

GRAHAM KINNEAR

# POST-LOCKDOWN PROGRAMME

**I**t appears that the current efforts of lockdown have yielded a positive result with incidences of Coronavirus reducing. Property folk will therefore be turning their attentions to a post-lockdown environment, and so this month I wanted to review some of the actions that should probably be on your to-do list.

## LEGIONELLA

The risk of the legionella bacteria is enhanced when water is left standing. Many landlords and those running serviced accommodation will have units that may have remained empty since March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Consequently, you must ensure that the water system is thoroughly flushed through prior to reoccupation of the premises. It would also be a good opportunity to descale all the tap outlets and check any tanks in the loft too. For those landlords who have yet to have undertaken a Legionella Risk Assessment in compliance with Approved Code of Practice L8, then this would be a perfect time to get your house in order.

## EPCS

The enforcement of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Given that local authorities were requested to take a pragmatic approach due to the COVID-19 situation, I am not aware of any enforcement action having yet taken place. That said, this enforcement is likely to start with some gusto once normality is resumed. I therefore urge you to check the EPC register that you have a valid EPC with a rating of E or above, failing which you must get the property reassessed and undertake the improvements required to score a minimum of 39 points.

## ELECTRICITY

It would be prudent to remember that you will need to have an electrical test undertaken at your residential properties prior to a new tenancy from July 2020. There may be a backlog of work for contractors following the lockdown, and so if you are planning on letting a property, then it would be an idea to get the electrical inspection booked in now.

## MAINTENANCE

It is likely that you elected to adopt an Only If Urgent policy in respect of routine maintenance of your properties. Now that most construction contractors are working again, you should make a list of the maintenance jobs that are outstanding and start to get these booked in. It is doubtless a false economy to try and continue to avoid routine maintenance. It is invariably cheaper than adopting a reactive approach to building works.

## GAS SAFETY

You should ensure that all gas safety certificates are up to date. Some may have lapsed if your tenants were self-isolating around the renewal date and it is an important legal requirement that you have valid certificates for each of your properties.

## ACQUISITION

Many of you are hopeful that a lack of confidence in the market could bring some purchase opportunities. You may well be correct, and so it is important to ensure that you are suitably equipped to take advantage. I would suggest that you revisit discussions with your banks, funders and JV partners to establish whether the various lines of credit that you had arranged prior to the COVID-19 outbreak are still available and whether still on the same terms. Knowing the availability and cost of finance is key to being able to discern whether an opportunity is viable. Furthermore, it has been rumoured that conveyancing firms may increase their fees in a post-COVID-19 world, and so it may be sensible to try and agree a fixed fee rate with your conveyancers if you are to continue to be a regular customer.

## SALES

Given it is likely that social distancing will be with us for some months ahead, give some thought about how you dispose of properties. If viewers are to be allowed in property unaccompanied, then you will want to ensure that no items 'go missing' during this process. You will also need to identify and address potential hazards such as the broken airing cupboard door or dodgy loft hatch, given that you will not be escorting a buyer around the property. It may set you apart from some competitors if you were to invest in a facility whereby you could offer virtual viewings and then a subsequent, physical viewing for those seriously interested.

In summation, it feels positive that the world appears to be starting to get back to some normality. We must however have an ongoing respect for the virus and continue to take any necessary precautions as we go about running our property businesses.

I would be very keen to hear how readers are adapting their working practices in response to the COVID-19 situation and can be contacted at:

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or **01843 583000**

**As always I am happy to assist readers of YPN and can be contacted on 01843 583000 or [graham@grahamkinnear.com](mailto:graham@grahamkinnear.com)**

Graham is the author of "The Property Triangle".

