

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – SEPTEMBER 2017

Changes to Greening Rules for 2018

The European Commission has published its updated greening rules for 2018:

-Plant Protection Products

The complete ban on the use of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) on Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) and Nitrogen Fixing Crops (NFCs) has been confirmed. The ban will apply to the use of PPP on EFA fallow areas, EFA catch and cover crops and EFA nitrogen fixing crops. Furthermore the ban is to apply from the time of sowing the crop, even if this date is before the 1st January 2018, through to harvesting. The ban will also apply to seed dressings.

For EFA NFCs the ban is for the entire growing period, being from the date of the sowing of the crop in 2017 until harvest 2018. For EFA fallow the ban will be for the period 1st January to 30th June, the confirmed fallow period. For EFA catch and cover crops the ban will be for those crops planted in 2018 rather than those being established to fulfill requirements of BPS 2017.

-Field Margins

The EFA buffer strip option which had previously been available only for buffer strips next to watercourses has been extended to include field margins adjoining arable land which do not lie beside a watercourse. The minimum width of the margin will be 1m. The EFA value is to be every 1m in length is worth 9m² of EFA.

-Catch & Cover Crops

Cover crops will need to remain from the 1st October to 15th January in the following year and catch crops from the 20th August to at least 14th October. These dates apply to crops grown in the 2018 scheme year.

-Crop Diversification

Under the new greening rules it will be possible to claim for small areas (less than 0.01 Ha) of different crops located next to each other as one mixed crop area. This will allow for areas that would not normally meet the minimum parcel area of 0.01 Ha to be eligible.

-EFA Hedges

The definition of hedges for EFA has been extended to include trees in a line. The EFA value will remain the same being every 1m of hedge is worth 10m² of EFA as long as there is management control of both sides.

-EFA Nitrogen Fixing Crops

Under the new rules in addition to pure stands and mixtures of Nitrogen Fixing Crops (NFCs) mixtures of NFCs and other crops will be permitted as long as over 50% is made up of NFCs. This rule will apply to crops sown in autumn 2017.

-Dates

It has been confirmed that the Cropping Period for Crop Diversification will continue to be from 1st May to 30th June in England. The EFA fallow period will also remain as 1st January to 30th June.

Basic Payment Scheme Mapping Updates

The RPA are currently undertaking a mapping update required under EU rules ensuring that none of its land data is more than three years old by 31st October 2017. Between 16th August and 31st October the RPA will publish update to the land data held on the Rural Payment Service. Agents and applicants will be informed via the 'Messages' feature on the Rural Payments Service online if any changes are made.

Where the change is correct no action is required. However, if you disagree with a change an RLE1 form and sketch map will need to be submitted following these steps ensuring:

1. The RLE1 form and sketch map have written on them 'Unrequested change query' and which schemes (e.g. BPS, CSS or ELS/HLS) the updates impact upon.
2. The land parcel information needs to be completed in the RLE1 including the date when the change was made on the ground.
3. Any changes should be marked on the sketch map along with the SBI number and any further evidence as to why you do not agree with the change.

Rural Development Programme for England

A further £200m of funding has been announced by the Government under the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) which for the first time is to be used partially to support rural broadband. The funding is made up of:

- £30m to support rural broadband and provide connection of up to 30Mbps or faster where they would otherwise not be available
- £45m for rural businesses including those involved in tourism and food production
- £120m for farm productivity under the Countryside Productivity Scheme (CPS)

The Countryside Productivity Scheme is open for application for both improving forestry productivity and water resource management. The minimum grant for both of these is £35,000 with grants available for up to 40% of the eligible cost. The deadline for applications is the 3rd April 2018. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-productivity-scheme>

Funds for broadband, on-farm food processing, resource efficiency, rural business support, animal health & welfare and resource efficiency will be made available later in the year.

Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier Applications – Key Reminders

-Application Packs

Natural England should now have send out all application packs. There will be no extension to the 30th September deadline for applications and the sooner the application is received the earlier validation checks can be completed and any issues raised.

-Application Numbers

Due to the number of application packs requested Natural England are anticipating that the 2017 Mid-Tier Scheme applications are likely to be over-subscribed. It is therefore important that all the necessary information is included in the application to avoid options or applications being deemed ineligible.

-Planning Permission

Where consent or planning permission is required for a capital item a copy of the consent needs to be submitted with the Mid-Tier application by 30th September 2017.

-Evidence/Consent Records

If confirmation that planning permission is not required is given verbally, rather than in writing, Natural England will accept this. Verbal consent will be accepted where Natural England are provided with information of who you spoke to, when the conversation was had and the conclusion of the conversation. These records should be provided along with the application by the deadline of 30th September 2017.