

Annual Review 2009



Castlehill Housing Association

"Whether we are talking about tenants in sheltered housing, general needs tenants or Care and Repair clients, Castlehill aims to provide a personal service whereby our front line staff get to know their tenants or clients."

Financial review

During the year to 31st March 2009 there were 41 completions of new units for the association, bringing our total stock to 1,620 units.

The completions were located at Portland Street, Aberdeen (20) and Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire (21). In addition, 20 units were completed for sale at Mintlaw under the New Supply of Shared Equity scheme.



The Mintlaw site nearing completion in late 2008.

The income & expenditure account of the association showed a surplus for the full year of £641,000 before transfers to reserves, compared to 2008's equivalent of £56,000.

- Our level of voids (properties standing empty between tenancies at any one time) has reduced over the last 3 years from 1.8% to 1.5%, which compares with a median figure for Scottish housing associations of 2%.
- 96% of our reactive repairs are completed within target timescales.
- Our rent arrears figures have reduced over the last three years from 4.0% to 3.46%, and again compare very favourably with other associations.
- Castlehill's Management costs per unit dropped year on year from £836 to £788 in 2008/09.

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Mintlaw site, October 2008.

A major challenge is to make provision for replacements and improvements in our housing stock, and we plan to spend over £8 million on this over the next 5 years.

Devanha Limited

Devanha Ltd. has been set up by the 5 local housing associations so that all the development work relating to new housing projects can be undertaken through a single agency. It is approaching the end of the 4 year programme.



Mintlaw shared equity houses for sale

In addition to the general needs housing in Aberdeen & Mintlaw, we also completed our first shared equity scheme—20 family houses in Mintlaw. Depending on an applicants' income, a 51% share of a two bedroomed house could be purchased for £66,000.

At the time of writing (August 2009), there are still four houses available at Mintlaw.

Our second shared equity scheme is under construction at Portlethen, and is showing strong demand.

Our main business remains the provision of affordable rented accommodation & by the end of the 2009/10 financial year, we will have 136 houses and flats either completed or under construction at Aberdeen, Dyce, Portlethen, Kintore, Mintlaw and Braemar.

Housing Support

"The Key Project maintains our approach of a personal service, tailored to meet individuals' needs, and an application is being made to expand the service in Aberdeenshire."

In recent years, most of our development has been general needs houses and flats, and our current development programme will take our general needs stock to over 1,000 homes. We have a significant role in assisting local authorities work towards the target that, by 2012, all unintentionally homeless people will be eligible for a permanent home. Over 50% of our allocations for general needs houses are now to homeless people, and it is important that we continue to have access to services to enable us to sustain these tenancies.

The Association's Key Project continues to prove its worth, particularly with the high percentage of allocations to homeless people. Currently it provides support for 46 tenants in Aberdeen and 22 in Aberdeenshire.

Our staff are continuing to make significant progress in completing NVQ qualifications in housing support. It is not much more than a year away until staff will have to register with Scottish Social Services Council, and 4 years until all staff have to be qualified. 13 staff have already completed their NVQ course and a further 15 staff are currently working towards a qualification.

Care & Repair



Adaptation completed by Care & Repair

This year, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City councils have both decided to test their obligations to demonstrate 'best value' by tendering the service. The first tender for Aberdeenshire is to be submitted in September 2009. Compiling the tender submission has been a completely new experience for staff, particularly as we have no idea whether any other organisations will submit a tender. Castlehill has been managing these services for over 16 years, and they are now an integral part of our business.

We are approaching this challenge positively, as we are able to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of these services.

Castlehill's Strategic Plan

The Management Committee has recently approved a new Strategic Plan for the Association, which is set out in 2 parts:

- Aims and Values, *and*
- a Plan for 2009-2012

We reviewed our core objectives, and simplified them into the following 3 parts:

- To provide high quality affordable housing, and an efficient, responsive and personal housing management and maintenance service.
- To provide appropriate support services to sustain independence and quality of life.
- To contribute towards sustaining rural communities through providing housing, associated employment and using local maintenance contractors.

See the website for more detailed information—www.castlehillha.co.uk

Future challenges

One of our targets is to achieve Scottish Housing Quality Standard for all our properties by 2015. Our main difficulties with achieving this are in rural areas where gas is not available. This year we have installed 2 renewable heating systems, at Cuminestown and Finzean, where we have installed our first ground source heat pump. We will evaluate these installations in 2010, in conjunction with tenants, before proceeding with further schemes.

A major change for staff in 2010 will be the implementation of a new IT system. It is increasingly important that we have a fully integrated system, with good reporting. Although this will entail much additional work this coming year, it should ensure that administrative tasks are carried out as efficiently as possible, so that the Association can concentrate resources on front line services.

And it's goodbye from me.....

Castlehill's Chief Executive, Gordon Kyle has confirmed that he will retire in February 2010.

Castlehill's Convener, Shauna Reith said, "We will miss Gordon very much for his reasoned approach to his responsibilities to the Association, but most importantly to the tenants and staff. On a personal note, he has been extremely supportive in assisting me to settle into the role of Convener, and I am sure that other members of the Committee will have felt similarly over the years' when they have taken over as Convener."

Gordon commented that, after 26 years in the job, he would be very sorry to leave, but was looking forward to having more opportunity to travel and spend time with his grandchildren, as well as having more time to indulge his main hobby of cycling.



Shared equity houses in progress at Portlethen.

"We are most fortunate to have hardworking and capable staff, and a committed Management Committee.

Working together, we can all look forward to the challenges of 2010."



Gordon Kyle



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Castlehill Housing Association
Committee of Management
At 31st March 2009

Shauna Reith	Graeme Ogston
Bill Howie	Raymond Simpson
Janice Lyon	Ian Thomson
Kate Mason	Nick Williams
Jim Morrison	Sandra Williamson
Jack Nicoll	

Chief Executive: Gordon Kyle

Castlehill cycles from Land's End to John O'Groats!

A sponsored cycling event carried out by staff and friends of Castlehill Housing Association, raised a grand total of **£6,756.79** for the Scottish branch of the Meningitis Trust.

Alec Macmillan & David Lappin cycled the whole length of Great Britain – a total of 1127 miles. Chief Executive Gordon Kyle, Admin Assistant Susan Murray and Housing Officer Colette Carroll joined them at Gourrock. In addition, Neil Clapperton from Grampian HA rode with them for a couple of the stages. Sharon Walker, a Housing Officer at Castlehill, acted as the Support Crew for the whole duration of the journey.

The group rolled into John O'Groats on Saturday 13th June 2009, tired but exhilarated that they had managed to complete the journey. At the finish line there was a group of family members and staff from Castlehill that had travelled up from Aberdeen in order to welcome them across the line. This was followed by a party held in Thurso that went on well into the early hours.

David Lappin said, "It's been a challenging but memorable trip and we are grateful for all the support we have received. We're delighted to have exceeded our £5,000 target."

Further details on the Trust can be found at www.meningitis-trust.org.



Five of the successful team—Colette, Susan, Alec, David & Gordon.