

Press release: Government to professionalise the estate agent market

New measures will be introduced to professionalise the estate agent market, driving up standards and bringing an end to 'rogue managing agents', announced Housing Secretary Sajid Javid today (8 April 2018).

With over one million homes bought and sold in England each year, delays and complications during the process cause unnecessary financial and emotional stress to customers. This uncertainty can lead to delayed decisions and contributes to over one quarter of house sales falling through annually.

According to government research, more than 6 out of 10 buyers and sellers have experienced stress, and around a quarter of sellers said they would use a different estate agent if they were to go through the process again.

Estate agents will now be required to hold a professional qualification and to be transparent about the fees they receive for referring clients to solicitors, surveyors and mortgage brokers. Other measures to make the system easier, faster and more transparent include:

- encouraging the use of voluntary reservation agreements to help prevent sales falling through and crack down on gazumping
- setting a timeline for local authority searches so buyers get the information they need within 10 days
- requiring managing agents and freeholders to provide up-to-date lease information for a set fee and to an agreed timetable which will end the current situation where leaseholders are at the mercy of freeholders and their agents
- strengthening the National Trading Standards Estate Agency Team so they can carry out more enforcement activity which includes banning agents

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Buying a home is one of the biggest and most important purchases someone will make in their life. But for far too long buyers and sellers have been trapped in a stressful system full of delays and uncertainty.

So we're going to put the consumers back in the driving seat. We will require estate agents to hold a qualification so that people are no longer at risk from a minority of 'rogue agents' and can trust the process when buying or selling their home.

Mark Hayward, Chief Executive, NAEA Propertymark said:

We particularly welcome the commitment to further regulation – we have long argued that estate agents should be recognised as professionals, this is an important step towards achieving this and we look forward to working with the government.

There are approximately 20,000 estate agent businesses across the country, and currently, anyone can practice as an estate agent. The changes set out will professionalise the sector, creating a more trustworthy and reliable industry who will be better held to account.

Guides on 'How to Buy' and 'How to Sell' will be developed and published to ensure customers are better informed of the process and know what questions they should be asking. The government will work with consumer groups and industry to develop a consistent set of performance metrics for conveyancers, so consumers can make a more informed choice.

To bring the profession into the technology era, a working group will be set up to bring industry and partners, such as HM Land Registry, together to look at developing innovative digital solutions to speed up the home buying and selling process.

Government will consult on how the industry can be brought up to professional standards, like those in the same trade such as conveyancers, solicitors and surveyors.

These new measures follow an 8 week [consultation](#) which ended in December 2017.

There will be behavioural insight research carried out on reservation agreements with the aim of trialling them by the end of this year.

[Research](#) last year by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy found:

- of those that experienced delays, 69% of sellers and 62% of buyers reported stress and worry as a result of the delay
- 46% of sellers had concerns about a buyer changing their mind after making an offer
- 24% of sellers would use a different estate agent if they were to go through the process again
- 32% of sellers and 28% of buyers were dissatisfied with the other party's solicitor

[**News story: Government puts consumers**](#)

at heart of the aviation industry

- greater focus on passengers, to improve their experience throughout their journey
- creating an ever cleaner, greener sector which prioritises sustainable growth
- building a global and connected Britain with more trade opportunities

The government will today (7 April 2018) set out its plans to make the country's aviation sector world-leading in prioritising passengers, fostering sustainable growth and promoting trade.

The [aviation strategy next steps document](#) outlines proposals which will build on the aviation industry's work to improve the flying experience for passengers at every stage of their journey.

This will include new measures to help passengers make a more informed choice about their flight including providing more transparency on additional costs.

The document also outlines how the government will work with industry to ensure all passengers have a dignified and comfortable travelling experience, including ways to improve accessibility at airports and on aircraft and tackling the issue of disruptive passengers.

Work will be carried out to improve the compensation scheme for consumers, ensuring passengers are properly informed about their rights to claim when things go wrong and exploring greater powers to enforce regulations.

Baroness Sugg, Aviation Minister, said:

Our world class aviation industry has a proud and accomplished history, from pioneering the first international routes to championing consumer choice.

Working with industry, we want to improve the flying experience from booking to arrival, ensuring passengers are truly at the heart of the aviation sector.

This demonstrates our commitment to creating a transport system which works for passengers as we build a Britain fit for the future.

How will a new aviation strategy help the industry and the UK?

The government is also providing more details about its ambitious plan to make Britain's aviation sector the world's greenest, including proposals to tackle issues around noise, greenhouse gas emissions and airspace congestion.

Environmental proposals include the introduction of new noise targets,

strengthened noise controls at airports and improved compensation for people living near airports. The government will work with industry to reduce the usage of single use plastics and improve recycling rates.

The government will also explore measures with industry to support the use of quieter and more fuel efficient aircraft, as well as the emergence of electric and hybrid technology.

The 'next steps' document makes clear the government's commitment to ensuring the aviation sector continues to grow.

The sector already contributes at least £22 billion to the UK economy each year and the strategy will examine what can be done to help it develop even further.

The strategy will examine the agreements UK has with other countries to operate flights, identify opportunities to improve connectivity and open up new routes for overseas investment.

Other proposals include reviewing the allocation of airport landing slots to ensure the process is fair, transparent and fosters a competitive marketplace which benefits consumers by offering more choice.

An [initial call for evidence for the aviation strategy](#) was launched in July of last year, receiving almost 380 responses. The proposals being outlined in the 'next steps' document will be consulted on further in the autumn, with the final strategy due for publication in early 2019.

The aviation strategy is designed to achieve a safe, secure and sustainable aviation sector that meets the needs of consumers and of a global, outward-looking Britain. It will look to:

- help the aviation industry work for its customers
- ensure a safe and secure way to travel
- build a global and connected Britain
- encourage competitive markets
- support growth while tackling environmental impacts
- develop innovation, technology and skill

[News story: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle meet Invictus Games UK Team hopefuls](#)

HRH Prince Harry and Ms Meghan Markle watching UK Team hopefuls competing.

His Royal Highness Prince Harry and Ms Meghan Markle met Invictus Games hopefuls today at the University of Bath Sports Training Village, ahead of the fourth Invictus Games being held down under in Sydney, Australia this October.

The Invictus Games, which have previously been held in London, Orlando and Toronto, set out to harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for our wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women.

Defence Minister, Tobias Ellwood, also met 2018 hopefuls today to see how they are using sport as part of their recovery journey.

Across the weekend, 5 – 8 April, hopefuls who have suffered a life-changing injury or illness will trial in nine different sports including Athletics, Archery, Wheelchair Basketball, Road Cycling, Powerlifting, Indoor Rowing, Wheelchair Rugby, Swimming and Sitting Volleyball. Last week (28-29 March), hopefuls also trialled in a new sport for the 2018 games; Sailing.

More hopefuls than ever before (451) have applied to take part in the 2018 Invictus Games and all hope to be selected as part of the 72-strong UK team that will head to Sydney. The UK team will be selected based on the benefit the Invictus Games will give an individual as part of their recovery, combined with performance and commitment to training.

The UK delegation to the 2018 Invictus Games is once again being delivered by a partnership comprising the Ministry of Defence, Help for Heroes and The Royal British Legion.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I wish all our serving troops and veterans taking part in this year's trials the best of luck. The Invictus Games demonstrate the positive impact of sport in the recovery process, and provide inspiration and opportunity to those that have suffered life changing injuries and illnesses whilst serving their country and keeping Britain safe.

The MOD is a partner in the [Defence Recovery Capability](#), a programme which helps wounded, injured and sick Service personnel either return to duty from injury or provides a mechanism to help them back into civilian life – link. A key activity of the Defence Recovery Capability is the Battle Back programme, an MOD initiative that delivers an adaptive sport and adventurous training programme.

The [Invictus Games Sydney 2018](#) will take place from 20 – 27 October.

World news story: Visit of British scientists highlights increased scientific collaboration between UK and Peru

More than 20 scientists from research institutions across the UK travelled to Peru to meet their Peruvian counterparts and identify opportunities for further collaboration.

The visit's programme, developed in the context of the Newton-Paulet Fund, will advance understanding of Peru's receding tropical glaciers and its impact on the country's water supply. The results of the programme are also expected to provide greater understanding about the risks of glacier melt as a natural disaster and how to create mitigation strategies against them.

The scientists participated in a joint workshop on "Peruvian Glacial Retreat and its Impact on Water Security and Resilience to Natural Hazards", organised by CONCYTEC (Peru) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). At the workshop, they highlighted the importance of Peru's glaciers for the international scientific community.

"Having 20 scientists from British research institutions here, with great experience in the dynamics of glaciers from different mountain regions of the world, demonstrates the importance of Peruvian glaciers to the international scientific community and the awareness of the impact of climate change", said the President of CONCYTEC, Dr. Fabiola León-Velarde.

Colin Gray, Charge d'Affaires of the British Embassy said: "In order to tackle a variety of global challenges, such as climate change, we need scientific research to be an essential part of the solution, and we need to work on these solutions together. That is why it is great to see so many Peruvian and British researchers collaborating, learning from each other, and working together to better understand the impact of receding glaciers. This group has important contributions to make."

As part of the programme, the British scientists travelled to see the glaciers of Huaraz and the Palcacocha lake on 21 and 22 March, together with experts of the National Institute of Glacier Research and Mountain Ecosystems (INAIGEM).

Glaciers in the Peruvian Andes provide water to surrounding communities for agriculture, human consumption, hydroelectricity, and industry. However, their surface area has reduced some 20% in the last 30 years. Many glaciers in Peru are sources of fresh water for coastal areas characterised by their arid climate and low rainfall.

On the Newton-Paulet Fund:

These activities are part of the Newton-Paulet Fund, the UK's most important investment in Peru in science and innovation. It allows Peruvian and British scientists to work together to find solutions to challenges in economic development and social welfare through collaboration in science and innovation, in Peru and across the world.

The joint fund of US\$26 million will be invested in areas such as health, specifically malnutrition and anaemia; water, including but not limited to the effects of tropical glaciers melting, and biodiversity.

On the support of the UK Space Agency:

In addition, the UK Space Agency recently announced that it will provide more than US\$3.7 million to support Peru in satellite research to reduce vulnerabilities from environmental disasters, using UK expertise and cutting-edge technology. The UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme will use remote sensing data to allow for more effective monitoring of the dams, and for quicker action to be taken to avoid the tailings dams failures.

Tailing dams are earth embankments used to store toxic mine waste and effluent which can be more than 100m high. Their rate of failure is high, due to poor design regulations and less rigorous construction methods than for normal water-retaining dams.

[Press release: Wickham man fined £3,000 for allowing the dumping of waste at Firgrove Lane](#)

Some of the waste deposited illegally at the site on Firgrove Lane, Wickham, Hants

Joe Keet of Firgrove Lane, Wickham, Hants, has been fined £3,000 for knowingly permitting the deposit of controlled waste at Firgrove Lane, following a trial at Portsmouth Magistrates Court.

Jasper Smith and Phillip Jenkins, who brought some of the waste to the site, also pleaded guilty at Portsmouth Magistrates Court on 18 December 2017, where Mr Smith was fined £333 and Mr Jenkins £121, and they shared the £300 costs.

Joe Keet was fined £3,000 with a £170 victim surcharge and £1,904.75 costs after being found guilty by magistrates of knowingly allowing the deposit of controlled waste without the correct permit. This included construction and demolition waste, household clearance and commercial waste, waste wood, furniture, grab bags, black sacks of domestic waste, underlay and insulation.

Mike O'Neil, Environment Manager said:

Joe Keet's actions showed a blatant disregard for the environment. In cases like this, where the actions of individuals threaten to undermine legitimate businesses, we have no hesitation in prosecuting those involved. We, in fact, previously prosecuted Mr Keet in May 2016.

To ensure that the right waste gets to the right place, we encourage the public and businesses to check that their waste carrier is registered on Gov.UK and to ask to see a copy of the waste transfer note for the waste. If possible take a photo of the note on your phone.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

Mr Keets was prosecuted under Section 33(1)(a) and (6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended)

Mr Smith and Mr Jenkins were prosecuted under section 34(1) and 34(6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

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