

Press release: Grading under review for First Priority Housing Association Limited

The Regulator of Social Housing reports that First Priority Housing Association Limited's grading is currently under review.

The regulator notifies that First Priority Housing Association Limited has fewer than 1,000 homes and therefore does not have a current published regulatory judgement in accordance with our established procedures. The outcome of the investigation will be confirmed in a regulatory notice, once completed.

The regulator is currently investigating a matter which may impact on First Priority's compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability Standard.

The [GUR list](#) is available on the website.

1. The [regulatory framework](#) can also be found on the website.
2. The regulation of social housing is the responsibility of the Regulation Committee, a statutory committee of the Homes and Communities Agency. The organisation refers to itself as the Regulator of Social Housing in undertaking the functions of the Regulation Committee. Homes England is the trading name of the HCA's non-regulation functions.
3. The regulator's purpose is to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.

For more information visit the [RSH website](#).

Our [media enquiries page](#) has contact details for journalists.

For general queries to RSH, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Speech: UK closing statement, OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Madam Director

As you bring HDIM 2017 to a close we have much to reflect upon.

I fully subscribe to the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its member states, and I will not repeat all the thanks already expressed except to applaud the hard work of your team preparing and delivering this conference.

I would like to add a couple of brief thoughts, as much as in my capacity as Chair of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee as in my national capacity.

First I want to highlight the connection between HDIM, which brings together a wide range of civil society and governmental representatives, and the meetings of the Human Dimension Committee in Vienna where diplomats meet roughly monthly for in depth topical discussions related to our OSCE Human Dimension Commitments.

Over the past nine months the Human Dimension Committee in Vienna has discussed specific aspects of issues also considered here at HDIM: tolerance, hate crime; political participation; freedom of peaceful assembly to name just a few.

Secondly I want to highlight the importance of engagement with civil society. In democratic societies civil society organisations play an essential role in helping keep governments accountable. Strong, independent civil society organisations also make a significant direct contribution to the lives of individuals and to the health and stability of society. As we have seen so often this week the key to tackling some of our most difficult challenges lies in trust and co-operation between authorities and genuine civil society. I am grateful to the invited civil society experts who have significantly enriched each of our discussions this year in the Human Dimension Committee.

I pay tribute too to civil society representatives, be they activists, lawyers, journalists or simply private individuals who have travelled to Warsaw this year to fight discrimination and injustice, and to defend people and principles.

Madame Director,

As long as there is injustice, or unfairness in our region, as long as a changing world presents us with new or shifting challenges there will be a need for the conversations between states and civil society that HDIM provides a forum for.

Finally, Madame Director, you and other moderators have reminded us more than once of the need for respectful interventions. It has been deeply troubling

to hear speakers using HDIM as a platform for views and language incompatible with the principles and commitments of this organisation and to attack the legitimate rights of others. Upholding freedom of expression whilst not allowing prejudice and incitement of hatred is a challenge we need to face together.

Madam Director,

The best discussion I heard in the past fortnight involved speakers with very different perspectives discussing sensitive issues with a critical but respectful audience. That for me is what HDIM should be about.

I look forward to working with you over the coming months in support of the valuable work of ODIHR and as you plan ahead for next year's HDIM and other activity in the coming year.

Thank you.

Press release: Call for evidence to help improve air quality launched

Householders and businesses are being asked for their views on proposals to cut harmful emissions caused by the burning of dirtier fuels.

A [call for evidence](#) on the use of house coal, smokeless coal, manufactured solid fuels and wet wood used for heating homes has today been launched to help the government reduce harmful emissions of soot and smoke, as action continues to improve air quality.

The government is considering a range of options to tackle these emissions, these include:

- Encouraging consumers to switch from house coal by only allowing the sale of low sulphur smokeless alternatives
- switching from wet wood to dry wood
- the introduction of sulphur limits for all smokeless solid fuels
- and new powers for local authorities to take action for persistent smoke offences where local amenity is harmed
- The government is not considering banning domestic burning, and is not seeking to prevent the use or installation of wood-burning stoves

The call for evidence will inform our understanding of what impact these measures could have if introduced.

While we are keen to encourage consumers to switch to cleaner wood burning, which will directly benefit them in their homes and improve the local

environment, the government is not considering banning domestic burning. Many households have installed wood-burning stoves, and we are not seeking to prevent their use or installation.

While air quality in the UK has improved significantly in recent decades, with reductions in emissions of all of the key pollutants, domestic burning of house coal (the typical black fuel), smokeless solid fuels (smokeless coal, for example, or manufactured solid fuels which are made from coal and other ingredients) and wood are the single largest contributors of harmful particulate matter (PM) emissions, accounting for around 40% of total UK PM2.5 emissions in 2015. In fact, a wood burning stove can emit more PM than a diesel HGV or passenger car.

The tiny particles in smoke can enter the bloodstream and have been found in internal organs risking long term health issues as well as having more immediate impacts in some people such as breathing problems or asthma attacks.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We all have a role to play in improving the air we breathe. Many of us enjoy a cosy fire in our homes, but burning dirtier fuel has a real impact on the quality of air for our family and friends around us.

We must be mindful that pollution is about more than just transport. Poor air quality affects public health, the economy, and the environment, which is why we are determined to do more. However, if we make the switch to burning cleaner domestic fuel, we can continue to enjoy burning wood and smokeless coal in stoves and fires in our homes.

Many consumers are unaware of the impact on their health or the environment from burning solid fuels, or indeed which are the cleanest fuels to buy. That is why the government is already working with industry to raise consumer awareness of the benefits of cleaner fuels, such as 'Ready to Burn' wood, where a logo clearly identifies wood that is certified as clean and ready to burn.

Consumers can already take action by buying the most efficient stove, using high quality fuel and regularly servicing their appliance.

Last year the government confirmed it would end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars by 2040 as part of a £3.5 billion plan to tackle nitrogen dioxide emissions. The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations produced by Defra and the Department for Transport, outlined how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action.

The call for evidence will feed into the government's Clean Air Strategy, which will be published for consultation in 2018. This will further address

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The call for evidence will feed into the government's Clean Air Strategy, which will be published for consultation in 2018. This will further address wider sources of air pollution.

**Open consultation: Air quality:
domestic burning of house coal,
smokeless coal, manufactured solid**

fuels and wet wood – call for evidence

We are seeking evidence and data on the use of solid fuels such as house coal, smokeless coal, manufactured solid fuels and wet wood for domestic heating.

We are interested in the effect on householders of shifting from burning the more polluting fuels such as house coal and wet wood, towards less polluting fuels such as low sulphur smokeless fuels and dry wood.

We are also interested in the effect on businesses, for example on those selling stoves, fuels or providing maintenance services for whom domestic burning forms an integral part of their business.

Your responses will feed into the government's Clean Air Strategy which will be published for consultation in 2018. This will set out how we will work towards our international commitments and continue to deliver air quality improvements in the UK.