

Land Business Update

Week commencing 7th September 2020

Farming

Greening amendment form: Countryside Stewardship

Farmers can make changes to their Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier or Higher Tier agreements that are due to start on 1st January 2021 due to the scrapping of greening requirements. They can add more land parcels to agreements, increase the amount of land under different options and change the location of the options. Please contact [Seb Murray](#) if you would like to discuss Countryside Stewardship or another grant.

EU and UK cereal production expected to be 5% lower than in 2019

Wheat production is expected to be 12% lower, maize the same and barley and oilseed rape up marginally according to COCERAL, the European grain trade organisation.

Environment

Government sets out thinking on its four legally-binding environmental targets

The targets are a key element of the Environment Bill's attempt to address environmental and climate challenges. The four targets relate to air quality, resource productivity and waste, biodiversity and water pollution. They will be monitored by the new environmental regulator, the Office of Environment Protection. The reaction from environmental bodies has been generally warm although there is much detail to be finalised and they would like legally binding interim (or stepping stone) targets set as well. The targets are likely to come into effect from 2022 onwards, which has led to some questioning the government's urgency.

Forestry

Second woodland carbon auction awards contracts to 27 bidders offering 1,517 hectares of new woodlands

The successful bidders will be offered the option to sell the carbon stored by their woodlands to the government over 35 years at a guaranteed price protected against inflation; they do not have to sell their credits to the government, but now have a guaranteed minimum price. The average size of woodland funded in the second auction was 56 hectares, so much bigger than the first auction, and the average price was £19.71 per tonne of CO₂e, so lower than the previous average of £24/t. The third auction will take place from 26 October to 1 November and up to 75% of the budget will be ring-fenced for 'predominantly native woodland' projects.

Property

Green Homes Grant Scheme funds £2 of every £3 spent on energy efficiency works up to £5,000

The aim of this English scheme is to enable homeowners and landlords to upgrade their homes and properties with energy-saving features, such as insulation or double glazing, in order to reduce energy usage and improve the energy efficiency of a property. Works can include wall and loft insulation, draught proofing and double glazing. These are all works that should improve the Energy Performance Rating (EPC) of a property. A voucher for 100% of the cost up to £10,000 is available for people on low incomes. Other schemes are available in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Please contact [Jess Waddington](#), [Lauren Gibson-Green](#) or your local building surveying team for advice on the grant and, most importantly, to ensure that any measures you are considering are appropriate and effective for your property.

Notice periods of Assured Shorthold Tenancies temporarily increased to six months due to COVID

Notice periods have been extended to six months (until at least 31st March 2021) apart from in certain circumstances: if a tenant has over six months' rent arrears (now four weeks' notice period); antisocial behaviour (now same notice period as usual, so two months for an AST). Notices served before the 29th August which gave three months' notice will remain valid. We will provide a briefing note for landlords and tenants when we have more detail. In Scotland, the ban on evictions is likely to be extended to



March 2021. According to research by the National Residential Landlords Association, 87% of tenants have continued to pay full rent since the start of the pandemic.

Measures to protect residential tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic have been extended

In England and Wales, the ban on starting eviction proceedings has been extended by a month to 30th September. While welcomed by public health bodies for reducing the number of people potentially exposed to COVID, the extension has been criticised as too short term by tenant bodies and too last minute, coming two days before the previous extension expired. Landlord bodies say the blanket extension exposes landlords to lost income.

Proposals for reform of the planning system strongly criticised by the TCPA

The Town and County Planning Association, which represents professional planners in the UK, says that the proposals undermine local democracy, marginalise local councils and fail to achieve the kind of high quality places that the government is committed to delivering. It set out a number of tests for the planning white paper but none of them are met. It also says that the proposals are weak on the contribution the planning system should make to health, well-being and combating climate change. Further, it says that the white paper does not make credible proposals for strategic planning, despite abolishing the current duty for local authorities to cooperate. The TCPA acknowledges that the planning system must change and supports the programme previously laid out by the Raynsford Review.

Rural affordable housing reforms criticised as over two thirds of rural communities unlikely to benefit from new affordable houses

The English government is proposing to quadruple the threshold above which a developer has to provide affordable housing from developments of 10 or more properties to 40-50 dwellings. The change has been criticised by the Rural Services Network, the Rural Housing Alliance, Plunkett Foundation and ACRE. They say that the changes mean that over two thirds of rural communities in England are unlikely to benefit in future from new affordable houses in their area. There is already an acute shortage of affordable homes in rural areas. Last year just 5,558 new affordable homes were built in smaller rural communities – equivalent to less than one affordable home in each village. The four groups have called for rural communities with a population of 3,000 or fewer to be exempt from the new rules, with local councils able to set their own thresholds for affordable housing in these settlements.

Rural economy

Over a third of pubs in the UK cannot break even one month after reopening

The finding, from a survey of the British Beer & Pub Association's members, came a month after pubs in England reopened on July 4th for the first time after the COVID-19 lockdown. In the same survey, 25% of brewing and pub sector businesses said they didn't feel their business was sustainable beyond the end of March 2021 at present.