Wales **Co operative** Centre
Canolfan **Cydweithredol** Cymru

/www.wales.coop

Building homes, creating communities, changing lives

A strategy for scaling up and maximising impact 2017-2021

CCH
Cydffederasiwn Tai Cydweithredol
Confederation of Co-operative Housing

The Nationwide Foundation

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Co-operative housing

The Context

Wales needs more homes, particularly homes that are affordable for people on low to middle incomes. Welsh Government has committed to delivering 20,000 affordable homes during the current Welsh Government term.

The tripartite Housing Pact between Welsh Government, Community Housing Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association, launched by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in December 2016, puts innovation at the centre of delivering this target with a commitment to:

Support housing development across all markets and geographies, including urban areas and through a continuation of funding for Rural Housing Enablers and support for co-operative housing.

There is a need to build more homes, but, building on rich traditions in Wales, there is also a need to build supportive and viable local communities. The Welsh co-operative housing programme is an increasingly important means of delivering this. Interest in co-operative housing is growing across Wales[1]. Since the project's inception in 2012, 99 new co-operative homes have been built, with many more in the pipeline, most of them new affordable homes.

By providing social, intermediate and market rented, shared ownership, leasehold co-operative ownership and management, a range of housing need is being met. In March 2017, the programme is already working with 19 schemes and groups in 15 local authority areas and there is a growing demand for support to take forward new schemes. Housing associations, local authorities, rural housing enablers and communities across the country are enthusiastically supporting the programme.

[1]In more/better: an evaluation of the potential of alternative approaches to inform housing delivery in Wales, Cardiff University have concluded that co-operative housing should be amongst the delivery pathways for new homes in Wales, alongside innovative construction techniques demonstrated in some co-operative housing scheme. The report details the Welsh co-operative housing programme.

As well as contributing to the 20,000 affordable homes needed, outcomes of co-operative housing are potentially broad and can contribute across the Communities and Children portfolio, as well as those of other Welsh Government departments. We are also already seeing its added value:

Co-op members are:

learning new skills - skills to help their personal development and which will enable them to contribute to the community in other ways

taking responsibility for management services, ensuring successful local delivery and achieving better value for money for all parties

building resilient and supportive communities where children thrive and that set their own standards, tackling anti-social behaviour before major problems develop.

Home Farm Village Housing Co-operative

Cardiff - affordable rent - Cadwyn Housing

Next to the River Ely in Cardiff, Home Farm Village Housing Co-op was the first leasehold co-operative in Wales, opening in mid 2015. Home Farm Village Housing Co-op lease their 41 flats and houses from Cadwyn on a renewable 7 year lease, meaning that they are able to issue their own tenancies to their members. Established on a site formerly plagued with anti-social behaviour, the co-op has already played a positive stabilising role in tackling problems across the local neighbourhood.

We love it - the community feeling with everyone looking out for each other and someone always there to help is amazing. My daughter has made some amazing new friends and spends time in the garden playing and talking with them instead of being inside on a computer. Coming from a neighbourhood with no community spirit it has been a complete change. I know nearly everyone here; people say hello and stop for a chat and offer help when they can. It's lovely to wake up and look out and see a lovely little community, everyone taking pride and enjoyment in their homes, and contributing to keeping it maintained.

Anne Harrington
Chair, Home Farm Village Housing Co-op

Old Oak Housing Co-operative

Carmarthen - intermediate rent - Pobl

Old Oak Housing Co-operative is being set up to manage 27 intermediate rent family houses on Job's Well Road, Carmarthen. Originally initiated by Carmarthenshire County Council, the anticipated local co-operative community nature of the scheme played a part in Pobl being granted planning permission in early 2015. The first members are due to move in during early 2017.

We can provide a really good local service and save money that we can use in our local community. It's a fantastic opportunity we have been given here. The skills we are learning will open doors for us in the future and the strength of our growing co-op will make us a really strong community.

Amanda Price
Secretary Old Oak Housing Co-operative

Loftus Village Association
Newport – shared ownership - Pobl

Part of the regeneration of the former site of East Newport's Pirelli factory, Loftus Village Association (LVA) is a shared ownership co-operative. Pobl developed co-operative shared ownership to offer a variation to traditional shared ownership. Of the 19 founder member households who moved in during Summer 2016, 17 are shared owners, one has bought their home through outright sale, and one is a tenant.

It's been excellent working together as a community to develop Loftus Village Association, and we were all really excited about moving into our new homes and our new community. We are the sort of community where people help each other out and I am particularly enjoying developing our communal garden.

Luana Dee
Loftus Village Association

West Rhyl Co-operative
Rhyl - rented housing in regeneration area - North Wales Housing

West Rhyl Co-operative has been set up to provide rented homes by West Rhyl Community Land Trust (WRCLT), whose aim is to regenerate the area, run down following the loss of the tourist industry, and local housing association North Wales Housing (NWH). Its first homes are a conversion of former multiple occupancy bedsits into 11 new homes.

We were really excited to start working with the tenants who all showed enthusiasm towards making a difference to their new community. Afallon is Welsh for blissful place, and through coworking and democracy, our new community will be.

Fiona Davies
West Rhyl Community Land Trust Chair

Taf Fechan Housing Co-operative
Merthyr Tydfil – intermediate rent – Merthyr Valleys Homes

Leadership and innovative loan financing from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council made it possible for mutual housing association Merthyr Valleys Homes to develop Taf Fechan Housing Co-op. With a long term lease from Merthyr Valleys Homes, Taf Fechan Housing Co-op took over as landlord in February 2016.

The Co-operative is an excellent idea as it makes you come together as a community, you gain and learn new skills and meet new people. We also get to resolve any issues as a group and all get an equal vote on how things should be done which is great. All in all, being part of a co-operative is a fantastic housing option.

Michaela Adams
Co-operative member

Shakespeare Gardens Co-operative
Rhydyfelin – affordable rent – Newydd Housing

Shakespeare Gardens has been set up in the already established residential area of Rhydyfelin during RCT utilising formerly empty homes. As a tenant management co-operative, the group will take on responsibility for various management and maintenance of the 18 one bedroomed flats. The co-op members started moving into their homes in September 2016 and are already making a positive difference in the local community.

I wanted to move here to have a place to call my own. It's absolutely lovely. We all know each other as neighbours. We helped each other when we moved in and continue to do so. It really is what a co-operative is all about, supporting each other.

Beverley Loveridge
Chair, Shakespeare Gardens Housing Co-op

Gwynedd Community Land Trust *Gwynedd – mixed tenure – Grwp Cynefin*

Grwp Cynefin are intending to establish Gwynedd CLT to provide affordable homes for local people. Gwynedd Council have agreed in principle support for the scheme and have set up a revolving loan fund to support the CLT, which will be based on a similar model in Cornwall where a county wide CLT facilitates the growth of local CLTs. Grwp Cynefin have bought three sites initially with plans to develop 31 new affordable homes.

There is considerable local interest in the prospective Community Land Trust from local communities. There is a pressing need for homes in rural areas in Gwynedd and the CLT's aim is to start to meet that need.

Arfon Hughes
Rural Housing Enabler, Gwynedd

This strategy has been developed by the Wales Co-operative Centre, the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Rural Housing Enablers and the various partners who have supported the programme, working in partnership with Welsh Government. It aims to chart how the co-operative housing programme will grow over the next five years.

Our Aims

Our aims in this strategy are that by the end of the current Government, we will have:

- scaled up co-operative housing with more schemes and more people benefitting from them
- contributed to the Welsh Government's target of 20,000 affordable homes
- provided easily accessible information and guidance about housing cooperatives, drawing on the experience of the new housing co-operatives developed as part of the programme
- developed and put into practice a means of assessing the performance and impact of housing co-operatives
- engaged with most local authorities and housing associations in Wales about the programme and have increased the numbers of partners supporting schemes
- increased the diversity of co-operative housing schemes, spanning tenures, potential income levels and meeting diverse housing needs in rural and urban communities
- strengthened and united the co-operative housing sector enabling networks to come together
- considered how the development of co-operative housing can become self-sustaining

We will assess the success of the programme against these aims.

What is co-operative housing?

As with traditional housing, co-operative housing can be developed in new or existing housing and it can enable modern design and building methods and high standards of environmental sustainability. The experience of the programme so far is that co-operative housing can be established to provide any tenure and adapt to most circumstances dependent on local priorities.

What is unique about co-operative housing is that:

- it enables its service users and/or people in the local community to become members of the co-operative
- those who become members own the co-operative and through that, have some level of control over their homes and community.

These features are what builds the sense of community and ownership from which the benefits of co-operative housing spring.

Within this broad definition, our strategy is about working with local partners and communities in flexible and innovative ways to meet the needs and aspirations of local stakeholders in ways that are right for them.

What we will do

In 2012, Welsh Government, supported by the Wales Co-operative Centre and the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, brought together a range of programme partners – housing associations, local authorities and rural housing enablers – to form the Co-operative Housing Stakeholder Group. This Group is shaping the co-operative housing programme in Wales drawing on the collective experience of the growing number of its members.

Through this strategy we will promote and support an increasing role for co-operative housing in meeting housing need in Wales. Our key objectives of the strategy are:

a) more co-operative housing schemes working with more partners

We will continue to seek to support the development of more viable co-operative housing schemes and work with more partners to deliver those schemes. This will involve:

- working with Welsh Government to ensure that co-operative housing helps deliver its housing priorities and that this contributes to achieving other social, economic and environmental priorities across portfolios; working with Welsh Government Regulation to ensure an appropriate framework for co-operative housing that maximises benefits.
- disseminating, promoting and sharing of practice lessons through existing and new housing networks and other channels, particularly working with sectoral bodies such as the Welsh Local Government Association, Housing Leadership Cymru, Community Housing Cymru and CIH Cymru. We will also engage with the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network Housing Commission.
- locally we will seek to engage with local authority members and officers and senior housing association staff and board members to champion the programme in their organisations.
- we will explore with some local authorities whether they would find it useful to pilot co-operative housing registers equivalent to the current custom build register programme being operated in England.

b) developing an online support resource

We will develop online guidance including podcasts and video materials, setting out key issues regarding the development of co-operative housing, enabling communities, local authorities and housing associations to understand what is involved and what potential options are available.

We will ensure that housing co-operators are centrally involved in capturing practice lessons, drawing on their experiences and producing online promotional material featuring the members of co-operative housing schemes.

c) expanding options

As well as continuing to offer the approaches already developed, we will explore new and innovative approaches to meet the needs and aspirations of those who become interested in co-operative housing. In particular, we will:

- gain a better understanding of the groups of people co-operative housing could provide solutions for including: single people, young people, people with learning difficulties, gypsies and travellers, ex-service people, students and older people.

  With regards to elderly people, it is noted that Welsh Government's Expert Group on housing an Ageing Population in Wales has recommended that a trial co-operative housing scheme be developed for the elderly[2].
- identify how co-operative housing can link with initiatives in health, social care and other policy areas, and ensure that it can play a role in furthering the objectives of the Well Being of Future Generations Act and the work of the Commissioner. The programme will also investigate potential links with the development of care co-operatives.
- seek new partners who may be interested in co-operative housing such as Housing Justice Cymru, homeless support organisations, faith communities and cultural groups.
- identify innovative approaches to developing co-operative housing, such as tackling areas blighted by anti-social behaviour or facing some other local challenge, bringing empty homes back into use, remodelling sheltered housing, adapting existing homes, promoting self-build and co-operative forms of home ownership, developing shared housing and workspaces, with the potential for live-work schemes, and examining opportunities for co-operative housing schemes in rural areas.

[2]*Welsh Government - meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales – January 2017*

d) developing support structures

The first years of the co-operative housing programme have seen a growth in enthusiasm and skills in the Co-operative Housing Stakeholder Group, and the ideas in this strategy came from sessions held with the group. We will work with Welsh Government to:

- welcome new partners into the Stakeholder Group and ensure that the maximum benefits are developed from and for those participating
- identify how best to support formal and informal networks between the developing co-operative housing organisations to enable knowledge sharing, confidence building and grass roots leadership.

e) developing impact methodology

We will develop and implement a common straightforward method through which the impact of new co-operative housing groups and the outcomes from the co-operative housing schemes can be assessed. We will share these findings to influence policy and practice.

Working with partners

Welsh Government and the Nationwide Foundation are providing ongoing support for the co-operative housing programme, both through revenue funding and through their commitment to the principles of the programme. Other sector organisations such as CIH Cymru, Community Housing Cymru, the Welsh Local Government Association and Housing Leadership Cymru have assisted the development of the programme and individual co-operative housing schemes. We will work to ensure that this support is ongoing, including securing their support in the following areas, and we particularly consider that their assistance will be helpful in the following area:

f) ongoing high level support

The co-operative housing programme started as a Welsh Government initiative and the inclusion of co-operative housing in the tripartite Housing Pact reaffirms the commitment of Government and partners. Ministers and civil servants can assist by continuing to refer to co-operative housing in speeches and in discussions with housing sector leaders. The support of the Nationwide Foundation has also been important to the programme's success and we will work further to develop this relationship.

We will work to secure the high-level commitment for new co-operative housing development with local authorities, housing associations, lenders and other key partners.

g) the Housing Pact

Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and Community Housing Cymru have shown commitment to co-operative housing by including it in the Housing Pact. In practice, this means supporting this strategy and ongoing participation in the Stakeholder Group.

Individual local authorities and housing associations can help by ensuring that co-operative options are considered as a key part of delivering Housing Pact outcomes locally.

h) links to other programmes

Welsh Government and others can assist in ensuring that co-operative housing opportunities are reflected in other Government supported programmes, and that potential links are made to other programmes.

Local authorities, housing associations and other partners can help ensure that co-operative housing schemes are integrated into local planning and development.

---

i) finances

The success of this programme would not have been possible without revenue resources provided by Welsh Government and the Nationwide Foundation and delivery of the strategy requires those resources to continue. Our long term aim is that the development of co-operative housing becomes self-sustaining. Over the course of the strategy we will develop options that set out how this could be achieved.

Individual co-operative housing schemes will continue to need capital resources as well as access to land and the expertise of partners. Continued access to Welsh Government capital funding programmes will be needed for co-operative housing schemes that are viable and comply with funding requirements.

We will continue to explore new and innovative methods of developing co-operative housing, such as models of co-operative home ownership. We will engage with Welsh Government to determine the availability of resources, such as through a revolving loan fund or other methods, to enable these schemes to be affordable.

We will initiate discussion with local authorities about potential use of their borrowing powers to support co-operative housing.

Appendix: WGCHP Stakeholder Group

The Welsh Government Co-operative Housing Programme Stakeholder Group was established in 2012 to implement Governmental commitments to co-operative housing. The group has gradually become an informal network made up of people keen to assist in the development of co-operative housing in Wales. The current membership of the group includes:

Nic Bliss	Confederation of Co-operative Housing
Glenn Bowen	Wales Co-operative Centre
James Burgess	Welsh Government
Elise Coalter	Newydd Housing
Pat Conaty	Common Futures
Kelly Davies	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Kathryn Edwards	Pobl
Catherine Harrington	National CLT Network
Kevin Howell	Chartered Institute of Housing
Arfon Hughes	Grwp Cynefin
Johnathan Hughes	Pobl
Sue Lewis	Denbighshire County Council
Bronwen Lloyd	Pobl
David Lloyd	TPAS Cymru
Jim McKirdle	Welsh Local Government Association
Hayley McNamara	Community Housing Cymru
Johnathan Morgan	Carmarthenshire County Council
Selina Moyo	Community Housing Cymru
Michael Owen	Merthyr Valleys Homes
David Palmer	Wales Co-operative Centre
Kath Palmer	Welsh Government
Nick Read	Pobl
Kate Sinclair	Pobl
Alan Sinclair	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Paul Taylor	Cwm Harry
Stephen Tranah	Welsh Government
Richard Vaughan	Cadwyn Housing
Vicky Watts	Pobl

Wales Co-operative Centre
Y Borth
13 Beddau Way
Caerphilly
CF83 2AX

Tel: 0300 111 5050
Email: info@wales.coop
Web: www.wales.coop

The Wales Co-operative Development and Training Centre Limited (trading as the Wales Co-operative Centre) is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, number 24287 R. This publication is available in Welsh.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffon yn Gymraeg i Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth ffon Cymraeg neu Saesneg yn cael eu trin yn gyfartal.
We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in both Welsh and English. Correspondence and calls made in Welsh or English will be treated equally.