



JO CHURCHILL MP
Member of Parliament for Bury St Edmunds



The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
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Thursday 12th May 2016

Dear Liz

Thank you for your response to my parliamentary question of Thursday 5th May regarding the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).

Recently, I have met with a group of rural farmers from Suffolk in which discussions returned to the frustrations and doubts around the Basic Payment Scheme.

I wish to raise with you directly, the concerns of a constituent farmer of mine who I have met with on several occasions. He has asked that I raise the following points with you:

1. There are a number of issues with the IT system in both its design and its functionality. These problems include:
 - The general layout and multiple screens;
 - The lack of navigation and ability to edit;
 - The field areas are now working to four places of decimal in one section and only two in another and do not reconcile;
 - The available permission levels are not delivering access to appropriate sections;
 - The site links to pages that do not exist;



- The mapping is not linked to the user interface or SITI-Agri itself;
 - There is an inability to find relevant help documents due to poor search tools;
2. There is no dedicated BPS telephone line at the Rural Payment Agency:
- The telephone support system is located on a single phone number with multiple dialling options, taking users several minutes to get from dialling the number to joining the BPS telephone support waiting line;
 - The waiting time announcements are inaccurate;
 - The separation of responsibility within the helpline means that almost every enquiry needs to be channelled through more than one person. This means users often find they have to explain their problem to a number of different people in order to find the person best placed to assist them;
3. The 2016 Basic Payment Scheme is not yet completed despite the claims window opening:
- Users find that they are dealing with an online system which is still undergoing changes whilst they try to make a claim;
 - There remain still a huge number of outstanding Rural Land and Entitlements (RLE1) changes from 2015. This means users familiar with the old layout are now having to navigate a new system and changing data;
 - Meaningful field identity like 'User defined names' have been ignored;
 - In the absence of BPS 2015, users with outstanding claims must put together a paper submission and outline where there are issues with the online system.
4. The mass mail outs from the Rural Payment Agency are poorly managed:
- Those mail outs with genuinely useful information often get caught in the spam filter;



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- The industry tends to be aware of the pending deadlines. Therefore, the constant emails with deadline updates are unnecessary.
- Often, the links contained in the emails are broken

I hope you will have a chance to consider and respond to these points raised by my constituent.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Churchill MP