

National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

CELG(4) HB 29

Inquiry into barriers to home building in Wales

Response from : Ann Jones AM

I wish to add the following into the consultation process for your current inquiry.

You will be aware that during the last Assembly I successfully steered the Domestic Fire Safety Measure through all stages of both the LCO and the Measure process with unanimous support gaining Royal Assent in April 2011. During the course of this Assembly I have continued to hold the Government to account to produce regulations to effect the implementation of the Law.

Throughout this process, House builders have put forward varying degrees of financial costings they claim will all have an effect of their ability to build houses in Wales. At every stage I have been able to prove their wild and inaccurate scaremongering figures are just that.

When the committee undertook an inquiry into affordable homes in Wales, The house-builders federation were forced to climb down from their written evidence of calling the Law “a proposal” and that the £5k figure for installing sprinkler systems was excessive and had no legitimacy as they had claimed.

I feel that the current position being adopted by developers and Politicians in another place is more about trying to stop the wheels of devolution and shows that the house builders and those that still appear to want to attempt to halt this Law have little regard for providing sustainable communities and safe and sustainable homes.

The cost, recognised by the Industry, Fire Services and the Department for Communities and Local Government and Welsh Government of between £2 - £3k for installation of a sprinkler system into a house will be repaid several times over as

There will never be the need to rebuild a house that has had a fire;

There will be a reduction in the number of fire deaths across Wales;

The cost to the health budget of dealing with fire related injuries will reduce;

There is a significant reduction on carbon foot caused by smoke from fires;

A Reduction in the amount of water used for fire-fighting between that used in a sprinkler system to contain a fire versus that of fire appliances using pumps and high volumes of water. (A Sprinkler system when fully activated, which is not often, uses 309 gallons of water opposed to 3,000+ gallons from 1 fire appliance)

Will make Wales a safer place to live in.

I hope the Committee will not accept that the Domestic Fire Safety Law and its implementation is a barrier to house building in Wales and if they feel minded to, then I would wish to point them to the reports by the Legislation Committee together with that of Finance Committee who also dismissed claims that this Law would have a detrimental effect on house building in Wales.

I would also seek assurances that should the Committee receive evidence blaming the Domestic Fire Safety Law, the Committee will critically challenge that evidence using the reports I have highlighted plus the many chamber debates and associated scrutiny of the legislation that is a matter of public record.

I am willing to attend any committee session you feel may assist in your inquiry.