

HOUSING MANIFESTO

# Senedd election manifesto 2026: Boosting housing and growth for Wales

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2026



Housing is vital to Wales's economic, social and environmental wellbeing. With rising living costs and an ageing population, the next Welsh Government must take bold, evidence-based action to improve housing for all.



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THE PROFESSIONAL BODY FOR THE PROPERTY SECTOR

# More homes and places to live

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## 01 Continue to fund empty homes initiatives

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Empty homes reduce local property values and worsen housing shortages. The Empty Homes Grant Scheme should be expanded and extended to the private rented sector, while local authorities are provided with the support, including dedicated empty homes officers, to bring vacant properties back into use. Council tax premiums can make it harder to return homes to the market, so a combination of grants, officer support, and tailored incentives is needed to encourage property owners to make empty homes available.

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## 03 Planning reform to deliver more homes

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Wales needs a planning system that enables, rather than blocks, the delivery of good-quality, affordable homes in the right places. Planning policy should be reformed to prioritise housing need, speed up decision-making, and give local authorities the resources and skills they need to process applications efficiently.

This includes strengthening local development plans, supporting small and community-led builders, and ensuring infrastructure, transport and green spaces are planned alongside new homes. Planning reform must balance the need to build more homes with protecting communities and the Welsh environment, while giving councils greater flexibility to meet local housing demand.

## 02 Regulate holiday lets

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To balance tourism with local housing needs, local authorities should have the discretion to implement licensing schemes for holiday lets where appropriate. Not all authorities may consider this necessary, and any scheme should be proportionate and not overly burdensome, putting holiday lets in line with requirements in the private rented sector to ensure they are properly managed, protect communities, and support planning decisions.

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## 04 Revitalise Welsh high streets and town centres

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Support vibrant local economies by tackling empty commercial and non-domestic properties. Welsh local authorities should have the discretion to run Welsh High Street Rental Auctions, using grants and incentives to bring vacant premises back into use and encourage new businesses, while complementing broader efforts to revitalise high streets.

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## 05 Introduce a Register of Accessible Properties

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There is a growing need for accessible housing in Wales and the private rented sector can work in partnership by collaborating with local authorities and highlighting where private rented stock might be suitable for older or disabled people. To achieve this, we recommend that local authorities populate a Register of Accessible Properties in their areas. Where there is insufficient accessible housing in the social sector, the local authority could signpost Contract Holders that require adapted properties to the private rented sector.

# Improve housing and consumer data for evidence-based policy decisions

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## 01 Deliver on commitments to introduce a modern Welsh Housing Survey

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Reliable data is essential for effective housing policy. A modern Welsh Housing Survey should capture property standards, rental market trends, and the actions of landlords, tenants, and home movers. It should cover landlord practices, including use of agents, management types, staff, finances, number of properties, age, time in the market, and use of technology, as well as leasehold and Build-to-Rent developments.

Integrating Rent Smart Wales and other official data will give policymakers an accurate, up-to-date picture of the sector. In May 2025, we welcomed the Welsh Government's commitment to introduce a survey in 2028. However, the data won't be ready until 2029 at the very earliest. Wales is undergoing a housing crisis and policy makers need sufficient data and intelligence. We are calling on the next government to prioritise investment in the Welsh Housing Survey and to bring it forward.

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## 02 Review all costs and taxes impacting private landlords

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The current tax regime, including the Additional Dwelling Supplement, is a significant disincentive for landlords and landlords' investors, leading to a shortage of rental homes and increased rents for tenants.

The next government must commit to a review of all property taxation and costs impacting private landlords so policy makers have a greater understanding of the impact of recent decisions and implement measures to support a healthy and sustainable private rented sector, which is essential to meeting housing demand.

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## 03 Explore phasing out Land Transaction Tax

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To make homeownership more affordable and stimulate the housing market, the government should explore gradually phasing out Land Transaction Tax on property purchases over 10 years following the next election.

This long-term approach would reduce upfront costs for buyers, encourage transactions, and help more people move into homes, while giving the market time to adjust.

# Make energy efficiency rules work for the property sector

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Help to decarbonise and make Welsh homes more energy efficient

Only 28% of Welsh homes currently meet EPC Band C or above. The next government should adopt tailored energy efficiency programs for different property types and tenures.

Grants, including through Green Homes Wales (managed by the Development Bank of Wales), should be available to both homeowners and private landlords to fund energy-efficient improvements, helping them decarbonise, create Welsh jobs, and reduce emissions.



# Tackling affordability in the private rented sector

## 01 Avoid rent control

Rent controls will not result in adequate housing and fair rents for Wales. They risk reducing supply, harming quality, and undermining long-term affordability.

Furthermore, without introducing measures that tackle tenant demand and landlord costs, property standards will reduce, landlords will leave the sector and rents will rise. This has been evidenced when rent controls have been implemented across Europe, the United States, and in Scotland.

## 03 Reduce the surcharge on additional properties

The current surcharge on additional property purchases under the Land Transaction Tax (LTT) remains a significant barrier for current landlords to expand their portfolios and new landlords to enter the market, impacting the supply and affordability of rental homes in Wales.

Under LTT an aspiring buy-to-let landlord purchasing an additional property for £211,000 (average house price Wales in December 2025 according to ONS) can expect to pay £11,635.00 in LTT. A purchaser buying as main resident would pay £0 in LTT.

## 02 Building more social homes to rent

Social housing, which is provided by local authorities and housing associations, has long waiting lists for people needing different types of accommodation. According to recent Senedd Committee reports 139,000 people were on a waiting list for social housing in Wales as of October 2023.<sup>1</sup>

In Wales, social housing currently makes up only about 16 per cent of stock. This figure should be increased to 20 per cent which would mean roughly 60,000 more social rented homes.

## 04 Lobbying the UK Government to unfreeze Local Housing Allowance

The Welsh Government must lobby the UK Government to restore and retain Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to at least the 30th percentile to cover the average cost of rents in the lowest third of local markets and prepare the housing market for an increase in rental demand.

The current UK Government has confirmed another freeze from April 2025 through to at least 2026. As a result, LHA now covers only 1% of private rents in Wales.

1. <https://senedd.wales/senedd-now/news/welsh-government-must-build-more-social-housing>

# Increasing accountability in the property sector

## 01 Greater scrutiny of Rent Smart Wales

As the body responsible for overseeing the private rented sector in Wales, Rent Smart Wales lacks transparency and a clear line of accountability. The work of Rent Smart Wales is not guided by a central national strategy nor is there an annual evaluation of Rent Smart Wales's work.

While Rent Smart Wales operates from Cardiff City Council, there does not appear to be any political scrutiny function evaluating its work other than as part of ad-hoc inquiries and questions from the Senedd. The work of Rent Smart Wales would be enriched if they produced a public annual report into its performance with direct scrutiny by the Senedd rather than on an ad-hoc basis.

## 03 Adequately fund local authorities to enforce legislation

The 2026–27 Welsh Budget includes an extra £112.8m for local government, which provides an overall 4.5% increase to the local government. Revenue must be ring-fenced to allow local authorities to enforce legislation to improve housing standards.

## 02 Extend training requirements for letting agents to include qualifications

The Welsh Government's policy intention through Rent Smart Wales is looking at training and the registration of property, whereas we think regulation should be focused on ensuring that every agent involved in lettings has the right skills to do the job and meets a minimum training standard through qualifications.

All agencies in Wales should ensure relevant staff are qualified and that staff understand and follow a Code of Practice. Unlike the training requirement through Rent Smart Wales, achieving a qualification should never be a box ticking exercise. Completing the right qualification drives the credibility of the sector and equips agents with the tools to meet the challenges ahead.

## 04 Support the regulation of estate agents

The next government must work with the UK Government to support improvements to the regulation of estate agents working in Wales. Estate agents across the UK are principally regulated by the Estate Agents Act 1979, but currently estate agents are not 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.

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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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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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