

Headlines

Natural Environment White Paper: new powers to designate green areas

The Government will consult later in the year on a proposal to give local people an opportunity to protect green spaces that they consider important for beauty, historic, wildlife or recreational reasons by designating them as 'Green Areas'. These areas would be identified in neighbourhood plans and would have 'suitably strong protection'. These new powers could have a fundamental effect on development – and makes participation by landowners in neighbourhood planning even more important. We think that this proposal differs from Assets of Community Value as it can be applied at a larger scale – up to whole landscapes. We will keep a close eye on this as it could be used to completely stifle development if there are not suitable checks and balances.

Smiths Gore / GunsOnPegs Shoot Benchmarking Survey

We will be launching this year's results at 3.00pm on Friday 22 July at the Game Fair – all welcome on the GunsOnPegs stand (P1099).

Agriculture

14% fall in yields according to NFU survey

Due to the lack of rain and poor water holding by soils, wheat and oilseed rape yield are expected to be 14% lower than in 2010 at around 6.5t/ha, the lowest since the late 1980s. Some farmers are expecting 30-50% reductions. LEAF has produced a [new booklet](#) on improving soils.

Agricultural Wages Board settlement

Workers will get a 2.9% increase in wages (2.5% for Grade 1). The NFU has expressed its disappointment at the settlement which is below inflation but above levels being settled in other industries.

Cattle TB and badger culls

Seven members of the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB (1998-2007) have written to The Times saying that Defra's proposed badger cull may not deliver the anticipated reductions in badger TB. Indeed Defra's own assessments suggest that participating farmers will lose more financially than they gain. They describe Defra's preferred approach of shooting badgers as untested and risky. John Krebs, who designed the Government's badger culling trial, has also said that the cull would not be an 'effective policy'.

Milk price hits May high

The UK average farmgate price stood at 26.3ppl in May, the highest May price on record (based on Defra's provisional figures). Although a small fall on the previous month, it is 2.7ppl (11%) higher than in May 2010.

Rural Payments Agency gathering evidence on dual use

The RPA is surveying randomly selected farmers to understand how dual use, which is where two farmers claim for different schemes on the same piece of land, works. For example one party claims SPS and another claims ELS, which is a possibility on tenanted land. This may become an issue in the CAP reform.

Environment & Sustainability

Big Butterfly Count – 16-31 July

Download your butterfly ID chart from www.bigbutterflycount.org and take part in Butterfly Conservation's project to assess the health of butterfly populations.

Energy White Paper

Low-carbon generators, such as wind, nuclear and low-emission gas and coal, will receive more than the market rate for electricity to make it economic for them to build such facilities, the cost of which is estimated at around £110bn. The precise level will be set in 2013 but everyone's electricity bills will rise to pay for it, it is estimated by about a third or £160 pa. The Government argues that the reform will make the UK's energy supplies more

resilient and less liable to shocks elsewhere in the world. The energy companies set to benefit most from the change in policy are those that already have significant nuclear (EDF) and renewable (Scottish and Southern Energy) assets.

Estate Management

Are landlords of premises let under short leases liable to repair damage to internal plaster? Yes

The case of *Grand v Gill* (2011 EWCA Civ 554) decided that plastering was part of the structure of a house and so is the landlord's responsibility, unless the lease says otherwise. Many leases are silent on this matter and landlords often assume that it is the tenant's responsibility. The judge said that structure included the elements of a house that give it its appearance, stability and shape.

Adoption of private drains and sewers by water companies

The Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011 came into force on 1st July. Virtually all private drains and sewers will be transferred under this legislation to a water company on either 1 October 2011 or 1 April 2012, which will then be responsible for repairs.

General

European fisheries policy

The European Commission has proposed a tradeable market in fishing rights which would allow holders to fish in certain areas for a set period or sell the right to another party. The proposals have been greeted with some concern, mainly due to European leaders railing against market speculation and fears that it will lead to the rights being bought by large investors or overseas companies – as happened in Iceland.

Public Services White Paper

The Open Public Services White Paper, launched on 11 July, sets out the Government's vision for improving public services based on five principles: choice, decentralisation, diversity, fairness and accountability.

Planning & Development

Councils to keep business rates

Councils in England will be allowed to keep the business rates they collect rather than paying them to central Government.

Planning: change of use

Communities and Local Government is consulting on encouraging temporary uses of empty buildings while a permanent solution to vacancy is found. It is part of a wider review on deregulating the use class orders system. The consultation asks some radical and far-reaching questions, including does the current operation of the Use Classes Order go far enough to remove inappropriate barriers to growth?

Community Infrastructure: proposed change criticised

A proposed amendment to the Localism Bill is to change CIL from a tariff to fund infrastructure improvements to a much wider one that "supports communities"; this has raised concerns that it will be used by local authorities to plug budget gaps and hold back development. At the same time, Tax Increment Financing, which is using future increases in taxes to finance current improvements, now appears less favoured.

Property Agency

Residential market update

- A balance of 27% more surveyors say house prices fell last month, marginally fewer than in May. While this looks like the market is stable or even improving, it masks significant regional variations. 58% more surveyors say prices are falling than rising in the West Midlands – while a balance of 27% report rising prices in London. (RICS)
- PWC's UK Economic Outlook report says that there is a strong probability (50%) that house prices will still be below 2007 levels in 2020

Woodland & Arboriculture

Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant (England)

This new grant supports woodfuel production by offering 60% grants towards roads, tracks and other infrastructure to assist timber extraction and preparing woodland inventories and managing harvesting contracts.

And finally...

BTCV app to get the world growing

The [Get Growing app](#) features a unique one touch calculator which allows users to enter their garden, balcony or plot size to find out exactly how much food they could grow. It also calculates how much money they could save on supermarket fruit and veg purchases and how many food miles they could avoid.

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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