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Rapists' human rights victory

Sex offenders, including paedophiles, can have their names removed from Home Office register, rules Supreme Court

By James Kirkup
Political Correspondent

THOUSANDS of sex offenders, including rapists and paedophiles, will be able to apply to be removed from the sex crimes register under human rights laws, the Government announced yesterday.

A Supreme Court ruling has forced the Government reluctantly to draw up new rules allowing serious sex offenders put on the register for life to have their place on the list reconsidered.

The Home Office plans were opposed by child protection campaigners and Conservative MPs, who said some offenders could never be considered completely

"safe". The new rules were drawn up because the Supreme Court ruled that automatic lifetime inclusion on the register breached the Human Rights Act.

David Cameron said the ruling was "offensive," but ministers say they have no choice but to comply by changing the rules on the register.

The case is the latest involving the Act to set judges against political opinion. It has increased calls for reform of the Act, which is being reviewed by a Coalition committee.

Under current rules, anyone sentenced to more than 30 months in jail for a sexual offence is put on the register for life on release. Those on the register are

monitored by police and visited regularly by officers. The Home Office estimates that there are about 44,000 people on the register, about 25,000 of them for life.

Under the proposed rules, adults listed for life could apply for removal after 15 years. Their cases would be considered by police and probation officers.

Those under 18 at the time of their crime would be able to seek a review after eight years.

The Home Office estimated that the change would mean more than 2,000 people a year would be eligible to seek a review. Offenders whose applications are rejected will have to wait another eight years before being able to seek another

assessment. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children said it opposed allowing child abusers to be removed from the register.

A spokesman for the NSPCC said: "Our view remains that adults who sexually abuse children should stay on the offenders register for life as we can never be sure their behaviour will change."

Priti Patel, a Tory MP, said the court ruling added to the case for reform of the Human Rights Act.

"Sex offenders are vile criminals," she said. "Why are these people allowed to use human rights laws to protect themselves? What about their victims?"

This is not the first case of the Coalition

being forced to introduce potentially controversial measures at the behest of judges. Ministers are drawing up plans to allow some prisoners the vote after a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr Cameron told MPs in February that the court ruling on the register "lies in the face of common sense". He ordered an appeal, which was rejected in April, forcing ministers to draw up the new system.

Despite ministers' reservations about the change, the Home Office's "impact assessment" study suggested that it could bring some benefits. Removing some people from the register would mean that

"police resources may focus on those offenders who pose a higher and continuing risk," it said.

The department said investigations suggested that not all the 2,000 offenders a year eligible to apply to be removed would do so. It predicted a maximum of 1,200 offenders would apply for removal.

Some experts and campaigners believe that several offenders present a permanent danger, justifying permanent restrictions on their freedoms.

The Home Office said it was impossible to say how many, if any, applications for removal from the register would be successful. But Harry Fletcher, of the

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Banks must ring-fence risks, says Osborne

By Andrew Porter, Political Editor

GEORGE OSBORNE will order the bin-

A rose-tinted opening to Ascot



Anger as Gaddafi's son allocated Olympic tickets

By Heidi Blake and Robert Winnett

COLONEL GADDAFI'S eldest son has been officially allocated hundreds of tickets to the 2012 Olympics in London, *The Daily Telegraph* can disclose.

“
Col Gaddafi,
whom we are

of the 8.8 million tickets available went to IOC members. Zimbabwe and Burma are among the other "pariah states" who have been granted tickets despite human rights abuses. Syria was eligible to receive tickets, but did not apply.

Resurgence of shops at UK's retail parks

By **Graham Ruddick**

THE number of empty units in retail parks has fallen to the lowest level since the recession, highlighting the growing divergence between out-of-town shopping and Britain's struggling high street.

Trevor Wood Associates, the property research group, says vacancy rates at retail parks fell to 9.2pc at the end of 2010, compared with 11.6pc a year previously and 11.3pc in 2008. The rate was 8.3pc in 2007.

The drop in empty space has been driven by profitable retailers such as Dunelm, TK Maxx, Matalan and Next snapping up units, and development activity slowing because of the recession. Many of these retailers would previously have focused expansion on the high street but are seeking to take advantage of the larger footfall and stores that new retail parks can provide.

In contrast, data for the high street shows vacancy rates rose from 12pc at the end of 2009 to 14.5pc in 2010.

Trevor Wood, senior partner at Trevor Wood Associates, said: "For many years we highlighted the problem that some retail parks had to face of 'second-hand' supply. Numerous administrations,

receiverships and declining confidence among some retailers led to an explosion in available space for some years but, with few new developments being built, a significant proportion of this space has now been occupied by expanding retailers during the past 18 months."

Despite the slowdown in development, the amount of retail park space in Britain grew marginally in 2010 from 172.5m sq ft to 173.8m sq ft.

The pressures on the high

9.2pc

The vacancy rate at UK retail parks at the end of 2010, compared with 11.3pc in 2008

street were reiterated yesterday as data from Synovate showed non-grocery store footfall fell year-on-year in May by 4pc.

Tim Denison, director of retail intelligence at Synovate, said: "Petrol prices are an everyday reminder of the higher bills we face and households are making adjustments to their lifestyles and shopping patterns. Fewer, shorter forays are replacing the regular mass expeditions to the shops."