

# Blog

## The Housing Quality Network Cymru

18 October 2018

### HQN Cymru members' update – 26 October 2018

#### Shock horror! Councils serious players in innovative housing game

*Keith Edwards welcomes the success of local authorities in the Welsh Government's latest round of innovative housing funding.*

It's ten years since CIH Cymru came up with the concept of One Housing System. The idea was simple; if we wanted to solve the chronic problem of over demand and under supply we needed to link all the component parts of the sector together and transition between each made as smooth as possible.

This may seem like common sense now but at the time Welsh Government was focusing on one aspect above all others. In the wake of the Essex review, how many additional homes could housing associations deliver?

The One Housing System approach is now widely accepted in Wales at least. In the past ten years we've seen major initiatives to bring empty homes back into use, push up standards in the private rented sector, diversify into new forms of tenure and governance, continuing to invest in housing related support and developing new strategies to tackling homelessness.

And now at last we are placing councils back at the centre of delivering new homes themselves or through arm's length companies. The mood was set when the latest iteration of the Housing Pact in 2016 included local authorities in a new triumvirate with government and the housing association sector. Ambitions were relatively modest to start – perhaps 500 new council homes over the term of this Assembly. But the pace of change is speeding up. The announcement that six of the next ten recipients of the Innovative Housing Programme would be local authorities, awarded a total of £10m, is the latest manifestation of this

Things are starting to change in England too. This week the Mayor of London announced £1bn of funding for local authorities under his council housebuilding fund which will help build 14,700 new homes. If delivered these plans will see councils increase their building rates by five times over the next four years compared with the previous four.

We already have similar ambitions, taking account for scale, in Wales. The latest announcement will not only help increase the number of homes beyond current targets but will reinforce that councils are back in the social housing game big time and to stay

## About the author

Keith Edwards is a former Director of CIH Cymru and TPAS Cymru. He came to the housing sector via the trade union, co-operative and community development movements. As a consultant, he has worked for Welsh Government Ministers, the Housing Regulator and a number of local authorities, housing associations and private companies.

He has wide experience of stakeholder involvement, developing strategy, option appraisals, designing new service models and supporting co-operative and mutual housing. He has particular expertise in helping organisation get the maximum social, economic and environmental benefits from their investment and service delivery, having set up and run the innovative i2i project for Welsh Government.

Keith is Lead Associate for HQN Cymru.