

Code will be far from secret



Spencer Noyon, Swoffers Local Market Director, Ruth Lilley, head of development at the NAEA, Charles Smailes, NAEA National President and Matthew Henry, Managing Director of Swoffers.

Maintaining its position as a leading best practice agency in the island's property sector, Swoffers is encouraging the creation of a local branch of the National Association of Estate Agents.

The need for a formal code of practice to protect buyers and sellers in the island's property market had been identified by Swoffers and the NAEA agrees that it is desirable. Thanks to Swoffers' lobbying, the formation of a Guernsey branch now looks likely. Members would be bound by rules of practice and conduct in a move being welcomed.

'We have been lobbying for a local branch of the NAEA because we want the whole sector to conduct itself in a professional manner,' said Matthew Henry, Managing Director of Swoffers. He met NAEA President Charles Smailes and head of membership and development Ruth Lilley when the national body's representatives paid a visit here recently.

'The NAEA is the UK's leading professional body for estate agents and, as such, demands the highest standard of ethics and best practice,' said Mr Smailes.

He was impressed with the level of professionalism found locally. 'It is rewarding to see agents still maintaining an interest in such matters in such a buoyant market,' he said, adding that a totally professional approach was sometimes abandoned elsewhere when demand was reliable.

The development of a local branch would enable any codes of practice to be tailored to the island's unique

property market. 'There is no point in us adopting the national one because many of the areas relating to buying and selling are totally different. On the plus side, I would say that our market is more controlled because it makes unpleasant practices such as gazumping very difficult,' said Mr Henry.

'We would advise all sellers to check if their agent is a member of the NAEA. Consumers have added protection because of the advice and guidance available to member agents and the demand for members to have professional indemnity insurance' said Ms Lilley.

They are also required to provide the association with accountants' reports on any client account that they hold. 'We feel that consumers have added protection by using an NAEA member, not just in monetary terms but also in quality of service and professionalism,' she said.

Setting up a dedicated Guernsey branch of the NAEA would enable members to network, but also ensure that they have the strength in numbers to hold professional development courses, focused speakers on the island and to ensure views are passed back to the NAEA generally.

'We are always keen to work to the highest possible standard. It is one of the reasons why clients return to us when they want a different home. This local branch should ensure that the whole of the island's property sector can work as well as possible for buyers and sellers,' Matthew concluded.