

STATES OF JERSEY



RENT SAFE SCHEME

**Lodged au Greffe on 21st December 2021
by Senator K.L. Moore
Earliest date for debate: 18th January 2022**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for the Environment –

- (a) to bring forward such legislative amendments as are necessary to make it legally mandatory that all landlords register with the current Rent Safe scheme; and
- (b) to develop a process for the regular renewal of Rent Safe registration based on a risk rating approach to determine the frequency and order of inspections of rental dwellings.

SENATOR K.L. MOORE

REPORT

The intention of this proposition is to ensure that landlords must register with the Rent Safe scheme, to promote the application of minimum accommodation standards, and to improve visibility for tenants of the standard of property they are renting.

Like the [Eat Safe scheme](#) before it (designed to improve food safety awareness) - the Rent Safe scheme is about transparency and safety for service users.

What is Rent Safe?

Rent Safe provides tenants with a list of landlords that have reached accredited status under the Rent Safe Scheme, together with an overview of the number of properties that have reached the accredited minimum standards required for 3, 4 or 5 stars.

Rent Safe is currently a voluntary scheme and whilst all landlords are able to register their properties, only those that meet an accredited rating are listed on the [Rent Safe register](#).

Accredited star ratings

These are the standards landlords need to meet to gain the following star ratings:

Number of stars	Standards
5	The property exceeds the minimum Rent Safe standard and has achieved accreditation through compliance with legal standards. Energy efficiency measures are also in place.
4	The property exceeds the minimum Rent Safe standard and has achieved accreditation through compliance with legal standards.
3	The property meets the minimum Rent Safe standard and has achieved accreditation through compliance with the minimum legal standards.

Non-Accredited star ratings

Landlords who achieve a 0, 1, or 2 star rating do not currently appear on the Rent Safe register.

Accommodation Standards

The minimum Rent Safe accommodation standards are detailed in full within the application form and require a yes/no answer from the applicant. The main accommodation standards are detailed below;

- The property is in a good state of repair both inside and outside and free from hazards to health.
- The house is free of damp.

- All habitable rooms have adequate natural and electric lighting to allow the tenant(s) to carry out domestic duties easily and safely.
- There is adequate space for occupants to move safely around the accommodation it is not overcrowded.
- There is a whole house heating system that is economical to run and capable of maintaining an adequate temperature throughout the dwelling. The tenant is provided instructions for use and rates of electricity.
- There is adequate ventilation to keep the property fresh, free from excess moisture (condensation), cooking smells etc.
- Electrical installations and appliances are appropriately installed and maintained in a safe condition. There are adequate socket outlets to prevent overloading.
- The property has a suitable working fire detection and alarm system as identified by a risk assessment of the property
- Windows, doors and any other access points should be constructed and designed to be reasonably secure from unauthorised entry. Lockable ground floor windows are a minimum but all entry points should be capable of being secured.
- The property is adequately insulated.
- The property is free from tripping and falling hazards.

So what is the Rent Safe scheme actually asking for?

That Landlords ensure a property they are renting out is not going to endanger the occupants, that it is dry, electrically safe and is not overcrowded. That the tenants can lock their own doors.

A number of the accommodation standards are therefore surely the absolute minimum that landlords should be applying to their properties when renting out accommodation.

Other features of the Rent Safe Scheme

In order to obtain a 5-star rating, Landlords need to ensure that rental accommodation is energy efficient – for instance, properties have double glazing, insulation, an energy efficient heating system. This provides positives not only for tenants, but directly corresponds to the Island’s [Carbon Neutral Strategy](#);

<p>We will reduce income inequality and improve the standard of living by improving the quality and affordability of housing, improving social inclusion, and by removing barriers to and at work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved housing stock quality through investment in insulation, energy performance standards and construction methods. • Ensuring a just transition to carbon neutrality as a key principle in fiscal policy development. • Upskilling our workforce through on-Island training schemes to enable implementation of carbon reduction measures.
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Source: Carbon Neutral Strategy – Common Strategic Priorities

Another feature of the Rent Safe scheme is that the paperwork requires Landlords to confirm that they arrange regular electrical checks using a qualified electrician and provide a copy of the report to the tenant.

Risk based renewal

The second part of my proposition requests the Minister to develop a process for the regular renewal of Rent Safe registration based on a risk rating approach to determine the frequency and order of inspections of rental dwellings.

The wording of this section is drafted to avoid a defined time frame for renewal as it is considered a risk-based approach is preferable. For example, a 5-year reinspection of a 5 star property may be appropriate, whereas a lower rating may need more frequent inspection.

The Rent Safe scheme also allows tenants to report issues with their accommodation to Environmental Health who may reinspect at this point. Such triggers may affect the renewal rota for properties.

Conclusion

The Rent Safe system is already in place. It is well used with 2,115 units of accommodation currently registered as 3+ stars on the Rent Safe register.

This proposition is about taking a small, easy step forward in order to maintain acceptable standards in rental accommodation. There is no new system – this would not require any action for all landlords.

But it is, nevertheless, a step forward in ensuring islanders have safe and appropriate accommodation.

Financial and manpower implications

The Rent Safe system exists already. As noted above, over 2,000 units of rental accommodation are already registered.

However, there is currently no record of the number of landlords in the Island¹, therefore the impact of the proposed legislative amendment is difficult to ascertain. A Freedom of Information (“FOI”) request from June 2021² showed the budget for maintenance of Minimum Housing Standards and the Rent Safe scheme at £473,800. That same FOI could not provide projected figures for 2022 onwards due to the ongoing re-design of the departments. It would seem that this is a good time to make the scheme mandatory as such change (and any increases in staff or costs), could be factored into the restructured department.

¹ <https://www.gov.je/government/freedomofinformation/pages/foi.aspx?ReportID=4993>

² <https://www.gov.je/government/freedomofinformation/pages/foi.aspx?ReportID=4651>