



8th March 2019

Dear All

We thought now would be a good time to give you a further update on our talks with the National Trust.

As a result of the Minutes from our second meeting now being approved, we feel we can expand further on where the Trust feels common ground could be found.

The Trust does recognise that it is important to protect the principles of home and asset security but due to the inalienable status of most of its properties, it finds it hard to support the idea that long lease tenants should be afforded full enfranchisement rights i.e. the right to buy the freehold. However, it does appreciate that lease extensions could satisfy the principles of home and asset security.

The topic of multiple lease extensions with longer terms and fairer premiums has been discussed and the Trust thinks it would be simpler to grant longer terms, making it easier for all concerned and saving on the costs involved in admin and legal fees for both sides. Considerably longer extension terms were mentioned, with the proviso that the Trust would have the right to buy back the lease each time a leaseholder wanted to sell i.e. at such time the NT would have the opportunity to review whether it might have a more appropriate use for the property; if so, it would have the right to purchase the lease at market value. This buy-back arrangement would need to be included in new legislation.

The Trust has said this proposed solution could be applied to most of its 600 of its long lease properties. However, there are some further properties which are located very near the visitor route, or where the property is open to the public, or where there were arrangements in place when the property came to the Trust, where it would not be appropriate.

We have been robust about the first point and are seeking clarification on what the Trust defines as the visitor route. We have stated that if these properties had such an obvious impact on the visitor experience, they should never have been let out on long leases in the first place and therefore the tenants concerned must be suitably compensated. Our view is that the Trust should buy back these leases at a fair market price if, and when, the tenant wants to move. The Trust has promised to provide more clarification and has clearly stated that it genuinely wants to support those leaseholders whose homes fall into this category.

Please bear in mind that there is still a lot of work to be done before a final proposal can be agreed but we are delighted to tell you that the Law Commission has suggested they meet with us (TANT) and the National Trust to discuss how an agreement can be reached.

This is all positive news but we want to make doubly-sure that long leaseholders are provided with security in this reform program and to this end we recently met with our local MP, Sir Hugo Swire, to give him an update. Having discussed our views with him on the Law Commission's proposals for National Trust long lease tenants, he is arranging a meeting with James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to discuss the right to longer lease extensions for NT leaseholders. Two members of the TANT Long Lease Committee in Northumberland are also meeting with their MP to request help.

We would appreciate it if you could all approach your local MP and give an update on your situation. Such meetings will lend weight to our campaign to protect the principles of home and asset security for National Trust long lease tenants and it will strengthen our voice in the negotiations.

We will be having another meeting with the Trust in the next few weeks and will continue to keep you updated.

Best wishes

Karen and Mike