

RHA 16

Ymgynghoriad ar yr hawl i dai ddigonol

Consultation on the right to adequate housing

Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol Cymru

Response from: Future Generations Commissioner for Wales



Comisiynydd
**Cenedlaethau'r
Dyfodol**
Cymru

**Future
Generations**
Commissioner
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John Griffiths MS

Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee

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Dear Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to add my perspective, as the new Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, to the Local Government and Housing Committee inquiry into the Right to Adequate Housing. I hope this letter will aid your discussions. A place to call home is a cornerstone to ensuring our well-being. Accessing adequate housing is about more than avoiding homelessness. It is about having a community, access to services and the prospect of creating a decent future life for us and our families where we can maximise our health opportunities and express our cultural identity.

In the [Future Generations Report](#) published in 2020, the Future Generations Commissioner called for the principles of the [United Nations enshrined Right to Adequate Housing](#) to be fully incorporated into Welsh housing policy. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that:

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

The view we set out is that such a right underpins many of the wider benefits outlined throughout the Future Generations Report that bringing an end to homelessness would have, to health, to community cohesion, to equality and to prosperity. This call was echoed in our [Manifesto for the Future](#) ahead of the 2021 Senedd elections.

We welcome the commitment in the Co-operation Agreement to publish a White Paper to include proposals for a right to adequate housing. I would like to take this opportunity to set out how the Well-being of Future Generations Act can be applied to realise this.

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The five Ways of Working

The Act sets out five Ways of Working which must be used by public bodies in its decision-making, for example, the development of policy.

Integration

Reports by Alma Economics in [2021](#) and [2022](#) set out that the key components of the right to adequate housing are:

- (i) legal security of tenure: ensuring legal protection against arbitrary eviction, harassment and other threats;
- (ii) availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure: facilities necessary for health, security, comfort and nutrition (e.g., access to safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting);
- (iii) affordability: the housing costs are at such a level that does not compromise a household's ability to attain other basic life needs;
- (iv) habitability: guaranteeing adequate space and protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards and disease;
- (v) accessibility: considering the needs of disadvantaged groups;
- (vi) location: easy access to services (employment, healthcare, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities);
- (vii) cultural adequacy: enabling expression of cultural identity.

Achieving these will require an integrated approach across a range of policy areas the vast majority of which, if not all, fall under devolved Welsh policy.

Through integration, the Act requires that the development of policy in one area is not detrimental to policy development in another area where it is aligned with the advancement of a Well-being Goal and the sustainable development principle. Implicit in this, is that no policy should be developed which is detrimental to another area of policy which is supporting access to adequate housing. Positively, we are seeing this action in Wales across fields such as transport, decarbonisation, and planning which when taken together reinforce many of these components of adequate housing.

The Act prescribes that the Welsh Government should consider not only its own well-being objectives in understanding the impacts of its decisions, but also should consider the impact on the wellbeing objectives of all other public bodies which may be impacted by such decisions, such as local planning authorities and national park authorities.

Collaboration

Working better and smarter with people, communities and within different parts of Welsh Government can help to realise the various aspects of the right to adequate housing. This includes avoiding duplication, unlocking synergies and identifying areas where they can work together and/or reinforce each other's work.

Involvement

It is a requirement of the Act that those impacted by, or that have an interest in the delivery of a well-being goal are involved in the process of decision making. It requires organisations to be open to influence from citizens and stakeholders, moving to a culture of 'working with' rather than 'doing to'. In contrast to consultation, involvement approaches work with people at earlier stages, such as helping to identify issues and potential solutions, and being supported to remain involved right throughout design, implementation and evaluation processes. It is important to fully understand the different impacts that decisions could have on different communities, and why. Local area well-being plans will be a good starting point for understanding geographic differences.

In considering collaboration and involvement as a way of working, the 2020 Future Generations report recommended:

- Work with organisations and communities to set a vision and long-term strategy for the future of housing in Wales.
- As part of this vision and strategy implement the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Review, the Independent Review on Decarbonising Welsh Homes and the report from the Homelessness Action Group.

We welcome steps that have been taken since which will begin to realise this recommendation by the Welsh Government in partnership with Siarter Cartrefi and the Co-production Network Cymru including an event in Machynlleth in February this year. We look forward to learning more about the outcome of this work.

Prevention

This calls on public bodies to act in a way which prevents problems from occurring or getting worse. A [standard definition of prevention](#) has been agreed with the Welsh Government. In taking this into consideration, the Welsh Government must ensure that housing policy prevents problems, or indeed costs, from stacking up in the future. For example, this could be due to factors such as the location of housing development and proximity to public transport and other services; future proofing developments for climate adaptation such as flood risk and coastal erosion; the quality of housing and the need to decarbonise at a rapid scale.

Our 2021 report [Homes fit for the Future: the Retrofit Challenge](#) sets out how housing decarbonisation can be addressed to meet Net Zero Wales carbon reduction targets.

Long-term

This makes reference to the importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs (the sustainable development principle).

In considering preventative and long-term thinking, the 2020 Future Generations Report recommended:

- Within the next year, set out how a long-term plan on how they will fund the decarbonisation of homes in line with carbon emissions targets.
- Require all publicly funded housing developments to be carbon neutral and demonstrate how they are meeting the broader requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- Explore the use of financial levers through the Social Housing Grant and Innovative Housing Programme to encourage innovation in developing

intergenerational housing, and communities and use taxation levers to incentivise intergenerational house-sharing.

- Ensure that Design Quality Requirements should be updated to reflect the future in terms of smart-homes and assisted living technology.
- Support and scale-up the development of social enterprises to provide jobs and skills in new methods of construction based on models established by Down to Earth and Cartrefi Conwy.

Again, we welcome steps to increase the ambition in the draft Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 and the revised Welsh Development Quality Requirements 2021. We would stress that more needs to be done in the private housing sector, in particular, addressing the challenges faced by those living in the private rented sector, the detail of which has recently been explored by the Senedd CCEI Committee.

Taken together, the five Ways of Working will ensure sustainable development with every effort made to ensure that no one is left behind either now or in future.

Yours sincerely,



Derek Walker

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales