

## Headlines

### **Rural Entrepreneurship Conference, Nottingham Trent University, 23-24 June**

Smiths Gore is delighted to sponsor this conference which will focus on sustainable development in the face of major social and economic challenges and opportunities. [Early bird registration](#) is now open!

### **CAP post 2013: EP proposes direct payment redistribution and no cap**

A draft report from the European Parliament has a completely different proposal for 'greening' payments than the European Commission's proposals published in November. It wants to establish a direct link between direct payments with a number of area-related Pillar 2 measures, such as erosion reduction, crop rotation, investment in green technology and innovation. These would be 100% EC financed, cover a number of years and would have penalties for farmers who do not take part. It also suggests that all Member States should receive at least 65% of the EU average in direct payments; while this sounds like a major change, it will only raise payments in three countries (Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia). The report also opposes the introduction of a CAP as it would discriminate against certain types of business. This paper is still to be formally adopted by the EP.

## Agriculture

### **CAP post-2013: UK, France and Germany want EU-wide budget freeze**

The leaders of each country have proposed a real-term freeze on the EU Budget, which would affect the CAP post-2013.

### **Back the Campaign for the Farmed Environment – or we will regulate**

Minister for Agriculture Jim Paice has praised the work of the Campaign but warned that if more farmers don't it he will consider a compulsory approach.

### **Scotland's vanishing wilderness**

A Scottish Natural Heritage report says that the proportion of Scottish land which could be counted as being "without visual influence of built development" fell from 31% to 28% in 2009, mainly due to windfarms and power lines.

## Environment & Sustainability

### **Review of Feed In Tariff and more details on Renewable Heat Incentive**

The Government will review the FITs scheme for small scale low carbon electricity generation (up to 5MW). It will consider tariff levels and eligibility of technologies. It will also include a review of field scale PV (over 50kw) with a view to making any resulting changes to tariffs as soon as practical – we suspect that support will be reduced. The review should be completed by the end of 2011 and tariffs remain unchanged until April 2012. Any changes will only affect new entrants and not existing ones. More details on the RHI will be confirmed next month.

### **New guidance on renewables from the Scottish Government**

Ten new [advice sheets](#) have been published on renewable technologies and the Government's policies.

## Estate Management

### **Trustees: limited circumstances under which professional trustees are paid**

The case of *Fowler v Fenland Area Community Enterprise Trust* [2010, Court of Appeal] stated that a professional trustee acting for a trust, under its instructions, could not claim payment if the requirements of the Trust deed had not been strictly followed (i.e., a separate meeting of the board to discuss and approve the payments had not been held).

## General

### Community shops

The Plunkett Foundation has published an interesting [report](#) on the finances, services and management of community shops. It claims that they now operate with a 97% success rate.

### Shapps unveils regeneration road map

Housing minister Grant Shapps has unveiled a road map for regeneration centred on handing powers to local people.

## Planning & Development

### Consultation on Community Right to Challenge and Community Right to Buy

These two consultations are part of the policy objectives of the Localism Bill. Under the Community Right to Buy, local groups will have a legal right to nominate any vital community asset to be recorded on a 'most wanted' list by the local council, which would mean that the community will be given time to prepare a business plan and raise the necessary funds to make a credible bid before the property goes on the open market. The Community Right to Challenge will give community or voluntary sector groups, as well as parish councils and council employees, new powers to challenge and take over services. The consultation closes on 3 May.

### Abolition of Regional Strategies should be considered in planning decisions

The High Court has agreed that the Government's intended abolition of Regional Strategies can be taken into account when making planning decisions, and has dismissed the further claim by Cala Homes for a judicial review.

## Property Agency

### Stamp Duty Land Tax will rise to 5% for £1m+ residential property

From 6 April SDLT will increase from 4% to 5% on houses purchased for more than £1m.

### Residential market update

- Fewer surveyors are reporting prices falling than since July 2010 – so an indication that the market is not continuing to weaken as fast overall but major regional differences remain. New enquiries and new instructions continue to fall.

## And finally...

### Christmas tip banned as bribe

Sprowston Parish Council has asked members of a bowls club in Norwich not to tip ground staff as it could be an illegal bribe under the Bribery Act 2010. "Everyone tends to think its a huge joke but I don't like being threatened with obscure acts of parliament" said club secretary Derek Walker. The Parish Council was unavailable for comment.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this briefing, its information may not be comprehensive and recipients should not act upon it without seeking full professional advice.

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