



Welcome to the First Edition of our own newsletter for the four areas making up Region 7.

The Inaugural Annual General Meeting in March 2008 was in a state of shock and disbelief over the loss of Mr David Minnery, Chair East Renfrewshire Tenants and Resident Federation and Thornliebank TRA. David was the most obvious choice to Chair West Strathclyde Region 7.

This set the committee back quite a bit with the death of such an able and intelligent Tenants representative. David's death robbed Scotland and West Strathclyde Region of probably one of the most knowledgeable, articulate men in the Tenants movement.

David was a family man with two sons at school. He was one of the wittiest people that we had the pleasure to work with.

Along with Karen and her sons Kieran and Sean, we miss his fun and generosity; this was a big hearted and kindly man. A man, who it is hard to forget and even harder to emulate.

Goodbye, David; we will always remember you.

The members elected to the committee were announced and the constitution ratified at the Annual General Meeting.

Report on the progress of your regional committees

Regional network committee members met with the Housing Minister, Mr Stewart Maxwell, in the Radisson Hotel Glasgow on 28th July 2008. Several networking sessions took place in the morning which were very informative, and an icebreaker getting to know delegates from across Scotland.

The Minister joined us for lunch then a question and answer session took place. All nine chairs had questions for the Minister which he answered, along with supplementary question from the body of the hall.

The Minister was with us longer than we expected, and Mr Maxwell was keen that we invite him along maybe twice a year, to get the tenants' point of view first hand.

This meeting has given heart to all the Regional Committees present that we can actively influence national policy development and work in partnership with Ministers and civil servants to achieve this.

The Regional Chairs meet on a regular basis in Highlander House, Glasgow.

There is regional network representation on a number of Scottish Government Committees, and Sounding Boards on a range of National Policy issues. Read further on for more detail.

Scottish Government officials attended the last meeting in January 2009 to explain some of the Government's conclusions taken from the responses to the Firm Foundations consultation sent out in 2007 – Investing in Affordable Housing relating to Registered Social Landlords and the use of Housing Association Grants.

Taking this at face value, it means Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) will continue to be the focus when it comes to the supply of new build rather than Local Authorities. I have expressed my dismay over this as Local Authority tenants want a level playing field and similar grant levels awarded to them as to RSLs. When asked what was going to happen with LA Housing the Government's response was that they were working with COSLA on how monies are provided to LAs and it could be some time before the Government could provide clarity on this issue. In light of the current severe credit crunch, affecting all tenures this is "NOT GOOD ENOUGH"!

The next regional Chairs and Secretaries meeting will take place in Highlander House on Wednesday 8th April with Region 7 in the Chair.

On the Agenda will be Housing Revenue Accounts, Investment in all Housing not just RSLs; and the Meeting in Edinburgh at the Grosvenor Hotel on 12th May.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and the information on what the regional network has been involved in over the year.

Gerald Casey, Chairperson

The Scottish Government set out its vision for the “Future of Housing” in Scotland, in “Firm Foundations Consultation Document” 2007.

Its vision is more Houses of all Tenures, that are built to a higher Environmental and Design Standard; that meets the needs of those on lower incomes; Contributing to the Creation of sustainable and mixed Communities.

Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, set out in the Scottish Parliament the direction of Government policy on housing in light of the responses to Firm Foundations.

Members from the Regional Networks Committees are working with Government Officers taking forward the policy areas set out in Firm Foundations. They are involved in the following working groups:

- **Future Regulation of Social Housing: Sounding board**

The focus is on protecting and promoting the interest of current and future Tenants. Looking at assessing and improving the value that Landlords deliver to Tenants and Taxpayers; reducing the burden of Regulation on Landlords; and giving reassurance to the Lenders.

The Regional Networks are represented by:

Hugh McClung, Central Region

Rena Smith Tayforth Region

Steve Byrne, Highland, Argyll and Bute Region

Along with COSLA and SFHA

- **Research into identifying Tenants’ Priorities for social housing**

A major piece of research is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Scottish Government to identify tenants’ priorities for Social Housing in Scotland. This research includes a number of

methods to gather information and views from tenants including:

- RTO survey sent out to 661 organisations
- 500 telephone surveys to be completed
- 5 Focus groups with social housing Tenants
- 1 Focus group with the 9 Regional Networks

I hope you have responded to this Research as your opinion is vital and valued.

The representatives on this group are:

Nadya Wagland, West Strathclyde Region 7

Tina Beattie, BEEM, Region 5.

Nadya found the process rewarding, as many of the views that the Tenants representatives put forward were taken into account.

- **Allocations Policy Review**

This review will result in revised guidance to social landlords and to produce a user-friendly document which would explain allocations systems to applicants in plain English.

Regional Network representatives on this group are:

Eric Allan, Northern Lights, Region 2.

George McGuinness, Glasgow and Eilean Siar, Region 9.

STOP PRESS

Housing Minister Replaced!

Stewart Maxwell, Minister for Communities and Housing, has been replaced in a Cabinet reshuffle.

We will miss Mr Maxwell MSP; he performed well at the meeting in the Radisson Hotel last July. Stewart was keen to meet with the Regions twice a year, something which we believe would be in the best interest of all our Tenants.

The new appointment is:

Alex Neil MSP, Minister for Communities and Housing.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the New Minister and hope he will carry on with the work started by his predecessor. We would like to ask him:

- With the current Credit Crunch causing havoc in the Banking System how will this affect Social Housing?
- What will the Scottish Government do to help local Authorities with providing New Build, will

they continue to lobby Westminster to Write Off Housing Debt to LA housing, in the same way Westminster has bailed out the Banks?

- Will there be Protection and Regulation for the Tenants of Private Landlords as similar to those of social handbook registered?

West Strathclyde Region 7: Annual General Meeting 2009.

Please join us at our second AGM as:

One member from each of the four areas must step down from the committee at this meeting.

Members can be re-nominated and voted back onto the committee, if they wish to do so.

The Annual General Meeting will take place at the Glynhill Hotel Paisley on Saturday 28th March at 10.30am until 1.30pm followed by lunch, at 2pm.

Every RTO in the area has been invited to come along.

Welcome to our first issue of R7s Newsletter. This is the Who's Who on your committee.

GERALD CASEY,
EAST RENFREWSHIRE (ERC)
CHAIR West Strathclyde Region 7

Chair East Renfrewshire Tenants & Residents Federation (ERTRF).

Secretary Mearns Village Community Association (MVCA); Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO); Vice/Chair Mearns Community Council (MCC).

I was invited to join the committee of the MVCA in 1999 at its inaugural meeting, and have been Chair and Secretary on more than one occasion. Through our involvement with the MVCA we received an invitation to join the newly-formed ERTRF and the Mearns Community Council.

Over the last ten years I have served on the following committees on housing issues: Housing Allocation Policy, Common Housing Register, Business & Rent Setting, Capital Allocations (Tenant Participation Working Group) now known as the Housing Service Liaison Group, Tenant Led Inspection subgroup, and with the MCC Local Planning subgroup sitting in on Two Local inquiries.

MARGARET DYMOND,
RENFREWSHIRE (RC)
SECRETARY West Strathclyde Region 7

I live in Paisley (single and proud of it); I have been involved in my local Tenants Organisation since September 2005 as secretary; currently a member of Renfrewshire Law Centre and Renfrewshire Public Partnership (CHP); Community Councillor for Paisley West & Central Community Council.

Recently, our Council restructured the Tenant Participation Groups, and I have been elected onto the Local Housing Forum Executive. Since then I've been elected onto the panel to select an Independent Advisor for Rent Restructuring in Renfrewshire. Recently, I gave a presentation to the Scottish housing Regulators in the Council Offices (it was a nervous experience). Currently I serve on the new Renfrewshire Licensing Board.

SANDRA GAULT,
INVERCLYDE
Treasurer, West Strathclyde Region 7

I have been involved in Tenant Participation since 2002. Currently acting Secretary for the Inverclyde Federation and belong to the Inverclyde Community Forum as well as being an active member of the local community.

HELEN WESTWATER
EAST RENFREWSHIRE (ERC)

As a founder member of the MVCA, along with likeminded Tenants fed up with the Newly Built Houses that were in constant need of repair, we formed a group in 1996 to present our ire to the LA. In 1999, we called a public meeting to gauge what support we could get from the other Tenants in the Mearns; this became the MVCA + RTO, which I was elected to as the Vice Chair.

Committees served on are the following;

TPWG now the Housing Service Liaison Group; sub committee Tenants Conference ERC; Business & Rent Setting Group.

CATE WEIR,
NORTH AYRSHIRE (NAC)

For the past ten years I have been Chair and Vice Chair of Saltcoats High Flats involved in all tenants issues working in conjunction with North Ayrshire Housing officers, on various committees. It gives us satisfaction helping our neighbours by being involved in my local Neighbourhood Watch and also on the Three Towns Crime Prevention Panel.

As a committee member of R7, we are helping other Tenants with new legislation brought forward by the Scottish Government.

**JOHN BUNCLARK,
EAST RENFREWSHIRE (ERC)**

I am privileged to be on the West Strathclyde Regional Network, which assists me in being a part of what goes on in my local community of Busby and East Renfrewshire as a whole in being able to further the greater two-way communications between the Scottish Government and the Tenants and Residents representatives on issues of National Policy.

At present, I have served as the Chairman of Busby Tenants and Residents Association since April 2006 and a Community Councillor since September 2005.

**NEIL SMITH,
NORTH AYRSHIRE (NAC)**

Currently: Chair Barrie Terrace and Hunter Avenue Tenants and Residents Association RTO.

For the last three years in Ardrossan I have participated with North Ayrshire Council (NAC) in compiling and agreeing the Tenants Handbook. More recently we have negotiated with NAC on traffic issues within our area. NAC has formed a Forum, which I was part of, to assess their performance as a Landlord.

The TPO, for NAC has said they are happy with our involvement in West Strathclyde Region 7. This makes us the golden thread between, the Tenants the Council and the Scottish Government.

I sit on the newly-formed network off RTOs in NAC.

**NADYA WAGLAND
NORTH AYRSHIRE (NAC)
Vice Chair West Strathclyde Region 7**

As a Tenant it is very important to be involved with all aspects of Tenant issues. Being a member of various working groups in North Ayrshire. As Vice Chair for Region 7, it keeps me informed and up to date with current and pending legislation.

Being involved with the Tenant movement goes back for the past nine years, seven in the South of England and the last two here in Scotland. The problems are very much the same in both countries, which allows the use of that variety of experience to help the Tenants Movement.

**ELIZABETH JENKINS,
INVERCLYDE
Deputy Vice Chair West Strathclyde Region 7**

For the last nine years I have been actively involved in volunteer Work within the Inverclyde Area. Vice Chair for the Federation of Inverclyde Tenants & Residents Association (FITRA). I organised the publication and promotion for Linking Education and Disability (L.E.A.D.) Scotland.

Fundraiser for Local groups like the Hospice and working with Ethnic Minority Groups of different religious beliefs outwith Inverclyde area and Abroad: learning more about different cultures.

**GORDON LETHORN
RENFREWSHIRE (RC)**

Hello, I would like to introduce myself; I was born in Bridge of Weir and still live in the village with my family. In the late eighties I became involved in the local community activities, and do a lot of voluntary work now, Chair of Bridge of Weir Tenants and Residents Association, Chair Bridge of Weir Festival Committee, Community Councillor, member of the Local Housing Forum, and Area Committee, Renfrewshire Licensing Board, Council Wide Executive, and a former Shadow Board Member of Renfrewshire Housing Association before the no vote.

**JOHN DONAGHEY
INVERCLYDE**

I have been involved in improving my local Community Centre for 23 years, supporting the community through many issues, for example, working with recovering drug users. I have experience in all aspects of housing management since the eighties.

Chair Federation Inverclyde Tenants & Residents Association (FITRA) and Branchton Association of Residents and Tenants. I am the treasurer of the Moving On group.

**ALVIA RAE
RENFREWSHIRE**

Alvia has been a member for Renfrewshire Glencairn Association and a valuable member of the current West Strathclyde Regional Committee.

It is with much sadness that we have had to accept Alvia's Resignation with the closure of her Tenants and Residents Association.

We wish Alvia a speedy recovery from her current ill health and hope to see her once again involved with a New TRA in her area.