

# Letters

## Restore our heritage and cut the tax on repairing old dwellings

*From Mr Gideon Amos and others.*

Sir, The chancellor has a unique opportunity in his Budget today to take advantage of the European Union decision on March 10, which allows member states to reduce VAT on services, and cut the current rate of VAT from 15 per cent to 5 per cent for all private housing repair and maintenance work. A cut in VAT could not come at a better time and, given that 72 per cent of MPs support this cut and 125 MPs have already signed up to Early Day Motion 7, which calls on the government to cut VAT for repair and maintenance work, the cut has substantial cross-party support.

Data from the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) show that the experiment of reduced VAT rates for activities relating to the restoration and maintenance of dwellings in Belgium, Spain, Italy and Portugal created almost 170,000 permanent additional jobs. In France, the scheme resulted in a €500m net increase in tax yields, disproving the argument that the

scheme would burden public finances.

Making dwelling repair and maintenance work more affordable will encourage the re-use of our existing structures and promote more energy efficient homes through an extension in retro-fitting of energy saving measures.

The re-use of existing buildings helps minimise the need to send demolition waste to landfill, reduces the damage done by the extraction and transport of construction materials, and cuts the demand for embodied energy.

Research carried out by the University of Oxford calculates that the potential market for the refurbishment of existing homes to improve their energy efficiency is worth between £3.5bn and £6.5bn, which would be a significant boost to the construction sector, providing thousands of new jobs at a time when they are needed more than ever. Recycling our heritage by putting buildings back into beneficial use is an essential part of improving our quality of life.

The facts are out there. All that is needed today is the political vision to see it through.

Gideon Amos,

Chief Executive, Town & Country Planning Association

Michael Ankers,  
Chief Executive, Construction Products Association

Henry Aubrey-Fletcher,  
President, Country Land & Business Association

Louis Armstrong,  
Chief Executive, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Tony Burton,  
Director of Strategy and External Affairs, National Trust

Martin Clarke,  
Chief Executive, British Precast

Laura Cohen,  
Director, Clay Roof Tile Council

Richard Diment,  
Director General, Federation of Master Builders

Matthew Elliott,  
Chief Executive, TaxPayers' Alliance

Julia Goodwin,  
Editor, House Beautiful Magazine

Simon Hart,

Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance  
Edward Hartley,  
President, Historic Houses Association

Ray Horwood,  
Chief Executive, National Federation of Roofing Contractors

David Ireland,  
Chief Executive, Empty Homes Agency

Phillip Kolvin,  
Chairman, Civic Trust

Andrew Leech,  
Director, National Home Improvement Council

Mike Leonard,  
Director, Modern Masonry Alliance

Yvonne Orgill,  
Chief Executive, Bathroom Manufacturers Association

Sunand Prasad,  
President, Royal Institute of British Architects

Kate Pugh,  
Secretary, Heritage Link

David Salusbury,  
Chairman, National Landlords Association