

# Land Business Update

Week commencing 12 February 2018

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## Planning

### **Consultation this spring on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework**

The Department for Housing, Communities & Local Government is going to consult on how to implement changes to the NPPF due to announcements made in the housing White Paper and the Budget announcements. A revised NPPF could be published this summer. Three former Tory ministers, including ex-planning minister Nick Boles, have said that the government needs to be bolder to solve the housing crisis by allowing higher buildings to be developed. For more information, please contact [John McLarty](#).

### **Housing Infrastructure Fund grants to improve infrastructure to enable new housing**

The Government recently announced grants totalling £866m under the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), which is a capital grant programme of up to £5 billion available until 2021 to help boost housing delivery. The grants cover 133 infrastructure projects across the country, including £5.7 million for a new link road and remediation works at Chelmer Waterside in Chelmsford, where Strutt & Parker work for Taylor Wimpey. Where the viability of schemes depends on key infrastructure works, our advice is that your planning advisers should work with the local authorities concerned on whether to bid for this fund.

## Farming

### **40% grant on farm equipment – closes 14 March – England only**

This new grant, which has just opened, provides around 40% funding to purchase equipment to improve farm productivity. There is a list of equipment that can be funded under the scheme, which includes precision farming (GPS, yield mapping, variable rate controllers, grain stirrers) and livestock equipment (EID readers, pasture plate measures). It is a new type of application process – online, simple and short – and there will be something of use to every farm on the list. Our advice is to review the scheme (and apply) as soon as possible. Please call [Jason Cantrill](#) for further information.

### **European Commission to produce protein plan by the end of the year**

The aim of the plan will be to reduce Europe's dependence on imported protein – also a key issue for the UK post-Brexit. A consultation on the plan is likely to include how protein production could be supported by policy, research initiatives and market information.

### **UK and European dairy industry petition Barnier for business to carry on as usual**

The European Dairy Association and Dairy UK have made the case to the EU's chief Brexit negotiator for continuing free trade in milk and dairy products – and for any changes in standards to be applied in both the UK and EU. They particularly want to avoid 'burdensome non-tariff administrative measures'.

### **Almost 100 groups now operating under Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund**

The Facilitation Fund offers payments to groups of farmers who work together to improve biodiversity, historic environment and water quality over a landscape or catchment scale. The reason for the funding is that these services – such as biodiversity and water management – are much more effective if delivered at a large scale, as that is the scale they naturally work at. The 98 groups manage 450,000 hectares between them. Please contact your local S&P farming team to discuss the Facilitation Fund or Countryside Stewardship.

**Brexit: Food prices and supply likely to rise after Brexit**

The British Retail Consortium, NFU and Food and Drink Federation have all said that one of the first groups to be affected by the consequences of Brexit will be food shoppers. They were giving evidence to the House of Lords' EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee. Summing up, Lord Teverson said that there were questions as to 'whether the UK will be able to maintain the food standards and quality that consumers want, and if we can actually get the food through the ports with all the new customs facilities which will be in place.'

**Property****Scotland: Modern list of improvements to agricultural holdings**

The Tenant Farming Commissioner has given Scottish Ministers statutory recommendations for a modern list of agricultural holdings improvements, with relevance to claiming compensation on termination of a tenancy. They include, among others, energy installations, soil improvers, a wider definition of sewage disposal and recognition of improvements to pasture as well as arable land. It notes that diversification projects are still outwith agricultural holdings legislation but this may be reviewed in future. The timeframe is unconfirmed but the changes are unlikely to be retrospective. Please contact [Alex Jameson](#) for further details.

**Rural economy****Islands (Scotland) Bill passes first stage at Holyrood**

The Bill will require policies to be 'island proofed', rather like 'rural proofing' in England, to ensure that their potential effects on islands have been fully and formally considered. The Bill, if passed, would also require a national islands plan to be produced each year.

**Increased funding for local government in rural areas**

The Government has increased the amount of funding in the local government finance settlement by £16m, taking the total funding for the Rural Services Delivery Grant to £81m, its highest ever level. The increase has been welcomed by the Rural Services Network, which campaigns for a fairer settlement for rural areas that recognises the higher costs of providing services in sparse rural areas. A new 'Needs Formula' is being developed which it is hoped better recognises the needs of rural areas; it will be implemented in 2020-21.

**Telecoms and broadband****Government hits target of superfast broadband to 95% of UK population**

While the progress is very positive and should be welcomed, there are still many rural areas that do not have fast or reliable broadband, which is holding back business and family life. The focus must now be on ensuring that the Government delivers its legal commitment of a minimum 10Mbps broadband speed for every household by 2020, and then ensuring that, over time, the minimum speed commitment is increased to stay fit for purpose.