Dear Neil Parish

Basic Payment Scheme 2017 Progress

Following the opening of the payment window on 1 December I thought it useful to provide the Committee with a brief update on our progress.

As of 7 December 2017, over 54,000 farmers in England have received their 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) money. These payments, worth more than £850 million to over 63% of the eligible claimant population, encompass a wide range of claim types and sizes, including those inspected and farmers with common land. Progress is being carefully monitored on a daily basis and we remain firmly on track. Payment volumes at the end of December 2017 and March 2018 will be broadly in line with our BPS 2016 performance.

To assist farmers with their financial planning, we will directly contact those farmers who will be paid from January onwards. Recognising the financial challenges facing the farming community we will continue to work with farming help organisations to provide financial support to those who need it. As part of this, we acted upon a suggestion from Caroline Flint MP to remove any perceived stigma associated with hardship payments and re-launched this support as “BPS financial support payments”.

In parallel with BPS 2017 processing we have continued to make good progress on all matters relating to commons. Earlier this year we began issuing additional payments to eligible claimants who submitted claims for additional claim SPS entitlements and payments as a result of the legal challenge on Commons allocations. We continue to work closely with commons stakeholders.

As you are aware, there is EU criticism in respect of our land data and we have sought to mitigate this by ensuring that all land data being used for our payment calculations is no more than three years old. Around 1.3 million parcels are being reviewed this year and our analysis shows that the impact on overall land areas so far has been relatively small.

I hope you find this update helpful and I would like to stress once again that everyone in the Agency remains absolutely focused on paying the BPS 2017 claims accurately and as promptly as possible.
I will be happy to provide the Committee with a further update on our progress next month.

Yours sincerely

Paul Caldwell