

National Assembly for Wales

Cross Party Housing Group

Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2015

1. Membership:

- Sandy Mewies AM, group chair and representing the Labour Party, an Assembly Commissioner and previous chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee.
- Jocelyn Davies AM, Plaid Cymru representative and former Housing Minister.
- Mark Isherwood AM, Shadow Housing Minister, representing the Conservatives.
- Peter Black AM, former Deputy Housing Minister, representing the Liberal Democrats.

2. Secretariat:

- Helen Northmore, Director, Chartered Institute of Housing. (Jan-Sept)
- Julie Nicholas, Policy & Public Affairs Manager, CIH Cymru (Sept-December)

3. Meetings in 2015:

Three meetings of the cross party housing group took place in 2015.

- [28th January 2015](#)
- [17th June 2015](#)
- [25th November 2015](#)

4. Financial Statement

CROSS PARTY HOUSING GROUP 2015 Accounts

INCOME	
CIH Cymru refreshment payments	£86.46
TOTAL INCOME	£86.46
EXPENDITURE	

Catering cost (refreshments for 17.06.15 meeting)	£56.46
Catering cost (refreshments for 25.11.15 meeting)	£30.000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£86.46
BALANCE	£0.00

5. The Year in Housing

Housing enjoyed another significant year in Wales in 2015.

The implementation of Wales' first Housing Act commenced; Wales became the first UK country to put a homelessness prevention duty on a statutory footing in April and the Rent Smart Wales brand was launched to introduce mandatory private landlord licensing.

Welsh Government published a White Paper in January consulting on *The Future of the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire* in Social Housing, and a consultation opened on the proposals for the national indicators to measure the wellbeing goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Welsh housing policy divergence from England continued with cross party support for the provision of affordable homes and significant protection of the Supporting People programme.

Minister Lesley Griffiths announced additional funding to increase the number of social houses in Wales and assured social landlords in Wales that rental policy would not change, following the announcements of an annual 1% cut in England.

The Renting Homes (Wales) bill completed Stage 4- the passing of the Bill in Plenary, and was awaiting Royal Assent as we entered 2016, providing legislation that will introduce whole scale Welsh tenancy reform.

An independent review of the £100 million regeneration scheme Vibrant and Viable Places, found it to be delivering significant benefits to the Welsh economy and communities across the country, and Help to Buy-Wales was extended.

In October it was reported that 91% of the target to provide 10,000 additional affordable homes during the current Assembly term had been reached already, suggesting the target would be exceeded by the end for the Assembly term, and the Houses into Homes schemes surpassed its target, of bringing 7,500 empty properties back into use.

The cross party housing group continued to build on its cross sector and cross tenure focus to inform the housing debate in Wales, focussing on leaseholder arrangements in Wales, receiving an update on the cooperative housing project, welcoming the Homes for All Cymru (H4AC) manifesto and acting on concerns from H4AC members regarding the draft Private Rented Sector Code of Practice for Landlords and Agents. The group also welcomed an update from Merthyr Valley Homes on its progress on moving to a tenant and worker shareholder mutual model- the first of its kind in Wales, were notified of the Welsh launch of the CIH Commission report to improve diversity in housing leadership and received a briefing on the cross-industry *Homes for Wales* campaign.

The National Assembly for Wales cross party housing group will formally close ahead of the Welsh Government elections in May 2016, with the intention that a new group will be reconstituted with membership invitations to all of the political parties represented in the new National Assembly.

Moving forward the next cross party housing group should strive to build on the collaborative and co-productive approach of this group, with its cross party advocacy for housing as a proven vehicle to achieve positive economic, environmental and social outcomes for Wales.

Acknowledgments

A significant part of the success of the group has been the dedication and commitment of the four AMs who represent their parties. Two of these AMs Sandy Mewies and Jocelyn Davis are standing down at the next election, and we are grateful for the support to the group and the championing of housing that both have provided in the last five years. We are also grateful for the continued commitment of both Peter Black and Mark Isherwood to the group; all four AMs have enthusiastically supported both the group and the Welsh housing agenda throughout this assembly term.

A particular thank you is due to Paul Mewies, who has supported the cross party housing group for the last 5 years, and has been responsible for organising meetings and coordinating activities with CIH Cymru.

In September 2015 Helen Northmore departed her position and secretariat arrangements temporarily transferred to the policy and public affairs manager at CIH Cymru. We will therefore welcome a new secretary Kevin Howells for the final few months of this terms' cross party housing group, who commences in his new position as Director of CIH Cymru early in 2016.

The Group continues to enjoy wide support from the housing community through the umbrella network of Homes for All Cymru, Chaired by Shelter Cymru, and we thank all participants for their involvement and drive to make a success of the meetings and take forward a one-housing system and collaborative approach that has become emblematic of Welsh housing. Members of Homes for all Cymru look forward to working with the next national assembly for Wales, through the cross party housing group; to end the housing crisis and build a stronger Wales.

Report by: Julie Nicholas, CIH Cymru and Temporary Secretary of the National Assembly for Wales Cross Party Housing Group

ANNEX: Homes for All Cymru (H4AC) members 2015

Chair: John Puzey, Shelter Cymru

Age Concern Cymru

Care and Repair Cymru

Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

Community Housing Cymru

Cymorth Cymru

Disability Wales

Home Builders Federation

National Landlords Association

Residential Landlords Association

RNIB Cymru

Rough Sleepers Cymru

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

Shelter Cymru

Tai Pawb

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru

Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Refugee Council

Welsh Tenants

Welsh Women's Aid

NOTE:

No professional lobbyists participated in or attended any meetings or events during the year.

Voluntary and charitable organisations who attended and/or participated in meetings or events are listed elsewhere.