

[Press release: Government action to end letting agent fees](#)

A new draft bill will be introduced to Parliament today (1 November 2017) to ban letting fees.

The [draft Tenant Fees Bill](#) will set out the government's approach to banning letting fees for tenants, helping millions of renters by bringing an end to costly upfront payments.

Evidence shows the level of fees charged are often not clearly or consistently explained, leaving many tenants unaware of the true costs of renting a property.

This latest action will help improve transparency, affordability and competition in the private rental market. It will also prevent agents from double charging both tenants and landlords for the same services.

Today the government has also launched a [consultation](#) on making membership of client money protection schemes mandatory for letting and managing agents that handle client money.

These schemes ensure greater financial protection for landlords and tenants, giving them complete confidence that their money is safe when it is with their agent and they can be compensated if all or part of their money is not repaid.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

This government is determined to make sure the housing market works for everyone. Tenants should no longer be hit by surprise fees they may struggle to afford and should only be required to pay their rent alongside a refundable deposit.

We're delivering on our promise to ban letting agent fees, alongside other measures to make renting fairer and increase protection for renters.

As part of wider plans to improve the rental market, government has already introduced measures that crack down on the small minority of rogue landlords that shirk their responsibilities. Earlier this year, the law was changed to allow councils to impose new fines of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for a range of housing offences.

The draft Tenant Fees Bill, which reflects [responses from a public consultation](#) also published today, will:

- Cap holding deposits at no more than one week's rent and security deposits at no more than 6 weeks' rent. The draft bill also sets out the proposed requirements on landlords and agents to return a holding deposit to a tenant.
- Create a civil offence with a fine of £5,000 for an initial breach of the ban on letting agent fees and creating a criminal offence where a person has been fined or convicted of the same offence within the last 5 years. Civil penalties of up to £30,000 can be issued as an alternative to prosecution.
- Require Trading Standards to enforce the ban and to make provision for tenants to be able to recover unlawfully charged fees.
- Appoint a lead enforcement authority in the lettings sector.
- Amend the [Consumer Rights Act 2015](#) to specify that the letting agent transparency requirements should apply to property portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla.

More than 9 out of 10 tenants who responded to the government consultation backed the action to ban letting agent fees, with 7 out of 10 of them saying these fees affected their ability to move into a new rented property.

Overall more than 4,700 responses to the consultation were received from a range of individuals and representative bodies from across the sector.

The government's [housing white paper](#) sets out measures to build the homes Britain needs now and to give those that rent a fairer deal. It puts tackling the high cost of renting at the heart of its plan to fix the broken housing market.

The new measures set out in the draft bill are now subject to Parliamentary scrutiny before they can be introduced into law.

All proposals relate to England only. The ban on letting fees will apply to assured shorthold tenancies and licences to occupy in the private rented sector.

The consultation on making membership of a Client Money Protection Scheme mandatory for letting and managing agent will help to ensure that all tenants and landlords have the financial protections they deserve.

Client money protection schemes give landlords and tenants confidence that their money is safe when it is with their agent, it also means that when things do go wrong – both tenants and landlords will be compensated if all or part of their money is not repaid.

The [consultation](#) will run for 6 weeks from 1 November 2017.

Read the [government response to the consultation on banning letting agent fees](#).

[Press release: Calstock residents urged to have say on flood alleviation plan](#)

The current embankment by the River Tamar which protects Calstock from flooding is in poor condition and needs replacing.

The Environment Agency is holding a public drop-in session at Calstock next week to explain how potential works could reduce flood risk to local homes and businesses, and benefit the environment.

The Environment Agency is keen to learn from local people who are invited to attend to share their views to help shape our proposals.

Dan Boswell of the Environment Agency said:

The existing flood defence embankment in Calstock protects property and community assets but is in poor condition and unsustainable in its current position. By moving it inland it can be maintained to a better standard to increase its effectiveness at reducing flood risk and allow the creation of inter-tidal habitat to help offset the impacts of rising sea levels on wildlife.

Local knowledge and experience about the flood risk from the residents of Calstock is important to help us design a scheme that people who live and work in the community support to shape the future management of flood risk in their community.

The Environment Agency is seeking to work with local partners to ensure its work delivers as many benefits as possible to the community. This includes:

- managing flood risk to the community, and the impacts of climate change
- protecting the environment and visual landscape of Calstock and the Tamar Valley as an important recreational amenity
- enhancing the environment by attracting additional wildlife to the improved local habitat on land reconnected to the river

The drop-in session for people to learn more and share ideas will take place in the Kelly Room of Calstock Arts on Wednesday 8 November 2017, from 3pm to 8pm.

Press release: UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue: Communiqué

The fourth meeting of the biannual UK-Sudan Strategic Dialogue was hosted by the Government of the United Kingdom in London on 16 October 2017, co-chaired by Neil Wigan, Director for Africa at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, and Ambassador Abdelghani Elnaim Awadelkarim, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan, accompanied by delegations from both countries.

The dialogue covered bilateral issues, the peace process, human rights, development, trade and investment, migration, defence engagement, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, and regional issues.

Both sides welcomed the steps taken since the last Strategic Dialogue meeting in Khartoum in March 2017 and agreed to continue joint work over the coming months. The parties welcomed the visit to Sudan by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the recent visit by the UK's Department for International Trade's East Africa Director. The UK congratulated the Government of Sudan on the recent decision by the Government of the United States of America to permanently lift bilateral economic sanctions, and both sides discussed steps to be taken to ensure that all Sudanese citizens benefit from this decision. This included agreeing to make progress on Sudan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and an offer from the UK to provide increased support on macroeconomic reform.

Both parties discussed the reconfiguration of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2362 (2017). The United Kingdom welcomed the improved humanitarian access and operating environment and the recent decision by the Government of Sudan to extend its unilateral cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the Two Areas. The Government of Sudan expressed its continued commitment to the implementation of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Roadmap. Both sides agreed to continue the regular dialogue on human rights between the two governments at all levels, including UK support for Sudan's accession to the Convention against Torture (CAT), and the subject of trafficking in people.

Both sides looked forward to celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the British Council in Sudan next year and affirmed their strong commitment to continuing cooperation on education and cultural exchanges. Both sides expressed strong concern about the ongoing conflict in South Sudan. The UK welcomed the Government of Sudan's decision to open humanitarian corridors and their continuing commitment to supporting South Sudanese refugees. Both sides agreed the importance of a politically inclusive peace process and agreed to engage constructively in support of the current IGAD led Revitalisation

Forum.

The two parties also agreed to continue working together on countering terrorism and violent extremism. They welcomed the recent exchanges of visits to share expertise and agreed to continue and broaden these exchanges in future.

The UK and Sudan reaffirmed the importance of continued progress towards our joint goals, and a continued broadening of the bilateral relationship, and agreed to hold another Strategic Dialogue in Khartoum in six months' time.

On the side-lines of the dialogue, the visiting Sudanese delegation engaged with Members of Parliament through the two All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) focusing on Sudan. The UK also hosted a technical workshop on human rights for the Sudanese delegation, including Sudan's Special Rapporteur of the Advisory Council for Human Rights. Through this workshop, the delegation engaged with representatives from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Justice and some of the UK's independent human rights bodies to discuss issues such as accession to UN human rights treaties and the role of independent human rights bodies in monitoring and reporting.

Press release: Company fined for failure to check product was made from legally-harvested timber

On 25 October 2017 at Westminster Magistrates Court, Angora 2011 Limited, trading as Lombok was convicted and fined £5,000 plus costs after pleading guilty at the first hearing.

The company failed to exercise the required due diligence when placing an artisan sideboard on the market, imported on 1 June 2016 from India.

A previous breach of the relevant regulations had earlier been identified and led to a Notice of Remedial Action being served on Lombok on 28 April 2015; this was followed by a warning letter dated 7 October 2015 when the company failed to comply with the notice.

On 20 October 2016, officers visited Lombok's central London showroom and found the required due diligence checks had not been made for an artisan sideboard for sale that had been imported from India.

When convicting the company District Judge stated these offences are "important", addressing environmental concerns, biodiversity concerns, and public confidence that companies do not endanger those. Companies are required to mitigate the risk of illegal logging. Lombok had failed to

exercise due diligence when importing the artisan sideboard, with their previous failures an aggravating feature, though in mitigation they had reacted proactively.

Taking into account their mitigation and credit for an early guilty plea, Lombok was fined £5,000, plus a victim surcharge of £170 and prosecution costs of £2,951. The total of £8,121 was ordered to be paid within 28 days.

Mike Kearney, Head of Regulatory Delivery Enforcement, said:

The Government's Regulatory Delivery team will take action against businesses that persistently, deliberately or recklessly fail to meet their legal obligations.

Lombok failed to change their practises in response to our advice and so, given the impact of illegal logging, a criminal prosecution was appropriate. I am pleased that Lombok is now improving its supply chain monitoring.

This prosecution was brought by the Insolvency Service Criminal Enforcement Team on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Regulatory Delivery team.

Angora Limited (company number 08680457), was incorporated on 6 September 2013 and trades as Lombok, a purveyor of 'eastern-influenced and hand-crafted designer furniture, lighting and homewares' from 204–208 Tottenham Court Rd, London W1T 7PL.

The prosecution was brought by the Insolvency Service Criminal Enforcement Team on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Regulatory Delivery team to address the company's failure to exercise the required due diligence when placing a timber product on the market was contrary to Regulation 4(b) of The Timber and Timber Products (Placing on the Market) Regulations 2013. The judgment was pronounced at 12:30pm by District Judge Blake.

Regulatory Delivery is part of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). It brings together policy expertise and practical experience to ensure that regulation is effectively delivered in ways that reduce burdens on business, save public money and properly protects citizens and communities. Regulatory Delivery is also responsible for sponsoring the British Hallmarking Council, a BEIS partner body.

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and

reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures. Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Insolvency Service's Criminal Enforcement Team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies. Further information about the work of the Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team is [available](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Plymouth fly-tipper banned from waste collection business](#)

A fly-tipper who dumped household waste in the Devon countryside has been banned from working in the waste industry for 2 years. John McDonagh has also been ordered to carry out 100 hours unpaid work and pay £500 costs. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

McDonagh, of Victoria Road, Plymouth, cold-called a householder offering to remove waste for cash. Instead of disposing of it properly, he fly-tipped it in the surrounding countryside.

The defendant was caught after he removed some old window frames and builders rubbish from a garden in Shaldon Crescent, Plymouth in November 2016. The owner agreed to pay him £50 upfront followed by another £50 when he returned from the tip with a receipt. McDonagh loaded the waste into his Ford Transit van and told the householder he would return for the rest of the waste.

However, he never returned and dumped the waste in Beara Lane near Marley Head, South Brent. It was later discovered by a man who found the access to his field blocked by 2 one-tonne dumpy bags of builders' waste. One of the bags contained a delivery note from a bathroom company with a customer's name and address on it.

The man reported the fly-tipping to South Hams District Council and handed over the invoice to the council. The householder who had been duped by McDonagh said he felt 'disgusted' and 'ashamed' when told his waste had been fly-tipped.

Adrian Evans of the Environment Agency said:

Householders have a responsibility to ensure their waste is disposed of correctly and doesn't end up fly-tipped. If anyone offers to dispose of your waste in return for payment, make sure they are a registered waste carrier and don't forget to ask for a receipt. If in doubt, don't hand over your waste.

Appearing before Plymouth magistrates, John McDonagh pleaded guilty to depositing controlled waste contrary to Section 33(1)(a) and 33(6) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. He also admitted an offence under section 1 of the Fraud Act 2006 of dishonestly misleading a person into thinking their waste was being transported to a licenced tip for disposal.

In addition to being ordered to carry out unpaid work and pay £500 costs, McDonagh was made the subject of a 2-year Criminal Behaviour Order prohibiting him from being involved in any business involving the collection, transport or disposal of controlled waste. He is also banned for offering building or home maintenance services.