

HOUSING MANIFESTO

# Scottish Parliament Elections 2026: 10-point plan to tackle the housing emergency

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Propertymark's 10-point plan urges the next Scottish government to cut renting costs, build more social housing, boost construction skills, cut emissions, and support housing mobility.



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# Propertymark manifesto

The Scottish Government declared a national housing emergency in May 2024 and the Scottish Parliament elections take place on 7 May 2026. <sup>1</sup>

Propertymark's 10-point plan outlines the measures our members think should be taken by the next government in Scotland to tackle the housing emergency through reducing the cost of renting, building more social housing, focusing on construction and trade skills, limiting carbon emissions from buildings, and providing more opportunities for people to move up and down the housing ladder.



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# 01

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## Review property taxes

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Act on the recommendation of the Housing Investment Taskforce report of March 2025 and conduct a thorough review of all taxes on property to encourage investment and solve the housing emergency. <sup>2</sup>

This should at a minimum include the abolition of the 8% Additional Dwelling Supplement and a review of the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax thresholds.

# 02

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## Clarity and consistency of approach to the energy efficiency of housing

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Housing in Scotland comprises a range of property and building types. The next government must look beyond a one-size fits all approach for energy efficiency and develop proposals that work with the different age, condition, and size of properties across all tenures. Importantly, the pursuit of energy efficiency measures must not be delivered at the expense of housing supply.

The next government should continue to fund low-cost loans and grants for private landlords and owner-occupiers and advertise them widely, with close scrutiny of the quality of work carried out through any grant schemes.

The new government must recognise the need for standards tailored to property type and geography. Many properties in rural areas face excessive costs when upgrading yet may still fail to reach unrealistic minimum energy efficiency targets.

It is essential that the government provide fund-grants, low-cost loans, clear guidance for landlords, and sufficient resources to monitor compliance.

# 03

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## Expand the construction and trades skill base

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As Scotland seeks to address the housing emergency and pursues a net-zero agenda to improve the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes, increasing the availability of skilled construction and trade workers is essential.

There must be adequate funding to ensure that the laudable aim of increasing the skills base through apprenticeships, set out in the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) legislation, is achievable.

Without a significant increase in skilled workers, Scotland cannot address the housing emergency or improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock in the way the Scottish Government currently hopes to do. CITB's Construction Workforce Outlook (CWO) finds that Scotland's construction industry must recruit 17,950 additional workers by 2029 to meet demand.

# 04

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## Develop a national body to coordinate rent data

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The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 introduces requirements for local authorities to collect and publish rent data in their areas every five years, helping to form recommendations as to whether Rent Control Areas should be implemented. To ensure this data is consistent and transparent it needs to be collected and coordinated nationally.

The next government should explore the introduction of a model similar to the Residential Tenancies Board in the Republic of Ireland, which is nationally funded and includes a monitoring purpose, an analytical purpose (including reviewing reasons for rent increases in certain areas), and a compliance and enforcement function.

# 05

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## Build more social housing

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Council house building has risen steadily in recent years across Scotland, but many existing social rented homes have been demolished or lost through the Right to Buy scheme. To improve the situation, the next government must commit to a significant programme of building social housing to ensure that renting is more affordable and secure for renters in all tenures.

While 6,102 new social sector homes were delivered in the year to March 2024, that compares poorly with 8,369 completions in 2022–2023. Further, social sector completions in the year to the end of September 2024 were down 26% (-1651 homes) from the previous year. Completions in 2024–2025 fell further to just 5,972 homes—a 13% decline and the lowest total since 2020–2021.<sup>3</sup>

When social housing targets are missed, demand is displaced into the private rented sector, driving up rents and reducing choice for tenants. A strong and sustainable pipeline of social housing is required to relieve pressures across all tenures as well as meeting demand directly.

To ensure housing is both affordable and secure, the next government must commit to a sustained and ambitious social house building programme. Without such a programme, the private rented sector will continue to absorb demand it was not designed to meet, to the detriment of both tenants and landlords.

# 06

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## Continue to fill empty homes

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Empty homes can lower land values and make it harder to sell other properties nearby. Bringing empty homes back into use can ease the pressure on housing stock and help improve local communities. The next government should provide greater incentives for people to bring empty properties back into use and continue to invest in the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership.<sup>4</sup>

As of 2024, over 46,000 homes in Scotland had been empty for more than six months, with 31,600 vacancies lasting over a year. This is incompatible with the housing demands across all tenures.

The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) has shown the potential of targeted action. In 2024/25, 2,066 homes were brought back into use—the highest annual figure since the launch of the scheme, which has seen 12,955 homes reactivated since 2010.

The next government must commit to strengthening SEHP and resourcing councils with a greater number of Empty Homes Officers to expand their work.<sup>5</sup> Redeploying empty homes is an efficient and cost-effective way to ease housing pressures, stabilise local markets, and boost property values.

# 07

## House the elderly

Scotland's population is ageing. By 2036, it is estimated that 1 in 3 people will be over the age of 65 in most Scottish regions, an increase from less than 1 in 5 in 2021. At the same time 70.3% of households have more bedrooms than required (1,763,000), compared to only one in forty households (2.4%) who have fewer bedrooms than required (59,300).<sup>6</sup> The areas with significant extra capacity tend to have older populations. There is a lack of incentive to downsize.

In terms of dedicated accommodation with additional support, 32% of local authorities still do not have clear policies in place to support housing for seniors, and only 0.48% of over 65-s in Scotland have the opportunity to live in Housing-with-Care, a figure significantly lower than equivalent countries like New Zealand (5–6%).<sup>7/8</sup>

### **Propertymark recommends two policy solutions for the next government:**

1. Require local authorities to have a plan for stimulating the supply of more retirement housing.
2. Incentivise people to downsize by offering a Land and Buildings Transaction Tax exemption for 'last time' buyers. Such an exemption could unlock significant sums of housing equity among over 60s, encouraging movement in the market. It would also be the best policy to remedy the significant underoccupancy of Scotland's housing stock. This presents an opportunity for estate agents - expanding retirement housing meets the needs of an ageing population whilst simultaneously stimulating local markets and aligning housing supply across all tenures.

# 08

## Use old retail space for city centre living where viable to do so

Many town and city centres across Scotland have significant retail vacancy rates. According to the Scottish Retail Consortium, 15.7% of stores remain empty.<sup>9</sup> The government must encourage the repurposing of these units to bring a greater number of properties into supply.

To achieve this, the new government must invest in additional infrastructure and planning officers. Expanding the planning capacity is essential to help local authorities manage change-of-use applications faster and more consistently.

Dedicated planning teams focused on high street regeneration could, at a faster pace than currently, deliver estate agents with new stocks of city-centre flats for sale and rent by reducing delays when unlocking vacant space for residential development.

# 09

## Lobbying the UK Government to unfreeze Local Housing Allowance

The current policy will leave more private renters unable to pay their housing costs as rents outstrip wage growth. Gradually, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) will be capable of covering less and less of the private rented sector, making the sector very unaffordable and virtually out of bound to households on benefits.

The three-year freeze imposed by the UK Government has had a significant effect on households in Scotland. In the third year of the freeze, LHA rates did not cover the rents of over 40,000 households in Scotland. Of these, the average shortfall for those on Universal Credit was nearly £1,500 per year.<sup>10</sup>

Unfreezing LHA and re-linking it to local rent levels would restore financial viability for tenants and landlords. This would help to stabilise markets by improving the sustainability of an affordable and functioning private sector.

# 10

## Support the regulation of estate agents

The next government must work with the UK Government to improve the regulation of estate agents working in Scotland. Estate agents across the UK are principally regulated by the Estate Agents Act 1979, but they are not currently required by law to be licensed or qualified. Between October and December 2025, the UK Government consulted on reforms to the home buying and selling process, including whether estate agents should be qualified.

YouGov research commissioned by PropertyMark, conducted in January 2025, identified the top three factors people think are most important when choosing a property agent to help them sell or buy/find a new home to rent; they are regulated, qualified and professional (35%), local reputation and visibility (32%) and recommendations from friends/family (15%).

It is vital that all agents are licensed, that they adhere to a strict code of practice, and hold at least a Level 3 qualification (the level equivalent to an A-level/Advanced Higher). As we have seen through the regulation of letting agents in Scotland, regulation offers huge potential to professionalise the sector, eradicate bad practices, and provide a smoother consumer experience.

# About Propertymark



Propertymark is the UK's leading professional body

of property agents, with over 19,000 members representing over 12,500 branches.

We are member-led with a Board which is made up of practicing agents, and we work closely with our members to set professional standards through regulation, accredited and recognised qualifications, an industry-leading training programme, and mandatory Continuing Professional Development.

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QUALIFICATIONS

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Qualifications, is  
the UK's specialist

awarding organisation offering industry recognised qualifications in property and property affiliated disciplines.

Their qualifications are regulated by the national Qualification Regulators in England (Ofqual), Wales (Qualifications Wales) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). In addition, their Scotland-specific Qualifications are credited and levelled within the SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework). This is helping to support adherence with the Scottish Letting Agent Register and Letting Agent Code of Practice.



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## CONTACT PROPERTYMARK

For further information and to arrange a meeting, please email [policy@propertymark.co.uk](mailto:policy@propertymark.co.uk)

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Propertymark ensure the voices of UK property agents are heard. We work with our members to interpret key policy developments and lobby for changes that represent members' views. We also work with MPs and Parliamentarians across the devolved nations.



Propertymark is the leading professional body for the property sector with over 19,000 members who work to the highest standards.



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