

# AND FINALLY...

**E**ach year a mixture of fact, fiction, gossip, innuendo and controversy enters the public domain in relation to the property market on Spain's Costas. Just lately there has been the corruption scandal involving town hall officials in the Malaga region sparking new, horror threats to rip down "unlicensed" buildings these crooked officials approved and "restore the coastline."

Interestingly, this wave of judicial prudence is being delivered at the very time a new law – Decree 218 – passed by the Regional Autonomous Government of Andalucia is about to come into force. It has only taken almost three years to enact!

The aim of the decree is to protect national and foreign property buyers in southern Spain and the authorities have let it be known that it will be strictly enforced with companies not complying expected to face increasingly draconian fines and penalties.

One of the first real estate organisations to comply with this new client protection legislation is the InmoNetwork, a group of nearly 50 estate agents in Andalucia, integrating their systems to offer up to 6,000 properties throughout Andalucia.

Said David Honeyman of Dreamhomes, one of the leading lights of the organisation: "Estate agents have to realise that the time has come to police our operations effectively. Increasingly we are being put under the microscope and with the recent court cases involving corrupt officials the regional government has decided to show its teeth.

"We are advising people who spend a lot of money and, therefore, we have to be seen to be whiter than white. Unfortunately, a few unscrupulous people have tainted the image of the industry. That is why we, as an organisation, are taking the lead and becoming the first to comply with Decree 218."

Under the new law all property agents and brokers offering property for sale are now legally required to have a full set of relevant documentation

available to buyers and inspectors, alike, before a property can be advertised and viewed.

The decree is aimed at protecting the consumer, ensuring that property buyers in Andalucia province will never again face the possibility of purchasing property that is illegal and lose it as a result. Central amongst the documentation required before a property can be offered for sale are the necessary building permits and licences. If a property is in possession of all these documents, prospective buyers can be assured that it is legal.

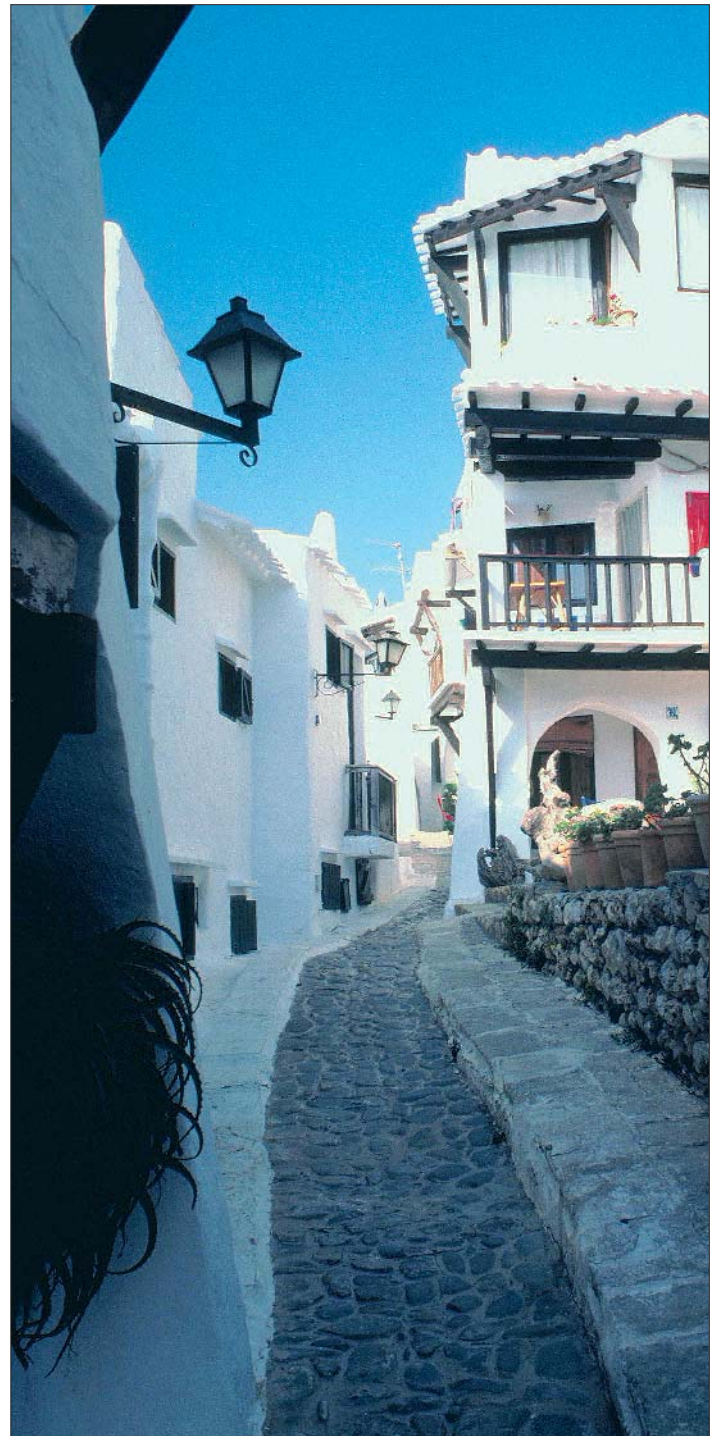
Founded in October 2006 the InmoNetwork was founded to form a collective of reputable estate agents who wish to work together and self-regulate in order to raise the standard of service and integrity within the sector.

Added commercial manager, Ally Kerr: "We don't just provide software for agents to view each others properties, but work within a strict code of conduct and ethics.

"Among our members are some of the most respected real estate firms in this region and, through the organisation's multiple listing service, they collectively list some 5,000 properties in this part of Spain, so it is in our interest to distance ourselves from less professional elements in the market."

In order to ensure this and comply strictly with Decree 218, the organisation has implemented the procedures and training programmes recommend by a respected law firm that was commission to liaise with the regional government.

"It's a project that has taken some months to implement,"



said Mr Kerr. "All our 50 members are fully compliant with the legal requirements. For buyers this means peace of mind, knowing that when a property is being purchased from one of our members, the consumer can be 100% confident that the advice and information given will be accompanied with all documents issued by the civil authorities.

"We know Marbella and the Costa del Sol have not had the best of press lately as a result of a number of property scandals, which have rocked client confidence in the market. It is because of this that we welcome new customer protection measures and tighter controls of this kind."

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