

RHA 05

Ymgynghoriad ar yr hawl i dai ddigonol

Consultation on the right to adequate housing

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Tref Aberystwyth

Response from: Aberystwyth Town Council

## Aberystwyth Town Council's Evidence to the Housing and Local Government Committee – The Right to Adequate Housing

A number of problems linked to this affect people in the Aberystwyth area:

- The standard of rented accommodation and HMOs is low in many cases. Many tenants have problems with mould, structural issues, rats etc and some of them are afraid to complain.
- Many tenants are on very insecure contracts and are unsure how long they will be able to stay in their accommodation.
- The rental market has collapsed with a very limited number of properties available for rent. Tenants undergoing no-fault evictions can't find anywhere else to live.
- The County Council clearly has a lot of trouble holding landlords to account. In Ceredigion last year there were 382 service requests received but only 3 enforcement notices issued. This suggests that the laws and arrangements for landlord accountability are not easy or quick to use and local authorities should be supported to regulate the sector more effectively.
- It appears that some landlords are not on the register, which causes problems in trying to hold them to account.
- Recently, the County Council had a waiting list for emergency accommodation. The County Council have now managed to clear this but we don't know if this will happen again.
- At the same time, some houses/flats lie empty, others are second homes and others have been turned into AirBnBs.
- The lack of accommodation at a reasonable price affects the ability to retain/attract key workers.
- The lack of accommodation at a price that is affordable on a local wage is a factor in the out-migration of young people, which has negative impacts on language, culture, the local economy, public services and community cohesion.
- Some people with families are in houses which are too small for them.
- Some older people would be keen to downsize but due to the lack of provision for "last time buyers" (access, rails etc) they continue to live in large houses.
- Some people are offered social housing far out of town and the lack of and decline of public transport stops them from moving in, or stops them from working, if they don't have a car.

In terms of establishing the right to an adequate home, we suggest the following:

- Revise the title to say The Right to Adequate Housing Locally.
- Place a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that local people can get adequate accommodation locally (withing a reasonable travelling time on public transport / active travel).
- Fund local authorities adequately to fulfil this.
- Measure the true need for accommodation in every area at a community level, including the precise types of accommodation required, and use this to revise local development plans.
- Streamline arrangements for ensuring that landlords meet an acceptable standard for their tenants, including the creation of an advice/assistance package to help local authorities tackle the problem.
- Establish a mechanism to force local authorities and housing providers to carry out their duties and ensure that all accommodation under their watch is fit for human inhabitation.
- It needs to be ensured that all landlords are on the list.
- Strengthen the rights of tenants, including protecting tenants from no-fault eviction if they complain. Set up longer term, more stable contracts, which only end with the tenant's consent or due to the tenant violating the contract.
- Ensure that more accommodation is provided for "last time buyers", which meets standards for the health, safety and welfare of older people (and thus release family homes).
- Further measures to regulate second homes and AirBnB properties that were formerly residential accommodation.
- Introduce additional measures to bring empty buildings back into residential use.