

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

29 July 2023

Dear Michael,

**Re: Abandonment of privately rented properties – Housing Coalition**

A Housing Coalition made up of membership organisations for property agents and landlords, trade press and other housing and legal professionals is working together to campaign to improve the private rented sector.

The first reading of the Renters (Reform) Bill has highlighted many positives that will improve renting for landlords, agents and tenants making it a fairer sector for everyone. However, we remain concerned on some areas with some provisions requiring further clarity. We also believe there are some additional areas that the UK Government should consider. One area we feel requires greater provision as part of the Renters (Reform) Bill, is the issue of when a tenant may abandon their tenancy.

When a property becomes abandoned it can cause several concerning issues for a landlord:

- There is the loss of rental income which with these unprecedented costs to landlords will be a concern.
- There is the risk of vandalism and lack of security at the abandoned property, which can attract anti-social behaviour and squatters not to mention higher insurance premiums for landlords.
- There is the issue that if tenants leave possessions behind, these become the responsibility of the landlord to safeguard.
- The tenant still has a legal tenancy and can return and demand to take up residence at any time.
- Insurers need to be informed if the property is left unoccupied.

As a precedent, the recent enactment of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 has provision in the legislation to deal with abandoned properties in Wales. Under the legislation, if a landlord believes their property has become abandoned, then they must write to their tenant and over a period of one month must provide sufficient evidence to prove the property has been abandoned. If they still believe the property has been abandoned, then they can write to their tenant to end their tenancy agreement. This is important because unless the landlord is certain of the fact that a tenant has left for good, then it is quite risky to take over the property. This is a proposal that the UK Government should consider including within the Renters (Reform) Bill.

An alternative to this proposal would be to bring into force the provisions on abandonment from the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The provisions introduced by Part 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 are designed to allow private landlords to recover possession of abandoned residential premises more easily, with the intention that more rental property will become available to let out to tenants. Currently, in England the law does not allow the landlord to end a tenancy. Under Housing Act 1988 a tenancy can only come to an end when a court order is executed (by a bailiff) or the tenant surrenders or takes some other action to bring the tenancy to an end.

By bringing these provisions into force, the UK Government will be supporting tenants, landlords and letting agents. It may increase supply of private rented sector properties by reducing the time they are left unoccupied; help meet some of the aims of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill by reducing the occurrence of dilapidated and empty properties and increase landlords' income on an ongoing basis so they can improve standards and keep rents fair.

I am sending this letter on behalf of members of the Housing Coalition and urge you to consider including provisions for abandonment as the Renters (Reform) Bill develops through Parliament. If you would like to meet to discuss this issue or any other issues contained in the Bill in more detail, then the Housing Coalition would be pleased to do so. Your office can liaise with Tim Thomas, Policy and Campaigns Officer at Propertymark, who is Coordinator of the Housing Coalition [timthomas@propertymark.co.uk](mailto:timthomas@propertymark.co.uk) and telephone 01926 417389.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,



**Nathan Emerson MNAEA MARLA MNAEA(Comm.)**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Propertymark**

