

Boris asks Osborne for London stamp duty to build affordable homes

By Robert Booth, Political Editor

Prime Minister David Cameron has asked Chancellor George Osborne to allow a stamp duty holiday for first-time buyers in London, as part of a plan to build more affordable homes in the capital.

Osborne is expected to announce the plan in his budget next month. The move would allow first-time buyers to pay a reduced rate of stamp duty on properties in London, which is currently 12 per cent.

The plan is part of a wider strategy to address the housing crisis in London, which has seen house prices rise sharply in recent years. It is also seen as a way to encourage more investment in the city's infrastructure and housing market.

Osborne has previously said that he is open to considering any measure that would help to address the housing problem in London. He has also said that he is looking for ways to raise revenue to fund the government's spending plans.

The plan is expected to be a popular one with voters, particularly in London, where the housing market is so hot. It is also seen as a way to help to address the government's budget deficit.

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GEORGE PUGH



Life story Frame by frame | Two women view works by two respected artists at the Ordovas Gallery in Savile Row, London. On the left is a portrait of Frank Auerbach by Lucian Freud, who died last year. Freud was influenced by Annibale Carracci (1560 - 1609), whose *Head of an Old Man* is also on display.

Defence cuts risk 'fatal blow' to Britain's relationship with US

By James Mann

Defence cuts could risk a 'fatal blow' to Britain's relationship with the US, according to a senior British diplomat. The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the cuts would undermine the UK's ability to contribute to NATO and other international security efforts.

The diplomat said that the cuts would also damage the UK's reputation as a reliable ally. He said that the US would be disappointed if the UK were to reduce its military spending, particularly in the area of defence research and development.

The diplomat said that the cuts would also affect the UK's ability to attract investment from the US. He said that the US would be less likely to invest in the UK if it perceived that the UK was not committed to its own defence.

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