

P-06-1204 Protect the people of Wales - Take urgent action on the housing crisis now, Correspondence – Petitioners to Committee, 12.12.21

We have read the response from Julie James regarding our petition. In this letter she outlines a range of actions some of which will take many years to roll out and in themselves prompt a range of further questions and clarifications.

A growing sense of outrage and despair has to be addressed and we have to have urgent and honest debates which should involve the participation of everyone affected by this crisis. We cannot continue to pretend that the housing crisis is only down to second homes and short term holiday lets, important though these issues are. We have to identify the whole range of causes which are having a fundamental impact on the Welsh housing crisis however difficult and complex these issues may be.

The housing crisis has exposed a deeply dysfunctional housing market and an unfair and unequal access to housing. It has highlighted great disparities in wealth leading to market prices beyond the reach of most local Welsh buyers, but affordable to wealthy people, most of whom are from England. This has an impact on social justice, the cohesiveness of communities and an impact on local services as a result of rapid demographic shifts. Escalating housing costs have led to a sharp increase in child poverty linked as it is to escalating housing costs. We also see a devastating impact on the culture and Welsh language in communities across Wales. In very many places local people are now largely excluded from renting or owning in their own communities.

In Julie James' letter there has been no mention of controlling the housing market despite the fact that this is an idea which is gaining more traction in wider society, and which offers great potential. If we are to meet the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act this approach will need to be part of the debate, both in the Senedd and in wider Welsh society. This system already exists in the UK. The Channel Islands are protected by the 'Jersey model' which we in Wales should be seriously exploring as a tried and tested example to follow.

As a campaign group we respectfully suggest that a full and proper debate on these issues is very necessary and that evidence and solutions should be gathered from the wider community if it is to take place. We are all affected by these issues, we should all be properly engaged, informed and enabled to participate in the solutions. Participatory political tools such as Citizens Assemblies should be urgently employed to work with the wider community. Please initiate this debate in the Senedd as a matter of urgency.

We are grateful for this opportunity to feedback, to be involved, and for the engagement of the petitions committee.

Kind regards,