

Rural Payments Agency update – April 2022

Welcome to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) April 2022 update. RPA recognises that this is a really challenging time for many rural businesses and we would like to share some updates with you and reflect on what has been achieved. Our updates include:

- the Sustainable Farming Incentive in 2022
- Landscape Recovery and Local Nature Recovery
- the Lump Sum Exit scheme

We have published our 5 Year Strategy which sets out our main objectives in delivering agricultural transition, meeting both customer expectations and policy needs, delivering environmental outcomes through a quality service and being an exemplar of the Civil Service's Operational Delivery Profession working in practice.

We continued to deliver a range of services to rural businesses and developed and implemented new schemes and services. We launched the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) pilot with over 2,500 expressions of interest and more than 900 applicants.

RPA has continued to issue payments to farming and rural businesses through schemes such as the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES). Over 100,000 eligible 2021 claims worth £1.8bn were paid – 92% by the end of December (2020: 89.5%). This represented 98.3% of BPS, 62.2% of CS revenue claims, and 64.6% of ES eligible claims.

We also received over 5,600 CS Capital grant claims worth £66.75m, which had helped to establish and maintain woodland and hedges, as well as much more.

We introduced a new approach for rural business that were due more than one 2021 scheme payment (combinations of BPS, CS, and ES). We wanted rural businesses to receive at least one payment in December, and over 98% did.

Inflation, it's personal

News story

In our latest blog we look at the reasons behind the cost of living increases.



In '[Inflation, it's personal](#)' GAD actuary Christophor Ward examines the background to our current period of high inflation of prices for goods and services.

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[New ACCIA application portal open for registration](#)

News story

You can now register for an account on the new ACCIA application portal to apply for an award in the 2022 round.



If you plan to apply for an award in the 2022 ACCIA round you will need to [register on the new ACCIA application portal](#), even if you have previously applied for an award.

At this stage, the portal is only accepting applications for new awards and will not show records of previous awards, as these data will be migrated to the portal later.

During the registration process you will be sent an email. If you do not receive this email, please check your junk folder. You may need to ensure that your email service trusts future messages from the address, so that you don't miss any important updates.

There is a different process if you are registering as an employer or nominating organisation. We will be emailing separately with details of how to do this. Please do not use the link above as this will only allow you to access the applicant portal.

Any queries about the application portal or the awards in general should be sent to accia@dhsc.gov.uk.

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National Highways awards major A417 contract to Kier

The contract award follows a competitive procurement process through National Highways' Regional Delivery Partnership framework.

Kier and National Highways completed a budget setting process in the early part of this year (2022). Kier's team will include Volker, Arup, Tony Gee and RPS to prepare for and construct the 3.4-mile route.

The Planning Inspectorate is examining our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, which is needed for all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects prior to construction starting.

Following the examination's conclusion in May, the Planning Inspectorate will send its recommendation of a decision to the Secretary of State for Transport in the summer, with a decision on the route expected by the Secretary of State in the autumn.

Michael Goddard, Project Director for the A417, said:

We are delighted to be working with Kier to move forward this vital scheme.

Kier has an extensive track record working with National Highways and delivering large scale infrastructure projects, so we are confident they will deliver a scheme that meets our landscape-led vision. We will work together to deliver a project that is sympathetic with the special character of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will support economic growth,

improve traffic flows at peak times and make the road safer.

Paul Baker, Kier Highways project director, said:

Delivering highways infrastructure which is vital to the UK is Kier Highways' purpose and we are proud to be doing this through the delivery of the A417 contract. We look forward to working with National Highways and our supply chain partners to deliver this vitally important infrastructure project to improve the connectivity of the strategic road network.

We are a national business with a local focus and throughout the duration of the project, we will support the local community through employment opportunities and social value initiatives that leave a positive legacy.

Councillor Mark Hawthorne, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, added:

I'm really pleased we've reached this key stage of this vital project. After such a long wait, it really feels like the solution for the 'Missing Link' is much closer to becoming a reality.

Completion will bring improved safety and air quality along with more reliable journey times leading to huge benefits for our county's economy as well as creating new habitats and habitat connections for native wildlife.

The A417/A419 provides an important route between Gloucester and Swindon that helps connect the Midlands/North to the South of England. It's an alternative to the M5/M4 route via Bristol.

The Missing Link itself is a three-mile stretch of single-lane carriageway on the A417 between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire.

The Missing Link causes many problems for road users and those who live or work in the area. Congestion can be frequent and unpredictable, so some motorists divert onto local roads to avoid tailbacks.

This causes difficulties for neighbouring communities and local roads were not built to accommodate so much traffic. Poor visibility and other factors also mean that accidents, many of which are serious, occur frequently along this section of road.

Our aim is to improve this section of the A417 with a scheme that includes:

- 4 miles of new dual carriageway connecting the existing A417 Brockworth bypass with the existing A417 dual carriageway south of Cowley

- the section to the west of the existing Air Balloon roundabout would follow the existing A417 corridor. However, the section to the south and east of the Air Balloon roundabout would be offline, away from the existing road corridor
- a new junction at Shab Hill, providing a link from the A417 to the A436 towards Oxford and into Birdlip
- a new junction would be included near Cowley, replacing the existing Cowley roundabout
- the existing A417 between the Air Balloon roundabout and the Cowley roundabout would be repurposed. We would convert some lengths of this existing road into a route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, while retaining other sections to maintain local access for residents.

Similarly, supporting the landscape vision of the scheme, we continue to work with our stakeholders to maximise the benefits. We will be creating new habitats and habitat connections for native wildlife including bats, bees, badgers and more to flourish.

To ensure this, we will deliver:

- 2 miles of dry-stone walls
- 8 miles of hedgerow
- 7ha of native woodland
- 5ha of scrub
- 15ha of native grassland
- 72ha of calcareous grassland
- helping us be at one with nature

Further information on upgrading the A417 can be found at on the [A417 web page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Ukraine: UK Government to re-open British Embassy in Kyiv](#)

Press release

The British Embassy will re-open in Kyiv next week after its temporary closure.



The UK Government will shortly re-open the British Embassy in Ukraine's capital city, Kyiv.

The Embassy was forced to temporarily close due to Russia's full-scale and illegal invasion. A contingent of British staff remained in western Ukraine to provide humanitarian and other support.

The Prime Minister has today confirmed the Embassy is set to re-open next week, dependent on the security situation.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The extraordinary fortitude and success of President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people in resisting Russian forces, means we will shortly be re-opening our British Embassy in Kyiv.

I want to pay tribute to the bravery and resilience of the Embassy team and their work throughout this period.

The British Embassy premises are currently being made secure before staff return, starting with the UK ambassador Melinda Simmons.

The UK continues to advise against all travel to Ukraine.

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