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24 January 2008

**National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (No. 5) Order 2008 relating to the disposal of dwellings and dwelling houses by social landlords (Affordable Housing).**

Shelter Cymru welcomes the opportunity of responding to the consultation on the above LCO to the proposed Affordable Housing LCO Committee.

## Shelter Cymru

Shelter Cymru provides specialist housing advice services and a number of housing related projects across the whole of Wales. Last year it assisted 16,000 people in housing need.

Shelter Cymru also provides an education service to senior schools across Wales, a housing training service for other agencies and information projects for Welsh youth services and rural information project in south West Wales.

In addition, Shelter Cymru also undertakes research, evaluation and policy work. During the last year this has included research into mortgage repossessions in Wales, young peoples housing accommodation needs in Rhondda Cynon Taff and the needs of homeless ex-prisoners.

## Affordable Housing LCO

Shelter Cymru has long advocated that the Assembly should acquire powers to vary the qualification provisions of the right to buy in particular to allow, when necessary, its suspension during periods, or in areas, of acute housing need.

Shelter Cymru believes this will make a contribution to addressing the shortage of affordable housing in Wales. However, it also believes that there may be a number of other areas, which the Assembly may wish to legislate by measure, which could also contribute to increasing the provision of affordable housing. As such, we believe the proposed Order as currently drafted is too narrowly defined.

It may be, for example, that the Assembly may wish to acquire powers that will ease the development of Community Land Trusts, or improve the provision of land in general, or planning measures with regard to the control of second homes, empty homes, tenure reform or indeed reforming homeless persons legislation which would also impact on affordable housing.

In addition the Welsh Assembly Government have launched a number of key task groups which are looking to develop a new Housing Strategy for Wales, a ten year homelessness plan and a new supporting people strategy. These groups may well identify opportunities to further improve the supply of affordable housing through legislative means.

Our conclusions, therefore, is that the principle of the Assembly drawing down legislative competence in matter 11.1 as drafted is one that we fully support, but given that the focus on a new housing strategy has just began it would be appropriate to either:

- Draw up an Order which is more widely defined and which would later allow further housing related legislation.
- Delay the current Order until the end of the current process of strategy development then draw up an Order that encompasses any new agreed areas for legislative measures.

We are happy that our response is made available to the public and we are prepared to give oral evidence to the committee if invited.

John Puzey  
Director