

An Alternative Housing Strategy for Scotland
Symposium held in University of Edinburgh
1st October 2007

Notes from symposium discussions

(I have attempted to group these by subject to make them more useful, but some divisions are inevitably somewhat arbitrary. They are not verbatim, but, I hope, retain the sense of what was said. They should be read in conjunction with the papers, and references to the papers are given where particularly appropriate – Sarah Glynn)

subject headings:

The Position of the Scottish Government

Property market and economic policy

The social effects of housing policies

Home Ownership

Right to Buy

Stigmatisation and social base of council house and housing association tenants

Meeting Social Housing Demand

Housing Associations

Glasgow Housing Association

Investing in council housing

Housing Debt Write Off

Regeneration

Mixed Tenure

Buy to Let

Building Quality

Health

Tenant Involvement

Democratic Deficit

Situation in Dublin

Situation in North of England

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The Position of the Scottish Government (as explained by Rachel England)

Talked through current situation (see her paper on background data). The cost of social housing is rising well above inflation. Some of this is explained by the right to buy, but not all.

In the parliamentary debate in June, Stewart Maxwell (Minister for Communities and Sport) gave 2 priorities: build more housing across all tenures, and meet challenges of rapid change. Housing people can afford in areas they want to live.

But current arrangements for funding social housing are unsustainable and need reformed. They have seen a 35% rise in real terms since 2002 from 52,000 to 79,000 per house. Costs of construction and land explain all or part of this, but need to find better ways of funding. Need to see efficiencies and improved processes while not compromising on quality. Make sure subsidies don't encourage and reward inefficiency. Aim for largest number of good new social houses for smallest expenditure.

Demand for social housing is rising and it should play a larger and more effective role. Social housing is now stigmatised as housing of last resort, but they are not prepared to accept the continued marginalisation of the tenure.

However, we shouldn't overstate the problems. Standards of new social housing are improving all the time and regeneration is bringing neighbourhood improvements.

Owner occupation is accepted as the preferred tenure for the foreseeable future, with social housing complimenting this and offering alternatives (e.g. to suit changing circumstances and needs).

On current figures $\frac{1}{4}$ of Scottish households are in rented housing (social or private)

Need to see three changes

- 1) Landlords need to recognise the importance of choice and aspirations
- 2) Social housing needs to get a reputation for consistently good services
- 3) Social housing has to be value for money, with rents more comparable with other landlords and reflecting the services covered

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We may see the government redefining the homelessness legislation if it can't meet the 2012 targets, and putting the emphasis on prevention (Andrew Field)

The SNP aren't here. They aren't talking to people critical of current policies. They are abjuring policy. (Tony Cox)

Current government doesn't seem to have a vision. The previous administration did: it was Blairite, and it failed at the ballots. This is a minority administration and may have competing urban and rural elements. There will be tit-bits to the local authorities (e.g. councils having ability to build but no money to do so) but the rural elements are less public orientated. What's important is delivery of service (Andrew Field)

Property market and economic policy

Political parties all regard property market as central to their economic policy and counter arguments not being discussed. (Tony Cox)

Councils have to get the biggest capital receipts for their land so public land is not being used for social housing (Andrew Field)

In development of social housing, landowners have always made profits, as have financiers. It is only the developing and loss-making landlord functions that have ever been socialised. In the 19thC slum clearances by local authorities were ways of maintaining housing shortage and high prices. It is the vested interests that make

building difficult: land owners and developers (who get more money from change of use than from building) and they line up with politicians (Andrew MacLaran)

Accessing land can be pushed up the political agenda as it was with the new towns after WW2 (Andrew MacLaran)

Worried about threat to green belt, and possible building densities (Jenni Marrow)

We can't analyse any tenure singularly. The failure to put capital gains tax on homes is a major incentive for them to be treated as investments. Financial security linked to tenure. (Andrew MacLaran)

(see also the discussion on John Bone's paper, below, and paper by Sarah Glynn)

The social effects of housing policies

(these are my notes on John Bone's paper – Sarah Glynn)

Under producer led capitalism and Keynesian economics there was a self-interest in generating a stable demand. In a welfare society risk is more shared.

But now we have had a shift to short termist finance-driven capitalism, and the interests of finance capital don't coincide with wider public interest. People who bet on the economy going up and down don't want stability. The shift from welfare has been a shift towards individualised risk, anxiety and uncertainty.

The twin pillars needed for personal security are a job and a home. Current society is destroying lives through the labour market (flexibility, offshoring, extension and degradation of work, mcjobs) and the housing market.

Risk-shifting – liquidity boom has shifted risks onto young borrowers while lenders see short-term returns. Buy to let is a symptom of risk-shifting too: as stable incomes and pensions are eroded people look for a short term fix and pass their own risk on through buy to let. An assured short-term tenancy gives little protection to tenants.

Landbanking by construction industry is also done for short-term profit. Building on less than half the land they have planning permission for produces more profit per unit.

The Halifax now calculates that less than 30% of housing sales are first time buys, but the real figure is probably more like 10%, with 70% of key workers priced out across the UK.

People who are taking out mortgages and buying now are taking on a high risk extended commitment that they have to meet from an insecure income stream.

Life chances are more dependent on property (and especially inherited property) than on merit or education

People are not having or postponing having children

Those who can access the housing ladder become open to exploitation from employers as they can't vote with their feet. Debt is the new slavery.

But people opt for ownership for security of tenure. People in private rented housing always having to move (example of family moving 5x in 4 years), leading to unstable communities, can't socialise children, have to move work and schools. Examples of retaliatory eviction in response to tenants asking for repairs.

Social outcomes:

Affects relationships at home, young people having to live with parents, collapsing expectations, some living off unearned income on back of workers, speculative development has become the biggest industry taking potential investment away from production, immobile and heavily indebted workforce, parenting issues with both parents working, problems for key workers, record emigration (especially of young professionals), credit boom, social injustice and inequality.

Need to:

Increase availability of social housing so taking away private sectors ability to control the housing supply

Regulate the mortgage market and stop the race to the bottom

Weaken the oligarchy of private builders (e.g. possibility of a land tax)

Housing affects the kind of society we create

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There is an inevitability about what is happening, but it conflicts with peoples needs (Jamie Black)

This sort of booty capitalism is not so strong in the rest of Europe (Paul Watt)

That's why there is so much government negativity towards Europe (John Bone)

What chance that this analysis will be taken seriously by government? (Tony Cox)

UK government has built its economy on housing and it is a roller coaster out of control. They don't want to puncture the bubble but to let the air out slowly – at least until the next election. Government is working hand in hand with the finance sector. Politicians know the reasons for what is happening but are frightened to admit them as they would have to do something about it. They are scared to precipitate a crash (John Bone)

So why did they put money into Northern Rock? (Jenni Marrow)

The risks of the bad loans had been passed on and the Bank of England was worried about a run on the banks all the way along the line (John Bone)

Need to get back to basics – what are housing policies for? Housing is the key to people's existence. (Iain MacInnes)

Home Ownership

Property owners are not a homogenous block (Tony Cox)

Aspiration to ownership is being pushed as government policy using spurious arguments about popular demand. (Tony Cox)

People talk about the subsidies to RSLs but not about the subsidies given to private developers. The more prices go up the more people can't afford to buy and our children and grandchildren may never be able to afford to buy. You can't separate looking at affordable renting and affordable housing to buy. (Sharon Donohue)

The debate on ownership is sterile (Andrew Field)

Owner occupation has historically been enormously funded by the public purse. (Andrew MacLaran)

Right to Buy

This was conceived of as a way of getting people engaged in the economy. They have to stay in their job and will buy more DIY materials and be less inclined to industrial discontent. They have sense of ownership, but this is an illusion until they pay off the mortgage (Jenni Marrow)

Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants was suspended in 2001 for 10 years. Is it going to be introduced in 2011 so they face the same challenges as the council or will there be a two-tier system? Right to Buy should be suspended and overturned for council housing too. (Jenni Marrow)

There are no changes planned to Right to Buy at the moment (Rachel England)

Right to buy has had its day (Andrew Field)

The discounts given to council house buyers are being paid for by the remaining tenants and this part of the Right to Buy scheme is never discussed. This hidden handout by tenants to their neighbours should cease immediately (John Carracher)

Stigmatisation and social base of council house and housing association tenants

Increasing the social base of council housing is difficult as council housing is now seen as damaged goods by some people who don't necessarily want to be council tenants (Paul Watt)

Increasing the economic base of council tenants would change the perception. Council housing already seen as a stepping stone so quite aspirational. (Luke Henderson)

Stigmatisation is encouraged by government policies and classifying areas as areas of deprivation. The choice-based lettings system is also used to concentrate families with social problems into particular areas (Jenni Marrow)

Council housing was OK but is now stigmatised and this affects education and health (Sharon Donohue)

We need to redefine social housing so it is not just for people with problems and poverty (Andrew Field)

(See also paper by Sarah Glynn)

Meeting Social Housing Demand

There has been a shift from Local Authorities to the Housing Associations, but housing associations are failing to deliver a solution to the social housing crisis (Tony Cox)

Disagree that housing associations have failed, but there is a collective failure of Communities Scotland, Local Authorities and Housing Associations. Could be better at co-ordinating and organisation e.g. average development size in Scotland is only 14 units at present and needs to be increased and we haven't spent all the development money we get. Land release is not fast enough and Communities Scotland don't process proposals fast enough. However Housing Association and Local Authority links are good in some areas. (Andrew Field)

Housing Associations and Local Authorities need to push together for more investment in social housing. The homelessness legislation is reducing opportunities for people who want to move to other social housing and immigration is also increasing demand (Sharon Donohue)

Don't buy idea that there is surplus housing. Social housing should be refurbished and reused (John Carracher)

(See also paper by Sarah Glynn)

Housing Associations

(see power point slides by Andrew Field)

We may see the government opening up housing association grants to private developers and local authorities, and giving more development funding control to local authorities (as a nod to local government) (Andrew Field)

Housing associations need to be involved in wider development to produce mixed tenure neighbourhoods and make use of cross-subsidies. They need to get into more profitable areas and re-churn the money into their core areas. They should also work in partnership with local authorities over service provision. The local authority is the strategic enabler, designing strategy. (Andrew Field)

In England, housing Associations are shifting into the market sector (Paul Watt)

Is the SFHA talking about housing associations taking up the provision of services currently provided by the local authority – i.e. local authority outsourcing? (Sean Clerkin)

Housing Associations are not interested in taking over core services but they are already sharing resources and involved in contracting out relationships with some councils where councils want to use their services. (Andrew Field)

Concerned about predictions that the number of housing associations will be reduced. Big companies such as Places for People aren't the way forward (Jenni Marrow)
Bigger housing associations may be a result of the housing options paper but are not what the SFHA want. We need mechanisms for local control. (Andrew Field)
Smaller housing associations can share personnel (Jenni Marrow)

Why not have housing associations involved in building houses for sale and cross-subsidising homes for rent? This would also reduce the monopoly of the private developers. (Stuart Cameron)

Want to avoid absolutes. Look at European model, e.g. Helsinki (Stuart Cameron)

This idea is OK in theory, but is problematic in a neoliberal economy (Paul Watt)

It is in the nature of housing associations to consolidate and for bigger associations to swallow up the smaller ones. If a housing association isn't profitable it can't borrow and will be taken over. There are also big private sector level payouts to chief executives and directors. Some housing associations are now talking about floating on the stock exchange. Housing associations have closed down local community centres as not their responsibility (Luke Henderson)

In some areas housing associations are acting paternalistically but there are new types of housing associations since the 1990s that are more commercially orientated. We need human imperatives, not the market, and regulation not deregulation. Housing associations are motivated to increase their total number of tenants so as to increase the executives' salaries. What's meant by 'executive democracy'? (Iain MacInnes)

COSLA and the housing associations need to work together (Andrew Field)

They should work together more as the providers of rental housing. Both will be challenged by the new quality standards and how to pay for them. Local Authorities are putting rents up and so will housing associations. Social landlords have to work together to squeeze out private developers. Also need to be sure that new developments have schools and shops – joined up thinking in which everyone needs to be involved. (Sharon Donohoe)

Glasgow Housing Association

Is the recommendation not to go for second stage transfer in Glasgow partly so that the GHA becomes one of those larger housing associations referred to in Andrew Field's talk? (Nick Durie)

Don't go with the idea that this is a conspiracy. The difficulty is the cost. If the housing budget is cut, is second stage transfer a priority when it has been estimated to cost a minimum of £200M? (Andrew Field)

Why was this not allowed for at the outset? (Jenni Marrow)

Our Local Housing Association was told lets just get second stage transfer over, but if I'd read the GHA would be dissolved I wouldn't have voted for it. What we voted for was promises of investment. (Bill Lambie)

The commitment to 2nd stage transfer took up just one page in the 1st stage document and was qualified with 'if financially neutral' (Andrew Field)

But do you believe the GHA might want to expand further? (Nick Durie)

No. And if it did there would be an almighty fight (Andrew Field)

This is disingenuous. One reason Glasgow voted for transfer was because the monolithic structure was going to be broken up (Luke Henderson)

This was promised to tenants and was massively important, but it was still only one paragraph in the documents (Andrew Field)

In Glasgow at the time. The promises were a form of blackmail. Vote for this or you get nothing. The only justification was that the council's historic housing debt would be written off. The GHA and council each put £6 ½ million into the yes campaign and

the opposition spent only £5-10,000. Lots of tenants didn't vote thinking it a done deal. Majority probably didn't want transfer at all (Iain MacInnes)

If the votes had been counted against the total number of houses involved the result would have been different (John Carracher)

It should be for the tenants in Glasgow to make the decision whether they wish SST to proceed or not and not the landlord or the Scottish Government. Also if there are to be ballots, then tenants should decide who they wish on the ballot papers as opposed to the present system where others are deciding, i.e. GHA Ltd and LHOs (John Carracher)

Investing in council housing

Some of the best quality building has been by councils. They can have a long term vision and do the job properly as not the same pressures just to make profit (e.g. in loft insulation). They have the ability and labour to do work themselves more cheaply and more flexibly. (Luke Henderson)

Big difference in housing associations and councils is their geographical remit. Housing associations work increasingly along market lines and don't necessarily have any local linkage. (Paul Watt)

Not arguing that only council housing acceptable but responding to an onslaught and to the argument that only owner occupation is acceptable. (Iain MacInnes)

(see paper by Sarah Glynn)

Housing Debt Write Off

42p in the £1 from Edinburgh rents goes to pay historic housing debt. This is an enormous shackle on council housing and the pressure of funds makes estates less and less desirable. Councils are still liable for the debt even after houses are sold under right to buy (or demolished – Sarah Glynn). How can the SNP push Westminster to undertake debt write off? (Luke Henderson)

Debt write off does not require an injection of cash and is no cost to the Treasury as it transfers funds from one department to another, as noted in the Audit Scotland report on stock transfer. (Jim Cuthbert and Luke Henderson)

Regeneration

This needs to be linked to economic regeneration. Changing landlords doesn't help. We need access to better real wages not just physical regeneration. (Claire Watt)
Jobs in care, security, call centres etc don't help people move on (Iain MacInnes)

Subsidy is not the only thing that is important, we need to think about neighbourhoods (Rachel England)

People suffering uncertainty not knowing which homes will be demolished and tenants not knowing what to do (Iain MacInnes)

Everything can be held up in rebuilding programmes if services are not disconnected in time (Jenni Marrow)

In his local area in Glasgow there is a PFI type scheme to demolish GHA housing and co-opt people into a regeneration strategy. There is massive state subsidy for a company that doesn't yet exist and which will also cover things currently done by GHA and local authority (e.g. parks, rubbish, security guards). In effect they are creating a company town. Don't necessarily disagree with non-profits developing private housing, but how to stop this Trojan horse? (Nick Durie)

Mixed Tenure

(See power point slides by David Manley)

Changing mono-economies may mean bringing in private owners (Rachel England)

Besides research based on large quantitative studies (see paper) observed that in the new mixed Ardler development in Dundee where people were expected to mix in local area, house owners generally use their cars to go elsewhere while renters are more locally based or using the buses. (David Manley)

When housing professionals talk about mixed tenure they generally mean a predominance of owner occupation (even higher than in the paper). Some positive affects will be due to social sorting and housing allocations: e.g. social housing in areas with a lot of owner occupiers may be given to the 'best' tenants, and programmes of demolition and rebuilding are often used to exclude less 'good' tenants from an area. (Stuart Cameron)

There is anecdotal evidence in Scotland to support that view (David Manley)

Difficulties of responsibilities for are improvements in mixed areas – owners delaying as don't want extra costs, money from tenants' rents going to improvements for home owners (Jenni Marrow)

Danger of confusing mixed tenure with mixed income. If public sector housing more widely accepted it would have more mixed income tenants. Communities take a long time to develop as communities (Iain MacInnes)

Arguments about mixed tenure are being used to push the poorest people out of certain areas, feeding the burgeoning private rented sector. (Sean Clerkin)

Many bought houses are not owner occupied but are buy-to-let for people on housing benefit. People with more money may not shop in local shops or use local schools or work locally (same in rural areas). Owners may sell up at a large profit and move on. (Sharon Donohoe) (David Manley pointed out that buy to let housing did not appear as owner occupied in their surveys)

Buy to Let

Need to disincentivise buy-to-let (John Bone)

The Scottish Government doesn't have sufficient levers to tackle buy-to-let but are regulating private landlords to address problems of poor services and quality. (Rachel England)

Building quality

Question quality of new housing – example of concern about construction standards among builders working on new housing in Dundee (Tony Cox)

Private builders concentrate on cosmetics. The older tenements were generally of better quality construction with bigger rooms (Bill Lambie)

Space standards and insulation are better in new social housing are better than in private developments (Rachel England)

Parker Morris standards were scrapped by Thatcher and standards have deteriorated. There is a confusion between new and better. Independent architects have predicted that new housing on the Clyde will only last 15 years. (Iain MacInnes)

According to a recent report Scottish private housing is the poorest in Europe (John Bone)

Health

(See power point slides by Hilary Thomson)

Need for more in depth qualitative work (Hilary Thomson)

Concerned about problems of moving old people with proposed demolitions, and the extra stresses on moving to a new environment when old (Sarah Glynn)

Investing in houses is not enough, need to make society fit for purpose too (Sharon Donohoe)

You can't automatically assume that if you put in central heating people will use it. They need to be educated to use it (Naimh Shortt)

Could also look at temporary housing studies by Shelter (Stuart Cameron)

Affects of improvements may depend on how work is carried out e.g. many local authorities don't have a decant policy and the work itself can be very disruptive. (Iain MacInnes)

Surprise to hear that fuel poverty in Scotland is falling. Use of pre-payment meters is hiding what is happening as people aren't heating their homes. These are on the highest tariff and fuel increases are predicted. The poorest are being punished by going without fuel (Jenni Marrow)

Tenant Involvement

People talk about involvement but there is no real tenant participation despite the legal requirements (Iain MacInnes)

Challenge the idea that 5 tenants on a housing association board is participation. What is needed is an independent tenants' association to monitor what is happening (Jenni Marrow)

GHA and SFHA act pleasantly but mystify the situation and people who live in the houses don't really know what is going on (Iain MacInnes)

Who decides the process for finding out what tenants want? Is this on the authorities' terms or the tenants' terms? At the moment it is all top down. Communities Scotland

is trying to run an alternative tenants organisation. They are running tenants' groups, writing constitutions and minutes. The Scottish Tenants' Organisation had arranged to meet Communities Minister Stewart Maxwell, but Nicola Sturgeon cancelled the meeting. Everything is being decided behind closed doors and organisations take part on invitation only. (John Carracher)

We set up our own Local Housing Organisation and do consult quite regularly (Bill Lambie)

How can Communities Scotland defend amount of money given to PPPs compared to money available for tenants' organisations? (Jenni Marrow)

The Scottish Government has announced that there will be a think tank looking at the future of housing, but who will be involved. Where will the people here today be heard? (Sharon Donohoe)

The Government is producing a consultation paper (not a think tank). After that there will be a 3 months consultation period when everyone can give their views on the paper. (Rachel England)

Who has contributed to that consultation paper? (Iain MacInnes)

Government has been having discussions with the SFHA, Chartered Institute of Housing, Shelter etc and looking at a wealth of data on housing market and supply (Rachel England)

But nothing from tenants (Jenni Marrow)

We are looking at issues of high level strategy and policy direction, not at allocations (Rachel England)

That's insulting to tenants (Sharon Donohoe)

Tenants will have a strategic view (Iain MacInnes)

Policies usually go adrift. Tenants can tell government about previous problems, (Jenni Marrow)

There may be a possibility later (Rachel England)

A possibility to get co-opted in this framework for tenant participation? And why is a framework not already in place (John Carracher)

'Participation' will probably be on model of community engagement network.

Example of representation on this by just two people, one with little experience and the other a home-owner in a village outside the city. (Jenni Marrow)

Why is government so afraid of tenants? Tenants are up for a fight, but would prefer to talk. (John Carracher)

How can we get debate going when debate is so controlled (John Carracher)

Why are there no tenants involved in the Scottish Government consultations? Is the housing association movement worried about this? (John Carracher)

The SFHA has just one place. All information it gets is made available on the web and housing association boards get regular updates (Andrew Field)

We've asked why the STO isn't on the task force (Jenni Marrow)

Democratic Deficit

Lack of difference between main political parties, all in thrall to the market. Lack of democracy within Labour Party. More need for active tenants' groups to raise issues. There is no representation of people in council housing (Tony Cox)

Housing has slipped so far off the agenda will it ever climb up (Sharon Donohue)

There is a clear warning coming from researchers and activists that market based policies are creating problems not solutions, but the official view doesn't recognise this. Civic society (inc housing professionals) close to government and there is a huge gulf between the political classes and the people they represent. This is breeding enormous resentment. The Left is champing at the bit and by ignoring these problems the government is providing the basis for a fight. This is not a threat but a warning. If there is no real dialogue and the government ignores what is happening we will see a new politicisation of a layer who aren't looking to the existing political classes for leadership. This can lead to xenophobia and the rise of the far right, or could transform into a radical class-consciousness. (Tony Cox)

This is happening already. There is a subculture with no connection to society and a growing sense of anger. Don't mistake apathy for ignorance. (Jenni Marrow)

It is important to strengthen local democracy rather than try and circumvent local government by inventing new structures (Sarah Glynn)

Perception that government is not acting in interests of public but managing on behalf of corporate and financial interests. Politicians maintain 'market good, public bad' Neoliberalism is the new commonsense. Alison Pollock (looking at health) has shown how PPPs are used to siphon public money into corporate pockets. That is why this is kept confidential. (John Bone)

Hospitals in England have brought the private sector huge dividends (Jim Cuthbert) Money put in by government is taken out of the back door as profit so there is no improvement in services. Corporations act to make money in the short term for their shareholders. (John Bone)

The purpose of this seminar was to bring together different voices including tenants but how can we make them impact on housing policy? Government regards the Scottish Tenants Organisation as 'the usual suspects' and prefer to talk to tenants who give the 'right answers'. Why has this situation emerged? We need to develop a network of representative tenants' organisations and housing activists. The SFHA is part of the political class as housing associations now have a role outwith what they were originally set up to do. Housing professionals are also playing a leading role in the current system. What we need is genuine dialogue. We need to resist the current enclosure of the commons that is bigger than the enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries.

People who express these views are officially regarded as completely off the wall.

There is an official 'there is no alternative' mentality (Andrew MacLaran)

No one listens to protests when they compete with the corporate economic agenda (Jamie Black)

Shouldn't regard resistance as pointless – look at example of anti-stock transfer campaigns, and fight of homeowners against GHA (Tony Cox)

Resistance doesn't get publicised, but tenants in Edinburgh learnt from the disaster of transfer in Glasgow

Disappointment that no members of the SNP had come to the symposium, which had been arranged to coincide with their rethink on housing policy. But importance of academic critique of gentrification exemplified by arrest of German academic under their anti-terrorism laws whose only crime had been arguing against gentrification. (See article in his support in the Guardian). (Sarah Glynn)

Discussion of the banking crisis is creating new debate (Andrew MacLaran)

Laissez-faire led to the problems of the 1920s. People will turn against it and rediscover Keynes (John Bone)

Planning processes also favour business. If something is turned down locally it gets referred centrally. Planning aid for local people and everything that helps local people is being withdrawn. (Jenni Marrow)

Managers and politician believe there is only one game in town. When local authorities consult on stock transfer they are legally obliged to be neutral. In Edinburgh tenants were each sent a 1ft pile of documents from the council but the negative side of transfer was not mentioned once. We need genuine consultation with grass roots groups. (Luke Henderson)

We are being given a con trick by the government accounting structure and need to expose what we are up against (Jim Cuthbert)

Example of financial costs in Dundee. We are told demolitions save money. They do cost the council less but only because they get huge subsidies from the Scottish Government. This is actually a very expensive policy as well as producing fewer homes. (Sarah Glynn)

'Community ownership' under housing associations is another con. (John Carracher)

The majority of tenants won't know about the green paper consultation. We need a report on the current situation in Scotland (Jenni Marrow)

Difficulty in getting information about what is happening in housing out to the public (Sarah Glynn)

Will people come out onto the street for housing issues any more? Are folk up for that? How can we feed into what is happening? (Sharon Donohoe)

There is a consultation process (Rachel England)

Suspicious that the consultation will select the answers it wants (Tony Cox)

Wait for the consultation paper to come out (Rachel England)

Situation in Dublin

(These are brief notes on Andrew MacLaran's talk, a much fuller paper is available to download)

Dublin has seen incredible economic success and housing failure – increased waiting lists, housing stress, homelessness. Now need 2 professional incomes to buy a home and an increasing percentage are bought by investors. People are now getting 35 year mortgages for 6/7 x their income.

Strong tradition of social housing but never general needs housing in Ireland. Now 78% owner occupied and only 8% social housing (of which less than 1% is voluntary sector). Lots of new private housing but many are second homes or bought as investments and left empty.

State geared to serve interests of capital and imposes entrepreneurship on local authority. Development plans orientated to needs of developers:

Very high densities (500 units per hectare or 200 per acre now allowed in central Dublin), Central city land sold by local authority which then claims it has no land for social housing. Public Private Partnerships transfer highly-priced land to private developers for very small returns to the state in form of new social housing units valued at tiny proportion of the transferred land value.

Reinventing image and reality of Dublin and measuring success by the number of cranes.

Under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, local authorities can demand 20% of land in a development is set aside for social or affordable housing. The authority can buy this at its low existing use value (e.g. at agricultural land prices) and if the developer does the building the authority only needs pay them a reasonable cost. This is meant to increase the supply of social housing and prevent segregation. Developers protested and took to court, but lost. Subsequent Act allowed developers to buy out Part V provision or provide land in another area instead. Trade unions supported the proposals often thinking they would bring more social housing, but this just largely replaced social housing provision from usual funding sources. In 2004 only 2 units were built in central Dublin under Part V. The Housing Strategy of Dublin Development Plan provided for no social-housing developments in areas where there is already 50% social housing.

Value of land (10million Euros an acre) threatens continuance of social housing in central areas. Enthusiastic promotion of PPPs transferring run-down public-housing estates to private developers who only build a small proportion as social housing. This often follows after a period of destructive neglect and deliberate detenanting (tenants offered money to move elsewhere). Example of rebuild plan negotiated with community at St Michael's estate being thrown out as too expensive and replaced by plan with <20% social housing. Assets assembled by the taxpayer are being transferred to private developers at advantageous rates with no valuation being carried out.

As Dublin promotes gentrification of its centre, a retired chief planning officer has highlighted the authoritarian nature of the urban management and described what is happening as social cleansing.

There is a close relationship between government and the property sector and a blinkered acceptance of the neoliberal agenda. Any problems are regarded as the price of progress and objections are referred to as unwarranted. Dissenters are co-opted and consultation processes are not subject to external scrutiny. Prospects for social housing look grim, though there is potential for political radicalisation.

Sounds like Edinburgh (Jenni Marrow) and Glasgow (Iain MacInnes)

PPPs have confidentiality but there is no real reason for this (Jim Cuthbert)

Dublin City Council won't even talk to critical academics now and councillors who criticise what is happening are given a carpeting by the city manager (Andrew MacLaran)

There is always some kind of consultation process that serves as an excuse but people aren't given information (Sinead Kelly)

Housing in Ireland is not in places where there is demand. Land around Dublin is controlled by a few families who want to keep the price up, though prices are now falling.

Situation in North of England

(see power point slides from Stuart Cameron's talk)

People in the area discussed generally moved into other local authority housing round the city, but the council later explicitly said they wouldn't re-house those in rent arrears or who had been guilty of anti-social behaviour (Stuart Cameron)

It's the same in all big cities. The poor are being pushed out, and they can't afford to travel (Sharon Donohoe)

People from different social groups should mix together and if the social sector built for different tenures this would be fine. But this is just reducing the amount of affordable housing. The figure of 10% social housing in the example discussed is not based on any assessment of social need. Markets are analysed, but not affordability. (Stuart Cameron)

It's greed rather than need – only for profit (Bill Lambie)

But housing professionals have also signed up to this, which is now the only game in town. There is a false consciousness (Stuart Cameron)

There is a mismanagement of language, like use of 'partnership' (John Bone)

Where do the new young professionals that the houses are built for come from/ (Paul Watt)

Different localities target different groups. E.g. some target couples when they move out of city centre to have a family.