



MAY 3023

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

The DCMS is consulting on a Registration Scheme for Short-Term lets in England and the DULHC is consulting on the introduction of a Use Class for short term lets and associated permitted development rights. NORA will be submitting responses to both of these consultations and members have been sent copies for information.

The consultations will close on the 7th June.

LEASEHOLDS WILL NOT BE ABOLISHED BY GOVERNMENT THIS YEAR

According to the BBC, the leasehold system will not be abolished in England and Wales this year, despite Housing Secretary Michael Gove previously promising to scrap it. Mr. Gove has described the system - where the owner of a property pays maintenance charges and often ground rent - as unfair and outdated.

The government says it will bring in new laws later this year to make life better for leaseholders.

But their plans will not include a date for abolishing the system.

Mr. Gove's long-held ambition is to scrap the system entirely and he has expressed this view repeatedly in media interviews and in the House of Commons.

In January, he told MPs the government would "absolutely" maintain a commitment to abolish the leasehold system and would "bring forward legislation shortly". However, as first reported by the Guardian, legislation due in the autumn will stop short of that.

Instead, the proposed new law is expected to focus on further protections for tenants from ground rents and legal fees, and strengthening the powers they have in dealings with freeholders.

Only a handful of countries still have leasehold systems but around 20% of homes in England are leasehold properties, many of them flats in cities.

Last year, the government abolished ground rents for most new residential leasehold properties in England and Wales, but only for new leases granted after June 2022. Mr Gove's pledge to abolish leaseholds was viewed with some scepticism, even at the time, not least because an alternative system has not been fully established.

A bill including further leasehold reforms is expected in the King's Speech, which sets out the legislation the government intends to pursue in the next parliamentary session.

The scope of the bill has not yet been agreed, but it is expected to bring forward reforms that will make the leasehold system less attractive, and lay the groundwork for a viable commonhold system.

A commonhold system would mean occupants jointly own and take responsibility for their buildings without an expiring lease. Mr. Gove's ambition to move away from leasehold to commonhold is unchanged, but the existing system will not be abolished overnight, which will disappoint campaigners.

Conservative MP Bob Blackman said the "much-needed reform" had been "delayed for far too long".

Labour has pledged to end the sale of new private leasehold houses and introduce a system to replace private leasehold flats with commonhold.

A Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities spokesperson said: "We are determined to better protect and empower leaseholders to challenge unreasonable costs.

"We have already made significant improvements to the market - ending ground rents for most new residential leases, and announcing plans to make it easier and cheaper for leaseholders to extend their lease or buy their



freehold.

"In line with our manifesto commitment, we will bring forward further leasehold reforms later in this Parliament."

KEIR STARMER VOWS TO BACK 'BUILDERS NOT BLOCKERS' WITH PLANNING RULES SHAKE-UP

The Labour leader will attempt to capitalise on Tory failures over the housing crisis after Rishi Sunak bowed to pressure from his own MPs to scrap house-building targets last year.

In a speech to the British Chambers of Commerce, the Labour leader will promise to make "tough choices but the right choices" when it comes to the UK's planning system.

Mr. Starmer will attempt to capitalise on Tory failures over the housing crisis after Rishi Sunak bowed to pressure from his own MPs to scrap house-building targets last year.

It comes as Housing Secretary Michael Gove was forced to admit there "simply aren't enough homes" in Britain.

Mr. Gove told the National Conservatism conference that Rishi Sunak had ordered him to get a grip on the issues faced by first-time buyers, as panicking Tories fear the housing crisis will be a big issue at the next election.

He said: "There is a problem and the problem is there simply aren't enough homes in this country. It is increasingly difficult to get on the property ladder. We choose the builders, not the blockers; the future, not the past; renewal not decline. We choose growth."

The Labour leader will say the country needs a government "that won't sit on the side-lines" and will address the "doom-loop of low growth, low productivity and high taxes".

"We need a reformed planning system, a modern industrial strategy, a more powerful British business bank that will help scale businesses - new and old," he will say.

Asylum seekers in UK to lose basic housing protections in move to cut hotel use.

RISHI SUNAK VOWS TO SAVE BRITAIN'S GREEN BELT AND FIGHT 'NATIONALLY-IMPOSED, TOP-DOWN TARGETS' AS HE STANDS FIRM AGAINST CRITICS IN HIS OWN PARTY CALLING FOR FRESH PUSH ON HOUSEBUILDING

The PM has vowed to save the Green Belt from housing development creating an election dividing line with Labour. Mr. Sunak faced down critics in his own party who want a fresh push on housebuilding, saying it is vital; to 'make sure our green spaces are protected', saying local communities are more likely to accept new homes if they are given a proper say.

Asked about protection of the Green Belt, Mr. Sunak said he was 'very clear' about the need to ditch the 'nationally imposed, top down targets' which required councils to permit a set number of new homes each year. 'I don't think that is the right approach, he said. 'I was very clear over the summer I wanted to make sure our green spaces are protected, I think that is what local communities want. At the same time, we have empowered local communities with local plans. We've made it easier for local communities to adopt local plans so that they can have a more meaningful say in the type of development happening in their areas.'

MINISTERS PLAN TO EXEMPT ASYLUM SEEKERS' LANDLORDS FROM RULES INCLUDING MINIMUM ROOM SIZES

Ministers are removing basic housing protections from asylum seekers under new rules designed to move tens of thousands out of hotels and into the private rented sector.

The changes would exempt landlords from regulations governing everything from electrical safety to minimum room sizes, leading campaigners to warn that the government is preparing to cram people into small spaces in an effort to alleviate the crisis in asylum seeker accommodation.

MPs are set to vote as soon as Wednesday on the plans, which have been put forward by Suella Braverman, the Home Secretary, and Michael Gove, the Housing Secretary

Under the changes, landlords of asylum seekers in England and Wales would no longer have to register with local authorities. The rules would allow landlords to house asylum seekers for two years without obtaining a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence, a standard requirement for any landlord renting to more than one household in a single property.

Most existing HMOs are of course already licensed. And in Areas with Article 4 Directions, new HMOs will still need planning permission.

It seems that this is a green light to new landlords to set up new HMOs in unregulated areas, without any controls! Just the sort of landlords that the whole field of HMO legislation was intended to prevent ...

Acknowledgment to Ricard Tyler of the HMO Lobby for this information.

FINANCIAL COLD CALLERS BANNED UNDER CRACKDOWN ON SCAMMERS

Cold calls offering financial products will be banned as part of a crackdown on scammers.

New anti-scam measures mean people can hang up on anyone trying to sell them a financial product, confident that a fraudster is on the other end of the line.

Cold calls offering financial products will be banned as part of a crackdown on scammers. Once the ban is in force, people who receive an uninvited call inviting them to take out insurance or get involved in crypto currency will automatically know they are the target of a fraudster. New measures to stop criminals tricking people into buying fake investments will be set out later.

Ofcom research shows 41 million people were targeted by suspicious calls and texts last summer. Fraud is estimated to cost the country £6.8 billion a year.

REPLACING METHANE WITH HYDROGEN TO HEAT HOMES IS A BAD IDEA—HERE'S WHY

Hydrogen is an energy-rich gas, which releases no carbon emissions when burned. It can be used in most equipment where fossil fuels such as natural gas (methane) or LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) are currently used.



In your home, that might mean a gas boiler, heater, cooker or all three. It can also power combustion-engine vehicles which might otherwise run on petrol. And it can generate enough heat for heavy industry processes such as steelmaking, which is overwhelmingly done by burning coal at present.

These qualities make hydrogen gas an attractive replacement for the fossil fuels driving climate change. But could (and should) it heat your home?

Should we use hydrogen in homes?

While hydrogen has the potential to be a green substitute for fossil fuels, this is still very much a future prospect. To decarbonise home heating and hot water, the UK's recent energy security bill promoted heat pumps as a replacement for gas boilers. Most countries in Europe and North America have done the same.

Heat pumps work like a refrigerator in reverse, pushing heat into rather than out of a space. The reason heat pumps are so useful is that they can convert one unit of electricity into two or more units of heat, referred to as a coefficient of performance or COP of 2. By comparison, gas boilers have a COP of about 0.9. It's even lower if they burn hydrogen, perhaps less than 0.5.

The bill set a target of fitting 600,000 homes with heat pumps each year by 2028. The UK Climate Change Committee (UKCCC), an independent body that advises the government, projects that 52% of home heating will come from heat pumps by 2050. All of those homes will be progressively disconnected from the gas grid.

At the same time, households are being encouraged to become more energy-efficient by installing insulation in windows, walls and lofts. This could reduce the average energy demand for space heating by as much as 75% if retrofitted to Passivhaus standard (an international benchmark for very low-energy construction).

Even tougher rules apply to new build homes. In Scotland, building regulations will prohibit the installation of gas boilers in homes built after 2024 and legislation was recently passed to introduce a Scottish Passivhaus-equivalent standard.

With fewer homes connecting to the gas grid and much lower energy demand for those that are connected in future, maintaining the national gas grid for domestic use seems wasteful. Maybe it's time to think about turning off the gas for good.

The gas grid

The message from UK gas network operators is that they are transitioning the gas grid to hydrogen, with work already underway planning the upgrades to regional pipelines that will be required and for pilot projects with small groups of houses. Boiler manufacturers are also promoting hydrogen-ready boilers that can be installed now in anticipation of 100% hydrogen supply. But transitioning the entire gas grid to hydrogen would be an enormous task. More likely is that some hydrogen hubs develop in places with surplus renewable energy generation to produce green hydrogen, alongside high industrial demand and a high density of buildings where heat pumps and retrofitting will be difficult.

What should households do?

You have no control over what sort of gas gets delivered through the pipes to your house. If an 80:20 blend is introduced, it will be to stimulate business investment in the production of hydrogen, and it will have to first be deemed safe for all existing household uses such that no modifications are required. In the longer term heavy industry and transport will suck up the vast majority of hydrogen produced.

What you can do, if you can afford it or are eligible for government support, is insulate your home and install a heat pump, which will immediately reduce your household carbon emissions as well as save you money.....and as for hydrogen, forget about it.

ELECTRIC SCOOTERS COULD BE REMOVED FROM UK ROADS AFTER PARIS VOTES FOR BAN

People in Paris have voted to ban the use of electric scooters on their roads, with one expert forecasting that a similar decision could be made in the UK.

Parisians went to the polls to vote on whether electric scooters should be banned, with an overwhelming 90 percent calling for the vehicles to be removed. While support for the ban was almost unanimous, it has been reported that the turnout for the vote could have been as low as eight percent.

Paris was seen as a world leader when it came to e-scooters, with the French capital embracing the vehicle for being environmentally friendly when they were introduced in 2018. Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris, has supported numerous sustainable travel methods like walking and cycling, but described electric scooters as “a source of tension and worry”.

Jonathan White, Legal and Compliance Director at National Accident Helpline, commented on the ban in Paris and whether a similar move could be taken in the UK. He said: “Paris has voted to ban for-hire electric scooters from the streets of the French capital after a referendum was called in response to a rising number of people being injured and killed on e-scooters. “This news provides an opportunity for Transport for London (TfL) to carefully consider the safety of the travelling public in the UK.

“Whilst the intention behind e-scooters was to offer an alternative to public transport and ‘greener’ option than cars, the rampant use of private e-scooters is evading public authorities and is becoming the cause of an increasing number of road accidents and injuries to pedestrians.

“Our research shows that the majority of Brits (63 percent) want electric scooters banned from public roads, while three-quarters believe a driving licence and insurance should be a requirement to use an e-scooter.”

Research from National Accident Helpline found that almost three-quarters of people believe e-scooter riders should be required to have a licence to drive a scooter on a public road.



Your comments and feedback are invited.

Email them to the N.O.R.A. Secretary at NORA SECRETARY@GMAIL.COM

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