

Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

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## Evidence Submission to inform the National Development Framework

### Call for Evidence & Projects

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

In Wales, we aim to provide a professional and impartial voice for housing across all sectors to emphasise the particular context of housing in Wales and to work with organisations to identify housing solutions.

For further information on this response please contact  
Matthew Kennedy, policy & public affairs manager  
at the above address or email [REDACTED]

## Introduction

CIH welcomes the opportunity to provide a view on the new guidance and performance standards developed as part of the changes to housing regulation in Wales.

Our response is informed by feedback from our members, our knowledge of the housing industry and expertise from our policy and practice teams.

## General Comments

CIH Cymru supports the development of Welsh policies, practices and legislation that aim to address the key housing challenges we face, to improve standards and supply, promote community cohesion, tackle poverty and promote equality. We promote a *one housing system* approach that:

- places the delivery of additional affordable housing at the top of national, regional and local strategies as a primary method of tackling the housing crisis;
- secures investment to ensure the high and sustainable quality of all homes in a sustainable framework;
- improves standards and develops the consumer voice within the private rented sector
- promotes the concept of housing led regeneration to capture the added value that housing brings in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- recognises that meeting the housing needs of our communities is a key aspect of tackling inequality and poverty;
- ensures that that there are properly resourced support services in place to prevent homelessness and protect the most vulnerable;
- uses current and potential legislative and financial powers to intervene in housing markets and benefit schemes;
- promotes consumer rights & tenant involvement;
- and supports the continued professional development of housing practitioners.

## 1. Title of Evidence

*The importance of placing housing at the heart of national development planning*

## 2. Summary of Evidence

CIH Cymru champion the work of housing professionals working across Wales in a variety of settings. We know that high quality housing can be a driving force behind revitalising communities, increasing employment opportunities and creating resilient, well-connected localities.

We strongly welcome the aim of the National Development Framework in setting out a 20 year plan for Wales. Housing is crucial to the economic and social wellbeing of communities, and is an important national asset; as such housing should be viewed as a critical form of infrastructure in Wales alongside transport, utilities and communications infrastructure. Second home ownership continues to be an issue in many Welsh communities; pushing up house prices for local residents and turning homes into an underused resource with consequential outcomes for local economies and community services.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard has ensured a significant improvement to many social homes across Wales. The deadline for achieving WHQS will fall within this Assembly term. Before the Welsh Assembly election in May 2016, CIH Cymru called on the Welsh Government to:

- Ensure national assessments of housing need and house condition inform both infrastructure investment programmes and planning at national, regional and local levels.

We believe that consideration of housing stock condition, in addition to the broader discussion around increasing and planning supply should continue to inform development strategies at all levels, from the local to the national.

The National Assembly for Wales Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee produced a report in January of this year that put forward a number of recommendations in shaping a national infrastructure commission for Wales. We feel that consideration of this commission and the exploration of structures for planning to development to be suitably linked. In exploring the options for a national development framework for Wales, we believe consideration should be given to the findings of the committee, which stated:

*“We understand the desire not to overload a new body, but we think the remit should be expanded to also include the supply of land for strategically significant housing developments and related supporting infrastructure alongside the economic and environmental infrastructure.”<sup>1</sup>*

Respondents to the committee’s request for evidence also supported this view with the Programme Manager for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board stating that:

*“Economic growth depends as much on housing and land for employment and the quality-of life aspects as it does on a road scheme or a new piece of drainage infrastructure. So, the plan has to be holistic.”<sup>2</sup>*

We fully support the views above that further emphasise the need for a “big picture” approach in developing plans for national infrastructure. As highlighted above, with large scale infrastructure projects such as the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon and the Wylfa Newydd power station project on the Isle of Anglesey taking shape, it is imperative that the impact of housing demand and temporary accommodation is considered in planning and development. In tandem with this should be an understanding of the skills required to deliver these projects and the potential knock-on impact on

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10901/cr-ld10901-e.pdf> (Accessed 02/03/2017)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

sector such as housing, where there is already a shortage in skilled workers required to meet the 20,000 affordable homes target set by the Welsh Government.

As important as the physical infrastructure realised through investment in high quality affordable housing, are the outcomes realised for individuals and communities that build a sense of home and belonging. Housing professionals are involved in a number of activities aimed at:

- Reducing barriers to employment and education
- Sign-posting to support, information and advice services
- Supporting and facilitating engagement with the welfare system
- Involving tenants/communities in developing schemes, scrutiny/governance and training
- Regenerating community spaces

### **3. Summary of Key Issues/Conclusions**

- Housing must be recognised in strategic development focused on planning infrastructure and improving community wellbeing
- The 20,000 affordable homes target must be considered in the broader context of a potential drain on skills with the labour market through the realisation of other, large-scale infrastructure projects
- Local planning must take a view on ensuring a joined-up approach on challenges around loneliness and isolation and those who may be digitally excluded

### **4. Why are you submitting this evidence?**

Housing and the work of housing professionals in Wales is rich in positive activity aimed at improving wellbeing and investing in infrastructure. Our evidence is intended to highlight this variety and demonstrate the value in ensuring the impact of housing professionals is well recognised in the National Development Framework.

### **5. How should the evidence inform the development of the NDF?**

The evidence we have provided is intended to highlight the variety of work being undertaken by the housing profession in Wales and further emphasise that housing must be considered as a vital piece of infrastructure. We would encourage the first iteration of the National Development Framework to make it clear that housing is a key part, and vital to the realisation of the wellbeing outcomes.

### **6. How does this evidence and any actions it recommends help achieve the 7 well-being goals?**

The work of housing professionals already has a substantial impact on the following Well-being goals:

**A prosperous Wales:** The combined efforts to increase housing supply supports employment opportunities within areas such as housing management, construction and care. The social housing sector in Wales has made significant progress in meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, implemented to ensure social landlords possess data on stock condition, have a well-informed programme of maintenance and ensure homes remain in compliance with the standard. In addition social housing is often built to other standards such as lifetime homes and BREEAM. (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method).

**A healthier Wales:** There have been a number of studies conducted to demonstrate the adverse impact of poor housing conditions on health.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the benefits of providing high quality homes, the housing sector more broadly has made advances in addressing the needs of people requiring continuing healthcare<sup>4</sup> and supporting hospital staff to reduce instances of delayed transfer of care among elderly patients.<sup>5</sup> The sector also has a strong preventative role in providing a wide range of care and support services reducing pressure and demand on health and social care.<sup>6</sup>

**A Wales of cohesive communities:** Housing professionals have a vital role to play in addressing anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and violence against women through a multi-partner approach. Some housing associations for example have teams and dedicated roles aimed at engaging communities and addressing issues in a proactive way.

## 7. Why is the evidence of national significance?

In the formative phase of exploring the process of national development planning we believe it is vital that housing is recognised and highlighted from the outset. As outlined above, as infrastructure projects see populations expand within certain areas it is vital that housing in meeting this immediate need as well as contributing to the long-term prosperity of these areas is carefully considered in the development context.

## 8. Do you agree for your evidence to be made public?

We agree for our evidence to be made public.

## 9. Highlighted projects

The following projects include some of the winners and shortlisted entries from the Welsh Housing Awards 2016. Our Good Practice Compendium brings together innovative practice from across the housing sector, full details of these projects can be found [here](#).

### Little by little (LBL)

LBL was a new idea created through Welsh Government Warm Homes funding and worked across five local authority areas located in South East Wales (Torfaen, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Blaenau Gwent and Cardiff) engaging with households in areas that had previously received Arbed or Max ECO funding and had hard measures installed e.g. new windows, doors, boilers external wall insulation. Its core aim was to demonstrate that significant positive outcomes can be achieved by providing residents with energy and behaviour change advice and interventions. The project set out to:

- Demonstrate the value (in terms of energy and money saved) of direct behaviour and advice interventions
- Demonstrate that investment in energy and behaviour change advice has a significantly greater impact on the Welsh economy than the cost of that advice

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/SPSW/Housing/2016/good-housing-better-health-2016.pdf> (Accessed 06/03/2017)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/866/2-8%20In%20One%20Place%20%20-%20Report%20of%20the%20Continuing%20Health%20Care%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group.pdf> (Accessed 06/03/2017)

<sup>5</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/supporting-people/case-studies/lighthouse-project/?lang=en> (06/03/2017)

<sup>6</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2016/160310-supporting-people-data-linking-feasibility-study-final-en.pdf> (Accessed 06/03/2017)

The project was submitted by Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC on behalf of the 5 local authorities, with all members forming a project board. Melin Homes' Being Greener Team, then managed, delivered and monitored the project. Project staff were employed within Melin Homes and hosted by some local authorities again to ensure value for money of investment but, as importantly, to ensure that outcomes, achievements and learnings were as a result of partnership working and the exchange of good practice. The project worked with 1345 properties throughout the five local authority areas, and fully engaged with 998 households giving the project a 70% engagement rate. Those households not wishing to fully engage all received the relevant information to assist them with saving money. The LBL project has been a huge success with many lessons learnt across the five local authorities. The approach was not solely energy, the officers visited each resident and surveyed the house to ascertain how they used energy and went through tips on how to save energy by changing behaviour. The officers supported residents to look at energy companies to compare energy providers and see if switching provider could save them money, and also a holistic referral approach toward:

- Employment and training needs
- Financial – income maximisation
- Digital – get them digitally included

Where it was clear that some residents were in financial difficulty with their fuel payments, hardship grants were applied for to pay off the debts, where boilers had been condemned and individuals were unable to afford new as they just sat above the grant criteria, the LBL officers helped write to charities to get them funding. The LBL officers supported some into apprenticeships and jobs through having the knowledge of vacancies locally. Schools were worked with in each of the areas to educate young people in understanding how to save energy both in the school and their home environments through a fun, engaging programme.

## **Reuse, reduce and recycle**

Bron Afon Community Housing is a social housing provider with 8300 rented homes in South Wales along with 915 leaseholder properties and over 2000 garages, we have numerous other assets such as shops, community centres, playgrounds and open spaces. We employ 550 staff which includes 165 trades. This year we will be spending £23 million improving and maintaining our assets. Our supply chain includes local and national building suppliers, contractors and specialist services. Our main aim is to build thriving communities and to improve the quality of life and life chances of people living in Torfaen and neighbouring communities with a particular focus on those who face disadvantage.

Our aims were to:

- Recycle building components replaced by the Welsh Housing Quality Standard programmes
- Recover and re-use surplus materials
- Reduce landfill (both environmental impact and associate tipping costs)
- Income generated goes towards community benefits

The recycling team manage all kinds of waste derived from void properties and maintenance carried out by their property services teams. The recycling centre team accept, segregate and reuse or recycle disparate waste streams including decommissioned boilers, wood waste, metals and cardboard. In just 2 years we have saved 50 tonnes of waste from going to landfill sites by simply donating it to charity, along with 120 PAT tested appliances and over 3500 other non-electrical items, 150 tonnes of wood and 24 tonnes of cardboard.

Many household items can be re-used by those in need; the team ensure all items of good quality are safe to be reused. Electrical items in working order are PAT tested and reused where possible but if the item is beyond repair, it's stripped them down by separating the components which are then sold to a scrap merchant.

#### Outcomes and achievements:

- Since starting this initiative Bron Afon's landfill costs have fallen from £285,000 in 2012-13 to just £80,000 last year with this years projected landfill costs expected to be just £9000.
- We generated an income of £50,000 since 2013 by selling mixed metals. Overall weight of waste saved from landfill is 210 tonnes (including charity donations, cardboard, wood waste, metals).
- Reseiclo made their first collection of wood from Bron Afon in March 2014 since then in total they have collected 2330 cubic yards in total (roughly 150 tonnes)
- Construction Excellence Wales (CEW) has shown a great deal of interest in the venture and have written a case study about the recycling centre entitled 'Waste not want not: how a social housing organisation is winning the waste war through collaborative working'.
- On the 6th July 2016 Bron Afon's recycling team, in conjunction with the charity TRAC2 and Reseiclo, won the MRW National Recycling Award for best business partnership ( <https://nra.mrw.co.uk/> )
- Just imagine the difference it would make if all the housing associations in Wales did the same by recycling their waste and donated unwanted household items to charity.