

A186



CENTRAL GOVAN
TENANTS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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John Foster
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22 January 2008

Dear Colleague

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS

I enclose the response as agreed at the general meeting of this Tenants Association on 11 December 2007.

Yours sincerely



John Foster
Secretary

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RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

FIRM FOUNDATIONS: THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN SCOTLAND

Please complete the details below and return it with your response to the above address. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: John Foster

Postal Address: 845 Govan Road
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1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)

(a) as an individual go to Q2a/b and then Q4

(b) on behalf of a group/organisation go to Q3 and then Q4

INDIVIDUALS

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government website)?

Yes (go to 2b below)

No, not at all We will treat your response as confidential

2b. Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (please tick one of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

3. The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Government website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available?

Yes No We will treat your response as confidential

SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

4. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes No

Response from Central Govan Tenants and Residents Association To the Scottish Government consultation document 'Firm Foundations'

Central Govan Tenants and Residents Association was formed in 1976 and represents 600 residents and tenants of Govan Housing Association and Glasgow Housing Association in the Central Govan area in Glasgow. Much of the tenement housing is seen as undesirable. There are problems of anti-social behaviour and drug-dealing. There is some over-crowding and many households would like to be re-housed locally but cannot.

RESPONSE

This association welcomes much of the document's analysis of the housing crisis

- The scale of homelessness and unmet housing need
- The requirement for 35,000 new houses a year
- The degree to which the bulk of 'social housing' is today in the least desirable areas and the bulk of tenants are either elderly or on income support – as against the balanced profile of council tenants before the switch of subsidy from rent to benefit after 1979. We believe a continuation of existing policies will intensify this ghettoisation of social housing.

However, in these circumstances we also would argue that that the reported 85 per cent preference for home ownership is NOT a reliable guide. It simply reflects the systematic rundown of council/social housing over the past thirty years

This association welcomes the proposals

- That local authorities be given incentives to build council housing
- That local authorities be encouraged to use their powers for prudential borrowing to build council houses
- That greater subsidies be given to Registered Social Landlords for new house building
- That the Right to Buy be ended for this new build housing.

At the same time this Association believes that the document's proposals for public sector housing are quite inadequate – in terms of volume - and its commitment to private sector provision is misplaced and unrealistic

Figures for house building completions in the private sector fell 9 per cent in 2006 on 2005 to 23,700. Given the current problems in the provision of finance for private house purchase, it is likely that this decline will continue through 2007 and 2008 and probably worsen. Unless council/social housing building is trebled from the current 5,000 to 15,000, there would seem no prospect of reaching the 35,000 target.

- This Association does not support the proposals for expanding the private rented sector – in particular as a provider of short-term and long term housing for homeless families. Our extensive experience of such private landlords in the Govan area is very negative.
- This Association believes that council housing provides potentially the most democratic and cost effective form of housing provision which also has the potential for much great energy efficiency adaptation that what is currently demonstrated in the private sector.

This Association is very disappointed that the document does not revisit the provisions for tenant participation set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

IN 2001 this Association made representation against the proposal that Registered Social Landlords be given responsibility for registering, supervising and annually validating tenants associations. The function of a tenants association is largely that of holding a landlord to account and to taking up individual cases that may involve legal action against the landlord. The existing regulations would appear to run directly contrary to natural justice – the equivalent of making employers responsible for trade union registration. This Association has for this reason refused to register under the new regulations. We remain convinced that an independent tenants movement, able to voice its own perspective independently of the corporate attitudes imposed by Communities Scotland and its successors, is essential for the future of housing in Scotland. We would also note the shameful attempts to control and muzzle tenants organisations by the use of the provisions in the run up to ballots for Housing Stock Transfer. We hope that the Scottish Government will turn its back on such methods and introduce a new era of genuine dialogue and debate.