



PARK HOME RESIDENTS ACTION ALLIANCE (PHRAA)



MEDIA REPORT (“PRIVATE EYE”)

www.parkhomesphraanews.co.uk

Est. 2002

www.thephraa.website

“END OF WEIR” Private Eye No. 1456. November 3rd 2017

Below is the third of a series of brilliant articles published by PRIVATE EYE over recent months exposing the activities of Mr. Barry Weir, Sussex Park Home Sites owner, trading under “SILVER LAKES PROPERTY INVESTMENTS reproduced and published for the PHRAA WEBSITE and PHRAA NEWS with grateful thanks to PRIVATE EYE.

MOBILE HOMES

End of Weir

RESIDENTS on Sussex park homes owned by Barry Weir (*Eyes passim*) are no doubt delighted the miserly millionaire accused of making their lives a misery is finally quitting the business and flogging his six sites for “offers in excess of £10.5m”.

They’re less happy about the glossy sales brochure aimed at “investors”, however. It spells out in detail the controversial and complex leasehold structures he has deliberately constructed and boasts: “This means that the pitch holders do not have security of tenure and their right to stay on the pitch does not continue after the expiry of their mobile home agreement.”

Residents are alarmed by the suggestion that investors could make an estimated £27m if they refused all lease extensions, booted off residents (many of whom are frail and elderly) – and sold brand new homes and leases. It says a new home on a plot can cost as little as £50,000 and then be sold with a new pitch agreement for around £175,000 – a shameless 250 percent profit. Some residents have as little as ten years left to run on their leases.

Housing rights champion Sir Peter Bottomley MP told the *Eye*: “This brazen brochure reads like a confession to the worst example of park home practice, and would condemn him in the court of public opinion.”

Whether recent criticism (not least from the *Eye*) and local authority investigations into complaints have been a factor in Weir’s decision to sell, the man who once styled himself “the much-honoured Weir of Dunderave” is not blushing. Offered through his freehold company, Silver Lakes Property Investments, the sales brochure spells out how investors make a quick 10 percent commission every time a park home owner sells on their pitch lease. It also outlines how “the majority of running costs for each park” are paid by the residents through services charges, and those who don’t pay service charges pay higher pitch fees. Residents have been charged for site work expenses including such petty items as 47p for paintbrushes and £3.50 for tool sharpening.

Leases even include a blatantly unfair clause saying residents are liable for all legal costs – win or lose – should they seek to challenge any park practice.

Bottomley is already leading cross-bench support for an overhaul of the Park Homes Act, after residents on Weir sites complained that they were being bullied and harassed into paying fees and charges they and their MPs consider to be unjustifiable and exploitative.

Stunned by the effrontery of Weir’s brochure, Bottomley says: “I invite any perspective purchaser to do the right thing and undo Barry Weir’s special arrangements which have so badly affected the lives of the residents.”

If anyone has any doubt about the depraved state of much of this already discredited park homes industry it is all exposed in these brilliant article produced by PRIVATE EYE who PHRAA heralds as a champion of us often exploited elderly pensioner park home owners.

These alleged revelations disclosed throughout the above, destroys the veil of carefully protected secrecy, rife throughout this so called industry, which have been allowed, indeed openly encouraged, to prosper by the lack of action by any responsible section of authority to protect the most innocent members of our nations society, the elderly, often frail, pensioners at whom the park home lifestyle is aimed at, at the most vulnerable time of their lives.

As this article exposes even the few remaining legal and human rights of park home residents are being stripped away by these rogue park owners with the help of their very “CLEVER” legal helpers and a strong and powerful trade organisation who, in statements included in their own company literature openly imply

that they will stop at nothing and are prepared to use all their considerable power, financial and lobbying of Government and MP's, to ensure that the real unpalatable facts regarding Unscrupulous Park Owners (UPO's) ever worsening incidents of abuse of their residents, many of which would make the likes of the notorious landlords of the sixties look like saints.

The Government, Local Authorities and the industry trade organisation BH&HPA etc., have handed more power to these very rich unscrupulous park owners to wield with impunity over their fellow human beings than the feudal Barons of the dark ages and Dictators ever possessed. Where is it ever going to end? Don't these so called clever law makers, who are sitting back and allowing this ongoing exploitation of the vulnerable to escalate even further, realise that they are killing off what could be a wonderful life for the elderly and a partial solution to the housing crisis as well as in many cases, wrecking the lives of their innocent victims.

There are many examples of disgusting exploitation of park home residents as practiced by this particular park owner, all of which are rightly condemned by the MP. Sir Peter Bottomley contained within this Private Eye article. But unfortunately they are only the tip of the iceberg of what horrific forms of abuse against those park home owners who can't fight back goes on, carefully hidden from view behind the glossy façade portrayed by this industry.

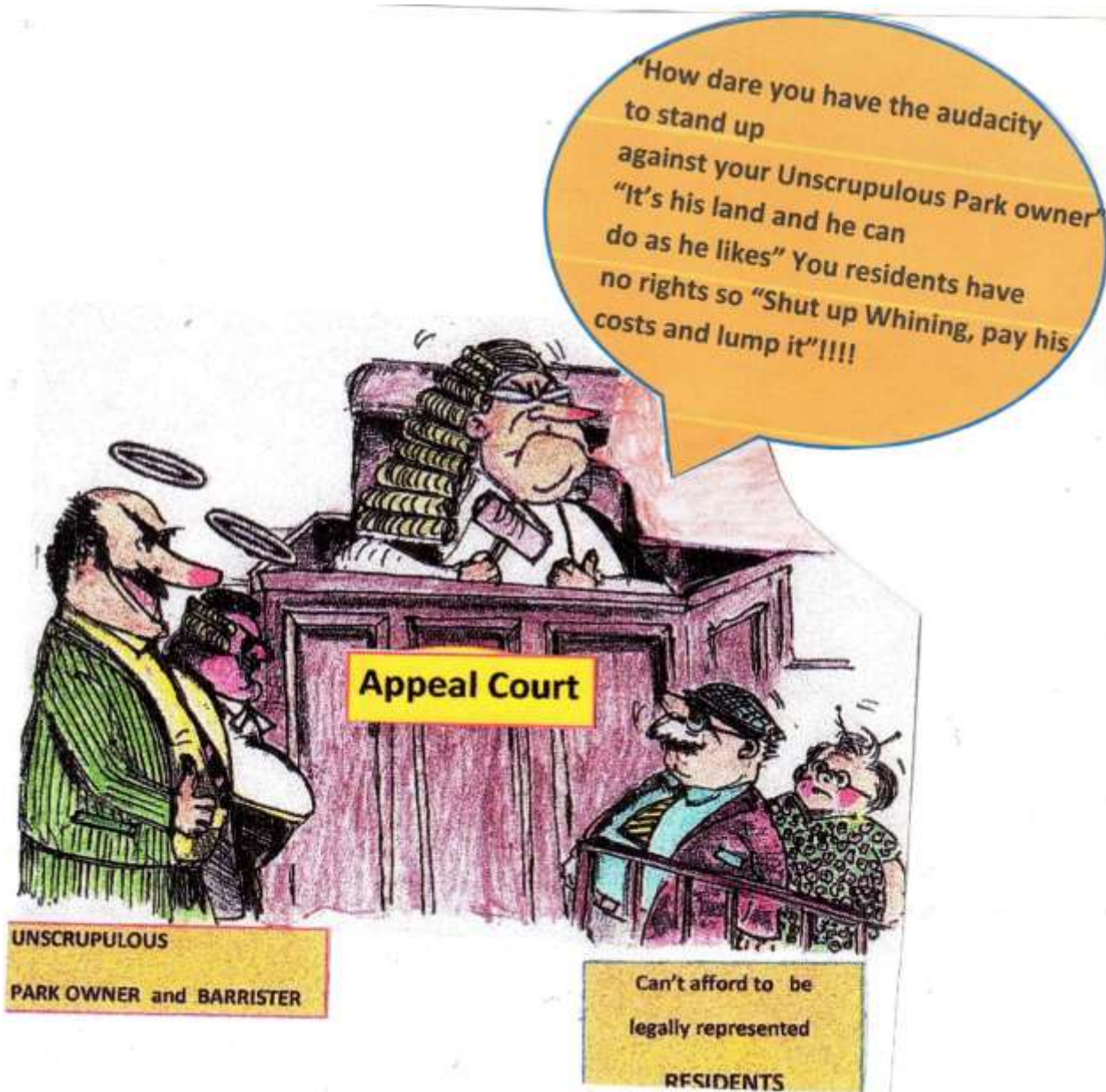
We also note Sir Peter Bottomley MP final comment at the end of the article which states..... ***"I invite any perspective purchaser to do the right thing and undo Barry Weir's special arrangements which have so badly affected the lives of the residents."*** Unfortunately Sir Peter, knowing the activities of the UPO's manipulating this industry, the opposite is the most likely scenario. His despicable brochure will be eagerly seized upon as a blueprint for the future, (IF IT ISN'T ALREADY?) park running activities of the UPO's

"That won't happen" PHRAA hears you say! But what, or who is going to stop them? It should be remembered that this park owners so-called ***"special Arrangements"*** could not have been implemented initially if those in authority had cracked down hard on this man when he first introduced these disgraceful measures. No doubt any complaints from affected residents would have suffered the same fate as most other complaints to the authorities. That is, ignored completely or the complainants being fobbed off repeatedly by Government, Many MP's, Local Authorities, Police Forces, Courts and "Uncle Tom Cobble and all". None of them want to know, or will not get involved.

The pathetic park home legislation is so riddled with loopholes that the park owners "CLEVER" legal teams easily drive a "Coach and Horses" through it. Most Solicitors purporting to represent residents flounder because they don't understand it, or won't touch such cases with a bargepole. We have the much heralded "FIRST TIER PROPERTY TRIBUNAL SERVICE" which replaced the County Court system for resolving disputes introduced supposedly to make justice it more accessible financially to residents, but did in fact just made it very much cheaper and less risky for the park owner to use against the resident. To make matters worse, should the Tribunal Decision be in the residents favour, the UPO could and often does, completely ignore the result, often making it a Toothless and unenforceable piece of legislation, especially for many distraught residents.

If anyone considering buying a park home in which to spend their retirement years disregard articles such as this and still consider that they are making a wise decision, then those like Private Eye and also recently the BBC who have had the guts to expose the blatant rip offs widely practiced by unscrupulous park owners against vulnerable and defenceless elderly folk who are the main customers of this industry, then we at the Park Home Residents Action Alliance (PHRAA) and other campaigners such as Tony Turner from Cornwall, also bravely dedicated to exposing these rogues, can do no more but urge every prospective park home buyer to take their time before leaping into the unknown, and attempt to see behind the glossy park

home advertising and always remember that “ all that glistens is not gold”. A little time taken into finding out all you can about the workings of the park home industry can save you years of heartache, worry and regret that you invested your life savings in a very expensive park home, sitting on land you can never own and will have to pay ever increasing rent upon for the whole of the time you live there, and then pay the park owner 10% of any price you receive should you, or your relatives, wish to sell the home, in the future.



Reproduced and published for the website of the PARK HOME RESIDENTS ACTION ALLIANCE (PHRAA) by Ron Joyce. General Secretary PHRAA and Editor PARK HOMES PHRAA NEWS

With grateful thanks to PRIVATE EYE

November 2017