

Press release: RPA confirms 2018 BPS and CS bridging payments

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has confirmed today that farmers will start receiving bridging payments from Friday 12 April. This will cover Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) 2018 claims and Countryside Stewardship (CS) 2018 advance payments.

While more than 99% of BPS 2018 claims have now been processed, a significant improvement on previous years, today's announcement means that remaining eligible claimants will receive a payment for 75% of the estimated value of their claim. This will help with farm business cash flow while the remaining amount on their claim is processed.

Bridging payments will also cover unpaid 2018 Countryside Stewardship advance payments. More than 95% of these payments have been made to farmers who are delivering important environmental work.

The RPA has written directly to farmers to provide an update on bridging payments and on how these payments will be calculated. All eligible BPS claimants and CS 2018 advance claimants will start receiving bridging payments from 12 April.

RPA Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

We have worked hard to improve our performance on the Basic Payment Scheme, and this year just a small number of farmers will be receiving bridging payments. We are also committed to driving up performance on the CS and ES schemes since taking those on in October last year.

Our focus remains on processing the remaining claims and paying farmers as quickly as possible. I would like to thank all those involved for their continued efforts on this.

A bridging payment is an interest-free loan to customers ahead of their full payment, providing them with 75% of the current estimated value of their claim. Once the full payment has been processed and made, the amount already issued through a bridging payment will be held back.

This year the RPA has so far issued 98% of CS 2019 Mid Tier agreements and 95% of CS 2019 Higher Tier agreements. Farmers and land managers are reminded to sign and return these agreements, and to submit their BPS 2019 applications as early as possible. The claim window for BPS, CS and ES schemes closes on 15 May 2019.

News story: Updated announcement from Dr Gillian Fairfield, DBS Chairman

Dr Gillian Fairfield, Chairman of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), made the following announcement earlier this week:

“Adele Downey, DBS Chief Executive since 2016, will shortly be retiring. I am pleased to announce that Paul Whiting, Chief Finance Officer, will take on the role as the acting Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of DBS from 1 May 2019. Recruitment for a substantive Chief Executive is underway.

I am also very happy to announce the appointment of Samantha Durrant and Mary Cunneen as Non-Executive Directors of the DBS Board, from 1 April 2019. A third interim Non-Executive is soon to be announced. I look forward to working with all our new Board members.”

As a follow-up to this, a third interim Non-Executive Director has now been appointed:

“I am very happy to announce the appointment of David Banks as an interim Non-Executive Director of the DBS Board, from 8 April 2019. I look forward to welcoming and working with David.”

More information regarding our Non-Executive Directors and Board Members can be found in the Management section of our [GOV.UK home page](#).

News story: UK's most advanced jets deploy overseas for the first time

Britain's new cutting-edge F-35B aircraft will depart their home station of RAF Marham in Norfolk later this year for Cyprus in their first overseas deployment.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

These formidable fighters are a national statement of our intent to protect ourselves and our allies from intensifying threats across the world.

This deployment marks an important milestone in this game-changing

aircraft's journey to becoming fully operational.

Owned and operated by the RAF, the Lightning Force is jointly manned by both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. This deployment will allow personnel from both services to gain vital experience in maintaining and flying the aircraft in an unfamiliar environment.

The deployment will also train and test all aspects of moving this aircraft to a new location, including logistics, maintenance, and sustainment of all the equipment and crew that comes with this impressive aircraft.

The Lightning, as the aircraft is known in the UK, is the first to combine radar-evading stealth technology with supersonic speeds and the ability to conduct short take-offs and vertical landings. With the ability to operate from land and sea, the F-35 forms a vital part of delivering a 'carrier strike' capability to the UK when combined with Britain's new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

It is great to see 617 Squadron, the modern day Dambusters, flying the most advanced and dynamic fighter jet in the UK's history and about to start their first overseas deployment.

I have no doubt that this short deployment will offer many tests, but likewise I am confident that our highly trained and skilled personnel will rise to the challenge and confirm our ability to deliver truly formidable capability.

Admiral Sir Philip Jones KCB ADC DL Royal Navy, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff said:

This first overseas deployment of these world-beating British F-35B aircraft to RAF Akrotiri, together with their embarkation in HMS Queen Elizabeth for the first time in the Autumn of this year, are important milestones to prove their readiness for deployed operations anywhere in the world in defence of our national interests.

The UK currently owns 17 F-35B aircraft with the reformed 617 Sqn having arrived back in the UK last year, with RAF Voyager aircraft providing air-to-air refuelling on their trans-Atlantic journey. More jets are due in Britain over the coming years, and there is an overall plan to procure 138 aircraft over the life of the Programme.

The F-35 is the world's largest defence programme at over \$1.3 trillion, with UK industry providing 15% by value of every one of over 3,000 jets set for the global order book. That makes the economic impact greater than if we were

building 100% of all 138 aircraft which we intend to buy. The programme has already generated \$12.9 billion worth of orders and at peak production will support thousands of British manufacturing and engineering jobs.

News story: Aviation Minister welcomes new investment to improve passenger experience at Leeds Bradford Airport

Major progress has been made on a project to improve the passenger experience at Leeds Bradford Airport, the Aviation Minister saw first-hand on a visit today (8 April 2019).

At Leeds Bradford Airport, Aviation Minister Liz Sugg saw construction begin on a major extension to the main airport terminal building, the airport's biggest investment to date.

The extension will significantly improve travel experiences for passengers, including larger immigration and baggage reclaim areas, better departure gate facilities, more shopping and food outlets and additional free seating.

Aviation Minister Liz Sugg said:

The development at Leeds Bradford Airport will not only further strengthen it as an important global gateway to Yorkshire, but will also provide passengers with an exceptional travelling experience to and from the region.

Improvements for local communities as well as major infrastructure projects like investment at Leeds station, [Northern Powerhouse rail](#), [HS2](#) and [Heathrow expansion](#) will continue to bring our country closer together, helping people move around more quickly and easily than ever before.

This progress continues to build on the major investment already going on in the area, including more than £170 million being invested by government in wider public transport improvements in the Leeds area.

By 2020, the government will have pumped a record £13 billion into transport investment across the north, including in developing major infrastructure projects such as HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. A new runway at Heathrow Airport will also bring big benefits to Yorkshire – better connecting the region to the rest of the country, increasing regional exports and driving local growth.

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