

Land Business Update

Week commencing 6th April 2020

COVID-19

Joint appeal by TFA and CLA for farming landlords and tenants to work together

The appeal says that say “neither party should seek to take advantage of the current situation or use it as an excuse to act unreasonably. Both parties should consider the impact of their actions on the other and avoid taking a hard line on any issue, at what is a very difficult time. Never has it been more important for the whole of the farming industry to focus one hundred percent on supplying the nation’s food.” The CLA said that formal proceedings for any non-payment of rent should be used only as a matter of extreme last resort.

Practical help and support from Strutt & Parker

James Farrell, head of the Rural team at S&P, has published an open letter about our commitment to providing the rural sector with the practical advice and support needed to deal with the immediate challenges posed by the coronavirus outbreak. It mentions our [checklist](#) with advice on estate management and well-being, our latest [pocket-sized summary of BPS rules](#) to help farming businesses maintain cashflow in the future, and the range of forms and protocols for businesses that can be accessed via your local S&P contact. The letter is published on our [Rural Hub](#)

S&P Farming Update – COVID update

Our farming team will publish a very short fortnightly e-bulletin on market updates, business continuity and useful information. Please contact [Mary Munro](#) in Scotland or [Andrew Atkinson](#) in England for details or to discuss any COVID-related issues.

S&P Health & Safety Update

We are also publishing our regular update on [health and safety issues](#). It is a particularly important period as many farms are catching up with spring cultivations and there may be more family members and new members of staff on the farms.

Update from the Rural Payments Agency on the impact of COVID-19 on scheme deadlines

The latest information that we have is:

- BPS application deadline – this is still 15th May although ministers are considering an extension. Our advice is to aim to submit applications by the usual deadline if possible.
- BPS applications by hard copy – it is unlikely that drop-in centres will be set up this year, so send any documents by tracked / recorded post.
- Deadlines for other schemes (e.g. Countryside Stewardship) - like BPS, these have not changed but some relaxation is likely.
- Inspections –all visits to farms have been put on hold to reduce non-essential trips and person-to-person contact. This includes Countryside Stewardship and BPS inspections. Some inspections, for example to protect the environment, protect animal welfare or control plant and animal diseases, will continue. Updates are available from the [RPA](#), [Natural England](#) and [Forestry Commission](#).
- Countryside Productivity Small Grant claim deadline - extended by two months to 31st July due to the challenges that the virus has created for suppliers of equipment that has been grant funded. It is however recommending that claims are made as soon as possible. NB All equipment must be at the location stated in your application and operational before a claim can be submitted.



Economy

National living wage rises by 6.2% from 1st April

The increase was announced at the end of 2019 and increased the rate for people over 25 to £8.72 an hour.

Energy

Planning applications for clean energy projects reach record level

There were 269 applications made in 2019, which is almost 33% more than in 2018 and 75% more than in 2016. The rise is attributed to falling costs of renewable technologies and more certainty amongst investors. The change in UK government policy to support onshore wind farms and so reverse the previous Conservative policy will further boost project numbers. In announcing the policy change, the government said that the UK should use 'every technology available' but in a way that does not alienate communities. New windfarms will be eligible for contracts for difference auctions in 2021, meaning that the new projects could start to generate in the mid-2020s. Most new wind farms are still expected to be located in Scotland, rather than in England.

Environment

BNP Paribas Real Estate releases its Biodiversity Commitment Charter

As a business, we aim to reduce the environmental impact of our activities while helping to improve wellbeing in buildings. As part of this aim, we have published our Biodiversity Commitment Charter, which summarises our seven objectives in this area. We are also members of the International Biodiversity Property Council. Please contact [Jason Beedell](#) if you would like to know more about these initiatives.

Farming

New book on *Feeding Britain* by Professor Tim Lang

This new book, which has been topping the charts at Amazon and in The Guardian bookshop, is a serious overview of UK food security, arguing that a rethink is overdue. It includes lots on land-use, farming and subsidies (and references our analysis of the future farming funding gap).

Forestry

Scientists plant 'sentinel trees' to warn of devastating pests

Researchers from Europe, the US and China are planting 'sentinel trees' from their own regions in distant nations to observe which insects attack them. The hope is that it will enable us to be more prepared for potential new threats and to even stop them becoming an issue, for example by avoiding imports from a region. Groves of European trees planted in China have already enabled scientists to identify and start to study more than a dozen insects of concern.

Telecoms

Universal Service Obligation comes into force –but watch out for costs

This means that anyone can request an upgraded connection if their broadband speed is below 10 Mbit/s download and 1 Mbit/s upload. The USO came into force on 20th March 2020. [BT](#) has 30 days to confirm eligibility and how much it will cost to build a better connection. If it will cost more than £3,400 to connect a home, the home owner will have to pay the excess costs. Once the connection has been upgraded, the broadband price must be the same as anyone else on the same package and no more than £46.10 a month.