

## AGRICULTURAL UPDATE

*January 2017*

### **Moore Allen & Innocent LLP incorporates Graham Singer Chartered Surveyors**

We are delighted to announce that as of 1st January, 2017, Moore Allen & Innocent LLP incorporated the business of Graham Singer Chartered Surveyors.

Graham is well known in the local farming community, having worked out of Malmesbury and Knockdown, Tetbury for a considerable number of years. He formerly ran Swindon livestock market and conducted furniture sales from Hook, Royal Wootton Bassett.

In recent times Graham has specialised in negotiating terms on behalf of Clients for residential development sites, in which he has been especially successful. Sites currently under negotiation are situated across Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

We would like to welcome Graham, who now becomes a Consultant in the merged firm together with Margaret Flood who provides a range of land agency services and Karen Holdsworth who supports both Graham and Margaret. We will continue to operate out of Graham's Knockdown office, about 5 miles west of Tetbury.

As a result of the merger there will now be four collective machinery auctions in 2017, to be held at Southrop and Great Somerford.

This is a very positive and exciting move for us and we look forward to providing new and existing clients with our full range of agricultural and rural services.

• Farm & Estate  
Management

• Sales & Purchases  
of Rural Properties

• Valuations

• Estate Planning

• Landlord & Tenant

• Farming Agreements

• Basic Payment  
Scheme

• Auctions

• Compensation &  
Compulsory Purchase

• Farm Buildings

• Expert Witness

• Planning &  
Development

• Minerals

• Agri-Environment

• Woodland

• Digital Mapping

• Diversification  
& Grants

• Employment

• Payroll & Accounts

• Renewable Energy

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## **Countryside Stewardship – Woodland Creation Grants**

The Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant will open for applications on 3rd January, 2017 and close on 1st March, 2017.

To receive support, new woodland creation applications must contribute to either biodiversity objectives and/or water objectives. In some instances lower thresholds can apply if the planting is part of a suite of measures for water quality or flood prevention. In order to be eligible for a woodland creation grant, the minimum area per application must be 3 hectares with a minimum woodland area of 0.5 hectare. These areas must have a minimum width of 20 metres.

To apply for this grant it is necessary to select capital items which offer different payments towards the costs involved with planting and protecting young trees. The initial application includes the capital grant application form, a woodland creation annex and an annotated application map. Once this has been submitted, a Forestry Commission Woodland Officer is allocated to refine the application before the final deadline.

The maximum available grant per hectare is £6,800.00, calculated as an average across the area of the application. Eligible applicants can also claim the Woodland Creation Maintenance option at a rate of up to £200 per hectare for up to 10 years. This does not contribute to the calculation of the cap on capital grant support. Applicants who accept an offer of grant will enter into a two year capital agreement with Natural England, which will include the Countryside Stewardship Terms and Conditions.

If you are considering applying for the grant or would like further information, please do contact a member of our Agricultural Team (01285 648106).

## **Farms Available to Rent**

We have been made aware that Wiltshire Council has two farms which are being offered for rent for a term of ten years. One holding extends to 92 acres at Melksham and the other 215 acres at Trowbridge. The farms are being offered by Carter Jonas, who can be contacted on 01749 683390. Tenders are due in by Friday, 17th February. If you would like any assistance in completing the Tender documentation, please call Chris Graham (01285 648106).

## Basic Payment Scheme Update

It was reported at the Oxford Farming Conference on Wednesday, 4th January that 91% of claims have now been paid. This beats the target set by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and is positive news.

Many of you will have received payment, although some may not have received any payment notification. In the short-term, all that will arrive is confirmation of the total sum of money and the date of payment. Full Claim Statements will not be sent out until the end of January/February, so it will not be until then that a true analysis of the payment can be made to ascertain whether it is for the full amount.

We are aware that a number of Claimants from 2015 have yet to receive full sums for that year. Unfortunately, all caseworkers from RPA were reallocated to achieving 2016 payments, so any outstanding issues for 2015 have been put on hold. If you have informed the RPA of any discrepancies, it is likely that this will be taken to be a complaint and will be addressed under that process. It is frustrating that outstanding issues are not being resolved, but it is with regret that we can advise that there is nothing much that can be done at this stage.

Thoughts turn to 2017. Entitlement and land transfers via the online system will not be effective until February at the earliest, and we will update you in relation to this as soon as we are aware of the exact timeframe. It seems likely that the 2017 application will again need to be submitted by 15th May and application forms should be available from early March. For those of you who hedged your Basic Payment, it is interesting to note that the exchange rate remains at around the 0.85 mark. Stirling has shown some signs of strengthening, and with elections due in both France and Italy this year, it might be worth considering whether or not hedging would be sensible sooner rather than later.

If you have any queries regarding the Basic Payment Scheme, please contact a member of our Agriculture Team (01285 648106).

## Farmers Skittles Competition

The first round of the Cup competition should be played by 8th January. Teams will be notified of their next opponents shortly and all games are to be played by 5th February.

## Keeping TB at Bay

TBFreeEngland has estimated that approximately 50% of TB breakdowns are caused by infected badgers in hotspot areas. It is very likely that the deer population is also playing a large part in spreading TB in our area. However, a key source of new infections is still the movement of infected cattle. Most cattle need fairly prolonged exposure to the sputum of an infected animal to become infected with TB. Here are some suggestions from a local vet, to aid keeping TB at bay:

- Keep livestock away from freshly spread slurry.
- Maintain strict farm biosecurity – especially disinfection of shared machinery and equipment – and ensure contractors are scrupulous about their own biosecurity.
- Attempt to fence off badger setts.
- Isolate any TB reactors or inconclusive reactors. Do not graze any grassland grazed by them for as long as possible (ideally 60 days).
- Keep boundaries well maintained and avoid any nose-to-nose contact with neighbouring cattle (2 metres).
- If possible, restrict wildlife access to housed cattle and their feed.
- Raise feeders, troughs or licks to at least 75cm off the ground.
- Cover the face of silage clamps or use electric fencing.

## Avian Flu Prevention Zone Extension

The Avian Flu Prevention Zone which was imposed on 6th December, 2016 requiring poultry keepers to keep their birds indoors where possible or, if not possible, to take steps to keep them separate from the wild bird population, has now been extended to 28th February, 2017 following the identification of further cases of the H5N8 strain.

For further advice please contact one of our Agricultural Team: Mark Hill, Christopher Graham, Paul Oughton, Stuart Milsom, Brian Smith, Peter Kirby, Margaret Bush, Amy Herring, Anthony Wright, Harriet Taylor & Andrew Stibbard

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