

Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill

Written submission to the Infrastructure and Capital investment Committee

Fresh Student Living

Fresh Student Living is a specialist Manager of Student Accommodation across the UK including Scotland. We are willing to express our concerns about the proposed Private Housing (Tenancies) Bill and its application to the Purpose Built Student Accommodation Sector (PBSA).

PBSA provides a specialist housing provision and service directly linked to supporting students during their time at University. The sector works closely with universities to ensure good quality well managed accommodation is available to students co terminus with their studies.

Whilst the changes in the proposed legislation may strengthen general tenants position in the private rented market, they are contrary to the underlying purpose of PBSA which is intrinsically linked to the University timetable – this point appears to have been recognised in the exemption for universities. The PBSA is quality accredited through ANUK which ensure tenancies are conducted and managed correctly and professionally.

We would strongly urge you to consider exempting PBSA from the legislation in line with universities to ensure that the sector can continue to contribute to providing specific well managed accommodation for students.

Unlike the private rented sector PBSA can only let to students, and cannot house other need groups to fill ad hoc vacancies. If the Bill goes ahead as currently drafted, some of the key implications in Scotland may be:

- Students choosing to study at non Scottish universities if they are unable to be confident about securing good quality purpose build accommodation;
- Students turning more to the HMO sector, reducing accommodation for other housing need groups, and denying students the 'student experience' and pastoral and welfare support that they receive in PBSA;
- Impacting on location choices for International Students, which is contrary to the recruitment strategies for the key Universities who rely on the Income generation of International students;
- Talent drain from Scotland, as it is recognised that a number of students remain in the City in which they study, retaining their talent within the local economy and supporting key industries;
- Reduction of appetite from investors for new student schemes within Scotland;

- Potential impact on rents as Owners may be left with increasing void periods if the letting period becomes dis connected from the academic cycle.

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