

Press release: Crackdown on unfair leasehold practices

Radical new proposals to cut out unfair abuses of leasehold have been announced by the government today (25 July 2017) in a major move that will deliver a fairer, more transparent system for homebuyers.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has set out plans to ban new build houses being sold as leasehold as well as restricting ground rents to as low as zero. This can often expose homebuyers to unreasonable and long-term financial abuse.

Leasehold generally applies to flats with shared spaces, but developers – particularly in the north west – have been increasingly selling houses on these terms.

With 1.2 million leasehold houses currently recorded in England and the number of leasehold sales rapidly growing, the government is taking crucial action to make future leases fairer.

Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

It's clear that far too many new houses are being built and sold as leaseholds, exploiting home buyers with unfair agreements and spiraling ground rents. Enough is enough. These practices are unjust, unnecessary and need to stop.

Our proposed changes will help make sure leasehold works in the best interests of homebuyers now and in the future.

Other measures, which are now subject to an [8-week consultation](#), include:

- setting ground rents to zero levels – in recent years these have increased significantly, in some cases doubling every 10 years
- closing legal loopholes to protect consumers – such as leaving some leaseholders vulnerable to possession orders
- changing the rules on Help to Buy equity loans so that the scheme can only be used to support new build houses on acceptable terms

The terms of some leases are becoming increasingly onerous to those purchasing leasehold flat or house, who often find they need to pay thousands of pounds to their freeholder to make simple changes to their homes. Recent cases include:

- a homeowner being charged £1,500 by the company to make a small alteration to their home
- a family house that is now unsaleable because the ground rent is expected to hit £10,000 a year by 2060

- a homeowner who was told buying the lease would cost £2,000 but the bill came to £40,000

Ground rents are charged on all residential leasehold properties but evidence shows that they are becoming increasingly expensive. Under government plans they could be reduced so that they relate to real costs incurred, and are fair and transparent to the consumer.

The proposed prohibiting of future houses being sold as leasehold will apply to all houses apart from a few exceptional circumstances where leasehold is still needed – such as houses that have shared services or built on land with specific restrictions.

The [consultation](#) will last for 8 weeks from Tuesday 25 July 2017.

These proposals relate to England only.

Department for Communities and Local Government [statistics](#) estimate there were 4 million residential leasehold dwellings in England in the private sector in 2014 to 2015 and of these 1.2 million were leasehold houses.

[Press release: Simon Hart MP joins the Committee on Standards in Public Life](#)

Simon Hart MP has been appointed as the Conservative party member of the independent Committee on Standards in Public life.

The [Committee on Standards in Public Life](#) advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK. It monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders.

The Committee is made up of an independent Chair, 4 independent members appointed by the Prime Minister following open competition in accordance with the [Public Appointments Governance Code](#), and 3 political members appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the leaders of the main parties.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life is currently conducting a short review of the issue of [intimidation experienced by Parliamentary candidates](#), and the broader implications of this for other holders of public office, following a request from the Prime Minister. The Committee has published the terms of reference for this review and published a [call for evidence](#) yesterday.

Notes to Editors

1. Interview requests and media enquiries should go to Maggie O'Boyle on 07880 740627.
 2. Simon Hart is Conservative MP for Carmarthen West & South Pembrokeshire, first elected in May 2010. Since being elected Simon has been a member of the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee, the Welsh Affairs Select Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee. He has also been a member/Chair of several APPGs including Tourism in Wales, Learning outside the Classroom, Marine Energy & Tidal Lagoons, EU/US Trade, and others. Additionally, Simon sits on the UK Delegation of the OSCE PA and is Chairman of the United & Cecil Club. Prior to being elected he was Chief Executive of the Countryside Alliance, and remains Chairman of the organisation.
 3. Simon Hart MP replaces Dame Angela Watkinson DBE who stood down at the 2017 election.
 4. The other members of the Committee are: Lord (Paul) Bew, Chairman, Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP, Dr Jane Martin CBE, Sheila Drew Smith OBE, Jane Ramsey, Monisha Shah, and Rt Hon Lord (Andrew) Stunell.
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[News story: Saturn surprises as Cassini continues its Grand Finale](#)

This observation, which means the true length of Saturn's day is still unknown, is one of several early findings from the final phase of Cassini's mission, known as the Grand Finale.

Other recent science highlights include promising hints about the structure and composition of the icy rings, along with high-resolution images of the rings and Saturn's atmosphere.

Cassini is now in the 15th of 22 weekly orbits that pass through the narrow gap between Saturn and its rings. The spacecraft began its finale on 26 April and will continue its dives until 15 September, when it will make a mission-ending plunge into Saturn's atmosphere.

The UK has involvement on 4 instruments onboard the Cassini spacecraft, including as the Principal Investigator for the magnetometer, built to measure planetary and inter-planetary magnetic fields and developed by a team at Imperial College, London.

Professor Michele Dougherty, Cassini magnetometer investigation lead at Imperial College, London, said:

The instrument and the spacecraft were originally designed to be in

orbit at Saturn for four years and 13 years later we are still there and everything is in really good shape! What we should remember is that neither Cassini nor the instruments were designed to carry out these Grand Finale orbits, for the magnetometer we have had to roll the spacecraft on a number of occasions in order to get the most accurate measurements.

The final critical rolls are taking place today (25 July 2017). The spectacular science being revealed is a testament to the fantastic spacecraft and science teams that have enabled these Grand Finale orbits to happen. The observations to date from the magnetic field are very surprising and certainly not as we expected.

Early Magnetic Field Analysis

Based on data collected by Cassini's magnetometer instrument, Saturn's magnetic field appears to be surprisingly well aligned with the planet's rotation axis. The tilt is much smaller than 0.06 degrees – which is the lower limit the magnetometer data placed on the value prior to the start of the Grand Finale.

This observation is at odds with scientists' theoretical understanding of how magnetic fields are generated. Planetary magnetic fields are understood to require some degree of tilt in order to sustain currents flowing through the liquid metal deep inside the planet (in Saturn's case, this is thought to be liquid metallic hydrogen). With no tilt, the currents would eventually subside and the field would disappear.

Any tilt to the magnetic field would make the daily wobble of the planet's deep interior observable, thus revealing the true length of Saturn's day, which has so far proved elusive.

Professor Dougherty said:

The tilt seems to be much smaller than we had previously estimated and quite challenging to explain. We have not been able to resolve the length of day at Saturn so far, but we're still working on it.

The lack of a tilt may eventually be rectified with further data. Dougherty and her team believe some aspect of the planet's deep atmosphere might be masking the true internal magnetic field. The team will continue to collect and analyze data for the remainder of the mission, including during the final plunge into Saturn.

The magnetometer data will also be evaluated in concert with Cassini's measurements of Saturn's gravity field collected during the Grand Finale. Early analysis of the gravity data collected so far shows discrepancies compared with parts of the leading models of Saturn's interior, suggesting

something unexpected about the planet's structure is awaiting discovery.

Sampling Saturn

In addition to its investigation of the planet's interior, Cassini has now obtained the first samples of the planet's atmosphere and main rings, which promise new insights about their composition and structure. The spacecraft's cosmic dust analyzer (CDA) instrument has collected many nanometer-size ring particles while flying through the planet-ring gap, while its ion and neutral mass spectrometer (INMS) has sniffed the outermost atmosphere, called the exosphere.

During the spacecraft's final five orbits and final plunge, the INMS instrument will obtain samples deeper down in the atmosphere. Cassini will skim through the outer atmosphere during these passes, and INMS is expected to send particularly important data on the composition of Saturn's atmosphere during the final plunge.

In addition, Cassini's imaging cameras have returned some of the highest-resolution views of the rings and planet they have ever obtained. For example, close-up views of Saturn's C ring – which features mysterious bright bands called plateaus – reveal surprisingly different textures in neighboring sections of the ring.

Launched in 1997, Cassini has orbited Saturn since arriving in 2004 for an up-close study of the planet, its rings and moons, and its vast magnetosphere. Cassini has made numerous discoveries, including a global ocean with indications of hydrothermal activity within the moon Enceladus, and liquid methane seas on another moon, Titan.

The Cassini-Huygens mission is a cooperative project of NASA, ESA (European Space Agency) and the Italian Space Agency. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a division of Caltech in Pasadena, California, manages the mission for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, Washington. JPL designed, developed and assembled the Cassini orbiter.

Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/Space Science Institute

[Press release: Met Office and DOST PAGASA partners to enhance weather services](#)

The UK Met Office and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (DOST PAGASA) established a three-year collaboration agreement on scientific weather-related research to improve

weather and climate services. Last July 21, 2017, PAGASA Administrator, Dr. Vicente Malano, and Met Office Director for Meteorological Science, Dr. Simon Vosper, signed the agreement, which also marks the official launch of the Weather and Climate Science for Service Partnership (WCSSP) Southeast Asia Programme in the Philippines. The UK is investing an indicative amount of £2 million (PHP 130 million) with the Philippines providing an equivalent contribution.

Filipino and British reserachers will work together to understand more about the region's severe weather conditions as comunities in the Philippines have to endure periods of torrential rain, flooding, landslides, high winds and thunderstorms. Improving weather forecasts translates to effective and timely advice protecting Filipinos from the damaging effects of floods, typhoons and other high-impact events.

British Ambassador Asif Ahmad said:

With our experience in typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), we've learned that the best way to address the challenges of natural hazards is by working together. This partnership leverages on the expertise and resources of the UK and the Philippines to deliver effective weather services that will protect lives and livelihoods in the Philipines and South East Asia.

WCSSP SEA Philippines is part of the UK – Philippines Newton Agham Programme. DOST Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña has recognised the programme's contribution since it began in 2014 saying:

The Newton-Agham Programme is a chance for our local scientists to thrive and progress through scholarships and research collaborations, reinforcing the development of their scientific fields which is crucial in our efforts to generate innovations and to provide creative sustainable solutions to present and future problems that we face. The Newton-Agham partnership allows us to fast track progress with the collaboration of our partners from the UK, helping us contribute to socioeconomic development through science, technology, and innovations.

The event was held at the Amihan Conference Room, PAGASA Central Office, Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

Newton Fund

The Newton Fund builds scientific and innovation partnerships with 18 partner countries to support their economic development and social welfare, and to develop their research and innovation capacity for long-term sustainable growth. It has a total UK Government investment of £735 million up until 2021, with matched resources from the partner countries. The Newton Fund is managed by the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

(BEIS), and delivered through 15 UK Delivery Partners, which include the Research Councils, the UK National Academies, the British Council, Innovate UK and the Met Office.

In the Philippines, the programme is known as the Newton Agham (Science) Programme to reflect the collaboration between the UK and the Philippines in science, research and innovation. UK delivery partners and the UK Government, through its embassy, works with Philippine science and innovation institutions and funders, such as the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Department of Agriculture to co-develop and implement programmes that strengthen science and innovation capacity and create solutions to development challenges in the Philippines and in the region.

The UK delivery partners presently working in the Philippines include the British Council, Royal Academy of Engineering, Medical Research Council (MRC), Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Research Councils UK (RCUK), Innovate UK, and the UK Met Office. Priority areas in the Philippines are: health and life sciences, improving environmental resilience, energy security, future cities, agritech, and digital, innovation and creativity.

Weather and Climate Science Services Partnerships Southeast Asia (WCSSP Southeast Asia) WCSSP Southeast Asia is a regional programme currently involving three partner countries: the Philippines and Malaysia. The partnership is led in the Philippines by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), in Malaysia by the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), and in Indonesia by Indonesian Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics (BMKG). This project aims to jointly develop and improve underpinning capability in global and regional forecasting systems, and advance the understanding of high-impact weather events in order to provide better advice of high impact weather events and mitigate the socio-economic impact of these events.

WCSSP SE Asia – Philippines: Project Objective

The Met Office will work collaboratively with institutions in the Philippines and the UK to engage in scientific weather related research and to collaborate on the development of improved processes to provide advice related to high impact weather events.

The overarching aims of this project are to:

1. improve the understanding of the impact of large scale atmospheric processes on the weather and climate of SE Asia and the Philippines
2. assess, develop and improve convective scale models (local fine scale models) in order to make better forecasts of high impact weather over SE Asia and in particular for the Philippines
3. improve the processes which translate weather forecast models into advice that can help mitigate against high impact weather in the Philippines at a range of lead-times from hours to months
4. Ensure that the requirements of the users of weather forecasts influence

the science carried such that advances of weather forecasts meet the needs of the users

WCSSP SE Asia Philippines: Work Packages There will be 3 work packages for WCSSP SE Asia to deliver the above goals:

1. Global scale science – improve the understanding of the impact of large-scale atmospheric processes on the weather of SE Asia and the representation of this understanding in global models.
2. Regional scale science – improve the understanding of regional to local scale processes in SE Asia and develop better convective-scale weather forecast models for SE Asia.
3. Improving advice and understanding needs – understand user needs, develop applications that support these needs and ensure the science in other work packages directly helps mitigate against high impact weather (HIW) in SE Asia, and in the Philippines particularly.

[Press release: Director of Labour Market Enforcement warns rogue bosses of plans to use powers to jail worst offenders](#)

Director of Labour Market Enforcement Sir David Metcalf today (25 July) warned rogue employers he would be consulting on how to make full use of powers to jail the worst offenders.

[Sir David Metcalf](#) was appointed in January 2017 to oversee a government crackdown on exploitation in the workplace by setting the strategic priorities for the government's 3 enforcement agencies:

- HMRC's National Minimum Wage (NMW) enforcement team
- the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)
- the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS)

Publishing his [introductory report](#), Sir David said he would work with the government's enforcement bodies to:

- better tackle illegal practices by implementing labour market enforcement undertakings and orders, which came into force in November 2016 and carry a maximum 2-year prison sentence for serious or repeat offences
- identify how best to ensure large employers' supply chains do not breach labour market laws, particularly in the fashion, construction and cleaning sectors

- review the effectiveness of current labour market enforcement efforts

Over the coming months Sir David will consult business and worker representatives, industry bodies and enforcement action groups ahead of publishing his first full labour market enforcement strategy later this year.

New [enforcement statistics](#) also released today revealed the government identified record back pay for workers, with almost £11 million for 98,000 workers in 2016 to 2017.

Sir David said:

Tackling labour market abuses is an important priority for the government and I am encouraged it has committed record funds to cracking down on exploitation.

Over the coming months I will be working with government enforcement agencies and industry bodies to better identify and punish the most serious and repeat offenders taking advantage of vulnerable workers and honest businesses.

The report is published alongside this year's National Minimum and Living Wage enforcement statistics. The figures show in 2016 to 2017 HMRC's enforcement teams identified a record £10.9 million in back pay for 98,150 of the UK's lowest paid workers – a 69% increase on those helped last year.

Businesses who failed to pay workers at least the legal minimum wage were also fined £3.9 million, with employers in hospitality and retail sectors among the most prolific offenders.

Business Minister Margot James said:

This government is firmly on the side of hard-working people and we are determined to stamp out any workplace exploitation, from minimum wage abuses to modern slavery.

While the majority of employers create a fair and safe environment for their workers, there are a small minority of rogue employers who break the law and we will use all enforcement measures at our disposal to crack down on labour market abuses.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Sarah Newton said:

I welcome the director's introductory report which recognises the importance of a collaborative approach across enforcement agencies.

I am pleased that we have extended the reach and budget of the GLAA as it will enable them to do even more, using new powers to search premises, seize evidence, and arrest those who mistreat workers.

The new powers are working, multiple arrests have already been made, including for modern slavery offences, and I am confident that GLAA officers will continue to disrupt the unscrupulous criminals who exploit the most vulnerable.

The report comes after Matthew Taylor published his [independent review into modern employment practices](#) to achieve “good quality work for all”. The government will study this review carefully over the summer and respond in detail later in the year.

Sir David will start consulting with stakeholders ahead of publishing his first full strategy later this year. To contribute please email directorsoffice@lme.gsi.gov.uk.