

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – MAY 2020

RPA Update

Coronavirus (COVID -19) Implications and Guidance

The Government continues to provide us with updated guidance on the current situation with regard to coronavirus (COVID-19). They have announced that the furlough scheme has been extended to the end of October and that furloughed workers will be able to go back to work part-time with employers paying a contribution to the cost of the furloughed salary. This may have positive and negative impacts on rural business depending on the restrictions still in place.

Rural Payment Service Key Dates - Update

- The 2020 BPS application deadline has been extended to midnight on 15th June 2020. It is possible to amend a BPS application up until midnight on 30th June 2020 without a penalty. Late claims can be submitted until midnight on 20th July 2020, subject to penalties.
- You must still have “land at your disposal” and hold the entitlements that you want to claim on at 15 May 2020.
- You can use Rural Payments Service to:
 - o Add land by email until 4 June
 - o Update land use until 15 June
 - o Transfer land parcels 15 June
 - o Add or delete common rights until 10 July
- Remember you can use the Rural Payments Service to:
 - o View land parcel map and information for a date in the past. From 6 April, in the View Land screens, you can choose to see your land parcel map and information for a date in the past as far back as 1st January 2015.
 - o You can now use the Change Land Tenure Form available on the RPA website to change your holding type or land share, so you can transfer land online or make a BPS claim.

Countryside Stewardship - Update

- The deadline for 2020 revenue claims for Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship has been extended from 15th May by one month to 15th June.
- The RPA have confirmed that where Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship agreement holders have not received a 2019 revenue claim payment there will be bridging payments available. The payments should be issued in May and should equate to 75% of the current estimated claim value.

Coronavirus (COVID – 19) and renting:

Residential

- As the effects of the current situation caused by Covid-19 continue, tenants are encouraged to keep their Landlords up to date of their situation and if they are unable to meet their rental commitments to let them know.
- The Government's continued advice is that landlords and tenants should work together to create an affordable repayment plan depending on the individual circumstances.

Residential Property Viewings

- From 13 May 2020 Estate Agents and Letting Agents have been permitted to re-open in England.
- The government has amended its regulations to allow people to move house. However it is important to understand that this does not represent a return to normality and therefore there are strict guidelines in place regarding the buying, selling and renting of property to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus.
- Below we have outlined the key points to consider:
 - o Initial viewings will be done virtually where possible.
 - o All physical viewing will be limited to members of the same household and open house viewings will not take place.
 - o During house viewings, where possible, surfaces should not be touched, all attendees should wash their hands regularly and bring their own hand sanitizer, attendees should be kept to a minimum.
 - o It is recommended that owners/tenants vacate their property during viewings and open all internal doors, cleaning the property in between viewings.
 - o Social distancing should be practiced at all times.
 - o Try and do your own packing and speak to removal firms in advance if necessary.
 - o Speak to the professionals you are involved with where you have any concerns.

Commercial

- With respect of the impact caused by Covid-19 on commercial business income the Government guidance states that business tenants who cannot pay their rent because of Covid-19 will be protected from eviction.
- Voluntary arrangements have been widely agreed upon between landlords and tenants with regard to rental payments and tenants are encouraged to discuss any concerns with their Landlord.
- There are a number of business support measures available to help businesses which can be researched online. These include the deferral of payments (VAT, July Self-assessment payment, HMRC Time to Pay Scheme), Support with employees costs (increased employer's allowance, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Statutory Sick Pay Relief Package), Self-employed (Coronavirus self-employment income support scheme) and Business Rate Reliefs and Grants depending on type of business (retail, hospitality, leisure and small businesses).