

## Packs won't speed home moves

# Hips operation gets under way

**MOVING HOUSE**

**H**ome information packs (Hips) will be mandatory for sellers of homes with four bedrooms or more from 1 August. They've been dogged by controversy and claims that there are insufficient trained inspectors to compile them. We asked the Communities and Local Government Department run by Ruth Kelly MP (above) to explain what's happened to the scheme.



### How will Hips make it easier and quicker for people to buy houses?

Hips include energy performance certificates (EPCs) and the legal and search documents already required in home buying. Buyers will get information free that they currently pay for.

### Why do Hips affect only large homes?

Properties with four bedrooms or more are the most energy inefficient. Roll-out to other-sized properties will happen once sufficient inspectors are in place.

**'Hips were supposed to make home buying easier. Now it seems they won't'**



### Won't people try to cheat the four-bedroom rule?

The average sale price for a four-bedroomed home is around £120,000 more than for a three-bedroomed home. Consumers will not want to devalue their property.

### Why do the packs not include a mandatory structural survey?

The industry wasn't ready. But Hips with EPCs should still help speed up the home-buying and selling process.

### VERDICT

Which? Public Affairs Officer Mark McLaren (above) says: 'We said a year ago that Hips without a mandatory survey would be of little value to consumers. Nothing since has changed our view. Hips were supposed to make house buying easier, quicker and cheaper. Now it seems they won't.'

## In brief

### BUTT OUT

From 1 July the English will no longer be allowed to smoke in enclosed public places, as England joins the rest of the UK in shutting out smokers. Those contravening face £50 fines, or up to £200 if they go to court. Firms face fines of up to £2,500.



### LABEL LAWS

Products will no longer be able to claim they're 'superfoods' from this month, unless the manufacturer can prove the claim to the European Food Safety Authority – so check your labels for any changes.

### BEWARE HOLIDAY CLUB SCAMS

If you're rushing to book a summer holiday be aware of holiday club scams. The European Commission is to crack down on these schemes, which have duped thousands of British holidaymakers. Plans include a ban on paying upfront and the introduction of a 14-day cooling-off period.

### EXPOSE PHONE CHARGES

After we called for your examples of add-on charges last month, regulator Ofcom launched a probe into extra fees charged by phone and broadband firms. It will investigate complaints about unexpected late payment charges and cancellation penalties. Send examples of extra charges on any product to [news@which.co.uk](mailto:news@which.co.uk)

## And finally... Mixed-up fruit

Either this is a case of GM foods gone mad or someone was half asleep when they packaged these yogurt pots. The blackcurrants look surprisingly green – almost like gooseberries, in fact – while the gooseberries look alarmingly like rhubarb.



### GET IN TOUCH

Send your examples of daft or misleading products or promotions to **Melanie Dowding, PO Box 44, Hertford X SG14 1SH.**



### CALL ABOUT CARS

If you have a car query, ask our motoring team. We're manning the lines once again to give you the advice you need on 12 July. Call 01992 822800 or 0845 307 4000 between 10am and 4pm, quoting your Which? membership number. We'd also like your feedback on this year's car guide.