



Right to Build Consumer Survey

December 2014



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3071 Total Responses

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Executive Summary

A consultation on The Right to Build legislation was instigated by the Government and subsequently run by the Planning Directorate within the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Government consultation ran from 23 October 2014 to 18 December 2014.

To help inform the discussion, a survey was carried out by the National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) in response to the Government consultation from 4 December 2014 to 18 December 2014. This NaCSBA survey contained five questions as set out below; Questions 1-4 had a yes, no and not sure option of response, with additional comments possible, and Q5 had three set answers with option to tick one, two or all three of them, and also provided additional room for comment. There were a total of 3071 responses to the NaCSBA survey.

The five questions asked were:

1. If you are a prospective custom or self-builder would you be interested in using the new Right to Build?
2. The government is currently proposing that you must have a local connection in the borough where you want to build/register. Do you agree that this is a fair restriction?
3. The Bill currently proposes that you will only be able register with one Local Authority at any one time. Would you prefer the ability to register with more than one Local Authority at the same time?
4. Would you be prepared to demonstrate that you can afford to proceed with a project as a test of eligibility for registration?
5. What additional support would you like to see provided by the Local Authority to assist you with your project?

General trends emerged from the responses produced with the vast majority of respondents in favour of the Right to Build. Land availability (and/or affordability) and planning issues were the most commonly reported issues with the need for credible plots that cover with a range of price, size and location options, and where there is a transparent process for purchase.

The majority of respondents believe that we should have the right to live where we want and that we should not restrict population mobility. Although there is a clear understanding that priority should be given to locals in order to make owning your own home both a real possibility and affordable option and not something which is the exclusive domain of the wealthy or property developers.

Flexibility of location was another important factor with many respondents wanting to be able to apply to more than one Local Authority, particularly in the case where they lived on a boundary. This was also important for those who may have to relocate for work, who are members of the Military, about to retire or who are returning to the UK from abroad.

An eligibility assessment of affordability was not a major issue for most respondents but many would like to know more about the requirements and have transparent processes in place. Assessment should be kept simple with many believing it should be similar to the process of buying a house or obtaining a mortgage agreement. Secured finance should not necessarily be available at the point of registration.

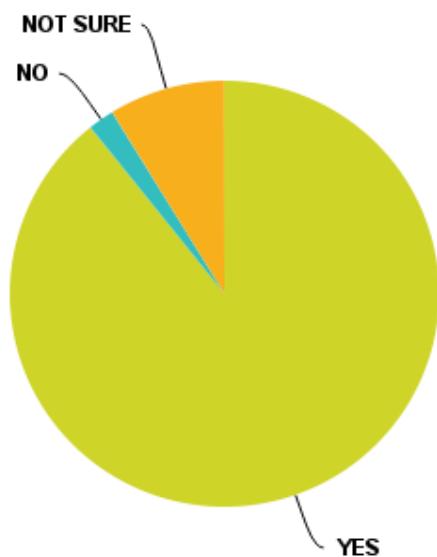
Nearly 60% of the responses to Q5 related to planning issues highlighting the importance of this issue for those taking part. Availability and affordability of land along with access to funding were other major issues brought up in the comments.

Q1: If you are a prospective custom or self-builder would you be interested in using the new Right to Build?

Quantitative results

Yes	2,670	89.27%
No	59	1.97%
Not Sure	262	8.76%

2,991 answered, 80 skipped



Qualitative interpretation for the comments made

2,991 responses were made to Q1 with 403 choosing to add further comments. Of these comments 36 were individual personal statements with no relevant interpretation. From the other comments made several themes emerged which have been expanded on below.
Note: Percentages referred to below are based on the 367 comments made (excluding the personal statements) and not the total responses to the question. These percentages have been rounded.

16% of respondents were openly encouraged, supportive and excited that this could help to make self build housing more affordable and therefore more likely.

Finding land with planning permission is the most difficult obstacle to overcome according to 12% and 5% would like to know that land supply will keep up with demand and therefore help to keep prices more stable.

15% said that plot solutions must be credible, cover a range of price, size and location options, and have a transparent process for purchase and it was the belief of 8% that Local Authorities, and especially their Planning teams, must reform, embrace change and/or allow more design innovation.

6% of the respondents said they already own land and just wanted to get planning permission with another 5% being veteran self-builders or currently on site and mid-project.

1-5% (for each response) included:

- 5% implied that this must not allow builders or developers to buy dedicated self-build plots so that individuals are not precluded and houses are built as homes and not just for profit.
- 4% showed a general mistrust of politicians, statutes and Local Authorities in being able to make effective change without bureaucratic consequences.
- There was small amount (3%) of general misinterpretation of the proposed legislation.
- 2% state that it must not be detrimental to current Green Belt policies.
- 2% want this to enable/help with mobility
- 2% wanted the legislation to also apply in Scotland
- 2% think that this should improve overall specification quality and/or design standards.
- 2% would like a mechanism (Section 106 or otherwise) to force larger developers to allocate some land on their sites for self build.
- 2% believe that no changes are necessary to the current system.
- For 1% this is a good solution for those with disabilities.
- 1% want this to cater for groups and co-housing schemes.
- 1% want to ensure this gets to rural areas and/or would ideally like to have a rural solution with land.

<1% (for each response) responses included:

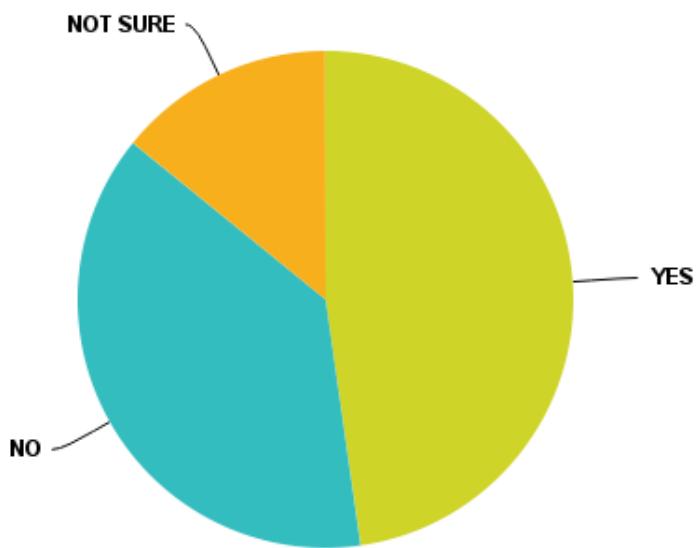
- Mortgages are still a problem.
- Right to Build might reduce Nimby impact.
- Grant aid required please.
- Would like to build off-grid and with all my own services.
- Must not increase Council costs.
- Must insist on Passivhaus or minimum ECO standards.
- There should be no discrimination on who can buy these plots, i.e. why would builders not be able to take part?
- There should be no discrimination on who can buy these plots. i.e. how does someone prove they are a self builder?
- This should be a great opportunity to stay in one's borough and build.

Q2: The government is currently proposing that you must have a local connection in the borough where you want to build/register. Do you agree that this is a fair restriction?

Quantitative results

Yes	1,450	47.74%
No	1,157	38.10%
Not Sure	430	14.16%

3,047 answered, 34 skipped



Qualitative interpretation for the comments made

3,047 responses were made to Q2 with 782 choosing to add further comments. Of these comments 50 were individual personal statements with no relevant interpretation. From the other comments made several themes emerged which have been expanded on below.

Note: Percentages referred to below are based on the 732 comments made (excluding the personal statements) and not the total responses to the question. These percentages have been rounded.

24% believe that we should all have a right to live where we want.

22% said that mobility of the population was important; The majority wanted general population mobility (5%), with mobility on retirement or lifestyle change important for 9% and relocation for work for another 5% with other responses relating to those returning to the UK from abroad (2%), but (<1%) that an influx to more desirable areas needs to be prevented.

13% believe that some form of restriction needs to be in place. The majority want this in order to prevent abuse of the system (2%) or second homes / developers moving in (8%), with numerous responses suggesting a minimum time limit from 6 months to up to 10 years

(3%) with a small number suggesting this applies only to UK nationals (<1%) or that there is a national register (<1%).

10% said the restriction should apply to a local area rather than a borough.

10% regarded the community as most important with priority given to locals (7%) or a clear connection to the community needed (3%).

9% wanted flexible restrictions; Flexibility included on a case-by-case assessment (<1%), a maximum % quota of incomers (<1%), with the majority wanting to see provision for those in the military or ex-military (3%) and general flexibility (6%).

5% believe the current proposals are too restrictive.

3% wanted to be able to look outside their borough due to the lack of affordable housing or land in the area.

3% agree with a need for commitment to the area or to the property you will live in (this is approximately a 50:50 split).

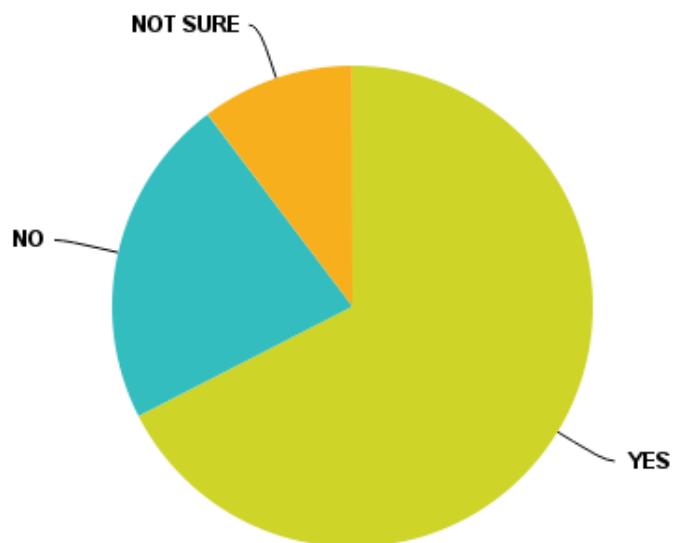
<1% (for each response) also showed concern about the details of the restrictions and the land that would be available. There were a couple of suggestions for a system of swaps between different Local Authorities.

Q3: The Bill currently proposes that you will only be able register with one Local Authority at any one time. Would you prefer the ability to register with more than one Local Authority at the same time?

Quantitative results

Yes	2,053	67.47%
No	677	22.25%
Not Sure	313	10.29%

3,043 answered, 28 skipped



Qualitative interpretation for the comments made

3,043 responses were made to Q3 with 716 choosing to add further comments. Of these comments 37 were individual personal statements with no relevant interpretation. From the other comments made several themes emerged which have been expanded on below.

Note: Percentages referred to below are based on the 679 comments made (excluding the personal statements) and not the total responses to the question. These percentages have been rounded.

50% of responses referred to location with 37% wanting the area to include adjacent authorities particularly for those on the border, 12% would like it to be a local area (possibly a radius from where they live) rather than bound by authorities and 2% wanted the location to be within commutable distance to work as there may be more than one suitable Authority covering this criteria.

Flexibility was also important to 17% of respondents. Availability of plots was of concern to 9% who wanted to be able to look elsewhere if none were available in their immediate area. 2% said that people's circumstances change so there should be flexibility in the system. Other concerns relating to flexibility included the mobility to move on retirement (2%) as lifestyle needs can change with retirement; you may have family or connections in several

areas (1%), being flexible may help to reduce waiting time particularly if one Authority has a long list and another has a short one (1%); some Local Authorities are more effective / flexible than others (1%) and some respondents would like the ability to change the local authority they would be registered with (1%).

8% of respondents said we should have a freedom of choice.

8% believe you should be able to register with more than one Authority but 5% think this number should be limited; 2% agree that once you have accepted a plot you are removed from all other lists and 1% would like to see this as an order of preference.

Another area of concern was the prevention of developers from being given priority over self-builders (5%) and general abuse of the system (2%) and so some of restriction should be applied.

A number of respondents (1%) think that this system of limiting the registration to one Local Authority will complicate the system.

According to 1%, most people know the area they want to live in so should not need to look beyond one Authority.

1% just believe this limitation is too restrictive.

<1% (for each response) responses included:

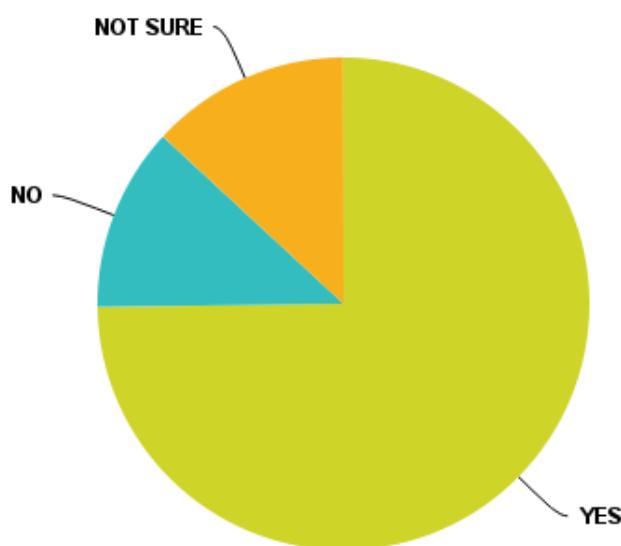
- There is a need to demonstrate commitment to the area.
- Priority should be given to locals.
- Registering with more than one local authority was OK provided there is a connection with the area.
- Control should not rest with Local Authorities.
- There should be a Charge for applying to areas not currently lived in.
- Applicants applying to more than one area should have to declare this.
- Any provision of plots should be on a First come first serve basis.
- There should be a National database rather than local ones.
- No registration should be required.
- You should only be able to register with one Authority at a time.
- The criteria for registering should only be that you are a UK citizen.
- It should be up to the Local Authority to decide restrictions.
- If you are only building one home then the location of it shouldn't matter.
- Legitimate reasons should be provided for applying to more than one Authority.

Q4: Would you be prepared to demonstrate that you can afford to proceed with a project as a test of eligibility for registration?

Quantitative results

Yes	2,267	74.79%
No	367	12.11%
Not Sure	397	13.10%

3,031 answered, 40 skipped



Qualitative interpretation for the comments made

3,031 responses were made to Q4 with 482 choosing to add further comments. Of these comments 34 were individual personal statements with no relevant interpretation. From the other comments made several themes emerged which have been expanded on below.

Note: Percentages referred to below are based on the 448 comments made (excluding the personal statements) and not the total responses to the question. These percentages have been rounded.

In principle 47% would be prepared to demonstrate affordability but with transparent processes in place; 11% agreed that you should have to prove you could afford the project up front; 9% believed that it would prevent time wasters / speculators; and 8% wanted this in place to prevent land being sold and not developed / partially developed.

5% said they thought this should include the proposed sale of their current home; 4% wanted an assessment based on affordability not money in bank and 2% wanted it to be similar to buying a house; 2% wanted loans / mortgages to be included; 1% said that a minimum % of funds should be available / accessible rather than the full amount; 1% suggested that a plan should be in place (maybe in the form of a business plan) to show intent where money is not available up front.

Of those agreeing 2% wanted any form of assessment kept simple; 1% would be prepared to undergo assessment but provided their privacy was guaranteed and information not sold to third parties; and 1% agreed that finance should be in place as it could help to determine the budget for the build and the appropriate plot.

12% agreed in principle but this depends on more information being available.

The definition of affordability needs to be clear according to 8%, along with what is included in the assessment (3%); 2% would like to know what proof would be required with 1% wanted to see how the assessment would work generally and <1% said it depended on the formality of the registration process.

Some respondents (9%) could foresee potential difficulties with assessment being required up front. 2% said that the cost of the build would depend on the plot; 2% were worried that finance would not be easy to secure in advance, with 5% worrying that mortgages in particular may be difficult to access or not be available until the plot was known/available.

More flexibility in the assessment was desired by 8% with 5% wanting flexibility due to many people's circumstances changing over time; a flexible attitude to funding was requested (1%) as was the ability to fund project in stages (3%).

6% said that this was too restrictive as they may not have mortgage in place, and much of the work will be done by self-builder.

4% agreed that finance should be in place but only at the moment of sale (2%); for plot but not necessarily for build (2%); only once the plot became available (1%).

3% believed that assessment criteria would discriminate against lower income individuals / families who may carry out much of the work themselves.

3% didn't think an assessment should be carried out just for registering for a plot.

3% said that new finance sources may be required for Right to Build.

2% didn't agree that the Local Authority should administer the affordability assessment.

2% believe that there should a time limit in place during which self-builders should have to start the build (3-5 years was suggested) and a small number (<1%) suggest a time period which self builders would have in order to prove eligibility.

Other <1% (for each response) responses included:

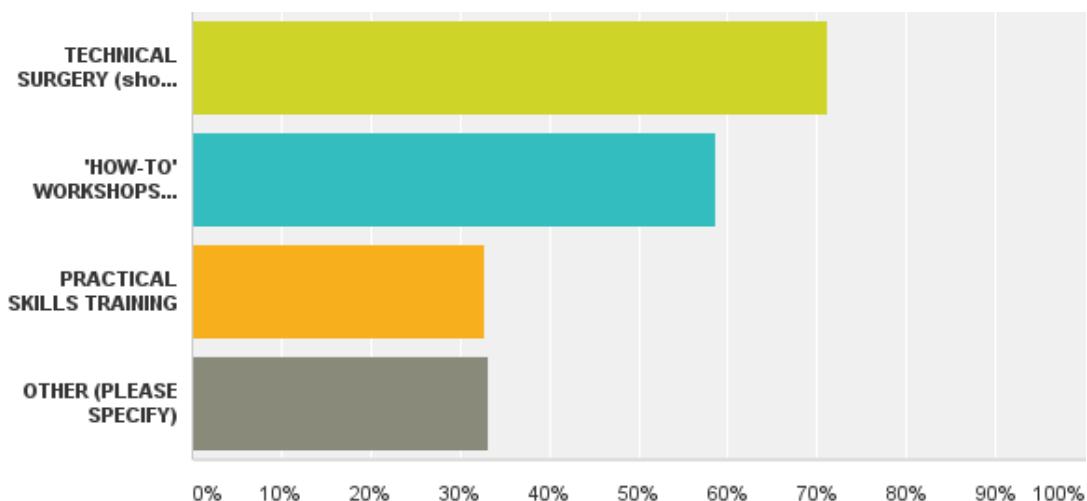
- There should be a guarantee in place that your plot won't be bought from under you.
- The proof should be that this will be your future main residence.
- Affordability should include proof that you can afford materials and VAT.
- A registration fee should be an alternative to an affordability assessment.

Q5: What additional support would you like to see provided by the Local Authority to assist you with your project?

Quantitative results

TECHNICAL SURGERY (short appointments with a consultant to obtain technical advice)	2,070	71%
'HOW-TO' WORKSHOPS (technical guidance & process management)	1705	59%
PRACTICAL SKILLS TRAINING	951	32%
OTHER (Please specify)	964	33%

2904 answered, 167 skipped



Qualitative interpretation for the comments made

2,904 responses were made to Q5 with 964 choosing to add further comments. Of these comments 21 were individual personal statements with no relevant interpretation. From the other comments made several themes emerged which have been expanded on below.

Note: Percentages referred to below are based on the 943 comments made (excluding the personal statements) and not the total responses to the question. These percentages have been rounded.

As this question was designed to elicit unprovoked commentary and ideas, the analysis has been divided into primary and secondary (less emphasized) responses.

Primary responses

60% of all primary responses were related to **planning**.

It is clear that applicants find the planning process difficult to navigate with 17% wanting clear planning guidelines with defined acceptance criteria. After this 9% wanted help or guidance through the planning process and 6% requested a streamlined / simplified overall approach. Pre-application advice was also important to respondents with 5% wanting this. In addition, 4% were looking for positive, helpful and proactive advice; 3% for an open attitude from Local Authorities to self-building design and process; and 2% wanted general planning advice.

Another theme seen through the responses related to the planning system itself with 2% saying that the system needed updating and 2% wanted to see better trained planning staff at Local Authority and Parish level. Being able to access planning officers easily was of importance to 1% and another 2% wanted to see dedicated case officers. 1% would like planning consultations to be free and another 1% would like the Local Authorities to run advice surgeries / clinics relating to planning.

Other issues relating to planning but accounting for <1% of responses include:

- Planning appeals should be independently run.
- The appeal process should be easy and accessible.
- There should be clear planning process guidelines.
- Advice should be consistent.
- Advice about environmental issues would be helpful.
- Advice with respect to land surveys.
- There should be a dedicated self-build team.
- Planning should be fast tracked.
- There should be equal opportunities for self builders and developers.
- Plot specific advice would be of benefit.
- Plots should be sold with planning permission (OLP) in place.
- Self-build plots should form part of affordable housing quotas and part of any new large development.
- The process should be transparent.
- There should be transparency about local land issues (e.g. local fracking sites).
- Regulations should be reduced.
- Workshops that focus on the community aspect of self-builds would be of benefit.

After planning the largest response category of 10% stated that **it was not up to Local Authorities to provide additional support** with reasons given that Local Authority money was better spent elsewhere; Prospective builders should seek the support themselves and that (private) specialists would be better suited to provide this support.

Land availability was another area that produced large numbers of responses with 7% of all primary responses relating to this issue. 2% want to see a register of all available land, for 2% the availability of land itself is an issue and for 1% it is a question of affordability.

Other issues relating to land but accounting for <1% of responses include those wishing to see a register of land vendors, a register of owners who prefer to lease land, and an update / removal of restrictions on land including covenants and listed building status on some

buildings. 6.68% of responses related to finance with 3.18% looking for guidance and 2.23% needing help with access to funding.

Other issues relating to **finance** but accounting for <1% of responses include an introduction of environmental build incentives, general financial incentives, a help to build initiative, incentivised funding from lenders, and reform with respect to CIL and VAT (stage recovery rather than waiting until completion).

Support from the Local Authority was what 5% were after. For 1% this took the form of a comprehensive and easy to understand information pack for self-builders. Less than 1% wanted general guidance, help with sourcing an architect, online support in the form of a website, a forum, blogs etc., legal advice / guidance, a Local Authority mentoring service, and a telephone helpline.

5% said that no additional support was required.

A register of Local Authority **approved trades and professions** were requested by 4%.

Services were the primary issue for 2%. Local Authority support was suggested with respect to commitment to provide infrastructure, ensuring cooperation between utility suppliers, providing information on connecting services, providing links to utility providers, the availability of plots with services in place / readily accessible, and pre prepared application forms for utilities. Each response was less than 1%.

Local Authority provided training accounted for 2%. It was suggested that they provided an opportunity for self-builders to become certified in trades, project management training, running a self-build management course, seminars / workshops on different aspects of self building projects, and the opportunity to shadow trades / professionals. Each response was less than 1%.

2% wanted to see the introduction of **self-build groups** with 1% looking for community support groups and less than 1% looking to set up consortiums in order to build as groups.

1% said that any additional Local Authority support should be carried out for a fee.

Building Regulations were the issue for 1% with 1% wanting compliance guidance / training. Free inspections, key-stage sign-off and reduced regulation were also requested (<1%).

The environment and sustainability were the most important issues for 1%. Local Authority input was requested in the form of advice / training in environmental / sustainable technologies / techniques, the encouraged use of environmental / sustainable technologies / techniques, and guidance on development of sustainable community developments. Each response was less than 1%.

Any available support that could be accessed from their Local Authority was supported by 1%.

Other <1% responses included:

- Local Authority backed 10 year guarantee.
- Reduce / abolish S106.

- Restrict onward sales.
- Right also needs to apply to Scotland.
- People shouldn't undertake a build if they have no knowledge of the process.
- Trades advisory panel.
- Transparency of scheme.
- Better communication from Local Authorities.
- Closer relationship between planning and building control.

Secondary responses

Of the 943 comments made 288 had additional information to that of the primary response. 136 were responses that highlighted more than one issue related to planning and if using the original 943 comments as the baseline this corresponds to 14%. Of this the most prevalent issues were 2% wanting an open attitude from Local Authorities to self-building general processes and for design and planning, 2% wanted positive, helpful and proactive advice, 1% wanted a streamlined / simplified planning process, 1% requested more help or guidance through the planning process, 1% wanting clear planning process guidelines and 1% wanted pre-application advice.

Other secondary responses relates, as above, to services, building regulations, finance, land and support but all of these responses were <1%.

Additional information highlighted includes

- There should be more flexibility with respect to the use of eco design / Passivhaus.
- CIL and S106 shouldn't apply to one off builds / family homes.
- Changes to CDM regulations need to be explained and promoted so that those self-building are aware of them.

Brief conclusions

Whilst the vast majority of those responding are in favour of the Right to Build legislation many have concerns about the form it will take. Amongst the issues highlighted was the need to have transparent processes in place to ensure that the Right to Build benefited self-builders and not second home-owners or developers. There was also concern about the type of plots being generated, their availability, suitability and the affordability-issue of land. The overall thinking is that the introduction of Right to Build legislation will be of great benefit but that care needs to be taken to ensure it best aids those it is designed to help.

**For & on behalf of NaCSBA
Dec 2014.**