

# Sentry assists with compensation claims from UK Power Networks

John Barrett, Farm Manager of Sentry Norfolk and Jamie Seaman, Sentry Land Agent

## THE FARMER

Back in September last year I was contacted by BTS, who are the contractors for UK Power Networks, as they had planned to replace a section of telegraph poles that crossed some of the land that we manage. They wanted to start in a field of oilseed rape at Bruce Seaman Farms, where we contract farm, across one of our neighbours, Neils Mattiesen, onto Whitehouse Farm, where we are tenants, and then onto another neighbour, Tom Crawford. My initial thought was that it would have been better to wait until after harvest to carry out the work, but of course they keep going all year round, whatever the conditions.

They started work in November when it was wet and made some serious ruts as they travelled from pole to pole, however they did stick to one rut so the damage was not extensive, just bad where they had travelled.

Before they started they had explained that they would pay us compensation for lost crop as well as remedial cultivations. Having discussed the impact with Bruce

Seaman Farms I then asked Jamie if he would be happy to act on behalf of us both. Of course he agreed and explained that UK Power Networks would be happy as they would be dealing with one agent rather than two (always better). This got me thinking whether our neighbours might like to use Jamie's negotiating skills as well, and both Mr Mattiesen and Mr Crawford agreed it would work well.

## THE AGENT

John passed on the details of the landowners and I arranged appointments to visit each one and discuss the process. I liaised with the agent representing UK Power Networks and obtained route plans and timetables for the works so these could be adjusted dependent on the landowner's wishes.

In total I represented four different landowners in obtaining compensation for the damage caused by the Network with a total length of pole replacement in the region of 4 miles spanning across four different parishes. Once all the routes for access and timetables for works had been agreed between myself, the landowner and the Network, I inspected the works on-site and advised on amendments whilst the work was being carried out, dependant on variances encountered on the ground. The works took approximately 6 weeks from start to finish on the routes I had involvement with. The next stage was for me to calculate the compensation payable to each landowner.

The obvious heads of claim were crop loss and damage to the soil structure, drainage issues and the added difficulty of spraying and fertilising for the rest of the season



with tramlines destroyed or cut in half by the contractor's route. I also considered damage to any farm tracks, impacts on shoots, damaged fencing and hedges and trees which required replanting. We also had some damaged culverts between fields, and some claimant's time to account for, including one of my clients providing a teleporter and man to assist the contractors in moving poles one day.

In some cases we negotiated a rental figure for storage compounds which the contractors used to locate the poles before installation. There was also a further claim for the additional reinstatement that the farmer would incur come next autumn for the large wheelings that had been created by the equipment, requiring deeper cultivations and greater expense. One of the claims was on a dairy business in which the temporary power supply provided by generator whilst the poles were being replaced, was insufficient to run the dairy equipment resulting in power cuts, the parlour tripping out and significant inconvenience to my client.

Overall, after being introduced and meeting the clients in late October the claims were submitted by the end of February and were settled by the end of March. It is important to note that each claim included an indemnity which allows the landowner to make further claims against the Network should any further loss or damage be discovered or suffered. It has in fact recently materialised

that the Network has damaged land drains on one holding for which we are now submitting a second claim.

The Network settled my fee so it was no additional cost to the landowner. If you have a utility company proposing work on any of your land, please do not hesitate to contact me for advice.

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