## **Home** Experts

# HOME HELP



#### **UNFAIR GAME**

We have recently bought a Redrow home with a beautiful green space in front of our house, which according to Redrow's covenant is for "rest and quiet recreation".

Some residents and friends play noisy and disruptive football and other ball games there, and Redrow subsequently wrote to all residents telling them that this was not acceptable and they would be erecting appropriate signage.

Subsequently Redrow did nothing about the signs, and its regional managing director has now said that it is not practical to enforce this covenant. yet it did erect signs to prevent dog fouling.

**Redrow is building lots** of developments that feature a "peaceful" green space as a selling point. But if Redrow doesn't enforce the covenants. what can be done? Steven Hall, North Yorkshire

A proper answer would involve a full review of the deeds and documents relating to the estate, but I can speculate about a few options. First, it is possible that a residents' management company will automatically be formed on the sale of the last house on the estate. If all the houses have already been sold and this hasn't happened, then you (perhaps with other interested residents) might be able to reach a private arrangement with the housebuilder to buy the communal areas. That ownership might come with onerous responsibilities, however, so this is not a decision to be taken lightly

Second, the deeds might have set up what is known as a building scheme. This would mean the restrictive covenants governing the estate are enforceable by and against all owners of properties within the estate. A solicitor could tell you if this applies to your property. If it does, you could take legal action to prevent anv breaches. That said, it may not be easy to do so without an identifiable person or group to bring action against

Third, there might be a covenant on behalf of the housebuilder obliging it to enforce covenants when called upon to do so. Such covenants usually require the complaining resident to pay the housebuilder's legal costs – which could be substantial Finally, perhaps Redrow

might allow you to place (at your cost) some benches or similar on the green space in a way that makes the space more suitable for rest and quiet recreation, and less suitable for ball games

## TOP TIPS... CLEAN YOUR MICROWAVE

#### 1 Use a lemon

EXPERTS

Email vour

auestions to

homehelp@

sunday-times

given without

responsibility

co.uk. Advice is

To remove smells and loosen dried-on stains add slices of lemon or several tablespoons of vinegar to a bowl of cold water. Ensure that the bowl is no more than half full. Heat on high until the water boils and windows get steamy.

#### 2 Cool it

Leave your cleaning solution to cool for 15 minutes before opening the door. Wipe dry with absorbent kitchen paper. Also, wipe down the dials and knobs, and the top of the microwave if it's exposed

#### 3 Clean with vinegar

Clean the window with a wet cloth that has been immersed in a mix of half vinegar and half water, then buff dry. Good Housekeeping

Institute



Ed Cracknell, senior associate, Russell-Cooke; russell-cooke.co.uk

> Redrow responds: "This is a completed development, with maintenance and management of the open spaces soon to be transferred to a management company. Covenants are designed to enhance the enjoyment of the development for the benefit of all residents. We have written to all residents requesting that they respect their neighbours' peace and quiet, and the use of open spaces.'

#### **GROUNDS FOR COMPLAINT?**

I purchased a Krups Nespresso coffee machine from Currys in September 2018. After just a few weeks, it was delivering only warm coffee, so I took it back to Currys, which sent it off to be repaired. Three weeks later, the machine was returned. It had replaced the water pump and some parts. After a few more weeks the same problem returned. but in addition we were now only getting half a cup of coffee. When ordering more capsules, I spoke to Nespresso, which said that I should not have gone to Currys to repair it, and to send it back to them. I did. and a few weeks later it came back.

Within a month, the same problems returned. I asked Nespresso if it would supply me with a new machine or give me a refund. Nespresso said that the machine had to be returned to it again, and that if it did not work after two repairs, it would look at replacing it.

At this stage I lost my temper and asked whether Nespresso thought that

three repairs within 18 months was reasonable. I spoke to the Citizens Advice Bureau, which said that under consumer law I should return the machine to where I bought it. So Currys has returned it to Nespresso for vet another repair – the third. I have written to Nespresso's general manager and CEO, but had no reply. What can I do? I just want a refund. It is a CitiZ&Milk machine made by Krups. **Bill Smith** 

Rights Act, any product you buy must be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose and as described. In this case, your machine did not meet those criteria. As you bought your coffee machine in 2018, the statutory provisions within the act apply. As the defects materialised within 30 days of purchase, you could have returned the machine to the retailer (Currys) and asked for a new machine or a full refund. If the defect had not materialised within the first 30 days, your entitlement to an automatic refund would have passed. You would still have been entitled to a refund, but the manufacturer or retailer would be entitled to offer a repair or replace the faulty goods in the first instance. In your situation, a repair was ndertaken at no cost.

If the defect happens within six months of purchase, it is presumed to have been faulty at the time of purchase. The six months have now passed, but, given that three repairs have been undertaken, you could argue that this presumption should still apply and you should get a refund.

It is clear that all reasonable steps have been taken by you

Do you have noisy ootballers outside vour home? Our experts have some ideas to law back peace

#### **Kevin Lincoln**

Neither is good for the machine or the planet. Try Eco Egg, a container filled with mineral pellets. You need nothing else. Machine and waste water is cleaner We have been using one for two months and clothes appear as clean as before.

#### Jane Jackson

I switched to Eco Eggs two vears ago. Great results kind to the planet and so much cheaper than powders or liauids

Judith Thunhurst, Bristol I use an Eco Egg, which is refillable and does the job

Michael Lawrence, London I read that liquid is better for greasy stains and powder is

thickness of the stone floor will have minimal impact on the efficiency of the underfloor heating, although a thick flagstone will take a little longer to warm up. The two main underfloor

heating types are warm water or "wet" systems - also known as capillary – and electrical systems. They both work equally well with a stone floor

Electrical systems can be laid by an experienced DIYer, but professional installation is recommended for wet systems: there will be more upheaval and floor heights



but this may not be a cost-effective approach. Danielle Lewis-James, Under the Consumer solicitor, Slater Gordon: slatergordon.co.uk Nespresso responds: "Nespresso has been in contact with Mr Smith and the matter has been resolved to the customer's satisfaction." Currvs responds: "Despite Mr Smith's complaint not being directed towards Currys PC World's management of

the repair, our customer services team has investigated. We always try to improve. Mr Smith responds: Nespresso has offered me a replacement. THE HEAT IS ON Can I install underfloor

heating under a limestone floor? Will it work as well? What kind of underfloor heating works best beneath a stone floor? Sarah Winter, Berkshire

effect repairs. You should call

or email the manufacturer's

which will take you through

If the manufacturer won't

help, you are entitled to take

vour complaint to Trading

Ombudsman.

Standards or the Consumer

If you do not wish to do

that, you could file a money

claim in a county court.

its complaints procedure.

customer services team,

Stone is considered one of the best partners for underfloor heating and all types of stone work equally well - from limestone to slate. Stone conducts heat more quickly than other natural materials such as engineered wood and offers greater heat retention, acting as a buffer against heat loss. The

## **READERS' CLINIC** WHAT'S BETTER, LIQUID OR POWDER LAUNDRY DETERGENT?

#### Irene Day, Hampshire

better for mud. And that liquid is better for the machine if you wash in cold water, because powder doesn't dissolve as well and can cause blockages.

JW, Birmingham Powder is better for the planet because cardboard boxes are easier to recycle.

Gill Carson. Cheshire When I used liquid, my washing machine was smellier

#### **Future questions**

What should I be stockpiling at home in case of a coronavirus epidemic? How can I make my stiff towels fluffy again?

Send your tips, tricks and auestions to homehelp@ . sunday-times.co.uk

may change. Wet systems take warm water from the central heating and carry it around in plastic pipes. A screed is poured over the pipes and the stone floor is laid on top. For this reason, many people install wet systems only if they are doing a big renovation at the same time. On the plus side, running

costs are generally lower than electric systems; wet systems are about 25% more efficient than radiators running off a condensing boiler and up to 40% more effective when running from a heat pump

An electrical underfloor heating system is a great option if you are just updating a room or replacing a floor, as it is less disruptive to install.

Ioss Thomas, founder Indigenous Stone; indigenous.co.uk

#### **CRACKING UP** I have beautiful yellow

faience plates that I've used for many years, including in a dishwasher. I had to store the china for several years and when I opened them they were completely "crazed" with marks, like a dirty map effect. I tried washing and soaking in Milton cleaner, but to no avail. Lassume that years of dishwashing invisibly cracked the plates, which allowed mould into the previously invisible lines while in storage. Can you help? They are unusable. Gav Christie

Items that we may call "faience" or associate with Delftware can be susceptible to "crazing" as soon as they leave the kiln. Crazing refers to hairline cracks in the glaze. This is a common occurrence, caused by the differential expansion between the ceramic and the glaze during firing. Usually it's not a problem, but sometimes liquid can penetrate the crazing and cause staining or lifting of the glaze. So they were probably "crazed" long before they were packed away Only now is the dirt showing up in the craze marks.

Many collectors have platters displayed on welsh dressers or Delft racks, and over time they can become



heating works well with stone floors



covered in a thin, greasy film. The number one rule when cleaning pottery or porcelain is, don't be too vigorous. They are fragile. Don't scrub: a good soaking in soapy water and a careful wipe will soon reveal the plates' original glory. The effects of nicotine can be removed in the same way. This advice also applies to porcelain decorated in

overglaze enamels, or gilded Many antique dinner plates can collect dirt in the scratches to the glaze. They can be quite resistant to a standard clean, so I often use a solution of washing powder and hot water. Using an old toothbrush, gently rub the solution into the scratches You will be astonished at the results. Even so, don't use this last method on your Imperial Chinese Qianlong porcelain dish, or 18th-entury Sèvres. Contact your local Lapada (the Association of Art and Antiques Dealers) dealer or recommended conservator for advice.

Philip Carrol, Philip Carrol Antiques, specialist ceramics dealer; philipcarrol.com. Member of Lapada; lapada.org

#### **STOP HAMMER TIME**

I live in a terraced house When one of our neighbours flushes their loo, we experience four. five or six short, loud bangs in our pipes in the kitchen. What is the best solution? Ross W

Water hammer is a common problem. If your neighbour has recently had a cistern filling valve replaced (or indeed the complete loo), the new valve is likely to be one that shuts off abruptly, which can send pulses back down the pipework. It's likely to affect several houses either side of them.

You can ask your neighbour to fit a filling valve with a gentler shut-off mechanism Modern valves tend to shut off like a light switch, whereas the traditional ball valves are much better, as they close gradually. If not, you may need to get one or more attenuators fitted to your mains inlet pipe, near your internal stop tap, to damp out the pulses (a Reflex expansion vessel shock arrestor 8199V costs £21 at screwfix.com). Sometimes insufficiently clipped pipework can add to the effect, but I have had little success fixing this problem with more pipe clips.

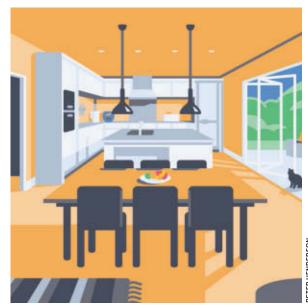
I would also have a word with your local water authority. I had a case some vears ago where a leaking shared underground inlet pipe was causing a similar problem in a row of five terraced houses. The authority repaired the leak and the problem vanished.

Joe Greaves, owner, Paveway Plumbing, Leicester; pavewavplumbing.co.uk

# Now you're cooking...



Modern kitchens have their work cut out. MyBuilder's **Carl Goulding** explains how to simplify your space and get more with less



itting a new kitchen might seem simple - iust find a cooke and add some cupboards. But it's vital to consider the layout of this functional heart of the home

There is a principle called the "golden triangle", where the kitchen is arranged around cooking area, fridge and sink. That will never change, but families have moved away from separate cooking and social spaces. Combining these functions in an open plan scheme can be as simple as knocking down ar internal wall - often cheape than people might think.

Other solutions, such as extensions, need structura work. Here, bi-fold doors that bring the kitchen and garder together are very popular. opening up the space with views and light. Within, kitchen islands are a stylish option, but space is critical. Allow at least a metre

between worktops and islands for circulation. And with appliances, don't default to expensive brand names. Low cost alternatives allow you to invest more in good worktops and door fronts. I'd always recommend built-in appliances: they're cleaner and more sophisticated.

### Not just any builder...

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**WyBuilder.**com

But expect to leave them

behind if you move. Nowadays householders prefer simple, glossy kitchens that are easy to keep clean intricate details mean nooks and crannies. I'd also steer clear of off-white cabinets as these tend to look faded from the get-go.

A good worktop can make or break a kitchen. Laminate works well, but can look cheap. If you can, stretch to

## Your layout is the key factor – an incredible looking kitchen that does not work is no use

natural stone – but check its potential for staining. Wood is lovely but requires care, while composite worktops - in dark colours especially - can draw attention to scratches.

Less obvious is lighting, but as a high-impact way to transform a kitchen, it needs proper consideration.

Finally, if you intend to sell n the short term, don't overdo it. Layout is the key factor – an incredible looking kitchen that doesn't appeal to someone else is not a great investment