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Lord Beecham (Lab): Seven leading companies in the field, which provide 5,000 places—some 80% of the sector—have formed the Property Guardian Providers’ Association, aiming to promote, monitor and ensure safety standards and regulations are adhered to or exceeded by its members, securing temporarily vacant properties and providing safe and viable low-cost accommodation. In addition, it is issuing a set of benchmark standards, including: a redress scheme, under which a guardian can take a complaint to a redress panel; security payment protection, requiring members to prove that they have set up separate guardian accounts for payments and comply with rules for handling the accounts; and prescribing transparency of fees. I suggest that the Government should consult the association about developing a common standard for the whole sector and make this a condition of a licence to provide property guardianship schemes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth) (Con): I welcome the new organisation....I am keen to meet (them), and we have already taken steps to ensure that that happens to see exactly what is being done to promote best practice and safety among the organisation’s members...the organisation includes seven of the United Kingdom’s leading property guardian companies, and I shall discuss with ministerial colleagues how we take that forward...to see what the organisation proposes and report back.

Lord Shipley (LibDem): “a property guardian providers association, and I welcome the fact that seven providers covering 80% of the sector are involved, although that of course raises questions about the other 20% ”

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Green Party): “It aims to work together to create common standards”