

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Datgarboneiddio'r sector tai preifat / Decarbonising the private housing sector
DH2P_10
Ymateb gan Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru /
Evidence from Welsh Local Government Association

Submission to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee at the Welsh Parliament in its inquiry into the Decarbonisation of housing: decarbonising the private housing sector

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Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); is a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. The Association represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. The 22 councils in Wales are all members of the WLGA and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their councils through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows sustainable communities to thrive.

The main aim of the Association is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

This means:

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce.

This is the WLGA's submission to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into Decarbonisation of housing: decarbonising the private housing sector

As suggested, the submission is framed around the terms of reference for the Committee's inquiry: -

- **the current approach to decarbonising housing in the private rented and owner occupied sectors in Wales, including the effectiveness of existing programmes and support for retrofit;**



The WLGA responded to the WG consultation on ‘*Warm Homes Programme*’ which highlighted; the importance of tackling fuel poverty and carbon reduction together, not as separate entities must be recognised; Considering energy prices and living costs, an evaluation of household income and savings thresholds is needed to establish a minimum income, where measures should be installed in householders’ homes at no cost; Off-gas properties have been left out or disregarded due to inconvenient locations; an area-based approach using deprivation rates may address this; Those households where cavity wall installation has failed after installation via previous schemes have received little or no assistance or provision to rectify, and residents have not benefitted by the introduction of measures intended to address fuel poverty; The opportunity to link fuel poverty and decarbonisation installation with skills development, knowledge and capacity, should support small companies and installers to understand and adapt to comply with PAS2035 and meet the demands of the market; the programme should invest in training and apprenticeships for local contractors on greener methods and technology.

- **the role of sector specific retrofit targets to help drive change;**

The WLGA were part of the membership of the independent Advisory Group on the Decarbonisation of Homes in Wales, which was supported by Welsh Government officials and chaired by Chris Jofeh. The Advisory Group’s report “*Better Homes, Better Wales, Better World: Decarbonising existing homes in Wales*” was published in July 2019 and made a number of recommendations that are relevant to the Committee’s inquiry. These include: -

Recommendation 2 - The Welsh Government should set ambitious housing targets to meet its ambition of achieving net zero carbon by 2050.

Recommendation 3 - The Welsh Government should put in place the right quality system and delivery mechanisms across all tenures to help achieve the targets.

Recommendation 4 – The Welsh Government, working with others, should develop a holistic package of support across all tenures to incentivise and facilitate action.

In relation to specific retrofit targets, the Advisory Group report also identified that Welsh Government should “..encourage early adopters in the privately-owned sector to upgrade homes to the target.” (EPC A).

- **actions the Welsh Government should take to progress a programme of retrofit for these sectors in the short, medium and long term;**

In Chapter 4 of the Advisory Group’s report – Incentivising and Support Action – there are a number of actions identified to support the delivery, by Welsh



Government and others, of the recommendation that “The Welsh Government, working with others, should develop a holistic package of support across all tenures to report “*Decarbonising Wales’ Private Rented Sector: Tackling the energy crisis to meet net zero*” incentivise and facilitate action”. These include a number of actions focussed on supporting action by the owners of private-sector housing.

- **the key challenges of delivering a programme of retrofit within these sectors, including financial, practical and behavioural, and action required from the Welsh Government (and its partners) to overcome them;**

In it’s the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Cymru set out a range of key challenges, grouped around the following themes – tenant and landlord engagement; installer and supply chain co-ordination; funding and finance; regulation and enforcement.

The CIH Cymru report also makes a series of policy recommendations for Welsh Government, Local Authorities and UK Government.

- **how the right balance can be struck between influencing/incentivising home owners and private sector landlords to retrofit their properties and regulating to increase standards to drive progress;**

A key finding of the Advisory Group’s work was the importance of developing a better understanding of behaviour change by policy makers. “This is important because behaviour change is at the heart of many such problems and influencing human behaviour can be very complex. Traditional policy tools such as legislation and regulation, taxes and subsidies, will form part of the overall strategy to achieve widespread sustainable behaviour change. Their effectiveness, however, can be limited without a better understanding of how to engage citizens and organisations in cooperative behavioural change.”

One of the key outcomes of the Advisory Group’s work was the identification of the importance of trust in influencing homeowners’ decisions – homeowners need trusted advice from trusted independent bodies.

- **how effective the Welsh Government is influencing decisions on reserved matters to support decarbonisation of these sectors.**

N/A