

Agricultural Leadership Development Programme 2027



Week 1

Sunday 17th January 2027
Friday 22nd January 2027



Week 2

Monday 1st February 2027
Friday 5th February 2027



Week 3

Monday 1st March 2027
Friday 5th March 2027

Programme Overview.

Applications Close on 7th September 2026.

The Agricultural Leadership Development Programme develops high-impact leaders, equipping them to grow, transform their organisations, shape strategic thinking, and strengthen the credibility and long-term resilience of agriculture.

Programme Aim.

To develop a cohort of professionally credible, strategically capable leaders equipped to operate effectively across business, policy, research and public discourse, while delivering tangible value to their organisations and the wider agricultural sector.

Programme Outcomes.

The Agricultural Leadership Development Programme is designed to deliver outcomes across three interconnected levels:

- individual capability
- organisational value
- and sector impact

Completion of this course may be recognised for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) towards the RAU's MSc in Business Management.

1. Professional Leadership Capability

Participants will develop the capability to:

- demonstrate enhanced professional judgement, self-awareness and leadership clarity
- apply strategic thinking to complex agricultural challenges
- communicate with confidence across media, policy and stakeholder environments
- operate effectively within UK and international agricultural systems
- lead with credibility beyond their immediate role

2. Organisational Value

Participating organisations benefit from individuals who are better equipped to:

- bring back strategic insight into policy, trade, research and sector direction
- strengthen organisational engagement with government, industry bodies and stakeholders
- enhance credibility through confident external representation
- contribute to innovation, resilience and forward planning
- apply learning through the 2027 Challenge, generating ideas aligned to business and sector priorities

3. Sector Leadership & Professional Standards

The programme supports:

- the development of a more professional, credible and confident leadership cohort
- stronger collaboration across industry, policy, research and the supply chain
- more effective engagement between the sector and government institutions
- wider recognition of agriculture as a skilled, professionally led sector

4. Strategic Insight & Sector Contribution

Through the 2027 Challenge: Research for Resilience, participants develop:

- nationally significant, evidence-informed research priorities
- proposals tested against economic, political and delivery realities
- practical insight into how leadership, policy and research intersect
- outputs with the potential to inform future sector strategy and investment decisions

5. Long-Term Impact

The Agricultural Leadership Development Programme is intended to contribute to:

- a pipeline of leaders capable of influencing sector resilience to 2035
- stronger alignment between organisational strategy, research priorities and policy direction
- improved sector confidence in public narrative and external engagement
- enhanced leadership capability embedded within participating organisations

Overall Outcome

The Agricultural Leadership Development Programme aims to produce a cohort of professionally credible, strategically capable and well-connected leaders who:

- deliver measurable value within their organisations
- support sector-wide progress
- help position UK agriculture as a modern, professional and resilient industry

Programme Overview.

Week 1 **Royal Agricultural** **University** **17th - 22nd January 2027** Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS, UK

The opening week is hosted at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU), one of the UK's leading specialist institutions for agriculture and land-based education, providing an academically grounded and sector-connected environment for the programme.

This week focuses on leadership foundations, self-awareness and sector context. Participants will undertake psychometrics and structured leadership development, alongside sessions exploring personal leadership journeys from senior figures across agriculture and beyond.

The programme combines workshops, small group exercises and debate-led dinners, creating space to challenge assumptions, test perspectives and build cohort cohesion.

Engagement with industry through events such as LAMMA provides practical grounding, while dedicated media and communication sessions begin to develop participants' confidence in external representation.

Week 2 **Brussels & Netherlands** **1st - 5th February 2027**

Week 2 provides an international and systems-level perspective, exploring how policy, trade, research and innovation interact to shape agriculture.

Participants will engage directly with European institutions, gaining insight into policy development and decision-making, before travelling to the Netherlands to explore world-leading examples of agricultural research, innovation and supply chain integration.

Visits to organisations such as Wageningen University and commercial R&D facilities will highlight how science, industry and investment align in practice. Sessions on trade, infrastructure and markets further broaden understanding of global agricultural systems.

Week 3 **Westminster, London, UK** **1st - 5th March 2027**

The final week focuses on leadership in action, with an emphasis on policy engagement, public narrative and strategic influence.

Participants will gain insight into government, investment and policy processes, including engagement with speakers from Defra and exposure to the UK's political environment. Media training is deepened through a press-focused session, ensuring participants can communicate complex ideas with clarity and authority.

The week culminates in the 2027 Challenge panel, where groups present their proposals for The 2027 Challenge: Research for Resilience in a commissioning-style environment.

Alongside this, the programme closes with reflection, leadership commitment and alumni engagement, reinforcing long-term impact and network strength.

The 2027 Challenge: **Research for** **Resilience**

Across the programme, participants will work in groups of five to develop a commissioning-ready research proposal addressing a critical barrier to long-term resilience in agriculture.

Each group must:

- Define a single, clearly scoped research question or programme
- Demonstrate why this issue matters now (national or international relevance)
- Set out what research is needed, by whom, and over what timeframe
- Explain how the outputs would be applied in practice (policy, industry, or farm-level impact)

The proposal should be framed as if submitted to a major research funder, government body, or industry organisation operating within a defined agricultural system (e.g. national, regional, or international).

The Challenge culminates in a commissioning-style panel, where each group delivers a 10–15 minute presentation followed by Q&A, pitching their proposal as if competing for real-world funding.



Programme Directors.



Professor Nicola Cannon

Professor Nicola Cannon, Professor of Agriculture, Royal Agricultural University, where she is involved in teaching, research, and policy engagement in sustainable farming systems. She holds a BSc in Agriculture from the University of London, a PhD in Plant Sciences from the University of Reading, and a PGCAP in Higher Education from The Open University.

Her career spans research, consultancy and senior academic leadership. She has served as Interim Dean at Qingdao Agricultural University in China and Deputy Rector at the International Agriculture University in Uzbekistan.

Earlier roles included Research Officer in precision farming at Cranfield University, farm adviser and company director with East Anglia Food Link, and Technical Expert for the United Kingdom Accreditation Service.

Professor Cannon's research focuses on sustainable cropping systems, soil health, nutrient efficiency and regenerative agriculture. Recent projects include evaluating war damage to farmland in Ukraine, developing urine-based fertilizers, advancing UK-grown soya, and contributing to the Farm Soil Carbon Code.

A Practitioner of the Society of Agriculture, Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies and Nuffield Scholar, she is also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and recipient of the Farmers Club Agricultural Educators Award. She has a wide range of external roles including the Expert Group for Organic Production (EGOP) for DEFRA, vice chair of Burford Farming Club and co-ordinator of Cotswold Arable Study Group. Previously she has co-ordinated and run HRH Prince of Wales Food and Farming Summer School and worked with celebrity chefs on a range of projects.



Angus Chalmers, BSc(Hons) Agriculture FSAg

Since 2005 Angus has owned and run RDP, an integrated communications business specialising in Agri-business and Animal Health.

An accomplished communicator and leader, delivering strategic thinking with a deep understanding of the wider agricultural industry alongside a strong network of contacts.

Following a degree from Seale-Hayne and an early career with Grant Thornton LLP and ADAS, Angus has grown RDP into a well-respected communications agency delivering outcome led solutions to many of the largest corporate businesses within the sector.

A graduate of the Institute of Agricultural Management Leadership Course 2012, Company Secretary to the Oxford Farming Conference and advisor to The Henry Plumb Foundation, he is a passionate but pragmatic advocate of UK agriculture.

He is married with 3 grown up children and lives on a smallholding in Gloucestershire, which acts as a practical foil for the day job!

Programme Details Week ONE

Sunday 17th January 2027

17:00

Arrival & Check-in

18:00

Welcome and icebreakers

18:45

Drinks Reception

19:15

Welcome Dinner

After-dinner speaker – Professor David Main, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Royal Agricultural University

Accommodation

Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS, UK



Monday 18th January 2027

09:00

Morning Briefing

09:30

Psychometrics and Self Awareness with Julie Bricknall, Inspired Mindset

This interactive workshop uses Johari's Window, personalised DISC reports and resilience activities to help participants understand their behavioural styles, strengths and preferences, improve working relationships, and identify opportunities to adapt their approach.

12:30

Lunch

13:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Dame Fiona Reynolds, High Sheriff of Gloucestershire

14:30

Leadership Workshop & Small Group Exercises

This interactive session encourages participants to explore their understanding of leadership, share different perspectives, and consider a range of leadership styles and approaches.

16:30

How innovation occurs, how it drives change across businesses and industries, and the role UKRI plays in enabling this with guest speaker Guy Woolley, Chief Operating Officer UK RI

17:30

Close

19:00

Dinner sponsored by MorePeople – Debate with Guy Moreton, Founder & Chairman MorePeople and Ryan Bainborough: UK Agriculture Must Rethink What Leadership Looks Like

Accommodation

Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS, UK

Tuesday 19th January 2027

09:00

Morning Briefing

09:30

Leadership Workshop with Ian Evans

11:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker David Webster, Chief Executive, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)

12:00

Lunch

13:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Gavin Lane, President, Country Land and Business Association

14:30

Leadership Workshop & Small Group Exercises with Ian Evans

17:00

Briefing on LAMMA

17:30

Close

19:00

Sponsored Dinner - Debate with Graham Redman, Editor of the Nix Farm Management Pocketbook, The Andersons Centre.

Wednesday 20th January 2027

08:30

Morning Briefing

09:00

Leave for LAMMA

10:30

Visit to LAMMA the UK's premier farm machinery show, connecting farmers across a range of sectors with pioneering companies offering cutting-edge agricultural machinery, technology and equipment.

16:30

Leave LAMMA, Return to the Royal Agricultural University

19:00

Dinner sponsored by HCR Legal LLP – Debate with Rory Hutchings, Partner, Head of Agriculture and Estates Team, HCR Legal LLP: Will AI replace my job?

Accommodation

Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS, UK

Programme Details Week ONE

Thursday 21st January 2027

09:00

Morning briefing & Professional Photography Session

09:30

Interactive workshop on building and protecting brand value – yours, your companies, your sector and that of UK agriculture with Angus Chalmers

12:30

Lunch

13:30

Leadership across diverse organisations and influencing national policy with guest speaker Professor David Knowles FREng, Chief Executive, Henry Royce Institute

14:30

Interactive Leadership Workshop – Building the story, inside the newsroom, and what of AI with Angus Chalmers

16:30

Roundtable discussion on The Challenge 2027: Research for Resilience

17:00

Close

19:00

Sponsored Dinner (To be confirmed)

Accommodation

Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS, UK

Friday 22nd January 2027

09:00

Morning Briefing

09:30

Leadership workshop with Ian Evans

11:30

Thoughts on Reflexive Leadership: Learning, Adjourning, Growing with guest speaker Louise Manning, PhD, FIFST, FRSB, ARAgS, NSch

12:30

Lunch

13:30

Reflection and work on the 2027 Challenge: Research for Resilience

14:30

Briefing for Brussels

15:00

Close

Accommodation

Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS, UK



Programme Details Week TWO

Monday 1st February 2027

08:30

Morning briefing

10:00

Visit and presentation: British Agriculture Bureau with guest speaker Robin Manning, Director, representing UK farming interests in Brussels and specialising in EU-UK agricultural policy and trade

12:30

Lunch

14:00

Visit to European Parliament

16:00

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker (To be confirmed)

17:30

Close

19:00

Dinner

Accommodation

Courtyard by Marriott Brussels EU, Brussels

Tuesday 2nd February 2027

08:30

Depart for the Netherlands

10:30

Visit to Wageningen University – Innovation in Practice.

Participants will visit the Netherlands Plant Eco-phenotyping Centre (NPEC), a state-of-the-art facility using climate chambers, high-tech greenhouses, sensors, cameras and drones to measure how plants respond to different environmental conditions.

The tour will demonstrate how advanced phenotyping helps researchers and businesses identify promising crop varieties more quickly, supporting sustainable agriculture, climate resilience and future food security.

NPEC Tour

12:30

Lunch

13:30

To be confirmed

15:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker (To be confirmed)

16:30

Work on The 2027 Challenge: Research for Resilience

17:00

Close

19:00

Dinner

Accommodation

Hotel Asteria, Maasheseweg 80a, 5804 AD Venray, The Netherlands

Wednesday 3rd February 2027

08:30

Morning Briefing

09:00

Welcome and Safety Briefing

09:15

Corporate Overview: Who We Are with Mark Cox

10:00

Sustainability at the Core: Feed the Future

10:45

Research Platforms Bringing Sustainability to Life

11:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Mark Cox

12:00

Lunch

13:00

R&D Facilities Guided Tour

15:30

Wrap-up and Key Takeaways

17:30

Arrive back at Hotel Asteria

19:00

Dinner with Invited Guests (To be confirmed)

Accommodation

Hotel Asteria, Maasheseweg 80a, 5804 AD Venray, The Netherlands

Thursday 4th February 2027

08:30

Depart

10:00

Port of Rotterdam Visit – Infrastructure & Food Security the Port of Rotterdam plays a crucial role as a gateway for agricultural bulk commodities such as grains and oilseeds. These products are imported from global production regions, stored and often processed within the port, and then efficiently distributed throughout Europe via an extensive inland logistics network.

13:00

Lunch

13:45

Welcome to Cefetra. An introduction to Cefetra, its business and its role within the agricultural supply chain. We would also welcome some insight into the organisation's approach to leadership and the leadership styles adopted across the business.

14:45

Rotterdam and the Netherlands as a Global Commodity Trading Hub: Demystifying the Role and Business Model of Trading Firms with guest speaker Dr Wouter Jacobs, Executive Director, Erasmus Commodity & Trade Centre (ECTC)

16:15

Close

19:00

Dinner

Accommodation

Double Tree by Hilton Rotterdam

Friday 5th February 2027

09:00–11:00

Strategic Integration and discussion

11:00

Analysis of different leadership styles - how does this link to EU targets?

12:30

Lunch

13:30

Close

Accommodation

DoubleTree by Hilton, Rotterdam Centre, Leuvehaven 80, 3011 EA Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Programme Details Week THREE

Monday 1st March 2027

09:00

Morning briefing Influence in Westminster

09:30

Leadership in Natural Capital – Agricultural Investing for Impact with guest speaker Carl Atkin-House, Managing Director, Head of Natural Capital Strategy, Climate Asset Management.

11:00

How to Inform Policy: Insights from Inside and Outside the Civil Service with guest speaker Harley Stoddart, Head of Climate Mitigation Science at Defra.

12:30

Lunch

13:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Emily Norton, Chair Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board

14:30

Depart for U.S. Embassy

15:00

Visit to U.S. Embassy, London and presentation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture with Steve Knight, Senior Advisor & Agricultural Specialist and Alexander Baych, Agricultural Attache.

15:15

Walking tour of the building

15:45

Roundtable discussion

16:30

Depart

19:00

Sponsored Dinner (To be confirmed)

Accommodation

The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, St James's, London, SW1A 2EL, United Kingdom

Tuesday 2nd March 2027

09:00

Morning Briefing

09:30

Media Day

12:00

Lunch

13:00

Boat trip – Embankment Pier

14:00

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Brigadier Anna Kimber

15:00

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Andrew Meredith

16:00

Return to the Farmers Club

19:00

Free evening

Accommodation

The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, St James's, London, SW1A 2EL, United Kingdom

Wednesday 3rd March 2027

09:00

Morning briefing

10:00

Houses of Parliament & House of Lords Tour

12:15

Drinks Reception & Lunch

15:15

Return to the Farmers Club – Tea and Coffee

15:30

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Karen Mercer

16:30

Reflection & Discussion Session

17:30

Close

19:00

Dinner

After Dinner speaker – “Manifesto for change” with guest speaker Mark Suthern

Accommodation

The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, St James's, London, SW1A 2EL, United Kingdom

Thursday 4th March 2027

09:00

Final Preparation Session: The 2027 Challenge: Research for Resilience

12:30

Lunch

13:30

The 2027 Challenge: Research for Resilience Presentations

14:30

Panel Feedback & Discussion

15:30

Cohort Reflection

16:30

Close

19:00

The Agricultural Leadership Alumni Dinner & John Alliston Memorial Lecture, One Great George Street

Accommodation

The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, St James's, London, SW1A 2EL, United Kingdom

Friday 5th March 2027

08:30

Leadership Breakfast with guest speaker Didi Wheeler, Chief Executive and Club Secretary of the Farmers Club

10:00

My Leadership Journey with guest speaker Dr Johnny Wake DL FRASE ARAGS

11:00

Leadership Declarations

12:00

Programme Reflections

13:00

Close

Accommodation

The Farmers Club, 3 Whitehall Court, St James's, London, SW1A 2EL, United Kingdom

Programme Fee.

The cost of the programme:

- **Members** of the Society of Agriculture £8,000 + VAT per person
- **Non-Members** of the Society of Agriculture £9,000 + VAT per person

Members of the Society of Agriculture benefit from a £1,000 + VAT subsidy.

Non-members are welcome to apply; however, the subsidised rate is only available to members.

All successful applicants on the 2027 programme will receive one year of complimentary membership of the Society of Agriculture.

For details on becoming a member of the Society of Agriculture, please visit: www.soc-ag.org/membership

Please note the following:

- Delegates are responsible for their own travel to and from Cirencester, Brussels/ Netherlands and London; delegates are responsible for arranging and covering these costs.
- A Health & Safety assessment will be provided to all delegates in advance as part of the delegate information pack.



Selection Approach

The selection process is designed to identify individuals who demonstrate:

- strong leadership potential and professional credibility
- the ability to think strategically about the future of agriculture
- a willingness to contribute actively to the cohort and wider sector
- commitment to applying their learning within their organisation and for the benefit of the wider agricultural sector

Applications will close on Monday 7th September 2026.

Following the application deadline, shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an online interview on dates between the 12th and 15th September 2026 (inclusive).

Proposed interview dates and times will be arranged directly with shortlisted candidates.

Agricultural Leadership Programme Application Form.

Complete the application form or to request an application form by email, please email: aldp@soc-ag.org

1: Please provide a brief summary of your current role, responsibilities and organisation.

Please outline your career pathway to date, highlighting key roles and experiences

2: Why are you applying for the Agricultural Leadership Development Programme?

3: What do you hope to gain from the Agricultural Leadership Development Programme?

Please save and email
your completed form to:
aldp@soc-ag.org

Participant Commitment

The Agricultural Leadership Development Programme requires full participation across all three residential weeks, active engagement throughout, and contribution to the 2027 Challenge.

By submitting this application, I confirm that:

- I am able to attend all programme dates in full
- I will actively engage with all elements of the programme
- I am committed to contributing to the cohort and applying my learning beyond the programme

Policies & Governance

I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the relevant policies of the Society of Agriculture:

<https://soc-ag.org/about-us/governance/>

I understand that participation in the Agricultural Leadership Development Programme is subject to these policies and expectations of professional behaviour.

Payment Agreement

I understand that, if my application is successful, a formal offer of a place on the Agricultural Leadership Development Programme 2027 will be made.

- I (or my sponsoring organisation) agree to pay the full programme fee as invoiced
- I understand that full payment of the programme fee must be received by 30 November 2026
- I understand that my place is not confirmed until payment terms are agreed and payment is received
- I acknowledge that cancellation terms will apply once a place has been accepted

Declaration.

I confirm that the information provided in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I agree to the commitments outlined above.

Name:

Date:

About the Society of Agriculture.



The Society of Agriculture is the UK's independent professional body for agricultural excellence.

We bring together expertise from across farming, consultancy, rural business and the environmental sector to support professional standards, strengthen leadership and encourage collaboration across the industry.

Who is the Society of Agriculture for?

The Society of Agriculture is for everyone working across the agricultural industry — from farming and food production to advisory, research, education, land management, agri-business and rural enterprise.

Why join Society of Agriculture?

If you are committed to developing your agricultural career, business or professional network, membership of the Society of Agriculture gives you:

- Recognition as part of the UK's independent body for agricultural professionalism and leadership
- Access to a collaborative professional community across the sector
- Career-long development opportunities, mentoring and thought leadership
- Independent strategic insight and guidance
- Networking through national and regional events with trusted experts and peers
- A platform to help shape the future of agriculture through shared expertise and innovation

Why work with a Society of Agriculture member?

Choosing a Society of Agriculture member means working with a trusted professional who:

- Operates independently, with expertise grounded in evidence-based insight
- Is committed to continuous professional development and high standards
- Connects you with the wider networks and knowledge shaping UK agriculture
- Provides clear, impartial guidance to help you make strategic decisions with confidence
- Upholds professional values of integrity, collaboration and innovation

Our Mission.

We serve as the independent professional foundation for agricultural excellence, connecting trusted expertise across the sector, championing fresh thinking, leadership and collaboration, and helping to secure a strong, resilient future for UK agriculture.