

Housing market must be able to reopen efficiently

7 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have demanded that the SNP government enable the housing market to reopen efficiently by allowing property professionals to visit homes.

The demand comes after the latest Scottish sales figures highlight the colossal impact of the lockdown on the property market.

In April this year Scotland recorded only 103 sales, down from 5765 in March this year and 6285 in January this year.

The size of the drop is no surprise given the housing market has been in lockdown, but surveyors and estate agents are worried that the confusing advice given to them for easing lockdown will mean that the much-needed reopening of the housing market will be undermined.

The Scottish Government's road map to lifting lockdown outlines that in phase 1 'preparing for the safe reopening of the housing market' can take place.

However, estate agents cannot open branches to the public during this period or visit people's homes for photography or to carry out market appraisals.

Surveyors are unable to return to work because they are not allowed to visit any properties. If surveyors cannot access properties then they cannot be valued or inspected prior to sale which will almost certainly delay the 'reopening of the market' in Phase 2.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has specifically stated that Phase 1 and Phase 2 are not clear enough in setting out exactly what estate agents and surveyors can and cannot do.

Therefore the Scottish Conservatives are calling for surveyors and estate agents to be allowed to visit properties for valuation which would be completely safe with the use of personal protective equipment.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow communities secretary said:

"The decimation of the housing market over the last two months is well known, but the figures are still utterly shocking.

"The property industry is a vital part of our economy and it is absolutely crucial, for all those waiting to move, for all those who work in property, for everyone in Scotland, that it is able to reopen and operate as efficiently as possible.

“In order to do this surveyors and estate agents need far more clarity for the next phases of lockdown and, importantly, property professionals must be able to view and inspect properties.

“There is no reason that property professionals cannot visit residential properties and follow social distancing guidelines, wear masks and gloves.

“At present the guidance is just not clear enough, which will only lead to a stuttering start when purpose and direction is needed.

“Unless the Scottish Government provides clear, sensible and relevant advice the property industry will not be able to open effectively, seriously hindering any economic recovery we hope to make.”