

SH 38

Ymgynghoriad ar ail gartrefi

Consultation on second homes

Ymateb gan: Undod

Response from: Undod

Second homes have dominated the Welsh landscape for as long as many of us can remember. More recently, and especially as a result of the pandemic, the discussion around access to affordable, quality housing for individuals and families in their community has risen up the agenda. Rightly, second homes have been identified as a significant issue preventing many in Wales from accessing quality, affordable housing in their community.

Undod believes that the prevalence of second homes and the commodification of housing in Wales has significantly contributed to the housing crisis. In Wales today, more than one in twenty households are worried about losing their home over the next three months. Six percent of households have been told they will lose their home - the equivalent of 80,000 households forced to seek a new home (the Bevan foundation, December 9th 2021). Although second homes make up a small proportion of the housing stock, they could make a marked difference to those in Wales facing homelessness today.

12,000 households were made homeless in 2018/19, a significant number of which included households with children. The majority of the households became homeless because of housing issues such as rent arrears, debt, or problems with private landlords. In short, the homelessness faced by these households is a policy failure.

Because of a lack of social housing and the perceived prohibitive cost of building social housing, Wales has rapidly and insidiously become reliant on the private rented sector to solve the housing crisis, including, unbelievably, solving homelessness through discharging homelessness duties into the private rented sector (with [the sector now being used more than the social housing sector to relieve households under threat of homelessness](#)). By addressing the prevalence of second homes across Wales, the Welsh Government could prevent the trauma and distress faced by many of those families.

Although Dr. Simon Brooks' recommendations demonstrate a fairly reasonable way forward in addressing second homes in Wales; the reality of the housing crisis demands the Welsh Government takes real action to address the inaccessibility of affordable, quality housing in communities which promote our health and wellbeing.

Therefore, we respond as follows:

Recommendation 1: - Reject

that local variation in public policy will address the issue of second homes. Local and regional authorities often do not operate in the best interest of those living in poverty, as those elected to councils often make up middle and upper class individuals who have more time and money to allow their participation in democracy.

In addition, the Welsh Government is already ineffective at enforcing and monitoring a variety of policy areas from the environment, to housing policy, and without an effort to increase the size and capacity of Government, this recommendation will not be implemented.

#### Recommendation 2: Support

#### Recommendation 3: Support

Comment: Evidence suggests holiday homes and second homes impact local communities, affordability of housing, and the prevalence of Welsh language. Therefore second homes and holiday homes should be considered as a group, rather than as a separate issue. However, some distinction is needed between the properties.

#### Recommendation 4: Support

Comment: Brexit and Covid-19 constitute long-term shocks, and will likely impact economies and patterns of travel and movement for the long term. Leaving policy change until after the impact of these shocks creates a space for increased harm to our communities.

#### Recommendation 5: Support

Comment: Second homes and holiday homes do not pop up out of nowhere. Local Government and their planning processes have contributed to the proliferation of second homes. Any policy development must ensure it takes consideration of local need and want, protect biodiversity, protect local residents from flooding and air pollution, ensure communities are well connected with a well-developed plan for public transport and connectivity, and ensure services are accessible for all within a 15 minute walk. If the second homes problem is addressed, but the issue of poor connectivity is not, rural and Welsh language communities will continue to decline.

#### Recommendation 6: Reject

Comment: The Welsh Government should act to implement a 100% council tax premium on second homes across the whole of Wales.

#### Recommendation 7: Reject

Comment: The Welsh Government should take decisive action against short-term holiday accommodation and exempt businesses owned outside of the relevant county being eligible for small business rates relief while households are being made homeless in Wales.

#### Recommendation 8:

Comment: Such a tax could impact on the housing market, but it should be considered carefully as this could impact local areas significantly, and could result in the problem being shifted from area to area.

#### Recommendation 9: Support

Comment: Undod agree with the recommendation, however, we believe every house which comes on the market, and not only the new houses should be subject to this policy. It is crucial to bring empty homes back into use, and Local Market Housing schemes should secure this.

#### Recommendation 10: Support

Comment: Local authorities should know exactly the amount of properties in this class, and all buildings of this type should be subject to the same standards.

Recommendation 11:

Comment: We support the need for planning permission for the conversion of a dwelling house into a second home. Second homes should be subject to scrutiny by local people and local government, to ensure that all people in a community have access to quality housing and are not at risk of homelessness or deprivation. If there are community members at risk, permission should not be given.

Recommendation 12:

There is a dynamic in our communities where the Welsh language was strong but is disappearing in the flood of second homes, short term accommodation, and non-Welsh speakers moving in. Tackling the problem of second homes is fundamental to the future of Welsh as a community language, and the challenge is interconnected with the creation of a truly sustainable local economy not reliant on tourism and seasonal, precarious employment. Despite the potential of a commission, a Welsh language commissioner already exists in Wales, who lacks the power to enforce significant changes for our communities, and instead focuses on Government and public bodies. Shouldn't the Commissioners office first be granted expanded powers and funding in order to serve the purpose of the new, proposed commission, instead of constantly expanding the roll call of high-paid commissioners who have very limited power to create the radical change we need to address the entrenched poverty and the disappearance of our Welsh language communities.