

WEST OF SCOTLAND

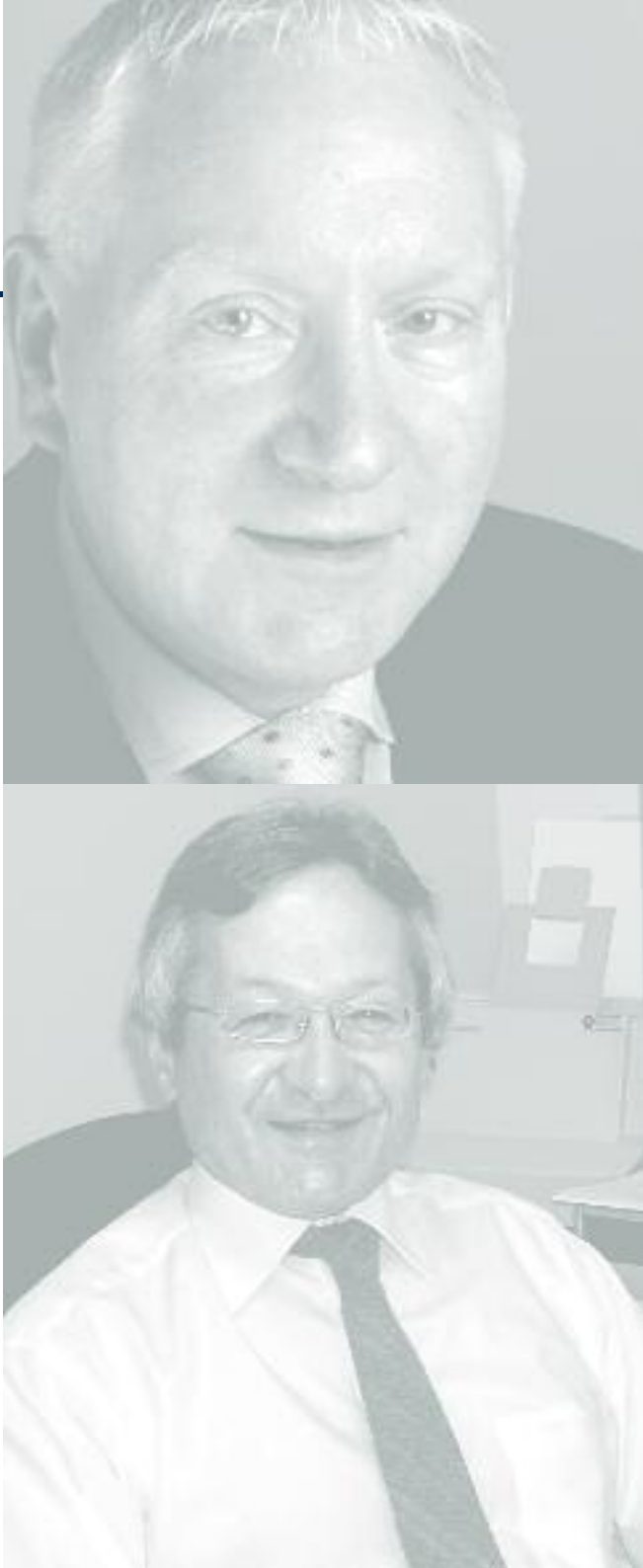
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REVIEW 2008



*for living*





## A Vision

West of Scotland Housing Association is today one of the top ten Scottish housing associations, has one of the largest new build and refurbishment programmes in Scotland and provides nearly 3000 homes in Glasgow, Ayrshire and Lanarkshire.

Our vision is captured in two words, which form a thread that runs through all that the association does - 'for living'.

The 'for living' ethos serves as a constant reminder that the emphasis remains firmly on improving people's lives through:

- **quality of housing**
- **place**
- **quality services**
- **community support**

This year's annual review is written against a backdrop of the Scottish Government's Firm Foundations approach and describes how the association has geared up to embrace the new policy agenda.

Partnership is a key watchword, exemplified by the success stories of the revitalisation of Camlachie (formerly Barrowfield) in Glasgow's east end and of Cowlairs in the north of the city. Tenants in both these areas were able to retain local empowerment while tapping into the experience and efficiencies of a larger organisation to accelerate large-scale regeneration.

We see this 'regional and local' approach as a key factor in satisfying tenants' aspirations and the Government's efficiency and innovation agenda.

We hope that the pages that follow will give you a glimpse of the direction we are taking and we would greatly welcome your feedback.

Andrew Martin  
Chair

Duncan McNaught  
Chief Executive

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## Customers First

Key aims:

“All aspects of service delivery to respond to changing aspirations and priorities of our customers; affordable, top quality housing and services.”

Harnessing of tenants’ aspirations is reflected in the fact that tenants form a majority on the association’s management committee, which, in partnership with professional staff, manages the association’s affairs. Tenants are also involved in the association’s Tenant Participation Working Group, focus groups in specific areas, residents’ meetings and telephone surveys.

During the year, following an audit by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, even more innovative approaches to empowering tenants have been developed, with some more still in planning:

- a network of tenants’ voices - tenants who will voice the views of the associations’ smaller communities
- estate walkabouts involving both association staff and tenants to help highlight good practice or areas for improvement, which in turn help create and sustain popular and attractive estates
- a tenants’ conference, scheduled for 2009.

As well as giving top priority to making sure we have effective channels for consulting and involving tenants, we are improving systems for recording, using and encouraging complaints, comments and compliments. This is part of our strategy of ensuring that we use tenants’ views to shape the services we provide.

While continuing to emphasise quality of property and place through innovative architectural design in new build and through environmental improvements, we continually assess our older properties to make sure they remain attractive and popular. We have communicated with tenants on progress towards achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 across all our housing.

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A further significant role is helping tenants obtain the welfare benefits they are entitled to. Our welfare rights service helped tenants receive over £40,000 of welfare benefits in 2007/08. This has transformed the quality of their lives. The common denominator to all of the wider role activity is the nurturing of relationships with tenants, to be able to respond to their needs and help them fulfil their potential. Building on this type of service, we are in the

process of developing an anti-poverty strategy to further improve the quality of their lives.

We are looking at how we continue to provide the highest quality services to our customers in the most efficient manner. With that in mind, we are reviewing the mechanisms for delivering repairs and housing services.



# Communities

Key aims:

“Be proactive in all development opportunities and focus on agreed wider role activities; develop effective relationships with all stakeholders and be recognised as one of Scotland’s top performing RSLs.”

At the heart of building thriving communities is West of Scotland Housing Association’s commitment to empowering tenants, keeping them at the centre of decision making.

As demonstrated in all areas, close involvement between the association and tenants creates a synergy that improves people’s lives beyond what better housing and environments could achieve in isolation.

The Cowlairs Area Association, made up of local tenants, have an unmistakable and infectious passion and determination for their community. During the year, tenants in Cowlairs were strongly focused on the planning and design of a new, multi-purpose community facility which will provide a social hub and which they hope to see on site within two years. Of an innovative triangular design and with a main hall as the focal point, it will feature a 5-a-side football pitch with modern changing facilities, a café, a quiet zone, office space and a community recycling point. This is one of the final objectives of the Cowlairs Area Strategy which has seen almost £11.5 million invested in the area over the last 5 years. A Community Economic Regeneration Officer is now in place at Cowlairs, to help empower local

residents to manage the proposed community facility and promote other social enterprise activity.

With the final phases of the major housing regeneration in Camlachie started on site in early 2008, we are employing a consultant to take forward the regeneration of the area “beyond housing”, liaising with the local community to produce an updated masterplan based on their needs, desires and aspirations.

Beyond Cowlairs and Camlachie, the Association has many other estates including a recently started new build development in Fernhill, Rutherglen. During 2008, we will consider all opportunities to inspire change, improve people’s health and give their children greater chances in life. Other planned projects include environmental improvements at Royston Road and backcourt improvements in Uddingston.



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# Corporate Strength

Key aims:

“Ensure finances remain healthy and income is generated to support all planned activities; manage assets effectively.”

West of Scotland Housing Association is in a strong position financially, having achieved in 2007/08:

An operating surplus of	£2,026,773
Gross turnover of	£9,375,600
Investment on new build or refurbished housing of	£20,208,000

In 2008/09, we expect our development expenditure to exceed £25 million

The association is rising to the challenge of the shifting agenda of the Scottish Government’s new Firm Foundations approach, focusing on the drivers of innovation, efficiency and sustainability to help further improve lives and communities.

Linking innovation with partnership is allowing the association to enhance the communities it serves. This is clearly demonstrated through the five-year, £60 million partnership deal struck with Barclays Bank and Dunfermline Building Society, allowing continued investment in a climate of very strong demand for affordable housing.

The statements on efficiency in Firm Foundations mean inevitably that the developing housing association map of Scotland will be radically different in the years ahead. For the association this will mean our continuing to develop strategic relationships, increasing partnership working and finding opportunities for providing services to other organisations.

Mergers and group structures can create opportunities while protecting local empowerment. We have worked successfully to protect the local identity of organisations that have transferred to us, while providing the scale, abilities and experience to translate new build and regeneration dreams into reality.

The traditional transfer model has evolved to allow local autonomous organisations to continue whilst gaining cost efficiency from corporate or strategic service delivery. We believe that there is a role to work more closely with others in protecting local identity and control whilst gaining in the range or cost of services delivered.

Firm Foundations suggests that there should be greater freedom for housing associations to develop different kinds of stock and to reorganise their stock in accordance with demand. This could include “mid market” rent and a range of ownership options, all of which we will consider during 2008 and beyond.

During 2008, as part of the Scottish Government’s drive to increase levels of social housing investment for less subsidy, it will become clear how the proposed competitive regime for Housing Association Grant and lead developer status will be achieved. The association is actively seeking lead developer status to build homes for other housing associations, local authorities and ourselves.

In a lead development role, we will ensure that local control of new build developments is delivered in a framework that streamlines the process, reduces duplication in terms of scheme appraisals, maximises the use of existing skills and achieves best value.



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## Culture

Key aims:

“Ensure all homes, services and surrounding environment are maintained and improved to meet our customers’ aspirations; be an exciting, enjoyable organisation where people want to work and volunteer.”

Linked with quality of service for tenants are the wellbeing of the employees who deliver that service and a climate of opportunity for staff. For this reason, we undertook a staff engagement survey during 2008 and developed action plans to improve our performance in areas where staff identified weaknesses. Further facets include an improvement in our annual training plan process and the development of an intranet by late 2008 to improve association-wide communications.

We are putting in place the frameworks to make all of the above happen in a co-ordinated fashion. These include Investors in People, Business Excellence (EFQM), benchmarking and self-assessment.

Quality has been described as ‘a thousand little things done better’. In that vein, we are in the process of fostering a culture of continuous improvement, involving everyone within the association, alongside external stakeholders where relevant.

During the year, as an example of innovation and new ways of working, we reviewed the impact of the Central Processing Team. This is a small team set up to process repairs invoices and applications for housing. These are very high volume tasks that we felt could be removed from the area teams to allow them to concentrate on services they provide directly to customers. We will continue to monitor this and explore other options to ensure that we get the balance right in providing quality services as efficiently as possible.



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# WEST OF SCOTLAND

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