

Crown Residents Against Sell Off

www.ourhomesarenotforsale.co.uk

Our campaign goes to Parliament



Wednesday 3 March 2010:

Crown resident campaigners pack the room as Chief Executive of the Crown Estate, Roger Bright is grilled by the Treasury Select Committee on the sell off of our homes.

There's a lot to report on this week! Last Wednesday the Treasury Select Committee grilled Crown Estate chief executive Roger Bright, and the Treasury Minister Sarah McCarthy-Fry over the proposed sale of our homes. Some 50 residents sat right behind a nervous Mr Bright as a panel of MPs put our case forcefully to him. Some key points:

- Mr Bright was instructed to put the details of the Crown Estate's assurances for existing tenants in writing for the Treasury
- He was forced to admit that the Tenancy Handbook – which we have been told will help guarantee our rights under any new owner – has been withdrawn
- He admitted that vacated flats are being deliberately kept empty and that key-worker lets have been suspended
- He gave no assurance about future key-worker provision
- He denied that a decision has already been made and offered to meet residents representatives
- He denied that the sale of our homes was directly linked to the

Crown's investment in retail parks and Regent St, but confirmed that those are the kinds of enterprises the money could be reinvested in

The Treasury Minister was also pressed hard by MPs on whether she could use the Treasury's power of direction over the Crown Estate to force them to hold a ballot of residents. She eventually said "I am more than happy to use any power I have to ask them to have a ballot of their tenants."

Residents' representatives and a legal adviser are meeting with the Minister and local MPs next week to follow this up.

Read the full transcript or watch online at www.ourhomesarenotforsale.co.uk

Our campaign was also given strong support by local MPs Frank Dobson, Meg Hillier and Mark Field in two House of Commons debates on Tuesday and Thursday last

week. See the website for transcripts from the parliamentary record Hansard.

Join the march and rally!

Assemble 12:30, Tuesday March 23, outside Crown Estate head office, 16 New Burlington Place (behind Regents St)



This marks the end of the consultation period. Join us and tell the Crown Estate "OUR HOMES ARE NOT FOR SALE!" SPEAKERS to include MP's and others to be confirmed.

To receive the latest news and campaign materials email: handsoffourhomes@yahoo.co.uk



I can confirm that the overwhelming majority of the tenants wish to remain with the Crown Estate. That is the heart of the matter. Those residents do not want to be sold off like chattels, or treated like the contents of the place where they live, and no foreshortened, inadequate process of so-called consultation is likely to change their minds.

Frank Dobson MP, Houses of Parliament, Thursday 4 March 2010

Fundraising appeal



Thanks to all who have given so generously at local meetings. The Millbank and Victoria Park collections each raised around £400 for our fighting fund, and Cumberland Market have committed £1000 to fund the campaign. However we urgently need to raise more money. Residents' Associations have not enforced membership fees for some years, but we need your help now! We suggest a donation of £5 per household, but please give what you can afford. We are in the process of setting up a campaign bank account and will put the details on the newsletter and website as soon as we can – in the meantime please send cheques (made payable to Crown Residents Association) to your local Residents' Association chair. If you have ideas for fundraising and can help please get in touch!

What a campaign!

Our campaign is getting fantastic support. Camden and Hackney councils have both passed cross-party resolutions opposing the Crown's plans. Key-worker employers and trade unions, including the chairs of Barts, Great Ormond St and UCLH NHS trusts and the head of the London Fire Service, the NUT and RMT have also written to the Crown to express concern. Local churches have also pledged support.

This all shows our campaign is putting massive pressure on the Crown Estate. We have a real chance of defeating these proposals, but we have to keep up the pressure!

- Fill in and send your consultation form if you haven't already (if you have lost it you can download via the website or ask your local committee for a copy)
- Send the postcard to the Crown Estate chiefs
- Sign the online and royal petitions – time is running out on these!
- Keep writing those letters!

Who is misinforming who?

You will have seen the latest 'consultation update' where the Crown say residents' concerns are prompted by 'misinformation' (we presume they mean by campaigners and in the press). Our view, which is shared by legal advisers we have consulted as well as our MPs and councillors, is that the Crown's assurances so far are just not specific or detailed enough to be reliable. Without firm information about exactly what a sale would mean for different types of tenants, (and this depends on who buys), and exactly what conditions will be imposed upon any buyer, we simply do not have enough information. Without proper answers to our questions our best course of action

is to oppose the sale.

And while the Crown say they will only sell to a buyer who will take a 'sympathetic approach' (whatever that means) to the management of our homes, the secrecy with which 'Operation Blue' has so far been handled speaks for itself, as does the recent withdrawal of the Tenancy Handbook. We have also found out that £47000 has been spent on consultants' fees for the consultation process, at the same time as the Crown is refusing point blank to find less than £3000 to fund a ballot of tenants. Lastly, they are simply ignoring the wider concerns we have raised about the future of our communities and of key-worker provision.

Legal advice

Residents' Associations are in touch with a housing law firm which can offer legal advice to any resident who contacts them. This is free for those who qualify for legal aid. If you are in receipt of any of the following benefits you should automatically qualify:

- Guaranteed state pension credit
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (formerly Incapacity Benefit)

You may also qualify if you are on a low income. If you are not sure please contact the solicitor and ask, or check out http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/guidance/eligibility_calculator.asp.

In order to get as accurate a picture as possible of how different tenants might be affected, it is important for as many people as possible to come forward and contact the solicitor. Please say when calling you are a Crown Estate resident.

Contact:

Christian Hansen
Hansen Palomares
153 Kennington Road
London
SE11 6SF

Tel 020 7640 4600

Email: <mailto:mailto@hansenpalomares.co.uk> (put Crown Estate in subject line)

If you do not qualify for legal aid you can still get free legal information from the CAB and local legal advice bureaux.

Upcoming meetings and events

Victoria Park Crown Residents' Association are holding a General meeting on Thursday 18 March at 7pm in St James the Less Church. Come to the meeting for the latest news on our campaign.

Fundraising event brought to you by Millbank residents: the "Hands off our Homes show", Wednesday, April 28, 2010 - 20:30 at The Royal Vauxhall Tavern.