



Rural Payments Agency

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**20 July 2023**  
**Our ref: RFI 6625**

Dear [REDACTED],

### **Environmental Information Regulations – Information Request**

We refer to your request for information dated 21 June, which we have dealt with under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

You have requested the below information in relation to the Lump Sum Exit Scheme (LSES):

- *The number of applicants and some sociodemographic, farm-related, or geographical information about them;*
- *How much they were offered, who finally accepted the lump sum value, and whether they sold, transferred, gave up, etc., their lands.*

With regards to point one, as advised in our email of 5 July, we have conducted our searches on the number of applicants to the Scheme, the number of applicants offered a lump sum value, the size of the applicant's farm, and the region where applicants are based.

Please find some of the information you have requested in the attached Annex A which contains information on all applicants to the Scheme.

To confirm, the total number of applicants to the scheme is 2015. The number of applicants offered a lump sum value is 1990. All data is correct as of 13 July 2023.

You may notice that for a small number of rows of data, the 'value' or 'size of farm' cells are blank. This means that we do not hold the value in the system at this point in time, which may be due to a processing error or a timing issue due to the manner in which the data was collated.

To clarify, column C refers to the status of the LSES application. Further details and the order in which the application progresses can be found below:

1. Eligibility – Business checks after initial application received
2. Customer offer – Eligibility checks completed, and estimated offer given to customer

3. Under check controls – Processing complete but failed to batch due to outstanding Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)
4. Evidence – Entitlements and Evidence form checked, ready for entitlement checks
5. Ready to Pay – Processing complete but going through financial checks
6. Paid – Customer has been paid

All applicants after Stage 2 have proceeded with their application following receipt of their offer, however, as the application can be withdrawn at any time until the lump sum is paid then it is the 'paid' status that should be used to categorically determine if an applicant has accepted the lump sum offer.

With regards to your request for information on whether the applicants sold, transferred, or gave up land, we are unable to provide you with this information requested as it is currently incomplete.

This information is only obtained following the return of the applicant's Eligibility and Evidence form, which must be returned following the surrender of their land entitlements. As the deadline for surrendering their entitlements is not until 31 May 2024, the data will not be completed until this time.

In this instance the exception at regulation 12(4)(d) 'the request relates to material which is still in the course of completion, unfinished documents or incomplete data' of the EIRs applies.

As this is a qualified exemption, a public authority is required to conduct a public interest test to determine whether information should be disclosed or withheld.

In considering this, we have weighed up whether the public interest in maintaining the exception is greater than the public interest in providing what information we currently hold.

We have considered that, in line with Government Policy, RPA must look to promote transparency and accountability in its actions and workings, as there is legitimate public interest in these matters and also facilitate the accountability and transparency of public bodies for the decisions taken by them.

Whilst we accept that this request is of significance to you, we have concluded it is of lesser significance in terms of the public interest test, as the adverse impact of publishing incomplete or unfinished information would be misleading and could lead to the data being incorrectly interpreted with further questions being raised as a result.

Please note the Information Commissioner states that, 'The public interest means what is in the public interest, not what is of interest to the public'.

Therefore, we have concluded that the public interest would be greater served in withholding this information at this time.

Regulation 9 of the EIRs requires public authorities to provide advice and assistance to applicants where reasonable.

Although we are unable to disclose the information at this time, we may be able to consider disclosure of this information once the data has been completed after 31 May 2024. Therefore, if you were to make another request at that time, we will be able to consider your request again.

While we are unable to provide the requested data on this occasion, we can confirm that in order to receive the lump sum payment, applicants must do all of the following:

- transfer their agricultural land in England (but they can keep up to 5 hectares) or plant it with trees under a woodland creation scheme
- transfer grazing and pannage rights they have on common land in England, if they have any
- give up (surrender) their English BPS entitlements

You can find out more information regarding the requirements and ways in which applicants can transfer their land at the link below:

[How to apply for a lump sum payment to leave or retire from farming - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

We also attach Annex A below, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

### **What you need to do**

If you are not happy with the way we have handled your request, you can ask for an internal review. These requests should be submitted in writing within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original request. You should email your request for a review to [IRT@rpa.gov.uk](mailto:IRT@rpa.gov.uk)

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision by following the link to the Information Commissioner's website [here](#).

They can also be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted RPA's own complaints procedure.

### **If you need further information**

If you have any questions about this email, you can contact us by email [irt@rpa.gov.uk](mailto:irt@rpa.gov.uk).

You can find more information on how we handle personal data in our [Personal Information Charter](#) and [RPA Customer Privacy notices](#) on [GOV.UK](#)

Yours sincerely

**Information Rights Team**

Rural Payments Agency | Eden Bridge House | Lowther Street | Carlisle | CA3 8DX  
Tel: 03300 416502 | Email: [IRT@rpa.gov.uk](mailto:IRT@rpa.gov.uk)  
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