



Ein cyf/Our ref JB-PO-558-25

John Griffiths MS, Chair, Local Government and Housing Committee

5 November 2025

Dear John,

Thank you for providing the Committee's questions on the Building Safety (Wales) Bill. My responses are attached at Annex 1.

I also agreed to write to you on various matters including: the delivery model for Building Safety Authorities, workforce planning and apprenticeships for environmental health officers.

I share the desire to see local authorities working together to deliver their functions under the new regime.

Support from Local Partnerships was commissioned to advise, and work with, local authorities and other stakeholders on developing a delivery model to ensure successful implementation of the Bill. The remit of the Local Partnerships work was confined to the delivery models possible under the Bill, with the functions of Building Safety Authorities being placed on local authorities. Therefore, the Joint Inspection Team was not considered as a potential delivery model. This work involved strategic engagement with local authorities and fire and rescue authorities with the high-level objective of local authorities agreeing an operating model for Building Safety Authorities across Wales.

I have recently received Local Partnerships' report and have agreed with the recommendation for local authorities to work together, mirroring the footprint of each of the three fire and rescue authorities, with a single authority taking the lead in each area.

There was a clear preference for joint working across multiple authorities and a broad consensus that the new Building Safety Authorities should operate in close proximity to fire and rescue authorities. Local Partnerships will now proceed in supporting local authorities in the development of a "critical path" setting out the necessary steps towards working together in this way.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

To further support local authorities in preparing for the new regime, I have also asked my officials to explore the development of a centralised national IT platform. This will be undertaken in partnership with local authorities and fire and rescue authorities to ensure it meets their needs. It will also be undertaken on a cross-Welsh Government basis to ensure join up where appropriate and that we adopt experiences and learn lessons from elsewhere across Government.

As I mentioned to the Committee, to support implementation of the Bill my officials are leading a workstream with a specific focus on local authority workforce. The core objective of the workstream is the development of a strategic workforce plan, which is co-designed with local authorities and the WLGA.

The workforce plan will focus on issues around recruitment, retention and skills development. The plan will feed into investment in skills and apprenticeship training under the new regime, so that we have a cohesive approach to workforce planning. I am happy to share the plan with the Committee once it has been finalised.

I was happy to tell the Committee, we have developed higher apprenticeships for environmental health officers, which went live earlier this year. This programme is already supporting apprentices in environmental health across Wales. My officials continue to engage with the sector and Medr (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) in relation to the development of a degree apprenticeship for environmental health practitioners.

I would also like to follow up on the discussion in Committee about additional costs to registered social landlords. Firstly, the transcript of your oral evidence session on 9 October shows that Trivallis did not claim that the costs to them were around £100,000. Community Housing Cymru (CHC) attributed that to another, unnamed, housing association, seemingly reflecting the costs of conducting fire risk assessments in all category 3 buildings. However, fire risk assessments are already required now under the Fire Safety Order for such premises, so these are not additional costs arising from the Bill.

Secondly, we have since had further engagement with CHC, from which it appears they and their members had misinterpreted some elements of the Bill. In particular, they believed that the Bill requires annual fire risk assessments for all buildings in scope. This may well underlie some of the cost estimates that were presented to the Committee. Section 30(5) of the Bill requires the principal accountable person to ensure that the current fire risk assessment is *reviewed* at least once in every 12 months after the assessment was made. A *new* assessment is only required in the circumstances specified in section 30(2) or when directed to do so by the fire safety authority (section 30(4)).

My officials have had extensive engagement with registered social landlords and CHC, including presenting at CHC's Safety Member Community event earlier in the year, to support their understanding of how the Bill will impact the sector. Officials recently responded on 27 points of clarification requested by CHC and a further session with CHC and their members has been arranged. I acknowledge the new

regime is complex and we will continue to work with stakeholders throughout implementation to ensure that everyone understands what is required of them.

I can also confirm that representatives of the telecommunications sector were reassured to learn that, unlike the Building Safety Act 2022, the Bill does not deal with building regulations or construction. Further, the gateway 2 process in Wales will not rely on a single regulator, as it does in England. The telecommunications sector is anxious to avoid the practical difficulties it has experienced with the gateway 2 process in England. To that end, officials are making arrangements for representatives of the sector to work through the detail with Welsh local authorities ahead of implementation of the gateway 2 process in Wales. However, that work is separate from, and has no implications for, the Bill and its implementation in due course.

I hope this information helps with the Committee's ongoing considerations and I look forward to receiving its report in due course.

I am copying this to the Chairs of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Finance Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jayne Bryant".

Jayne Bryant AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai

Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

Annex 1: Responses to Questions from the Local Government and Housing Committee

- 1. Do you recognise that there could be unintended consequences associated with section 65, given the risks to tenants' security of tenure that could arise from withholding rent, and if so do the benefits of the right to withhold rent outweigh the risks?**

Section 65 of the Bill seeks to ensure that certain written demands given to a tenant must contain the relevant building safety information, such as the name and contact details of the principal accountable person. We would encourage residents that consider rent is not due as a result of this provision to seek their own advice. We also intend to issue guidance on this.

Resident empowerment is at the heart of the regime. Ensuring residents have this vital information to allow them to raise concerns and have discussions with the principal accountable person and building safety authority for their building is paramount. I am confident that the amendments made to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 are reasonable to ensure that residents are empowered with the vital information they need in order to raise any concerns about the safety of their building.

- 2. We've heard strong representations that providing lots of information to tenants is expensive for landlords and not necessarily more transparent if tenants are unable to understand the information they've been given. Would you consider amending the duty in Section 65 from the provision of information to 'making information available', to address concerns on costs?**

I heard the representations to Committee that providing lots of information to tenants could be expensive, but I don't agree that we need to amend the duty in section 65 nor the duty in section 46. The information that would be required to be provided, on the face of new sections 47B and 49B of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 (inserted by section 65), is primarily contact information. We think these duties are proportionate. We have no current plans to prescribe further information under section 49B(5)(e). Section 46 provides a power for the Welsh Ministers to make regulations requiring an accountable person for a regulated building to give information or copies of particular documents to other persons, including, residents. We intend to use regulations to set out what information must be given to residents routinely, and what information must be given to a resident if they have requested it (section 46(4)). What information, how the information or copies of documents must be given, and the format in which they must be given, will be set out in regulations and will of course be subject to public consultation. Regulations could, for example, prescribe that certain information could be provided electronically if this is a resident's preferred method of communication. But in broad terms, we expect the information that would be given routinely to residents would be standard information such as, for example, information about what residents should do in the event of a fire, how residents can raise building safety complaints, the contact details for the principal and

accountable persons and information about residents' duties. An important part of the consultation will focus on the format of information to be provided, ensuring it is clear, proportionate, and accessible and we will of course work closely with stakeholders to shape the content and format of information provided to residents.

The regime is designed to redress the balance between residents and those responsible for their buildings. In the interest of transparency and resident safety, duties placed on accountable persons to provide information to residents are considered reasonable and fair. The critical importance of providing building safety information to residents was a key finding of the Hackitt Report, which noted many residents were frustrated by the intermittent and partial nature of building safety information. It recommended residents should be proactively provided with a set of information that supports them to understand the safety systems in place for their building. In our own research and engagement with residents, they have consistently told us of the importance of receiving building safety information in order to feel safe in their homes and to understand their own role in keeping their building safe.

3. We've heard a call for the Bill to be amended so that accountable persons in Category 1 buildings must involve residents in the development of the engagement strategy required by the Bill, and also specifically in respect of evacuation processes especially for disabled people. What is your view on these representations and would you consider making amendments in respect of these matters at stage two?

We absolutely recognise the importance of meaningful resident engagement and the value of co-producing strategies with residents. I saw firsthand when I visited St Tydfil's Court in Merthyr Tydfil in the summer how empowered residents feel by the processes Merthyr Valley Homes have in place to engage residents and what a difference that is making to how they feel about the building they live in.

That's why we've included regulation-making powers under section 39(7)(a), which will allow the Welsh Ministers to specify circumstances in which consultation with residents about the residential engagement strategy must take place. These regulations will specify the circumstances in which residents will be consulted, which could for example, include when the strategy is prepared or when any revisions to the strategy are made, or when significant material alterations are being made to the building which requires the strategy to be updated. The development of these regulations will be subject to public consultation. I would encourage stakeholders to engage with that process so we can shape the regulations in a way that reflects the lived experience of residents and the operational realities for accountable persons.

In respect of evacuation processes for disabled people, we set out in our response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report that we are committed to working with stakeholders to identify the most appropriate means of ensuring provisions are in place to plan for the evacuation of residents whose ability to self-evacuate is compromised. The Bill already requires accountable persons to take all

reasonable steps to ensure residents can escape from the premises quickly and safely. That includes disabled residents. If necessary, the Welsh Ministers can make further provision about this matter in regulations and guidance. Ensuring this work is done in partnership with all those with an interest in this area is of the utmost importance. My officials have had discussions with disabled people, including Disability Wales, about the challenges they face in evacuating buildings and the solutions they would like to see. There is not a one size fits all solution, but evacuation plans formed part of those discussions.

We are also exploring the possibility of using data about vulnerable people, which is already securely held, to inform the response to an emergency and, where necessary, the rescue of such people.