

PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL OF SECTION 21 - DO YOU REALISE THE IMPLICATIONS?

Members should be well aware of the campaign by our Association to stop the withdrawal of the Section 21 Notice, which appears Government are intent on doing (see page 4 for more details).

Members will be well aware that the success of the Assured Shorthold Tenancy was based on the right of landlords following fixed term contracts to obtain possession of their premises, without having to give a reason for doing so.

Over the years, many landlords have never had to serve any form of notice as their tenants have always acted responsibly, paid the rent and conducted their tenancy in a proper, decent manner. However, some tenants, a small minority, abuse their tenancies, often not paying the rent, and the Section 21 has been used, in the majority of cases, to obtain possession, in preference to using the Section 8 procedure, as the Section 21 accelerated possession does not usually require attendance at Court.

Shelter and Generation Rent allege that the majority of Section 21 cases are brought by landlords completely unjustifiably and require the use of it abolished. What our Association has done, and members need to know, is the unforeseen consequences of abolishing the Section 21. Later in this newsletter there will be an article about the unforeseen consequences, which we trust members will read and understand why your Association is so opposed to its removal.

BUILD TO RENT

From articles in the national press members may well be aware of the significant increase of build to rent properties, mostly by corporations/specialist international companies.

Build to rent in the main provides good quality accommodation at high rents. From a recent survey, the average rental above that normally charged can be up to £900.00 per calendar month and therefore such properties are unavailable to the economically poor and are only targeted at the high earner end of the market.

Although originally most build to rent properties were in London, such properties are being built in many major cities throughout the country. But have no doubt, the target tenant is affluent and no provision is normally made for the other end of the market in such properties. Build to rent no doubt has a place in the rental market, but it is a specialist targeted market not available to many aspiring tenants, wishing eventually to move on to private ownership.



IS AIRBNB MOVING INTO TRADITIONAL LANDLORDS' BUSINESS?

Airbnb has amended its rules to allow users to search for stays up to 12 months (from six) and the platform is overtly linking this with announcements by many high profile companies including Procter & Gamble, Ford Motor Company, PwC, and Amazon – that its staff can continue to work remotely in certain circumstances.

In addition, Airbnb says its users have clicked on the WiFi filter more than 288m times, so in response it is adding 'Verified Wifi' to property details, allowing hosts to test their listing's internet connection from the Airbnb app and have their wifi speed authenticated.

Now, adding to that appeal to longer term renters, Airbnb is introducing something called Aircover for its hosts – it calls this “top-to-bottom protection, free for every host, only on Airbnb.”

On its UK website Airbnb says the cover offers the equivalent of US\$1 million in damage protection.

This includes pet damage protection, and Airbnb tells its hosts “no need to worry, damage caused by four-legged guests is covered.”

It also has deep-cleaning protection (“We compensate you for unexpected cleaning costs, like removing cigarette odour if a guest smokes in your home” and income loss protection (“AirCover reimburses lost income if you cancel confirmed Airbnb bookings due to guest damage.”)

Even though some 20 per cent of Airbnb business is already stays of one month or longer and long-term stays have become the platform's fastest-growing category, it is clear that they are directly challenging the traditional rental model.

BUSINESS RATES

Members may have seen much publicity and pressure for Government to completely change the way in which commercial rates are charged, saying that companies with physical presence in shopping centres, etc., are paying a disproportionate cost compared with online traders, which gives an unfair advantage to the latter.

The reality is that any Government would be completely irresponsible to abolish a tax that raises £25 billion a year and it is considered that Government will never completely abolish such an easy tax to collect.

In the recent Budget, the Chancellor has announced a 50% reduction in business rates for certain small businesses. It is not applicable to any business that has a rateable value of over £117,000. Therefore the big companies in shopping centres will still be charged the full rate. It has only been given for 12 months. The reality is that Government has no intention of reforming business rates and those campaigning for it need to look again at ways of making the balance of taxes on businesses more equitable.

SCS LAW: CHRIS MCGEEVER : ADVOCACY MANAGER

On 3 November 2021, it was announced that the ‘Overall Arrangements for Possession Proceedings in England and Wales’ came to an end on 1 November 2021. This means that the Courts are no longer expected to list a possession claim for a Review Date before it then receives a date for a Substantive Hearing. The Designated Civil Judge in each area has been asked to decide their approach to listing possession claims in their region's Courts.

From 1 December 2021 onwards, Courts will be obliged to list a claim for a hearing to take place within 8 weeks of the claim being issued.

Practice Direction 55C contains the obligation for a Claimant to serve and bring to the hearing 2 copies of a notice regarding what knowledge the Claimant has as to the Coronavirus pandemic on the Defendant and their dependants. This obligation is scheduled to remain in place until 30 June 2022.

There is expected to be a ‘run-off’ period over the next few weeks for cases which the Courts

have already scheduled to be reviewed. For newer claims that have been issued since 1 November 2021, it is expected that the vast majority of these shall proceed straight to a Substantive Hearing. From 1 December onwards, the hearing should be scheduled for no later than 8 weeks after the issue of the claim.

In sum, landlords should see their claims reaching a hearing sooner after they have been issued. There will be increasingly fewer – and eventually, no – claims which have a Review Date before being scheduled for a hearing.

SECTION 21 & 8 COURT FORMS

A reminder that following all the amendments to Section 8 & 21 over the past 18 months, both have returned to pre-pandemic notice periods, i.e. 2 months for Section 21, and 2 weeks for a Section 8 for rent arrears (Grounds 8; 10 & 11)

However, be careful as both have got new forms. The Section 8 is form 3, and the Section 21 is form 6a. Both are on our web site.

We always advise landlords not keep these forms on your computer, but to always go to the web site to ensure you're getting the latest version. This applies to the *How to Rent* guide as well.

If you use the wrong forms, you might have problems at court. With the extended waits for courts at the moment, you don't want to wait for ages only to find you've wasted your time and money due to using the incorrect forms or procedures.

COURT FEES

Note, that as of 30th September new court fees have been introduced across England and Wales.

- £130 to apply for a warrant of possession (previously £121)
- £83 to apply for a warrant of control (previously £77)

- £119 for various other things like applying for an attachment of earnings or a charging order (previously £110)
- Applications for possession hearings remain at £355.
- Smalls claims applications now cost between £35 and £455 depending on the size of the claim.



RIGHT TO RENT CHECKS

The ability to check Right to Rent documentation virtually, e.g. by Zoom, has been extended to April 5th 2022. Additionally, the previous requirement to go back and physically check any documents taken virtually has been removed – so if you have Right to Rent documents by email, etc., that is fine – unless the rules get changed!

Don't forget that any EEA citizen have lost their automatic right to rent as from July 1st this year, except Irish nationals. They will be expected to provide their **current** residence card or evidence of their **settled status** (EU only) to prove their permanent right to rent.

EEA and Swiss Nationals can demonstrate temporary right to rent status by showing a passport and proof of entry to the UK within the last 6 months. This entitles them to up to 12 months without requiring a further right to rent check.

Existing tenants before 1st July will not need to be re-checked.

The EEA includes EU countries and also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. We also allowed Swiss nationals the same exemption.

SECTION 21

We have mentioned Section 21 a lot in the newsletter, and for a good reason. Many landlords totally rely on it, and would be devastated if it goes, as the Government have stated it will.

But let us look at the facts and establish if it would be as devastating as you believe.

Modern letting began in the 80's, mainly with the 1988 Housing Act that saw the introduction of both the Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) and the mechanism to end it, contained in Section 8 and Section 21 of that Act, now known as the Section 21 (no fault) notice, and the Section 8 (there is a fault (Ground)) notice. As a result, the PRS has over doubled in size during that time, growing from 9% to 21% of families housed.

The majority of landlords we speak to have never had to serve either notice, many of the others have used the Section 21 notice. We find that the Section 21 tends to be used in the majority of the time for rent arrears, whereas the Section 8 should be used; this overuse of the Section 21 for rent arrears has led to the likes of Shelter claiming that landlords are just getting rid of tenants on a whim.

We have tried to point out that the opposite is true, a landlord will not want to evict a tenant who looks after the property and pays the rent, why would they? A tenant is only ever evicted for a reason, not on a whim.

We have had a good look at the situation if the Section 21 were to be abolished, and we are of the opinion that this move to 'protect' tenants could easily have the opposite effect. Let me explain

Whilst it is true that the Section 8 should be used for rent arrears, the Section 21 is frequently used to avoid having to go to court. The Section 21 is also used when there are problems with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). This is because it can be very difficult, if not impossible to get all the evidence required to use a Section 8 notice. It also needs to be used if the property is to be sold, as the Section 8 Ground (1) is almost impossible to use –

although the Government have stated they will substantially improve Ground 1.

Therefore, the ability to use a Section 21 is seen as a 'backstop' mechanism if all else fails, and thus allows landlords to take a tenant they feel might fail, but they are worth giving a chance to – because of the safety net on the Section 21.

Without the Section 21, landlords would have to be extra diligent before they offer to a prospective tenant, and anyone not having impeccable references and credit history will struggle to be offered decent accommodation. Additionally, we believe that many landlords will take the opportunity to rid themselves of problematic tenants.

All this will mean that the socially disadvantaged/poorer tenants will suffer, and probably find it difficult to find accommodation. This is happening in Scotland, where they lost the Section 21 some while ago.

So, as we said, it will be the tenants who lose out.

What can you do to prepare?

It has always been important not to rush to fill a vacancy. Better a short void at the start of a let, than many months of no rent, plus court fees at the end.

The answer? Be a professional landlord, who:

1. Fully trained in land lording
2. Ensure due diligence at commencement of let
3. Keep on top of problems (including arrears)
4. Maintain their properties
5. Have sufficient funding

The longer-term landlords I talk to shrug their shoulders. They have managed during previous bad times, and will manage again – they are professional landlords.

WRITE TO YOUR MP'S

If you are concerned about potential loss of the Section 21 write to your MP.

We have lobbied Government, and all MP's. You can use our paper as a basis to write to your MP (see the campaigns page on the website), but ensure you use your own words.

CAN YOUR PROPERTY BE SOLD WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE?

Yes, it can.

Ensure you register all your properties at Land Registry so that you will get an email alert if someone tries to amend the Land Registry entry. Unfortunately, there is a limit of 10 properties per email address, but you can use other email addresses to get round this.

ARE YOU A LIMITED COMPANY?

Ensure any forms you sign are signed in accordance with Section 44 of the 2006 Companies Act, i.e. requires signature by *"two authorised signatories or a director of the company in the presence of a witness"*.

HOUSING THE ECONOMICALLY POOR - LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Members, wherever they have their residential business, will be aware that most local authorities are desperate for landlords to take on the economically poor who, as mentioned in other articles in this newsletter, are unable to provide references, rent in advance, deposits, etc. Some of course will be ex-offenders, others will be refugees and some simply people who, for one reason or another, have fallen on hard times.

So, let's look at the future on the basis of the way Government seemingly intends to proceed.

Both Generation Rent and Shelter are active in pursuing objectives to ensure tenants occupying properties can do so for as long as they wish. It accepts there will be exceptions when landlords have a right to possession, but what it appears not to understand is that private landlords have a choice as to whether they accept economically poor/socially inadequate tenants.

Local authorities are so desperate for landlords to house such people, many will not only pay rent in advance, deposits, some costs towards dilapidations and many give financial incentives.

However, let's make it absolutely clear that if Government removes the right for landlords to gain possession without Court intervention, any landlord in future would be extremely wise not to continue to offer housing to such people. What will that mean?

Firstly the build to rent landlords have no interest in social housing in the vast majority of cases. Housing associations build properties for sale or shared rental and not social housing as they were designed to do. That leaves local authorities, who obtain vast sums of money from private landlords when permission is obtained for developments, thus ensuring that the private landlord cannot realistically provide social housing rents in any developments they carry out. Similarly, the cost of 106 levies to local authorities means that any properties being built for sale will have imposed costs as a result of these levies and cannot be sold at affordable prices. It seems therefore that Government has given local authorities the ability to, in effect, take vast sums of money from developers and ensure that the private developer/landlord has no real ability to provide housing at social rents. Government and local authorities can't have it both ways - either a private landlord, providing new housing at social rents should not be charged infrastructure levies/106 payments which ensures that it is not viable to provide the same sort of property at rents charged by local authorities.

In summary and if some of the proposed changes take place, Government must face up to housing all economically poor, etc., in council properties and not private sector ones.

VIEW FROM THE BOILER ROOM – WAS COP26 JUST BLAH, BLAH, BLAH? Rodney Townson

Whether you're a hardened eco warrior or a full throttle petrol head, unless you live in the broom cupboard under the stairs, you will have caught some of the coverage of the recent COP26 conference, in Glasgow. Attendees were treated to a lack of accommodation with those staying further afield endured various transport issues.

If you were expecting big announcements on measures to make housing more environmentally friendly, there were no specific measures agreed. The closest they got was agreements on **coal** (a push for coal production and coal fired generation to be phased down) and no more **finance** for fossil fuel energy projects from the end of 2022.

The only housing which got a specific mention was those homes in low-lying countries, which will disappear under the rising tides if urgent action on climate change is not delivered.



Announcements

As expected, most of the announcements, which will be of interest to UK homeowners, were rushed out in the

two weeks before the start of the conference. These included the Government's latest wheeze - the **Boiler Upgrade Scheme** offering funding for us to change our gas boilers for **heat pumps** and other renewables, which launches in April 2022. This is a replacement to the current RHI (renewable heat incentive) which runs out next March. While this may be of interest to landlords with modern build houses or HMOs this is not likely to be of much interest to those with older properties, especially converted flats, due to issues getting permission to fit the unit, fitting it in a location where it can be serviced (without keeping residents awake) and the need for the property to already be thermally efficient.

The only notable announcement during COP26 as far as landlords are concerned was a joint update from by Alok Sharma's Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and our new Housing Minister, Michael Grove's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. On 8th November they released their **EPC Action Plan progress report**, which "[is] designed to improve the quality of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs). It outlines the actions completed to date and the next steps in the delivery of the remaining actions"

The key announcements were:

1. New Energy Performance of Buildings Register - ratings scheme for non-domestic buildings
2. A new format for the EPC which presents the most important EPC information upfront whilst allowing interested consumers to drill down into further levels of detailed information where relevant; and the publication of a consultation on how mortgage lenders can support homeowners to improve the energy performance of their homes
3. The quarterly publication of the extended data sets on the Open Data Communities website; and helping consumers locate information on improving energy efficiency of their building by signposting from the Register to websites that can provide trusted advice.

Blah, Blah, Blah: What's Happening in the Boiler Room?

To be honest, not much. **Gas boilers** in the UK are to be phased out but when this will happen is still unclear.

As part of the Future Homes Standard, new homes will only be able to install energy

efficient heating systems: no fossil fuel boilers can be installed in new properties after 2025.

It is unclear how long new fossil fuel boilers can be fitted but the current expectation is 2028, with a target date of 2035 for banning them.

Those of you with **electric heaters** will have noticed significant changes in the controls offered over the last few years. Oil filled, aluminium, ceramic, finned or infra red, they are likely to be badged LOT 20 compliant, meaning they have to meet higher efficiency standards, helping us reduce carbon emissions and energy bills. They include an electronic thermostat with a 24-hour, 7-day timer with either adaptive start or an open window sensor, with many offering the ability to link together or even operate with a smart phone.

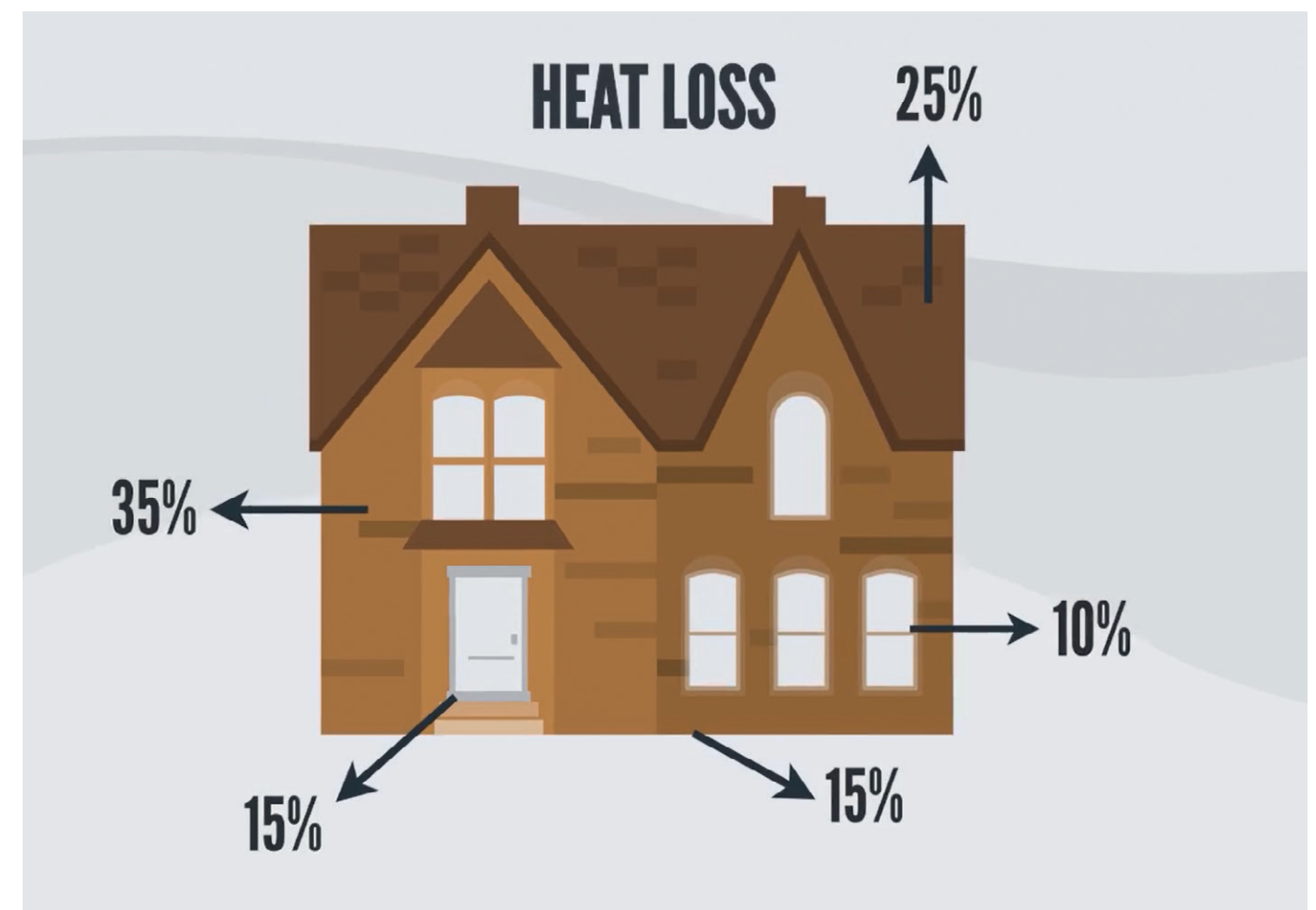
What should we expect?

Christabel Watts, Energy Advisor at the Environment Centre (tEC) charity in Southampton, and a popular guest on our

online meetups, always reminds members of the need for a **fabric first** approach to energy efficiency

- Maximising airtightness.
- Using Super-high insulation.
- Optimising solar gain through the provision of openings and shading.
- Optimising natural ventilation.
- Using the thermal mass of the building fabric.
- Using energy from occupants, electronic devices, cookers and so on.

Government has already redirected much of the Green Homes Grant to local authorities under the local authority delivery scheme (LADs) to enable landlords with tenants on benefits to bring their properties up to a minimum EPC of C. With the recent rise in energy costs and the need for properties to reach an EPC of C in the next few years, this is certainly one occasion you will be happy to speak to the council.



It is hoped that once the EPC requirement review is complete, the Government may launch other initiatives. In our conversations with them, we have urged them to take a longer-term approach, with longer term funding which is easier to access – whether through grants, loans or tax allowances.

There has been a lot of talk about **hydrogen** recently. (Did you know all gas boilers made since 1999 can run on a mix containing 20% hydrogen?). Hydrogen is rapidly moving from research to commercial usage – take a look at BBC Click, ITM Power, Shell and Ceres Power for latest developments. Not only can hydrogen be used as a zero carbon fuel for gas boilers, it's separation by electrolysis offers an alternative method of energy storage, utilising surplus electrical supply.

With Hydrogen currently classed in four colours, according to how it is produced, it may be a few years until your Gas Safe engineer upgrades your boiler to green hydrogen.

- Brown** = coal
- Grey** = natural gas
- Blue** = natural gas with carbon capture



Government

It's possible that as higher energy bills land in households in boxes or on their doormats, politicians will find a way of boosting their green credentials while helping insulate and make airtight Britain's housing.



Landlords

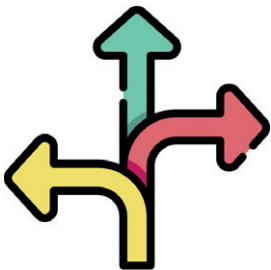
In the meantime, we can do our bit by servicing our boilers, fixing draughty doors and windows, fitting LED bulbs and supplying low energy appliances, such as heat recovery tumble dryers.



Tenants

Most energy suppliers have an energy tips page on their website you can send your tenants. We can also get our tenants to do their bit by educating them on simple tips such as heating system controls, using lids on pans and putting a full load in washing machines.

With many tenants working a hybrid home + office model, they likely to be receptive of ways to keep bills down this winter.



Direction of Travel

Those who are first adopters and already have solar panels fitted might be looking at options for installing charging stations for tenants looking to migrate to plug in hybrid or fully electric vehicles (FEV). Talk to your accountant to see if there are tax implications.

With tenants becoming more environmentally aware and our mortgage lenders and insurers encouraging us to get our homes to an EPC rating of C or better, the direction of travel is clear, even if timetables and funding are less so at this stage.

PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL OF SECTION 21 NOTICES

This article is to explain in more detail, what is seen as the 'unforeseen consequences' of the removal of the Section 21.

Firstly, it should be made absolutely clear that when Assured Shorthold Tenancies came into being, the main driver for landlords either extending their portfolios or alternatively new investors becoming landlords, was as a result of the Section 21 being introduced. No matter what is said today, the increase from approximately 9% to nearly 20% in private rented sector tenants, as a result of the Section 21 being introduced, is fact which cannot be disputed.

To now take away the very document that promoted favourably the private rented sector appears an extremely bad move, but supported by tenants' organisations such as Shelter and Generation Rent.

What this means in reality is that landlords will only be able to gain possession under proposed amended Section 8 procedures, all of which at present require attendance at Court. This effectively means that the legal system will be the sole deciding body of whether a tenant can be evicted and not the landlord.

To put it bluntly, landlords will not be in control of their businesses, the Courts will and how does that equate with fairness?

Why should it be necessary, when a tenant is over 8 weeks in rent arrears, for there to be a Court hearing followed by, if possession is granted, a protected period awaiting bailiffs to evict with such tenants knowing only too well that they can stay on at a property, pay no rent and are legally protected. This is not fairness between landlords and tenants, it is using the legal system to the disadvantage of landlords and to the advantage of tenants who consider paying the rent, and often acting responsibly, not to be their concern.

If Government is concerned about the lack of efficiency of Courts, why is it then that currently there is no proposal for allowing landlords a Possession Order when the tenant is over 8 weeks in arrears, without having to attend Court and with an obligation for bailiffs to attend to evict, where the tenant does not leave, within a maximum period of 4 weeks. This is fairness and will give tenants the knowledge that sitting in a property and not paying the rent will not be allowed.

A number of landlords still house vulnerable tenants, who are unable to provide references, rent in advance or deposits and may well have County Court Judgements etc against them. Those landlords currently, who house such tenants, have the facility to use Section 21 to evict where they consider the tenant is 'unsuitable' for continued occupation in their properties.

One would think that tenants' organisations do not believe such tenants exist; or if they

do, they still have a right to housing. But if unsatisfactory, private landlords do not have the equal right to evict without using the Court system.

As mentioned earlier, if the Section 21 is abolished then private landlords currently taking such tenants will be well advised not to do so in the future.

If Government expects to take over the management of landlords' tenants and relinquish them of the authority to manage as they see fit, then Government must understand the consequences will be that landlords will in future not house such tenants.

Finally, it will also be interesting to see if the removal of Section 21 is retrospective and the justification for doing so.

BUILDING COSTS AND SUPPLY PROBLEMS

How have you found getting hold of materials? It has been a difficult few months, shortage of materials being one of the main causes, your editor wasted the best part of a day trying to buy cement, then it was a shortage of timber, then the painter complained that the painters merchant had run out of white emulsion, really! Followed by the plasterer complaining that he could not buy angle bead. Then there is the cost increase, I know it is hardly a national inflation scale but Wickes sold a 2.4m length of planed 3" x 2" for £2.50 for ages, it then went up to £2.75, two years ago, before reaching the heady heights of £5.50 in the summer, it has since dropped to £4.75, ouch!

Wickes to their credit do offer a 10% discount card for trade's people.

Builder friends tell me that they are really careful of pricing the materials in jobs in case there are further large increases, so you might have to expect builders to leave a very large contingency in the pricing. Add all this to the increase cost of filling the van up with fuel and you need to cost that renovation job very carefully or you might catch a bad cold.

HELPLINE ISSUES

Managing Remote Property

Buying a house in London and the south east of England is prohibitively expensive. You typically need to find a quarter of the capital cost for the deposit and pass various affordability criteria, based on mortgage costs at 5% and 145% cover for the rent etc. Add in additional stamp duty land tax at 3% and it is almost impossible for new landlords to get their first property. Hence many landlords are looking at more attractive entry offerings in the North of England, where prices can be a quarter of those in the South East.

You do however need to think long and hard about how you are going to manage your property that may be 300+ miles away. Can you find an agent you can trust? How well do you know the local market, what are the local rents, are you going to rely on the estate agent for builders and other trades. We would urge anyone that buys a property hundreds of miles from their base to think long and hard about the management of that property. Remember that just because you employ an agent it does not dissolve you of your legal responsibilities for the tenants or the property.

Deposits

The deposit regulations have been around for 15 years, yet we still get issues on the helpline. If you take a deposit you must protect it within 30 days. If for some reason you have not protected the deposit, we would suggest that you return that deposit to the tenant immediately.



NOISE AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Your Editor recently represented iHOWZ at a residents association meeting in Brighton. The residents are furious at the level of late night noise coming from a small number of HMO houses in the area.

As landlords we are very limited in what we can do with a noisy household. However, we do have a duty to inform the tenants that they live in a residential area and that they need to be considerate off their neighbours, this includes late night gatherings, slamming taxi doors, shouting in the street etc.

At his particular meeting were local councillors, representatives from both Universities and the Police. It is important that we as landlords act responsibly before the local council impose restrictions. Particularly those properties where the conservatory is used in as a living room. It is a condition within the HMO licensing that anti social behaviour is managed. Noisy students also need to be reminded that the University can impose restrictions via a noise abatement notice

So ask your tenants nicely, and perhaps put up a sign inside the front door telling them to be quiet. Act before you lose your HMO license.

PLANNING PERMISSIONS BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

A local landlord applied to convert a Mission Hall into nine units - eight studios and one 2-bedroom flat. That application should have been dealt with by Brighton & Hove City Council within 8 weeks of being registered.

It was clear that the local authority planning officer was opposed to the development and instead of making a decision and the matter going before the planning committee within 8 weeks, after 8 months the planning department recommended refusal. Members living in the Brighton area may well have seen the articles in the local Argus newspaper.

The situation is that all units complied with minimum national standards. However, the local authority described the studios as 'poky'. It has also has introduced a local planning condition regarding community space and seems not to recognise that when applications are made in respect of existing buildings, space is limited to what that building is able to provide and it seems only Brighton & Hove City Council has included such a requirement in their local plan.

The planning committee accepted that the building should be able to be converted into residential but wanted a lesser number and larger flats and yet appeared to still expect those flats to be let at social rents.

What the planning department and the planning committee do not understand is that to provide flats at social rents, numbers are important. If the property can only obtain planning permission for smaller units, then those units will be let at market rents, and the council lose the opportunity for housing an number of economically poor tenants.

In contrast, in 2020 in Moulsecoomb, Brighton a scheme for 30 significantly under sized studios was unanimously approved by the same planning committee. The conclusion of the landlord is under sized units are perfectly acceptable in Moulsecoomb and units meeting all minimum size standards completely unacceptable in Hanover.

COST OF PARKING CHARGES IN BRIGHTON & HOVE

Landlords who have significant interests in the city currently have to pay around £700.00 per year to be able to park during the day and that is of course if they can find spaces, especially in the city centre. It is noted that the outer areas, where parking control has been implemented, the increase in the charge for 2021/22 is 10%. If a landlord was to increase a rent by 10%, I am sure there would be an outcry but it seems Brighton & Hove City Council for doing nothing to justify extra costs thinks nothing of simply adding 10% and that is completely unacceptable.



PROVISION OF SERVICES BY BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

Members may be aware that the vast majority of employees of Brighton & Hove City Council are still working from home. The usual offices for parking vouchers, etc., in Hove is closed, as is the Housing Benefit department in Brighton. One cannot believe that the leaders in Brighton & Hove City Council consider leaving their main offices closed, long after lockdown ceased, is acceptable and it is believed that extra staff have been taken on as a result of the continued working at home system.

If private landlords failed to manage their properties or carry out essential work because they also were only working from home, would that be acceptable? iHowz think not.

COVID

As you are all painfully aware, just over 18 months ago we had the first lockdown, and the start of a difficult time for all.

We were all caught by surprise, consequently most were unable to run their portfolios in the best way, especially visits; re-lets; and evictions.

The Government are saying that we won't get another lockdown, but we might. Therefore, you need to prepare.

Make sure:

- ✓ You are up to date with inspecting your properties, and you have rectified all faults/problems?
- ✓ Have a good line of communication with your tenants, especially if you cannot visit for a while.
- ✓ Keep on top of arrears. Even during the very dark days of court closures, etc., you were still able to chase arrears, and serve appropriate notices. Most importantly, you apply to the Small Claims Court via Money Claim On Line (MCOL) to chase arrears.

Don't get caught short again, there's no excuse this time – if it happens.

MIKE STIMPSON'S COLUMN

Welcome to the final Newsletter for 2021. On the bright side, rents have significantly increased over the past year and that is the good news. The bad news, so far as I am concerned, is Government's Rental Reform proposals, which appear to concentrate on tenants being able to live in their properties for life. In other words, regardless of the length a tenancy is granted for, provided that tenant pays the rent and acts in a good tenant

like manner, they can remain in the property as long as they wish.

This is going back to pre-1988 regulations. In Scotland, removal of the Section 21 has already been implemented and what we are seeing now is the reintroduction of rent control. Although from a rental point of view, times are reasonable from a future agenda for landlords by Government, currently the future does not appear favourable.

One bright note is that Michael Gove has been appointed the Secretary for Housing and I consider he is more likely to be reasonable than his predecessor.

In the meantime, members should respect that your Board is doing everything possible to seek a balance between the rights of our members and the rights of their customer tenants.

On that note, may I wish you good health and enjoyable Christmas and hopefully a not too onerous New Year.

REBUILDING A BAY WINDOW Gary Waller

The most difficult job my builder and I have had all year is to rebuild a bay window, the bay had been cracked for some time and the external render had blown so badly that it was becoming dangerous. The house was built in roughly 1870 and over the years the bay had been repaired mainly by builders adding yet more cement render to the existing structure.

We started by propping up the bay with Acrow props, then we removed the multiple layers of cement taking it back to brickwork. From the number of waste bags that were taken away we estimate that over 900 Kg of render came off the bay! That is a lot of weight and an accident waiting to happen.

This free standing bay was built with a RSJ (H section steel beam) on which the brickwork for the bay is built. The H-Section beam is supported by wooden floor joists attached into the room. Luckily the H-Section beam was structurally sound, but the ends of the wooden floor joists were rotten.

The first photo shows the floor in the room up and new floor joists added and bolted to the existing floor joists.



Photo 2 shows the beam, new bay supports and the Acrow props.



Next we resin filled the cracked brick work on the angles and inserted steel bar to tie it together.



The next and most difficult job was to cut back the new joists to size and build a wooden frame which could be rendered.



The woodwork is tricky because of the multi way cuts and because the wood has to be tapered to a edge. Once the under side of the bay was built the bay was cemented then covered with a stainless steel expanded metal lath, this wraps the bay and gives a secure base on which to render the bay.



Final job was to reseal the window to prevent water ingress and a few coats of paint.

Moral of the tale, it is important to check windows and the frames to ensure that water is not leaking into the structure around, a few minutes checking windows a little mastic could save you an expensive repair job.

MONTHLY ZOOM MEETINGS



We're pleased to say that we were able to keep members informed throughout the recent pandemic with our regular monthly virtual landlords meet-up, courtesy of Zoom.

Whilst I think we all agree they are not the same as face to face, they came a very useful, and close second. And we are delighted to tell you that we will be continuing them next year, but bi-monthly, put these dates in your diaries:

- » February 7th
- » April 4th
- » June 6th
- » August 8th
- » October 3rd
- » December 5th

We've covered a range of topics this year from buying at auction; tax; legal updates; rent arrears; this is addition to the regular update from Mortgage for Business with mortgage news, and much more. If you want a flavour of what you have seen, or missed go to iHowz.tv to catch up.

This is addition to the regular (normally weekly) email news update. Let us know if you have not been getting your updates – info@iHowz.uk

FACE TO FACE MEETINGS

Additionally, we're pleased to be out and about again. Our first time out was to the National Landlord Investment Show at it's new site of Billingsgate – this is after substantial redevelopment at the previous site of Olympia. It was a busy day, and attendees found it extremely useful. Note that the next London one will be March 15th next year.

Next was the first meeting at Southampton for two years, and although we were down on numbers we enjoyed a good attendance with the chance to network.

Next are Ealing, London and Brighton.

FUTUREBUILD

And looking forward to next year, we are delighted to be attending a brand new show, for us.

FutureBuild is all about building; renovating; and future proofing buildings.

We will be taking a stand there at Excel March 1-3rd along with our partners Boswells Insurance and Mortgage for Business.



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All comments and opinions expressed here are strictly those of the individual contributors, and the iHowz cannot accept any responsibility or liability whatsoever.

WEBSITE

All our meetings are on the website, iHowz.uk, as is a regular news update.

LANDLORD FINES

We keep seeing reports of landlords being fined, and frequently having to pay back rent to their tenants, sometimes as a result of a deposit fine.

Virtually every time the punishment is avoidable if only the landlord understood their responsibilities and liabilities.

The days of the amateur landlord are coming to an end, and only the professional landlord will survive. Make sure you know what you are doing by taking our training and accreditation, and then stay up to day with our news items.

Whether you have 1, or 1 thousand properties you have the same responsibilities, i.e. full time responsibility, even if you have a part time job.

CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

Office will be closed for Christmas, December 24th to January 3rd, reopening Tuesday January 4th 2022.

Help Line Number - 01732 56 56 02.

