



bulletin



UK200Agricultural Group e-bulletin

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Housing and Planning Act hits landowners rights

The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) has warned that landowners face losing millions of pounds of potential development value under the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The new Act grants developers of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, such as large transport links, the right to the compulsory purchase of land for related housing. In addition, developers will only have to pay compensation at the existing land value, meaning the profits from subsequent development will belong to the developer. Under the Act, developers will also have additional powers of entry to allow them to survey land in connection with the project, with compensation only payable for damage caused during the survey. Kate Russell, Policy and Technical Adviser at CAAV said the changes "allow developers to get housing in places that might not otherwise have been justified – and they are able to do so at existing land use value, transferring the windfall uplift in value from the landowner to the acquirer."

[Click here](#) to read more about the Housing and Planning Act

Farmland values remain variable

Demand for farms and farmland values remain highly variable according to research by rural property agency Strutt & Parker. The research has revealed that over 40% of farms placed on the market in 2016 were still available at the beginning of 2017. Over half of the livestock and residential farms put onto the market in 2016 are still for sale or have been withdrawn from the market, which is a higher proportion than for other types of farm. However, around 25% of farmland placed on the market in Q1 2017 has already found a buyer or been sold. The research has also indicated that the average price of arable farmland was £9,800 per acre in Q1 2017 with 40% of arable land selling for £6-8,000 per acre and most of the remainder selling for over £10,000 per acre.

To read more about the figures [click here](#)...

Landowners urged to review phone mast contracts

Farmers and landowners should review their contracts with telecommunications operators for phone masts built on their land before new rules are introduced, according to FBC Manby Bowdler. The warning comes ahead of the introduction of the Electronic Communications Code, which will give telecommunication operators similar rights to utilities companies. The Code, which is expected to be introduced later in 2017, could see landowners receive less financial compensation when phone masts are built or located on their land. Under the Code, the rent telecommunications operators pay landowners for use of their land would be limited and rights would be given to the operators to upgrade existing equipment without the landowner's permission.

[Click here](#) for more about the Electronic Communications Code

Farmers facing labour shortage

The Government must do more to address the growing labour shortage faced by farmers, according to a report by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (Efra). The report, 'Feeding the Nation', reveals that farmers are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining labour, and that the agriculture sector will face a labour crisis if the Government does not take immediate action. In the report, Efra claims that the farming sector is highly reliant on EU workers, and is calling for measures to ensure that farmers and growers have access to sufficient numbers of seasonal and permanent workers after the UK leaves the EU. The committee is also calling for clarity about the rules for EU nationals currently working in the UK. Other measures outlined in the report include greater support for the automation of the sector to reduce the need for labour, trebling the number of apprentices working in agriculture, and encouraging more young people to consider a career in the sector.

To read more about the report [click here](#)...

High Court ruling on joint rights of way

Landowners are being encouraged to ensure they are complying with legislation governing joint rights of way following a High Court ruling. In a recent case, users of the land argued that the installation of three gates was interfering with the use of the land and should be removed. The court ruled that while some of the gates did not interfere with the use of the land, one of the gates did and must be removed. Rural law expert Helen Clutterbuck said: "Important points for landowners and users to take away from this High Court decision are that simply erecting a gate will not usually interfere with a right of way, even if it narrows the right of way at that point; however, where there is more than one in a short distance it may." Ms Clutterbuck has also urged landowners to seek legal advice before installing any gates across a shared right of way.

[Click here](#) for more about the ruling

Falling milk prices to steady production

Falling milk prices are expected to help curtail UK milk production in the second half of 2017. Farmgate milk prices increased for nine-consecutive months from June 2016 to March 2017, with prices up by 37.7% to 27.46p per litre. Price rises were largely driven by falling milk production. However, farmgate milk prices have begun to stabilise or fall on the back of rising production, with processors either holding or cutting the prices paid to farmers in May and June 2017. Farmers are expected to cut production in response to falling milk prices, although UK farmgate milk prices are expected to remain steady, with rising butter and cream prices (up 101.4% and 116.3% respectively in April 2017), offsetting a fall in skimmed milk powder and cheddar values.

To read more about the figures [click here](#)...

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