

FARMERS

WEEKLY

Common land farmers face challenge on 2016 BPS process

Farmers with common land will find it difficult to complete their 2016 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application because they could lack some of the information they need, an adviser has warned.

Hugh Townsend of Townsend Chartered Surveyors in Exeter said applying for BPS was "bedlam" for many commons farmers in 2015, but this year they were facing double uncertainty.

Changes in the rules for claiming on common land were introduced last year, prompting many to buy and sell entitlements ahead of their 2015 claims being submitted.

Processing these claims has proved hard, with the RPA admitting commoners are likely to be one of the last groups to be paid. Until then, claimants will not be sent a claim or entitlement statement.

Some commons rights holders did not claim in 2015, leaving "naked hectares" of unclaimed land, and some commons graziers complaining this reduced their payments. It was then decided that under the BPS, the eligible area of



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Commoners will be some of the last paid BPS.

a common would be divided up among only farmers who used it.

"Without a claim statement they don't know how many entitlements they already have for 2016," said Mr Townsend.

Farmers wanting to maximise the value of their 2016 claim would need to know the total eligible area of the common, the number of commoner's rights used by commoners on that area for that year and the number of entitlements required to claim on the eligible area allocated to each commoner.