

CORNWALL'S HOUSING CRISIS

All over Cornwall, a roof over one's head, the most basic of human needs, is increasingly difficult to find. Those in a position to change things need to be prompted to take the necessary action.

Please consider this housing manifesto at your next meeting. If you agree with it (feel free to amend it to your taste) please notify your local Member of Parliament and all 87 Cornwall Council elected representatives.

BACKGROUND

Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council's September meeting was asked to consider Bude-Stratton Town Council's response to Cornwall's housing crisis. We supported Bude-Stratton and produced this manifesto.

1. **Increase social housing and affordable homes in Cornwall** - to enable local people to remain in Cornwall and ensure we keep thriving Cornish communities.
 - 1.1. **Stop Right to Buy in Cornwall.** This policy has created an acute shortage of publicly-owned (and therefore accountable, well-maintained and affordable) homes for local people. It has funnelled in-need people into the arms of landlords, where there is no security of tenure and little control over the protection of vulnerable tenants. Within the main town of our parish, Polruan, some 28% of social housing stock has been lost through right to buy and some 10% of this are now second homes! One of our residents has recently been uprooted after 35 years in the village and moved 25 miles away. This has caused significant stress and mental health issues. The definition of housing need has evolved in line with the shortage of housing to the point where cases previously classified as dire need are now considered to be tolerable by the housing authority.
 - 1.2. Situations such as this can no longer be tolerated. Cornwall Council must end Right to Buy to send a strong signal to the people of Cornwall that it has the interests of the people it represents at heart. It is no longer acceptable for elected members to say only Parliament can end Right to Buy. That may be true but Cornwall Council has a choice between backing the people of Cornwall (and winning the support of the people of Cornwall) and accepting the dictat of remote politicians.
 - 1.3. **End Bedroom Tax.** This cruel policy, derived from the sale of council houses, meant remaining stock was at a premium so council tenants with extra bedrooms were stigmatised and penalised. The comments in 1.1 above apply to those within Cornwall Council who will say Bedroom Tax can only be ended by national government.
 - 1.4. **Increase affordable housing stock for purchase** - selling new properties to local residents only (a clear definition of 'local resident' is required throughout Cornwall to ensure homes are fairly allocated)
 - 1.5. **Increase the stock of social housing.** Cornwall Council has significant financial resources, and given the severe need for social housing, could use its financial weight to build publicly-owned, publicly-controlled social housing for rent. Using its own well-trained, well-paid, well-motivated workforce to design and build these homes, Cornwall Council could become a motive force for economic regeneration in the county.
 - 1.6. **Cornwall Council should end its partnerships with developers.** Current county council policy is fundamentally flawed in that hundreds of millions of pounds of public money is given to private developers for Cornwall to fulfil its house-building commitment. Developers' pursuit of profit, at the expense of meeting local need, is at least partly-

responsible for the current dire shortage of decent, affordable, publicly-owned housing for rent.

- 1.7. **Requisition empty or underused properties** to house residents in desperate need. There are current and historical precedents for such action.

2. **Reduce second home ownership and holiday rentals.**

In our Parish, some 50% of homes are owned by people whose main residence is outside Cornwall. Many of these houses remain empty for significant periods, affecting the vitality of our communities. At the same time, there is a significant shortage of housing stock for local people. We are at risk of our local communities dying out.

- 2.1. **Make it less attractive to own second homes** - increase council tax levies, put in planning constraint, introduce caps on numbers of second homes in key areas,
- 2.2. **Make it less attractive buy holiday rentals** - increase business rates and ensure council tax is being paid if properties are not being fully rented etc
- 2.3. **Make it more attractive to rent to long term tenants** – grants or subsidies by the council toward council rentals, incentives to private landlords etc

3. **Put People First and improve the quality of life for tenants**

- 3.1. **Bring back secure tenancies for all housing under Cornwall Council control.** It is unacceptable that tenants live in a permanent state of anxiety about eviction. S.21, no fault, evictions need to be ended. It may be said that Cornwall Council cannot intervene in the relationship between landlord and tenant and the courts. Surely with the political will, Cornwall Council could create a climate whereby landlords who evict tenants without just cause, are penalised. Cornwall Council could declare that no S.21 eviction can take place unless there is suitable, local, alternative accommodation available.
- 3.2. **Set up rent tribunals throughout Cornwall.** This will ensure that rents reflect local incomes.
- 3.3. **Set up a register of private landlords.** This will serve to protect tenants somewhat protected from unscrupulous landlords. The register could, for instance, record whether a landlord is DBS-checked, if they have applied for S.21 evictions and if so, how many etc.
- 3.4. **Change the definition of affordability.** “Affordability” should be linked to local incomes rather than local house prices.
- 3.5. **Close the house transfer register to people with no Cornwall connection.**

Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council feels strongly that the above actions are urgently needed. We commend these actions to every town and parish council in Cornwall and ask that these bodies endorse the actions (or something similar) and press Cornwall’s MPs and all 87 Cornwall councillors to adopt the same.

Please reply to clerk@lanteglosbyfowey.org.uk