

NPHC Conference report

Eight speakers, from government, the industry and beyond, entertained and informed an audience of more than 100 delegates at the Imperial War Museum Duxford. The keynote speaker was Simon Llewellyn, the senior civil servant with responsibility for park homes at Communities and Local Government (CLG).

Llewellyn began by saying that working with stakeholders is the key to getting things right in the industry and thanking NPHC for their commitment over the last year. He explained that park home reform is far from

complete, while the expectations of owners of park homes are not always met. He believes the industry needs to sharpen its consumer focus and that it could do more to be straight with customers.

Hence, government is keen to introduce a more comprehensive licensing scheme for ALL caravan sites, as current legislation is not fit for purpose. For example, Local Authorities (LAs) cannot enquire as to a licence holder's suitability or management capabilities. In future, CLG is proposing to introduce a 'fit and

proper person' regime for operators of parks – both residential and holiday. The proposals, which will be consulted on in early 2009, will consider the transfer of existing licences to the new regime which will be chargeable and renewable probably every three years.

CLG has consulted on a new dispute resolution service for home owners on residential parks – government's preferred option is to use the Residential Property Tribunal (see John Clement's speech). This could be in operation as early as spring 2009.

Highlights from other speakers



Alicia Dunne – National Park Homes Council

The industry has three challenges:

- i) Provision of a high quality product
- ii) Moving forward to meet standards that apply in mainstream housing
- iii) Stronger and more effective self regulation
- BUT the impact of 10 years of reform is yet to bite. Rogue activity remains unabated.
- Government needs to raise levels of enforcement and communicate more effectively with residents over their rights.
- Greater synergy is needed between the various agencies involved in policing the industry.



Richard Ashton – Imperial War Museum Duxford

- Marketing is just informed common sense!

- Know your customer and look at their lifetime value.
- Rank customers in terms of importance and target accordingly by spend.
- Keep messages in marketing material simple (KISS) – just 3 or 4 key messages.



John Clement – park home law specialist at Turbervilles

Regional Property Tribunals are government's stated preferred option in dealing with park home disputes. They are good because:

- They are experienced in dealing with housing disputes
- Hearings are informal
- Parties can represent themselves (usually each side pays its own costs)
- Some cases can be decided on paper
- Usually they're quicker than courts

However, it was likely that terminations of an agreement should remain with the court service, due to complexities. Watch this space!



Len Bell – Champion Accountants

- Prepare for a downturn! The housing log jam is resulting in a fall in park home sales.
- Businesses need to focus on sales and keep the sales team motivated (ensure that your bonus structure rewards success).
- Look after existing customers and improve value for money.
- Review marketing themes in line with the current market conditions.
- Write (rewrite) a long term business plan, but concentrate on immediate cash flow and cash flow management.



Dr Mark Bevan – Research Fellow, University of York

- The number of older people is set to increase dramatically – e.g. those aged over 85 will nearly double between 2003 and 2028.

- There will be more people with impairments requiring housing, and changing health and support needs.
- There will be pressure in the housing market, and opportunities in niche markets.
- Park home living could provide the solution!
- See the national policy for housing in an ageing society: 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods.'



John Lally – Director General, NCC

John Lally began with the hot-off-the-press High Court judgement (see article opposite).

The call to action for the industry is to:

- Embrace innovation.
- Examine the requirement for park homes in the current market.
- Target local authorities to raise awareness of the role of park homes.
- Provide market information for collation into an annual statistical report.