

Council Response Form

Council action planned in response to the recommendations issued by Audit Wales

Council: Ceredigion County Council

Report title: 'Cracks in the Foundations' – Building Safety in Wales

Issue date: August 2023

Document reference:

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
R1	<p>The Welsh Government should provide greater clarity on the implementation and expectations of the Building Safety Act to ensure local authorities are able to deliver their new responsibilities and duties. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarifying the detailed requirements for competency and registration to enable local authorities to plan for these changes; 	Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.	N/A	N/A

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a specific timetable for development and adoption of Welsh guidance to ensure local authorities and others can deliver their duties; and • the Welsh Government should work with key stakeholders, such as LABC Cymru, to support understanding and implementation when guidance is issued. 			
R2	The Welsh Government should ensure that it has sufficient resources to deliver the legislative and policy changes for Building Safety to reduce implementation risks.	Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.	N/A	N/A
R3	The Welsh Government should review the mixed market approach to building control and conclude whether it	Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.	N/A	N/A

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	<p>continues to be appropriate and effective in keeping buildings in Wales safe. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess the status quo against potential changes, such as the model of delivery in Scotland; • be framed around a SWOT analysis of costs, benefits, threats, and risks; • draw on existing research to identify good practice; <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be published and agree a way forward. 			
R4	<p>The Welsh Government should increase its oversight and management of the building control sector to ensure there is a robust assurance system in place for building control and safety by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a national performance framework with clear 	<p>Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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	<p>service standards to promote consistency of service.</p> <p>This should also include outcome measures to monitor performance and an evaluation and reporting framework for scrutiny.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a national building safety workforce plan to address the most significant risks facing the sector. This should include regular data collection and publication, as well as coverage of priorities, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a greater focus on trainees to mitigate succession risks; - establishing aligned, national job roles matched to competency levels; - increasing the diversity of the sector to ensure it reflects modern Wales; and 			

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	<p>- specific funding to enable surveyors to obtain and maintain competence should also be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Welsh Government should explore with the further education sector how best to provide building control training in Wales to support succession planning, skills development, and competency. 			
R5	<p>Local authorities should develop local action plans that articulate a clear vision for building control to be able to plan effectively to implement the requirements of the Act.</p> <p>The Plans should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be based on an assessment of local risks and include mitigation actions; • set out how building control services will be resourced to deliver all their statutory responsibilities; 	<p>Ceredigion County Council have implemented the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022, and all registered Building Control Officers have undertaken the competency framework exams and passed at the level applied for. The Local Authority has developed a Local Action Plan a copy of which is attached that outlines the risks and mitigations evident in the Building Control service.</p>	Complete	<p>Roger Turner (RT) Sarah Groves-Phillips (SGP)</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illustrate the key role of building control in ensuring safe buildings and be linked to well-being objectives and other corporate objectives; and • include outcome measures that are focused on all building control services, not just dangerous structures. 			
R6	<p>Local authorities should urgently review their financial management of building control and ensure they are fully complying with Regulations. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a timetable of regular fee reviews to ensure charges reflect the cost of services and comply with the Regulations; • annually reporting and publishing financial performance in line with the Regulations; 	<p>The Council are reviewing aspects of our financial management of Building Control to ensure that we are compliant with the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010. A review has been done previously in accordance with the CIPFA Code. If the outcome of this review results in a need to change the fee structure of the service, then this is likely to take effect for the next fee setting period (i.e. in readiness for the 25/26 financial year)</p>	April 2025	RT and SGP and the finance section.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring relevant staff are provided with training to ensure they apply the Regulations and interpret financial reporting correctly; and • revise fees to ensure services are charged for in accordance with the Regulations. 	together with any amendments, as required, to the publication of Building Control financial information.		
R7	Local authorities should work with partners to make better use of limited resources by exploring the potential for collaboration and regionalisation to strengthen resilience through a cost benefit analysis of partnering with neighbouring authorities, establishing joint ventures and/or adopting a regional model where beneficial.	<p>The benefits of shared services are probably more evident in urban environments such as south Wales than rural Ceredigion. Cross boundary working, in terms of inspections, would be difficult due to the geography and proximity of Ceredigion to urban centres.</p> <p>Assistance with the Plan checking function, which is largely an online process, is more feasible but there remains valid reasons for officers to plan check sites they will later inspect.</p> <p>LABC are currently internally consulting upon a report outlining possible delivery models for Building Control. This includes maintaining 'in-</p>	Ongoing due to external consultation and stakeholder engagement	RT

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		<p>house' control, 'shared service working', 'Wholly owned companies', 'Mutuals' and possible 'Outsourcing' models. This document is currently being studied and discussed by Building Control sections across Wales with a view to fully exploring the collaboration opportunities available.</p> <p>In view of the ongoing national conversation on this issue it would not be prudent to make a decision as to how to amend the current model but following publication of the recommended routes for regional working the Local Authority will review and build on the recommendations where appropriate.</p>		
R8	<p>Local authorities should review risk management processes to ensure that risks are systematically identified, recorded, assessed, mitigated and subject to regular evaluation and scrutiny.</p>	<p>A newly updated Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Framework was published and adopted by the Local Authority in February 2024 and all Building Control Officers have been made aware of it and asked to comply with relevant sections.</p>	<p>The updated Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Framework was endorsed by Cabinet on 20/2/2024 and approved.</p>	Rob Starr

