

Thousands more leaseholders freed from rising ground rents

- Fifteen businesses to remove costly ground rent terms
- Over 3,400 leaseholders' ground rents will now remain at the amount charged when their home was first sold
- CMA Chief Executive says more housing developers to be put 'under the microscope' as investigation continues

Fifteen businesses which had bought freeholds from housing developer Countryside have now given formal commitments – known as undertakings – to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to remove terms that cause ground rents to double in price. These terms, which kick in every 10 or 15 years, mean people often struggle to sell or obtain a mortgage on their leasehold home. Their property rights can also be at risk if they fall behind on their ground rent. The move comes after the CMA secured undertakings from Countryside in September 2021 to strike out terms that doubled ground rent every 10 to 15 years.

The businesses, which include investment firms and housing associations, will also remove terms which had originally been ground rent doubling clauses, but were converted so that ground rent increased in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The CMA believes that the original doubling clauses were unfair terms and should therefore have been fully removed, not replaced with another term that increases the ground rent.

The move comes after the CMA launched enforcement action against 4 housing developers in September 2020. These were Countryside and Taylor Wimpey for using possibly unfair contract terms, and Barratt Developments and Persimmon Homes over the possible mis-selling of leasehold homes.

After securing undertakings from Countryside to remove doubling ground rent terms from its contracts, the CMA turned its eye to businesses that bought Countryside freeholds and continued to use the same ground rent terms at the expense of leaseholders. The CMA wrote to these businesses, setting out its concerns and requiring them to remove these terms from their contracts.

Due to the CMA's intervention, thousands of leaseholders will now see their ground rents remain at the original amount – i.e. when the property was first sold – and they will not increase over time.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

“Thousands more leaseholders can now rest easy knowing they will not be forced to pay costly doubling ground rents. We believe these terms are unjust and unwarranted, and can result in people trapped in homes they are unable to sell or mortgage – a major cause of anxiety and stress for so many.

“We welcome the commitment from these businesses to do what is right by their

leaseholders by removing these terms, and we will hold them to it.

“While this is a huge step forward, our work here isn’t done. We will continue to work hard to free leaseholders from these problematic terms and will now be putting other housing developers under the microscope.”

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove said:

“We are restoring fairness in the leasehold system and that’s why we asked the CMA to investigate unjust practices, such as doubling ground rent.

“I welcome their ongoing success in eradicating this unacceptable treatment of leaseholders from the housing market and freeing thousands from such inflated costs. Others must now follow suit, as our work to help all leaseholders continues.

“Homebuyers starting a new lease from this summer will now pay nothing in ground rent costs – setting the path to a more equal future for homeownership.”

As part of its ongoing review, the CMA is continuing to investigate 2 investment groups: Brigante Properties, and Abacus Land and Adriatic Land. While both firms have agreed to remove doubling ground rent terms from the leases they bought from Countryside, the CMA is seeking the same in relation to leases they bought from Taylor Wimpey. The CMA maintains that these terms must be removed. The CMA’s investigation into possible mis-selling by Barratt Developments is also continuing. Further updates will be made in due course.

For more information on the CMA’s ongoing work in the sector and for future updates, visit the [leasehold case page](#).

Notes to editors

1. These undertakings have been provided to the CMA voluntarily and without any admission of wrongdoing or liability. It should not be assumed that any of the 15 businesses have breached the law – only a court can decide whether a breach has occurred.
2. The 15 businesses who have provided undertakings are:
 - Adriatic Land 3 Limited (part of the Abacus Land and Adriatic Land investment group);
 - Brigante Properties Limited;
 - Chris Allnutt and Company Management Limited;
 - Claycourt Limited;
 - Penult 101 Limited;
 - RMB 102 Limited;
 - SF Ground Rents No 15 Limited;
 - Great Places Housing Association;
 - London and Quadrant Housing Trust;
 - Mann Island Properties Limited;
 - Notting Hill Genesis;
 - Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association Limited;

- RG Reversions 2014 Limited;
 - Tapestart Limited;
 - Weathercourt Limited.
3. The CMA is in ongoing discussions with 2 remaining freeholders who bought freeholds from Countryside but have not yet signed undertakings: D.A.T.S. (Holdings) Limited and Wallace Estates. D.A.T.S. has agreed in principle to provide undertakings subject to finalising arrangements with Countryside.
 4. For people who own, or are looking to buy, a leasehold property, [the CMA has produced written and video guidance](#), which offers advice on a number of issues, including what people can do when faced with fees and charges they consider unjustified.
 5. In September 2021, [Countryside Properties signed undertakings](#) committing it to strike out terms that mean ground rents double every 10 to 15 years.
 6. In December 2021, [Taylor Wimpey committed](#) to remove doubling ground rent terms from their contracts and the CMA is engaging with businesses who bought freeholds from the developer to ensure they also strike out the terms.
 7. In June 2021, [Aviva committed to remove doubling ground rent terms, and Persimmon Homes committed](#) to offer leasehold house owners the opportunity to buy the freehold of their property at a discounted price.
 8. The remaining housing developer currently under investigation by the CMA is Barratt Developments over concerns about its sales practices in relation to leasehold properties. It should not be assumed that Barratt has breached the law. The CMA has not yet named the other housing developers set to come under review – it will do so once a formal investigation into a firm has commenced.
 9. The investors under investigation who are freeholders of leases – purchased from Taylor Wimpey – with less than 20-year doubling ground rents are Brigante Properties, Abacus Land and Adriatic Land. It should not be assumed that any of these firms have breached the law.
 10. The main provisions of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's concerns about ground rent terms are the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999 (UTCCRs), for contracts entered into before 1 October 2015, and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA), for contracts entered into on or after 1 October 2015. The UTCCRs and Part 2 of the CRA aim to protect consumers against unfair contract terms, and require contract terms to be fair and transparent.
 11. The main provisions of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's concerns about mis-selling are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs). The CPRs aim to protect consumers from unfair commercial practices such as the misleading provision or omission of information as part of sales processes.
 12. As an enforcer under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA cannot currently impose administrative fines for breaches of this consumer protection legislation, but it can enforce the legislation through the courts, and where appropriate, obtain additional measures to improve consumer choice, drive better compliance with the law, or obtain redress for consumers. The government is consulting on proposals to give the CMA new powers, including to impose fines for breaches of consumer

protection law.

13. The CMA's investigation of potential mis-selling of leasehold properties has benefitted from the support of several local Trading Standards offices which have been the focal point for some consumers to raise their concerns.
 14. All enquiries from journalists should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk or by phone on 020 3738 6460.
 15. All enquiries from the general public should be directed to the CMA's General Enquiries team on general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6000.
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[British Ambassador to Thailand joined the opening ceremony of Ex Panther Gold 21](#)

World news story

This Ex Panther Gold 21 joint collaboration will provide an opportunity for the two defence establishments to deepen their military ties through sharing experiences and lessons from previous deployments.



On 14th March, H.E. Mr. Mark Gooding, British Ambassador to Thailand, and General Supachok Tawatpeerachai, Deputy Chief of Defence Forces, presided over the opening ceremony of Ex Panther Gold 21 at the 3rd Army Area in Phetchabun province. The bilateral exercise aims to develop capabilities and understanding in training processes and infantry tactics between the UK and Thailand.

Ex Panther Gold 21, the biggest defence engagement activity between the UK and Thailand this year, demonstrates the close defence and security relationship between the two nations. The exercise programme comprises two main activities which are Cross Training Exercises (CTX) where the combined armed forces learn how to master their skills in martial arts, jungle survival and weapon familiarisation, and Field Training Exercises (FTX) which

enable all personnel to develop competences including close target reconnaissance and contact drills.

Ex Panther Gold 21 is being conducted from 14th March to 1st April with 120 personnel deployed from 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards of the British Armed Forces, along with 160 personnel from the 3rd Cavalry Regiment and Security Battalion of the Royal Thai Armed Forces. This joint collaboration will provide an opportunity for the two defence establishments to deepen their military ties through sharing experiences and lessons from previous deployments.

Mark Gooding, British Ambassador to Thailand said:

Ex Panther Gold provides an excellent opportunity not just for our soldiers to learn valuable military lessons from each other, but also to deepen the longstanding friendly relationship and the mutual respect that our nations share

General Supachok Tawatpeerachai, Deputy Chief of Defence Forces said:

This exercise is the symbol of good cooperation and relationship of our two armed forces. I hope that all of the exercise participants can gain a lot of experiences from this exercise.

Background

- Panther Gold is classified as a combined military exercise between the British Defence Forces and the Royal Thai Armed Forces initiated in 2017.
- The first Panther Gold took place in Kanchanaburi province in 2017, followed by Panther Gold 19 in Nakhon Ratchasima province in 2019.

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[New UK-wide ambitions to accelerate genomic research and drive innovation in healthcare](#)

- New 'Shared Commitments' set out priority actions for genomics initiatives across the UK
- Cancer diagnosis, earlier detection of diseases and patient access to

clinical trials will improve

- Plans will advance government's priorities to reform healthcare and make the UK a scientific superpower

Patients across the UK are set to benefit from faster cancer diagnosis and innovative new treatments thanks to a ground-breaking agreement with the nation's devolved governments.

The UK government, Welsh and Scottish Governments and Northern Ireland Assembly have today (Friday 18 March) agreed a series of commitments to improve outcomes for patients through better genomic testing and access to clinical trials.

The new Shared Commitments for the first time set out priority actions across the UK and are part of wider plans to improve healthcare through genomics – the study of genes and DNA

The Genome UK strategy announced in 2020 builds on innovative work already underway to create the most advanced genomic healthcare system in the world and deliver better healthcare at a lower cost, and forms part of the government's wider commitment to reform healthcare and ensure the UK and the NHS remain at the forefront of cutting-edge treatment. For example, using research to evaluate the use of whole genome sequencing in newborns to screen for rare genetic conditions and diagnose rare diseases earlier, enabling more tailored treatment sooner.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said: > > The pandemic has highlighted the importance of our booming UK life sciences sector and the potential it has to transform health and care services. > > By harnessing the power and innovation of genomic research, we can reduce diagnosis times and use cutting-edge treatments for some of the biggest health challenges we face, including cancer. > > By coming together and agreeing these new shared commitments, we will ensure patients across all four nations of the UK can benefit from these pioneering advancements and cement our place as a world leader in research and genomics.

Genome UK: Shared commitments for UK wide implementation 2022-2025 include working together to:

- Improve cancer diagnosis and treatment by working across the UK to better integrate genomic testing into healthcare and increase access to clinical trials to provide better, personalised treatment.
- Better early detection of disease by establishing a clear, evidence-based approach to Newborn Genome Sequencing, led by Genomics England in partnership with the NHS, alongside the devolved governments, to ensure learning is shared across the UK to benefit newborns and their parents nationwide.
- Build on the successful UK-wide partnership in sequencing of COVID-19 to strengthen collaboration on sequencing of other diseases. As part of this, the UK Health Security Agency will set up a national group on disease genomics with representatives from the four nations.
- Encourage innovative and cutting-edge industry partnerships in research and development across the UK to support implementation of Genome UK by

bringing together the UK-wide genomics ecosystem to improve collaboration and maximise investment.

- Produce high-quality research by bringing together genomic data sets across the UK and increasing access to clinical trials as well as ensuring research feeds back into the NHS to improve patient care.

Building on the collaborative and innovative ways of working during the COVID-19 pandemic, these commitments aim to build on scientific successes, tackling future disease challenges and ensure patients can access more tailored treatment.

Minister for Innovation Lord Kamall said:

Clinical research has been vital in our fight against COVID-19 and the UK's innovation is enabling us to transform our health service and ensure it is firmly at the cutting edge of healthcare.

We're continuing to build on our game-changing genomic advances to better detect new diseases and faster diagnose and treat cancer, which will ultimately save lives.

These new shared commitments show a united vision across the nations to ensure we continue to build on the UK's world-leading genomic capabilities and remain at the forefront of genomic healthcare and research.

The commitments will also help cement the UK's position as the leading global hub for life sciences.

Bringing the joint ambition and skills in this field together will help transform the use of genomics in healthcare and place the UK firmly at the forefront of developments in advancements in genomics, as well as demonstrating the UK is a valued partner for international collaboration and an attractive location for investment.

Cabinet Secretary for Health Humza Yousaf said:

There has never been a time when genomics and the benefits it can bring to help revolutionise the way we provide health care has been more focal.

The past two years showed us just a fraction of what can be achieved in this field and I am pleased that these shared commitments bring together our joint ambitions to deliver genomics healthcare.

Health Minister for Wales Eluned Morgan said:

The UK is at the forefront of the genomics revolution and it is

absolutely right that we should be working with other governments across the UK to deliver on our joint vision. We are already working on our own genomics delivery plan through Genomics Partnership Wales, but it makes sense for us to share our expertise and research in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for patients across Wales and the rest of the UK.

Health Minister for Northern Ireland, Robin Swann:

I am pleased today to jointly publish the Genome UK: Shared Commitments with the Health Ministers for Scotland and Wales and the Minister for Technology, Innovation and Life Sciences in England.

These commitments will ensure that all patients across the UK can benefit from the wide range of opportunities offered by genomic healthcare so that the UK remains at the forefront of genomic research in the world.

The future of genomics in Northern Ireland has the potential to be very exciting and far-reaching in its ability to benefit patients and families here, however it is imperative that we lay the proper foundations for the service to develop and thrive. Publication of these Shared Commitments today is the first step, and establishment of a DoH-led Genomics Partnership for NI will allow us to keep step with our UK counterparts and ensure future progress in this exciting field, for the health, wealth and prosperity of the NI population.

Jennifer Harris, ABPI Director of Research Policy said:

Genomics is already transforming lives, helping our scientists create new generations of treatments for many conditions.

To ensure patients can benefit from these new breakthroughs, a coordinated effort across the UK is needed – which these plans demonstrate.

Today's announcement is welcome, and we look forward to further collaboration between the government, the pharmaceutical industry and the research sector to harness the UK's world-class genomics capability.

David Atkins, UK BioIndustry Association representative on the National Genomics Board, said:

SMEs are a vital part of the UK's existing strength in genomics.

Fostering the right environment and developing a workforce for these companies is key to achieving the ambition of Genome UK.

The commitments set out in this plan, including enabling industry access to clinical assets, expertise and partnerships are an important step in realising the vision of making the UK the best place to start and scale new genomics companies.

The UK Bioindustry Association welcomes these shared commitments and is looking forward to working with the UK government and devolved governments on the next phase of Genome UK implementation.

Nick Meade, Joint Interim Chief Executive at Genetic Alliance UK, said:

We very much welcome these Shared Commitments. As the largest alliance of organisations supporting people with genetic, rare and undiagnosed conditions in the UK, we wholeheartedly support more coordinated implementation action to progress the vision of Genome UK. We hope that collaboration between devolved administrations will realise the potential of genomic healthcare for the benefit of patients across the UK. We are delighted to see the UK wide-commitments on patient and public engagement and look forward to engaging with the UK and devolved governments on their implementation plans.

Background

- The Shared Commitments build on the vision outlined in Genome UK in September 2020 and the commitments in the first implementation plan for 2021-2022 in May 2021.
- They will be followed by more detailed implementation plans from each country by the end of 2022.
- The landmark Genome UK vision can be found [here](#)
- The first implementation plan from 2021-2022 can be found [here](#)

[Government backs latest stage of British Sign Language Bill](#)

- The government backs Bill's next step to make British Sign Language (BSL) a recognised language in GB
- The British Sign Language Bill will benefit more than 150,000 BSL signers
- The Third Reading of the British Sign Language Bill takes place today (Friday 18 March 2022)

The British Sign Language Bill, a Private Member's Bill introduced by Rosie Cooper MP, will, if passed into law, recognise BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland in its own right.

It will be supported by a duty on the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to regularly report on what each relevant government department has done to promote or facilitate the use of British Sign Language in its communications with the public.

The Bill also places a requirement on the DWP Secretary of State to issue guidance to ministerial departments on the promotion and facilitation of BSL.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Chloe Smith MP said:

We know many D/deaf people can experience social isolation and face reduced access to work and education because of barriers in communicating their basic needs and aspirations.

Legally recognising BSL will create a more inclusive and accessible society, improving the lives of D/deaf people and helping public services to get it right.

Rosie Cooper MP said:

This Bill is all about improving the lives of deaf people and the Minister and I have worked together in strengthening it and achieving cross-party approval.

I am confident that with the support of MPs across all parties today, we can get this Bill passed and start making positive steps to give deaf people equal access to public services.

David Buxton, Chair of the British Deaf Association said:

The BSL Bill presents a real opportunity for change, to finally break down avoidable communication barriers and to give Deaf people and their language – BSL – the recognition, inclusion, and equality that they deserve.

If the BSL Bill passes into law, we are ready to work hand-in-hand with the UK government to redesign public services that meet the unique needs of the 151,000 people who have British Sign Language as their first or preferred language.

We also hope that the legal recognition of BSL will encourage many more people across the UK to learn British Sign Language and go on to become interpreters, bilingual professionals and allies of the Deaf community. BSL can bring us all together as a society.

Mark Atkinson, Chief Executive at RNID, said:

We at RNID, our supporters and the wider Deaf community are delighted that the British Sign Language Bill is set to clear the final stage of its passage through the House of Commons. We hope it receives the same support from peers in the House of Lords as it has from MPs and ministers.

We welcome the mechanisms within the Bill and commitment from government to working with a proposed advisory board of Deaf people to put the Bill into practice. Giving the Deaf community a seat at the table will mean government policies and public services will meet the needs of Deaf people for fully inclusive and accessible services.

We mustn't miss the vital opportunity the Bill gives us to win legal recognition of BSL and expand Deaf people's rights. On behalf of the Deaf community and alongside other charities, we will continue pushing to make sure the Bill is passed into law before the end of this session of Parliament.

The Minister for Disabled People has also announced the launch of an advisory board of BSL signers to offer guidance to the DWP on matters relating to BSL; examine how the DWP goes about increasing the number of BSL interpreters; and make sure the Access to Work scheme better meets the needs of BSL signers to support them in employment.

The Third Reading of the Bill will take place today in the House of Commons and the Government will once again be supporting its introduction into law.

The BSL Bill was first introduced on 16 June 2021 and passed the Second Reading stage on 28 January 2022, receiving unanimous cross-party support.

The Minister for Disabled People has worked closely with Labour MP Rosie Cooper and D/deaf people's charities and organisations, such as the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and the British Deaf Association (BDA), to ensure the Bill effectively meets the needs of those who will benefit most.

- Figures from the British Deaf Association suggest that 151,000 people use BSL in the UK, 87,000 of which are D/deaf.

- A Private Members Bill on BSL was introduced on 16 June 2021 and had its Second Reading on 28 January 2022.
- The Bill is recognising BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland in its own right supported by a duty on the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to regularly report on what each relevant government department has done to promote or facilitate the use of British Sign Language in its communications with the public.
- The Bill also places a requirement on the DWP Secretary of State to issue guidance on the promotion and facilitation of BSL, which will be developed together with D/deaf BSL signers as part of the advisory board.
- The Bill will be supported by a package of non-legislative measures, including:
 - establishing a non-statutory advisory board of BSL signers to advise the DWP Secretary of State on matters related to BSL;
 - examining how the government might increase the number of BSL interpreters;
 - reviewing how the DWP might work to ensure the Access to Work fund helps BSL users; and
 - consider how government can further facilitate and promote BSL usage.
 - The Access to Work scheme is available to help people who are disabled or have a physical or mental health condition stay in employment and covers those who work from home. It can provide grants up to £62,900 to keep a job accessible.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

Follow DWP on:

[Russia is responsible for the suffering in Ukraine, Russia alone can end this war: UK statement to the UN Security Council](#)

Thank you, Mr President, and I join others in thanking our briefers today as well.

As we've heard, it's 3 weeks since we met in this Chamber to make one final effort to avert a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

It's 3 weeks since we were interrupted by the news that President Putin had abandoned diplomacy and chosen war.

These have been 3 devastatingly long weeks for the people of Ukraine. For the 3 million people who have fled – and for those who have stayed.

As we heard from the UN, Russian forces are laying siege to populated cities and towns, and indiscriminately shelling residential areas with high impact weaponry, including cluster munitions.

43 healthcare facilities, including a maternity hospital, have been attacked, killing the most vulnerable and depriving civilians of access to medical assistance.

And President Putin's war is causing suffering well beyond Ukraine's borders.

Thousands of students, many from nations around this table, have been caught up in the violence.

The war is spiking food and energy prices, bringing further pain to countries in the developing world already suffering from the impact of COVID, and famine, and conflict, and climate change.

Millions of refugees have been taken in by countries across Europe.

Mr President, Colleagues, 3 weeks since the start of Russia's invasion – one point should be clear in our minds.

This is an unprovoked war of aggression waged by Russia.

Russia is responsible for the suffering it has inflicted on Ukraine and beyond.

Russia alone can end this war.

141 UN Member States have unequivocally condemned Russia's illegal invasion. The International Court of Justice has issued a legally-binding order, requiring Russia to suspend military action in Ukraine immediately.

This week, perversely, Russia tabled a resolution that, among other things, called for the protection of civilians, including women and children.

This is cynical game-playing in the face of human suffering.

Just yesterday in Mariupol, Russian forces reportedly targeted civilians taking cover from the onslaught, despite the word 'children' written on the ground where they sheltered.

If Russia really wanted to protect women and children, it would withdraw its troops from Ukraine and end this illegal invasion today.

Thank you, Mr President.