

Changes to the Basic Payment Scheme in the New Forest

Press release

The results of the public consultation on the operation of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) on the New Forest common have now been published.



After careful consideration of the responses, the Rural Payments Agency is changing the way BPS payments are allocated to New Forest commoners.

At present, New Forest commoners can apply for BPS and be allocated a nominal share of the Forest's eligible agricultural area. The allocated area is based on the number of marking fees they paid for animals turned out to graze in the previous year. Marking fees are a fee that commoners must pay to the Verderers (a body which regulates and protects the interests of the New Forest commoners) in order to have their animals marked before being turned out to graze in the forest, so they can be identified and traced back to the keeper in the case of need.

This method has recently been challenged as having the effect of encouraging commoners to keep more animals in order to be paid more subsidies, and therefore impacting the environment.

The RPA is now going to allocate to each commoner who has claimed BPS in the New Forest a reference amount based on the maximum number of marking fees they declared in any year between 2015 and 2020. This will be taken as an expression of their grazing rights and used annually to perform the area allocation calculation for BPS, entirely divorced from the number of animals each commoner chooses to turn out to graze in the New Forest that year. There will also no longer be a requirement for New Forest commoners to provide copies of Marking Fee receipts to support their BPS claims.

This option was supported by over 87% of respondents to the RPA's consultation.

The RPA is writing directly to all commoners who claim BPS in the New Forest

and [the consultation response is published on GOV.UK](#).

New farmers in the New Forest who started commoning in 2020 and won't yet have declared any marking fees to the RPA, may still be able to claim BPS in 2021. The updated BPS 2021 guidance provides further information on completing the 2021 application form in these circumstances.

The Government has separately publicised its plans to change the way all farmers are paid and in November published the ['Path to Sustainable Farming'](#). One of the key changes is the reduction in Direct Payments, which commences this year. The document also includes a wide-range of support measures that will help farmers adapt to a new agricultural system.

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