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Collective Custom Build is a web-based advocacy tool that makes the case for developing Collective Custom Build as part of a more diverse housing market in the UK. It uses an animated narrative to curate key research findings, revealing them as peelbacks at key points in its argument.

Collective Custom Build is part of the *Motivating Collective Custom Build* practice-based research project within the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *Home Improvements Knowledge Exchange* based at the University of Sheffield. *Motivating Collective Custom Build* is led jointly by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Ash Sakula Architects and Design for Homes.

POLITICAL WAVE

THERE IS STRONG CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL INTEREST IN COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

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Summary

There is a political wave of support for self-provided housing solutions - such as Collective Custom Build – which is due in no small part to the added value that can be achieved in terms of other policy objectives by procuring housing in this way – such as providing meaningfully affordable housing, strengthening local communities and economies and engaging people with an environmental agenda.

Successive Housing Ministers have voiced support for the ‘self-build’ sector, described as a reflection of the Government’s Localism agenda¹ (Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3; Stevens, 2013a, 2013b) and central Government shows clear intention to implement the recommendations of the Government-Industry Self-Build Working Group, which secured consideration for ‘Custom Build’ in the latest UK central Government Housing Strategy (DCLG, 2011)² and prompted the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) to actively engage in research about self-build housing practices internationally (Owen et al., 2011).

At the time of writing, there has been a public commitment to form an All Party Group on Self-Build and Independent Housing³ to *raise awareness and promote a better understanding of the Self-Build*

¹ Within the localism framework, represented by the Localism Act 2012 and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local authorities are encouraged to respond to their community’s needs and preferences, including the needs of those that wish to build their own homes.

² See also ‘Statute & Policy’ in this study.

³ All Party Groups (APGs) are informal, cross-party, interest groups that have no official status within Parliament and are not accorded any powers or funding by it. They should not be confused with select committees, which are formal institutions of the House. There are a great number of APGs. They cover many and diverse fields such as health, education and transport. Some exist to foster links with other countries and parliaments, others to address a particular issue, and a couple exist mainly for social reasons (eg some sports groups). Some APGs have existed for many decades whereas others come and go in response to issues of the day. APGs are essentially run by and for Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. Mostly they are run by backbenchers, though ministers may also be officers or members of APGs and many groups choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities (UK Parliament, 2013).

It is also worth noting that All Part Parliamentary Groups also exist for Sustainable Housing, Housing & Care For Older People and a variety of other groups focusing on social cohesion, the built and natural environments (UK Parliament, 2013), which could be said to have complimentary agendas to the Self-Build and Independent Housing group.

sector among MPs⁴, whilst the Communities and Local Government Select Committee has already made an inquiry into, and report on, the financing of new housing supply - highlighting that 'Government, local authorities and lenders must work together to remove the barriers that currently restrict self-build and commit to getting pilot schemes underway very quickly' (Betts, 2013). The committee also recommended that Government 'establish a fund to incentivise local authorities to support pilot "volume self build" schemes by allocating sites and taking a flexible approach to planning'; adding that there is 'no reason why the first pilots could not be up and running in two years' time [by]...2014' (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2012).

There is also serious speculation in central Government as to the role that policy can play in developing a more diverse housing market. Think-tank, the Policy Exchange recently proposed a self-build policy that it argues could be as big and popular as Right-to-Buy⁵, detailing the political value in adopting a policy that could be both effective and popular:

"This policy would supply around 110,000 new self-build homes in its first full year. It would create a new broad base of support for housing. Each local authority should create a new waiting list for those who want a self-build plot. Households could register on it and transfer plots they obtained to immediate family members; siblings, parents, children and step-relatives. Whole families would support more homes because it could benefit a close family member. This new approach is easy to summarise: popular homes. This scheme ensures voters who become homeowners connect it with government action on their behalf.

This proposal represents a last chance to turn around housing before 2015. It should facilitate the building of more than 210,000 homes a year in 2014. But that is only the beginning. Over time, it could help millions of families to build the decent family home they need and want. It would do so while making building more homes into a politically winning move. This self-build policy could be as big and popular as Rights-to-Buy. It could be the next phase in this country's story of home ownership. It could be a major boost to growth while actually gaining votes."

(Morton, 2013, p. 5)

Whilst such proposals remain as speculation, A Right To Build is indicative of the fact that self-provision is being taken seriously by central Government as part of the future of housing supply in the UK.

It should be noted that 'self-build' - in the context of an evident housing crisis acknowledge across political parties - represents a particularly active and contested political field. The idea of supporting people in building their own homes has cross-party appeal, resonating equally well with both free-market and social democrat politics, and it is therefore reasonable to suggest the development of viable strategies for self-provision - such as Collective Custom Build - will remain resilient through shifts in the party-political landscape.

References

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⁴ Richard Bacon MP, introducing the 'Build-it-yourself?' report by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York (A. Wallace, J. Ford, and D. Quilgars, 2013), at a parliamentary launch in London on 16th May 2013. However, as of June 7th 2013, the Group does not yet appear on Parliament's official Register of All Party Groups (UK Parliament, 2013).

⁵ The Right to Buy scheme is a policy in the [United Kingdom](#) which gives *secure tenants* of [councils](#) and some [housing associations](#) the [legal right](#) to buy, at a large discount, the home they are living in. There is also a Right to Acquire for [assured tenants](#) of housing association homes built with public subsidy after 1997, at a smaller discount. It is estimated that approximately 2 million homes in the UK have been sold in this manner since 1980.

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This excerpt is taken from www.collectivecustombuild.org and forms a single element of a wider research study. Please visit the website or contact us at collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk for more information.



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