

Self Storage: The Ultimate Hands-Free Business

Hosted by Cleveland Containers

Speakers: Lewis Pennicott (Cleveland Containers), Patrick Blanc (Stora), Ben Temple (ET Planning), Angus (Store Mill Self Storage)

At the *Farm Business Innovation Show*, Cleveland Containers led a packed session exploring how self-storage has become one of the UK's most profitable and "hands-free" diversification models — ideal for farmers and rural landowners.

Marketing Director **Lewis Pennicott** opened with compelling SSA (Self Storage Association) data showing the sector's explosive growth: UK turnover is now **£1.2 billion**, with container-based sites up **82% since 2022** and rural locations leading the charge.

Joined by software partner **Stora**, planning expert **ET Planning**, and Yorkshire operator **Store Mill Self Storage**, the panel broke down the full journey — from identifying demand and gaining planning permission to automating bookings, securing finance, and driving digital marketing results.

Angus's story of growing from 12 to 100 units in two years, entirely managed online, illustrated how the right setup can create a true "hands-free" income stream.

10 Key Takeaways for Landowners

- **Strong returns, small footprint.** One acre can host around 170 containers and generate over **£300k annual profit** by year five at 80% occupancy.
- **Automation is key.** Stora software enables full remote management — online bookings, contracts, payments, ID checks, and automatic access control — letting operators run sites from anywhere.
- **Plan before you place.** Secure planning permission early. Rural and brownfield sites with existing hardstanding are easiest; beware of biodiversity net-gain costs on greenfield land.
- **Traffic and access matter.** Provide safe turning circles, parking, and sightlines; councils may request trip-rate data and flood-risk plans.
- **Start small, scale fast.** Launch with a handful of containers and expand modularly as demand grows — most operators add units monthly.
- **Maximise every square foot.** Double-stacking, multi-store conversions, and clever end-row use can lift site yield by up to **60%**.
- **Build visibility.** Invest in roadside signage, local Google Business profiles, and targeted **Google Ads** — proven to deliver the fastest occupancy growth.
- **Upsell smartly.** Insurance add-ons, padlocks, and dynamic pricing tools can add **10%+ to total profits**.
- **Leverage diversification policies.** Councils increasingly support farm-based self-storage as part of rural-enterprise strategies.
- **Think long-term, hands-free.** The most successful sites are professionally branded, automated, and compliant — freeing owners to focus on wider farming or estate ventures.