



OPINION

Lord Rupert Redesdale is the former Liberal Democrats' Spokesperson on Environment, Energy & Agriculture in the House of Lords. He is on record as the youngest Life Peer, initially admitted as a Hereditary in 1991, and subsequently returning as a Life Peer in 2000 at the age of 33.

Educated at Highgate School and with a degree in archaeology from Newcastle University, he enjoys his work as a board member of the York Archaeological Trust, and also is a passionate protector of the red squirrel in England as Chair of the Red Squirrel Protection Partnership.

Boilers are boring', but they could be part of the solution to meet the government emission targets, as Lord Redesdale explains

Many boiler manufacturers could see a significant upturn in the sale of new boilers although 2008 may be seen as a year, in which the economy fell into a recession.

At first sight this statement may appear ridiculous; however the government has introduced Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and in a downturn in the housing and letting market a poor energy rating will devalue the selling price or the rental income from a property. How might this work?

Quite simply the EPC will state two values: the present energy efficiency of the property and the potential energy efficiency of the property. The difference between the

two is also stated in a cash value within the EPC; figures of up to £400 pounds have been quoted as the difference between a band A and a band G boiler.

In a period when the rental market could become tougher and landlords may be worried about a void in rental income, the tenant may seek to negotiate a lower rent if the EPC value of the property is low. Many landlords will start having to do the calculations of the necessity of replacing a boiler against lower rental income or void rental periods. This situation will also affect commercial property and, with the large energy bills associated with them, some commercial property may be difficult to let without major work to upgrade the EPC status.

Once the public become aware of the EPC as a negotiating point, as with the usual "carpets and curtains" argument of many property sales, how

long before the idea of selling a house without an A-rated boiler becomes financially unthinkable?

The reason most people have not seen this change coming is largely because for at least ten years the property and letting market has been a sellers' market; for the next few years it will most definitely be a buyers' market with energy prices quite likely only to increase in the short term. The major political issues will be carbon, fuel poverty and cost of fuel.

Boilers, which have always seemed to be ignored while insulation has received attention, will soon be the focus of those trying to deal with these issues.

The boiler industry in 2008 has been given a fantastic vehicle to sell boilers on ethical grounds. It is up to the industry to get the message out that saving the planet and saving money could mean a new boiler. ●