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Former Pensions Minister to demand Government extends exemption from council tax that bereaved families receive on inherited properties for relatives unable to sell during pandemic

By [MARC SHOFFMAN](#), FINANCIAL MAIL ON SUNDAY

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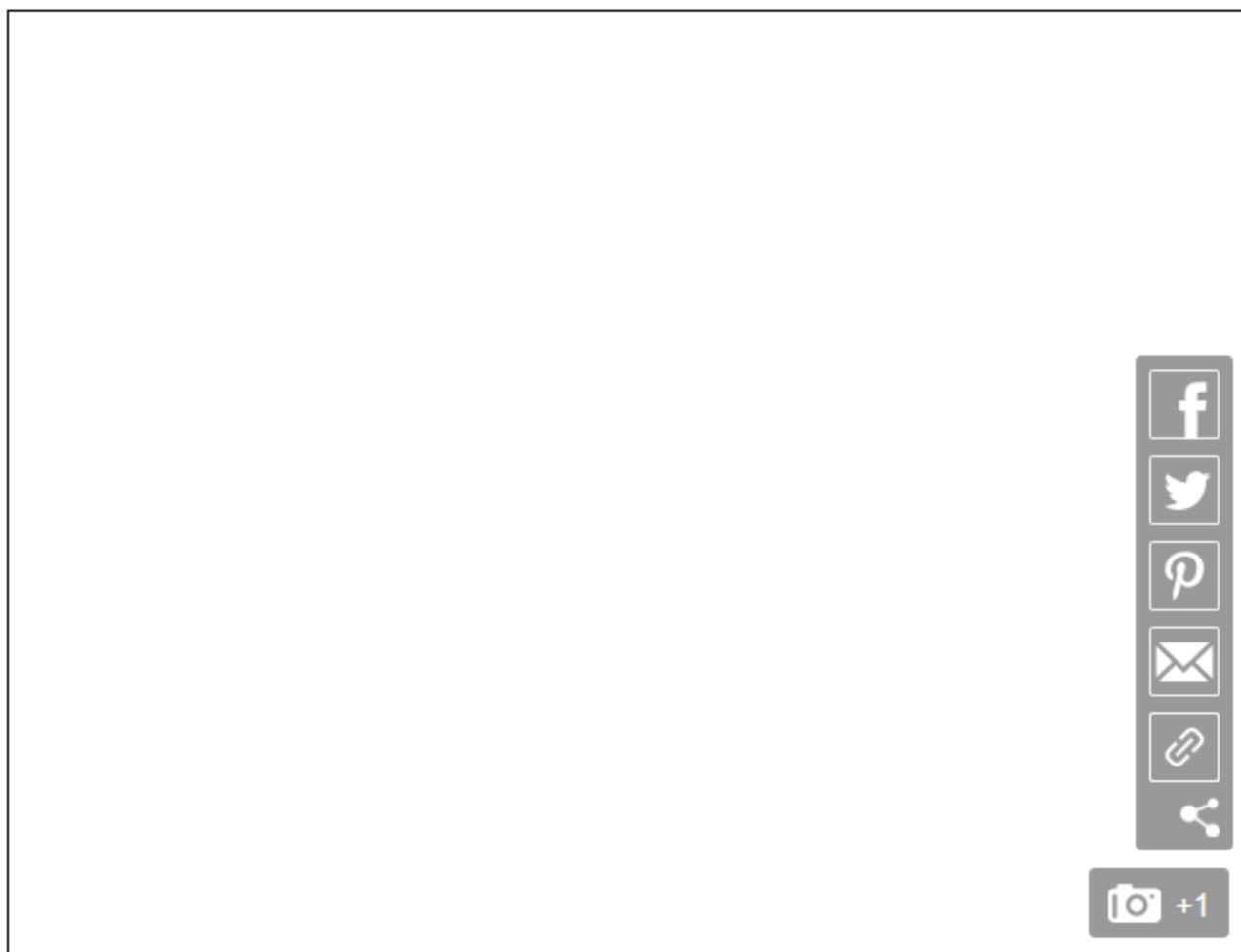


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A former Pensions Minister is set to demand the Government extends the exemption from council tax that bereaved families receive on inherited properties for relatives unable to sell them during the pandemic.

Baroness Ros Altmann is backing a campaign by The Mail on Sunday that calls for more fairness from town halls after this newspaper uncovered dozens of cases where grieving families had been hit with unexpected council tax bills for properties once owned by their loved ones.

In many cases these are retirement flats that were owned by elderly relatives, but which cannot be easily sold as many potential purchasers are still wary about attending viewings due to Covid-19.



Demand: Baroness Ros Altmann is backing a campaign that calls for more fairness from town halls

This delay in house sales has left families paying council tax bills both on their own properties and for homes they are unable to use.

Altmann told the MoS that the current six-month council tax exemption for families once they gain control of a property through the legal process known as probate should be extended to a year.

She said: 'Given all the other measures we have introduced to help people in this time, it seems reasonable to extend the council tax exemption, particularly as in these circumstances there is not much people can do about it.'

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'The Government has been encouraging private landlords, for example, to tolerate receiving no rent on their properties.'

'At the very least I would push for an additional six-month exemption so there would be a vacant rate exemption for a year in total.'

'Central government would have to fund this as the councils don't have the money to do so.'

The peer plans to table a series of written questions once Parliament returns on Tuesday. She will ask Ministers to provide details on the number of bereaved families forced to pay council tax on empty retirement properties they have been unable to sell.

She will also ask if the Government has any intention of extending the six-month empty rates exemption to a year.

Altmann said: 'The policy of charging council tax on empty properties is right, but imposing it in the current environment is not – particularly on retirement properties where the very people who could buy them cannot get out and do viewings.'

