

SH 04

Ymgynghoriad ar ail gartrefi

Consultation on second homes

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Tref Aberystwyth

Response from: Aberystwyth Town Council

The following evidence was noted by Aberystwyth Town Council:

- Many young people are having to move out of Aberystwyth to buy homes due to high costs.
- Older people (50+) who wish to downsize and purchase a more affordable property nearer to services (thus releasing a family home) in order to maintain independence have very limited to no options in Aberystwyth – the flats available are either too expensive, belong to Housing Associations or they do not conform to lifetime home standards with poor access (over 65% of people own their homes in Ceredigion and a good proportion of those are older people)
- It is worth noting that Ceredigion was the third most difficult county in Wales for people to afford a home in 2019. At that time, houses cost 7.32 times wages on average. By now, prices have risen even more due to increase demand in the wake of the pandemic. In 2018 there were nearly 200 second homes within Aberystwyth Town Council boundaries; it's likely that this has increased significantly since then.
- There are some landlords who sit on hundreds of properties some of which are left empty. They should be taxed and the 'uninhabitable' loophole needs to be removed
- Holiday lets represent a different category to short term tenancies which are needed.
- Small Business Rates Relief and the number of self-catering accommodation that is eligible for such relief is one of the reasons why many individuals and businesses living elsewhere see opportunities to buy property here
- Farm tourism diversification projects or family run businesses utilising unused old farm buildings, help support rural communities and the tourism industry. The main and serious problem is when properties in towns and villages are bought as second homes and the income leaves the local area.
- The social housing register currently has 118 Category A families
- There are various reports of people registering their second homes as businesses in order to avoid the council tax premiums. At the moment property must be rented for only 70 days a year to register as a business. This should be increased to 140 days a year.
- The present system doesn't deal with platforms such as AirBnB which allows people to opt out, to all intents and purposes, of normal arrangements, not only in terms of effect on the housing situation in our communities but by

unfair competition with local businesses such as hotels. There are no fire inspections or related rules on property put on AirBnB.

- We see small terraced houses that would be perfect starter homes being turned into second homes. A lot of properties in Aberystwyth are fairly small houses and flats: properties that would otherwise be perfect for single people or low income families. A few years ago, a developer had avoided contributing to an affordable housing fund through showing that he would not make a large profit through redeveloping an old building in the town into residential flats. Immediately upon the completion of the work, he turned the entire building into holiday lets. No planning permission was required to do this!
- 2nd homes left empty destroy communities eg New Quay in Ceredigion is a ghost town in the winter, and is destructive to the Welsh language in the last communities where Welsh is the day-to-day language. The percentage of Welsh speakers has fallen dramatically in Aberystwyth, with the town council area falling by 5 percentage points between the 2001 census and the 2011 census (and 8.1 percentage points in one ward). The results of the 2021 census are thus far unknown; however the state of the Welsh language in the area is precarious.
- 2nd homes mean less employment.
- There are examples of conflicts between preserving green community space and housing developments