

RESPONSE FROM LLANSTEFFAN and LLANYBRI COMMUNITY COUNCIL, CARMARTHENSHIRE

Second homes: Developing new policies in Wales

Dr. Simon Brooks

Recommendations for consideration in Senedd Cymru Inquiry into Second Homes.

Recommendation 1 – develop regional and local variation in public policy

Second homes are primarily a regional and local phenomenon, and the Welsh Government should encourage the development of regional and local policy solutions facilitated by permitting policy variation within a national framework. Public policy solutions should be flexible enough to be applied in different ways in different counties and communities according to regional and local need.

We agree that there should be flexibility when developing policies within the National Framework in order to take account of local and regional need. It would require some flexibility in the interpretation of the Public Policy strategies and solutions.

Recommendation 2 – control of the numbers of second homes

Public policy should aim to ensure stability as regards the numbers of second homes in communities affected by them, or it should aim to reduce their numbers gradually over a number of years.

We agree, but recognise that there may be some difficulty in determining the toleration level and that this may vary between purchased and inherited property.

Recommendation 3 – the definition of second homes

In order to facilitate policy decisions based on objective information, a better definition of second homes is needed. The Welsh Government could consider several ways of doing this but, with this in mind, a Mandatory Licensing Scheme for Holiday Homes should be introduced.

We agree that introducing a Mandatory Licensing Scheme would be very helpful.

Recommendation 4 – responding to Brexit and Covid-19

In an attempt to mitigate the inevitable effects of Brexit and Covid-19 on the housing market in communities which are heavily impacted by second homes, the Welsh Government should adopt a more proactive approach, and more radical steps should be taken, than would otherwise have been the case.

We agree that Covid in particular has impacted greatly on the increase in remote working and has changed many people's working practices for the future. This is tied into the wider economy and we would welcome any steps that would lead to a more proactive approach. There are many who would want to stay in their chosen local community and work from home, however the demand for housing stock and the impact of price rises in many areas, due to second home ownership, prevents this from being a reality.

Recommendation 5 – the need for policy intervention across a range of policy areas

Policies should be implemented across a range of policy areas, and in the following three fields in particular: direct planning policies, indirect planning policies and taxation policies.

'Policy intervention' sounds positive but would be helpful to see some exemplar interventions / guidelines, particularly in relation to taxation.

Recommendation 6 – Local Council Tax Premium

County councils that consider second homes to be a serious social problem should use their taxation powers fully, raising the council tax premium on second homes to 100%.

We recognise that there have been some issues in relation to Council Tax with holiday-home owners registering as a business leading to Local Authorities losing out on the Council Tax payments. This loophole should be closed on the condition that ' they could not register as a business'. This could tie in with the Mandatory Licensing Scheme. We do agree it is worth considering.

Recommendation 7 – Short-term holiday accommodation and business rates

The Welsh Government should consult on the possibility of making short-term holiday accommodation exempt from being eligible for small business rates relief.

As above

Recommendation 8 – Land transaction tax

It should be possible to vary the higher rates of the land transaction tax in either counties or local government wards in order to reflect local circumstances. To achieve this:

- i. The Welsh Government could delegate to county councils a right to vary the higher rates of the land transaction tax, potentially adding a further rate to the tax of up to 4% of the value of the second property in some parts of Wales.
- ii. Or, the Welsh Government could vary the higher rates of the land transaction tax in this manner in specific local government wards heavily affected by the second homes problem.

We agree that action of this nature would be beneficial and decentralisation of control would be a good thing.

Recommendation 9 – Gwynedd and Anglesey Councils’ ‘Local Market Housing’ Scheme

Gwynedd and Anglesey Councils should consider extending the ‘Local Market Housing’ policy in the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan to other coastal and vulnerable communities in both counties where there is a concentration of second homes alongside an affordability problem. Other planning authorities in Wales should scrutinise the ‘Local Market Housing’ policy to consider whether such a policy might be beneficial for some of their communities. The Welsh Government should consider whether planning guidance should be amended or strengthened in order to support or facilitate the process of extending this or similar policies.

We agree that this should be considered. Differentiation would be beneficial. Finding appropriate solutions for different areas is key.

Recommendation 10 – the creation of a new use class for short-term holiday accommodation

The Welsh Government should amend the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2016 by introducing a new use class for short-term holiday accommodation.

We agree

Recommendation 11 – trialling a new use class for second homes

The Welsh Government should conduct a trial in a community or cluster of communities severely impacted by second homes, and where there is community support for doing so, to evaluate the feasibility and impact of introducing a new use class for second homes. This would make the

conversion of a dwelling house into a second home subject to planning permission when the percentage of second homes in the housing stock of a specified community crosses a particular threshold.

Getting community support is key, we agree with trying to find appropriate solutions but recognise there are inherent problems in getting an agreement of this sort.

Recommendation 12 – establish a Commission to make recommendations regarding the future of the Welsh language as a community language

The Welsh Government should establish a Commission to make recommendations in response to the linguistic challenges facing areas where the Welsh language is currently a community language in the face of likely socio-economic and social restructuring. In particular, the Commission should address the challenges of the post-Brexit and post-Covid environment with the aim of protecting, stabilising and nurturing the future of the Welsh language as a community language in Wales.

We are in total agreement with protecting and nurturing the Welsh language but would want a Commission with ‘teeth’. Constructive, funded plans behind the recommendations.

Llansteffan and Llanybri Community Council

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