

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – APRIL 2020

RPA Update

Coronavirus (COVID -19) Implications and Guidance

In line with the government coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance the RPA have closed the majority of their offices and have equipped their processing and helpline teams to carry on work from home. They remain fully focused on making vital payments to the rural community and helping customers submit their claims and applications.

Rural Payment Service:

Where possible, continue to use the Rural Payments service for the following:

- Entitlement Transfers
- Land transfers
- Submitting BPS 2020 applications
- Submitting CS 2020 annual revenue claims
- Applying for CS Mid Tier and Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grants

Where it is not possible to submit applications online including Environmental Stewardship and CS annual revenue claims, those can be emailed to ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk.

Postal Arrangements for RLE1 Forms, Applications, Supporting Documents and Claims

The RPA is now accepting post again. For anything urgent that cannot be emailed use the following addresses:

- Basic Payment Scheme customers – Rural Payments Agency, PO Box 352, Worksop S80 9FG
- Countryside Stewardship customers – Rural Payments Agency, PO Box 324, Worksop S95 1DF

Where the persons with the relevant permissions is not able to sign forms due to a COVID-19 related issue, the RPA has confirmed that forms can be signed by someone else provided a note is included either on the front of the form or next to the signature box advising it is being signed by someone else because of COVID-19. If you are not able to reach the post, keep hold of your RLE1 form and the RPA will provide information in due course on what to do. Regular updates are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-farmers-landowners-and-rural-businesses>

Professional Advisors on all Rural Property Matters - Agricultural, Residential & Commercial



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Key dates

- The 2020 BPS application deadline is midnight on 15th May 2020. It is possible to amend a BPS application up until midnight on 1st June 2020 without a penalty. Late claims can be submitted until midnight on 9th June 2020, subject to penalties.
- Entitlements must be transferred by midnight on 15th May 2020 to be eligible for this year's claim.
- The Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier applications deadline remains 1st May 2020. If you have any difficulties in meeting this deadline due to COVID-19, call the RPA on 03000 200 301 to advise.
- The Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier applications deadline is 30th June 2020. If you are unable to get online then you must call the RPA by 31st May 2020 to request an application pack.
- The Countryside Stewardship Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant remains as 1st May 2020. If you have any difficulties in meeting this deadline due to COVID-19, call the RPA to advise.

Coronavirus (COVID – 19) and renting:

Residential

- Landlords and their agents are mindful of the current situation caused by COVID-19 and are encouraging tenants that they must keep them informed of their situation and if they are unable to meet their rental commitments to let them know.
- The government has advised that landlords and tenants should work together to create an affordable repayment plan depending on the individual circumstances.
- Further government measures include a mortgage holiday for buy-to-let Landlords and that Landlords cannot evict Tenants for 3 months' due to non-payment of rent at this time.

Commercial

- The coronavirus (COVID-19) is presenting business tenants with intolerable financial pressure, leaving some without any income at all. Many tenants were not able to pay their quarterly rent on 25th March resulting in the need for urgent strategy to be implemented to protect tenants and their landlords. Government guidance states that business tenants who cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus (COVID-19) will be protected from eviction.
- Many landlords and tenants are reaching voluntary arrangements about rental payments including the payment of rent in monthly installments in advance. Where requests are being made by tenants for the deferment of rent completely, landlords are entering in to negotiations to create suitable payment schedules for when trading conditions return to normal.

The Farming Community Network

The Farming Community Network (FCN) is encouraging farmers to think about contingency planning against the backdrop of the COVID-19 outbreak. Visit their website at www.farmwell.org.uk for a wealth of free information about building resilience, mental wellbeing and managing through changing times. FCN is a charity and voluntary organisation that provides practical and pastoral support to farming families in England and Wales. They also provide a helpline for people in the agricultural industry who may be experiencing difficulties – it is open from 7am to 11pm every day of the year and can be reached on 03000 111 999.