



# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HOUSING AND THE GENERAL ELECTION 2015

CIH is gearing up for the 2015 general election and to help our members keep up with the main political parties' plans for housing we have put together a short guide to what we know so far. At this stage information is still emerging and we will provide further updates as we learn more.

## ***Conservatives***

Having made economic recovery a central pillar of the 2010-15 programme for government, the Conservatives will continue to frame the majority of their messages around the economy and their competence to deliver on economic priorities. A key audience is 'hard working families' – a challenge given continuing downward pressure on living standards for this group.

The main housing and welfare position articulated at this autumn's conference was an 'earn or learn' criteria which would be applied to people under 25 claiming benefits, and which would make benefit entitlement for this group dependent on them being in work, education or training.

## ***Liberal Democrats***

The party has tried to position itself as being a natural and necessary partner for both Labour and the Conservatives if either wishes to be the next main party of government. They will stress their economic competence and experience alongside their social focus and conscience.

Housing and welfare positions articulated at their conference include:

- a commitment to allowing pooling of local authority HRA debt capacity (but not to raising the borrowing cap). This would give local authorities some additional freedom to borrow in order to fund the development of new council houses
- a commitment to review the bedroom tax.

## ***Labour***

Labour's key messages look set to be about their preparedness to intervene where markets are not delivering the desired outcomes, especially where they relate to the cost of living, and about the importance of securing economic recovery for everyone, not just a select few.

Housing and welfare positions articulated at, or since, their conference include:

- house building to be increased to 200,000 units a year within 5 years. Sir Michael Lyons is currently conducting a review to identify the ways in which this could be achieved, however the Party have already expressed an interest in:
  - a 'use it or lose it' policy, where developers have not built on land with planning permission
  - building further new towns



- introducing a 'right to grow' to make it easier for councils to develop where there is opposition from a neighbouring authority
- preventing developers from advertising properties to overseas investors first and consulting on allowing local authorities to increase council tax on empty homes.
- a commitment to repeal the bedroom tax.

### **What CIH is doing**

Our [‘ticking the box for housing’](#) campaign aims to influence the debate in the run up to the 2015 general election and ultimately the policies of the next government. Through it we will be challenging all political parties to put addressing the housing crisis at the centre of their manifestos.

### ***What do we want to see?***

We have set out what are, in our view, the fundamentals of an effective housing system for the future, and will use these as a ‘litmus test’ against which we measure parties’ proposals in the lead up to the election, and even more crucially, as the Programme for Government is designed. In our view these fundamentals are :

*The country has an adequate supply of good quality homes to meet housing need and support economic growth.* Supply is critical to a successful policy response. We want there to be enough good quality homes to meet the needs of our growing population and to support economic growth. But quantity cannot come at the expense of quality. Homes must be of a good physical standard and environmentally sustainable, and the supply of homes must take into account our changing population and local circumstances.

*Everyone should be able to afford a home which meets their needs.* There should be a range of different housing options and tenures available at different prices, to cater for people with a range of incomes. Everyone should be able to afford to live in their home and maintain a decent standard of living. We believe a well-functioning welfare system has to play a crucial role here – it should act as a safety net and enable everyone to afford to live in a home which is right for their needs.

*Good housing helps people to live well, enjoy better health and achieve their full potential.* It’s more than just bricks and mortar. Good housing can be the most important factor in supporting independent living and health and wellbeing. It creates strong, cohesive communities that allow everyone living in them to achieve their full potential.

### ***How can I get involved?***

Throughout the run-up to the election, we will be regularly seeking the views of members and using them both to inform our responses to policies that are put forward by the main political parties and



to help us refine our own ideas, which we will be championing and encouraging them to take up.

For more information about how you can help us with this, [visit our website](#).

