



Glasgow and West of Scotland
Forum of Housing Associations

Annual Conference 2023

Investing in our homes and communities

Friday 1 December
9.00am – 3.55pm
Radisson Blu Hotel, Glasgow

GWSF Members £210.00/Non-members £275.00



9.00am Registration

9.45am Welcome from the Chair

John Hamilton, Barrhead HA

9.55am Ministerial address

Paul McLennan, Minister for Housing

10.25am Address from our Director

David Bookbinder, Director, GWSF

10.35am Why does poverty affect health so much?

Prof. Chik Collins, Director, Glasgow Centre for Population Health

The notion that poverty has a big impact on health and leads to excess mortality rates isn't new, but are we any closer to dealing with it? Even when the cost of living crisis is driving up poverty rates, are there ways of avoiding this having a direct effect on health? Is there still a 'lifestyles' aspect to this challenge or are lifestyles just a result of not having enough money? In all of these discourses, one fact remains: people in the poorest areas are impacted the most. What can we do to change this?

11.05am What next for Scotland politically and constitutionally?

Prof. John Curtice, University of Strathclyde

Our Conference takes place almost exactly half way through the current Scottish Parliamentary term, with the next Election due in May 2026. There has been greater turmoil than anyone could have expected a year ago, and the new First Minister has had a challenging start to his time in office. Can we now assume that 2026 will see a return to minority governments and the need for alliances? And what's the current appetite among Scots for independence?

11.30am Break and Exhibition Viewing

12.00pm Workshops – topics and presenters tbc – see below

1.15pm Lunch and Exhibition Viewing

2.15pm Grenfell: have we really learned the lessons?

Cllr Emma Dent Coad, London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, author and former Member of Parliament

The Grenfell tragedy was initially a case of fire and buildings, but soon became just as much a story about communication between people and organisations. In her recent book *One Kensington* Emma Dent Coad lays bare what she describes as the appalling degree of mismanagement and neglect that has made her area a grim symbol of an ever more divided country: what happens when local government is pared to the bone and the culture isn't – and never was – one of respecting and looking after people? But through the depth of community connections and tireless political organising, it also suggests a potentially hopeful future for a new Britain.

3.00pm **The power of local and the battle against ‘big is better’ – who’s winning?**
Dr Oliver Escobar, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh

Influential academic Oliver Escobar has long championed the need for genuinely local democracy. But in a nation where local democratic structures are larger than almost anywhere else in Europe, how easy is it for people to genuinely effect change? Is the Scottish Government’s latest Democracy Matters initiative helpful or just tokenistic? And where do community anchor organisations fit into this - can local HAs and other types of CAO legitimately claim to act on behalf of local people?

3.40pm **Chair’s final remarks**

3.45pm **Close of Conference**

Workshops 12-1.15pm

It’s possible we may add a further workshop, but at this stage the five topics are set out below.

1 Retrofit for zero carbon – can we achieve it and can we afford it?

Anne Marie Brown, Chief Executive and Dougie Wilson, Customer Services Manager, Dalmuir Park HA, and Colleen Rowan, Policy and Research Lead, GWSF

By the time of the Conference, the Scottish Government’s long awaited consultation on revising the EESSH2 standard should be out, and this will bring renewed focus on the huge challenges ahead for social landlords.

This session firstly looks at an ongoing retrofit project in Dalmuir, involving pre-1919 tenements, and is notable for the improvement work being done with tenants in situ – something that looks likely to be much more common than retrofit in empty blocks.

We then broaden things out to focus on the EESSH2 consultation: GWSF’s Colleen Rowan looks at the proposed new standard, the timelines and the prospects of increased grant subsidy being made available to support retrofit in the social sector.

2 Making acquisitions work well locally

Bryony Willett, Chief Executive, Maryhill HA and Barry Lees, Director of Investment, Atrium Homes (East Ayrshire)

Acquiring privately owned flats on the open market can not only give social landlords greater or full control over particular blocks, but are also a way of boosting social new supply much more quickly than building new homes.

Acquisitions aren’t new for many housing associations and councils, but the focus on it has increased in the last year or so as the new build programme has slowed down as a result of spiralling costs. Will this higher profile lead to more associations seeking funding for acquisitions that can address very local needs? What risk factors do community based housing associations look at when weighing up whether to acquire private flats?

We hear from two associations in very different types of community on their approach to acquisitions and where they think things will go in the future.

3 The tenancy sustainment paradox: more pressures on services; more vital than ever

Collette Anderson, Corporate Services and Innovation Manager, Milnbank HA and Sue Wallace, Mental Health Therapist and Consultant

The Forum's report earlier in the year highlighted the increasing pressures on members' tenancy sustainment services, and how this was impacting on tenants, staff, and associations overall. We know that in the context of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, these pressures are only likely to intensify. In this session, Collette will share how Milnbank's tenancy sustainment strategy seeks to deal with this rising demand whilst getting the best outcome for tenants.

Therapist and Consultant Sue Wallace will talk about the challenging issues of how important it is to both set boundaries and manage expectations when dealing with tenants. Sue will discuss how in some cases, 'going the extra mile' is often *not* best, for staff or tenants' well-being in the long run.

4 Carrying out a strategic options appraisal – launch of new GWSF guidance

Linda Ewart, Governance Consultant

We probably hear more about options appraisals nowadays than ever before. This seems to be mostly down to the rate of retirements of chief officers. The expectation from SHR is no longer that a retirement announcement must trigger an Options Appraisal, but that the Business Plan should already contain an Options Appraisal which is reasonably regularly reviewed.

But we know some members have been told their OAs aren't thorough enough and could be improved. Our new, relatively short (and non-prescriptive) guidance, produced for us by Governance Consultant Linda Ewart, isn't intended to suggest OAs need to be very lengthy documents, but does try to set out the main issues which should normally be considered for inclusion. The guidance also seeks to suggest key differences between these more routine OAs and the different type of process needed where an association is facing serious difficulties.

5 What can mentoring do for me?

Adele Fraser, GWSF Mentoring Associate, with input from GWSF mentors and mentees

If you're interested in finding out more about mentoring, then this is the workshop for you! We were delighted to resume our free mentoring service for Forum members earlier in the year, and equally delighted with the interest we received from members.

In this session, our Mentoring Associate Adele Fraser will talk about how mentoring works and the benefits of being either a mentor or mentee. The session will focus on tangible examples of how mentoring can support staff and committee members in real situations. Adele will be joined by some of the mentors and mentees who are currently participating in the programme, and they will share their experiences and answer queries from workshop attendees.

Bookings for this conference are being managed by Share.

You can book below at:

<https://www.share.org.uk/upcoming-courses/events-networks/gwsf-annual-conference-2023>

or by email at:

gwsfevents@share.org.uk

Cancellation policy

Please note a 50% cancellation fee will apply should you cancel your booking within two weeks of the event.

The full cost will be incurred for cancellations/no show on the day of the event.