RURAL BULLETIN

Autumn 2014

HEADLINES

WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE KNIGHT FRANK RURAL BULLETIN

The UK's political landscape is going through a period of immense upheaval and scrutiny.

While the Scottish nationalists failed at the final hurdle in their quest for independence, the Sunday Times poll that put them ahead virtually on the eve of the referendum caused widespread panic in Westminster and led to offers of more devolved powers.

If Scotland's replacement for Stamp Duty Land Tax is anything to go by (see page 6) we can expect some significant changes that may have serious implications for rural landowners and property markets.

South of the border, UKIP now has a foothold in parliament following its Clacton by-election victory. This will inevitably influence the policies of the Conservative and Labour parties in the run-up to next year's General Election.

The political posturing is already well underway with Labour finally unveiling its controversial Mansion Tax plans (page 6) and all parties, of course, pledging to protect the NHS, even if they also want to cut taxes.

While sliding commodity prices (page 3) will be of more immediate concern to many farms and estates, it will be worth preparing for the longer-term more fundamental changes that could be on their way.

All of these issues and many more are discussed in detail over the following pages.

I hope you find the information in this bulletin useful. If Knight Frank can be of further help in any way please do get in touch. You can find our key contacts on the back page.

Further information about our services can be found online and you can keep up to date with the latest rural property news on our blog. You can also follow us on Twitter @kfruralproperty

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RURAL PROPERTY MARKET

The latest Knight Frank research on the value of farmland and country houses

English farmland

Farmland prices continue rising

The average value of farmland in England has risen by 12% so far in 2014, according to the latest results of the **Knight Frank Farmland Index.**

Prices for bare agricultural land (without any farm buildings or houses attached) rose by just over 2% in the third quarter of the year to exactly £19,000/hectare (£7,689/acre).

This builds on the 9% growth seen in the first half of 2014 and means prices have now risen by 15% year-on-year and by 187% over the past 10 years.

Farmland continues to outperform the UK housing market, even the top-end of the London luxury sector, but over the longer-term gold continues to show the strongest growth, albeit via a much more volatile trajectory (see chart opposite).

The rise in farmland values comes despite a sharp fall in the price of agricultural commodities, such as wheat and milk, proving that land prices are being driven by more than just the economics of farming.

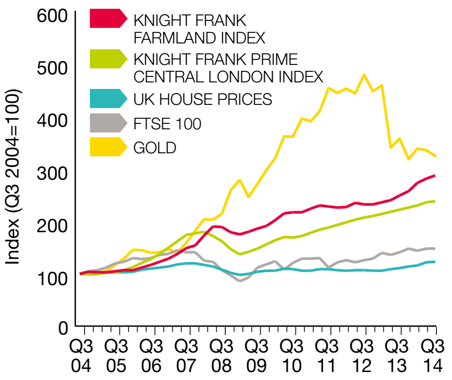
Limited supply and continued demand from investors, as well as farming businesses looking to expand, is the main driver.

An upturn in the house-building sector with developers subsequently looking for new sites has also increased the number of farmers with roll-over funds to invest back into land.

Assuming commodity prices do not stay in the doldrums for a prolonged period, the market should continue to strengthen as buyers take a long-term view.

If you are thinking of investing in farmland or would like to sell some land to take advantage of the current high prices please contact Tom Raynham or James Prewett

English farmland performance versus other asset classes



Source: Knight Frank Residential Research

Scottish farmland

It is too early to say what impact the no vote in the Scottish referendum will have on farmland values, but it has certainly removed some of the uncertainty that was hanging over the market and could persuade a few more potential wavering vendors to put their farms up for sale in the spring. Demand for arable land in particular remains strong.

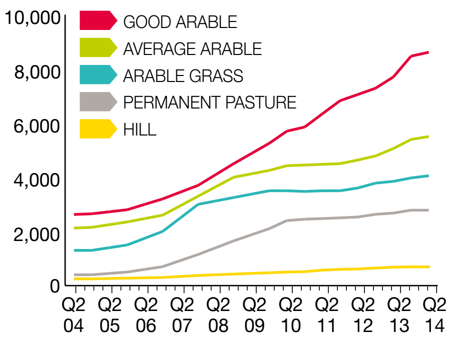
The on-going **land reform process** is still affecting the sporting estate market, but deals are being done and we have had strong international interest for a **7,000-acre estate** on the Isle of Mull.

The latest results from our **Scottish Farmland Index** show that average prices for bare agricultural land increased by 2% in the first half of 2014 to £4,329/acre. Good arable land is worth £8,612/acre, while hill land is now almost £700/acre.

Please contact James Denne if you would like to sell your farm or discuss the market further.

Scottish farmland values by type

£/acre



Source: Knight Frank Residential Research

Country houses

In England and Wales, prime country house values rose for the seventh consecutive quarter, according to the **Knight Frank Prime Country House Index**. However, concerns over a potential Mansion Tax, impending interest rate rises and tighter mortgage lending combined to see price growth slow to its lowest level in almost two years.

In Scotland, the price of all country house types flat-lined between June and September as referendum uncertainty curtailed growth, according to the **Knight Frank Prime Scottish Property Index**.

See page 6 for more on Mansion Tax and the new Scottish Stamp Duty replacement.

Please contact Oliver Knight for more information

Country house values

% change to Q3 2014

England & Wales

	Cottage	Farmhouse	Manor house	Avg
Quarterly	0.8	-0.1	0.3	0.3
Annual	7.6	5.2	2.5	4.7

Scotland

	Cottage	Farmhouse	Small country house	Large country house	Avg
Quarterly	0	0	0	0	0
Annual	2.9	1.1	1.5	1.4	1.4

AGRICULTURE

An update on commodity prices, CAP reform and the big issues affecting farming and forestry

Commodity market round up

Agricultural commodity prices across all sectors have been under serious pressure during 2014.

The average spot price of feed wheat slipped below £100/t at one point during September – the lowest since July 2010 – although prices did rally slightly in October due to wet weather concerns in the US.

However, values are still significantly below the prices available 12 months ago and it was only in March of last year that feed wheat was worth over £200/t. Interestingly, or perhaps frighteningly, the current prices being paid are just below those of 25 years ago, even before taking into account inflation.

Bumper harvests around the world have helped depress prices, while the crisis in the Ukraine doesn't seem to have had a serious impact on the country's exporting capacity. A general drop in quality has ensured a plentiful supply of average-quality cheap European grain that our exporters are struggling to compete with.

In the UK, average wheat yields were up 16% to 8.6t/ha (3.5t/acre), according to the NFU's harvest survey – the largest jump in 30 years. The total wheat harvest could hit a record 16.5m tonnes. Traders say there is little upside potential at the moment and wheat futures for November 2016 are trading at just £136/t.

Farmers, however, can take some respite from the recent drops in fuel and fertiliser prices.

Dairy producers, meanwhile, have taken to the barricades once more as milk prices continue to fall – by as much as 6p/litre since April to well below 30p/litre in some cases.

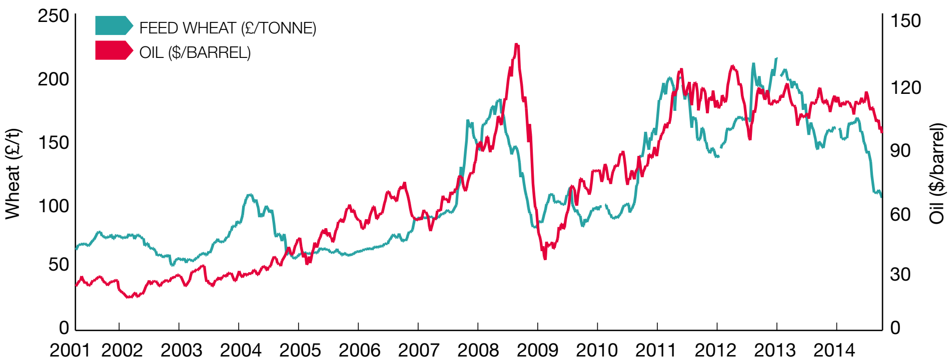
Pressure group Farmers for Action has blockaded supermarket distribution centres and milk-processing factories in protest at the cuts, which it says have taken prices below the cost of production for many farmers.

Global milk production is up by around 5% – something that the removal of the EU milk quota system as part of CAP reform could exacerbate. At 8.4bn litres, UK milk production so far this year is at its highest level since 2003. At the same time, the Russian ban on dairy imports and a drop in Chinese consumption is hitting suppliers across Europe, while sterling's increase against the euro is making UK exports less competitive.

This supply and demand imbalance has seen dairy commodity prices tumble, with butter values (£2,375/t) down 34% on the year and skimmed milk powder (£1,750/t) sliding by almost 40%.

One ray of light is a rebound in the price of beef, which is moving up after hitting a low of 327p/kg at the beginning of July. The latest figures show consumer spending on fresh beef is up year-on-year.

Wheat and oil price changes



Agricultural price changes Q3 2013-Q3 2014

	Q3 2013	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Annual change (%)	Quarterly change (%)
Commodity prices					
Feed wheat (£/t ex-farm)	150	142	101	-33%	-29%
Oilseed Rape (£/t ex-farm)	287	250	228	-21%	-9%
Cattle (R4L steers p/kg dw)	403	338	359	-11%	6%
Sheep (R3L lambs p/kg dw)	392	501	357	-9%	-29%
Pigs (DAPP p/kg dw GB av)	171	164	155	-9%	-5%
Milk (UK p/litre)	32.00	31.72	31.27*	-2%	-1%
Skimmed milk powder (£/t)	2,800	2,400	1,750	-38%	-27%
Input prices					
Red Diesel (p/litre)	72	66	64	-11%	-3%
Oil ($/barrel OPEC index)	109	108	96	-12%	-11%
Fertiliser (£/t AN 34.5%)	271	254	260	-4%	2%
Soyameal feed (Argentine £/t)	407	336	331	-19%	-1%
Economic indicators					
Interest rates (B of E base %)	0.5	0.5	0.5	nc	nc
Inflation (CPI)	2.67	1.90	1.50	-44%	-21%
£:€ rate	1.20	1.25	1.29	7%	3%
£:$ rate	1.62	1.70	1.62	0%	-5%

Sources: HGCA, Farmers Weekly, DairyCo
*to August

continued on next page

AGRICULTURE (CONTINUED)

CAP REFORM UPDATE

Farmers by now are probably sick to their eye teeth of the frustratingly slow drip feed of CAP reform details, particularly relating to the new greening measures like Environmental Focus Areas (EFAs), from DEFRA.

However, the vast majority of the detail is now known, with DEFRA issuing another update at the end of October that covered some of the the outstanding issues.

The remaining gaps, which include final details of the new “active-farmer” test, are highlighted in **the latest update**, which answers most questions growers need to prepare for next year when the new Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) will replace the existing Single Payment Scheme (SPS).

While some of the missing final details on the new greening measures will be frustrating for a small number of farmers, most should by now know enough to be able to comply with the new rules.

Greening rules will vary across the UK’s regions. **The Scottish** and **Welsh governments** have also just released updates clarifying some of their greening rules.

Hedge-cutting ban

One new rule that has particularly upset farmers is extending the ban on hedge cutting to the end of August. DEFRA has said this is to comply with EU legislation about disturbing nesting birds, although it has been pointed out that very few species do nest at this time of year. A derogation is hoped for.

More positively, it has been confirmed that farmers will be able to use their existing Entry Level (ELS) and Higher Level (HLS) environmental scheme options to meet the new EFA requirements, although the **payment for some options** in ELS schemes entered into after 1 January 2012 will be reduced.

DEFRA says only 10% of ELS and no HLS claimants will see their payments cut.

The ministry has also confirmed that dual-use claims (where for example a tenant may be claiming the Single Payment and their landlord an environmental scheme payment on the same parcel of land) can continue for existing environmental schemes, But it has not confirmed if they will be allowed under the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) set to replace ELS and HLS.

More details about NELMS are expected in November.

Transfer deadlines

October 21 was the last date to transfer entitlements under the SPS regime using an RLE1 form. All SPS entitlements will automatically be transferred into BPS entitlements at the end of 2014 and a trading system is expected to open in mid-January.

The minimum claim under BPS will be five hectares, but anybody with fewer entitlements than this will still be able to sell them in 2015, if they missed the October 21 deadline.

And finally for the technophobes, all BPS claims will have to be made online. There will be no option to do it using a paper form.

Neonic ban hits

Many arable farmers have reported severe establishment problems with their oil-seed rape crops following the EU’s ban on neonicotinoid seed treatments, which some claim damage bee populations. Large areas of OSR have had to be re-drilled or abandoned after suffering flea-beetle damage. DEFRA opposed the ban.

In addition, a **new report** from farm business consultant Andersons, commissioned by the NFU and Crop Protection Association and launched on 21 October, looks at the potential impact of a further chemical clamp down by the EU.

Farm profitability could slide by 36%, some fruit and vegetable crops would no longer be viable in the UK and 44,000 jobs could be lost if the 40 active ingredients in the EU’s sights are banned, it predicts.

Exchange rate woes

As if the cut in commodity prices discussed on the previous page wasn’t enough, farmers will see their Single Payment Scheme claims for 2014 fall significantly following a rise in the value of sterling.

The payments are set in euros and converted into sterling based on the prevailing exchange rate on 30 September. This year one euro was worth £0.77730 compared with £0.83605 on the same date in 2013 – a 7% fall.

Combined with a 1.6% drop in the UK’s CAP budget for 2014, a 1.3% cut to payments over €2,000 as part of the European Commission’s Financial Discipline Mechanism (FDM) and modulation (movement of funds from direct farmer subsidies to rural development), claimants should budget for a 12% drop in their payments.

As part of the CAP reform process, the exchange rate for converting BPS claims into sterling will be calculated based on the average rate over the whole of September.

DEFRA reshuffle

DEFRA minister Owen Paterson, a staunch advocate of badger culling, was himself culled during an extensive cabinet reshuffle in July. He was replaced by South-West Norfolk MP Liz Truss. In a speech at the recent Conservative Party conference Ms Truss said she wanted to help farmers reverse the UK’s increasing reliance on imported food.

Mr Paterson, meanwhile, is causing a commotion from the backbenches with his vociferous calls for the government to suspend the Climate Change Act and focus more on shale-gas and smaller nuclear power stations instead of renewables.

Over in Brussels, former Irish Environment Minister Phil Hogan has been nominated as European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. He replaces the Romanian Dacian Ciolos. Mr Hogan says he will review the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2016, in particular the unpopular greening measures.

Badger cull continues

The second round of the controversial badger culling trial is taking place in Somerset and Gloucestershire. However, the government has said it will not be extended to other areas until after the General Election, Labour has said it will scrap the trials completely if elected.

For more information on farm management issues and how CAP reform could affect your business please contact Paddy Hoare: 01608 737057
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BUILDINGS, PLANNING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

The latest news from our Building Consultancy and Energy teams

Energy issues

Large-scale solar-PV subsidies cut

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has **just confirmed** that it will be going ahead with its controversial plan to scrap Renewables Obligations (RO) support for solar PV schemes over 5MW from April 2015.

When first proposed **this May**, the plans caused panic amongst solar developers with projects in the pipeline. Despite opposition to the proposals, DECC says more large ground-mounted schemes than it expected have come on-line and it is now focusing support on roof-mounted projects.

However, to protect existing financial commitments, DECC has agreed to relax the criteria for solar PV projects that were in the planning stage when the announcement was made.

It has dropped the financial requirement to have spent approximately 10% of the total cost, changed the land rights condition so that it can be satisfied by an option to lease, and said planning permission must have been applied for, rather than granted, by 13 May 2014.

DECC has also launched a **new consultation** on whether or not to offer a grid delay grace period, which will protect developers against slippage of the connection date. This closes on 28 October.

Developers of schemes over 5MW will now have to bid for support payments from a pre-determined pot under the Contracts for Difference system.

The new Environment Minister Liz Truss also announced on 20 October that as of 2015 it will no longer be possible to claim agricultural subsidies on parcels of land used as solar farms, even where livestock are grazing around the panels.

To encourage more stand-alone roof-mounted schemes, DECC has split the +250kW Feed-in Tariff (FIT) band so these kind of installations will be protected from future cuts to support payments for ground-mounted schemes of the same size.

It is also plans to consult on the ability to move roof-mounted schemes from one building to another without losing their FIT accreditation.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is currently examining the responses to its recently closed consultation to raise the permitted development threshold for roof-mounted solar PV schemes from 50kW to 1MW.

Score: Pickles 18 Wind farms 2

Large-scale solar PV is not the only renewable technology under pressure from the government. Of the 20 called-in planning applications where Communities minister Eric Pickles has made a decision since June 2013, only two have been approved. Mr Pickles cited harm to the landscape in 14 of his judgements.

While many people will be delighted with his approach, renewables organisations are suggesting the policy is more about politics than planning. Planning and legal professionals are also worried about the impact a minister calling in so many cases will have on confidence in the planning process.

Fracking powers confirmed

The government is pressing on with its plans to change the law to make it easier for companies to explore for and extract shale gas, despite an overwhelmingly negative public response to its consultation that closed on 15 August.

In its just-published **response to the consultation**, the government revealed that of the 40,647 responses received, 99% opposed the proposal to remove the need for shale-gas companies to gain the consent of property owners for horizontal drilling beyond 300m below their land or houses.

However, the government claimed that most of the respondents stated their opposition to fracking, rather than commenting on the specific access proposals.

It also said that existing legislation would safeguard landowners from pollution claims or other issues that might arise in the future. Where the company responsible had become insolvent or could not be identified, the government said it was working with UKOOG, the trade body for the onshore oil and gas industry, to develop a scheme to provide cover should these circumstances arise.

For more information on how renewables could benefit rural property owners and other energy issues please contact Edward Holloway of Knight Frank's Energy team: 01179 452638
edward.holloway@knightfrank.com

Green belt guidance published

The government has just published **new guidance** on its green belt policy. It says councils should take account of green belt constraints when putting together their local housing plans. Planning consultants are worried that many local authorities will use this as an excuse to ignore the need for new housing. Others may welcome the protection it appears to give the green belt.

New barn conversion rights thwarted

New figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) show that councils are blocking over half of the applications to convert farm buildings into residential use, despite the process now being covered by permitted development (PD) rights in many cases.

Under the new rights, full planning consent is no longer needed for conversions that are below 450 sq metres, are outside designated areas such as National Parks and AONBs and don't involve listed buildings. However, applicants still have to go through a prior approvals process to ensure the development **satisfies certain conditions.** It is at this point that many schemes are being stymied.

According to the DCLG numbers, 52% of prior approval decisions in the second quarter of 2014 were turned down.

Anybody thinking of converting an agricultural building might also want to bear in mind that if the Labour party was to win power at next year's General Election it may well scrap the new PD rights.

For more information on converting farm buildings, listed buildings consent or any other building project issues please contact our Head of Building Consultancy James Carter-Brown: 01488 688523
james.carter-brown@knightfrank.com

LEGISLATION UPDATE

A guide to what's new in the worlds of tax, tenancies, policy and law

Mansion tax proposal

The Labour party has attracted widespread criticism – even from some of its own supporters – following confirmation that it plans to introduce an annual Mansion Tax for houses worth over £2m if it wins next year's General Election.

Critics point out that the tax, announced by shadow chancellor Ed Balls, at the party's recent annual conference will be complicated to administer and is unfair because it is largely a tax on London and South-East England.

Details of how it will be implemented are sketchy, but we know the following:

- The £2m threshold will rise in line with property prices, in an effort to stop more properties being drawn into the tax
- People earning under £42,000 can defer the tax until they sell the house or die
- There will be a value band system, which will be based on similar mechanics to the current **Annual Tax on Enveloped Dwellings (ATED)**
- The charge for houses valued between £2m and £3m will be £3,000. Above £3m the rates have not been revealed.

More background can be found in our report: ***Taxation of Prime Property***

While still keen on some sort of taxation for higher-value properties, the Liberal Democrats appear to be focusing on the Council Tax system rather than a Mansion Tax.

COUNTRY HOUSE BUSINESS INNOVATION 2014

Knight Frank at Country House Business Innovation show

Knight Frank's Rural Consultancy team will be attending the new **Country House Business Innovation show** at Olympia, London, on 27 and 28 November.

The show, which runs in tandem with the successful **Farm Business Innovation** event, will include plenty of information for anybody looking to diversify or make the most of their estate, country house or farm.

Our building consultancy, country house consultancy and estate management experts will also be taking part in a series of seminars at the show.

To find out more about the event or order your free tickets click **here.**

Rural crime initiative

The government has just confirmed a two-year £40,000 funding package for a newly created National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) operating across England and Wales.

It will be used to provide information and support for rural communities by encouraging direct interaction between businesses, organisations and the police. The concept for a rural crime network was developed by the Rural Services Network (RSN), working alongside most of the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) serving rural communities.

Policing Minister Mike Penning said: "The National Rural Crime Network will help support rural communities and businesses that are all too often targeted by ruthless criminals who consider homes and property in the countryside an easy target.

The NRCN will encourage the development of strong links between national policing leads for rural and wildlife crime, for heritage crime, and for interested organisations such as the NFU and English Heritage.

Acknowledging rural crime concerns, Angus Macpherson, the PCC for Wiltshire recently pledged to divert police resources from urban areas to the countryside if a major survey of farmers and landowners discovers they 'do not feel secure'.

In a statement that might raise a few sceptical eyebrows, Mr Macpherson said he will not hesitate to pull officers out of the county's large towns and get them patrolling country lanes, and make policing the rural community 'part of mainstream policing' again.

Please contact the RSN's Nick Payne for more details of the NRCN

Scottish Stamp Duty replacement revealed

The first new tax set by a Scottish Finance Minister in over 300 years has sparked controversy after it was unveiled as part of the country's draft budget on 9 October.

As expected, John Swinney announced that he was using the Scottish Parliament's devolved tax-raising powers to replace Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) with the Land and Building Transaction Tax (LBTT) on the purchase of residential and commercial property from 1 April 2015.

What was not quite so expected was the extent to which higher-value homes will be taxed, with a top rate of 12% for houses worth over £2m.

The only saving grace for the purchasers of such properties is that, unlike SDLT, LBTT is a progressive tax and each rate will only apply to the proportion of a sale over the thresholds in the table below.

Purchasers of houses worth up to £320,000 will pay less tax under the new system, but somebody buying a £2m house will be paying almost £200,000. The Scottish government has created an **online calculator** to work out the amount due.

Tax experts believe farm and estate sales will count as non-residential transactions.

With more devolved tax-raising powers in the pipeline, including Income Tax, it remains to be seen what the impact will be for farms and estates.

Land and Building Transaction Tax rates

Residential transactions		Non-residential transactions		Non-residential leasings	
Up to £135,000	0%	Up to £150,000	0%	Up to £150,000	0%
£135,001 to £250,000	2.0%	£150,001 to £350,000	3.0%	Over £350,000	1.0%
£250,001 to £1m	10.0%	Over £350,000	4.5%		
Over £1m	12.0%				

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

LEGISLATION UPDATE (CONTINUED)

Scottish tenancy drop

The amount of tenanted land in Scotland has dropped by almost 100,000 acres over the past 12 months, according to the Scottish government's June census. Currently, 23% of the country's farmland is tenanted compared with 30% a decade ago. The government's Agricultural Holdings Review Group is due to present its findings before Christmas.

Landowners are also waiting to see which of the Scottish Land Reform Review Reform Group's 62 **proposals,** announced earlier this year, will be adopted by the government.

For advice on Scottish tenancies, valuations and other consultancy issues please contact Michael Ireland: 0131 222 9625
michael.ireland@knightfrank.com

Update for AHA tenancy model clauses

The rather snappily titled Agriculture (Maintenance, Repair and Insurance of Fixed Equipment) Regulations 1973 are being updated.

A **consultation on government proposals** to modernise and consolidate these "model clauses", which govern how the maintenance, repair and insurance of fixed equipment is divided between landlord and tenant on farms let under Agricultural Holdings Act (AHA) tenancies, has just closed.

Under the proposals, landlords responsibilities will now include internal plaster work, replacement central heating systems, chimney linings and fireplaces, and electrical supply systems including the consumer board, but excluding switches and fittings.

The legislation is expected to be enacted before the General Election.

Tractors go faster

Speed and weight limits for tractors will increase from March 2015 following the **results of a government consultation.**

The maximum combined weight limit for a tractor and trailer will rise from 24.39 tonnes to 31 tonnes, while the speed limit for conventional tractors will move up from 20mph to 25mph, bringing Great Britain in line with much of Europe.

Further increases in weights and speeds, including maximum laden trailer weight limits and a roadworthiness test for some agricultural tractors and trailers, could be introduced before harvest 2016.

Employment Issues

Minimum wage up

The Scottish Agricultural Wages Board has increased the minimum wage for workers by 15p/hour to £7.14 from 1 October.

Following the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) in England and Wales, English workers are now protected by the national minimum wage, currently £6.50/hour.

Labour has said it will reintroduce some form of AWB in England if it wins power at next year's General Election.

The Welsh Assembly has won the right to set up its own wages board after a **ruling by the Supreme Court** in July agreed that such a move was within its devolved powers.

Pension auto-enrolment

Farms and estates not already planning for the introduction of auto-enrolment pensions need to start getting ready now as most employers will have to comply at some point within the next two years, depending on the number of staff they employ and their PAYE reference.

Since the legislation was introduced in October 2012, businesses, starting with the largest employers, have gradually been obliged to offer automatic enrolment to their workforce. In 2014, firms with 59 to 499 employees have been drawn into the net, while smaller businesses will be brought in from 2015 to 2017.

The Pensions Regulator has an **online staging-date calculator** so businesses can work out when they need to have an auto-enrolment scheme in place. Its advice is to start planning 12 months in advance.

Accommodation benefits review

The Office of Tax Simplification has published its third, and it says final, **review of employee benefits and expenses**. Of most interest to rural property owners will be the section on accommodation, as this is often an important part of employment packages. The report proposes ways on how to distinguish accommodation offered as a "perk" from what is actually "needed to get the job done" when deciding whether it should be considered a taxable benefit.

Flexible Working

Since 30 June 2014, the right to request flexible working conditions has been extended to all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service. Employers do not have to grant any such request, but should be able to provide an objective business reason for turning one down. Legal experts are warning employers to follow a suitable process when dealing with any claims to avoid allegations of discrimination. Guidance can be found on the **ACAS website.**

Knight Frank/CLA Staff Salary Survey

In conjunction with the CLA, Knight Frank is conducting an estate staff salary survey. For more details or to participate please contact **Andrew Shirley**.

If you need help with employment issues please contact Angus Harley: 01488 688511
angus.harley@knightfrank.com

Scottish raptor licence ban

Scottish farms and estates will have their general licences to trap or shoot wild bird pests, such as pigeons, crows, Canada geese and magpies, withdrawn where there is evidence of wildlife crime against birds.

The **measure was introduced by Scottish National Heritage** in October and will be backdated so that action will be taken where there is evidence of wrong-doing since January 1, 2014. Restrictions will prevent people from using the general licences on the land in question for three years. This period will increase if more evidence of offences comes to light.

Decisions will be made on the basis of strong evidence provided by Police Scotland, and will be based on a civil standard of proof.

Other recent actions to reduce wildlife crime in Scotland include vicarious liability for offences against wild birds, which was introduced in 2011, and the review of penalties for wildlife crime offences that is currently underway.

OUR TEAM

Knight Frank can advise on all aspects of rural property ownership. Its principal service lines and the relevant contacts are listed below. Further details are available on our website at **KnightFrank.co.uk/rural**

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BUILDING CONSULTANCY AND VALUATIONS

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