

**Date:** 30 April 10

**Consultation:** Land Law Reform – Supplementary Consultation Paper  
NILC 3 - Ground Rents

## Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents registered and non-registered housing associations in Northern Ireland. Collectively, our members provide over 30,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at [www.nifha.org](http://www.nifha.org)

## Background

Of the 30,000 homes owned by housing associations in N Ireland:

- approximately 50% are houses or bungalows; 45% are flats and the rest are Houses in Multiple Occupation
- approximately 95% of the houses and bungalows were built since 1976; most of the other 5% are small houses built at the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century and rehabilitated by housing associations since 1976
- the great majority of the rehabilitated houses are concentrated in small areas of Belfast and a few other large settlements
- the great majority of the rehabilitated houses are owned by about twenty housing associations, most of which are small, community-based organisations
- uniquely, the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association specialises in offering equity sharing tenure. Its stock of about 4,500 homes comprises a mixture of houses and apartments of varying ages, widely distributed across Northern Ireland. They were generally bought as individual properties rather than groups of properties.

## Comments

NIFHA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and supports the aim of simplifying land law as much as possible.

The Federation agrees that the existing provisions for the voluntary redemption of ground rents should be strengthened.

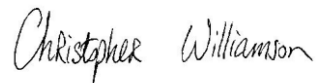
We are not opposed to a system of mandatory redemption **provided** it allows housing associations (which are responsible for paying many ground rents) to have appropriate exemptions. Otherwise they would have to pay substantial sums of money within a short space of time and this would have an adverse effect on the social housing development programme by diverting scarce public grant and/or private borrowing capacity from the construction

programme which is so important in meeting social need and sustaining the local economy.

The special position of equity sharing leases should also be recognised given the work of Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association Limited and the fact that the other registered housing associations offer an equity sharing option as a variant of the statutory Houses Sales Scheme (commonly known as the tenant's "right to buy").

The Federation would be happy to provide further information and/or engage in discussion with the Law Commission on the implications of ground rent redemption for housing associations.

**Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Williamson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Christopher Williamson**  
Chief Executive