

NUS condemn legal moves on HMO flats

MSPs today passed a new law which they hope will raise the standard of private rented housing in Scotland.

The Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Bill will protect the reputation of Scotland's good landlords and tackle the minority of bad landlords who are acting illegally.

Local authorities will have greater powers to tackle bad practice and penalise unlawful operators while improving tenants and landlords' awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

Bad landlords face a £50,000 fine and a ban on letting flats for up to five years. There will also be a crack-down on unscrupulous agents charging extortionate, unlawful premiums.

Housing and Communities Minister Alex Neil said:

"This Government recognises the increasing importance of the private rented sector in the current challenging economic climate.

"That demand is likely to increase because of pressures on the sector due to the UK Government's ill-thought plans for housing benefit and welfare reform.

"I want to support and encourage good, honest landlords who provide much needed high quality accommodation whilst getting tough on the unscrupulous players.

"I am particularly pleased at the consensual view in Parliament that this Bill will meet that aim."

Following the vote in Parliament which also gives powers to local authorities to restrict HMOs (Houses in Multiple

Occupancy) at Stage 3 of the Private Rented Housing Bill, Liam Burns, President of NUS Scotland, said:

“The amendment passed today on HMOs is incredibly dangerous and very bad news for students, young people, and people of all ages in private rented accommodation in Scotland. HMOs were brought in to protect the safety of tenants, following the deaths of two students in a fire in Glasgow. The idea that they are now being used to socially engineer communities is incredibly worrying and incredibly irresponsible.

“The Scottish Parliament should not be passing legislation to tell people where they can and cannot live. Let’s not forget HMOs are not just occupied by students, but also by young professionals and, given the economic downturn, increasingly older people too.

“It is sheer hypocrisy of Ted Brocklebank to propose an amendment which could restrict where people can rent homes, just at the same time as his colleagues in Westminster are slashing housing benefit and forcing more and more people to share in rented accommodation for longer. Restricting supply just at a time when demand for renting is likely to hugely increase is a recipe for disaster, forcing more tenants into black market properties and into the hands of unscrupulous and unsafe landlords.

An HMO licence is required by a landlord where three or more people who are not part of the same family live in a rented property. The City of Edinburgh Council has a page of information on these licences [here](#).