

# Housing and Young People on the Isle of Man

A policy statement submitted to the Tynwald Youth Select Committee

by

The Liberal Vannin Party

April, 2024

## BACKGROUND

Liberal Vannin have long recognised that there is a continuing housing crisis on the Isle of Man. Our Party Leader, Lawrie Hooper, MHK, Minister for Health and Social Care and fellow candidates campaigned on this at the last general election for the House of Keys in 2021.

**Tackling the housing crisis through developing an all-Island housing strategy that delivers on suitable, sustainable and affordable homes for renters or owners – at every stage of life. – Liberal Vannin joint manifesto, September 2022.**

Since then, the lack of affordable homes has got worse, although the current administration has established a Housing and Communities Board to develop the strategy we called for at the election. Originally chaired by Chris Thomas, MHK, the current Chair of the Housing and Communities Board is David Ashford, MHK.

We also welcome the establishment of the Manx Development Corporation to assist in developing urban brown field sites for housing, alongside the introduction of the Island Infrastructure Scheme which provides grant assistance to property developers wishing to develop on brownfield sites on the government's Unoccupied Urban Sites Register.

While the housing crisis affects people of all ages, we acknowledge that it is felt particularly keenly by young people as they seek their independence with a home of their own, whether aspiring to buy or seeking to rent.

It is critical that an all-Island housing strategy addresses the many and varied types of housing need. Not everyone wants to own their own home. Renting (both short term and long term) needs to be a viable choice for people. Equally, people's housing needs change as they go through life, and it isn't always an upward journey. Housing availability and government support schemes need to reflect that.

Where we talk about 'affordable homes' we mean both in the context of buying or renting. Where we talk about "building" homes we also include converting empty properties and renovating existing buildings, not simply the building of brand-new houses or flats.

## **ACTION REQUIRED**

To help young people to find their first home, or perhaps their second as they need more space to accommodate a growing family, and to ensure that everyone has access to a suitable, sustainable and affordable home, Liberal Vannin campaigns for:

1. More affordable homes to be built. This includes:
  - a) Building more homes for rent as public sector housing.
  - b) Building more affordable homes for sale through government supported first-time buyer schemes.
  - c) Ensuring that homes marketed as 'affordable' are taken up by local authorities to add to social housing stock where they haven't been sold to first-time buyers.
  - d) Building more homes for rent in the private market at affordable rents.
  
2. Powers to address dilapidated or uninhabitable properties including:
  - a. Financial disincentives such as increasing rates or taxes on these properties
  - b. The introduction of an equivalent to the Empty Dwelling Management Orders that would enable government or local authorities to requisition these properties, make them habitable, recover their costs through renting out and then subsequent to costs being recovered, returning the property to the control of the original owner, or onward sale where no original owner can be found
  
3. Disincentives for people keeping habitable properties empty, such as by introducing a deemed income tax on these properties to encourage owners to rent them out, or sell them
  
4. Continued redevelopment of brownfield sites by the Manx Development Corporation.
  
5. Further rounds of the Island Infrastructure Scheme being more specifically targeted at the development of affordable housing
  
6. Emergency housing provision available for those who need temporary accommodation at short notice, and a pathway for people to move from this into more secure accommodation. To this end Liberal Vannin supports the Homelessness Strategy that has been recently laid before Tynwald.
  
7. The expansion of dedicated housing for young people leaving care and the creation of dedicated housing for vulnerable adults. To this end Liberal Vannin supports the Homelessness Strategy that has been recently laid before Tynwald.
  
8. Dedicated housing built for people relocating to the Island, a "landing pad" that would give people short term security when they first come to the Island allowing them to build networks and become part of our community before moving to somewhere more permanent. This provision could be focused on "key workers", although Liberal Vannin believes that this definition could be applied very broadly to cover all the roles we need to fill on the Island.

9. Improved regulation of rental properties, including introducing minimum standards and deposit protections. These regulations must not be overburdensome on the rental sector.
10. The creation of an Island-wide Housing Association to manage and expand the provision of social housing for rent, for those on low incomes, which will be of particular benefit for younger people starting out. Such an organisation will allow for a more coherent approach to the provision of social housing than the current situation, where some is owned and managed by the Department for Infrastructure, with the rest owned by various local authorities, each with their own management structure and administrative procedures. None of them are building sufficient housing to meet the need. This organisation must also have the freedom to offer 'mid-rent' and 'rent-to-buy' schemes and support house purchase through other mechanisms that may be available in the future.
11. Financial support schemes for assisting house purchase, to enable younger people who can afford a mortgage, but who have difficulty saving for a deposit, including:
  - a) Rent to Buy
  - b) Shared Equity
  - c) Mortgage Guarantee

These don't necessarily have to be government run or government backed but the government has a responsibility to ensure these models exist either publicly or privately funded. The core purpose of these schemes is to assist people onto the property ladder, not to generate a return for the government.
12. Support the building of more homes of all types by the private sector, in line with the forecasts that are set out in the Objective Assessment of Housing Need (OAHN) that is due to be published shortly. This should be a factor in the development of the Island Strategic Plan.
13. Housebuilding targets should be included in the Island Plan, aligned to the OAHN. These targets should include housing for all ages, such as sheltered, extra care, nursing care as well as first time buyer – these targets should be flexible to respond effectively to market needs, ensuring the housing being built is the housing people want to buy.
14. Review the planning system to look at the way the commuted sums system works, the introduction of a community infrastructure levy and a review of the way the planning system treats first time buyer or affordable homes.
15. Priority for social housing and first-time buyer schemes should be given to Manx residents under 30, with less than £10,000 in savings and earning less than £30,000 pa (£50,000 for a couple). Housing purchased under such schemes, should be reserved for re-purchase by government, when the owners wish to move, to then make available through similar schemes.

Submitted on behalf of Liberal Vannin by:

Paul Weatherall, Chair, Liberal Vannin, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024

