Dear xxxxxxxxxx,

I am writing to urge you to back the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) [proposal to improve homes](https://www.nrla.org.uk/campaigns/wales/improving-homes) across Wales. With climate change high on the agenda, decarbonisation will surely be a priority for all policymakers over the coming years. However, the private rented sector cannot be left out of this, especially given it accounts for [14% of housing stock in Wales](https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Dwelling-Stock-Estimates/dwellingstockestimatespercentages-by-year-tenure).

That’s why the NRLA is calling for the introduction of funding similar to the UK Government’s Green Homes Grant previously in place in England and better liaison work between local councils and energy providers to maximise and target the use of Eco-Flex money and other grants. Funding to help landlords install adaptations and improve safety standards where large costs are likely to be incurred should also be part of a programme to ensure homes can meet resident needs.

The Green Homes Grant was a UK Government scheme open to homeowners, including landlords, in England. Landlords could apply for a voucher towards the cost of installing energy efficient and low-carbon heating improvement in their homes. Vouchers cover up to two thirds of the cost of qualifying improvements up to £5,000. Having such a programme in Wales would be invaluable as it recognises the need for assistance in tackling the costs that such intrusive renovations would accrue.

Although the UK Government scrapped the grant scheme, the Welsh Government have the chance to learn lessons to ensure it reaches as many people as possible. The NRLA believes a longer-term commitment to ensure tradespeople recognition of the scheme and making the application process more consumer-friendly will have greatly increased take-up. It should be accompanied by a communications strategy to ensure potential applicants are aware that Wales cannot reach carbon neutral levels without tackling emissions from housing and that it will help landlords meet their legal obligations to meet the UK Government’s Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

Beyond energy-related assistance, the NRLA has long argued private landlords’ capacity could be utilised by local authorities to meet their objective of filling empty homes. Given this will regularly mean the need to renovate and provide more homes, landlords willing to take on empty homes to bring them back into use should be encouraged to by:

* Introducing interest-free council loans or grants in low-value and hard-to-rent areas; and
* Introducing a holistic package of Council Tax incentives, recognising the potential behavioural impact of sanction and reward in the system.

You can read Ben’s story about the problem with arbitrary council tax premiums [here](https://www.nrla.org.uk/news/an-empty-property-a-dysfunctional-prs-and-the-question-of-council-tax-bens-story).

The NRLA understands the debate regarding second homes. However, much of the discourse here does not take into account how buy-to-let properties – subject to the same Land Transaction Tax (LTT) premium as other second homes – does not take houses out of the market, but instead provides affordable rental homes for those in the area that cannot afford to buy, or do not need or cannot access social housing. Indeed, the [Welsh Government’s recent report from Dr Simon Brooks on Second Homes](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/second-homes-developing-new-policies-in-wales.pdf) discussed this very issue and how it would impact areas that have housing shortages and too little rental homes. Therefore, the second-home LTT premium should be removed for buy-to-let property.

*Include own story and personal experiences*

I hope this letter finds you well and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Xxxxxxxxxxx