

Our HIPs are gold-plated

A letter to the Herald, Sept 2008

Sir,

In last week's *Letters* page, a correspondent takes issue with Conservative policy to scrap Home Information Packs (HIPs) on the grounds that they are an EU requirement.

In fact, HIPs are a classic example of the government here 'gold plating' an EU directive – in this case the one on energy performance certification. It is perfectly possible to have this certification without HIPs, as in Northern Ireland.

The Government pushed HIPs through before the results of their own trials were revealed to avoid criticism from industry, consumers and the public. It is now clear why: 8 out of 10 sellers did not think that the HIP had helped to sell their property; and 55% of buyers did not think that the HIP had speeded up the process. And 2006 research by Oxford Economic Forecasting warned that HIPs would cut the number of housing transactions by between 10% and 25%.

Conservatives have pledged to abolish the requirement to have a Home Information Pack, but retain energy certification – an important part of our plan to cut carbon emissions. This is in addition to our commitment to abolish Stamp Duty for 9 in 10 first-time buyers. Together, these measures would have a more beneficial effect than just the limited, temporary steps announced by Mr Brown.

Sincerely

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