

Scottish Government submission of 14 September 2022

PE1959/A: Tackle Scotland's affordable housing crisis

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to improve the current housing crisis by:

- *Merging housing associations and local council housing; and*
- *consider introducing a new right to buy scheme for council tenants.*

On the first point in the petition:

Making sure everyone in Scotland has access to good quality housing is a vital part of the Scottish Government's drive to secure economic growth, promote social justice, strengthen communities and tackle inequality. [Housing to 2040](#) sets out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. It aims to deliver our ambition for everyone to have a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be.

The Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) aims to deliver a mix of social housing and other affordable housing, which are defined as follows:

- Affordable housing within the context of the AHSP includes both social and mid-market rented homes, and also low cost home ownership properties.
- Social housing is rented housing let by both councils and housing associations (also known as registered social landlords), normally with a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

The Scottish Government's approach to the planning and delivery of affordable housing, is focussed on providing the "right homes in the right place". This is achieved by working closely with councils in their role as strategic housing and planning authorities, and it is therefore for councils to determine the housing priorities in their area.

All councils are required to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which sets out their strategic vision for the delivery of housing and housing related services and the outcomes that it will seek to achieve.

Priorities and outcomes identified in the LHS help inform council Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs) which are submitted annually to the Scottish Government and which set out the key strategic housing investment priorities over a five year period. SHIPs provide the basis for targeting investment through the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP).

Housing associations and councils have a long history of successfully working in partnership in the delivery of affordable homes across Scotland. Since 2007, a total of 111,750 affordable homes have been delivered, 78,174 of which were homes for social rent, including 19,339 council homes, 23,704 homes for affordable home ownership and 9,872 homes for affordable rent.

In April 2009, the Scottish Government re-introduced the Council House Build Programme to incentivise councils to begin building new homes, the first such central government support to councils in a generation. Prior to the re-introduction of the Council House Build Programme, housing associations were the main delivery

vehicle for the provision of affordable homes across Scotland. Not all councils build new homes, six local authorities have previously transferred all of their housing stock to housing associations.

The Scottish Government has a current target to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% will be in our remote, rural and island communities. The delivery of this target would exceed the number of homes for social rent suggested within the petition, and also be within a shorter timeframe. A total of 1,119 homes have already been delivered during March 2022 towards the 110,000 target, of which 1,057 (94%) are homes for social rent – 431 housing association and 626 council homes.

Turning to the second point in the petition:

The Scottish Government has no plans to reintroduce Right to Buy.

The previous Right to Buy policy was unsustainable and removed almost half a million homes from the social rented sector into private ownership. In the first 10 years since the policy ended, it is estimated that up to 15,500 homes have been kept in the social rented sector – homes which will continue to be available to future generations at affordable rents.

The Scottish Government also helps with affordable home ownership through the Low Cost Initiative for First-Time Buyers (LIFT) shared equity schemes. The Open Market Shared Equity (OMSE) scheme is one of the schemes available to first time buyers and priority access groups. OMSE is a demand-led scheme available for the purchase of existing properties on the open market and is administered by an agent ([Link Homes](#)) on behalf of the Scottish Government. Please see the attached link for further information <https://www.mygov.scot/open-market-shared-equity-scheme/>

The New Supply Shared Equity (NSSE) scheme is also part of LIFT and is administered by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSL). The scheme is only available for the purchase of new build properties being sold by a local authority or RSL. The NSSE scheme is also available to priority access groups. The attached link provides further information <https://www.mygov.scot/new-supply-shared-equity-scheme/>

Since 2007, over 19,000 households have been helped into ownership through LIFT.

The delivery of social homes remains a top priority for the Scottish Government, and in the four years to 2021, we delivered over nine times more social rented homes per head of population than England and our per capita spending on affordable housing is over three times higher than the UK Government.

I hope the above is helpful in setting out this government's position.