



Holiday Home Association News

Edition 158 February 2020

Keep the Home Fires Burning?

Open fires have made headlines this month and the government's announcement about the banning of the most polluting fuels will have an impact on a lot of holiday home operators who make a feature of the welcome that a roaring fire can offer.

HHA news looked at the detail behind the headlines from a holiday home operator's perspective.

The government has carried out a consultation and the announcements made are its response to that consultation and decisions as to plans it is making to put forward legislation. The actual legislation itself has not yet been published and as we know the devil sometimes lies in the detail.

The first point, of relevance to some owners, if not many, is that the proposals seem to be about the sale of wood and coal, rather than the use of it. We don't think any HHA members have a coal mine, but some have grounds from which wood may be gathered and made available for burning. Unless well-seasoned, this would be "wet wood", which generates the most smoke and pollution. There will be an

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issue here: if you sell holiday accommodation and a supply of wet wood is included as part of the package, are you selling wood? If it were alcohol the answer would be yes. We shall perhaps need to await the legislation to answer this.

Certainly, you won't be able to buy wet wood for your fire or stove. It will only be legal to buy dried wood that has been

seasoned in dry conditions and this will certainly be more expensive.

What is actually going to be prohibited is the sale of small-volume wet wood: *We intend to take forward our proposal for a mandatory certification scheme demonstrating that wood sold in volumes under 2m³ is dry (less than 20% moisture). We intend that this will apply from one year from publication of the government response. From this time, sales of wet wood in volumes under 2m³ will be prohibited.*



So, from 21st February 2021 or more likely 21st February 2022 you will only be able to buy wet wood if you buy a minimum of two cubic metres at a time – which may permit some large-complex owners to carry on polluting! There is a further suggestion of a one-year delay to enable stocks to be used up and small suppliers to prepare to season and dry their wood. If you only want a small quantity and won't be gathering it yourself, you'll need to buy dried wood.

We do not know yet how these changes will affect prices, but it may be prudent for holiday-home owners to look ahead and plan to discontinue wood-burning in fires and stoves – there is every prospect that burning wood will be too expensive and inconvenient.

There are some non-traditional wood fuels on the market such as olive logs, sourced from the Mediterranean area, and these will continue to be permitted for the time being in rural areas that are not in smokeless zones. However there is to be a review of standards for these logs and we can expect some standards to be set for them in the future that may prevent them from being sold at a reasonable price.

The alternative is coal, or manufactured solid fuels. You won't be able to provide your cottage with traditional house coal – that's certainly going to be banned from sale from February 2021 onwards. The government says *We are not looking to ban the sale of all coal. We want to see a move away from using traditional house coal towards using less polluting fuels in the domestic setting by only allowing the sale of smokeless coal (or anthracite) and low sulphur manufactured solid fuels for the purpose of domestic heating.*

So, if you buy manufactured smokeless fuel you'll be able to carry on keeping the home fire burning and providing that warm cosy cottage experience that your guests appreciate.

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Bagged coal sales will end in February 2021, loose coal by coal merchants will end in February 2022.

There is not going to be a scheme for scrapping of wood-burning stoves so if you have a stove that's only suitable for burning timber you will have to bear the cost of replacement, or the cost of dried timber, yourself.

It would probably be best to consider manufactured solid fuel derived from coal as the only type of fuel, looking ahead, that has any sort of long-term future and plan any changes to properties with that in mind.

CoronaVirus Advice

The virus that is alarming the world has not yet taken hold in the UK but nonetheless there is a prospect of disruption to the tourism industry if things get worse.

VisitBritain has a web page of general advice here:

<https://www.visitbritain.org/covid-19-new-coronavirus-latest-and-advice-businesses>

One key point is that the virus does not last for more than two or three days on surfaces, so in the event of a person in a holiday home contracting it, and leaving, the property could be locked and left empty for a few days after which the risk to anyone entering or using the property would have ended. In the event of a person in a property needing to remain in isolation there, due to suspected infection, it would be best not to oppose this even if it means cancelling another

booking. The circumstances are exceptional and although the law does not give an infected person a right to stay, it is unlikely that the next customer is going to want to stay there anyway and the reputation damage that could arise from non-co-operation with quarantine would be considerable!

Insurance Tips from David Morris

Some things you may need to know about self-catering insurances:

Locks and bolts

We do not have a minimum standard of locks and bolts. Whatever security you have, is good, and we will not ask. The reason for this is that cover is not provided for thief-attractive goods e.g. valuables, personal possessions and clothing (because you wouldn't leave any of these in your property) and theft without a break in e.g. by holidaymaker is included.

Intruder Alarms

Not necessary. There is no need to go the expense of the installation and the annual maintenance costs of an intruder alarm. It would also be pointless for an alarm to be an insurance requirement as you would be worrying guests about setting and unsetting the alarm, and relying upon them to maintain your insurance cover for theft.

Key safes

A good idea. Your insurance cover is not compromised. It is sensible to ensure that the code is regularly changed.

Sprinklers

In the unlikely event that that you have sprinklers, make sure your policy includes damage for accidental discharge.

Leak detection devices

Another good idea. At the moment insurers are trialing the benefits and it is probable that a premium discount may become available in due course, or the excess for water damage is reduced.

Remotely controlled central heating

This will help you comply with the winter heating requirements when the property is unoccupied.

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Tax Tips from Trevor Jones

An opportune time to increase profits

Whether you own a furnished holiday property or a portfolio of properties you have nothing to lose and possibly a great deal to gain by chatting with us about the tax benefits which could be found within your property. As chartered accountants, tax specialists and chartered surveyors why not use our free of charge and totally without obligation expertise to discover the extent of the capital allowances within your property or portfolio.

It is not uncommon to find tax benefits in excess of 20% of the purchase price of the property or portfolio.

Why not call our helpline on 0330 043 0046 or email trevor@staxuk.com. You will find the conversation quite interesting

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Editor's note: We'll be moving to a more informative style of tax advice tip next month. If you have a tax issue do try out this new tax helpline!

Reminder from the Petrol-Heads

Have you thought about targeting classic and sports car users? They are usually mature and affluent customers. Petrolheadswelcome.com is a website that promotes great places to stay for car-lovers. You can have a basic listing on that website free of charge, or, as a member of the HHA, you can have an enhanced listing (incl. unlimited photos) for only £15 for a year! The usual annual fee for HHA members is £20 (£25 for non-members).

News 157 carried a feature on Petrol-heads!

Fuel rates for tax purposes:

HMRC has published new advisory rates for the appropriate expense level for driving cars. These are used when an employee uses a company car for private use or when a company car is provided and the employee buys the petrol and reclaims on a mileage basis.

The new rates from 1st March are:

Engine size	Petrol	Diesel	LPG	Electric*
1,400cc or less	12p		8p	4p
1,600cc or less		9p		4p
1,401cc - 2,000cc	14p		10p	4p
1,601cc to 2,000.cc		11p		4p
Over 2,000cc.	20p	13p	14p	4p

* Fully electric cars only

New Ministerial Team at DCMS

The reshuffle affected the Culture department and once again we have a change of face at the top of the government department responsible for tourism.

The new Secretary of State is Rt. Hon Oliver Dowden CBE, the MP for Hertsmere in Hertfordshire. He is regarded as something of a rising star in the world of politics so that might mean he'll only be at the Culture department until the next reshuffle!

The junior minister with specific responsibility for tourism is Nigel Huddleston MP, who represents mid-Worcestershire. He is thought to have a good knowledge of the tourism industry and be well-disposed towards it.

Changes to Freeview – Do adjust your set!

Upcoming changes to Freeview TV signals between February – April 2020

We have received this update from Digital UK

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inform you of a change to Freeview television signals in parts of the UK and Crown Dependencies which may affect accommodation providers who provide a television for their customers. This includes hotels, B&Bs, caravan sites and guest houses.

Some channels on Freeview will be moving to new airwaves to allow for the future development of new mobile broadband services, following a decision by the UK Government. Digital UK is working with Freeview and co-ordinating the technical planning of the updates needed at transmitters. This programme of changes will take place in stages between now and 2020.

Engineering work will be carried out in the areas listed at the end of this letter between **February – April 2020**. As a result, accommodation providers receiving Freeview from one of the transmitter groups listed overleaf may need to retune their TV equipment on or after the date shown so that guests can continue to watch all available channels. Those using other services based around Freeview channels, such as YouView, BT TV or TalkTalk, may also need to retune.

In some cases:

- Communal TV distribution systems that receive a signal from a transmitter in one of these groups, including MATV and IRS equipment, may need to be adjusted to work with new frequencies.
- Some older grouped aerials – notably 'group C/D' – may need to be replaced where these

are still in use. A wideband model is generally recommended.

Freeview services will be subject to disruption while work is carried out at transmitters, which is expected to be completed at most main stations by 6am and at smaller local relays by late afternoon on retune days. Equipment can be retuned at any point after this. Satellite and cable TV services are not affected.

A local information campaign will prepare people for the changes as they take place in each area. Should you receive questions about this from the public, information about the changes is available via the Freeview Advice Line on freephone 0808 100 0288 and on the Freeview website at freeview.co.uk/tvchanges.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at industry@digitaluk.co.uk

Kate Macefield
Director, 700MHz Clearance Programme
Digital UK

Upcoming Freeview retunes in Q1/Q2 2020

Please check your area and advise those responsible for TV systems in your properties

Transmitter Group	Area Served	Retune Date
Emley Moor	most of Yorkshire	5-Feb-2020
Chesterfield	the Chesterfield area	5-Feb-2020
Sheffield (Totley Rise relay only)	parts of Sheffield	5-Feb-2020
Belmont	Lincolnshire and east Yorkshire	5-Feb-2020
Tacolneston (Creake relay only)	parts of the Creake area	5-Feb-2020
Emley Moor (some relays only)	parts of west Yorkshire	12-Feb-2020

Keighley	the Keighley area	12-Feb-2020
Idle	the Idle area	12-Feb-2020
Oliver's Mount	the Scarborough area	12-Feb-2020
Sandy Heath	Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire	12-Feb-2020
Winter Hill*	Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and north Staffordshire	20-Feb-2020
Divis	Belfast and the surrounding area	4-Mar-2020
Belmont	Lincolnshire and east Yorkshire	4-Mar-2020
Waltham	much of the East Midlands	4-Mar-2020
Nottingham	the Nottingham area	4-Mar-2020
Darvel (Blackwaterfoot & Campbeltown relays only)	parts of Blackwaterfoot & Campbeltown	4-Mar-2020
Bilsdale	Teesside and much of North Yorkshire	12-Mar-2020
Winter Hill	Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and north Staffordshire	22-Apr-2020
Pendle Forest (Trawden relay only)	parts of Trawden	22-Apr-2020
Saddleworth	the Saddleworth area	22-Apr-2020
Storeton	parts of The Wirral and Liverpool	22-Apr-2020
Lancaster (some relays only)	parts of the Lancaster area	22-Apr-2020
Caldbeck (some relays only)	parts of Gosforth and St Bees	22-Apr-2020
Caldbeck Scotland (Creetown relay only)	parts of Creetown	22-Apr-2020
Kendal	Kendal and parts of the Lake District	29-Apr-2020

*Those receiving a TV signal from the main Winter Hill transmitter should retune after 10am.