

Press release: New interim Chief Executive announced for the Rural Payments Agency

Paul Caldwell has been announced as the incoming Interim Chief Executive of the Rural Payments Agency following the news that Chief Executive Mark Grimshaw has decided to stand down after more than six years.

Paul Caldwell, who is the Basic Payment Scheme Operational Delivery Director has held a number of senior positions within the RPA since 2001 including becoming the Operations Director in 2010.

Environment Secretary, Andrea Leadsom said:

In the six months that I have worked with Mark I have been grateful for his clear commitment to resolving outstanding BPS issues. Both he and Paul Caldwell have worked hard to achieve a strong recovery from the challenges of the first year of this new system.

The agency remains fully focussed on paying all remaining eligible claims as quickly as possible including those outstanding from 2015.

Clare Moriarty, Defra Permanent Secretary, said:

Mark Grimshaw has achieved a huge amount at the Rural Payments Agency and helped deliver substantial improvements in performance for the benefit of our farmers and rural communities.

Under Mark's leadership, the RPA has come through a significant transformation including the challenge of introducing the Rural Payments online service and the new Basic Payment Scheme.

Paul will ensure that the focus continues to be on delivering remaining payments to all eligible claimants as soon as possible. The RPA has a very experienced leadership team in place who will continue to lead the Agency after Mark's departure and provide continuity for everyone who uses the Agency's services.

Mark Grimshaw, Chief Executive of the RPA, said:

It has been a great privilege to have led the RPA and its exceptional people through some major changes.

Together we created and delivered an ambitious Five Year plan, getting the Agency in the great shape it is today. After six years at the helm I have decided now is the time to stand down and hand over the reins to a new leader to take the organisation through the next phase of its development as part of the Defra Group.

Paul Caldwell, Interim Chief Executive of the RPA, said:

I am proud to have the opportunity to lead the Agency and recognise how important our work is to support our world-leading food and farming industry.

That is why our priority is to ensure that remaining BPS payments are made to all eligible farmers as soon as possible and that we continue to deliver the other 40-plus schemes and services we administer.

Notes

1. Paul Caldwell has been with the Rural Payments Agency since 2001. Paul has worked in operations, communications and strategy, and was made Operations Director in 2010. He was appointed in late 2016 as the BPS Operational Delivery Director.
2. Paul was previously manager at the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) and occupied various roles within the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now Defra).

Press release: Digital tax revolution moves a step closer

Following extensive consultation, with more than 3,000 responses over the last eight months, HMRC has issued in-depth details on how digitising the tax system through its flagship Making Tax Digital project will help millions of businesses to get their tax bills right first time, without the need for an annual tax return.

Alongside draft legislation, HMRC has also published its responses to the six consultation documents issued in August 2016. After listening to the concerns of businesses and agents, HMRC can now confirm that under Making Tax Digital:

- businesses will now be able to continue to use spreadsheets to record receipts and expenditure, which they can then link to software to automatically generate and send their updates to HMRC – this was requested by a wide range of stakeholders, particularly small businesses and the Treasury Select Committee
- free software will be available to the majority of the smallest businesses
- businesses that cannot go digital will not be required to do so
- all self-employed businesses and landlords with a turnover under £10,000 a year will not have to keep their records digitally or make quarterly updates, but can do so if they wish
- the option to account for income and expenditure on a simple ‘cash in, cash out’ basis will be extended, helping an extra 2.5 million self-employed businesses and unincorporated landlords
- charities will not have to keep their records digitally or make quarterly updates
- customers will have at least 12 months to become familiar with the changes before any late submission penalties will be applied; following feedback from respondents, HMRC will also consult again in the spring on a new penalty model
- HMRC will pilot these digital systems with hundreds of thousands of businesses before rolling them out to ensure the software is user friendly, and to give businesses and landlords time to prepare and adapt

HMRC also confirmed that the government will need to consider further issues, such as the initial exemption threshold and deferring the changes for some small businesses alongside their cost, with final decisions to be made before legislation is introduced later this year.

During the consultation period, HMRC ran a series of public events across the country and online to hear views direct from businesses and agents. It also ran a short online survey for small businesses on some of the key questions from the consultations, which received over 1,200 responses.

Under HMRC’s plans to move recording and paying your tax online, most businesses, self-employed people and landlords will be able to keep track of their tax affairs digitally and update HMRC quarterly by 2020. This is part of the government’s commitment to make the annual tax return a thing of the past for millions of people and businesses.

With millions of businesses already banking, paying bills, shopping and interacting online, integrating tax with the day-to-day running of a business is a natural next step.

This will help businesses steer clear of errors – reducing the £8 billion a year cost to the public purse, get their tax bills right first time, and give them a clearer view of their tax position as they go through the year. Reducing the amount of avoidable errors will also reduce the cost, uncertainty and worry that businesses face when HMRC is forced to investigate them.

Director General, Customer Strategy & Tax Design, HMRC, Jim Harra said:

We know that the majority of businesses want to get their tax right first time, but the latest tax gap figures show that too many find this hard, with more than £8 billion a year lost in tax as a result of avoidable taxpayer error by small businesses.

Making Tax Digital will help businesses to get their tax right first time; it will help reduce the likelihood of errors, lower the chance of unwelcome compliance checks and give them greater certainty that they are getting things right.

There were more than 3,000 responses to the consultations and I'd like to thank everyone for their time and effort. We are pleased that there was a broad welcome for the principle of Making Tax Digital and HMRC developing a transparent and accessible tax system fit for the digital age. The appetite for digital services is growing and traditional paper-based processes make no sense in the 21st century where the vast majority use digital services.

HMRC will continue to work closely with stakeholders, including small businesses and agents, to ensure their views are reflected in the development of making tax digital.

News story: Bass industry guidance for 2017

From:

First published:

31 January 2017

Part of:

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is pleased to be able to publish the bass industry guidance for 2017.

The [bass fishing guidance](#) covers commercial bass fishing, track records, fishing gears that may be used and catch limits.

It also provides further information on both the pelagic and demersal landing obligations whilst providing information on recreational fishing for bass.

Fishermen are advised to [read the full guidance](#) to understand their obligations and the various requirements in respect of fishing for bass.

News story: Competition to uncover space entrepreneurs of tomorrow

From:

First published:

31 January 2017

Young people have the chance to win £10,000 in a competition to come up with ideas on how to use satellite data to improve life on Earth.

The SatelLife Challenge, run by the UK Space Agency, is looking for inspirational ideas from those aged 11 to 22, linking satellite and space data and its application to everyday life.

Examples could include using satellite data to tackle loneliness amongst elderly people, looking at changes to green spaces in your town and identifying exercise routes based on traffic flows.

The competition, which aims to support the development of science, data handling and technological skills, is split into three age groups, offering five prizes of £5,000 for each age category with an overall winner receiving £10,000. The judging panel will be made up of experts including representatives from the UK Space Agency, the European Space Agency, the Satellite Applications Catapult in Harwell and industry.

The winners from each category will be able to pitch their idea to a panel of 'dragons' from the space sector who will offer prizes, which could include mentoring, work experience and even the development of the idea into reality.

The best entries will also be invited to present their idea at the UK Space Conference – the most influential event for space in the UK – held in Manchester from 30 May to 1 June, 2017.

Documents on how to apply, judging criteria and T&C's are listed below.

PDF, 103KB, 3 pages

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[Green Party leaders ask Theresa May: Did you know about the Muslim ban?](#)



31 January 2017

*** Jonathan Bartley, co-leader: May's inaction a betrayal of Britain and appeasement of a racist, bigoted President**

The leaders of the Green Party have written to Theresa May [1] to ask her if knew about President Trump's Muslim ban before it was announced.

The call follows reports that the Prime Minister was told about the ban during her visit to the United States. [2]

The letter from Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas states that, with more than 1.5 million people signing a petition [3] to cancel Trump's state visit because of the ban, the public have the right to know how much May was told

about the policy in advance.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"News that the Prime Minister already knew about President Trump's Muslim ban is deeply disturbing and will send a chill down the spine of all who believe in a just and compassionate world.

"This week more than 1.5 million British people made it clear they want to live in a country that shows leadership and has a clear resolve to create a world where refugees are welcomed and supported. Donald Trump's action stands in complete opposition to this.

"Theresa May must answer questions on how much she knew and what she did to challenge such a vile policy.

"If the Prime Minister knew about the Muslim ban in advance, and failed to challenge it, it would be not just a betrayal of the open, tolerant and welcoming country that Britain should be, but amount to appeasement of a racist, bigoted President."

Notes:

1. Dear Prime Minister,

We are concerned by reports you were told about President Trump's plans to ban the residents of seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States in advance of the policy announcement.

With more than 1.5 million people signing a petition calling on you to cancel the state visit invitation extended to the US President, it's clear that there is a huge public anger. The country has a right to know how much you were told about the ban, and what you said to the President about it.

Were you told about the ban at the meeting with President Trump?

If so, what exactly were you told, and when.

And crucially, what did you say in response?

Yesterday we also learnt that the President may be intending to pull the US out of the Paris Agreement – an announcement which came just days after you left the US. Such a move would be a bitter blow to Britain's stated intent to work with other countries to tackle climate change, possibly the greatest threat that our country faces.

Did you talk to the President about climate change?

What did you say, and what was his response?

If you did not raise climate change with him, then why?

The British people deserve to be told the truth. We trust you will answer these pertinent questions as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader

Caroline Lucas, Green Party co-leader

1. <https://www.channel4.com/news/by/gary-gibbon/blogs/theresa-may-told-a-us-refugee-ban-was-coming>
2. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/171928>

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