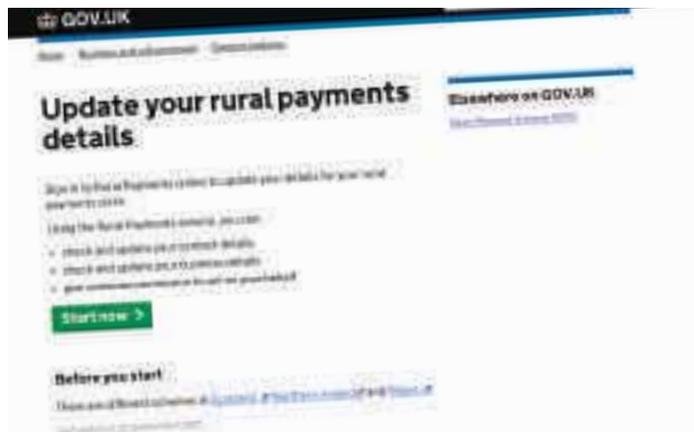


# History repeating

About this time every year I sit down and write a tale of woe and foreboding concerning the Basic Payment Scheme and previously the Single Payment Scheme. It would have made a nice change to be writing in positive tones about the RPA and an IT system that makes applying online a simple straight forward process, unfortunately the RPA binned SPS online in 2014. Instead I find myself struggling to draw the positives from a very unsatisfactory situation.

I will not bore you with the detail of how the RPA monumentally screwed up in 2015 only to say that if you look back through your dusty pile of South East Farmer magazines you will see that I, like many others predicted a disaster 12 months ago. Now, you may be one of the lucky ones who has been paid and you may even be one of the really lucky ones who has been paid correctly. As one agent recently commented: "I wasn't aware that England had opted to make partial BPS payments this year." That however is exactly what has been happening in a huge number of cases. As the RPA have rushed to push the number of claimants paid figure ever higher, their attention to detail, not great at the best of times, has gone missing. My key message therefore is to ensure that when you eventually receive a Claim Statement you check that you have been paid on everything



that you have claimed on. The RPA have been promising claim statements for some time now and they will be sending them out in a few weeks time which is the same line that they have been spouting for at least a month. Clearly if you have been paid incorrectly you are probably due some more cash. Funnily enough I have not seen any claims that have been over paid, but more importantly you will also be missing entitlements. If you fail to point out an error now you could be counting the cost for the next five years if you have fewer entitlements than eligible land.

I have sat through no fewer than six presentations from the RPA in recent weeks detailing the claims procedure for BPS 2016. Five of these presentations were exactly the same and were purely self-inflicted pain as a result of the roadshow of events that we recently ran with the CLA and RPA across

the South East. At one of these events a colleague suggested that perhaps the audience could use the vintage weaponry that was adorning the walls of our venue in order to elicit answers or even a payment from the two RPA representatives. The audience however was left speechless by the surprisingly slick patter trotted out by the RPA communications team – their performance in stark contrast to that of their organisation in 2015 and the grumpy brick wall that some of you may have experienced recently when phoning the RPA's customer service centre. Of course when the audience regained their composure the cracks in the RPA façade began to appear.

In summary, 2016 will be just as messy if not more so than 2015. You will have the option of applying online or on paper – neither option is available yet. You will be able to view maps of your fields online this year –

this is not possible yet. It is quite possible that when you do eventually get the chance to view your maps that any changes you requested last year will not have been made yet and will therefore be reflected on your claim form. The RPA are a long way behind where they should be and there is no guarantee that the IT, when it is available, will cope with thousands of claimants all logging on at once. I have my fingers crossed that BPS online will work and will be available in time for us to complete the in excess of 200 claims that we submit for clients. Submitting claims online reduces the possibility of human error when the RPA are processing them, resulting in quicker and more accurate payments. It would be nice to look back in 12 months and see that the RPA have proved me wrong for once.



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