



BOG STANDARDS

WHILE too much water has been causing the Environment Agency (EA) trouble in the west and south, in East Anglia the quango and its bosses at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) are accused of ignoring expert advice over pristine fenland that is drying out.

Catfield Fen is a wetland of international importance, a site of special scientific interest and part of the Broads conservation area. Used to grow reeds for thatching, it is a habitat for several endangered species, managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation.

Landowner Tim Harris has been trying to raise concerns with the EA and Natural England (NE) for six years, since a survey revealed the site was drying – potentially endangering its ecology. Backed by the Broads Authority, the RSPB and reports from hydrology and conservation experts, he is opposing renewal of water abstraction licences for a neighbouring farm.

Last year, local MP Norman Lamb asked Defra to call in the abstraction decision and review the science. When it refused, Mr Harris requested under freedom of information rules to see the department's briefing from the EA and NE. Rather than a proper scientific report, the briefing was just five pages, much of them grumbling about Mr Harris and that "responding to his numerous accusations and information requests has taken up significant officer time and delayed the decision-making process".

Having been caught out, both EA and NE sent grovelling apologies, admitting Mr Harris had legitimately challenged their decision-making. Lamb wrote again to environment secretary Owen Paterson last month complaining that the handling of the case by both quangos was "procedurally very poor" and that the EA is bizarrely now refusing to publish all relevant documents on its Catfield Fen website, created "in the interests of transparency", due to, er, lack of space on the internet.

HOME AFFRONT

CAN anything or anyone stop the remorseless rise of Generation Rent?

Home ownership is shrinking year by year and those priced out of buying seemingly have no choice but to get used to life as tenants of private landlords. The latest official government survey shows that fewer of us own our home than at any time since 1987, while the number of private tenants has doubled since 2000 to reach almost 4m in 2012/13. Older generations are doing quite nicely but the 7.2m of them who own their homes outright now almost outnumber younger people who are buying with a mortgage.

Successive housing ministers have come into the job pledging to help first-time buyers but without any power to reverse the trend. As each one has come and gone – and there have been 12 in the past 17 years under Labour and the coalition – fewer and fewer people have been able to get on the housing ladder.

The latest to have a go is Kris Hopkins, who has shrugged off the way the housing job was downgraded to junior ministerial status when he was appointed in October to fire off impressive-sounding statistics at anyone who challenges the coalition's record. The MP for Keighley is a self-styled "gobby Northerner" who says the dismal figures are a year old and boasts that the government is helping 100,000 households on to the housing ladder through schemes like right to buy and Help to Buy. Alas, the figures also show that the number able to buy with a mortgage had already shrunk by 500,000 in the first three years of the coalition while the ranks of Generation Rent had swelled by another 600,000.

YES - IT'S
BORIS INVASION
WORLD HO...



Get on
and st
out

DON'T expect the City about London's overheated it is pocketing donations out of a capital rental market of expensive luxury flats.

The latest donations Commission show that Shadi each gave £47,500 in December. Bruce runs property Land, which makes more than London's distorted property properties currently available for £415-a-week studio flat.

Ritchie began building with his *London Repossessed* repossessed houses in the city has a property empire built by property trade magazine government plans last year not to have another increase in aspect of residential (property) want is another brainwashed.

Ritchie will now be directly with George Osborne him membership of the donor club whose membership chancellor.

Typically, big donors buying them memberships which has direct access Ritchie's £47,500 is thus unusual amount for a dealer-wheeler-dealer, could he be the Leader's Group, but discount? Perish the thought.

NUMBER
CRUM
77,000 M
last month, the beginning of the
463,000
currently in negative
thanks to falls in

NAME CHECK

AS a pleasant distraction about Ukraine, David tweeting a photograph of Edinburgh visiting over the weekend.

It makes a change for whom he has invited to until January 2014 did his guests at Chequers over half years – and, as *Eye* then he managed to omit controversial bankers at by getting the Conservative taxpayer to foot the bill, reveal their identities to