



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

David Rutley MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Food and Animal Welfare

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

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L. Compton

The Kew Gardens (Leases) Bill is being introduced into the House of Lords on 25 April. This two clause Bill removes an unnecessary restriction on the length of time a lease on the Kew Gardens estate may be granted. Currently the Crown Land Act 1702 limits leases at Kew Gardens to a term of 31 years. This Bill modernises these provisions, allowing leases of up to 150 years. This is also in line with provisions made for the Crown Estate in 1961.

This will release value from non-core land and property at Kew Gardens and enable income to be generated through a variety of commercial options, such as long leases for residential or office use. It would also reduce maintenance liabilities and running costs. The additional income that would be generated will help Kew to achieve its core objectives, enhance its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and improve the quality of its estate. All proposals for granting long leases will be in line with Kew's World Heritage Site management plan.

The changes do not allow the sale of the freehold of Kew land. The Bill will not change the freehold position of the land, which remains with the Crown, it just provides the ability to grant longer leases on the land. Proposals will be subject to scrutiny by Kew Trustees, Defra and through the planning process with local residents and businesses. The Bill extends to England and Wales. It will only have application in England.

The Bill and Explanatory Notes are being published by the House Authorities on 26 April. If you would like to discuss this Bill further, I would be pleased to meet you. My office can be contacted at ps.david.rutley@defra.gov.uk.

With best wishes,

DR
DAVID RUTLEY MP

