

NEWS RELEASE

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Welsh Assembly backs Community Housing Mutual

A Community Housing Mutual developed by the think-tank Mutuo has been endorsed by the Welsh Assembly as their preferred ownership structure for the transfer of social housing out of local authority control.

Local Government, Finance and Communities Minister Edwina Hart made the announcement at a reception sponsored by the Co-operative Group and Nationwide Building Society in Cardiff on 8th May. The new Community Housing Mutual Model will give greater responsibility and a real sense of ownership to council housing tenants, Edwina Hart said.

Unlike the majority of Housing Associations, the Community Mutual will give tenants a constitutional stake in the management and ownership of their housing. Under the model, ownership of local authority housing stock would be transferred to a tenant centred organisation, in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to see greater community participation in housing.

Mrs Hart said: "We have made clear our objective to improve the condition and quality of social housing in Wales.

"If Councils are considering transferring their houses in conjunction with their tenants then I would like them to give serious consideration to this Model. I believe it has tremendous potential not just to improve the physical condition of the houses and estates but also to stimulate economic and social regeneration of our poorest communities."

Mutuo's Karen Wilkie said: "The mutual ideal is as valid as ever, and the time is right for the development of new mutual services, rooted in, and accountable to, local communities. That is why we are delighted to sponsor this model and to assist councils who may wish to adopt it."

Mutuo will be hosting a seminar in Cardiff in June to enable local authorities to examine the Community Housing Mutual model, which will be extended to the rest of the UK in the autumn, in detail.

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Notes

The model has been developed by Mutuo and Cobbetts Solicitors on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government and is sponsored by Mutuo and the Wales Co-operative Centre.

A Working Party was established to take forward development of the Model. Members included Council of Mortgage Lenders Cymru, Nationwide Building Society, Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh Federation of Housing Associations, Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru, TPAS Cymru and the Wales Co operative Centre

All local authorities in Wales are required by the Welsh Assembly to identify their plans for bringing their housing stock up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

The Community Housing Mutual Model Rule Set places emphasis on tenant empowerment and local community focus. It transfers ownership of the local authority housing stock to its tenants as a collective or co-operative. A layperson's guide to the Rule Set is available on request from the Assembly.

The event was held in Conference rooms A&B in the Assembly Building in Cardiff Bay. In attendance were Stephen Hogan and Karen Wilkie (Mutuo), John Bader (Director of Housing for the Welsh Assembly), Mrs Edwina Hart AM, Simon Jones (Wales Co-operative Centre), Cliff Mills and Mike Gaskell (Cobbetts), and Keith Reeve (Nationwide)

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