

**Julie James AS/MS**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol, Tai a Chynllunio  
Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/05372/24

Cynghorydd Beca Roberts

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18 June 2024

Dear Councillor Roberts,

Thank you for your letter of 21 May regarding the call by Cyngor Gwynedd for the introduction of a Property Act.

I want everyone to be able to afford to live in their local area, whether buying or renting a home. We also know that many communities throughout Wales are struggling with affordability, large numbers of second homes, holiday lets and empty homes. These factors can impact on communities and on the sustainability of the Welsh language as a thriving community language.

The Welsh Government has already taken forward the UK's most comprehensive package of interventions, allowing local authorities across Wales more tools to manage the future use of property. Indeed, as a result of the groundbreaking changes we have made to the planning framework, Cyngor Gwynedd was able to undertake a consultation on the application of an Article 4 direction. We have also supported Cyngor Gwynedd with additional funding to consider the evidence arising from that consultation, and to support resource for the delivery of a direction in the Dwyfor pilot area – if that is what Cyngor Gwynedd decides to do. The Council has also increased the council tax premium it levies on second homes in response to our move to extend the maximum permitted premium beyond the 100% that applied until April 2023. We have encouraged all local authorities charging premiums to use the taxes raised to support affordable local housing solutions.

We have also increased the threshold for short-term lets to be liable for non-domestic rates, rather than council tax. Self-catering properties need to be let for at least 182 days in any 12-month period to be listed for non-domestic rates. This ensures that owners are taxed correctly, and in turn are contributing to the local economy and infrastructure.

The Welsh Government has committed to the introduction of a statutory registration and licensing scheme for all visitor accommodation. This will, amongst other benefits, ensure that local authorities have more robust evidence about the numbers and coverage of visitor accommodation.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Our Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan provides numerous interventions to support the creation of new social enterprises and community-led cooperative housing. The plan brings together economic, housing, community development and language planning policy areas to ensure the sustainability of our Welsh-speaking communities. My colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language created a Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities in 2022. The Commission has examined different policy areas and what can be done to support our Welsh-speaking heartlands. The Commission aims to publish its report and recommendations to Welsh Government this August.

As part of our efforts to reduce the number of long-term empty properties in Wales, in January 2023 I launched the national Empty Homes Grant scheme, which will bring up to 2,000 long-term empty properties across Wales back into use over the next 2 years. I also made available to Cyngor Gwynedd an additional £3m, £1m of which was earmarked for the Dwyfor pilot area to bring empty properties back into primary residential use.

Of course, the challenges of affordable living extend beyond the current use – or indeed non-use - of property. Our Programme for Government outlines our commitment to deliver 20,000 new low carbon homes for rent within the social sector during this government term.

In considering a range of associated factors, we issued a Green Paper: A Call for Evidence on securing a path towards Adequate Housing, including Fair Rents and Affordability. The evidence submitted to the consultation is informing the development of a White Paper, which will set out proposals relating to the aims of delivering adequate housing, ensuring rents are fair, and making homes affordable for those on local incomes.

Finally, I hope this reply illustrates the breadth and depth of activity undertaken and being brought forward in line with our commitments. I would restate my thanks to Cyngor Gwynedd for its valuable role in taking forward a number of interventions which will be independently evaluated in the context of the Dwyfor pilot, which absolutely places local needs at its heart. For a number of Dwyfor families this has already led to 17 completing HomeBuy purchases – in a part of the county which had seen a single completion in the five years prior to the pilot's inception. This is testament to our combined efforts and I look forward to continuing to work with Cyngor Gwynedd on the pilot.

Yours sincerely,



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