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Introduction

In 2017, again you can use the Rural Payments service to apply online for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). Or, if you need a paper BPS application form, they are available. To make sure there is time to apply on a paper form by the application deadline, you need to call us to ask for one by 9 May.

Guidance about how to apply online or on a paper BPS application form is available on GOV.UK at www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2017:

- to apply on the Rural Payments service read 'How to claim BPS online in 2017'
- to apply using a paper BPS application form read 'How to apply using a paper form'.

Both documents have been updated in 2017 to include the hints and tips we provided in 2016.

Do you need a little more help to apply online?

Call our digital support team on 03000 200 301. They can answer any questions you may have and can talk you through every step of the process.

Applying in 2017

If you have a query about your previous year’s BPS payment, for example, you think there is a difference between the amount you were expecting to be paid for BPS 2015 or BPS 2016 and what you’ve received, or that your entitlements balance is incorrect, you must:

- fill in a ‘BPS payment query form’ (if you haven’t already told us about the issue) which is available on GOV.UK at www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2017 and return it to us by post or email (please use ‘BPS payment query’ as the subject). You can also call us on 03000 200 301 and ask for a form. We need this form so that we can investigate the issue.

Then:

- carry on making your 2017 application, declaring your land as it is at 15 May 2017 (or the land use for the crop that will be present for the majority of the cropping period
where this is to be sown after 15 May – read the ‘Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2017’ for more information).

Remember, it’s the responsibility of the person submitting the application to make sure that:

- they meet the scheme rules
- all the eligible land included in the application is correct to the best of their knowledge and reflects the position on the ground on 15 May 2017.

Remember to declare all the agricultural land on your holding when you apply. You can apply for BPS on as much of your eligible land as you want to - you don’t need to match the area you apply for with the number of entitlements you have.

There is no penalty if the eligible area you apply for is greater than the number of entitlements you have. We will work out your payment based on the lower figure. However, you should not apply for more eligible land than you have.

**Sign in to the Rural Payments service**

Sign in to the Rural Payments service at [https://www.gov.uk/claim-rural-payments](https://www.gov.uk/claim-rural-payments).

Or, you can sign in using the link on the RPA page on GOV.UK at [www.gov.uk/rpa](http://www.gov.uk/rpa) and click ‘Sign in to the Rural Payments service’.

If you’re a new customer, you must register before you can apply – call us on 03000 200 301 or search for ‘register for Rural Payments’ at www.gov.uk.

**Problems signing in to the Rural Payments service**

You have 3 attempts to access your account in the service. If you make a mistake when logging into the service you will see this message below:
If you make a mistake 3 times then you won't be able to access your account, and you'll need to either change your password by following the 'If you've forgotten your password' link on the screen, or call 03000 200 301 as below.

If someone else makes a mistake when logging into their account and accidentally uses your customer reference number (CRN) they'll also see this message, but it will count towards failed attempts to access your account. If this happens, then the next time you try to log in to your account you may not get 3 attempts, and may need to follow the same instructions above to get access.
Still can’t access your Rural Payments service account?

**Registered through GOV.UK Verify**

If you registered through GOV.UK Verify and can’t access your account, you will need to contact your chosen provider.

You can leave feedback on the issue using the link on the [GOV.UK Verify](https://www.gov.uk/verify) page.

The Government Digital Services (GDS) team will investigate your issue and reply to you if you requested a response.

**Registered through RPA**

If you registered through RPA you will need your CRN and the password you created when you activated your account.

If you have forgotten your CRN call us on 03000 200 301.

If you have forgotten your password, request one through the [sign-in page](https://www.gov.uk/verify) and click on the ‘[create a new one](https://www.gov.uk/verify)’ link.

![Sign in page](https://www.gov.uk/verify)

Enter your email address and CRN then click on ‘Send security code’.
You'll be sent an email with a security code which you'll need to enter on the screen below.

**Important:** you need to keep your browsing session on Rural Payments open or you'll have to start again.

The easiest way to access your email to retrieve your security code is by of the following:

- open a new browsing window and access your email account
- access your email from another device, for example, your mobile phone

When you’ve received your code, enter this and click ‘Continue’.
You can now create a new password to access the Rural Payments service when you want to log in.

If you have an Orange email address - Orange UK (Now EE) has advised their customers that their Orange email addresses will be closed down on 31 May 2017. If you have used one of the email addresses affected to register with Rural Payments please log on and change this to your new email address.
Check your information

Whether you apply online or on paper, we’ll fill in your application with the information we have about your business and your land. You can read guidance about how to check your information in the ‘How to...’ documents. There’s more detail below about how to check your land and entitlements information.

To check your claim, you need to look at your ‘Application summary’. Read page 8 of ‘How to claim BPS online’ for more information. To access your online application summary you need to have BPS submit permission.

Business relationship and permission levels

If you have a relationship of ‘employee’ you will not be able to access the application, even if you have BPS submit permission level. You will need to get someone with full permission level for the business to change your relationship to ‘helper’. If there is no-one in the business who can do this on the service, call us and we will help you over the phone.

If you don’t have the right permission level on the Rural Payments service you’ll need to get someone with full permission level for the business to change your permission level.

Permission levels and relationships can be updated from the ‘Give access to this business’ link on the ‘Business Overview screen’ in the Rural Payments service.

**Important:** We have recently updated our guidance about permission levels. It explains how we use these to decide who to contact about BPS, and how we will contact them.

Find more information on GOV.UK ‘Rural Payments: registering and updating your details’.

Land

**Greening: ecological focus areas (EFA)**

If you have more than 15 hectares of arable land you must have ‘ecological focus areas’ (EFAs) on your land unless you are exempt from this rule. The total of all EFAs must add up to an equivalent of at least 5% of the total amount of arable land you have (even if you aren’t claiming a BPS payment for it).

**Important:** you can declare more EFAs if you want to make sure you are meeting this rule.

You won’t be able to increase the percentage you’ve declared after you’ve applied.

However, if you’re inspected, and the inspector finds that some of the EFA features you declared aren’t present on your holding, they can work with you to use other EFA features that are eligible.
For more information about EFA, read the ‘Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2017’ starting at page 41.

**Common land - split rights**

Where rights can be used on more than one common, we will allocate the rights between the commons in proportion to their relative eligible areas. For example, if a farmer has rights to graze 100 cattle (equivalent to 100 Livestock Units (LU)) on Common A (150 ha eligible area) or Common B (50 ha eligible area), we will allocate 75 LU (150 ha/200 ha x 100 LU) to Common A and 25 LU (50 ha/200 ha x 100 LU) to Common B.

The information pre-populated in the ‘Common Land Grazing Rights’ table shows the allocation of rights that was used for BPS 2016 payments. However, if you are declaring split rights for BPS 2017, you should declare the full number of rights held against all of the commons on which the rights can be used (in the above example declare 100 cattle on Common A and 100 cattle on Common B).

**Common land - how to claim BPS if you have New Forest grazing rights.**

To claim BPS on the New Forest in 2017, farmers should use the column headed ‘Number of rights of this type’ to declare the number of marking fees they paid on the New Forest in 2016. Farmers should record the number of animals for which marking fees were paid (for example, how many cattle, ponies and/or horses) and we will convert these into LUs. Any farmer wanting to check the number of LUs that their marking fees will be worth should use the table on page 30 of the ‘Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2017’, but note that in the New Forest horses are valued at 0.6LU.

**Important:** do not declare any land use for common land parcels.

**Entitlements**

**Entitlements not shown correctly**

If there are any planned adjustments or you have an outstanding query about your BPS payment for 2015 and/or 2016, any entitlement transfers will not be completed until the adjustments and queries are resolved. Therefore, your entitlements will not show as transferred on the Rural Payments service until the adjustment or query work is completed.

If you’ve already sent us an RLE1 to transfer entitlements to be used in 2017 but the transfer hasn’t yet been completed, you can still make the transfer online using the Rural Payments service. Once you’ve transferred you entitlements online you need to call us or send us an email to ask us to withdraw your RLE1. The email subject heading should include ‘BPS 2017 - Withdraw entitlements transfer RLE1’. You’ll need to tell us the following information from your RLE1:
• SBI of the business transferring the entitlements
• SBI of the business receiving the entitlements
• type of transfer: state that this is an entitlement transfer RLE1
• the method of transfer, for example, sale, gift or lease
• the number of entitlements and payment region they’re in.

Using your entitlements in 2017

You don’t have to use all of your entitlements each year. However, you do need to use all of them, in a single application, at least once in every two years. If you don’t do this you’ll lose the unused entitlements in the second year. This means that you won’t be able to keep entitlements by ‘rotating’ (swapping) the ones you use from year to year.

If you lease entitlements from another business and have entitlements of your own, and you lose some because you haven’t used them, they’ll be taken away proportionately. This means that some (or all) of the entitlements you leased from another business won’t be returned to their original owner.

We’ll apply the rules on entitlements separately within each payment region.

Check your maps

It is your responsibility to check your maps, either online or on paper, and tell us about any changes. You can see digital maps of your individual land parcels on the Rural Payments service and print them. The screen will highlight if there are any changes ‘pending’ on any of the land parcels – if there are, you will see an ‘!’ icon. Read page 35 of ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’ to find out more about the ‘!’ icon and ‘pending’ changes.

You can see the 'land cover' for your land parcels online, this will be either arable, permanent pasture, permanent crops or in non-agricultural use. It is important that this information is correct. For example, all of the land you use for greening must have an arable land cover. To change the land cover for a land parcel you need to change the land use in the ‘Land use’ screen and we’ll make the change to the land cover. If you’ve entered an ineligible feature (for example, a pond or wood) resulting in an incorrect land cover you will need to submit an RLE1.

To change land cover if you don’t have access to the Rural Payments service you need to change your land use in column C7 of your paper BPS application form.

Check your maps carefully to make sure they are correct. If you need to make changes because:

• changes to your land are not shown on your maps
• land features have been removed from your maps and you need to add them again
• mapping changes made already need further amendments
• your maps don’t show all of your land correctly

you can do this online or using the RLE1 form. If you need to amend your maps, first read ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’. This explains what changes you can make online and, if and when you need to use an RLE1 form. Read more information about the Rural Land and Entitlements (RLE1) form and guidance at [www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2017](http://www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2017).

If you have already submitted an RLE1 with your BPS 2016 application and the changes haven’t been made to your maps, you can send another RLE1 with the relevant supporting documents. If you have a copy of your RLE1 then you can send that rather than a new RLE1 but you’ll still need to send the relevant supporting documents. You don’t need to send us another RLE1 if there is a (!) icon showing that your changes are ‘pending’.

**Land parcels showing as incorrectly merged on maps**

If you have a land parcel that has been incorrectly merged with someone else’s land parcel, you can still apply on your eligible land area within the parcel and then send us an RLE1 to correct the land parcel boundaries. Read ‘C6 –Part field size’ in ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’. Don’t fill in a land use code for the area that isn’t yours.

**Using the greening checker in your application summary**

In Parts C and D of your application summary, you’ll see information about greening and whether you may be meeting the crop diversification or EFA rules. This is just a guide and is based on your land use and area information.

These greening sections may be incorrect if you have any of the following:

• ‘Undeclared’ areas in your land use screen
• organic land and have applied for an exemption in Part J of your application summary
• applied for crop diversification exemption 3 (read the BPS scheme rules for more information)
• used paper continuation sheets
• have land in another part of the UK.

If your application summary shows NO beside ‘EFA’ rules met’, check that you have declared a land use for all your land parcels.

If your application summary shows N/A beside ‘EFA rules met’ - this means that you don’t need to declare EFAs, because you meet one of the exemptions (which are explained in the scheme rules). However, if you want to check what areas or features on your application would count as EFA, go to the ‘Use less EFA than available’ screen. You will see all the areas and features you’ve declared which
would count as EFA, should your circumstances change and you are no longer exempt. Read page 29 of the ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’ for more information about this screen.
Change your information

Read the ‘How to...’ guidance for more information about how to make changes to your online application or paper BPS application form.

Land

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<tr>
<th>If you…</th>
<th>You need to…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>add a land parcel</td>
<td>If the land parcel is already registered with us, you can do one of the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to your application</td>
<td>• ask the previous owner or claimant to transfer the land parcel to you online (this will register the parcel to your holding). We recommend online transfers are made as early as possible so they appear on your online application in time to submit it</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• fill in a BP5 continuation booklet (available on GOV.UK) with the details of the land parcel and send it to us when you apply</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• send us an email to let us know – put ‘Add land’ in the subject line and include the following information:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• the SBI and name of the business the land should be linked to (so it appears on your online claim)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• your name and contact number in case of any issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the land parcel reference numbers for the parcels you want to add, including sheet reference numbers and parcel IDs.</td>
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</table>

Send your email to: ruralpayments@defra.gsi.gov.uk

If you contact us after the 5 May we’ll do our best to respond to your email, but you should be prepared to add the land parcels to your application by using a paper continuation sheet which we must receive by the 15 May application deadline.

We will send you an email (to the email address you send the request from) once the change has been made. In some cases we may not be able to link your parcel to your holding – if this happens we will email you and provide you with a link to the continuation sheets that you will need.

Please note: the person requesting this will need a minimum of ‘Amend’ permission for land and/or ‘BPS Amend’ permission.

If the land parcel isn’t registered with us:
**Dual linking of land for landlords and tenants**

A tenant can add land to their application and declare the appropriate land use without breaking the existing land link to the landlord. The landlord should not declare any land use for that land so column C8 ‘Eligible area you want to claim for payment’ will show as 0.0000.

<table>
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<th>have land parcels that you want to transfer or remove</th>
<th>You can do one of the following:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• transfer the land parcel to the right business in the ‘Transfer land’ screen on the Rural Payments service (this will remove it from your holding)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• choose the ‘Remove’ option in the ‘Transfer land’ screen on the Rural Payments service, however, you must own 100% of a land parcel before you can remove it. You should only ‘Remove’ the land parcel from your holding (record) if it shouldn't appear under your SBI because you no longer have control of it - for example, you don’t farm it any longer or you tried to delete it from your application last year and it's still appearing.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Do not</strong> use the general SBI that was part of the process for removing land in BPS 2016 as this is no longer in use.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read more about how to remove or transfer land parcels in ‘Rural Land and Entitlements (RLE1) guidance’ at <a href="http://www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2017">www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2017</a>.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Important:** if you use the ‘Remove’ land option this will completely remove the land parcel from your record so you won’t be able to claim for payment on that land parcel for either BPS or one of the following rural development payment schemes:

-- Countryside Stewardship  
-- Environmental Stewardship  
-- Habitat Scheme  
-- English Woodland Grant Scheme  
-- Farm Woodland Premium Scheme  
-- National Forest Changing Landscape Scheme.

**Do not** use the ‘Remove land’ option if you still control the land parcel for one of
these schemes, in these cases you should use the correct ‘land use’ under the ‘Edit land use’ option. And make sure you only indicate that you have applied for the land parcel you still control for the scheme you want to claim for payment.

If you remove a land parcel under an existing rural development payment scheme agreement (see above list), this may affect your agreement or payment.

If you see the ‘Plan not editable’ message on the ‘Land use’ table, you need to call us on 03000 200 301 and tell us you have this message. We’ll change the status of your records from ‘edit’ mode to ‘official’ so that you can make your changes.

**Entitlements**

**Transferring entitlements**

Only the business that has the entitlements at midnight on 15 May 2017 can use them to get paid in that scheme year. This means all entitlement transfers for the BPS 2017 scheme year also need to be made by midnight on 15 May 2017.

**Important:** the business transferring the entitlement(s) does not have to be an active farmer. However, the business receiving the entitlements must be an active farmer before the transfer can take place (any entitlements transferred to them before they’re an active farmer will remain in 'pending' status on the service.)

Anyone who completed an active farmer declaration as part of their BPS 2016 application will keep their active farmer status until 15 May 2017.

If you want to transfer your entitlements but aren’t claiming BPS you need to fill in an RLE1 form.

If you want to lease your entitlements to the same business year after year call us on 03000 200 301 to extend the original lease.

For more information about transferring entitlements, read the ‘Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2017’ starting at page 34.
Activate less BPS area

Check you've declared and applied for your land correctly.

**Important:** You need to check the ‘Activate less BPS area’ screen to make sure you’ve correctly declared and ‘applied for’ your land or check column C8 in your paper application. We know that in some cases the value you ‘Apply for’ (C8) may default to 0.0000.

You need to check this after you’ve filled in all the information in your application but before you submit it. You can do this in one of the following ways:

- generate a PDF of your claim
- use the ‘Activate less BPS area’ screen.

The ‘Eligible area’ will show the area you’ve declared, and you can also see how much land you’ve ‘Applied for’. If the ‘Applied for’ figure is less than the ‘Eligible’ figure this could indicate that some of your areas have defaulted to 0.0000. In these cases, you should make any changes in the ‘Applied for’ column.

For BPS, the total eligible area of a land parcel must be at least 0.10ha to ‘Apply for’ payment for it. If the land parcel is below 0.10ha then C4 and C8 in your application summary will show as 0.0000ha.

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![Image of Activate less BPS area screen](image.png)
Complete your declarations

Make sure that you’ve made the active farmer declaration and completed ‘Your declaration and responsibilities’. You need to do this before you can submit your application.

For more information read page 32 in ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’, or read pages 25 in ‘How to apply using a paper form’.
Confirm your information and apply

Before you submit your application, we recommend you check your ‘Application summary’ and make sure all the information in it (including any changes you’ve made) is correct.

You might have land parcels which you can’t see in the ‘View land’ screen but you can see in the ‘Land use’ screen. As long as you’ve declared the land use they will be included in your application. For more information read Page 21 of ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’.

Make sure you check the latest version of your ‘Application summary’. It won’t update automatically when you make changes on the Rural Payments service. To update it go to the ‘Apply for BPS’ screen, click the drop-down arrow ‘View and print your application summary’, then click ‘Generate’ to create an updated version of your application summary. Then click ‘Download’ to read it.

**Important:** After you’ve generated and downloaded your final application summary we recommend you save a copy on your computer or print it for your records. Each time you generate a new copy it will include any updates made in the service at the date and time it’s generated.

You must submit your application by **midnight on 15 May 2017 to avoid late claim penalties**. The most recent BPS application is the one that will be accepted. It cannot be deleted online.

To submit your application click the green ‘Submit’ button at the bottom of the list of options when your BPS application is open on the ‘Apply for BPS’ screen. A ‘pop up’ notice on the screen should confirm that we have received your application.

If you haven’t completed the ‘Active farmer’ or ‘Your declaration and responsibilities’ declarations you will be asked to do this before you can submit your application.

If you don’t have the correct permission level then you won’t be able to see the green ‘Submit’ button. To find out more about this permission level read page 7 of ‘How to claim BPS online in 2017’. If your permission level is changed, you will need to log out of the Rural Payments service then log back in again, to allow the changes to take effect.

When you submit your application the ‘Apply for BPS’ screen status of your application will change to ‘Submitted’ and show you the date and time it was submitted.
Supporting documents (including continuation booklets)

If you need to send supporting documents, for example:

- active farmer certificate
- proof of young farmer or new farmer status
- continuation booklets

they are part of your application and we must receive them by midnight on 15 May 2017 to avoid late claim penalties. You must make sure you clearly write the SBI on every sheet, then send them to us by post. We cannot accept scanned images that are sent by email. The address to send them to is:

Rural Payments Agency
PO Box 352
Worksop
S80 9FG
Clarifying BPS rules

Young farmer payment

Clarifying the young farmer criteria for 2017

To apply for either the young farmer payment or entitlements as a young farmer or new farmer, you need to show that you:

- are at least 18 years old but not more than 40 years old in the scheme (calendar) year when you make (or made) your first successful BPS application
- are in control of the farm business that is applying for BPS
- set up or took control of your business for the first time on 1 January 2011 or later.

As a young farmer, you can apply for the young farmer payment each year, for a maximum of 5 years after the year you started, or took control of your business. You must only meet the age criteria the first time you successfully apply for BPS.

Evidence Requirements

If you applied for the young farmer payment in 2015 or 2016 and were successful but didn’t apply for entitlements you can apply for both in 2017. If there have been no changes to the business structure since your previous application you can do either of the following:

- complete and send us the whole form plus annex (certificate) again
- send us all the following:
  - the same accountants or solicitors certificate (annex) that you provided to us for your previous successful application
  - a letter confirming (signed by a person with permission to ‘make legal changes’ for the business) there have been no farm business structure changes since your last application
  - a completed form (the first two pages Parts A through to D) – you do not have to complete the annex (certificate).

If you applied for the young farmer payment and entitlements in 2015 or 2016 and were successful and you apply for the young farmer payment again in 2017, if there have been no changes to the farm business structure since your previous application, you can do either of the following:

- complete and send us the whole form plus annex (certificate) again
- send us all the following:
  - a completed form (the first two pages Parts A, C and D – you do not have to complete the annex (certificate)
  - the same accountants or solicitors certificate (annex) that you provided to us for your previous successful application.
o a letter confirming (signed by a person with ‘BPS Submit’ permission for the business) there have been no farm business structure changes since your last application.

**Example 1** - Young farmer applied successfully in 2015 (so submitted a 2015 accountant’s or solicitor’s certificate) but had their young farmer payment rejected in 2016 because they didn’t submit any evidence. What do they do for 2017?

We can allow the 2015 accountant’s or solicitor’s certificate to be copied along with confirmation of no business change. The key part in using re-submitted evidence is the covering statement/declaration that the business structure details have not altered.

**Example 2** – Young farmer applied successfully in 2015 (so submitted a 2015 certificate) and applied successfully in 2016 (submitted their 2015 certificate and a letter confirming no business structure changes for 2016 application), what do they submit in 2017?

Repeat evidence was provided in 2016 copied from 2015. We can allow the 2015 accountant’s or solicitor’s certificate to be copied along with confirmation of no business change. The key part in using re-submitted evidence is the covering statement/declaration that the business structure details have not altered.

You must apply every year if you want to continue to receive the young farmer payment (assuming you are still eligible).

Young farmers can only receive entitlements as a young or new farmer once.
