

# DBULLETIN

## Housing strategy for Wales

### Summary

On 21 April 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government published its new housing strategy (strategy). The strategy:

- Sets out the challenges in meeting Wales' housing need, the priorities and the action that will be taken.
- Highlights the wider social and economic benefits of providing good quality housing.

The successful implementation of the strategy depends upon the combined efforts of many organisations. The strategy will be of particular interest to developers, lenders, local authorities, charities and private landlords in Wales.

### Background

In June 2007, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) published its *One Wales agenda* in which it committed to building at least 6,500 additional homes by 2011 (housing target).

The *Essex Review* on affordable housing in Wales was published in June 2008. It highlighted that urgent action was required to address the housing shortage in Wales.

On 22 February 2010, the WAG published a consultation paper on measures to improve standards and professionalism in the Welsh private rented sector.

### Summary

On 21 April 2010, the WAG published its new housing (the strategy). The strategy:

- Sets out the challenges in meeting Wales' housing need, the priorities and the action that will be taken.
- Highlights the wider social and economic benefits of providing good quality housing.
- Explains that responsibility for implementing the strategy lies with the WAG and other organisations including developers, lenders, local authorities, charities and private landlords.

### Key aspects of strategy

In particular, the strategy highlights the following:

- **Providing more housing**  
In light of the shortage of affordable housing, the strategy requires:
  - o continued action to achieve the housing target;
  - o the development of a Welsh housing bond to encourage private sector investment to build more affordable homes;
  - o a review of the housing revenue account subsidy system and social rents policies;
  - o more publicly owned land to be made available for the construction of affordable housing;
  - o the WAG to work with local authorities and the private sector to ensure that local planning policies take account of the shortfall in affordable housing; and
  - o the WAG to seek wider legal powers to deal with the housing shortage.

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- **Improving homes**

The following steps will be taken to improve standards in homes:

- o the WAG will seek more legal powers to regulate the quality of accommodation provided by private landlords;
- o local authorities and housing associations will improve the standard of social housing so that it meets the *Welsh Housing Quality Standard* (WHQS); and
- o the WHQS will be reviewed to see whether it can be used to support action on fuel poverty, health and climate change.

- **Improving services**

Although many organisations provide a good service in helping people to find a home, there is scope for improvement. Certain vulnerable groups of people require particular assistance in finding suitable accommodation. The WAG will:

- o implement the recommendations of the National Assembly for Wales' *Report on Home Maintenance and Adaptations Services for Older People in Wales*;
- o develop more ways of addressing the housing needs of an ageing society;
- o review the laws that apply to homelessness to identify what needs to be done to tackle it; and
- o complete a major review of the *Supporting People Programme* so that help is delivered as efficiently as possible.

## Comment

The strategy highlights the need for action to provide suitable accommodation. However, it recognises that its success will depend upon the joint efforts of many organisations. In addition, public funding is limited, owing to the current economic situation, and resources will need to be used carefully.

## About Devonshires

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