

Land Business Update

Week commencing 7th August 2023

Farming and food

Calf Housing for Health and Welfare grant to open shortly (England)

This new funding, part of the Animal Health and Welfare Infrastructure Grant, covers up to 40% of the eligible costs of a project, with a minimum grant of £15,000 and the maximum £500,000. It will pay for capital costs to build new or upgrade existing calf housing buildings. Eligible costs include many different types of buildings for calves and they must be permanent and meet the legal requirements for calf housing. Projects can also include rooftop solar PV panels, which are 25% funded. £10m of funding is available and we expect the scheme to be popular so applicants should focus on the funding priorities of the scheme when putting together an application. For more details contact [Alice Johnson](#).

Basic Payment Scheme advance payments made on 1 August (England)

The payments will be up to 50% of the total annual BPS payment, with the remaining balance paid in December 2023. If you have any questions about BPS or the payment you have received, please contact [Andrew Atkinson](#).

All Glastir agri-environment agreements will end on 31 December 2023 (Wales)

An interim habitats scheme will open later this year before the new Sustainable Farming Scheme opens from April 2025. The interim scheme will be open for all Welsh land managers to apply for, not just current Glastir agreement holders, and more details on it are expected this autumn.

Border checks on food imports delayed – for the fourth time

The UK government has delayed the start of border checks on animal and plant products coming from the EU, saying that it risks increasing inflation. The checks had originally been due to start in 2021; in April, they were delayed until October and they are now expected to be postponed until after Christmas. The 'Border Target Operating Model', which is the rule book, has not been published yet. Reaction from UK farmers has been generally negative, saying that the delay perpetuates an unfair advantage for imports, which are not subject to checks, while UK exports are already subject to full checks. Separately, the government has dropped its plan to introduce a post-Brexit UK equivalent to the EU's 'CE' quality mark.

Amount of profit made by fertiliser companies 'exceptional' during 2022

Three of the main suppliers of fertiliser in the UK, CF, Yara and Origin Enterprises, made a combined net profit of \$5.45bn in 2022, which was up from £920m in 2020, according to analysis by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit think tank. The analysis showed, for example, that the gross margin earned by CF by product tonne of ammonia went up by 1,745%. The report also states that government figures show that farmers and supermarket profits did not rise substantially at the same time as the fertiliser companies' profits. Separate analysis showed fossil fuels and climate change added about £400 to the average household food bill in 2022, which amounted to about 88% of all food price inflation in 2022, which the ECIU says demonstrates how fossil fuel reliance can feed through to food prices (and food price inflation).

Environment

What bird is that? Download the Merlin app to find out

The app allows users to identify birds by their songs and has been downloaded by over half a million people in the UK and six million globally. The app was developed by Cornell University in 2002 and uses a global database called eBird. The data allows the researchers to know exactly where birds are in every week of the year, which is useful. For example, it was used to confirm a new migration route for cranes across Italy in 2013.



Nature 2030 campaign

Wildlife and Countryside Link, which is an umbrella group for around 70 nature conservation groups, has launched [this campaign](#) which sets out five urgent reforms for political parties to include in their manifestos ahead of the next general election. They are:

- Doubling the nature-friendly farming budget to £6bn per year.
- Putting a Nature Recovery Obligation in law requiring polluting big businesses to deliver environmental improvement plans.
- A rapid delivery programme to fulfil the promise to protect 30% of the land and sea for nature, including creating a Public Nature Estate.
- A National Nature Service which delivers wide-scale habitat restoration and creates thousands of green jobs.
- Establishing a human right to clean air and water and access to nature and building nature into decision-making.

Property, planning and rural economy

Government announcement on housing and other matters

The UK Government made a number of announcements, mainly on housing, on a wide range of issues in late July. They include:

- £24 million to scale up local planning capacity.
- A consultation on new Permitted Development Rights.
- Another consultation on changes to local plan making.
- An extra £13.5m for a new 'super-squad' of planning experts to facilitate large-scale development projects.
- A new Water Scarcity Working Group, including the Environment Agency, Ofwat, government and business, to identify and accelerate plans to address water constraints.

The announcement also said that there would be further news on Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for the private rented sector later in the year, which is rumoured to suggest a delay in implementation. The government is also thinking of reviewing the plan to replace fossil fuel heating systems with heat pumps. S&P comment: Both of these suggested changes create uncertainty over the direction of government policy and delay homeowners making changes to low carbon systems.

Wild camping ruled legal on Dartmoor

The Court of Appeal, overturning a high court judgement made in January, has ruled that wild camping counts as open-air recreation and should therefore be allowed on the commons. One of the judges said that members of the public have the right to rest or sleep on the Dartmoor commons, whether by day or night and whether in a tent or otherwise. The case was brought by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and Open Spaces Society. Dartmoor remains the only place in the UK where camping is allowed without requiring the landowner's permission.

Guidance on rights of way and property owners' privacy, security and safety

Defra has published long-awaited guidance for local authorities on the weight they should attach to the impact of rights of way on private houses, gardens, farmyards and commercial premises. The guidance is for use when there is an application to divert or extinguish the right of way. It says that, 'reducing or eliminating the impact of the current route of the right of way on the owner and/or occupier, in terms of privacy, security and safety, are important considerations to which due weight should be given.' It is effective from 1 August 2023. Please contact [Charles Loyd](#) if you would like to discuss.

Energy Performance Certificate reform consultation (Scotland)

The Scottish Government is consulting on how to reform domestic and non-domestic EPCs to make them appropriate, accessible and clear. The Government plans to introduce the reformed EPC shortly after amended Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations are issued this winter and ahead of the proposed Heat in Buildings regulations being introduced. The consultation closes 16 October 2023.