

Q I've been receiving an annual payment for a wild-flower meadow that I manage. Will I still be eligible to receive this after Brexit?

LE, via email

A The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) provides annual payments to land managers, providing that the land is being used for environmental benefit. Typically, the agreements are for 5-10 years, with an average annual payment of £182 per hectare for a traditional wild-flower meadow. The payments are ultimately funded by the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, albeit processed by Natural England, so when Britain leaves the EU, this funding will come to an end.

The chief executive, Philip Hammond, has made a statement guaranteeing that CSS contracts signed before this year's autumn statement will be honoured by the Treasury until 2020. If your management agreement is in place, you will continue to receive the payments until then.

The situation for any agreements not already in place is unclear, and it is impossible to say what will happen to such payments. It may be that new schemes will be introduced, with potentially different levels of remuneration and environmental targets.

Phillip Edzell, director of Savills Country House Consultancy, savills.co.uk

Q The owner of the property next door to us has, with a building planning permission, turned an extended detached house into a three-flat property. The original home now has downstairs and upstairs flats, with another dwelling in the garden extension.

We have joint responsibility with the next-door property for the boundary wall and fence. The owner is now selling the ground-floor flat in the main dwelling and we have been informed that, as the other two flats become vacant, they will also be sold.

What is our position in the event of any necessary repair or replacement of the boundary wall and fence?

Lynne Robinson, via email

A There are two issues here. If the conditions of the planning permission have been breached, the local authority has a 10-year enforcement period to take action, so contact it if the breach is detrimental to you.

With regard to the flats, they will be sold as leasehold properties. The freehold (think of it as the external box of the building) may be retained by your neighbour or transferred to the flat owners to own jointly. The leasees are likely to state that the owners cannot carry out work on the structural/external walls without the written consent of the freehold owner. To ascertain who this is, you can download a copy of the freehold legal title from the Land Registry.

For general maintenance, you should seek to reach an arrangement with the owner of the freehold. If it is jointly owned by all three flats, you would have to reach a consensus with all of them. You could write them letters and try to arrange a meeting. Should any of them ignore you, a majority would make decisions.

If work is undertaken on a boundary wall to extend the neighbouring property, it will be necessary to obtain a party-wall award from a surveyor. You can appoint your own or jointly instruct the same one. This agreement will govern how the work is undertaken and ensure that no structural damage is done to the other property.

Simon Thomas, director, Thomas Legal Group, thomaslegalgroup.co.uk

Q Do you need help from one of our experts? Email your questions to homehelp@Sunday-times.co.uk. Advice is given without responsibility.

Q We love to throw dinner parties, but our open-plan kitchen/dining room. It is not soundproofed, so it's awkward when someone spends a penny. Should I turn up the music when guests feel the call of nature, or send them upstairs?

WA, London

A Ah, the perils of open-plan living. The best, although costliest, solution is to have something done about it. Carpet the walls, perhaps? Short of having a little speaker playing music in the lavatory itself, I would send guests upstairs, apologise and say that the downstairs loo is playing up.

Your situation reminds me of two friends. One in Chelsea has a Dyson Airblade in his lavatory. He thinks it marvellous, as he knows when his guests have finished and are ready to emerge. The other friend, an older, rather grand Cheshire-set woman, has the same problem in her house, and sings with gusto when she's testing the plumbing. Last time I was there, we had a rendition of Ory Me a River.

William Hanson is a leading etiquette coach, williamhanson.co.uk



QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q My cousin lives in East Anglia and has bats

inside her converted barn. They are within a timber inside the upstairs bedroom where her two young children sleep, and can be seen flying in and out of the house at dusk.

My cousin is aware that bats are protected, but has no desire to share her living space with them. She is nervous about informing the Bat Conservation Trust, for fear that the welfare of the animals will be its priority. The bats are encased inside the timber, which has a chest of drawers rammed against it to prevent her children seeing them. The noise and, in particular, the smell is overpowering. She is also concerned about the effect this may have on the children's health.

Who can she speak to? As the bats are within a bedroom, will she be able to remove them legally?

SB, London

A Your cousin is right to be concerned about doing anything to the bats without taking expert advice, says Matt Bosworth, a partner at Russell-Cooke solicitors (russell-cooke.co.uk). The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 9, protects bats, stating that any person who "intentionally kills, injures or takes any wild animal... shall be guilty of an offence".

Should she try to get rid of them, she should face up to six months' imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Each bat destroyed constitutes a separate offence. The only defence is outlined by Section 10 of the act:

TOP TIPS

Waffle-makers are back, but they are very different beasts from the smoking machines of the 1980s, which you always had to keep an eye on. The latest models are fast and non-stick – and they won't set off the fire alarm. Here are our picks.

WINNER
Andrew James Belgian Waffle-Maker, **£57/100, £24.95***

andrewjamesworldwide.com

■ Heated up quickly and produced golden, fluffy results in five minutes.

■ Although they are not

dishwasher-safe, the plates wipe clean easily.

RUNNER-UP

Unold Diamond Waffle-Maker, **£85/100, £29.99; amazon.co.uk**

■ Delivers single crisp waffles with a fluffy middle every time.

■ Has multiple settings, which allows you to cook your waffles at a lower temperature, depending on what the recipe calls for.

■ goodhousekeeping.co.uk/institute



Illustration: Russell Newman

Home help

Whether your worry is bats in the bedroom wall or the future of countryside grants, our experts are here to offer advice