# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Establishment of a Land Division within Welsh Government** |
| **DATE**  | **24 September 2019** |
| **BY** | **Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Finance and Trefnydd** |

I am pleased to inform Members that I have established a new division to further enhance this Government’s mission to increase the number of new homes built across Wales.

The new Land Division will promote joint working between public sector bodies to unlock the potential of our public land for development. It is tasked to ensure we make the best use of the resources available, and provide a mechanism for sharing expertise so that we can see a concerted public sector response to the shortage of social housing, and to the development of public land for wider policy benefit.

The establishment of this division is a clear demonstration from Government that we are serious about accelerating the development of public sector land. With this new approach we are putting in place the resources and structures to help delivery this major cross government priority.

As a responsible Government, we have been very active in seeking to manage our financial resources. Extracting the maximum public benefit from our property assets has been part of that process. We have been exploring how we can take a more strategic approach to how our own assets are managed. Part of that work is about redefining how we think of value for money. This includes reflecting on our responsibilities in terms of climate change and safeguarding biodiversity, for example, and considering what the wider benefits could be for local communities across Wales.

The division will take over responsibility for a number of Welsh Government owned sites, which will be promoted to support the delivery of our wider government priorities - including a strong focus on using these assets to help deliver more social housing in Wales.

This initial drive will also seek to utilise these assets to support the emerging housing policy objectives, including the increased provision of more social housing across Wales. In addition, developments will align to our social housing space standards, increasing public housing stock numbers whilst also taking opportunities to deliver new zero carbon developments. We will also be able to press for innovative designs, encourage greater biodiversity and make greater use of modern methods of construction, building on the experience gained through the Innovative Housing Programme.

The new division will also lead on the Welsh Government’s Corporate Asset Management Strategy for land and building assets, ensuring that they deliver greater public value for the people of Wales. It is crucial that we are able to work across government to provide the assurance that maximum policy value is being derived from our land and buildings asset base.

Whilst the identification of and delivery of land for housing is important, the division is also charged with increasing the pace and scale of the work already being taken forward via ‘Ystadau Cymru,’ which has a remit of ‘Working together to make the best use of the public estate’. It encourages excellence in the active management of the Welsh public sector estate through strategic collaboration and adopting a place-based approach to make the best use of our collective resources.