

## HEALTHY HOMES AND BUILDINGS APPG

**AGM + Bridging the Healthy Homes Gap: Why levelling up must improve health and wellbeing**

**17:00-18:45, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House, House of Commons**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Attendees:

- Jim Shannon MP
- Debbie Abrahams MP
- Margaret Ferrier MP
- Rushanara Ali MP
- Ian Murry MP
- Lord Bethell
- Baroness Prashar
- Lord Best

The following Parliamentarians were confirmed as officers:

- Chair: Jim Shannon MP – Democratic Unionist Party (nominated by Debbie Abrahams MP)
- Co-Chair: Mary Glendon MP – Labour
- Secretary: Derek Thomas MP – Conservative
- Treasurer: Paul Girvan MP – Democratic Unionist Party
- Vice-Chair: Lord Best – Crossbench
- Vice-Chair: Tony Lloyd MP – Labour
- Vice-Chair: Earl John Lytton – Crossbench
- Vice-Chair: Lord Carrington – Crossbench
- Vice-Chair: Marco Longhi MP – Conservative
- Vice-Chair: Lord Stunell – Liberal Democrat

### CONFIRMATION OF REGISTERED CONTACT AND SECRETARIAT

DevoConnect were confirmed as the Secretariat and point of contact

### APPROVAL OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The Income and Expenditure Statement was approved

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## CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

### Jim Shannon MP, Chair, Healthy Homes and Buildings APPG

- Jim Shannon MP welcomed everyone and thanked people for coming. He noted that he will shortly have to return to the Chamber, and so will pass the Chair to Gill Morris from the Secretariat of the Healthy Homes and Buildings APPG.
- Today are launching our new 'Bridging the Gaps' series. Firstly, some context in what are interesting times.
- In 2018 the Healthy Homes and Buildings APPG White Paper, Building Our Future: Laying the Foundations for Healthy Homes and Buildings, set out clear recommendations for Government to adopt a more holistic and joined-up approach to tackle the problem of unhealthy homes and buildings. In wake of the pandemic, we know that the most vulnerable in society are more likely to live in unhealthy homes which are damp, energy inefficient, noisy, poorly ventilated and crowded. In the context of rising energy prices and a cost-of-living crisis, it is even more important than ever that the Government acts to ensure our homes and buildings do not cause or exacerbate poor health and wellbeing. The cost to society is too vast and it is the poorest in our society who are particularly affected.
- Therefore we are launching our Bridging the Gaps series which will look at the Government's levelling up agenda, its Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Decent Homes Standard Review, the Building Safety Bill, and updated planning reforms to ask what more can be done to build and retrofit homes that improve the nation's health and wellbeing.
- In particular, in light of Lord Crisp's and other Peers' valiant efforts to amend the Building Safety Act to acknowledge health and wellbeing we are particularly pleased to welcome him and other colleagues from the Other Place here today.
- Our Bridging the Gaps series will aim to tackle the key question – what is, and what should be, the Government's definition of health and wellbeing when applied to the built environment and housing policy?
- I am also delighted that we are going to hear a stellar practitioner panel that will highlight the gaps which need to be bridged in the context of the cost of living crisis and how this impacts the nation's health and wellbeing. In particular, we will look at the gaps in Government policy and how and why there needs to be a more joined-up and holistic approach to the growing problems caused by unhealthy homes and buildings.
- Without further ado, I will pass over to Jade Lewis, Chief Executive at the Sustainable Energy Association, to kick off our practitioner panel.

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**Gill Morris, Secretariat, HHB APPG**

- Noted the excellent attendance
- Thanked people for the support so far in the campaign including

**BRIDGING THE GAPS**

**Jade Lewis, Chief Executive, Sustainable Energy Association**

- Health and wellbeing should be a number one priority. But the recent Queen's Speech had little reference to Health and well-being.
- There is not currently the right governance structure for Healthy Homes and Buildings. There needs to be joined-up thinking across Government which does not exist.
- While there is the Decent Homes Standards Review, there is not a 'Healthy Homes and Buildings' strategy. There is a missed opportunity to decarbonise homes while building healthier buildings and places.
- A national league table of housing standards could drive change
- In the White Paper, we defined health along the lines of the WHO. Homes and Buildings must maximise physical and mental health and wellbeing. We want to see a national standard focused on the occupants' health.
- There is a skills gap in the delivery of decarbonised and healthy homes and buildings.

**Dan Meredith, Manager of External Affairs, E.ON**

- The energy industry has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. E.ON no longer have big power systems which are delivered to the grid and homes. Over time, new technologies are happy and it is around decentralised energy – they do not have big power energy any more.
- Particularly around energy efficiency, there are great things such as health benefits. The amount of money the NHS spends each year due to people living in damp and poor homes is huge. We could help the NHS if we did energy efficiency better in homes.
- As E.ON are going into people's homes across the country, people realise they could install non-energy related apartments.
- The bottom line stems from energy. E.ON have been doing energy efficiency at scale for several years. What they do not have is a reason to do energy efficiency well for everyone else. Between 50-80% of the population do not have the inkling to do energy efficiency as they should.
- Every time Government has tried to do energy efficiency, it has tried to 'reinvent the wheel'. But the industry knows what works – such as the Eco programme, aimed at vulnerable people.

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## Adam Scorer, Chief Executive, National Energy Action

- National Energy Action's mission is that everyone should be able to keep their homes warm and safe.
- For the money, bad homes can ruin lives. Bad homes can cause and exacerbate ill health. In the winter, people will have to do unsafe activities such as cooking on barbecues and unsafe forms of heating due to the cost of living crisis. A crisis means 6.4 million households – which will set to increase – mean behaviours will become even worse
- We need to pray we have a warm winter – otherwise, it will be catastrophic. Vulnerable people will suffer from the cost of living crisis.
- There is a little bit left of spring, the summer and some of the autumn. We need to use this time to identify those at risk. What agencies can be used to reach out to them and help? What is it going to take for the most vulnerable to get intrusive energy efficiency measures to improve homes?
- When we think about the built environment and retrofit, we must take the opportunity of the cost of living crisis and hard wire it into our thinking for what the priorities are.

## Edward Hobson, Director of Place, Design Council

- The Design Council aim to make people's lives better through design.
- Looking at the context of housing and the built environment, better and healthier homes in terms of thermal comfort, noise and air quality etc. The environment around the home is also vital.
- Three-quarters of recent developments were of poor thermal quality. Looking at the levelling up proposals, there should be three points. First, it should be noted that designing is about the place as much as the homes. The quality of new development needs to be raised – but 50% of local authorities do not have enough capacity. Homes England should develop a role for placemaking. They should deliver exemplary places, setting the bar higher.
- Second, numerous pilot initiatives have failed to drive retrofit. The disconnect is understanding what people want in their homes. There is an opportunity in using design to understand the need.
- Third, design capacity in local authorities. They need to be helped with design – identify the key things they need to pursue.
- The final recommendation is the opportunity for whole-systems reform. There is a cost of living the way that we do crisis, but the solutions can only be solved with whole-systems reform.

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## WHY LEVELLING UP MUST IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### Gill Morris:

- Gave background to the Crisp Amendment, quoting Lord Crisp's words in the House of Lords asking Minister Simon Greenhalgh for a meeting to recognise the need for holistic Healthy Homes and Buildings.

### Lord Crisp

- Their background is in health – and was formerly CEO of the NHS. Coming at it from an angle of health. There is great momentum and energy, including from the HHB White Paper.
- Health and housing are and have been linked. If one thinks about basic needs, you think about shelter and food – how do you give someone a decent life? It is necessary to encourage health as well as prevent ill health. Vital to a healthy life is a healthy community.
- The amendment is very simple – saying safety needs to be defined to include health and wellbeing. This makes people think about what they are doing differently. A meeting with the Minister should happen in the not-so-distance future.
- The Healthy Homes Act puts a duty on developers to think about health and wellbeing. The campaign will continue in Parliament – people coming together, not just to avoid harm, but to do something positive.

### Baroness Prashar

- Grateful for the work the TCPA have done – there is a positive direction of travel, driven in particular by Lord Best and Lord Crisp.
- Previous speakers accurately described issues.
- Important that health and wellbeing are enshrined in legislation. It is difficult to define health and wellbeing in the built environment – there is groundwork which is being laid.
- Safety should include health and wellbeing and should be enshrined. As it cuts across different regimes, it should be integrated within policy.
- Looking at the levelling up agenda, you cannot just invest in infrastructure but must invest in people.
- One of the major issues is that we do not have a joined-up Government. We are beginning to get some sort of coalition.

### Lord Bethell

- Saw the impact of unhealthy homes during the pandemic. Had gone through the numbers of people going to ICU units. Bad housing drove the Covid-19 disease – it was one of the most consistent factors in terms of spread. Bad housing in terms of cramped conditions.

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Bad housing in terms of dampness and draught makes people less able to fight the disease. Bad housing as people were not engaged with the civil communities and so were not engaged with health services

- There is a clear link between health, housing and the economy. We are going into the recession – so perhaps it is not in front of people’s minds – but it should not slip off the agenda.
- For Lord Crisp, the connection between health and wellbeing is clear in people’s minds. However, at the moment Government are not liking health and wellbeing in the built environment. They should see for themselves the immediate moral, economic and health link – but they are not linking. The Crisp debate showed a ray of light – but there is a long way to go.
- There should be a bigger connection between developers and the NHS. The default mentality is that poor health is because the NHS is not doing enough. But we must consider the social determinant of the nation’s health, which can only happen if the health and housing industry work much closer together.
- Everything that needs to change requires people to bring together people across the House to get the machine of Government working. There is no Minister who is going to own this on his or her prerogative. The campaign has to own the problem.

### Lord Young

- We have to end up with how we make this change happen. Government operates in silos – they do not do things holistically, co-ordinate and integrate. The levelling up agenda, however, is a much more holistic approach. Two of the missions are specifically about health.
- It is also about a lot of money. We can say all the words about integration, but Government needs to take the lead. The Levelling Up Department could lead to integration and joining up, and there is now a Cabinet Sub-Committee.
- If you invest in healthy transport, healthy homes, etc. – areas focused on health – you get the money back. There is enough cash coming down the track which can be used. This is an opportunity.

### Jade Lewis

- Health should be on a par with climate change and net zero.

### Adam Scorer

- Campaigns need to be more pointed as to what they are asking for and why.

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**Edward Hobson**

- There is an opportunity to accelerate community involvement in the design of great places.

**Dan Meredith, Manager of External Affairs, E.ON**

- Some people in this country have energy inefficient homes and no jobs. There is a solution – train those people to do retrofit.

**18:00 DISCUSSION AND Q&A**

**Audience member**

- Who is taking this crisis to the front line? People who can see the poverty and experience and the impact the policy can have?

**Laura Fatar, PolicyConnect and APPG for Carbon Monoxide Safety**

- There are reflections of the integration of health and wellbeing, particularly in local authorities. Perhaps it is joined up at a different Governmental level?

**Bill, Healthy Homes Solutions**

- How do we get access to MPs to get our point across?

**Tim Pye**

- Lead exposure should be added to the Healthy Homes and Buildings White Paper due to the prevalence of lead poisoning.

**Audience Member**

- Sunlight is a natural source of energy and mental well-being and it must be utilised in the built environment.

**Audience Member**

- Children should not be growing up in damp houses and houses without doors on. We need to be braver and quicker. Children are losing their life chances to poor housing.

**Peter Rogers, Institute of Acoustics**

- Particularly welcomes the issues of noise in the White Paper. Health and a sustainable way of living should be linked. It would be a fantastic way to hook on to the campaign.

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**Gill Morris, Secretariat, Healthy Homes and Buildings APPG**

- People are beginning to 'get' the issue. This series will look at where the gaps are and bring people together.

**Baroness Prashar**

- APPGs could come together to provide a forum to join up health and wellbeing.

**Lord Crisp**

- We need the arguments we can use to politicians. Everything in health is a priority – lead paint, carbon monoxide, etc. What is it that will shift the Government? It is a competitive game.
- People continuously make arguments that money can be saved. The point is – for relevantly cheap expenditure, you can get people going into homes and changing lives. This is the sort of argument which works for the Government.

**18:45 ENDS**

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