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Ariane Burgess MSP
Convener Local Government, Housing and
Planning Committee

By email: localgov.committee@parliament.scot

19 December 2024

Dear Ariane,

Compulsory Sales Orders - Update

I am writing following the recent Parliamentary Debate on 19TH November, celebrating the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, to update on progress with the Scottish Government's Programme for Government commitment to consider the justification for, and practical operation of, Compulsory Sales Orders ("CSOs").

As I have previously set out, we do need to fully consider the introduction of compulsory sales measures against a complex practical and legal background, including compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights. Any process which involves the expropriation of property needs sufficient safeguards to ensure that it is proportionate, in the public interest and that fair compensation is paid.

Understanding how CSOs might work in practice, including the potential steps and safeguards built into in any process, is fundamental to considering whether they would provide an effective and workable additional land assembly and enforcement tool, including in the context of tackling long term empty homes.

To assist with our consideration, we have asked the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to explore with local authorities and empty homes officers the practicalities of a potential compulsory sales process for long term empty homes, and the extent to which this might add value to existing compulsory purchase powers. I expect this work to be completed early next year and am happy to provide a further update to the Committee at that point.

Of course, local authorities do already have compulsory purchase powers which can be used for a range of purposes, including housing, and are currently being used effectively by some local authorities to bring long term empty homes back into use. However, we do recognise that the system needs to be modernised, and our 2024-25 Programme for Government included a commitment to publish a public consultation on a comprehensive package of compulsory purchase reforms in 2025. More information about the compulsory purchase

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reform programme can be found via the link below, along with the recently published progress report.

[Planning and Architecture Compulsory Purchase Reform - Planning and Architecture](#)

More generally, we are continuing to tackle empty homes as a priority, and our investment of £3.7 in the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to date is making a real difference with almost 11,000 homes returned to use since 2010.

I hope this update is helpful and look forward to providing further information at the conclusion of the work by the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership.

Yours sincerely,

PAUL MCLENNAN

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