

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – MAY 2018

BPS Updates

Three Crop Rule Derogation

George Eustice, the UK Farming Minister, has written to the EU Commission requesting derogation from the Crop Diversification, or three crop rule as it is widely known. The letter is a response to the wet, late spring affecting farmers' ability to drill spring crops and therefore impacting upon cropping plans.

The application covers the whole of the UK and a response from the EU is expected shortly.

2017- Bridging Payments

'Bridging Payments' should now have been made by the RPA to all those yet to receive their 2017 Basic Payment. These should be worth 75% of the expected claim, although there have been cases of payments being more or less than this figure. Approximately 4% of claimants are yet to receive their full payments with the speed at which these are issued seemingly decreasing as the RPA are reallocating resources elsewhere in the run up to the 2018 deadline.

RLE1 Forms

Farmers are reminded that RLE1 forms are not formally part of the BPS or Countryside Stewardship application. Therefore claimants should prioritise submitting the application on time before the 15th May deadline ensuring it is accurate and reflects what can be found on the ground.

RLE1 forms and sketch maps can then be completed and returned to the RPA by 6th June however, in reality, it may be easier to complete sketch maps whilst completing the application.

RPA Helpline

As the call-back system has not been working for many claimants the RPA have implemented new arrangements for requesting a call-back. A temporary email service is now in place enabling claimants to request a call back at a suitable time; this will be available until 15th May.

To request a call back simply email the RPA with your contact details giving **at least one days notice** of when you would like the call back to take place. The email should include:

- The phone number you wish to be contacted on
- The SBI and business name you have queries about
- Your preferred day of call, for example Wednesday or Thursday and time of call, either morning or afternoon

Drop-in Centres

The six drop-in centres are now open based in Carlisle, Exeter, Newcastle, Reading, Workington and York. They do not offer any support beyond a check and receipt system. Appointments can be requested by emailing: dropincentres@rpa.gov.uk giving at least 48 hours' notice.

Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier Packs

The deadline to request a pack for CS Mid-Tier agreements is the **31st May 2018**. All packs must be requested by this date to apply for schemes commencing January 2019.

Further Restrictions on Neonicotinoids

A vote by EU member states on the 27th April 2018 has approved further restrictions on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. The proposals will see a ban on the outdoor use of three neonicotinoids- Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam.

Currently, their use is prohibited for oilseed rape, spring cereals and sprays for winter cereals, but they can be used to treat sugar beet, various horticultural crops and as seed treatments for winter cereals. The current restrictions will stay in place until the new measures come into force following a phase out period that is likely to be around eight months, therefore giving farmers and businesses time to adjust to the changes.

Heightened Security Checks on Land Deals

The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 came into effect on 26th June 2017 and now apply throughout the UK meaning farmers buying and selling land need to be prepared for increased security checks during these transactions. The Regulations have resulted in a tighter regime of identity checking for property transactions to reduce the potential opportunities for criminal organisations to fund terrorist activity or launder money.

Agents now have a duty to identify transactions where there is a risk of money laundering for the purchase or sale of houses, farms, land and commercial property. This means identities of parties must be confirmed, along with the source of funds, and any suspicious activity reported to the authorities.

The requirements will depend on the kind of transaction:

- Auction: registration and identification required before bidding begins, this means ensuring any identity documents are taken to the auction if you intend to bid.
- Tender/Private Treaty: identification will have to be confirmed before an offer is accepted

Should the buyer or seller be a trust, charity or limited company information on the 'beneficial owners' will be required. A beneficial owner is a person that owns or benefits from that organisation such as trustees, beneficiaries, directors or shareholders.

Even where relationships between a farmer and land agent have been established for many years identification will still need to be checked and a risk assessment carried out to comply with the new legislation. In order to make the process as straightforward and quick as possible farmers are advised to ensure all documents are in order and can be provided when requested.

New Scheme to Support New Entrant Sheep Farmers

British Wool has launched a new scheme to support any sheep farmers that have kept sheep for less than five years and have not been previously registered with British Wool. The scheme will allow successful application to receive 100% of their clip value as an advanced payment for the first two years. The further three years will then transition to the standard payment over the following three years.

More details can be found at <http://www.britishwool.org.uk/news/british-wool-launches-new-scheme-for-first-time-sheep-farmers.php> .

Future Farm Policy Consultation

The Government's Health & Harmony consultation on the future of food, farming and the environment closes on 8th May. The opinions submitted will be used by government to develop proposals for both the Agricultural Transition period and for the new food, farming and environmental policy.