

Press release: Bridging payments delivered to 3,200 farmers

More than 96% of farmers in England signed up to the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) have now received their full payments and the RPA is working to make the remaining 4% of payments which require more complex processing and therefore take longer to complete.

Over 18,000 2018 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) applications have already been submitted since the application window opened in March. A record 90% of the applications made so far have been online, as farmers continue to make the switch from paper forms, with over 16,500 online entitlements so far.

RPA Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

We have made solid progress in delivering payments to farmers this year, with more than 96% now paid, and I am pleased so many of this final 4% have now received their bridging payments.

As always, there is more to do, and the RPA will continue working to make the final remaining payments. But now is also the time to get online to make sure your application for 2018 is in before the deadline closes in May.

Farming Minister George Eustice announced in January the commitment to provide a bridging payment to any farmer not paid by the end of March and highlighted how the burden of EU rules continues to be a barrier to processing some of the remaining claims. These bridging payments are worth 75% of their full allocated amounts.

The RPA is encouraging farmers to apply online now, to ensure that their application is submitted before the deadline of 15 May 2018. Applying online means farmers and agents can quickly check and update existing personal and business details, as well as view and transfer land and entitlements.

Throughout the application process, help and support is available through our online guidance, 'How to' videos and by telephone.

Online and paper applications

Anyone who applied online for the Basic Payment Scheme in 2017 has been emailed all they need to apply online for BPS in 2018. Those who did not apply online in 2017 and did not use an agent have been sent a paper form and guidance on how to apply online.

Support available from the RPA

Farmers and anyone helping them with their claim can find step-by-step guides

on transferring land, transferring entitlements and a general overview of how to apply online in useful 'How to' videos. Further guidance and scheme rules can be found on GOV.UK. On-screen help is also available, going through the application process screen by screen. A copy of this on-screen guide is also available for download or print.

The application deadline for BPS 2017 is midnight on 15 May 2018. Late applications will be accepted until 9 June but will incur a penalty. More information on how to claim or amend applications in the penalty claim period can be found in the Key Dates section of the 2018 guidance.

Mapping queries

This is the first year that hedges are shown in online digital maps. For those that want to use hedges as part of their application it's important that they read our guidance on 'How to check and change your hedge information'. This guidance explains how to check the information we hold about hedges, whether applicants need to tell us about changes and what to do if changes do need to be made.

Where an RLE1 form is necessary as part of a BPS 2018 application, farmers should submit their main application first and on time (by 15 May 2018). They can then submit any queries and send the RLE1 form to the RPA with the sketch map before 6 July 2018. This is to reduce the burden on applicants and allow them more time to complete the extra information required.

Press release: New team to help Commonwealth citizens confirm their status in the UK

The new dedicated team will work across government to help individuals identify and gather evidence to confirm their existing right to be in the UK. The team will include a dedicated contact point and aim to resolve cases within 2 weeks once the evidence has been put together. In addition, no one affected will be charged for the documentation which proves their right to be here.

The package of measures is being introduced to support individuals, who have resided in the UK for an extended period of time, and encourage them to come forward and regularise their stay. It will help guide individuals through the process and use data from across government to help build a picture that will evidence a person's right to be here.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

This is about individuals, people who have built their lives here in the UK and contributed so much to our society. I don't want them to feel unwelcome or to be in any doubt about their right to remain here. There is absolutely no question about their right to remain and I am very sorry for any confusion or anxiety felt.

The vast majority will already have documentation that proves their right to be here. For those that don't I am announcing a new dedicated team that will be set up to help these people with getting the documentation they need and do it quickly.

We've also set up a webpage and have been speaking to charities, community groups and High Commissioners about providing advice and reassurance to those affected and we will set up a dedicated contact point to ensure this is resolved as soon as possible.

The new team will work with HM Revenue and Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and other relevant bodies to help people evidence their right to be here.

The Home Office has also published a [new web page](#) which provides information and guidance for former Commonwealth citizens.

It gives examples of the type of evidence that can be provided to support applications including exam certificates, employment records, your National Insurance number, birth and marriage certificates or bills and letters.

[Press release: UK joins International Solar Alliance to help provide over 1 billion of the world's poorest people with clean, affordable energy](#)

The UK is joining the Indian-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) to give over 1 billion of the world's poorest people access to cheap, clean, renewable energy, the International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has announced today (Monday 16 April) ahead of the Indian Prime Minister's state visit later this week.

Narendra Modi's flagship climate treaty has already brought together more than 60 countries who have pledged to increase solar power that will ensure homes remain lit, children can be educated in schools, health facilities can provide life-saving treatment, and businesses have access to vital mobile and

internet services.

At an event held at the London Stock Exchange as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM), the UK cemented its membership to the ISA, which is aiming to raise \$1 trillion of private and public finance to provide affordable and sustainable energy for all by 2030.

The International Development Secretary has championed the UK's world-leading innovation and expertise – including from the City of London, the leading global centre for green investment finance – that will enable the ISA to deliver more effective programmes and help more of the world's most vulnerable people.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt said:

The signing of this treaty is a momentous occasion for the UK, and demonstrates our continued commitment to providing the very best of British expertise to the renewable energy sector. With the UK joining the International Solar Alliance, the lives of almost a billion of the world's poorest people, across the Commonwealth and beyond, will be changed for the better.

Partnering with like-minded countries and businesses who share the UK's commitment to delivering clean, affordable energy will help end poverty while also delivering benefits for the UK by opening up business opportunities for UK renewable energy and green finance companies.

Without India's leadership, the Alliance would not have come so far and so fast. By increasing access to solar energy, millions more babies will now be delivered safely, millions of farmers will be able to grow more crops and better support their families, and millions more children can be better educated.

The UK will support the ISA to develop solar water pumping projects, where farmers can use cheaper solar power – rather than diesel pumps – to water their crops. This will build on the success of similar initiatives in Uganda and Bangladesh where farmers are already growing higher value vegetable crops and increasing their incomes.

UK expertise will also help increase the number of 'mini grids' supplying power to remote areas that cannot be reached by the main electricity grid. These energy sources are a life-line for rural communities, helping to power business and homes, making sure the poorest people no matter where they live can access clean, reliable and affordable energy quickly to lift themselves out of poverty.

This new collaboration means the ISA will be able to make solar power cheaper by helping countries join forces to procure solar energy systems. Currently twelve ISA countries, including Commonwealth countries Bangladesh and Malawi want to purchase over 720,000 solar pumps through ISA. The joint purchase

will see a significant reduction in solar pump costs for each of the participating countries and up to five million people in developing countries will benefit from this collective purchase.

Notes to Editors:

Traditional financial aid to India ended in 2015. The UK now provides the country with world-leading expertise and private investment which boost prosperity, create jobs and open up markets, while generating a return for the UK at the same time. This is firmly in our interests.

The UK is providing technical expertise and private sector investments to support India's development in areas where the UK has globally recognised expertise and commercial capability.

The International Solar Alliance aims to raise \$1,000 billion to deliver clean and affordable energy to almost a billion people who currently lack access.

The UK will be the 62nd country to join the ISA. Others included Australia, Bangladesh, Tuvalu, Benin, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Vanuatu, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and France.

The UK will provide the best of British expertise and advice to help the effective delivery of the Indian-led initiative. The UK will only provide expertise to the ISA, there will be no monetary contributions.

UK expertise will enable UK, NGO's, researchers and businesses to collaborate with ISA partners to generate innovation and investments that will help meet the ISA's target to provide affordable sustainable energy for all by 2030.

The UK is supporting the ISA through existing initiatives and partnerships that will open up new solar markets for UK companies. This will include sharing UK experiences that supported the UK solar market to become viable and as a result no longer need taxpayers' support.

A number of countries DFID works in have already signed up to join the ISA and will benefit from the additional expertise that the UK is providing. Countries include: DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra-Leone, Uganda, Yemen, Rwanda, Nigeria, Somalia and Tanzania.

[Press release: PM calls with Netanyahu, Juncker and Tajani: 14-15](#)

April 2018

PM calls with Netanyahu, Juncker and Tajani: 14-15 April 2018 – GOV.UK

Prime Minister Theresa May had separate phone calls with Benjamin Netanyahu, Jean-Claude Juncker and Antonio Tajani.



A Downing Street spokesperson said:

Over the weekend the Prime Minister had separate phone calls with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and European Parliament President Antonio Tajani. The Prime Minister updated the leaders on the successful strikes against the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons sites early on Saturday by the UK, France and the United States.

The Prime Minister explained that the action was limited, carefully targeted, and designed to alleviate humanitarian suffering by degrading the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons capability and deterring their future use.

The leaders agreed with the Prime Minister on the importance of restoring the international norm that the use of chemical weapons is never acceptable.

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Thank you for your feedback