

# NRLA Wales

## Manifesto

### 2021

**NRLA**  
NATIONAL RESIDENTIAL  
LANDLORDS ASSOCIATION

## Introduction

The National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) is the UK's largest membership organisation for private residential landlords, supporting and representing over 85,000 members across England and Wales, who own around 10% of the homes in the private rented sector (PRS) equating to half a million properties. We are formed following the merger of the National Landlords Association and the Residential Landlords Association, in April 2020. We are primarily a campaigning organisation, and provide support and resources for members to successfully manage their properties. We aspire for a PRS that works for all – landlords and tenants.

Increasing demand for housing and rising property prices have seen more and more people look to the PRS for a home. With this increase in demand comes an increase in scrutiny, bringing wholesale changes to the way people rent in Wales. Some of these are welcome – indeed long overdue. However, the rate of change is taking its toll on landlords, with four major pieces of legislation introduced in the last six years alone. While landlords have complied with these, to meet other and future challenges, there are more steps government can take to help meet shared goals. Only when the PRS is regarded as part of the solution to the housing crisis can landlords and tenants prosper.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of the PRS in providing the homes Wales so desperately needs and NRLA Wales is committed to working with government, and all of those parties and politicians seeking to represent local communities, to shape legislation that bene its both landlords and tenants while improving standards across the sector. We believe this can happen by:



## 1. Streamlining licensing

Rent Smart Wales (RSW) and Fitness for Human Habitation (FFHH) obligations require landlords to meet the highest of standards, meaning there is no need for councils to introduce local licensing schemes that often duplicate many conditions and increase the cost of compliance. These superfluous local schemes should be abolished, with any beneficial features and safeguards incorporated into RSW and FFHH. This will reduce costs and bureaucracy for landlords, meaning savings can be invested in improving the property and maintaining rent levels for the tenant. Furthermore, there is a need to establish greater transparency and clear accountability for an organisation as large and powerful as RSW. This should include:

- **Producing a public annual evaluation and performance report**
- **Direct scrutiny by the Senedd**
- **Much greater clarity between operational and policy decision making and functions, clearly defining where responsibility lies for each; and**
- **Establishing an independent body with oversight of RSW, accountable to Welsh Ministers**

## 2. Supporting landlords and tenants

Homelessness is a growing issue and as vulnerable people become increasingly dependent on the PRS, privately rented households need to be given the same support as those in social housing. This can be offered by:

- **Providing help for those with short-term problems and support-needs that can affect their ability to sustain a tenancy**
- **Funding Landlord Support Officers to help tenants stay in their homes**
- **Adding anti-social behaviour to the list of mandatory grounds for repossession.**

We also believe the introduction of a new tenant passport would help both landlords and tenants. The new 'passport' would allow a landlord to access live data on a prospective tenant, including credit ratings, employment status, and references to establish whether they would be likely to be able to sustain the offered tenancy and potentially identify future support needs. It could also allow tenants to pass their existing deposit on to their new landlord when they move home, without having to raise a 'second' deposit before their first one has been returned.

### 3. Improving homes

The Welsh Government should commit to boosting the energy efficiency ratings of PRS homes and fund the installation of large-scale adaptations and safety improvements. An important first step towards this would be to match, or better, the green energy support schemes of other British nations, particularly the Green Homes Grant. This will ensure Wales does not fall behind the rest of the UK. Additionally, local authorities should liaise with energy providers to maximise and target the use of Eco-Flex money and other grants.

Private landlords' capacity could be utilised by local authorities to meet their objective of filling empty homes. Given this will regularly mean the need to renovate and provide more homes, landlords willing to take on empty homes to bring them back into use should be encouraged to by:

- **Removing the second home Land Transaction Tax premium**
- **Introducing interest-free council loans or grants in low-value and hard-to-rent areas**
- **Introducing a holistic package of Council Tax incentives, recognising the potential behavioural impact of sanction and reward in the system**

### 4. Introducing a Welsh Housing Survey

Research on the PRS in Wales is limited, meaning policymaking is too often made based on anecdotal evidence. We recommend that the Welsh Government commission an annual Welsh Housing Survey similar to that conducted regularly in England, giving decision-makers access to a comprehensive package of reliable, independent data on all areas of housing. Our proposal is already backed by several organisations, among them Homes for All Cymru, an alliance including Shelter and Crisis.



## 5. Improving justice for landlords and tenants

A dedicated housing court or tribunal should be established for Wales to deliver swifter access to justice for landlords to legitimately repossess their property and tenants to hold their landlord to account. This is all the more important given the increasing statutory divergence resulting from devolution. The proposal already has the backing of a House of Commons Select Committee, Shelter Cymru, the Chartered Institute of Housing, and landlords on the ground. Senedd committees have also backed exploring this proposal.

## 6. Rejecting Rent Controls and Right-to-Rent

Evidence from across the world shows rent controls do not work. They make it harder for renters to find an affordable home, encourage rent rises, see housing conditions deteriorate and can lead to a reduction in the overall number of homes to let as landlords leave the market. We would encourage the Welsh Government to resist any moves to introduce them.

We would also urge the Welsh Government to reject the introduction of the Right-to-Rent scheme, currently operational in England. We believe the scheme, in which tenants must prove their legal right to live in the UK, obstructs the letting process, encourages adversarial relationships and may lead to increased discrimination. It should not be adopted in Wales.

Find out more:

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