



By Email

gordon.lyons@mla.niassembly.gov.uk

Mr Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Housing
Department for Communities
NI Executive
Room 354, Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST, BT4 3XX

12 February 2024

Dear Mr Lyons

REVITALISATION OF THE NI HOUSING EXECUTIVE (NIHE)

Firstly, may I extend warm congratulations on your appointment as the Minister for the Department for Communities and wish you many successful years in post, a role which covers a wide range of critical public services, including public housing.

Secondly, I write to you as the NIPSA negotiating official with responsibility for the NI Housing Executive, on behalf of our members who are dedicated to providing lynchpin public and social housing services to those most in need across NI.

You will be aware that the NIHE is undergoing a Revitalisation Project to ensure that it can meet the ever growing demands for safe and affordable housing across NI at the point of need. You will also be familiar with the many funding challenges that the organisation has endured over many years which has led to the current housing crisis, with the number of those presenting as homeless, in temporary accommodation and without a safe roof over their head at an all-time high and still growing.

NIPSA has worked very constructively with the NIHE and indeed a series of Housing Ministers over many years to suggest ways in which to meet current and future funding challenges, based upon the principle of provision of housing as a fundamental human right. We have also published several research papers on this critical matter, including most recently the "Spectre of Privatisation", which we commissioned highly acclaimed expert Professor Stewart Smyth to write. This publication is attached for your ease of reference. It provides a brief history of the difficulties facing public and social housing funding in NI, several case studies from other jurisdictions and also a set of principles and recommendations which we believe establishes that it is possible to fund the NIHE and lift the borrowing restrictions on it, if our politicians choose to do so, to meet the public and social housing requirements of our citizens in need of support in our society both now and into NI's future.

NIPSA secured very positive commitments from your predecessor that the NIHE would not be privatised and that a new funding model which permitted the NIHE to borrow, as in other jurisdictions and housing organisations, which would ensure the future success of this public body with minimal change to its structure and staffing. We understand that the NIHE is



heavily committed to this and detailed preparation work is ongoing to realise this very objective.

NIPSA would ask that this issue is an immediate focus of the NI Executive and would call upon you as Housing Minister to ensure that it forms a key political commitment, with sustainable budgetary long-term backing going forward.

Finally, NIPSA would be very pleased to meet with you to discuss should that be helpful to you and looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Smyth'.

Kim Smyth
NIPSA Assistant Secretary

Encl