**Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council**

**General Comments re Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy Consultation**

There is nothing that the PC radically disagrees with in the Strategy. The ideas put forward should have a positive impact providing there is the will on behalf of all stakeholders & sufficient resources allocated.

We doubt that using CPO powers to acquire unoccupied property will be an effective way forward.

In the current economic & political climate this form of plan needs to involve the private sector as much as possible. Areas include:

- Working in partnership with developers to redevelop or regenerate rundown neighbourhoods;

- Put in place a procedure to help facilitate the purchase of unoccupied or under used property.

The County should act as facilitator to encourage private sector involvement rather than doing it directly

The same comments apply to working with social landlords especially Housing Associations with whom we are sure they already have a good working relationship.

Improving the energy efficiency of the existing building stock is one of the key issues we face as much of this will still be here in 50 or more years time. It does require a highly proactive role from central government. The County need to work closely with the utility companies mainly in the role as facilitator. They should encourage a greater take up of The Green Deal & any other funding opportunities. This will require working with landlords both in the social sector & the private sector. Some radical action is needed

We don't think the County or central government has a sufficient stock condition survey of the existing houses. This needs to be put in place as a key foundation to enable effective plans to be established to deal with the problems because until we really understand the extent of the problems we can't effectively create an action plan. At a simplistic level owners & occupiers could be asked to fill in a short questionnaire about the property they live in. It's a bit tacky but they could offer a prize draw for those taking part maybe funded by one of the utility companies. The sorts of questions would be - double glazing, cavity wall insulation, roof insulation, type & age of heating system etc. It could be done by people knocking on doors to ask the questions. There are lots of students around who would do it for payment

Energy generation is not really part of this consultation but is integrally linked to it.

It would be beneficial if the County could facilitate the development of local energy generation schemes such as the failed Hydro scheme at Hexham. There has been minimal use of Solar Farms. There must be marginal agricultural land in the county that could be used for this e.g. the scheme adjacent to the recycling unit in Hexham.