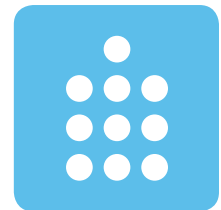


Annual Report 2015/16



GWSF

Glasgow and West of Scotland
Forum of Housing Associations



"Our purpose is to promote, represent and campaign on behalf of local community controlled housing associations and co-operatives in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, and to share information and best practice."

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Welcome to GWSF's Annual report for 2015/16



Margaret Burgess MSP and (then) Minister for Housing and Welfare is pictured at our 2015 annual conference with 3 apprentices from EHRA's modern apprentice programme

Well there's certainly been some political turmoil across the UK in recent months, but I'm in the mood to be optimistic that this won't significantly impact on GWSF members after what was a positive year, overall, for community controlled housing associations:

- Subsidy levels for building new homes went up, and are getting towards their 2009-10 levels – GWSF played a big part in this
- The housing supply programme has been massively expanded, meaning there should be more room for CCHAs to play their part alongside the bigger regional and national associations
- Political and legislative emphasis on organisations which act as anchors in their community is clearly increasing as the Scottish Government looks to make community empowerment a reality
- Our April 2015 report on conditions in private tenements has started the ball rolling on this critical issue, a long

way though we have to go to see tenemental improvement mainstreamed.

There have been other policy successes for the Forum, and these are covered later in this Annual Report. Plenty of challenges still remain – tenements, reclassification, funding for wider role activity to name but a few, and the Forum will work hard on behalf of members to try to get these issues tackled effectively.

As always, we've put a lot of emphasis on promoting the CCHA model. Our Manifesto document for the Scottish Election showed how the activities of our members help meet so many different government agendas.

Our July 2015 report on operating costs and our autumn Charter Report again reinforced the message that CCHAs are both highly responsive and efficient landlords, doing outstandingly well in comparison with the housing association sector as a whole.

We were delighted to gain an additional member – a warm

welcome to Clydebank HA – giving us a total of 68 member associations.

We enjoyed another highly successful annual conference in November, and we continue to review how we can bring members together in different ways. A new Finance Forum has been set up, supported by GWSF but largely run by the members themselves.

And looking ahead, I'm pleased to say that our Campaign Group is keen to raise its profile now that the frenzy of activity around the bedroom tax campaign is a distant memory.

My thanks go to my colleagues on the GWSF Board and our lead members group for the time and knowledge they bring to the Forum's work, and of course to our staff team for keeping the show on the road.

Peter Howden, GWSF Chair

Our Policy Work

Our policy work throughout the year has covered a range of issues that impact on the CCHA movement. Some of the key policy areas are summarized here:

Investment

The Forum played a particularly active role in the working group which made recommendations to Ministers on increasing the new build subsidy levels. The data we supplied on the cost of meeting the new Building Regulations was a key example of the lead role we played.

In the wake of the hugely welcome expansion of the national new build programme, along with the subsidy rates increase, as 2015/16 progressed the Forum's focus turned to practical capacity issues and how members could maximise their contribution to the programme if that's what they wanted to do.

There will of course be ongoing capacity issues for some members and indeed in the wider construction industry. Where a CCHA has stopped developing

because of previous cuts in subsidy or because their local authority has not enabled the association to be part of the programme, it can be difficult to suddenly return to development.

But the indications from members across the GWSF area are that more are likely to be involved in developing in the next five years than in the previous five, and that has to be a good thing. CCHAs see new build in the context of the wider regeneration needs of the area they understand so well, and it's crucial that the overall programme isn't dominated by regional and national providers.

Getting the right land at the right time and the right price – whether it's publicly or privately owned – is more important than ever, and the Forum will support members to work with their local authority partners to get land released.

Regulation

The Forum has continued to enjoy a constructive relationship with the Scottish Housing Regulator, and this has meant we've been able to influence how its functions are carried out.

We regularly engage with SHR on how it conducts its annual risk assessment of RSLs and on how it reports on performance. Using specific examples, we drew attention to the very different language SHR was using to describe the respective Charter performance of housing associations and local authorities: the language was harsher in relation to associations, despite their much better overall performance when compared with councils. We were very pleased when the

SHR advised that they would be addressing this. Reporting of performance is very public and so language is important – this was a real success for GSWF.

A very small number of member associations have gone through significant challenges and have been the subject of statutory intervention from SHR. The encouraging thing is that so far, associations are working through their problems and emerging with clear determination to continue and thrive as independent CCHAs. We take this as a sign of the strength of CCHAs and of the passion which motivates committee members to get their association through hard times and towards a positive future.

Reclassification

During 2015/16 we witnessed the fallout from the reclassification of English housing associations as public bodies. We were pleased to hear from National Housing Federation's David Orr on how the decision was being dealt with.

Before the end of the financial year, we knew that a similar reclassification was likely in Scotland before the end of 2016, and we kept in close contact with colleagues in the Scottish Government and SFHA. We are confident that any reclassification decision here will, in time, be reversed, and that the deregulatory measures needed to achieve that reversal will not significantly weaken the Scottish Housing Regulator's ability to intervene where things have gone seriously wrong in an association.

Tackling poor private sector housing

Our April 2015 report on the deteriorating condition of many private tenements across the GWSF area has, we hope, thrown a spotlight on a huge problem for our communities and indeed for the heritage of our towns and cities. It has kick started what is likely to be a long journey in bringing associations together with local councils and the Scottish Government to give tenemental acquisition and improvement a greater degree of priority. The consequences of not doing so are too scary to contemplate.

Currently, only a relatively small number of GWSF members are involved in tackling fully private tenements. But there are also other ways in which CCHAs can help raise standards in private housing, and in Glasgow some of our members are at an early stage of exploring with the Council initiatives to manage private rented housing.

None of this work is likely to be easy, but bad private housing affects a CCHA's area, and over time we think



more members are likely to consider options for intervening and providing improved options for local people in housing need.

New powers for Scotland

We needed to be patient during 2015/16, as we await new powers, particularly over the housing element of Universal Credit. The UK Government's new restrictions on help with social sector rents – impacting people under 35 in particular – give us another potential mitigation to add to our shopping list for Scottish Ministers.

But on top of abolishing the bedroom tax we know that Scotland will struggle to find the money to put right all of the punitive measures affecting tenants in both the social and private rented sectors, and we look forward to working with the Scottish Government and partner organisations to find the most achievable solutions which reduce the impact on some of the poorest people in our communities.

We do know that restoring direct payment of help with housing costs to landlords, subject to the tenant's consent, will be a massive help for tenants and landlords alike, and we will play our part in urging the implementation of this measure as soon as possible.

Regeneration

Our Regeneration Partnership Project headed up by Liz McEntee, our Regeneration Partnership Consultant, enjoyed a successful year. Following the launch of the Project's Community Regeneration Learning Network (CRLN) in March subsequent sessions were well attended and well received by members. These covered 'hot topics' including: services for older people; dementia; and social enterprise. Keep a look out for this year's sessions which will be just as good!

As part of the project Liz also carried out a survey with members on their wider role activities. The survey built upon our previous 'More Than Bricks and Mortar' report and the findings reinforced the evidence on the contribution that CCHAs make at local level which help to improve people's lives. From the provision of community centres to employment and training services for residents the results were impressive.

We have been able to use the findings in our partnership work to highlight the crucial role that CCHAs make in their communities, and how they help to support a number of key policy outcomes.



Liz McEntee presents her survey findings to delegates at our regeneration conference



In the past year we've held three really successful events and received great feedback from members and invited guests on each of them.

- **In June 2015 we held our annual summer regeneration conference at The Tannahill Centre in Ferguslie Park.** As usual, the event celebrated members' crucial wider role work in their communities and was attended by around 80 delegates. The day included a great mixture of plenary and workshop sessions focused on the key issues for CCHAs, including health and social care integration and the importance of 'capturing' the impact of the work that CCHAs do to improve their local communities. Keynote speaker, Margaret Burgess MSP, (and then) Minister for Housing and Welfare, highlighted the importance of CCHAs as key community anchors.
- **We were delighted that Mrs Burgess was also able to join us at our annual conference held in the Grand Central Hotel in November.** Over 200 delegates attended and heard from a compelling range of plenary and workshop speakers.

Morning plenary speakers included David Orr, Chief Executive, National Housing Federation, who addressed the issue of reclassification for housing associations in England, and potential implications of the same scenario in the Scottish context. Rosemary Agnew, Scotland's Information Commissioner, talked delegates through some of the key issues surrounding the proposed inclusion of CCHAs in Freedom of Information legislation. In the afternoon, Dr. Kim McKee, from the Centre for Housing Research at the University of St. Andrews, discussed CCHAs' 'fit' with a range of key Scottish Government policy areas.

We got great feedback from attendees and once again our Commercial Supporters' exhibition area was a big hit on the day.

- **We held a lively Scottish election 'housing hustings' in Govanhill in April with representatives from the major political parties in attendance.** Forum members asked searching questions on the key housing issues including the investment programme and the role of CCHAs moving forward.

The GWSF year in pictures

GWSF Events



Welfare Reform

- As we waited to see what the new powers for Scotland would bring we continued to liaise closely on welfare reform with colleagues in the Scottish Government and at local authority level
- We fed the CCHA perspective into the policy debates on welfare reform on the groups we sit on at both national and local level
- We liaised closely with organisations like the Poverty Alliance and CPAG to highlight the welfare mitigation activities our members are involved in, and discussed where we go from here
- We supported our Campaign Group as it considered its strategy on welfare reform activities moving forward

Health and Social Care Integration

Over the past year we have continued to be closely involved in the integration agenda on behalf of members. The cross-sectoral Housing Coordinating Group, which was instrumental in making the case for the vital role of housing in relation to the integration agenda, has now evolved into the Housing Partners for Health and Well-being Group. Along with the Forum, SFHA, and ALACHO the group also includes representatives from the Scottish Government and the NHS. The group's over-arching remit is to monitor how integration is developing in relation to housing sector involvement within all local authority areas moving forward. The group is also looking at examples of best practice and innovative initiatives which feature housing.

In Glasgow we continue to sit on the steering group which oversees the 'Accommodation Based Strategy' strand of the Integrated Care Fund. As we've kept members updated on, the main project funded is 'Community Connectors' (CCs) which aims to connect older people, their families, and carers with the 'wrap-around' services (provided by the third sector). CCs is now up and running in the three host housing association hubs who are all Forum members, and we



hope that it will be rolled out to other associations soon.

Also in Glasgow, The Forum sits on the Housing Health and Social Care Group which GCC convenes. Through this group we submitted a robust response to the Glasgow City Joint Board Strategic Plan. This group was also closely involved in planning an integration event for the housing sector which took place in February. The focus of the day was to engage with the sector on the Housing Contribution

Statement which will form an integral part of the Strategic Plan.

We are also continuing to liaise with members from outside Glasgow to collect information on what is happening in their area in relation to health and social care integration.

Finally the Forum is working with our relevant Lead Members on a future session for all members to consider the opportunities and challenges linked to integration.

Our campaigning work and promoting the CCHA movement

The Forum's key aim is to promote and represent local community controlled housing associations in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Throughout the year we continued to do this effectively on a number of fronts.

We maintained a meaningful dialogue with politicians at both national and local level, as well as with policy makers. We also continued to build upon our strong relationships with a range of public and third sector partners: to promote the CCHA model and the work of GWSF members; and to pursue innovative ways of partnership working.



Highlights here included:

- The publication of our July 2015 report on operating costs and our autumn Charter Report. Both reports again reinforced the message that CCHAs are both highly responsive and efficient landlords, doing outstandingly well in comparison with the housing association sector as a whole.
- Unveiling our manifesto for the Scottish Elections earlier this year. As well as outlining our key 'asks' the manifesto document captured the crucial role played by CCHAs in relation to a range of key Scottish Government policy areas. The use of case studies showcasing the work that members do really brought the manifesto to life and helped to underpin the case for CCHAs as great landlords and as valuable community anchors.
- Our campaign group reconvened this year to focus on key issues which impact on CCHAs and on their communities. Maureen



Maureen Cope, MBE, Chair of GWSF's Campaign Group, got a great reception from delegates at our annual conference

Cope, the Group's Chair gave a rousing account of the Bedroom Tax Campaign at our annual conference. We subsequently received excellent feedback from members with many indicating that they were delighted to see the group taking forward the long-standing campaigning tradition of the Forum.

- The group took part in a CPAG event on housing and child and family poverty in January and are currently meeting with the Poverty Alliance and other organisations to determine where best to focus its energies in the coming months. The group will now give updates on its activities at the Forum's regular open meetings. Watch this space!

Partnership working

We continued to work effectively throughout the year with colleagues in Glasgow City Council, in particular with Development and Regeneration Services and Social Work Services. We also worked with colleagues in NHSGGC, and with the new integration body. As always, maintaining our close links with the third sector was a key priority. The Housing, Health and Social Care group which we sit on has been a really

useful Forum for discussion with all of these partners.

We also kept up our representation on each of the local community planning structures, including the strategic community planning board. We also have member representatives on the three sector partnerships in the city; the North East; North West; and the South.

Welfare Reform

- The Forum continued to be represented on all of the City Council's key welfare reform working groups.
- We are also a member of the expert group that oversees GCVS' 'Building Connections' welfare reform project where we provide a CCHA perspective alongside colleagues from other public and third sector organisations.



Improving the homelessness referral system in Glasgow

- January 2016 saw the appointment of a GWSF member of staff to work in Glasgow City Council's new Housing Access Team, which was set up to bring new focus to repairing the homelessness referral system in the City.
- For Paul Tonner and his colleagues in the Team, the early stages of their work focused on bringing GCC and housing associations together in new 'local lettings communities' to agree targets for homelessness lets in 2016/17. That work has gone well, but we're all aware that the real test is in 2016/17, when our members will expect to see real improvements in the referral system.
- Paul's post is being funded by financial contributions from 15 of our members, and we are immensely grateful for the commitment they have made. We wish Paul and the Team every success – it feels like it's now or never on this one.

Housing options

- The Forum continued to support the development of the housing options approach in the City.
- We also supported the newer Housing Options model for older people which aims to support older people to live as independently as possible, and for as long as possible, in their own homes.



GWSF Finances

The financial statements for the period ending 31 March 2016 have been provided to all GWSF members. The statements have been certified by Alexander Sloan, Chartered Accountants.

The Forum turned over £259,694 in the year to March 2016, resulting in a small deficit of £825. The deficit is much smaller than had been planned, given that two projects delayed from 2015/16 – our office move and much of our website modernisation – took place during the year.

The savings we were able to make in other areas means that we retain a healthy balance sheet which gives the Forum overall net assets of £144,111.

Following our office move, we are now pleased to be using our neighbours Queens Cross HA to provide financial services support to the Forum. We would want to extend warm thanks to Sean O’Sullivan of Wellhouse HA for the excellent service he has provided to the Forum over recent years.



The GWSF staff team (L-R): Admin Officer, Eleanor McCormack; Director, David Bookbinder; and Membership & Policy Officer, Colleen Rowan



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