

# New law good news for tenants

Plans to raise the standard of private rented housing in Scotland have been unveiled today by Housing and Communities Minister, Alex Neil.



The Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Bill will protect the good reputation of Scotland's private landlords by improving the law on how they are registered. Councils will be given more powers to tackle bad landlords.

To ensure a better deal for tenants, landlords will be required to provide information on tenants' rights and responsibilities.

The maximum fines for the worst offending landlords will increase from £5,000 to £50,000. Courts will also be given power to ban convicted landlords for up to five years.

There will be a crack down on unscrupulous agents charging extortionate, unlawful premiums, and to see what further improvements can be made, a comprehensive review of the current landlord registration system will be undertaken.

Alex Neil said:

"Good, lawful landlords have nothing to fear from this Bill. This Government wants to encourage a vibrant and responsive Scottish private rented sector, which provides good quality and well managed accommodation.

"I see the private rented sector as more important than ever in providing good quality accommodation given the economic challenges that face the public sector.

"The Bill sends a clear message to bad and unlawful landlords that they will not be tolerated, and give greater powers to

local authorities to tackle the problem.

“We also plan to tighten landlord registration and HMO licensing by toughening up on the worst offenders by significantly increasing penalties. I have also ordered a root and branch review of landlord registration.”

Councillor Colin Keir, Convener of the City of Edinburgh Council’s Regulatory Committee, said:

“The private rented sector in Edinburgh makes a significant contribution to meeting the city’s housing needs by providing a home for 20 per cent of its residents. The Council is committed to working with the landlords who provide high quality, well managed accommodation in the city, and has been at the forefront of providing services to support the sector.

“However a small minority of landlords do not meet the required standards and damage the reputation of the sector. The Council welcomes the measures proposed in the Private Rented Housing Bill, which will provide added protection for tenants and reputable landlords, and help local authorities to take robust enforcement action when it is called for.”

Mrs Mary Corrie, an Edinburgh landlord, said:

“Having been a landlord for 13 years I have seen first hand the negative impact that bad landlords have on the reputation of the sector and the lives of vulnerable tenants.

“Any measures taken by the Government to deal with the problem and make it fairer for landlords who abide by the law will be welcomed.”

The Chair of the Private Rented Sector Strategy Group, Douglas Robertson, welcomed publication of the Bill and said:

“The Group welcomes the fact that the private rented sector is being seen as a priority area for housing reform, and these measures will help set in place a better functioning sector

for both tenants and landlords.

“We are especially pleased that the government fully took on board our proposals for ensuring transparency for both parties in relation to tenancy conditions, through the introduction of a tenancy pack.”