Newsletter December 2019

Stacey

Rural Business Administration

MTD - Digital VAT

I am sure everyone by now has heard of and knows about Making Tax Digital for VAT. For those of you that qualify and have not yet registered and got your accounts onto compatible software this must be done before April 2020. If you are not enjoying doing your own bookkeeping, struggling to keep up with it or struggling with the software, give us a call to see how we can assist you.

We've assisted several businesses with conforming to the new regulations and introduced new procedures to help with storing digital records. We're aware that setting up new bookkeeping records has meant that businesses have incurred additional setup costs, but there are advantages. All income and expenditure is categorised, bank records reconciled and paperwork scanned in and readily available. Access can be granted to your accountant so that they can prepare your returns and accounts quickly, efficiently and cost effectively.

There are also several ways in which you can assist us to reduce the amount of time we need to spend reconciling accounts and chasing for information. This will help keep bills down in future.

1. Keep personal and business transactions separate. The simplest way to achieve this is to maintain separate bank accounts for personal and business use, and to ensure that business and private purchases are kept separate. This reduces the time spent recording private expenses.

2. Provide all invoices and receipts. This sounds simple but companies are increasingly moving away from paper records and may only email invoices or you may need to log into an account to download an invoice/ statement. Electronic records can be emailed to us when they become available to you to save hunting for it later. Ensuring that all paper records are provided saves us having to chase paperwork from suppliers.

3. Provide us with supplier statements. This is a great way to double check that no invoices have been missed and assists with matching up payments when a single payment has paid off more than one invoice, or a credit note has been applied.

4. Keep a record of cheques written to pay business expenses and details of business income paid into the bank. This is needed for the bank reconciliation to match up which bills/invoices have been paid.

5. Ensure that all Hire Purchase Agreements have a number, are dated and signed. As the VAT invoice is made out to the HP company, then we can not claim the VAT from that, however we claim the VAT using the HP agreement. Therefore, a VAT inspector must have sight of the completed agreement to be able to claim the VAT.

Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

For 2020 we shall be introducing a new procedure for BPS applications. In January we shall send out a BPS Declaration Letter in which I will require you to complete the yes/no questions, give details of any changes, or request a visit, and send it back signed for the beginning of February when the application window opens. Although I do love to speak to you all and catch up with your news and see how everyone is doing, this BPS Declaration will save a considerable amount of time and will also act as instructions and a record of the changes I have been informed of. Please do not forget to send us your Claim Statements for checking, as the RPA will not send a copy to agents.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Under these regulations we are required to inform you about how your personal data will be processed. This is documented in our Privacy Policy which is available on our website. We have made the decision that we can no longer hold your personal log in details for the Rural Payments Agency. Therefore, if we have those details you will find your Customer Reference Number (CRN) enclosed with this newsletter. Then in January in a separate mailing we shall forward to you your password. If you don't get this in January then either I don't have it, or what I do have doesn't work. You will see that they are printed on labels for you to stick in a convenient place. All the information will be deleted from our records at the end of January.

Felling licenses

If you are carrying out hedgelaying and coppicing work on hedgerows, please be aware that you may need a felling licence. In any calendar quarter you may fell up to 5 cubic metres without a felling licence.
Included in this amount are:

- anything with a diameter of 8cm and over if felling with the intention of the tree not to regrow
- anything with a diameter of 15cm and over if you are coppicing for the tree to regrow

The Forestry Commission does not charge a fee to apply and they can take up to 3 months to be processed. Note that even if you are part of a Countryside Stewardship agreement, you still need to have the Felling license in place if necessary. Please refer to the latest publication by the Forestry Commission "Tree felling, Getting Permission" for full guidance.

Agricultural Waste Exemptions

The Environment Agency introduced the current system for Waste Exemptions in October 2013. Any farmer using, treating, storing or disposing of waste will need to register the relevant exemptions such as spreading waste to benefit agricultural land and burning of waste in the open. Now would be good time to review your position as these last 3 years and most would have been up for renewal this autumn.

Grants

All the grants below are expected to run again, all launching early 2020. They all have different deadlines which have not yet been announced. If you wish to discuss any of these schemes or if you would like help with an application, please do call.

Productivity Small Grant – the third and final round is expected to launch sometime in 2020. We shall keep you posted via email.

Hedgerow & Boundary Grant - is available to all that are not already in Mid-Tier. It pays for boundary works of hedgelaying, coppicing, casting-up, earthbank restoration and gapping (planting up gaps), but NOT fencing, and you are expected to fence it yourself. It is expected that £10,000 will be available on a competitive basis with hedgelaying being the highest scoring item. If you have an existing agreement and complete and claim the work by the end of this winter, you can apply again.

Water Capital Grant - only available for those in the targeted area. It is expected that £10,000 will be available for a standalone agreement, however it can be significantly more as part of a Mid-Tier application. Don't forget that if you know that you will need planning permission to get it in as soon as possible so it can be granted before an application is started. If you are unsure if planning permission is required, we can apply for Pre-Planning Advice.

Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship - available to all apart from those still in ELS or HLS. It is competitive and has land options as well as capital works including fencing and can be combined with a Water Capital Grant. Last year, application packs and visits from Natural England had to be requested by the end of May, with a deadline of the end of July, for a start date of the following January. If you wish to apply, please think about this early in the year as each application can be quite involved due to the evidence requirements, and there is no leeway in deadlines.

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to assisting you during 2020 and beyond.