

22 October 2024

Dear

ATISN 21963 – Freedom of Information Request

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 25 September 2024. You asked for:

- An update on the number of completed new build, low carbon properties in this Senedd term as well as the number of properties in the process of being built.
- Confirmation of the amount of completed new build properties in the previous Senedd term.
- The number of social properties sold by housing associations during this Senedd term.
- The net increase in social housing during this Senedd term and the last.
- The funding paid to housing associations for capital expenditure on new properties this Senedd term and last.

Our response

In a Written Ministerial Statement, published on 15 June 2021, the then Minister with responsibility set out that the target to deliver 20,000 new homes for social rent would include homes for rent in the social sector, homes for intermediate rent, shared ownership schemes and acquisitions. <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-social-housing-wales>

The following information provided is correct as at 9 October 2024.

1. A breakdown of Registered Social Landlords and Local Authority delivery by new build and acquisition is not currently available. However, we recognise the importance of this data and work is being undertaken to add this information to Stats Wales by the end of the financial year. You will then be able to find this information under the Affordable Housing Section of StatsWales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Affordable-Housing>

In terms of the number of properties in the process of being built, Registered Social Landlords and Local Authorities provide informal projections data on a six monthly basis. This allows Welsh Government to understand the number of homes in the pipeline (new stock, both new build and acquisition) that have the potential to deliver by the end of this Senedd term. These projections suggest a range of delivery between 16,500 and 19,500 over the course of this Government term (2021/22 to 2025/26).

In relation to the low carbon element of your query, new homes receiving Social Housing Grant are required to comply with the relevant standards for the time,

currently the Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR) 2021¹. This requires social landlords to meet the very high standard of EPC A and not use fossil fuel fired boilers to provide domestic hot water and space heating. Homes started before that time, met the previous standard.

2. Data in relation to the amount of completed new build properties in the previous Senedd term is available through the New Housing Building statistics which can be found here: <https://www.gov.wales/new-house-building>. However, as noted in the release, the tenure split should be treated with caution as it is believed to include an undercount of social sector builds and an overcount of private sector builds.
3. The number of social properties sold by housing associations during this Senedd term is published on StatsWales. The information can be found here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Sales>
4. The net increase in social housing during this Senedd term and the last is published on StatsWales. The information can be found here: <https://www.gov.wales/social-landlord-housing-stock-and-rents>, with more detailed breakdowns available at <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Stock-and-Rents>.
5. In this current Senedd term, the amount of funding paid to housing associations (local authorities and registered social landlords) for capital expenditure on new properties totals £899,608,751. Please note, this only reflects the three years of the Senedd term to date (2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24).

I have decided that some of the information under section five of your request is exempt from disclosure under Part 1 section 12 of the **Freedom of Information Act 2000** and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying these exemptions are set out in full at Annex A to this letter.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

¹ Welsh Development Quality Requirements 2021
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/development-quality-requirements-for-housing-associations.pdf>

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex A

Application of exemptions/exceptions

The Freedom of information Act/Environmental Information Regulations provide a right for anyone to ask a public authority to make requested information available to the wider public. As the release of requested information is to the world, not just the requester, public authorities need to consider the effects of making the information freely available to everybody. Any personal interest the requester has for accessing the information cannot override those wider considerations.

I have decided to withhold the following information:

The funding paid to housing associations for capital expenditure on new properties in the last Senedd term.

The information is being withheld under Part 1, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of section(s) Part 1, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and our subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

Engagement of Part 1, Section 12 (Cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Welsh Government believes that the information relating to funding provided to housing associations for new build homes should be exempt from disclosure. It is estimated that the likely costs to provide this information would significantly exceed the appropriate limit currently set at £600 for the Welsh Government, which is calculated on the basis of one member of staff taking more than 24 hours (at a standard rate of £25 per hour) to comply with the request. It is estimated that costs for this section of your request alone, would reach a minimum of four days work.

Public Interest Test

In order to satisfy the public interest test in relation to the exemption, it is necessary to conclude that the public interest arguments in favour of withholding the information are sufficient to *outweigh* the public interest arguments in favour of release.

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

The information would allow for a clearer understanding of funding provided to housing associations for new build homes.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding

The majority of information relating to several funding streams in the previous term of government is not recorded clearly in terms of the split between new build and acquisitions of properties – as this was not a priority and commitment within the

previous term of government's housing target. Therefore, to gather the information each individual application would be to be open, read and understood to determine the number of new build homes.

This however then raises concerns around the accuracy of the data. The opportunity for human error is increased and would take significant time to undertake for the five funding streams involved in delivering affordable housing.

Balance of public interest test

On balance, it is determined that the public interest argues in favour of withholding the information relating to this section of your request.