

East Midlands Policy Update

EAST MIDLANDS NFU Policy Update No 894 31 March.

THE WEEK IN BREXIT

That was a week that was in Brexit terms as the Article 50 watershed has come and gone. See the [NFU Vision for the future of farming](#). First up is our brief on a new domestic agricultural policy aimed at delivering for both farmers and the public. Further papers to follow. On Tuesday the coalition of food and farming trade bodies, NFU, Food and Drink Federation and British Retail Consortium wrote to ministers across Government outlining our [collective priorities](#). Following the publication yesterday of the Great Repeal Bill White Paper the UK's four farming unions have said that Brexit must be seen as an opportunity, not just to ensure continuity, but to deliver a regulatory framework suited to UK farmers. See NFU news on Brexit and the vision paper and what we are doing about it [via this link](#).

BPS 2016: BRIDGING PAYMENTS LATEST

The RPA have sent letter on Wednesday to all farmers who have not received a BPS 2016 payment (as of 20 March). They will be advised that they will be due to receive a bridging payment if are not issued with a full BPS payment by 31 March. Bridging payments will be issued from Monday 3 April onwards and the anticipation is the majority of these to be paid within the next two weeks. Bridging payments will be calculated at 75% of their BPS 2016 claim value on the day of calculation. Full BPS payments will also continue to be issued throughout this period therefore farmers have been advised to ignore the letter if they receive a full BPS payment. Bridging payments will be supported with a remittance advice which will show the value calculated and any deductions taken such as interception of a debt or an earlier Financial Support Payment – it will say 'bridging payment on the paperwork'. Full payments will be supported by a remittance advice and a claim statement. There is an NFU Q&A on bridging payments for those affected and this can be found [here](#). Bridging payments have been possible for those not yet paid due to persistent NFU lobbying, pushing both Government and the RPA.

NFU WIN NURSERIES RATING WIN

The NFU's policy team secured a big win on Thursday. Following an long-running engagement campaign, the Department for Communities and Local Government issued a Written Ministerial Statement confirming that the Government will amend the Local Government Finance Act 1988 'at the soonest opportunity' to ensure both agricultural land and buildings at plant nursery grounds are exempt from business rates. Well done to all those involved in this – a great example of the NFU delivering for members. [Read more here](#).

AI: WE'RE NOT IN THE CLEAR YET

The current AI restrictions are still in place and the poultry industry remains at high risk from avian influenza. Click [here](#) for more information on the regulations and to make sure you are complying. Not sure if you are in the prevention zone? View the Defra map [here](#).

HAVE YOU DONE YOUR 2017 BPS APPLICATION YET?

The clock is counting down to the 15 May 2017 deadline for your 2017 BPS application. Whether you do it online or by paper application please don't leave it to the last minute and risk late penalties or mistakes made in a rush because a problem crops up. If you need guidance then ring NFU CallFirst on 0370 845 8458. Have a look at NFU BPS experts blog [here](#) to get you started with a rundown of key points to get you started.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD DELAY COMPLEX DIGITAL TAX PLANS, UK FARMING UNIONS SAY

The UK's four farming unions are calling on Government to delay the new "Making Tax Digital" scheme for farm businesses, many of whom will find it almost impossible to access. Following a joint consultation response on the draft legislation, we fear that the scheduled implementation will be inaccessible for many farm businesses and difficult to

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implement properly. The complex scheme requires access to digital infrastructure that is not available in many rural areas, as 5% of the population does not have adequate access to broadband – many of those people are farmers.

LAMBING SURVEY AND SCHMALLENBERG IMPACT 2017

The University of Nottingham has created an SBV survey and are collaborating with the University of Liverpool to gather evidence on the impact of Schmallenberg on farms this year. Complete the survey [here](#).

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

Please complete the survey to help us build an evidence base on workforce issues and to gain insights into the current make up, future needs and risks to supply in the dairy and wider agricultural industry. [Read more.](#)

HOW CAN YOU HELP PROMOTE RED TRACTOR?

It is really easy! Promotional kit from Red Tractor is now available and any farmer who is assured can do their bit to promote that fact. Trailer stickers, postcards, farmgate signs, pens and notepads are available at <http://bit.ly/1Tv7WVY>. So please make sure your farm gates are badged, farm office branded, and vehicles are stickered up with this kit. As Brexit develops the RT will have a role to play in British and promoting that fact.

OPEN YOUR GATES OPEN FARM SUNDAY 2017

Demonstrate the dedication, skills, technology and passion that go into producing great food and managing the countryside. Open your gates for LEAF Open Farm Sunday on 11 June and proudly show the public all that you achieve and the breadth of goods and services you deliver. [Read more here.](#)

SILAGE, SLURRY, AND AGRICULTURAL FUEL OIL STORAGE (SSAFO) REGULATIONS

The SSAFO Regulations require farmers to install and maintain good quality facilities for storing silage, slurry, and agricultural fuel oil to prevent unnecessary pollution. Farmers will achieve this by designing and building to the standards in the Regulations. These materials can be serious pollutants if they are not handled or contained properly. The Environment Agency assess new, significantly enlarged, and significantly altered facilities for compliance with the regulations, and their ongoing maintenance to remain fit for purpose. Farmers have to notify the EA about such facilities at least 14 days before they start any construction, giving the EA time to confirm their proposals are to the required standard. Fact sheets providing further guidance can be found [here](#).

AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES

The latest news on agri-environment schemes including feedback from the EFRA inquiry on the performance of RPA and whether Countryside Stewardship is fit for purpose, CS 2017 agreement offers, the Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant Scheme and agri-environment scheme payments is here [online](#)

BRITISH BEEF WEEK

Kicking off on St George's Day, 23 April, Great British Beef Week is a celebration of our fantastic beef industry, promoting Red Tractor assured British beef. [Read more.](#)

EVENTS

[Please click here](#) to view our events page.

- Nottinghamshire Agricultural Charities Luncheon – Newark – **2 APRIL**

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- AHDB Strategic Dairy Farm Launch – Leicester – **5 APRIL**
- Rogation Sunday – Southwell Minster – **21 MAY**
- Farming Fit For Food Nuffield Conference – Nottingham – **8 JUNE**

ARLA MEMBER MEETINGS

Arla meetings are taking place across the country. As these are election meetings where new area representatives will be chosen they are Arla member only. They also represent an opportunity for Arla suppliers to raise issues of concern. Meetings in or close to East Midlands are as follows:

- 5 April, 7:30pm, The Gate Hangs Well, Fosse Way, Syston LE7 1NH
- 4 April, 7:30pm, Bentley Brook Inn, Fenny Bentley, Ashbourne DE6 1LF

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