



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Cymru

What you need to know about the programme for government



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Introduction

The newly elected Welsh Government has launched its programme for government – what it plans to do over this Senedd term. Addressing and tackling climate change runs as a common thread throughout all portfolios in addition to commitments around tackling inequalities, stigma and racism.

Responsibility for housing (of all types) is overseen by Julie James MS as the Minister for Climate Change, supported by Lee Walters MS as the Deputy Minister. There are some elements linked to the work of the sector such as welfare reform and fuel poverty that sit within Social Partnerships – headed up by Jane Hutt MS.

The headlines for housing

The housing section of the programme for government confirms many of the promises made in Welsh Labour's manifesto with main commitment around supply being to:

- Build 20,000 new low carbon homes for rent

The housing section also confirms activity around homelessness, decarbonisation and supply chain development by outlining activity around:

- Fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing.
- Support cooperative housing, community-led initiatives, and community land trusts.
- Create a timber based industrial strategy that can develop and sustain the high value production and processing of Welsh wood.
- Decarbonise more homes through retrofit, delivering quality jobs, training and innovation using local supply chains.
- Improve building safety so that people feel safe and secure in their homes.
- Explore where services and contracts can sustainably and affordably be brought back into a strengthened public sector.

Some commitments, whilst not being included in the main housing section, have a clear impact on the work of the sector, these include:

- Support the development of a register of empty buildings and help small businesses move into vacant shops.
- A commitment to implementing a Welsh language community housing plan
- Renewed support for cooperative housing and community led initiatives
- Continue to improve existing homes, helping us tackle fuel poverty, create much needed jobs, training opportunities, and supply chains.
- Empower communities to have a greater stake in local regeneration.
- Ensure Rent Smart Wales landlords respond quickly to complaints of racism and hate crime and offer appropriate support.
- Develop a national scheme restricting rent to local housing allowance levels for families and young people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness.
- Develop a fire safety fund for existing buildings.
- Legislate to enact the recommendations of the Law Commission in relation to leasehold reform.

Measures to improve healthcare and well-being

The programme sets out a strong focus on mental health within its plans to progress the impact of high quality healthcare in Wales. Linked to the work of the sector the commitments also set out:

- Reform primary care, bringing together GP services with pharmacy, therapy, housing, social care, mental health, community and third sector.
- Introduce an all-Wales framework to roll out social prescribing to tackle isolation.
- Support innovative housing development to meet care needs.

Work the economy and life in Wales

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on how people work and live there is a clear focus on sustaining some of the changes to how people work to ensure business can remain flexible and the environmental positives be realised in over the longer-term. The commitments linked to this area include:

- A 10 year infrastructure investment plan to support a zero carbon economy
- Seek a 30% target for working remotely.
- Develop new remote working hubs in communities.
- Pilot an approach to the Basic Income.
- Ensure that each region in Wales has effective and democratically accountable means of developing their future economies.

Wales relationship with Westminster

The detail of the conditions linked to the UK leaving the EU have continued to shine a light on the need to fill the gaps left by the rules and procedures in existence at an EU level that will no longer apply in the UK. To this end the Welsh Labour government have committed to:

- Establish an independent, standing commission to consider the constitutional future of Wales.
- Make the case for clear and stable tax devolution for Wales.
- Challenge the UK Internal Market Act and its attack on devolution and champion the rights of the Senedd to legislate without interference in areas devolved to Wales

A view from CIH Cymru

We welcome the focus and priority given to housing, particularly social housing within the programme for government. The low carbon housing target of 20,000 homes will require long-term certainty on investment but in tandem with other commitments around employment and skills which was one of our own asks around a green deal for the sector made within our Back Housing / Cefnogi Tai 2021 manifesto.

Whilst there is still more detail required underpinning some of the main elements of the programme for government we would have welcomed a greater emphasis around skills to realise a greener vision for the housing sector – our manifesto called for a workforce strategy and we continue to believe a strategic approach is needed.

Some elements of the programme for government touch on the work of the private rented sector, but with the sector playing such a vital role in alleviating homelessness we wanted to see a strategy that would underpin the support available to help the sector thrive, and tenants to have a consistently high experience of renting in Wales.

We're pleased to see the Welsh Government pushing for real progress in tackling racism, inequalities and discrimination with increasing community cohesion and addressing stigma included within our own manifesto asks. But it is disappointing that there is no commitment to progressing the right to adequate housing in Wales – something the we, alongside campaign partners Tai Pawb and Shelter Cymru have been calling for through our joint Back the Bill campaign.

Lastly, how Wales works with Westminster will only increase in importance as the UK Community Resilience Fund transforms into the Shared Prosperity Fund – for us an area of focus is on ensuring the role of housing organisations in utilising these resources are well recognised. It is therefore positive to see commitments linked to a continued focus on this, alongside how tax powers could further be realised in Wales, something we believe could again, be utilised to supplement and increase the resources available to support the sector.

Join the discussion

As an organisation actively engaging with politicians from all parties to inform debate and shape housing policy we are always keen to gain the insights of CIH members working across Wales. If you have any reflections or thoughts you'd like to feedback to us please contact matthew.kennedy@cih.org (policy and public affairs manager, CIH Cymru).