

# Land Business Update

Week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

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## S&P news

### Land Business magazine out this week

It includes articles on how businesses can respond to COVID, investment, a mindset for success, biodiversity net gain, collaborative ventures, woodland carbon and much more. Keep an eye out in your email inboxes on Friday or on the [Rural Hub](#) for more details.

### Strutt & Parker is one of the founding business service partners of the new National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise

The [Centre](#) plans to undertake research and knowledge exchange to support resilience and innovation among rural firms, unlocking the untapped potential of rural economies across the UK. Led by experts from Newcastle, Warwick, Gloucestershire and the Royal Agricultural Universities, and working with businesses, policymakers, enterprise agencies and communities, the Centre has been awarded £3.8m of funding by Research England. As a business service partner, Strutt & Parker's role will be to extend the Centre's reach to tens of thousands of rural enterprises, provide feedback to inform research and policy-related activities and share our expertise in developing market-ready products and delivering practical change.

## COVID

### CLA proposals on re-starting the economy in rural areas

The CLA has made the argument that if rural business can be re-opened – subject to social distancing and hygiene measures - they could provide an early boost to the national economy as they have an in-built advantage of having space. This will require government to provide clear re-opening milestones and sufficient notice so that a national roadmap for re-opening can be agreed. With this information, businesses can carry out risk-assessments to assess whether they can reopen safely. The proposals restate the CLA's position (which has not changed since well before COVID) that reductions in Basic Payments are delayed for a year to 2022, and that much better broadband and mobile connectivity is required to reduce the gap in productivity between rural areas and the county as a whole.

### Coastal and rural areas appear to be most at risk of unemployment, according to RSA

Analysis by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce says that over 30% of jobs are 'at risk' in the most affected areas; the top 20 at risk areas are mainly coastal and rural districts with large tourism and hospitality sectors. The RSA calculated the percentage of jobs at risk by multiplying data on which industries have furloughed workers across UK by the industrial composition of different local authority districts. NB 19-23% of jobs are considered at risk in the 'least at risk' areas, which include the City of London and places that have strong knowledge-economies.

### Sales and lettings markets reopen for houses and farms in England

Moving home was restricted to only 'critical cases' when the lockdown started on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. In England, this changed from 13<sup>th</sup> May onwards so going to view a property is now possible, subject to rules designed to keep everyone involved safe. The new rules include continuing to do more of the process online, such as virtual initial viewings, vacating a property whilst potential buyers are shown around, and ensuring that protocols for social distancing, touching things in the property and cleaning are followed carefully. A fuller explanation of the new rules is available on our [website](#). Our agency teams, including for farms and estates, are still working and available to arrange viewings, so please contact them. NB The changes from 13<sup>th</sup> May only apply in England. Different advice applies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

It is unclear what effect the pandemic will have on house prices. It is clear that unemployment and job insecurity is rising and many of those still in employment have had pay cuts, which could lead to lenders withdrawing or changing mortgage offers. The RICS residential market survey showed a net balance of more than 90% of surveyors reporting falling listings, falling inquiries and falling sales before this week's reopening. Our agency team is hosting a 45 minute webinar at 10.30am every Tuesday to answer questions about the property market. 700 people joined the first webinar and you can register to join the series [here](#).



## Farming

### Agriculture Bill moves to House of Lords after amendments defeated at third Reading stage

The third reading happened in the House of Commons on 13<sup>th</sup> May with all of the main amendments being pressed for by farming and environmental bodies defeated by the government. An amendment to prevent food and farming standards being lowered in trade agreements was defeated despite a sizable rebellion against the government by 22 of its own MPs. The other main amendment to recognise food as a public good (with the NFU claiming that the case is stronger due to the weaknesses in the food supply system exposed by COVID) was also defeated, as the government maintained its position that food is a market good and so is different to goods like wildlife and clear air, which do not have market prices. The Bill is likely to face more opposition in the House of Lords as the government does not have a majority there. The government's aim remains to pass the Bill this summer.

### Let us know if you need help submitting your BPS due to extra month

The extended deadline for submitting Basic Payment scheme claims is 15 June so please let our [farming team](#) know if they can help submit a claim for you.

### Agronomy update

Spring fertiliser programmes will be nearing an end on the majority of crops, with much of the recent nitrogen applications sitting on the rock hard surface, desperate for any moisture to carry them down into the seed bed. Urea is proving the biggest issue with these dry conditions as it likely faces nitrogen losses of between 5-10% due to volatilisation; if possible, wait to make these applications in a weeks' time when it may have rained. Longer-term, it is worth considering switching to ammonium nitrate products. Oilseed rape crops that were drilled late are patchy at best but the drier weather has kept disease pressure low. Monitoring for pests, especially pollen beetles and sand weevils, is important now. It is also important to keep pesticide programmes for wheat under constant review as the difficult establishment means crops are at very different stages of development. Please contact [Jock Willmott](#) if you would like to discuss day-to-day or strategic agronomy.

## Forestry

### Have your say by taking part in the British Woodlands Survey 2020

This is an important [survey](#) on the state of our woodlands and how managers and advisers are reacting to threats and opportunities to them. The Survey is organised by Sylva, supported by 15 member organisations and has been funded by the Forestry Commission. It takes about 30 minutes to complete, so two cups of tea.

### Mighty oaks from little acorns grow

We were delighted to receive a picture from James Miles Hobbs of his oak seedling that we gave out as part of our sponsorship of the CLA Rural Business Conference last November. It is a positive analogy for what we now need to happen across the UK and world to recover from COVID.