

# Central Region Network Committee – 23 June, 2009

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**Minute Number:** 11

**Venue:** Mayfield Centre, Stirling

**Present:** Hugh McClung (Chair) Stirling Tenants Assembly  
Alex Lamb Stirling Tenants Assembly  
Geoff Morgan Breton & Corentin Court T&R Association  
Danny Mullen LOBS T&R Association  
Jack Hardman Lower West Tullibody T&R Association  
Helen Forrest Clackmannanshire T&R Federation  
Moira Robertson Strathfillan Housing Group

**In Attendance:** Michael Boal Scottish Government Priorities Team  
Ann Baillie Scottish Government Priorities Team  
Anne Cook Scottish Government Priorities Team  
William Fleming Scottish Government Priorities Team  
Tessa Brown Scottish Government Priorities Team  
William Brown Scottish Government Priorities Team  
Michelle Flynn Clackmannanshire Council  
Sheila Wynne Clackmannanshire T&R Federation  
Marie Dunbar Falkirk Council  
Margaret Couper Breton & Corentin Court T&R Association  
Angela Laley Forth Housing association  
George McArthur Stirling Council  
V Brown Stirling Council  
S Macaulay Stirling Council  
C Lydon Stirling Council  
C Hamilton Stirling Council  
M Whitelaw Stirling Council  
Catriona Rowley Stirling Tenants Project  
Alex M Wallace Stirling Tenants Assembly  
Mary A Rainey Stirling Tenants Assembly  
Hazel Mackay Stirling Tenants Assembly  
Mrs Mackay Broom Court Tenants, Stirling  
Sylvia Sharp Broom Court Tenants, Stirling  
E Copeland Broom Court Tenants, Stirling  
? Broom Court Tenants, Stirling  
Glen Stevenson Broom Court Tenants, Stirling  
Alexandra Russell Broom Court Tenants, Stirling

**Apologies:** Mae Barker Chapelle Crescent Residents Association  
Donald Budge Stirling Tenants Assembly  
Therese Mullen LOBS T&R Association  
Susan Robertson Delphwood T&R Association  
Sonia Cull Strathfillan Housing Group

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Item	Subject Matter	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>Hugh welcomed everyone to the meeting. He expressed his delight at the excellent turnout. Hugh explained that the meeting would consist of two parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presentation on proposals included in the draft housing bill. William Fleming and Tessa Brown from the Scottish Government would give the presentation and would allow time for questions.</li> <li>2. The normal Central Regional Network Committee business meeting. Guests would be welcome to remain and take part in this part of the meeting.</li> </ol>	
2.	<p><b>Presentation on Draft Housing Bill</b></p> <p>2.1 William outlined the purpose and objectives of the draft Housing Bill as being: (i) to safeguard social housing for future generations through reforms to right to buy; (ii) to improve value for tenants and taxpayers by modernising how social housing is regulated, and; (iii) to find a better name for social housing.</p> <p>2.2 Section 109 of the Bill would end Right to Buy (RTB) for all new build social housing. This commitment had been included in <i>Firm Foundations</i> and had received overwhelming support. The government are also seeking views on other RTB measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ending RTB for new tenancies</li> <li>• Reforming Pressured Area Status (PAS) by devolving to local authorities the power to designate PAS without reference to the government. Additionally to allow local authorities to extend their use of PAS to cover different housing types and extend the period of designation from the current 5 years to 10 years</li> <li>• Extending the suspension from RTB for Registered Social Landlords beyond the existing 10 year suspension rule</li> <li>• Revising guidance for landlords re their continuous occupation discretionary powers to allow them to waive the continuous occupation rule for certain categories of tenants.</li> <li>• A tenant allocated a new build tenancy would retain his/her RTB where a demolition order is placed on his/her existing house by the landlord, or where the landlord has not fully informed the tenant that his/her new tenancy is subject to RTB exemption.</li> </ul> <p>2.3 The aims of the modernised regulation regime are designed to get social landlords to focus their attention on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting tenants priorities</li> <li>• Continually improving performance and value, and</li> <li>• Commanding the confidence of public and private investors</li> </ul>	

2.4	<p>The modernised regulatory regime rests on two pillars: (a) a new Scottish Housing Charter and (b) a modernised regulator operating with its own board and acting independently of government. The statutory role of the regulator will be defined as: safeguarding and promoting the interests of existing and prospective tenants and other service users. The regulator will supervise landlords using a more flexible, proportionate and risk based process. More attention will be given to helping low performing and failing landlords while allowing good performing landlords to benefit from a lighter touch regulation.</p>	
2.5	<p>At the heart of the regulatory process will be a set of national standards (requirements) against which all social landlords will be assessed. The national standards will be incorporated within a new Social Housing Charter. The government and relevant stakeholders (including tenants) will develop the content of the charter through a series of conversations. On completion the Charter will be debated and if approved by the Scottish Parliament will have legal status. An additional component of the Charter will be to set out a number of local priorities agreed between local landlords in consultation with their tenants.</p>	
2.6	<p>William concluded his presentation by explaining that Alex Neill’s intention is to encourage grass roots discussion on what should be included in the Bill. He reminded stakeholders that they must bear in mind the issues of affordability, manageability and deliverability. The seriousness of the document makes it an overriding aim to get the principles right.</p>	
2.7	<p>Hugh thanked both William and Tessa for their presentation and opened the meeting for questions and comments.</p>	
2.8	<p>Discussion and questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Moira enquired when the designated date for ending RTB on new build housing would come into force. William replied that he envisaged most of the current local authority investment in new build would fall into this category.</li> <li>b) Geoff made the point that in extending the time limits for pressured area status designations, the government should consider the impact it may have on elderly tenants who may not live long enough to regain their RTB entitlement.</li> <li>c) Responding to a question on RSL registration criteria William made the point that the government were looking ahead and were not prepared to close the door on possible future alternative private investors becoming registered.</li> <li>d) Michael Griffith (Stirling Tenants Assembly) argued that only ex-service personnel should benefit from a local authority’s continuous occupation discretion.</li> </ul>	

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2.9	<p>e) Neil McKay expressed concern on devolving power to local authorities regarding designating pressured area status.</p> <p>f) Danny expressed his concern regarding the shared role of all the statutory regulators and in particular the perceived lead role being mapped out for the Accounts Commission.</p> <p>g) A Clackmannanshire delegate expressed his dismay at the wording of the actual Bill, complaining that it was not easy to understand or to follow. William replied that the actual Bill content is by necessity written in legal form so as to ensure lawyers and judges are clear as to interpretation. William went on to give assurance that the questions posed in the consultation are written in plain English and it is the questions that tenants should focus on.</p> <p>h) Hugh expressed the view that a change of name away from 'social' would be a good idea. He suggested replacing 'social' with 'tenants'.</p> <p>At this point Hugh adjourned the meeting for lunch and reminded everyone they were welcome to remain for the Regional Network Committee meeting.</p>	
<p><b>3.</b></p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p><b>Approval of Previous Minute</b></p> <p>Hugh reconvened the meeting at 12:45pm and thanked all those who had remained.</p> <p>Minute of Tuesday 26 May 2009 adopted as a true record on a motion by Moira seconded by Helen.</p> <p>Michelle Flynn (Clackmannanshire Council) - with the Chair's permission - informed the meeting that plans were being drawn up to hold a Forth Valley Conference involving all local authorities and RSLs in Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk areas. Hugh expressed interest in the concept but wondered at the exclusion of West Lothian. Danny interjected to say he could see no harm in the conference going ahead without West Lothian. Michelle informed members that talks were being held involving all TP officers and promised to come back when proposals were firmed up.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Agenda Item 5 - Anne Cook advised that Regional Committee should deal with this point through the conference sub-committee.</p> <p>Agenda item 5. Bullet point 5 – Geoff objected to the Hugh's remark 'at this point in time' expressing his view that we are a Regional Network. Hugh accepted we are a Regional Network although other people in other Networks would like to move towards a National set-up. Anne Cook confirmed the basis of National Engagement will continue as</p>	

	being through engaging with 9 Regional Networks.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>	
5.1	<p>Ann Baillie – email giving an update regarding website traffic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits: 657</li> <li>• Page views 6457</li> <li>• Top viewed pages are : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Homepage</li> <li>○ Regions – Northern Lights</li> <li>○ Regions – Central Region</li> <li>○ Regions – Highland and Argyle &amp; Bute</li> <li>○ Regions – Glasgow and Eilean Siar</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Traffic Sources: 63% entering the site directly; 28% entering from referring sites; 9% entering from search engines (mostly <a href="http://www.regionalnetwork.org">www.regionalnetwork.org</a> as a search term)</li> </ul>	
5.2	<p>Ann Baillie – email informing that an opportunity for members to visit the Scottish Parliament during September is being offered as part of committee training package. Members agreed that secretary should write Fiona Hyslop MSP asking her to arrange a conducted tour for committee members.</p>	Danny
<b>6.</b>	<b>Communication with RTOs</b>	
6.1	<p>Hugh asked members to consider appropriate ways to connect and communicate with our member RTOs. Ideas put forward by members included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking all landlords to include briefings on Central Regional Network’s activities in their tenants’ publications. Members recognised there would be issues around timing and sporadic nature of these publications.</li> <li>• Instigate a designated committee contact within each constituency. Again there might be problems in getting this message across.</li> <li>• Instigate designated ambassadors to attend local group meetings. This idea depends on having good transport links for ambassadors attending outside own area. Not considered as being appropriate for those members who do not have access to a car.</li> <li>• Produce a single page biography of the Network and include it in all future correspondence with RTOs.</li> <li>• Hugh prefers face to face meetings suggesting its not enough to simply correspond in writing.</li> <li>• Encourage landlords to include links to Regional Networks website.</li> </ul>	
6.2	<p>Members agreed to keep this as a semi-regular item for future agendas.</p>	

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<b>7.</b>	<b>Website Report</b>	
7.1	Danny informed members that the Priorities Team would be updating the website this week. The website sub-group were looking at setting up training for administrators so that they can undertake this function in the near future. All Regional Networks have now got their own email account and any comments registered to a particular region will be forwarded by the Priorities Team.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Area Roundup</b>	
8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clackmannanshire – Undergoing a review of TP strategy</li> <li>b) Stirling – continuing with a review of allocations policy</li> <li>c) Falkirk – update from their Inspection by the SHR</li> <li>d) West Lothian – settling in of recently formed housing networks and beginning new round of Tenant Led Inspections.</li> </ul>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Dates and Venues for future meetings</b>	
9.1	<p>Members agreed the following dates and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tuesday 28 July at 11 am in Thistle House, Edinburgh (discuss and formulate a response to draft housing bill consultation)</li> <li>2. Tuesday 25 August at 11 am in Thistle House, Edinburgh</li> <li>3. Tuesday 29 September at 11 am in Thistle House, Edinburgh</li> </ul>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Any other Business</b>	
10.1	Members indicated they had no other business to discuss.	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Close of meeting</b>	
	Chair declared the meeting closed and again thanked everyone for their attendance and support.	