

AWICS Housing News

April 2016



Cressingham Gardens in Lambeth.

Will the Housing & Planning Bill result in the end of social housing as we know it?

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Starter Homes

The Government is committed to reversing the decline in home ownership and improving opportunities for young first time buyers. The delivery of 200,000 quality starter homes during the Parliament is a central part of this ambition. Starter homes will be exclusively available for first-time buyers under the age of forty and sold at a discount of at least 20% of the market price.

To deliver this commitment, the Housing and Planning Bill proposes a new statutory framework for starter homes, including:

- A statutory definition of a starter home
- A general duty on local planning authorities to promote the supply of starter homes when carrying out their planning functions
- The ability to set a starter homes requirement, meaning that local planning authorities may only grant planning permission for residential development if the starter homes requirement is met
- Reporting arrangements to ensure local communities, and especially first time buyers, are aware of what action local planning authorities are taking to support the delivery of starter homes
- Powers for the Secretary of State to intervene if local planning authorities fail to carry out their functions related to starter homes.

The detailed implementation of key aspects for the statutory framework for starter homes will be set out in regulations made by the Secretary of State, including:

- Elements of the definition of a starter home
- The starter homes requirement (regulations specifying the number of starter homes to be delivered and the types of site on which the requirement should be imposed, such as those of a reasonable size)
- The reporting arrangements for starter homes delivery.

The government's explanatory note to the Housing & Planning Bill describes their reasons for initiating the starter homes policy as follows:

"In England most of the available data shows that the aspiration to buy and own a home remains strong for the majority of households. Three fifths (61%) of private renters and around a quarter (25%) of social renters in the United Kingdom think they will eventually buy their own home. This desire to achieve homeownership is also reflected in the latest British Social Attitudes survey which reported that 86% of people want to own their own home.

"Around two thirds of social renters (68%) and three fifths (60%) of private renters stated, as their main or only reason for why they don't expect to buy their own home in the United Kingdom that they would be unable to afford it.

"The proportion of English households that owned their own home, either outright or with the help of a mortgage peaked in 2003 (71%) and has been falling ever since then. By 2013/14 only 63% of households owned their own home.

"Within this trend, the change in the chances of becoming a homeowner has disproportionately affected younger households. Of those households that do own their home 75% are over the age of 45 and nearly half (48%) of households in the 25-34 age group live in the private rented sector (only 21% were renting privately in 2003/04). In the last twenty years, the proportion of under-40 year-olds who own their own homes has fallen from 62% to 41% and, in 2014, the Office for National Statistics reported that 3.3million people between the ages of 20 and 34 were still living with their parents (accounting for 26% of the age group).

"The number of first-time buyers since the financial crash of 2007/08, as measured by the number of mortgages issued to first-time buyers, has fallen significantly. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the number of mortgages to this group averaged over 400,000 per year but between 2008 and 2014 the average annual number of loans has been fewer than 300,000.

"In its manifesto the Government committed to 'build more homes that people can afford, including 200,000 starter homes exclusively for first-time buyers under 40'. The Bill will require local planning authorities to actively promote the development of starter homes for first-time buyers under 40. Starter homes will be sold at 20% below the market price to provide the opportunity for more young, first-time buyers to get onto the housing ladder."

The government is currently carrying out a consultation on the detailed implementation of the starter homes policy prior to issuing the relevant regulations. This consultation closes on 18th May 2016.

The Local Government Association has responded as follows:

"Councils are keen to support home ownership. Starter Homes are being promoted by the Government as an alternative to other housing tenures, such as shared ownership, social rent, discount market rent. Councils need the powers and flexibility to shape the supply of genuinely affordable homes to meet needs of different people in their area, in line with their local plan and the National Planning Policy Framework."

"The delivery of 200,000 Starter Homes will put additional pressure on local infrastructure. Exempting Starter Homes from Community Infrastructure Levy and other tariff-based contributions to general infrastructure pots will reduce the amount of funding for infrastructure in some areas. Furthermore, delivery through the planning system will create significant new burdens on council planning teams, and so should be fully funded."

"It is planned that Starter Homes can be resold or let at open market value five years after the initial sale. In our view the restrictions on re-sales and letting at open market value should be in perpetuity. This model already exists through Low Cost Home Ownership schemes run by many councils."

In February 2016 the Local Government Association published research that suggested that discounted starter homes could be out of reach for the majority of families in need of an affordable home in many parts of the country. The Local Government Association said the starter homes scheme could help some people onto the housing ladder but that crucial details are yet to be confirmed. It is concerned it will help the fewest numbers of people in areas where the housing affordability crisis is most acute and will be out of reach for many people in need of an affordable home in the majority of local areas.

One of my concerns about the direction of government policy on housing is its emphasis on reversing the decline in owner-occupation by providing subsidies to buyers. My fear is that this approach will prove both expensive and ineffective. The reason why I think this will be the case is that the supply of private sector housing appears to be what economists call 'inelastic'. This means that an increase in demand will result in higher prices rather than increased supply. Evidence for this includes the fact that the supply of new private sector housing has remained remarkably constant ever since the 1950s despite there being significant fluctuations in economic activity and the fact that the significant increase the value of the national stock of housing since the 1990s has been mainly due to increased values rather than to an increase in the numbers of houses. If my analysis is correct, the subsidies that the government is offering to owner-occupiers will simply inflate prices leaving owner-occupation still unaffordable for people with modest incomes while the national shortage of housing will remain. Paradoxically, spending less on subsidising owner-occupation may make owner-occupation more affordable and save the government money!

I have written a briefing paper on starter homes that summarises and provides comment on the government's proposals for 'Starter Homes', the provisions regarding them in the Housing & Planning Bill and the contents of the government's current consultation on their detailed implementation. Your copy can be freely downloaded from here: <http://www.awics.co.uk/starterhomes.asp>

We are also holding a seminar on the Housing & Planning Bill and its implications for housing and local government. Further information can be found at the end of this newsletter or by visiting our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/h&pbill.asp>

Housing Association Mergers

There have been an increasing number of mergers of housing associations during recent years – prompted by the climate of austerity, specific financial or regulatory problems or a wish to be more commercial and increase development potential or improve services through the 'economies of scale'.

Mergers of housing associations are not new. According to a joint study by the Housing Corporation and Chartered Institute of Housing, mergers into larger group Housing Associations are seen as advantageous because they create:

- Scope to make effective use of special purpose borrowing vehicles and more complex treasury instruments
- Enhanced balance sheet strength arising from merger which creates capacity for further borrowing and growth
- Enhanced capacity to take controlled financial risks
- Ability to move resources around a group which may enable the partners to grasp new opportunities
- Ability to exert influence and gain access to key parties in both public and private sectors
- Improvements in market intelligence resulting from greater coverage of the market

Indeed, the creation of larger Housing Associations is often seen as important in supporting the government's agenda of efficiency, competition for grant, provision of more homes at lower grant rates, regeneration and community development. Where mergers are not seen to be appropriate, the swapping of housing stock is sometimes advocated as a way of reducing the number of Housing Associations operating in a particular area.

Advocates of merger argue that they can result in economies of scale that enable housing associations to achieve improved viability and value for money; more opportunities for development and improved services. It is also argued that there are often too many housing associations operating in specific areas and that mergers can result in rationalisation that improves effectiveness. However, critics of mergers argue that there is no compelling evidence that larger housing associations can achieve better value for money and better tenant satisfaction than smaller housing associations; while mergers can lead to housing associations losing site of their specific values and missions and their close links with particular communities.

In practice, however, many mergers occur because a housing association experiences specific issues with financial viability, value for money and / or governance that leads to them seeking a merger with a more robust housing association with the 'deal' often being brokered by the Homes & Communities Agency.

The National Housing Federation published a voluntary code for housing association mergers in November 2015. This includes ten principles that it is considered housing associations should observe when considering mergers. The voluntary code has had a mixed reception with some housing associations indicating that they do not intend to adopt it.

The National Housing Federation's voluntary code seems to be motivated mainly by a desire to ensure that boards are made fully aware of any merger proposals that are made and that these proposals are given full and objective consideration rather than being rejected out of hand. The code does not look in detail at how these evaluations should be carried out regarding the financial, governance or service implications. Some commentators and housing associations have criticised the code for being based on a presumption in favour of mergers and for this reason many housing associations have decided not to adopt it.

The Homes & Communities Agency has not produced detailed guidance on how housing associations should evaluate merger proposals. However, it has published statutory guidance on its use of powers setting out what factors it takes into account when considering applications from providers seeking its consent to merge. This is contained in 'Guidance for Constitutional Consents (sections 212 to 214), Restructuring & Dissolution (sections 160 to 165)' issued in April 2015. It is also the case that providers considering merger must comply with the regulator's standards and continue to comply (as registered bodies) once merged. These regulations require housing associations that wish to merge to produce a business case that addresses value for money, viability and governance issues and to consult with residents and stakeholders.

This leaves housing associations that wish to merge with some discretion over how they approach the production of their business case.

I have written a briefing paper on housing association mergers that considers the reasons for mergers, arguments for and against mergers, the National Housing Federation's Voluntary Code on Mergers and the requirements of the regulator. Your copy can be freely downloaded from here: <http://www.awics.co.uk/hamergers.asp>

We are also holding seminars on 'All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance' in London and Leeds during May 2016. Further information can be found on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/hafin16.asp>

Scottish Housing Regulator publishes assessment of Housing Associations

In March 2016 the Scottish Housing Regulator published its annual assessment of the finances of the 160 largest housing associations in Scotland. This shows that in 2014/15 the annual turnover of the sector increased by 4.2% from £1.3million to £1.4million, but that the cash generated from operations was slightly less than the £412million generated in 2013/14, at £406million. Registered social landlords generated more than £3 from operations for each £1 paid in interest for the fourth successive year. The sector's net surplus was £124million, a 24% increase on 2013/14 when it was £96.6million. Only nine housing associations had a net deficit, the lowest number in five years.

Housing associations spent £702million on the acquisition and construction of houses, an increase of 15%. However, this is still lower than three years ago when £806million was spent. The total private investment in social housing exceeded £5billion for the first time. The regulator said private investment in social housing had grown 'more than fivefold' in less than twenty years.

Around eighty housing associations are developing new social housing with grant assistance from the Scottish Government and private borrowing. Another ten housing associations are planning to build over the next five years.

However, in its report the regulator said that one of the most important risks for housing associations 'relates to future rent levels'. Looking to the future, the regulator has warned that most registered social landlords are continuing to plan above inflation increases in rents and warned that increases in rents are a risk if tenants' incomes do not also increase in real terms. They said that:

"Most registered social landlords continue to rely upon above-inflation increases in rents. We see a reliance upon above inflation increases in rent as a potential risk to the financial health of some registered social landlords given the uncertainty about the future of the welfare system and the risk that the income of those in work may not increase in real terms."

The regulator considers that most housing associations are managing financial risks successfully and are continuing to manage their resources to ensure their financial wellbeing. Therefore, overall the sector continues to enjoy good financial health.

Ian Brennan, Director of Regulation (Finance & Risk) at the Scottish Housing Regulator, said that:

"Once again the aggregate accounts show a healthy surplus and a strong cash position. We also see that rents are rising in real terms and that most RSLs are planning to continue above inflation increases for the next five years. We are aware that many registered social landlords are making considerable efforts to ensure that rents remain affordable for tenants and all registered social landlords need to set rents in a way that places affordability for tenants at the centre of their planning."

David Bookbinder, Director of Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations, said:

"Our data shows the average size of rent increase this year is clearly significantly down on the previous years. Housing associations are making efforts to achieve a balance between a business plan which looks at modernising the stock over a long period of time and keeping rents genuinely affordable – it's always a balance. There's been a re-balancing towards smaller rent increases this year."

Mary Taylor, chief executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, said housing associations keep rents 'constantly under review' and the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's latest analysis shows that they are 'getting the balance right'.

Local authorities in Scotland have also tended to increase council house rents by more than inflation during recent years so the affordability issue could be expected to apply to them as much as to housing associations. The devolution of some welfare budgets to the Scottish Parliament may also mean that real increases in rents could have budgetary implications for the Scottish Government. However, despite recent increases in social rents in Scotland and the United Kingdom government policy of reducing rents in England by 1% a year over the next four years, social rents in Scotland remain lower than those in England.

We are holding a seminar on 'All You Want to Know about Scottish Social Housing Finance' in Edinburgh in June 2016. Further information can be found on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/scotfin16.asp>

Budget 2016: The Implications for Housing and Welfare

George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, delivered his 2016 Budget in the House of Commons on 16th March 2016; against an economic backdrop of deteriorating public finances and a political backdrop of divisions in the government over the European Union referendum. It was therefore expected that the budget would contain a mixture of reductions in spending and measures that would be designed to be popular with the government's core voters.

The Chancellor recognised that the failure of the United Kingdom to build sufficient new homes has been a major brake on economic growth. The government is tackling this issue by taking measures designed to reverse the decline in home ownership through providing subsidies and changing planning laws.

The Treasury's budget book states that:

"The government supports home ownership and first time buyers. In addition to helping young people to buy their own home through the Lifetime ISA and Help to Buy, the Budget sets out further measures to deliver more housing. The Autumn Statement 2015 set out the government's commitment to delivering 400,000 affordable housing starts by 2020/21, including 200,000 Starter Homes and 135,000 Help to Buy Shared Ownership properties. This constitutes the most ambitious affordable housing programme since the 1970s.

"To deliver on these plans the Budget announces:

- The launch of the Starter Homes Land Fund prospectus, inviting Local Authorities to access £1.2billion of funding to remediate brownfield land to be used for housing, to deliver at least 30,000 Starter Homes.*
- The delivery of 13,000 affordable homes two years early by bringing forward £250million of capital spending to 2017/18 and 2018/19."*

The Housing & Planning Bill is still in Parliament with the Commons considering amendments proposed by the House of Lords. Some of these amendments have financial implications such as the amendments to the proposal to charge near-market rents to social tenants with relatively high incomes.

The Treasury's budget book refers to the concerns about the future funding of sheltered housing but does not really add anything to what has already been said. It states that:

"The government recognises the important work of providers of supported accommodation, including the providers of homelessness shelters and other services for those who may otherwise be sleeping rough. On 1 March 2016 the government confirmed that the date from which Local Housing Allowance caps apply to new tenancies in the supported accommodation sector will be delayed by one year. It will now apply to tenancies in this sector signed after 1 April 2017. The evidence review of the supported accommodation sector, due to report in the spring, will provide a foundation to support further decisions on protections for the supported housing sector in the long term."

Issues related to the government's approach to housing include:

- Not everyone agrees with the government's focus on home-ownership arguing that there is a continued need for social and affordable housing and that the government's reforms have discontinued social housing grant and reduced the potential to ensure social housing is provided through planning. However, the government view (that it made clear during the general election) is that the focus of housing policy should be on reversing the decline in home ownership.

- The government is providing significant subsidies for home-ownership – especially through the starter homes scheme. However, as with all subsidies care needs to be taken to ensure that the effect of the subsidy will be as intended. There is always a danger that subsidies will only increase demand and therefore prices thus frustrating their original intention.
- Many in the housing sector will be disappointed that the government did not take the opportunity to make a substantive statement on the future funding of sheltered housing. The problem here is that the government has provided in the Welfare Reform & Work Bill for social housing rents to be reduced by 1% a year from 2017/18 to 2019/20 and for housing benefit to be capped at local housing allowance rates from 2018. These measures threaten the viability of sheltered housing schemes that are essential for the housing of many elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people. The government has stated that it appreciates the problem and will propose a solution but one is still not forthcoming!

The government has recognised that the doubling in homelessness since 2010 is 'unacceptable' and more than £100million has been earmarked for a series of measures aimed at helping people at risk of homelessness. This budget is designed to provide 2,000 accommodation places for rough sleepers who are ready to move on from crisis hostels and £10million for homelessness prevention projects. George Osborne said:

"Homelessness is simply unacceptable in our day and age. I am absolutely committed to helping homeless people get back on their feet, into safe accommodation and obtain the skills they need to get on in life. I won't stand by and see things going in the wrong direction – and we have a particular problem with rough sleepers in London. That's why I am announcing a major new package of measures to help get a grip on this problem."

The Treasury's budget book explains the government's strategy for welfare as follows:

"The government introduced the Welfare Cap at Budget 2014 to strengthen control of welfare spending, support fiscal consolidation and improve Parliamentary accountability for the level of welfare spending. The cap applies to welfare spending in Annually Managed Expenditure with the exception of the state pension and the automatic stabilisers. It is assessed at Autumn Statements."

"Summer Budget 2015 and Autumn Statement 2015 announced reforms to ensure that the welfare system is both fair and sustainable. The Welfare Reform and Work Bill legislates for the majority of these reforms. As announced by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Department for Work and Pensions will continue to deliver Personal Independence Payments in line with their original intention of supporting claimants with the greatest need in helping them meet the extra costs of their disability or long-term health condition. Spending in 2015/16 on Personal Independence Payments and its predecessor, the Disability Living Allowance, is expected to be over £3billion higher in real terms than in 2009/10. Spending on these benefits is forecast to be higher in real terms in 2019-20 than in 2009-10."

"The government's intention is for the cap to be met by the end of the Parliament when the Office for Budgetary Responsibility conducts its next assessment at Autumn Statement 2016. The Charter for Budget Responsibility requires the Treasury to set out the level of the welfare cap in the Budget Report... The Office for Budgetary Responsibility forecasts of the level of welfare spending are set out in the 'Economic and fiscal outlook', March 2016."

However, as was widely reported after the budget the government has since withdrawn its proposed reductions in welfare for disabled people and has stated that it intends to bring forward no further proposals for reductions in welfare budgets, leaving many to speculate how the government will now achieve its objective of eliminating the public sector deficit by 2020.

As expected the 2016 budget represents a continuation of the government's established policies.

The focus of the budget was political – it included a number of announcements that are likely to be popular with the government's core supporters.

Significantly, the budget identified a need to reduce public expenditure by a further £3.5billion but did not identify where these reductions would be made. It is likely that they will be made in 'unprotected budgets' such as housing, local government and welfare.

In contrast there were a number of announcements about increased public expenditure!

I have prepared a briefing paper that summarises and provides comment on the 2016 budget and its implications for housing and local government. Your copy can be freely downloaded from: <http://www.awics.co.uk/budget2016.asp>

Local Government Association Advocates Housing Devolution

The Local Government Association published 'English Devolution – Local Solutions for a Successful Nation' in May 2015. This publication sets out why devolution matters, the principles to sustain devolution, a road map to follow and how to make devolution work well. It starts with the bold statement that:

"The new government has set out a long-term agenda for economic and social reform. The paper sets out local government's offer of a new partnership with government to tackle the big challenges facing our country and secure a bright future for all."

The paper states that by working together to strengthen our country from the ground up, central and local government can:

- Establish a fair settlement for England.
- Reinvigorate our democracy.
- Deliver £11billion in savings for the public purse through radical reform.
- Generate at least £80billion in growth and 700,000 new jobs.
- Build half a million new homes.

The paper states that a stronger England and United Kingdom will come from:

- Bringing power as close to people as possible.
- Enshrining the position of local democracy in law.
- Providing local areas the same fiscal tools and powers that our global competitors have.

The paper considers that over the course of the next Parliament we have the opportunity to:

- Put in place a legislative framework to extend the benefits of devolution to all parts of England.
- Use the spending review to ensure fairer funding for council services in this parliament while working towards fiscal autonomy in the long-term.
- Agree how the process of devolution should move forward, with different places moving at different paces.

The paper concludes that to deliver a balanced economy, healthier nation and better places to live will require changes at all levels:

- Refreshing models for English local governance.
- Renewing models of accountability and risk management.
- Jointly agreeing a framework for readiness for devolution both locally and centrally.

Regarding affordable homes, the Local Government Association states that:

“The shortage of houses in this country is a top priority for people and buying a home is increasingly out of reach for many. Over the last two Parliaments the number of people under 45 who can afford their own home has fallen by a fifth. More than three million adults aged 20-34 are now living with their parents; house prices are rising faster than average earnings and there are 1.7million households on waiting lists for affordable homes across England.

“The private sector cannot and will not alone deliver on the scale required to tackle the crisis (it has averaged 130,000 completions a year over the last forty years) nor will it deliver the full range of housing people need. Councils have a leadership role in shaping a vision for housing development in their areas, identifying and unlocking land suitable for development and encouraging more businesses into house building. Although many councils are developing long-term plans for investment in housing and establishing new models for financing and delivery, there are many opportunities to unlock their full potential.

“Councils could be freed to invest in and build more homes directly, and in partnership, through greater control over finance, simplifying and streamlining funding for housing and infrastructure, and more effective use of public land.”

The Local Government Association went on to make five specific proposals for housing:

- We can free councils to invest in new affordable homes under the same rules that apply to any other council borrowing by removing the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap.
- We can enable funding to be targeted more effectively, better align investment to local priorities and lever in private finance by pooling and devolving all funding pots for housing and infrastructure into a single local funding pot.
- We can incentivise house building by enabling councils to retain any savings from the Housing Benefit Bill where this can be attributed to increased levels of house building.
- We can help councils invest in replacing homes locally bought under the Right to Buy without complex rules that currently restrict them by allowing councils to set Right to Buy discounts and ensuring that they retain all receipts from sales of council properties.
- We can ensure a joined-up approach to decision-making and use of public land and assets by giving councils the ability to direct the use of surplus public land and retain a proportion of the receipts to reinvest in the local area.

However, since May 2015 progress on the ‘devolution deals’ has been slow in most areas and, even where they have been agreed, the proposals of the Local Government Association for housing have not always been realised.

Local Government Association Research on Homelessness

Homelessness will increase and housing waiting lists will rise as government housing policies combine to reduce the number of desperately-needed homes available to communities, councils warn in a snapshot survey published by the Local Government Association in March 2016.

The Local Government Association poll asked councils what the impact of a range of government housing policies would have on their local area by 2020. The overwhelming majority of councils (90%) responding to the survey said that reforms – including extending Right to Buy, cuts to social housing rents and Pay to Stay – will lead to a drop in the number of much needed council homes in their local area.

Many predict that the reforms will lead to a rise in homelessness (78%) and demand for temporary accommodation (80%) in their community while the majority (81%) expect their council housing waiting lists will increase as a result.

Four in five councils (82%) said that investment in estate development or regeneration would decrease by 2020 and 58% of councils said that housing benefit spending will increase, a likely consequence of more people being forced into the private rented sector.

As the Housing and Planning Bill makes its way through the Lords, the Local Government Association is calling for councils to retain 100% of receipts from any council homes they sell, and should gain greater flexibilities to replace homes sold through the council Right to Buy scheme.

Social housing tenants unable to afford market rents will need to be protected from the unintended consequence of Pay to Stay. The Local Government Association said the policy should be voluntary for councils that should be able to retain any additional income generated to reinvest in new and existing homes.

Councillor Peter Box, Local Government Association Housing spokesman, said:

"Our survey shows many councils fear some aspects of the Housing and Planning Bill will all but end their ability to build new homes by cutting billions from local investment in new and existing council housing. Local authorities will also then be forced to sell existing council homes and will struggle to replace them and many are warning this will combine to drastically reduce the number of homes available in local communities.

"Local authorities are keen to get on with the job of building the new homes that people in their areas desperately need. Instead, housing reforms that reduce rents and force councils to sell their homes will make building new homes all but impossible.

"With 68,000 people already currently living in temporary accommodation, more than a million more on council waiting lists and annual homelessness spending of £330 million – there is a real fear that this lack of homes will increase homelessness and exacerbate our housing crisis.

"While private developers have a crucial role to play in solving our chronic housing shortage, it is clear that they cannot rapidly build the 230,000 needed each year alone. There is no silver bullet, but we will not resolve our housing crisis without a dramatic increase of all types of housing, including those for affordable and social rent alongside those to support home ownership.

"New homes are badly-needed and we will only see a genuine end to our housing crisis if councils are given the powers to get on with the job of building them too."

An online survey was sent to housing lead officers in all 166 housing stock-owning councils in England during January 2016 to capture their views on how housing reforms could impact on the provision of housing for local communities. It was completed by sixty councils, a response rate of 36%.

Regeneration Schemes in Wales

Twelve Welsh regeneration projects were awarded £12.8million in March 2016 to create over 220 new homes, 400 new jobs and 50 traineeships. This Vibrant and Viable Places funding will include the creation of sixteen two-bedroom flats in Holyhead town centre, a new employment hub on the Kingsway in Swansea and a family entertainment zone on the Rhyl waterfront. The additional funding brings the total investment in the Welsh Government's flagship regeneration scheme to £118million.

The local authorities that will receive the additional Vibrant and Viable Places funding are Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Swansea, Torfaen and Wrexham.

A recent report has found that between 2014 and 2017, the programme is also expected to provide 1,000 affordable homes and more than 2,300 homes in the private sector, that will create more than 2,000 jobs, support 3,000 people into work and bring a further £300million into Wales.

Communities and tackling poverty minister, Lesley Griffiths told 24dash that:

"This additional £12.8million is a huge boost to twelve key regeneration projects across Wales which will make a very real difference to their local communities. As well as boosting Wales' housing supply, it will improve important local services, and create hundreds of jobs and traineeships."

The Housing & Planning Bill The Implications for Housing and Local Government

April 2016

The Housing & Planning Bill received its third reading in the House of Commons on 12th January 2016 and is now at the committee stage in the House of Lords with the expectation that it will become law in the spring of 2016. Some commentators have predicted that the Bill will lead to the end of social housing as we know it, but is this really the case? What are the implications for housing and local government and what are the threats and opportunities that the Bill presents?

The Bill contains a number of significant proposals for housing and local government including:

- Starter Homes
- The 'voluntary' right to buy for housing association tenants.
- The sale of 'high value' council homes.
- Near-market rents for social tenants on 'high incomes'
- Reducing Regulation of Social Housing
- Phasing out of lifetime tenancies
- Measures to tackle rogue landlords
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Planning reforms including automatic planning permission on brownfield sites and to support small builders.

The seminar will consider the implications of the Bill for Housing Associations, Local Authority Housing and Planning services and Local Authorities generally – including what the government is likely to do by regulation and what needs to be done to implement the Bill when it is passed. It is accompanied by a very useful guide entitled: “The Housing & Planning Bill – The Implications for Housing and Local Government”

Who should attend?

All those with an interest in housing and / or planning, including: Councillors; Housing Association Board Members; Housing Managers and Accountants in Local Authorities and Housing Associations; Tenant Representatives and others.

Venues and Dates:

London: Novotel Hotel, Waterloo – Tuesday 12th April 2016.

North: Novotel Hotel, Leeds – Tuesday 26th April 2016

For further information or to make a booking please click here:
<http://www.awics.co.uk/h&pbill.asp>

Our other Seminars

Details of all our seminars are available on our website at:
<http://www.awics.co.uk/seminars2016.asp>

Our seminars include:

- All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance
- All You Want to Know about Scottish Social Housing Finance
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance
- All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing

Our seminars are held at venues in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Leeds and London.

Our Webinars

Our next webinars are on the following subjects:

- Local Authority New Build: The Financial Implications
- Social Rent Reforms
- Service Charges in Social Housing
- Welfare Reform & Work Act
- Right to Buy for Housing Association Tenants
- Introduction to the Housing Revenue Account
- Sale of High Value Council Homes
- Business Planning in the Housing Revenue Account

For further information or to make a booking please visit our website at:
<http://www.awics.co.uk/webinars.asp>

Technical Books

AWICS publishes books on technical topics useful for those providing public services. Our most recent book is on the ‘Housing & Planning Bill: The Implications for Housing and Local Government’. For more information or to order a copy please visit our website at:
<http://www.awics.co.uk/hpbillbook.asp>

AWICS Ltd., Unit 3, Shire Hall, The Sands, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6XN. Tel: 017683-52165.
Mobile: 07502-142658. Twitter @AdrianWaite. E-Mail: adrian.waite@awics.co.uk. Web: www.awics.co.uk

Managing Director: Adrian Waite MA CPFA CIHM FInstLM
Registered office as above. Company Number: 3713554. VAT Registration Number: 721 9669 13.

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Service Charges

We have published a new brochure on the services that we offer to support clients with service charges. To download a copy please click: <http://www.awics.co.uk/schsadvice.asp>

Client Survey

We would be grateful if you could take part in our survey of our clients, website users, newsletter readers or others with an interest in local government or housing. If you would like to please visit <http://form.jotform.me/form/50612526489459>

Editorial Note

This edition of the AWICS Housing News was edited by Adrian Waite. The AWICS Housing News is published by AWICS Limited. Articles are written by Adrian Waite unless otherwise stated. However, the views expressed are not necessarily those of Adrian Waite or AWICS unless expressly stated.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLACE AN ADVERTISEMENT PLEASE CONTACT
Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk

About 'AWICS'

'AWICS' is a management consultancy and training company. We specialise in providing support in finance and management to clients in local government and housing in England, Scotland and Wales. We are well known for our ability to analyse and explain complex financial and management issues clearly.

Our mission statement is 'Independence, Integrity, Value'. We therefore provide support to clients from an independent standpoint that is designed to help the client to achieve their objectives. We are passionate about working with the utmost integrity. We believe that we offer the best value for money that is available today!

For more information about our services and us please visit our website at www.awics.co.uk or contact Adrian Waite at Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk.

Services that we offer include:

- Management Consultancy – <http://www.awics.co.uk/ManagementConsultancy.asp>
- Interim Management – <http://www.awics.co.uk/interimmanagement.asp>
- Regional Seminars — <http://www.awics.co.uk/Seminars2016.asp>
- Webinars – <http://www.awics.co.uk/webinars.asp>
- In-House Training — <http://www.awics.co.uk/inHouseCourses.asp>
- Independent Residents' Advice — <http://www.awics.co.uk/IndependentTenantAdvice.asp>
- Technical Books — <http://www.awics.co.uk/publications.asp>
- Information Service — <http://www.awics.co.uk/aboutUs.asp>