



## LANDOWNERS

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### Expert advice on applying for Basic Payment Scheme 2018

Saturday 17 March 2018 6:00

Alice De Soer (<http://www.fwi.co.uk/author/alice-de-soer>)

The online Basic Payment Scheme 2018 application window opens this week in England. Alice De Soer from the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers gives some advice on applying.

#### How to apply for BPS 2018

In England, apply online using the Rural Payments service ([www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments)) or complete a paper BP5 form.

Farmers who applied on paper in 2017 and didn't use an agent should receive a paper BP5 form later in March.

Almost 84% of 2017 claims were submitted online – to switch from paper to online, phone the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) on 03000 200 301.



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Alice De Soer, Central Association of Agricultural Valuers

See also: [Changes to greening rules for 2018 – what farmers need to know \(http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/greening-rules-updated-farmers-need-know.htm\)](http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/greening-rules-updated-farmers-need-know.htm)

Elsewhere in the UK, submit the Welsh Single Application Form (SAF) using RPW Online ([www.gov.wales/rpwnonline](http://www.gov.wales/rpwnonline)).

Scottish applicants can apply online using Rural Payments and Services ([www.ruralpayments.org](http://www.ruralpayments.org)) from this week or submit a paper SAF.

## What are the BPS 2018 application deadlines?

To avoid late claim penalties, submit BPS 2018 applications and supporting evidence by midnight on 15 May 2018. From 16-31 May, certain changes can be made to submitted applications without penalty.

Late applications can be submitted up to 11 June 2018 subject to penalties. After that, applications will be rejected unless force majeure or exceptional circumstances apply.

## Where to find BPS 2018 guidance

Guidance for English applicants is at [www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2018](http://www.gov.uk/rpa/bps2018), including BPS 2018 Scheme Rules, 'How to' guidance for online and paper applications, BPS 2018 land use codes and other supporting forms.

## How to start an online BPS 2018 application

Sign in at [www.gov.uk/rural-payments](http://www.gov.uk/rural-payments) using either your customer reference number (CRN) and password or GOV. UK Verify details. If you're not already registered, use GOV.UK Verify or phone the RPA (03000 200 301).

From 'Your businesses', click on 'View business' to see the 'Business overview' page. All the links for completing a BPS 2018 application can be found here.

## How to check what to update on a BPS 2018 application

Identify what changes are needed by checking the 'application summary', which looks like a pre-populated paper BP5 form. To view it, go to 'Applications' and click on 'Apply for BPS'; then 'Create a new DIRECT PAYMENTS application' and press 'Back' and 'Open'.

From the drop-down arrow 'View and print your application summary', click 'Generate' and then 'Download'. Don't submit it as a paper form.

## What changes are there to claimant eligibility?

From 2018, the 'active farmer' rule doesn't apply in England. It still applies in Wales and Scotland has only removed the negative list of activities. A BPS claimant must still be a 'farmer' carrying out an 'agricultural activity' (agricultural production or maintaining land in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation).

## What land is eligible for BPS?

It must be agricultural land (permanent grassland, arable or permanent crops) primarily used for an 'agricultural activity' throughout 2018 and is 'at the disposal' of the claimant on 15 May 2018. Some non-agricultural land in agri-environment/woodland schemes may be eligible if used to claim Single Payment Scheme in 2008.

## How to check land

Since BPS 2017 applications were submitted, the RPA has completed a significant number of mapping updates. Carefully check the digital maps (from 'Land', click 'View land') as updates aren't always correct.

To query a mapping update, submit an RLE1 form and sketch map (both marked with 'unrequested change query'). The digital maps should show an '!' icon if there's a pending RLE1 mapping change. There's also new EFA hedge information on the maps for 2018.

## How to transfer or remove land parcels

Land can be transferred or removed online (from 'Land', click 'Transfer land') unless the 'Holding type' shows as 'Tenant' or shows as 'Owner' but '% owned' is less than 100%. Submit an RLE1 form instead.

## How to add land parcels

If land can't be transferred online, email the RPA ([ruralpayments@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) to request registered land is added to a single business identifier (SBI). Put 'Add land' as the subject, include the SBI/business name, give a contact name and number and the land parcel reference(s).

Confirmation should be received within five working days. If it cannot be added, include the field on a paper continuation booklet.

## How to update land use and declare 'greening' details

Update land use codes/areas and declare Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) on the 'Land use' screen (from 'Land', click 'Land use'). This updates Part C (Field data sheet) and Part D (Greening: EFAs), but doesn't change the digital maps. The same land use codes/areas are used for BPS and Countryside Stewardship.

The total 'Parcel size' (equivalent of column C3) and 'BPS area' (the BPS eligible area - C4) show what's mapped on the RPA's land database. They can't be updated online, an RLE1 form should be submitted to request they're remapped.

The land use code (C7) and area/length (C6) prepopulated should be the same as declared for BPS 2017, unless land has been remapped since or the new mapped EFA hedges information 'clashes' with what was declared. EFA catch/cover crops aren't shown.

Declare agricultural and non-agricultural land uses/areas to reflect the correct position on the ground as at 15 May 2018. 'Overdeclared' or 'undeclared' may show if they total more or less than 100% of the mapped field size (C3) – this doesn't prevent a BPS application being submitted and may be correct if the field is larger or smaller and an RLE1 is submitted.

## How to check the claimed area

The total agricultural land uses/areas declared (C6 and C7) should give the 'Area to be activated for payment' (C8). Sometimes this incorrectly defaults to '0.0000'. Before submitting the BPS 2018 application, check the claimed area is correct (go to 'Applications', 'Activate less BPS area' and look at the 'Applied for' column).

## How to check entitlements

From 'Entitlements', click 'View entitlements'. Transfer entitlements online by 15 May 2018 for English BPS 2018 claims (in Wales, it's 30 April and in Scotland, 3 April).

The two-year usage rule means that if only some entitlements held were claimed for BPS 2017, all the entitlements held as at 15 May 2018 must be used to claim BPS 2018 or the number unclaimed for two years will be lost.

## How to check and submit a BPS 2018 application

After updating land and entitlements information, go to 'Applications', 'Apply for BPS' and 'Make changes to my application'. Use this section to reduce the eligible area claimed (C8), the area declared as EFAs or common land rights. Also indicate if claiming the young farmer payment.

Dropping the 'active farmer' rule was agreed too late for the RPA to change its IT system, so the 'active farmer' declaration must still be completed under 'Declarations'. All BPS claimants should click on 'No – I qualify as an active farmer'.

'Generate' another application summary to check through land (Part C) and EFAs (Part D). The greening checker won't work correctly if: there's an 'undeclared' land use; the organic exemption applies; land is included on a paper supplementary booklet; or, it's a cross border application.

Changes made under 'Make changes to my application' and 'Declarations' should also show.

Under 'Make/manage your application', press 'submit'. That gives instant confirmation of receipt and the application status should show as 'submitted'. Save a copy of the submitted application summary as the data is 'live' so may change.

## How to submit supporting documents

Supporting documents should be posted to the RPA (Rural Payments, PO Box 352, Worksop S80 9FG) or hand-delivered to an RPA drop-in centre (open from 1 May). Write the SBI on every sheet and keep a copy for your records. If posting documents, ensure they're sent either recorded or special delivery.

How to apply for BPS 2018 if there are outstanding payment queries

The RPA is still working through BPS 2015-2017 payment queries. Declare land to reflect the correct position on the ground as at 15 May 2018. To raise a new payment query, use the Payment Query form (on GOV.UK).

## BPS 2018 – summary

- Sign into the **Rural Payments service** (<https://www.gov.uk/claim-rural-payments>)
- Carefully check land on the digital maps – there have been mapping updates since BPS 2017 applications were submitted
- Transfer land and entitlements online wherever possible
- Submit the application and supporting evidence by 15 May 2018

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**Read more on:** BPS (<http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/payments-schemes/bps>)

Business (<http://www.fwi.co.uk/business>)

Payments, schemes and grants (<http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/payments-schemes>)