

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

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| Cross Party Group Title: | Cross Party Group on Construction |
| Date of Meeting: | 10.11.25 |
| Location: | MS Teams |

In attendance:

| Name: | Title: |
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| Catherine Griffith-Williams, CE Wales (CGW) | |
| Claire Cotter, NHS Wales (CC) | |
| David Humphrey, Morgan Sindall (DH) | |
| David Kirby, CIOB (DK) | |
| Eddy Jones, Medr (EJ) | |
| Gareth Evans, UWTSD (GE) | |
| Gareth Williams, CITB (GW) | |
| Gordon Brown, TACP (GB) | |
| Heather Davidson, Medr (HD) | |
| Ifan Glyn, FMB (IG) | |

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| Jeff Protheroe, Colegau Cymru (JP) | |
| Jill Fairweather, ECWL - Tertiary Edu, Culture, Heritage & Sport - Cadw (JF) | |
| Joyce Watson MS, (JW) | |
| Keith Jones, ICE (KJ) | |
| Malcolm Davies, LGHCCRA (MD) | |
| Mark Hand, RTPI (MH1) | |
| Mark Harris, HBF (MH2) | |
| Mark Hennessey, ASD Build (MH3) | |
| Matt Harrison, CIOB (MH4) | |
| Nitesh Patel, Member Support Staff (NP) | |
| Owain Jones, TRJLTD (OJ) | |
| Rob Davies, CITB (RD) | |
| Stephan Rowlands, Greengency Cymru (SR) | |
| Steve Cranston, LGHCCRA (SC) | |
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| Zak Clark, CITB (ZC) | |

Apologies:

| Name: | Title: |
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Summary of Meeting:

Meeting started at 14:32. JW welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited SC to talk through a collaboration between Welsh Government, social landlords and industry experts aiming to tackle housing challenges in Wales through sustainable timber housing.

SC thanked JW for the invitation and outlined that there is an opportunity to unlock high and stable levels of investment in new affordable social housing alongside a climate opportunity to shift to zero carbon homes and a shift to low carbon/high productivity skills.

SC highlighted that this is a challenging environment and is a cutting-edge transition, but comes with challenges such as: labour shortages, spiralling costs, delays in planning.

SC outlined that there are currently 25 landlords (65% of developing landlords in Wales), 11 councils, 14 housing associations collaborating to build an aggregated pipeline for next generation high-performing, healthy, affordable homes using a standardised pattern book which utilises zero carbon practices, Welsh timber and are manufactured off site with strong supply chains and a skilled workforce.

SC highlighted that the project is landlord led in the sense that it is largely self-funded by landlords.

SC outlined that this project was launched back in January and contains four key documents, a pattern book for new homes, 15 house types and a performance specification standard in which to which those homes must meet.

SC highlighted that the idea is these documents will be used by the landlords and by the design teams to not start from scratch each time and to figure out what does “good” look like in terms of how the homes perform.

SC outlined the network of timber frame manufacturers across Wales and that many of them are working with social landlords and there is an opportunity to

shift more too off-site to reduce waste and on-site labour and increase productivity.

SC highlighted some concerns from supply chains stating that the industry can be chaotic and “everyone’s doing their own thing” and that many embrace the standardisation agenda.

SC outlined previous pilots conducted in Wales to bring forward sites and resources which has formed a community of practice which meets monthly to discuss challenges and encourage learning about how to bring those schemes forward.

SC highlighted that there have already been some key issues raised and have started to work collaboratively to deal with those, such as demand for Welsh timber, tire testing and the use of new bio-based insulation materials, planning and delays.

SC outlined that there have been conversations with Design Commission of Wales and has attended an RTPI led AGM to introduce the pattern book with a view to think about how to aid in the smooth application of the standardisations.

SC highlighted that a larger issue that is being worked on is around the issue of pipeline, its visibility and the need for it to build market opportunity.

SC stated that everyone wants it, but no one wants to own it and make it visible.

SC outlined that this work aims to bring stakeholders together and ensure it is brought to light so that it can help businesses and seize the market opportunities and are keen to learn from others such as the Scottish Futures Trust.

JW thanked SC and asked if this was planned to be rolled out across Wales and across the private and public sectors.

SC stated that some of the large volume builders already have pattern books and that's one of the reasons why they can build deeper than social landlords and were very comfortable with this. when those private developers working in collaboration with social landlords.

SC highlighted that the idea is to get this pattern book as far as possible and get it adopted as far as possible to get the pipeline needed.

JW thanked SC and opened the floor to questions.

GB asked SC if the documents presented and spoken of can be shared and whether the pipeline aspect is “reinventing the wheel”.

SC outlined that it’s important to make the most out of every opportunity and that “the simple ideas are the best ones”.

IG asked SC if there is anything one can say to reassure SMEs that they will not be marginalised in this process?

SC highlighted that there is a need to make it clear what the market opportunity looks like and that there will be massive opportunities for

tradespeople to get their head around what the passive house standards are and the accreditation process.

CGW noted that there is a strong need and an appetite to solve this problem as it has been ongoing for 20+ years.

JW asked around what is being done around making homes accessible to all

SC outlined that all house designs meet the Welsh housing quality requirements and the lifetime homes designs as well as fully wheelchair accessible designs that are aligned to the Wheelchair Housing Design Guide 20.

JW asked around passive housing and what sorts of conversations has SC has around getting insurance companies to ensure them.

SC highlighted that it is a conversation that will become more prominent over the next two years as those schemes start coming through.

JW asked if passive housing now keeps houses warm and cool depending on weather compared to eight years ago.

SC outlined that the modelling gone into the pattern book is extensive and were designed based off houses from different climates from within Wales.

JW stated that she was interested to see where this goes and how it lands on the time scale.

SC highlighted that the first schemes are at the very early concept stage and have not gone through planning, so it is likely to take two years.

JW asked what kind of conversations are taking place around ensuring local governments are aligned and understand these schemes.

SC outlined that conversations have taken place around raising the profile of the work with councillors and planning officers.

MH1 highlighted that it's not just about getting elected officials involved but also ensuring that SMEs are aware of the skills needed while meeting the Welsh Government standards.

GB asked if the pattern book solution could cut out some planning requirements and short circuit the system?

MH1 stated that it could simplify parts in theory, but planning is not necessarily around the design, but more how it interacts with the neighbouring properties and infrastructure.

JW moved the meeting on to suicide and harm prevention within the construction industry and handed over to CC.

CC outlined that NHS Wales Executive has been changed to NHS Performance and Improvement as of April 2025 and she works closely with a policy team in Welsh Government in the Suicide Prevention and Self Harm programme.

CC highlighted that there is a good level of awareness within the construction industry and that trades and similar occupations experience higher rates of suicide.

CC outlined that work in this area has been done by CIOB, Lighthouse and CITB and now there is a new British standard for the UK on suicide in the workplace.

CC highlighted that Safer by Design was published in 2019 and it talks about the importance of designing structures that limit access to the means of suicide.

CC outlined that the report suggests the planning system should help create better places which reduce opportunities for people to willingly harm themselves.

CC highlighted the need to inform designers and planners and ensure they are mindful when they are designing and constructing buildings.

CC asked a rhetorical question around if there would be appetite or scope to develop guidance from design all the way to refurbishment.

CC outlined that NHS Wales are currently working with FE colleges and universities on suicide prevention and welfare.

CC pointed to a website called "Helpy" that have a directory of men's mental health groups, substance use, domestic abuse, gambling, employment, financial support, etc.

JW thanked CC and opened the floor to questions.

JF asked whether any work has been done with awarding bodies who are developing qualifications and training for construction site managers and supervisors?

CC highlighted that no work had been done in that arena but is open to suggestions and links to any contacts.

GB outlined that CIOB have done some work around QR codes on sites linking to the Samaritans.

JW moved the meeting to talk about CIOB's campaign.

MH4 highlighted the first report published by CIOB in May 2020 that found high levels of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts.

MH4 outlined that CIOB has created a "Need to talk" sticker, which has a QR code that links to CIOB's Assist website which has links to various expert agencies.

MH4 highlighted that these stickers are designed to be placed in discrete locations (such as toilets or lockers) and can be used by members and non-members alike.

MH4 outlined guidance as to how to explain these stickers and raise awareness to colleagues from an employer standpoint.

MH4 highlighted that the Wales Hub completed a pilot around using the stickers in Autumn 2024 which was well received and launched a full campaign in March 2025 with 26,000 stickers now distributed by over 30 companies and has seen a 600% increase in traffic to the CIOB Assist page.

MH4 noted that CIOB is committed to supplying any orders for the stickers and is happy to share a digital download should people want to produce their own.

JW thanked MH4 and asked if this is available to be used by everyone.

MH4 outlined that there is an international agency and the need to provide signposting for those whose first language is not English and there are links available for that.

JW asked if that includes Welsh.

MH4 stated that he would investigate it but is confident that it does.

CC highlighted that there is also a Welsh Government funded national service called National Advisory and Liaison Service (NALS) that provides support for those who are bereaved or affected by suicide.

CC outlined that she is happy to continue any conversations to come out of this meeting with anyone that is interested.

JW thanked those who presented and asked if there was any other business, JF responded.

JF highlighted that she was in some conversations with CITB and Qualifications Wales around a new building insulation apprenticeship but was troubled to hear that Qualifications Wales now has no interest in FE Colleges.

JF outlined that there is an emphasis on short courses and energy efficiency for new builds, heat pumps, etc. but nothing around building insulation.

JF asked what do we do about this?

JP noted that he did not know how to answer that question but is keen to understand whether FE colleges are saying that they're not interested in supporting the development of an apprenticeship.

JP highlighted that he would be happy to take the conversation offline.

JP outlined that there is a pilot taking place around micro credentialing which means delivering short courses in a more responsive way.

JF highlighted that short courses are fine for upskilling the existing workforce but for new entrants, it may lead to gaps in knowledge and quality is critical in retrofitting.

JW noted that a previous Minister has mentioned pilots around testing the suitability of the materials needed for the different types of houses/structures, and if those are completed, there should be some learnings/results from those.

HD outlined that they would be happy to take points that JP mentioned offline around fitting into Level 2 frameworks developed by Medr.

MD outline that the reference to the previous Minister was making against the optimised retrofit programme, coming out from how registered social landlords and local authorities on the programme have been looking at how they improve the sustainability of their buildings, and those lessons learned are still being mapped.

JW thanked everyone for presenting and attending and highlighted that DK and MK (not present at this meeting), will work on content for what will be

included in the next meeting, the final meeting with JW and chair as she is stepping down.

JW closed the meeting.