# Northern Irish landlords warn rent controls risk collapse of private rental sector amid rising prices



Northern Irish landlords are expressing growing frustration over proposed measures aimed at supporting renters, arguing that such initiatives overlook the significant challenges they face. The Alliance Party’s “A New Deal for Private Renters” includes various proposals designed to protect tenants, such as limits on rent increases, a ban on no-fault evictions, extended notice periods, and improvements to housing supply and maintenance standards. However, proponents of the current rental model warn that these suggestions might inadvertently lead to a crisis in the private rental market.

Richard Smith, a representative from the Landlords Association of Northern Ireland, has voiced strong concerns about the ramifications of rent caps. He emphasises that such measures could be detrimental to landlords and could potentially cause the private rental sector to collapse. “If rent control is introduced, we believe the private rental sector could collapse,” said Smith, underscoring the risks involved. He is cautiously open to a limit on the frequency of rent increases — suggesting annual increases rather than full control — but remains adamantly against stricter regulations.

The urgency of this conversation is underscored by recent data indicating that rental prices in Belfast are rising at a rate surpassing even that of London. Smith highlighted that the private rental sector plays a vital role in Northern Ireland's housing landscape, noting that it is larger than the social housing sector. “Every time we lose a property from the private rental sector, that’s potentially another homeless family,” he cautioned. Losing even a fraction of private rental housing could exacerbate the existing housing crisis.

The pressures on landlords are compounded by increased regulatory compliance requirements. Smith notes that the perception of landlords often skews negative, largely influenced by the 5% of tenants who report issues such as damp or poor living conditions. “Most landlords are good landlords... but we feel we’re often painted as villains,” he lamented, calling attention to the fact that the majority of tenants experience no significant problems with their housing.

Colin Moran, director of a Belfast-based letting agency, shared similar sentiments regarding the proposals. He argued that while the proposals may resonate as politically appealing, they simplify complex issues. “If you keep making it more expensive to be a landlord, they’ll simply exit the market,” he warned, highlighting the potential consequences of driving landlords away from South Belfast’s market amidst growing demand and limited supply. Many landlords are also actively improving housing quality by investing in properties, suggesting that the standard of rental housing in Northern Ireland has significantly improved over the past two decades.

Kellie Armstrong, the Alliance Party’s Housing spokesperson, has been vocal about the plight of tenants, advocating for measures to provide greater security in an environment of rising rents and an increasing number of short-term lets. In her view, urgent action is warranted to counter the perceptions of landlords versus their tenants. Armstrong insists the proposed support mechanisms for renters, including a local Housing Ombudsman, are essential in creating a fairer housing landscape. However, a delicate balance must be achieved; a recent study by the Chartered Institute of Housing Northern Ireland indicates that approximately 41% of private landlords would leave the market if rents were frozen, potentially leading to a dire shortage of rental properties.

As the legislative landscape evolves, the debate around the state of Northern Ireland’s rental market remains urgent. Housing associations have pledged their support to help tenants manage rising costs, yet the overarching question persists: how can policymakers protect vulnerable renters without alienating the landlords who provide them with housing? The potential for widespread rental reform necessitates a nuanced dialogue that recognises the differing needs of all stakeholders involved. Only through careful consideration and collaboration can Northern Ireland hope to sustain both a robust rental market and the financial viability of its landlords.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3
2. Paragraph 4
3. Paragraphs 5, 6
4. Paragraph 7
5. Paragraph 8
6. Paragraph 9
7. Paragraph 10

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/ni-landlords-we-have-it-more-difficult-than-ever-before-as-rents-rise-faster-than-london-FHMLTB35LBCR5G25IQKYMAGWZI/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/ni-landlords-we-have-it-more-difficult-than-ever-before-as-rents-rise-faster-than-london-FHMLTB35LBCR5G25IQKYMAGWZI/> - An article from The Irish News discusses the challenges faced by Northern Ireland landlords in light of the Alliance Party's 'A New Deal for Private Renters' proposal. The proposal includes measures such as limiting rent hikes, banning no-fault evictions, extending notice periods, and boosting housing supply. Richard Smith of the Landlords Association of Northern Ireland expresses concerns that rent caps could negatively impact landlords and the private rental sector. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining rental standards and highlights the difficulties landlords face due to increased compliance burdens.
3. <https://www.allianceparty.org/minister_needs_to_take_steps_to_protect_private_renters_says_armstrong_as_alliance_makes_proposals_calling_for_new_deal> - Kellie Armstrong MLA, Alliance Party's Housing spokesperson, calls for the Communities Minister to implement measures to protect private renters. The Alliance Party's 'A New Deal for Private Renters' proposal includes limiting rent increases to once a year, banning no-fault evictions, and creating a local Housing Ombudsman. Armstrong highlights the struggles of private renters in Northern Ireland, citing unaffordable rent hikes and lack of security, and urges the minister to take action to address these issues.
4. <https://www.generationrent.org/2025/05/09/a-new-deal-for-private-renters-in-northern-ireland/> - Generation Rent discusses the proposed People's Housing Bill in Northern Ireland, which aims to ban no-fault evictions, implement strong rent controls including an immediate rent freeze, and establish longer tenancies with a minimum of five years. The bill also proposes creating a Rental Board to enforce minimum fitness standards and fair rent practices, and bringing vacant homes back into use to address the housing shortage. Generation Rent supports the bill and outlines key tenant protections and proactive measures to increase housing supply.
5. <https://www.allianceparty.org/renters_continue_to_have_their_security_eroded_says_armstrong> - Kellie Armstrong MLA, Alliance Party's Communities spokesperson, comments on the erosion of renters' security in Northern Ireland. She highlights issues such as rising rent increases outpacing inflation, no-fault evictions, and a shortage of available rentals due to the rise in short-term holiday lets. Armstrong emphasizes the need for the Communities Minister to implement measures to protect tenants, including limiting rent increases, banning no-fault evictions, and creating a local Housing Ombudsman.
6. <https://www.cih.org/blogs/new-cih-research-shows-41-per-cent-of-private-landlords-would-quit-the-market-under-northern-ireland-rent-freeze> - Research by the Chartered Institute of Housing Northern Ireland, commissioned by the Department for Communities, indicates that 41% of private landlords would consider exiting the market if rents were frozen. The study suggests that implementing rent controls could lead to a shortage of suitable housing options for tenants. The report emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to rent regulation to avoid unintended consequences and ensure a sustainable private rented sector.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2022/10/31/news/housing_associations_commit_to_helping_tenants_meet_challenges_of_rising_costs-2880309/> - Housing associations in Northern Ireland, managing 55,800 homes, have committed to supporting tenants facing rising costs. The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) announced proactive measures to assist tenants during the winter, including identifying and supporting those experiencing difficulty paying rent, providing access to income and benefit advice, and encouraging tenants to engage with landlords if problems arise. Patrick Thompson, Interim Chief Executive of NIFHA, emphasized the importance of additional support during the cost of living crisis.