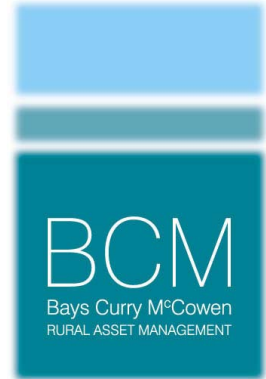


Press release

February 2006



DEFRA Criticism Well Justified

The Independent Commons Committee on the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has criticised DEFRA and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), in a recent press release, for their failure to plan and develop the new Single Payment Scheme adequately.

Andrew Bays, a partner at BCM the architectural and rural asset management company in Winchester says “ We are not surprised that the Commons Committee has been deeply unimpressed with the RPA and DEFRA’s track record on rural payments. It is our experience that at virtually every stage in this application process we have found either the advice or guidance inadequate, or that the systems in place simply have not worked.

For example only last week we received maps for one farm which had been returned to us for the fourth time by the RPA and were still inaccurate, despite many calls, E mails and correspondence.

We at BCM are still heavily involved in negotiations with the RPA over issues such as the National Reserve Awards and Private Contract Clauses. Given the relative lack of progress in this respect, we think that it is highly unlikely that full payments will be paid in February as

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agreed and frankly we would be surprised if the definitive establishment of entitlements are achieved in that month as they have been promised.

The public are probably also not aware that the computer systems employed for this whole scheme cost the public purse more than double the original estimate and have never worked properly - a combination in our view of a waste of public money and poor management.

The sensible decision should have been to defer the whole Single Payment Scheme for a year, to come into effect from 2006 rather than 2005. Those that applied in May 2005 and should rightly have expected full payment at the end of February, have no idea how much they can expect or when and if this will happen.”

Andrew Bays

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