

Annual Report 2009-10

GWSF's purpose is to represent community-controlled housing associations (CCHAs) in Glasgow and the west of Scotland

This report provides our members with information about GWSF's main activities in the last year.

Our big objectives in 2009/10 were:

- To **represent our members' interests** on a growing number of policy and campaigning issues, at local level and nationally
- To **promote the work of CCHAs** in providing good housing in stronger communities
- To improve networking across the CCHA movement

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The GWSF Board,
May 2010



Chairperson's Introduction, by Lyn Ewing

GWSF made some real breakthroughs in 2009 ... we can do even better in 2010!

Welcome to GWSF's latest Annual Report.

I hope the Report will show your management committee **what we have achieved** on behalf of the membership. And that we are **giving good value** for the affiliation fees you pay us.

As Chairperson, I think our "highlights" in the last year have been:

- **Breaking the deadlock** on Second Stage at long last, and seeing the great ballot results now being achieved by our members
- **Welcoming new members** from outside Glasgow
- **Seeing so many voluntary committee members** come to our annual conference and open meetings

- **Getting a much stronger voice for CCHAs** on the major national issues that affect us
- **Deciding to develop the work of the Forum** in future, with Jim Harvey joining us as GWSF Director for the next 18 months.

The **CCHA movement is unique**, because all our organisations are led by local people. The years ahead will be difficult because of financial austerity and growing pressure for efficiency. But we've survived tough times before and I know we can do so again by working together to find the right ways of adapting to change.

This is **my last Annual Report** as Chairperson. As many of you will know, I am stepping down from the GWSF Board at the AGM. I would like to express my sincere thanks to my fellow Board Members for their support and friendship over the years. I know I am leaving GWSF in good hands and I hope that the Forum and all our members go from strength to strength in the future.

Making a difference on behalf of CCHAs

Campaigning and Representation

In the last 12 months, GWSF has campaigned and lobbied hard for the political, policy and funding decisions CCHAs want to see. These were some of the year's major activities.

Second Stage Transfers in Glasgow

- In the first part of the year, we met regularly with the Minister for Housing and Communities, commissioned expert financial advice from Mazars LLP, and developed innovative proposals for a statutory community right to purchase, all to help **break the deadlock** on SST
- The second half of the year saw a renewed willingness to negotiate on the part of GHA. GWSF has represented SST purchasers in **highly productive negotiations**, resulting in a "Concordat" between GWSF and GHA. The GWSF negotiating team has secured **major financial benefits** for our members.
- CCHAs across the city are now working with GHA to achieve **transfers to community ownership of around 16,000 houses** by March 2011. A huge task – but one that is now a lot closer to completion.

Housing Investment

- GWSF played a major role in setting out the weaknesses in the Scottish Government's proposal to introduce "**lead developers**" and

regional HAG competitions. Both proposals have now been withdrawn.

- We are now contributing to **three Investment Reform working groups**, led by the Scottish Government
- We have argued strongly that changes made to **Housing Association Grant** calculations are financially unsustainable. We continue to make the case to Ministers for a sustainable funding system.
- In Glasgow, we have been active participants in the **Citywide Investment Forum**, seeking to influence the investment priorities of Glasgow City Council.

Partnership Working

- GWSF representatives worked with **Glasgow City Council and other partners** on a range of initiatives during the year – for example on homeless referrals, fuel poverty and the creation of employment opportunities.
- We met quarterly with the **Minister for Housing and Communities** to discuss issues of concern to our members. We greatly appreciated the Minister's support for community ownership, and his "open door" policy in meeting with us.
- The Minister also met with a delegation from GWSF to discuss the **National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders** (NASSO). The Minister has asked us to provide him with regular reports on these issues.

Speaking up for our members, supporting our communities

The Housing (Scotland) Bill

- We submitted a **clear and comprehensive response** to the Scottish Government's proposed housing bill. Along with others, we argued successfully that profit distributing landlords should not become registered social landlords.

Housing Regulation

- We expressed strong concerns about statements made by the Scottish Housing Regulator on **housing association mergers** and **the role of tenants as committee members**. We were encouraged when the Regulator subsequently spoke at the GWSF annual conference, confirming that it would not be pursuing a general policy of mergers or restructuring or challenging the role of tenant committee members in CCHAs.

Fresh Ideas

- We produced a number of policy papers during the year, to set out **new ideas** about the part CCHAs and other community-led bodies could play in future in community regeneration and empowerment.
- We will develop this type of work further in the coming year, to **promote debate and action** on the challenges and opportunities the future holds for CCHAs.

Promoting the Profile of CCHAs

Keeping second stage transfers in **the media spotlight** was a top priority in the first half of the year.

We offered **briefings to Glasgow MSPs** from all of the main political parties during the year, and we achieved two important "firsts":

- **Alex Neil MSP, the Minister for Housing and Communities**, accepted our invitation to give the keynote address at GWSF's annual conference in October 2009;
- GWSF was invited to take part in a number of Scottish Government working groups on policy and legislative matters, giving us the chance to **work more closely with policy-makers** and to offer a **CCHA perspective on the major issues** affecting our membership.

Networking across the Membership

We held GWSF **briefing and networking events** throughout the year, and these were well-attended and well-received by committee members in particular.

The **2009 GWSF annual conference** was our best yet, attracting almost **150 delegates**. As well as the Ministerial address, delegates heard from guest speakers from the Scottish Government,

Membership, governance and finance

the Scottish Housing Regulator and Glasgow City Council.

We held **7 open meetings** during the year, giving committee and staff members the chance to hear about and discuss topical issues. Subjects included the impact of changes to HAG funding, the Housing (Scotland) Bill, the G:Heat fuel poverty initiative, the work of Local People Leading, and Second Stage Transfer briefings for committee members.

Two staff groupings – **the Community Ownership Group and the Housing Management Group** - met regularly throughout the year.

We continued to develop the **GWSF website**, as a way of sharing information and resources. And we decided that the time is now right to give the website a revamp – coming soon to a computer near you!

Membership of GWSF

We were delighted to welcome a number of **new CCHA members** over the course of the year.

We began 2009/10 with 35 member housing associations, almost all of them Glasgow-based.

Membership rose to 45 housing associations during the year, and now includes housing

associations in Glasgow, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde.

GWSF Governance

GWSF is a company limited by guarantee. **The Board of Directors** is made up of committee directors and staff directors nominated by GWSF Members. TC Young, Solicitors, act as our Company Secretary.

The Board met five times over the course of the year. The **Board's main priority** was to oversee GWSF's finances, so that we continue to operate on a "break even" basis. The Board also took the important decision in December 2009 to extend GWSF's existing relationship with Jim Harvey Consulting Ltd, by commissioning **Jim Harvey to provide GWSF with Director services** over the next 18 months.

The **GWSF Directors during 2009/10** were:

Committee directors

Lyn Ewing (Chair), Govanhill Housing Association

Peter Howden (Vice Chair), Calvay Housing Association

Patsy Beaton, Craigdale Housing Association

Iain McLellan, Glen Oaks Housing Association

Bill Sharkey, New Gorbals Housing Association

Brenda Wilson, Thistle Housing Association

Neil Eliot, Glen Oaks Housing Association (co-optee)

Staff Directors

Alan Benson, Milnbank Housing Association

Michael Carberry, Blochairn Housing Association

Anne Lear, Govanhill Housing Association

Joe Williamson, Wellhouse Housing Association
(Treasurer)

Anne Culley, Oak Tree Housing Association (co-optee)

GWSF held an Extraordinary General Meeting in April 2010. This approved a **revised GWSF constitution**, allowing members outside Glasgow to nominate prospective Board members and to vote at general meetings.

GWSF Finances

The financial statements for the year ending 31 December have been provided to members along with this Annual Report. The financial statements have been certified by Alexander Sloan, GWSF's auditors.

All of GWSF's income currently comes from the membership. We raised **income of over £140,000** during 2009:

- £100,000 came from affiliation fees
- £35,000 came from supplementary fees raised to support our work on Second Stage Transfer
- Our annual conference produced a £5,000 surplus.

GWSF did not employ any staff in 2009, so we used our income to **commission expert advice and assistance on all major areas of GWSF's work**. This included work on Second Stage Transfer, housing and investment policy, the Housing Bill, media support and NASSO.

Our advisers included Mazars LLP, Beattie Media, Jim Hastie and Jim Harvey Consulting Ltd.

We balanced the budget, with a surplus of just under £8,000 to be carried forward to 2010.

The year ahead for GWSF, by Jim Harvey our new Director

Working with CCHAs has been a big part of every job I've done over the years. So I jumped at the chance of working as GWSF's Director for the next 18 months.

"Regeneration" and "community empowerment" are what CCHAs are all about. We need more of both these things in future, not less. They make a huge difference to people's lives and communities and to our economy.

The coming year promises to be a busy time. These are the **big things** GWSF will be doing:

- **Stepping up our campaigning work** to promote the achievements of local housing associations
- **Strengthening our relationships and profile with politicians and decision-makers**, to influence their thinking and show what CCHAs have to offer
- **Focusing our policy and representation work on the issues with the biggest impact on CCHAs**
These will include investment and poor housing, HAG policy, the new Housing Green Paper, the Housing Bill, housing allocations and homelessness, and Second Stage Transfers in Glasgow
- **Looking at new directions and opportunities for CCHAs**, so that we have our own ideas for the future and can put them into practice.
- **Helping CCHAs to share information and good practice** with each other

- **Managing the work of GWSF in a professional way**, with clear information for both committee members and staff
- **Finding out how we can best meet the needs of newer members**, from outside Glasgow.

More details about all of this will be in **the new GWSF Business Plan**, coming to members in June.

GWSF is different because a lot of our work gets done by staff from member organisations. Since there's only one of me and we have lots to do, that won't change!

I'll be working closely with the GWSF Board and all our volunteers to **co-ordinate GWSF's work**, as well as **taking the lead** on a number of areas myself. I'm hoping to **persuade new people** to get more involved in GWSF's work, so we get good input from right across the whole membership.

I hope your association will continue to support GWSF, and that together we can **preserve and build upon** the great work CCHAs do.



GWSF Director,
Jim Harvey