**London Evening Standard 8 June 2015**

**Foxtons charged lecturer £616 to change light fitting... now class action could cost firm £42m**

A law lecturer charged £616 by Foxtons to change a light fitting at a house he rents out today said the estate agent had “tried to rip off the wrong guy”.

Dr Chris Townley, who lectures at King’s College London, is preparing to launch **a class action** which his legal team believes could eventually cost the chain up to £42 million.

He told the Standard he was furious when Foxtons, which manages his £500,000 property in Forest Hill, south-east London, charged the “inflated” sum for the “shoddy” installation of a security light.

He contacted sub-contractors Maintenance1st to demand the work was redone and discovered they had charged just £412.50.

When challenged on the difference, Foxtons admitted it had added a £137.50 **commission** and an “ad hoc management charge” of 10 per cent. They had also charged VAT because, once the commission was included, the final invoice was more than £500.

Dr Townley, 44, has now launched a legal action claiming the “hidden commission” was not covered in the **landlord**’s contract.

Dr Townley and a team of solicitors from Leigh Day are now seeking a group legal action against Foxtons to claim back money he says he and other landlords have lost.

It has served the estate agent with a letter of claim, which is sent prior to the beginning of legal proceedings.

Foxtons, which was valued at almost £800million when it **floated** on the stock market two years ago, is believed to manage more than 6,000 properties in the UK.

Leigh Day believes that if all their landlords joined the group legal action, Foxtons could face a legal bill of up to £42 million.

It is believed other estate agents charge similar commissions and if they are dragged into the dispute compensation payments could rise to more than £100million.

Dr Townley, who has lectured in competition law for the past 10 years since leaving the Government’s Office of Fair Trading, is seeking £14,000 in **compensation for** “inflated costs for work” over the two-and-a-half years he rented out his property from 2011 to 2013.

He said: “Foxtons were very **dismissive** when I first went to them saying the charges were unfair. Being a lawyer has helped. It gave me confidence. It meant they couldn’t **pull the wool over my eyes**. With my legal team, they have messed with the wrong guys.

“Who knows how many people will join the action. If a lot do though it could really revolutionise the rental market. I’m a simple guy. I’m not a hero by doing this, they ripped me off and I just want my money back.

“I hope other landlords join and together we can form a powerful case.”

Chris Haan, from Leigh Day, said: “It’s a very significant case and there are potentially thousands of **claimants** out there. The case could significantly change what charges estate agents bring to landlords in the future.”

A spokesman for Foxtons said: “We are incredibly disappointed to hear when any customer is dissatisfied with the service they have received, however, as a legal dispute we are not in a position to comment on the specifics of this case.

“We are satisfied though that our **fees** are clearly laid out within our terms and conditions and that approvals are obtained from our landlords before works **commence** on their property.”

**Ex. 1 Match the underlined words with the definitions given below.**

1. [money](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/money) that you [pay](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/pay_1) to a [professional](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/professional_1) [person](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/person) or [institution](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/institution) for their [work](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/work_1) - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. to begin - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. an [extra](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/extra_1) amount of [money](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/money) that you have to [pay](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/pay_1) to a [bank](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/bank_1) or other [organization](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/organization) when they [provide](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/provide) a [service](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/service_1) for you - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. [reacting](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/react) to something in a way that [shows](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/show_1) you do not [think](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/think_1) it is [worth](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/worth_1) [paying](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/pay_1) [attention](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/attention) to - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. a man who [owns](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/own_2) a [house](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/house_1), [flat](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/flat_1), or [room](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/room_1) that [people](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/people_1) can [rent](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/rent_1) - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. [money](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/money) that someone [receives](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/receive) because something [bad](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/bad_1) has [happened](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/happen) to them - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. a [legal](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/legal) [case](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/case_1) [organized](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/organized) by a [group](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/group_1) of [people](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/people_1) who all have the same [problem](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/problem) - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. to [start](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/start_1) to [sell](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/sell_1) a [company](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/company)’s [shares](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/share_1) on the [stock](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/stock_1) [market](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/market_1) - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. to [try](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/try_1) to [trick](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/trick_1) or [cheat](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/cheat_1) someone by [giving](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/give_1) them [wrong](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/wrong_1) [information](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/information) - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. plaintiff / someone who [brings](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/bring) a [legal](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/legal) [case](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/case_1) against someone else in a [court](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/court_1) of [law](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/law) - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_