



Rural Payments
Agency

June 2020

An update from the Rural Payments Agency

Including:

- How to submit applications, claims and supporting documents during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- Update on rural payments, grants and services
- Updated scheme deadlines



Go to www.gov.uk/rpa for scheme information



We're committed to maintaining vital services for our customers, and have made changes to adapt to the current emergency situation. In line with [government COVID-19 guidance](#), we have closed the majority of our offices. As our people are working from home, there may be an impact on call quality on occasion.

To make sure you follow the government advice on social distancing, please do not visit or hand in any correspondence or supporting documents to any of our local offices. You can continue to post correspondence or supporting documents but only to those offices listed in the 'Contact us' section of this update.

To make sure your documents get to us follow the advice included in this update.

We will continue to keep you informed about any updates on our coronavirus (COVID-19) page at www.gov.uk/rpa.

How to submit applications, claims and supporting documents

The [Rural Payments service](#) is available and you should use this wherever possible, for example to submit Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) applications, Countryside Stewardship (CS) revenue claims, CS capital claims, CS Wildlife Offers and CS Woodland Management Plans.

It's the quickest and most secure way for you to send your BPS and CS applications, and CS claims to us, and it will help us to start processing your application or claim as quickly as possible.

When you submit an application or claim online, an online receipt will confirm that it has been submitted successfully

Where there's no option to use the Rural Payments service or you are unable to access the online service, there are 2 further options: email or post.

Email

Where guidance confirms there is an existing email service, we recommend that you use it, for example to submit a CS or ES revenue claim.

Email your forms and documents to us at ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk. Include the name of the scheme in the subject heading, for example 'Environmental Stewardship claim form 2020'. This will help your email get to the right department quickly.

If you submit your application, claim or supporting documents by email, we will acknowledge receipt by email. We can only accept emails from email addresses that are registered in the Rural Payments service.

It's important (especially in these challenging times) that we have your most up-to-date personal and business contact details. We may contact you by email or telephone, so please check your details in the Rural Payments service, and update or register them if necessary. Also, please make sure your permission levels for BPS and CS are set and are correct.

It's a good idea to regularly check your spam or junk email folder so you don't miss important emails that we've sent to you. And, read the 'Be aware of fraud' section in this update as we are aware of coronavirus (COVID-19) related scams.

We cannot accept supporting documents and evidence that we need to access from links to an external shared drive facility, for example Dropbox or Google Drive.

Post

If there's no existing email service and you would normally post something to us, you should continue to use the post.

If you need to post documents to us, we would encourage you to do so as soon as you can. If you submit your application, claim or supporting documents by post, we will acknowledge receipt either by email or by post. It is therefore important that you have registered your email address in the Rural Payments service.

If you are unable to get online or post a paper application form, paper claim form, or supporting documents to us before the application or claim deadlines, please call our helpline on 03000 200 301.

In line with government COVID-19 guidance, drop-in centres will not be available this year for handing in any correspondence and supporting documents.

Where the person with the correct permissions is not able to sign any forms, due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related issues, this can be done by someone else and a note advising us of this should be clearly shown either on the front of the document or next to the signature box. We will verify the signature before making any payments to you.

RLE1 form

Use the Rural Payments service to tell us about land transfers and land changes.

If you need to submit an RLE1 form to us, you can now do this electronically, by email. Download the form, complete it electronically following the RLE1 guidance, and return it to us as a PDF email attachment.

If you are unable to get online or email it to us, you can print an RLE1 form, complete it by hand, and post it to us.

Search 'RLE1 form' at www.gov.uk. If you can't get online, call our helpline on 03000 200 301.

Organic certificates

We will accept certificates in whatever format the organic body issues them in, where it is necessary to support BPS and CS applications, and CS and ES claims.

Please email a copy of any certificates to ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk.

If you're unable to get online, post a copy to us.

Find out how you can submit various documents to us. Search 'Rural payments: different ways to submit applications, claims and documents' at www.gov.uk.

Deadlines for 2020

- **Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) applications**
- **Countryside Stewardship (CS) revenue claims**
- **Environmental Stewardship (ES) claims**
- **Woodland legacy revenue claims**

Deadlines for the schemes above have been extended by one month, without penalty, to **midnight on 15 June 2020** in recognition of the disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19).

The period for making amendments without penalty is extended to **midnight on 30 June 2020**.

The final deadline, with penalties, is extended to **midnight on 10 July 2020**.

Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier

Find out how to apply on the Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier GOV.UK pages

2020
30 Jun
(Midnight)

Deadline to Request an application pack online

2020
31 Jul
(Midnight)

Applications close

Countryside Stewardship Wildlife Offers

Find out how to apply on the Countryside Stewardship Wildlife Offers GOV.UK pages

2020
31 Jul
(Midnight)

Applications close

Countryside Productivity Small Grants scheme - round 2

All items must be purchased, paid for, delivered and installed by 31 July 2020

2020
31 Jul
(Midnight)

Woodland Grants

Applications for the Woodland Management Planning Grant, Woodland Creation Grant and Woodland Tree Health are open all year round.

Allow at least 6 months to get your agreement for Woodland Creation.

Submit a Woodland Management Plan by **31 December** in the year before a Woodland Improvement application to ensure it is assessed and approved in time.

Remember that the closed period banning the cutting and trimming of hedges and trees between 1 March and 31 August (inclusive) is a cross compliance requirement. For more information, search 'cross compliance 2020' at www.gov.uk.



Support for the farming community

We work in partnership with Farming Help organisations to support their work to help the farming community through challenging times. If this affects you, please either contact them on 03000 111 999, visit their Farming Help website or call us on 03000 200 301.

Updates on rural payments, grants and services

Basic Payment Scheme

Crop diversification rules removed for BPS 2020

With large areas of farmland in England affected by the extreme wet weather in the autumn of 2019 and the winter of 2019 to 2020, the government has agreed to remove the crop diversification rules for all farmers for 2020 ('the two or three crop rule').

You must still complete your BPS application and declare all of your arable land using the appropriate crop codes. But if you are unable to plant the required combination of arable crops, you will not be penalised.

We will not apply the crop diversification rules to your application to determine eligibility for the BPS greening payment.

However, you will still need to meet the rest of the greening rules:

- maintaining at least 5% equivalent area of ecological focus area if you have more than 15 ha of arable land
- following the rules for the management of permanent grassland.

Countryside Stewardship

Higher Tier applications

If your initial application is eligible, Natural England advisers and Forestry Commission woodland officers will provide technical advice on developing your final application. RPA will contact you if your initial application is not successful.

Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant

We're processing applications and will start making offers during the summer.

Mid Tier applications

Farm advice support is available for CS Mid-Tier applicants using an off-farm advice programme where applicants can contact an adviser and book a clinic session.

More information is available on GOV.UK - search 'Information on Farm Advice for farmers and land managers'.

CS Revenue claims

If you have a CS agreement that contains multi-year options, submit a CS revenue claim for every year of your agreement - this includes agreements that started on 1 January 2020.

Claim for all options that will be established this autumn. If the location of any rotational options changes, contact us. We must receive a valid claim and relevant supporting documents, including the Whole Business claim for customers with Multi Agreements on a single SBI only.

Sending evidence for CS claims

If you have problems collecting all the evidence for your revenue claim or capital claim due to coronavirus (COVID-19) illness or restrictions, please do all you can to submit your claim, making it clear that your evidence is missing due to coronavirus (COVID-19). Please continue to collect the evidence and send it to us as soon as you are able to do so.

Environmental Stewardship

Remember that if you have an ES agreement that contains multi-year options, submit an ES revenue claim for every year of your agreement.

We will acknowledge receipt of ES claims differently this year. You may receive an email or a letter depending on the contact information we have for you. This is a change from previous years where we confirmed receipt by returning the slip from the front of your claim form.

Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) - Growth Programme

Information has been published on GOV.UK about arrangements for delivering existing RDPE Growth Programme projects and for applications under Round 3.

Woodlands legacy revenue claims

These include:

- Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS)
- Farm Woodland Payments (FWP)

Check that the form is fully completed, including the Income from Farming question. Email your completed form, and if necessary, attach a valid Agent Authority form (available on GOV.UK) to the Forestry Commission admin hub below. Contact the admin hub if you have problems meeting the claim deadline.

Bucks Horn Oak - adminhub.buckshornoak@forestrycommission.gov.uk this hub generally covers the east of the country.

Bullers Hill - adminhub.bullershill@forestrycommission.gov.uk this hub generally covers the west of the country.

British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS): requesting cattle passport amendments

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, temporary changes have been made to how cattle keepers request amendments to cattle passports.

Read about how to request amendments to cattle passports during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Search 'cattle-passports-temporary-changes-to-requesting-amendments' at www.gov.uk.

Report online or electronically

In line with government coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance, we have closed the majority of our offices and most of our staff are now working from home. This means it may take us longer to deal with your applications if you continue to send them in by post.

To help us to support you, use our CTS Online service to report births, movements and deaths. It is the quickest and safest way to contact us. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Email us at bcmsenquiries@rpa.gov.uk and we'll send you the information you need to register.

You can also use CTS Web services if you have a farm management software package that is compatible with BCMS. Or, use our 24 hour automated Self-Service Line on 0345 011 1212.

Farm visits and inspections

As part of our work, we undertake a range of farm visits and inspections. We are now starting a phased return to physical site visits following social distancing requirements and alternative inspection techniques.

Further advice and guidance is also available from Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

Contact us

Call us

Rural Payments Helpline: 03000 200 301

(Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm, except bank holidays) Updates to bank accounts – Monday and Thursday only

BCMS Helpline: 0345 050 1234

Welsh Helpline: 0345 050 3456

(Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm, except bank holidays)

Email us

ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk

bcmsenquiries@rpa.gov.uk

Postal addresses

Where there is no email option available, use the following addresses for anything urgent.

Countryside Stewardship customers

Rural Payments Agency
PO Box 324
Worksop
S95 1DF

Basic Payment Scheme customers and all RLE1 forms

Rural Payments Agency
PO box 352
Worksop
S80 9FG

Environmental Stewardship customers

You can find details of addresses on the Environmental Stewardship page.

BCMS customers

Rural Payments Agency
British Cattle Movement Service
Curwen Road
Workington
Cumbria
CA14 2DD

Be aware of fraud

In these challenging times, fraudsters will try to take advantage. We are aware of coronavirus (COVID-19) related scams from people claiming to be from other government departments, and we want to remind you to remain vigilant.

- We won't call you or send you emails or texts asking you to confirm your personal details or payment information.
- Never discuss your bank account details with someone you don't know.
- We won't ask you to make a payment over the phone.
- Delete any emails or texts you don't believe are genuine.
- Don't open any links unless from our main email addresses:

ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk

rpa@notifications.service.gov.uk

ruralpayments@rpa.emails.com

rdpenetwork@defra.gov.uk

- Be cautious about what information you share externally, particularly on social media.

If you suspect an attempted fraud or feel you have been the subject of fraud, you can contact:

- RPA's Fraud Referral Team on 0800 347 347 or FraudInConfidence@rpa.gov.uk
- Action Fraud (the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber-crime) on 0300 123 2040.