

# Annual Review 2010



Castlehill Housing Association

## Financial review

During the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 there were 45 completions of new units for the association, bringing Castlehill's total stock to 1,664 units.

The completions were located at Sunnyside Drive, Portlethen (15) and Carnie Brae, Kintore, (30). In addition, 18 units were completed for sale at Portlethen under the New Supply of Shared Equity scheme.

The income & expenditure account of the association showed a surplus for the full year just in excess of £1m before transfers to reserves, compared to 2009's equivalent of £651,000.



The Portlethen site nearing completion in late 2009.

*“Castlehill emphasised our commitment to keep our housing affordable by having no increase in our rent charges this year. Castlehill was one of only a handful of Housing Associations in Scotland to do this.”*

*Castlehill convener  
Shauna Reith*

- The Association's level of voids (properties standing empty between tenancies at any one time) has reduced over the last 4 years from 1.8% to 1.4%, which compares with a median figure for Scottish housing associations of 2%.
- 95% of the Association's reactive repairs are completed within target timescales.
- Castlehill's rent arrears figures have reduced over the last four years from 4.0% to 2.28%, and again compare very favourably with other associations.
- The average number of days taken to relet a property has dropped from 48 days to 42 days over the last five years.

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Portlethen site, October 2009

A major challenge is to make provision for replacements and improvements in Castlehill's housing stock. The Association plans to spend over £8 million on this over the next 5 years.

## Housing Support



Very sheltered scheme at Abbey Court, Mintlaw nearing completion in April 2010

Provision of Housing Support Services remains a core activity and this year Castlehill's Sheltered Housing Service and Key Project have had their first inspection by the Care Commission since the introduction of their new grading scheme. Castlehill services achieved a 'Grade 5 - Very Good' for Quality of Care and Support and a 'Grade 4 - Good' for Quality of Staffing. This result reflects well on the dedication and hard work of the Association's staff who provide these services.

Progress was made in Tenant Participation, with meetings, events and activities across a range of Castlehill's schemes and a group of tenants is now helping to draw up questions for a full Tenant Satisfaction Survey that is to be carried out later this year.

Castlehill continues to make a significant contribution to achieving the Government's targets in alleviating homelessness, with 71% of the Association's general needs housing in Aberdeen City, for example, going to homeless households.

## Key Project

*"I cannot express adequately the help and support the Key Project has given to me. It has been an absolute godsend and I could not have coped without the help and support. I shall always be grateful"*

Key Project client

Castlehill Housing Association's Key Project is a housing support service offered to tenants. The aim of the housing support service is to help sustain a successful tenancy, in other words, to 'keep the key'. The service provides a holistic approach to tackling any risk which may threaten the tenancy and supporting the individual whatever their particular needs may be.

Key Project staff have also developed an increasingly productive partnership with the SMART Project Money Advisers, available to tenants of housing associations both in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. Key Project housing support workers have worked with the tenants and the Money Advisers, leading to considerable debt reduction and more manageable financial positions.

Over the last 12 months, Key Project housing support staff have generated approximately £14,357 for tenants and a further £5,151 per annum in eligible State Benefits. This is mainly as a result of assistance with State Benefit claims, applications for backdated Housing/Council Tax Benefit, applications for Discretionary Housing Payments and Trust Fund applications for individual tenants.

## Care & Repair

It has been a difficult time for Castlehill's Care and Repair services as funding from the Local Authorities becomes increasingly tight. The Association remains fully committed to providing these invaluable services and is making good progress towards redesigning how to deliver services to ensure long term viability.

For example, in Aberdeen the Association has launched a new Adaptations service and changed the scope of the Handyman service. Work is now being done to develop a Social Enterprise model, to reduce reliance on Council funding for future services.



Adaptation completed by Care & Repair

## Grampian Community Care Charitable Trust

During the past year, Grampian Community Care Charitable Trust took the decision to move towards a transfer of their properties to a new host organisation. After a lengthy selection process, Castlehill was chosen as the preferred recipient of the properties. At present the Trust has 160 tenancies at 35 sites throughout the north-east, including a number of group homes.

There is still much to do to finalise the transfer but on completion this will lead to a significant increase in the Association's asset base and allow Castlehill to become further involved in providing housing options for people with particular needs.

The adoption of any new properties will not impact on the level of standard of service given to existing tenants of the association.



## Challenges for 2010/11

- A huge amount of work this year has gone into the procurement and implementation of a new IT system for the Association. Castlehill looks forward to a fruitful working relationship with Aareon QL as the Association's new system supplier and to the benefits this will provide for the efficient operation of Castlehill's business. The new system went live on 2nd August 2010. There are still some modules to implement including payroll & HR, and planned maintenance. These will be done before the financial year end.
- The Scottish Government is currently consulting on future Housing Policy through its "Fresh Thinking, New Ideas" document and has established a number of Working Groups to look at future funding options. It is inevitable that there will be less money available for affordable housing development and that Housing Association Grant will reduce significantly or be replaced by a whole new funding regime. Innovative thinking will be required if the Association is to continue to build new homes, as the major policy driver for government will be expenditure cuts.

*"We are indeed fortunate to have a strong, settled, Committee with a depth of knowledge, skills and experience that serves Castlehill well."*

*Castlehill convener*

## Development in 2010/11

The current financial year will see the following completions:

- Very sheltered scheme at Abbey Court, Mintlaw.
- General needs scheme at Arran Avenue, Aberdeen.
- General needs scheme at Dyce.
- General needs scheme at Braemar.

In addition to the properties for rent at Braemar, there will be two properties available to buy under the Scottish Government's New Shared Equity Scheme.



General needs scheme at Arran Avenue, Aberdeen under construction in August 2010.



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Head office at 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen

Castlehill Housing Association  
Committee of Management  
At 31st March 2010

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

Chief Executive: David Lappin

## Staff update.....

Over the years, Castlehill has grown into a sizeable employer across North East Scotland and there is upwards of 140 people working for the Association as office staff, scheme based staff, direct labour, cleaners and gardeners.

The Association aims to be recognised as an employer of choice and we continue to offer training opportunities to staff as well as consultation and involvement of staff in decision making through the Joint Consultative Group.

During this year many of the Association's sheltered housing staff have completed their NVQ qualification and Castlehill has just about completed the requirements for the Healthy Working Lives Silver Award.



The four intrepid rowers, Sharon, Gail, Arlene, Colette and cox Mhorag.



Other notable staff activities this year included Castlehill's first team in Aberdeen's Inter-Company Rowing Event on the Dee (and won the best supported team prize, if not the actual race!) and the return of the Association's sponsored walk on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010 which raised money for Alzheimer Scotland.