, as well as all light land farmers on the Suffolk coast, considerable concern. If there is not enough water for irrigation, or our existing water availability is reduced significantly, it would render some land totally unproductive and will require further import of vegetables from foreign countries.

Farming is going through significant changes at the moment, predominantly as a result of Brexit, with the removal of the subsidy paid to farmers which was ultimately there to aid cheaper food production. This will now see farmers like Blackheath, ask for more from their customers (i.e. supermarkets, processors, etc), which in turn will lead to more expensive food on the supermarket shelves.

Blackheath, as with all local stakeholders and residents, continue to be concerned about the National Grid proposals to construct up to three convertor stations on or around the Estate.

Blackheath has made significant investments in futureproofing the estate and to increase the available land for the growing of vegetables, however, for the time being, we will need to have everything crossed that our water availability is not reduced in due course, to prevent us from growing the range of vegetables we do.

Gwyn Church – Land Agent Blackheath Farms