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What are the priorities for CHC's Forums and Networks? The Chairs reveal all...

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Promoting the Welsh Way?

A recent report by the think tank ResPublica, 'At the Crossroads', argues that key aspects of the big society, in particular issues of mutualism, community ownership and localised decision-making, have so far been noticeable for their absence from recent social housing debate.

At the same time English MPs have attacked housing associations for being 'too large, remote and unaccountable'.

The 'At the Crossroads' report calls for a greater focus on the potential of housing associations as community-focused players, and for that to be balanced against their important role as providers of new homes.

The report also highlights the following:

- The huge potential for housing associations to work with local communities, to help support them in taking on local services or assets under the Community Right to Buy and Right to Challenge.
- The emerging role of social landlords as small scale funders of community endeavour - good examples include Trafford Housing Trust, Affinity Sutton, and the Accord Group.

- And where they have strong local presence, potential to provide a much broader range of public services in partnership with communities and local government.

Without wishing to sound complacent, surely this report evidences the growing differences between social housing in England and Wales?

Over the past five years we have seen a massive increase in the role of the 'mutual' in delivering social housing and other vital community services across Wales. However, this new wave of mutualism and investment builds on a legacy of community development and regeneration which has been delivered by the traditional sector in Wales.

Recent policy changes have only sought to strengthen this tradition, hence why we have received a new regulatory framework which is tenant focused, promotes co-regulation, and therefore greater 'localism', whilst advancing good governance and financial sustainability.

We've seen new innovations such as Arbed; in the first round of this programme the sector retrofitted 8,000 homes. The second round will be EU funded, taking advantage of changes to the European Regional Development Fund that could put the sector at the centre of the economic regeneration mainstream.

New financial inclusion services such as Moneyline Cymru have also led the way by helping thousands of tenants and non tenants to escape the clutches of loan sharks and doorstep lenders.

The use of local labour clauses creating training and work following the successful i2i initiative has also strengthened the economic and social impact of housing investment in Wales which now exceeds £500m per annum.

The sector in Wales is open to even more innovation with more work and 'live' action research to fight fuel poverty and worklessness, providing significant care, support and health related services and assessing how we can do more to take pressures off the NHS in Wales.

As we were reminded with the think piece 'The Collective Entrepreneur', Wales is the home of mutualism and the traditions of localism and collective ownership were not re-born with the conjuring of the 'Big Society'.

The not-for-profit sector in Wales is ready to invest an additional £250m of not-for-profit resources into housing, regeneration and care related services in return for a continued, outcome focused partnership with the WG.

As we look forward to developing a new relationship with a new Welsh Government and a new Housing and Regeneration Minister, shouldn't we have the courage and ambition to envision a new co-operative and mutual movement that can continue to deliver?



Nick Bennett
Group Chief Executive

Creating Lean Systems Champions

This year saw the first cohort of Lean Systems Housing Champions completing their programme of study and practical experience.

The Improvement Consultancy and Community Housing Cymru partnered for the programme as Cynon Taf CHG, CT Eryri, Taff Housing, Mid Wales Housing Association and CHC themselves put nine people through the twelve month programme. Learning is ongoing and the new lean systems champions learning group, which is open to all members, will meet quarterly to discuss challenges and opportunities.

The programme was centred on outcomes and is therefore a useful compliment for the new regulatory framework in Wales. Delegates asked and answered questions about the purpose of their services from the customer's viewpoint, how capable their processes were at meeting the need, key areas of wastage and what new processes would look like. A key focus was on measuring the outcomes and using tools such as statistical process control charts or capability charts to provide real time data on performance. Next year's programme will commence in January 2011 and we are delighted to announce that due to ESF funding we will be able to offer the programme at an even better rate.

We asked delegates what they found most useful about the programme: 'Sharing ideas and learning about the theory and how to implement it'; 'SPC charts and learning new methods of lean thinking'; 'Interaction with other group members'.

We asked delegates what they had learned: 'Different tools that can be used to track performance and how to encourage others to change'; 'The benefits of taking a lean approach to processes resulting in savings in human resources and financial resources'; 'To continuously question and look to make changes. How to use different methods to identify waste/need for change'; 'Lots of techniques in terms of understanding the purpose of the service/process from a customer perspective, the need to analyse data before any changes are made'.

For further information please contact Michaela Weaver on 07779754779 or info@theimprovementconsultancy.co.uk.

Sector Finance Update

Pressures on the economy and the reduction in Social Housing Grant over the coming years means that innovative financial solutions have to be sought if current levels of housing supply are to be maintained and/or increased.

As mentioned in the last edition of Cartref, the sector is exploring options to address this financial need. Several ideas are being progressed for further discussion. These fall broadly into three categories: New Sources of Funding, Public Sector Partnering and Widening RSL Services. Such proposals include:

- Making existing sector funding capacity available to all RSLs, possibly by some form of collective equity or investment fund. Accessing capital markets and financial institutions through Bond issues and collective RSL funding vehicles.
- Public sector guarantees (building on the Feed In Tariffs [FITs] Revolving Guarantee Fund idea).
- Transferring or leasing public land and assets at nil cost to RSLs, or as equity investment through development manager contracts, to generate development with land value being paid out of future receipts or profit share.
- Acquisition and refurbishment of empty properties (public and privately owned) requiring lower subsidy, using SHG and wider WG funds.
- Public sector partnering with RSLs to deliver public services, relevant and relative to social land-lording, e.g. community, entrepreneurship, health and education, enabling a 'cross-subsidy' with existing activities through increased scale.



- Partnerships with existing public and third sector providers, who have service capability but insufficient financial strength individually, through mutual/social enterprise structures drawing in private/third sector finance such as the Social Impact Bond approach.

The paper will build on these ideas, and others, to provide viable funding solutions for discussion with members and key stakeholders.

Steve Evans
Head of Finance and ICT



Rents Consultation

A consultation document entitled **A New Policy for Social Housing Rents** has been produced by the Welsh Government drawing on assistance from council and RSL sectors and tenant associations.

The underlying approach for the existing Local Authority and RSL rent policies is quite different. This consultation seeks to develop new proposals for a policy that would apply consistently to both sectors and provide fairness to tenants in terms of rent charges for equivalent homes in the two sectors.

This change is being suggested in the wake of the Essex Review of affordable housing policy underpinned by the following reasons:

- Outdated benchmark rents.
- Inconsistency between the two sectors' approaches.
- Lack of financial incentive in the system for landlords to improve quality of their stock.
- Divergence of service charge application across both sectors.
- Lack of transparent and evidence-based system for setting guideline rents.

The document has been issued to sector colleagues to assess and conduct financial modelling with responses being requested by 23 June 2011.

This is a topic that has garnered much discussion since its production at the end of March. Dialogue has focused around the 'rent envelope' figures, qualifying statistics, modelling details, length of consultation period and overall approach to the policy issue.



Members of the review group and WG personnel have had discussions through the Finance Forum to address these concerns and a key address took place in Merthyr Tydfil on 26 May.

This consultation is pivotal for the sector and calls for all members to be fully engaged in the process.

Further updates will be provided in future issues.

Steve Evans
Head of Finance and ICT

Development and Regeneration Conference 14/15 July

This year's Development and Regeneration Conference will be held in the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells on 14/15 July.

With an ever growing sustainability agenda, this year's conference will present solutions for housing delivery and help organisations get to grips with the changing housing standards.

On top of environmental sustainability, our homes need to be part of communities where economic, physical and social sustainability is embedded, and where the impact of housing is measured by more than bricks and mortar.

Topics to be covered include greener homes and behavioural change, building regulations, empty homes, funding updates, changes to planning and much, much more!

For further information, please see www.chcymru.org.uk.



Welfare Reform – Next Steps

Your Benefits

As the Welfare Reform Bill makes its way through the House of Commons, CHC is working hard to ensure that key messages on the impact of the housing benefit proposals are being heard loud and clear.

While we are pleased that the proposal for a 10% cut for those claiming JSA for 12 months or more was dropped, we are still very concerned about some of the other reforms proposed, in particular those around underoccupation, direct payments and the expansion of the shared accommodation rate to include anyone under 35.

Underoccupation and shared accommodation rate

In Wales 4,000 social housing tenants are deemed to be under occupying their property. Under the Welfare Reform Bill the DWP plans to slash housing benefit for all tenants living in homes considered to be too large for their needs - even if they have lived there for decades! The DWP has suggested that households will see their benefit reduced by up to 15% for those with one 'spare' room and up to 25% for two or more 'spare' rooms. CHC anticipates that this will lead to claimants losing an average of £13 a week.

We already know that demand for social housing in Wales far outstrips supply and an assessment by the DWP also suggests that there is a mismatch between property size and household composition, and therefore social landlords will struggle to rehouse tenants successfully within the sector resulting in many falling into debt and risking eviction. Even if a tenant is successfully rehoused, it risks uprooting people from the places where they have family and friends and would unfairly punish tenants whose children have grown up and left home.

The underoccupation proposal is compounded by the restriction of the full flat housing benefit rate to those aged over 35. This will mean individuals between 25 and 35 will now only be eligible for a shared room rate which again will mean many seeking to be rehoused.

For the first time last year, homelessness in Wales increased; if these reforms go ahead then we can expect to see this becoming a steep upward trend.



Direct Payments and Universal Credit

We are also concerned about the proposals for direct payments. London & Quadrant piloted paying housing benefit direct to tenants in 2004, and the result was an increase in rent arrears from £2.5million to £4.4million which equates to an 80% increase. This equates to an 80% increase. We are worried that the impact of the proposed Universal Credit changes could be worse due to the lack of local housing benefit offices and monthly payments.

We have devised a housing benefit communications strategy which we will be implementing over the coming weeks and months and will include lobbying activities, communicating to tenants and also the general public about the wider implications for Wales. For further details on the communications campaign, please contact Edwina O'Hart.

Amanda Oliver
Head of Policy and Research

Cartref Interview

As you're probably aware, Huw Lewis AM has been appointed Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage. Mr Lewis was elected as the Labour and Co-Operative Party Assembly Member for Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney in 1999 and has held several cabinet posts including Deputy Minister for Education, Deputy Minister for Social Justice, a brief spell as Regeneration Minister and most recently the Deputy Minister for Children. Read on to find out a little more about our New Minister....

- **What was your first job?**

Teaching in a small secondary school in Scotland.

- **How did you get involved in politics?**

Through the miners' strike and genetics.

- **What aspect of your new role are you looking forward to most?**

Trying to protect the most vulnerable.

- **What aspect of your new role are you least looking forward to?**

The paperwork.

- **What do you think will be the key issues that will affect the housing sector in Wales this year?**

Supply, quality and affordability.

- **How, as Minister with responsibility for Housing and Regeneration, will you ensure cross sector working with health and social services?**

Vigilance and good communication.

- **If you could change one thing in housing, what would it be?**

That affordable supply = demand.

- **What is the strangest thing that's happened to you?**

Becoming a politician.

- **Have you met anyone famous?**

Only politicians – and they don't count.

- **If you could do any other job what would it be?**

A writer.



Huw Lewis AM

- **What are your personal ambitions for this year?**

To protect as many people as I can from the UK Government cuts.

- **Name one thing about yourself people wouldn't know?**

I love cooking.

- **How do you relax?**

A good book and a glass of wine.

- **How would you like to be remembered?**

Warmly.

- **Whom do you most admire?**

Keir Hardie.

- **What has been your personal greatest achievement?**

Making it to higher education.

- **Favourite song?**

Bailero - Songs of the Auvergne.

- **Favourite tippie?**

Italian red.

- **Favourite film?**

High Noon.

- **Who would you like to play you in a film?**

Anyone taller and better looking than me (i.e. pretty much anyone).

Meet the Forum/Network Chairs

We are working in a very diverse sector and a great deal of Community Housing Cymru's policy development and support for members is carried out in our networks and forums.

These meetings are a great opportunity to hear presentations from high quality speakers about relevant topics, share good practice and most importantly for members to identify and discuss emerging strategic and operational policy and practice, and consider the impact on the sector.

A chair person is elected annually for every forum and has a place on CHC's National Council, with chairpersons for the networks elected annually also.

The following members who currently hold post outline their priorities for the coming months:

Financial Services Forum

Chair: Steve Higginson, Monmouthshire Housing



The next 12 months will see some interesting developments affecting social landlords in Wales. The first is the rent review consultation; whatever the subsequent outcome, it will have a major impact on all social landlords, RSLs and Local Authorities alike. Once considered, a new rent regime can be brought into being in Wales which will be a truer, more accountable reflection on what tenants should be paying as rent for their property. The second is the continued advance towards the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), although not in the short term. This will affect all RSLs and its imposition will change the face of the audited annual accounts as we currently know them. We will face increased costs in the preparation of the new accounting statements, particularly the larger RSLs who may, by their nature, have to adopt the most comprehensive suite of reporting standards. The third is the continued shortage of grant and therefore the sector will continue to try to innovate and be creative in the sourcing of funds that would allow it to meet its commitments to Government in very challenging times.

Housing Services Forum

Chair: Helen Armstrong, Cadwyn Housing Association



With the whole purpose of social housing being reinvented everything is a priority! Who is it for? Who should we be letting homes to? How should we be addressing housing need? How can we benefit more people? We are getting to grips with the welfare reforms, household profiling, affordability and Rent First, changes to our powers to deal with anti social behaviour, issues arising from tenants living in sustainable homes, self assessment, regulation and collecting the data to evidence our outcomes, and making sure the voice of tenants and the wider community come through loud and clear as we are shaping the future...

Supported Housing Forum

Chair: Christine Rutson, United Welsh HA



The Supported Housing Forum continues to focus on taking forward the Aylward review of Housing Related Support. Forum members, vice Chair, and all three of the workstreams (Regulation and Governance, Finance and Quality Services) use the Forum as a sounding board to ensure that the sector's views are represented. The Quality Services workstream is looking at services for older people.

The Forum is also monitoring and influencing the changes to welfare benefits as they apply to supported housing. Changes for individuals and restrictions on housing benefit for temporary accommodation are being implemented and the DWP consultation on Exempt Accommodation is awaited.

Technical Services Forum

**Chair: Andrew Bateson,
Cadwyn Housing Association**



The first priority of the forum is to ensure that it meets the needs of its members. We want to support members in tackling the issues around ensuring WHQS compliance and meeting the challenges of providing good quality energy efficient homes, both new and existing, in an environment of reduced social housing grant and increasing costs.

Another important area of the forum's work will be to support members in dealing with legislative changes, for example, fire safety and the future implications of the transfer of building regulations to Welsh Government. Finally, the forum wants to continue to be a mechanism for sharing and promoting good practice.

Regulation Network

**Chair: Antonia Forte,
Cynon Taf Community
Housing Group**



Set up to help associations deal with the expectations of the new regulation framework, this network has had the dual purpose of enabling Welsh Assembly Government's regulation team to communicate directly with the movement, in particular about the self-assessment submissions that went in at the end of March. At the next meeting, I am anticipating that the network will reconsider its remit, in the hope that we can refocus our brief to include governance, performance management and continuous improvement— otherwise regulation is in danger of becoming a process, which defeats the whole objective!

Leaseholder Network

**Chair: Richard McQuillan,
Hafod HA**



The inaugural CHC Leaseholder Network was held at the MRC on 23 May. 18 delegates attended the meeting with representatives from 14 different Welsh housing associations taking part in lively discussions including S. 20 and the consultation process, types of leaseholder contracts and information provided by members to their leaseholders. The meeting established that there is a huge need for a network for leaseholder managers to be able to share resources and good practice. The fantastic support we had for the meeting showed the commitment in Wales to improve and develop leaseholder services together. If we can carry on like this we will achieve great things in Wales. If you would like to know more about the Leaseholder Network, please contact Clare Williams, CHC.

HR Network

**Chair: Sarah-Ellen Stacey,
RCT Homes**



The Human Resources network has grown significantly over the last few years which not only confirms its importance, but also justifies its place at board level within associations.

Over this period, the profession has adapted to significant change in today's workplace, has aligned its priorities to meet these business challenges, is addressing skills gaps to implement the programmes needed, and is developing the capabilities it needs to raise its game for the future. It is becoming more proactive, more outcome-focused and is delivering in partnership with other strategic partners.

The HR network continues to provide an opportunity for members to discuss these changing demands, to share innovative and award winning best practice with each other and also to support each other in these challenging times.

IT Network

**Chair: Richard Troote,
Newydd Housing Association**



Firstly, I would like to thank those of you who have supported the re-launch of the IT Network over the past two years. We now have a very good base to grow, and debates are vibrant and interesting. I expect we are all experiencing similar business pressures to extract greater efficiency from present or future systems, while ensuring routine services are available and performing.

In the next year, the aim of the IT Network is to support Associations' IT Departments by stimulating debates, and bringing suppliers to meet us collectively. Where it is practical, we can join together in securing better deals or increasing our collective knowledge, forming partnerships to introduce new ideas.

Currently we are looking at the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) offering from the WG to see if that can reduce our costs and provide services to facilitate Digital Inclusion for tenants.

PR Network

**Chair: Sarah Manners,
Wales & West HA**



These are undoubtedly challenging times and members of the PR Network know that we have a key role to play in the impact that our sector has on the lives of thousands of people throughout Wales.

There are many issues to be tackled as well as opportunities to be grasped. Perhaps three of the most immediate are:

Explaining and promoting the fundamental role that good quality, affordable housing plays in maintaining good health, raising educational achievements, cutting crime and supporting employment.

Communicating the details of benefit changes to our residents, and communicating the impact of benefit changes to decision-makers, stakeholders, the media and the wider public.

Grasping the opportunities presented by new social media including Twitter and Facebook.

Rural Housing Network

**Chair: Steve Jones,
Tai Ceredigion**



Carwyn Jones, the newly re-elected First Minister, has stated that the 'overarching priority...will be on delivery'. So, what are the key challenges facing housing in rural areas? And how can the Rural Housing Forum help?

The key challenges remain those set out in the comprehensive and independent JRF Commission on Rural Housing in Wales 2008. Unmet housing need; homelessness; land supply; empty homes; and data/information issues. Add to that original list the financial deficit, and an urban centric majority Welsh Labour party in the Senedd, and it could be argued that we have the ingredients for a perfect storm!

The next meeting of the Wales Rural Housing Forum therefore needs to get into hurricane mode and put forward positive ideas as to how housing professionals across Wales can deliver innovative solutions to tackle the well documented rural housing problems. No moaning, no further commissions needed, we just need to lobby hard and DELIVER - the alternative storm wreckage does not bear thinking about.

Community Regeneration Network

**Chair: Nigel Draper,
Valleys to Coast**



The forum explores and investigates issues of community development, regeneration and resident engagement; sharing experience and best practice and advising CHC on issues of strategic importance to the social housing sector in Wales. One such strategic matter in recent years has been our work to secure funding for the sector from European Regional Development Funds, where a sub-group was created to take this forward with support procured from West Wales European Centre. Despite it being a long and complex journey, this work has resulted in a number of important and successful outcomes:

- Recognition of the role of social housing in pioneering and developing low-carbon/energy efficiency measures – through the WAG funded Arbed 1 programme and in future years through EU funding of Arbed 2.
- Establishment and development of CREW as a centre of excellence in Wales – partly financed through EU funds and within the framework of a unique partnership with CHC.
- In principle approval by WEFO for a programme supporting the development of social enterprises through the social housing sector.
- Significant progress in developing a programme of support for disadvantaged people to enter and sustain employment.

As this work proceeds, we recognise the need to share our experience with the sector and to disseminate lessons learnt. In addition we expect to assist RSLs to access funding or support through these projects and programmes. Alongside this it is anticipated that a separate, strategic advisory group will emerge to monitor the progress of our EU work and to continue to advise CHC on the strategic environment.

Financial Inclusion Network

**Chair: Jason Wroe,
Newydd Housing Association**



The Financial Inclusion Network has been going from strength to strength since it was set up in September 2008. Over the past year the Network has discussed money advice, financial capability, a quality mark for financial inclusion services, welfare reforms and affordable warmth amongst others. The focus over the coming year will be to integrate digital inclusion into our remit, to look at how to effectively performance monitor financial inclusion activities and, as the benefit reforms are implemented by the coalition government, ensure that housing providers are geared up to support those tenants affected by the cuts.

Cwrdd â Chadeiryddion Fforymau/Rhwydweithiau

Rydym yn gweithio mewn sector amrywiol iawn a chaiff llawer o waith datblygu polisi a chefnogaeth Cartrefi Cymunedol ar gyfer aelodau ei wneud yn ein rhwydweithiau a fforymau.

Mae'r cyfarfodydd hyn yn gyfle gwych i glywed cyflwyniadau gan siaradwyr amlwg am bynciau perthnasol, rhannu arfer da ac yn bwysicaf oll i aelodau ddynodi a thrafod polisi ac ymarfer strategol a gweithredol sy'n datblygu, ac ystyried yr effaith ar y sector

Caiff cadeirydd ei ethol yn flynyddol ar gyfer pob fforwm ac mae ganddynt sedd ar Gyngor Cenedlaethol Cartrefi Cymunedol. Etholir cadeiryddion y rhwydweithiau yn flynyddol hefyd.

Mae'r Cadeiryddion presennol yn amlinellu eu blaenoriaethau am y misoedd nesaf:

**Fforwm
Gwasanaethau Ariannol**
**Cadeirydd: Steve Higginson,
Tai Sir Fynwy**



Bydd y 12 mis nesaf yn gweld rhai datblygiadau diddorol sy'n effeithio ar landlordiaid cymdeithasol yng Nghymru. Y cyntaf yw'r ymgynghoriad ar adolygiad rhent; beth bynnag yw'r canlyniad diilynol, bydd yn cael effaith sylweddol ar bob landlord cymdeithasol, landlordiaid cymdeithasol cofrestredig ac awdurdodau lleol fel ei gilydd. Unwaith y bydd wedi'i ystyried, medrir cyflwyno trefn rhent newydd yng Nghymru fydd yn adlewyrchiad cywirach a mwy atebol o'r hyn y dylai tenantiaid fod yn ei dalu fel rhent am eu cartref. Yr ail yw parhau i symud ymlaen i fabwysiadu Safonau Adrodd Ariannol Rhyngwladol (IFRS), er nid yn y tymor byr. Bydd hyn yn effeithio ar bob LCC a bydd ei osod yn newid wyneb cyfrifon blynyddol archwiliedig fel y gwyddom amdanynt ar hyn o bryd. Byddwn yn wynebu costau uwch wrth baratoi'r datganiadau cyfrifeg newydd, yn arbennig yr LCC mwy a all, drwy eu natur, fod yn gorfod mabwysiadu'r gyfres fwyaf cynhwysfawr o safonau adrodd. Y trydydd yw'r prinder parhaus mewn grant ac felly bydd y sector yn ceisio arloesi a bod yn greadigol wrth gyrchu cronfeydd a fyddai'n ei alluogi i gyflawni ei ymrwymadau i'r Llywodraeth mewn cyfnod anodd.

**Fforwm
Gwasanaethau Tai**

**Cadeirydd: Helen Armstrong,
Cymdeithas Tai Cadwyn**



Gyda holl ddiben tai cymdeithasol yn cael ei ailddyfeisio, mae popeth yn flaenoriaeth! Ar gyfer pwy mae? Pwy ddylem ni fod yn gosod cartrefi iddynt? Sut ddylem ni fod yn trin angen tai? Sut medrwn roi budd i fwy o bobl? Rydym yn mynd i'r afael gydag ad-drefnu budd-daliadau, proffilio aelwydydd, y gallu i fforddio a Rent First, newidiadau i'n grymoedd i ddelio gydag ymddygiad gwrthgymdeithasol, materion yn deillio o denantiaid yn byw mewn cartrefi cynaliadwy, hunanasesiad, rheoleiddio a chasglu'r data i roi tystiolaeth o'n canlyniadau. A gwneud yn siŵr bod llais tenantiaid a'r gymuned yn ehangach i'w glywed yn uchel a chllir wrth i ni lunio'r dyfodol.

**Fforwm
Tai â Chymorth**

**Cadeirydd: Christine Rutson,
Cymdeithas Tai United Welsh**



Mae'r Fforwm Tai â Chymorth yn parhau i ganolbwyntio ar symud ymlaen ag adolygiad Aylward ar gymorth sy'n gysylltiedig â thai. Mae aelodau'r Fforwm, yr is-gadeirydd a phob un o'r tair ffrwd gwaith (Rheoleiddio a Llywodraethu, Cyllid a Gwasanaethau o Ansawdd) yn defnyddio'r Fforwm fel seinfwrdd i sicrhau y cynrychiolir barn y sector. Mae'r ffrwd gwaith Gwasanaethau o Ansawdd yn edrych ar wasanaethau ar gyfer pobl hŷn.

Mae'r Fforwm hefyd yn monitro ac yn dylanwadu ar y newidiadau i fudd-daliadau fel y maent yn weithredol i dai â chymorth. Caiff newidiadau ar gyfer unigolion a chyfyngiadau ar fudd-dal tai ar gyfer llety dros dro eu gweithredu a disgwylir ymgynghoriad yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau ar lety eithriedig.

Fforwm Gwasanaethau Technegol

Cadeirydd: Andrew Bateson, Cymdeithas Tai Cadwyn



Blaenoriaeth gyntaf y fforwm yw sicrhau ei fod yn diwallu anghenion ei aelodau. Rydym eisieu cefnogi aelodau wrth fynd i'r afael â'r materion yn ymwneud â sicrhau cydymffurfiaeth gyda Safon Ansawdd Tai Cymru, ateb yr her o ddarparu cartrefi safon uchel sy'n effeithiol o ran ynni - yn adeiladau newydd a'r rhai sy'n bodoli eisoes - mewn amgylchedd lle mae grant tai cymdeithasol yn gostwng a chostau'n cynyddu. Maes pwysig arall o waith y fforwm fydd cefnogi aelodau wrth ddelio gyda newidiadau deddfwriaethol, er enghraifft, diogelwch tân a'r goblygiadau ar gyfer y dyfodol o drosglwyddo rheoliadau adeiladu i Lywodraeth Cymru. Yn olaf, mae'r fforwm eisieu parhau i fod yn ddull ar gyfer rhannu a hyrwyddo arfer da.

Rhwydwaith Rheoleiddio

Cadeirydd: Antonia Forte, Grŵp Tai Cymunedol Cynon Taf



Sefydlwyd i helpu cymdeithasau i ddelio gyda disgwyliadau'r fframwaith rheoleiddio newydd, mae gan y rhwydwaith y diben deul o alluogi tîm rheoleiddio Llywodraeth Cymru i gyfathrebu'n uniongyrchol gyda'r mudiad, yn neilltuol am y cyflwyniadau hunanasesiad a anfonwyd cyn diwedd mis Mawrth. Yn y cyfarfod nesaf, rwy'n rhagweld y bydd y rhwydwaith yn ailystyried ei gylch gorchwyl, yn y gobaith y medrwn ail-ganolbwyntio ein briff i gynnwys llywodraethu, rheoli perfformiad a gwelliant parhaus - fel arall mae rheoleiddio mewn perygl o ddod yn broses, sy'n trechu'r holl fwriad!

Rhwydwaith Lesddeiliaid

Cadeirydd: Richard McQuillan, Cymdeithas Tai Hafod



Cynhaliwyd cyfarfod cyntaf Rhwydwaith Lesddeiliaid Cartrefi Cymunedol ar 23 Mai. Bu 18 o gynrychiolwyr yn bresennol yn y cyfarfod gyda chynrychiolwyr o 14 o wahanol gymdeithasau tai yng Nghymru'n cymryd rhan mewn trafodaethau bywiog yn cynnwys Adran 20 a'r broses ymgynghori, mathau o gontractau lesddeiliaid a gwybodaeth gan aelodau i'w lesddeiliaid. Canfu'r cyfarfod fod angen mawr am rwydwaith er mwyn i reolwyr lesddeiliaid fedru rhannu adnoddau ac arfer da. Mae'r gefnogaeth wych a gawsom i'r cyfarfod yn dangos yr ymrwymiad yng Nghymru i wella a datblygu gwasanaethau lesddeiliaid gyda'n gilydd. Os ydym yn parhau fel hyn medrwn gyflawni pethau gwych yng Nghymru. Cysylltwch â Clare Williams, Cartrefi Cymunedol os hoffech wybod mwy am y Rhwydwaith Lesddeiliaid.

HR Network

Cadeirydd: Sarah-Ellen Stacey, Cartrefi RhCT



Mae'r rhwydwaith Adnoddau Dynol wedi tyfu'n sylweddol dros yr ychydig flynyddoedd diwethaf sydd nid yn unig yn cadarnhau ei bwysigrwydd, ond hefyd yn cyfiawnhau ei lle ar lefel bwrdd o fewn cymdeithasau.

Dros y cyfnod, mae'r proffesiwn wedi addasu i newid sylweddol yng ngweithle heddiw, wedi addasu ei flaenoriaethau i ddiwallu'r heriau busnes hyn, yn mynd i'r afael â bylchau sgiliau i weithredu'r rhaglenni sydd eu hangen, ac yn datblygu'r galluoedd sydd eu hangen i gynyddu ei gêm ar gyfer y dyfodol. Mae'n dod yn fwy rhagweithiol, yn canolbwyntio mwy ar ganlyniadau ac yn cyflawni ar y cyd â phartneriaid strategol eraill.

Mae'r rhwydwaith Adnoddau Dynol yn parhau i roi cyfle i aelodau drafod y gofynion newidiol hyn, i rannu arfer da blaengar gyda'i gilydd a hefyd i gefnogi ei gilydd yn y cyfnod heriol yma.

Rhwydwaith Technoleg Gwybodaeth

Cadeirydd: Richard Troote, Cymdeithas Tai Newydd



Yn gyntaf, hoffwn ddiolch i bawb a gefnogodd ail-lansio'r Rhwydwaith Technoleg Gwybodaeth dros y ddwy flynedd diwethaf. Mae gennym bellach sylfaen da iawn i dyfu ohono, ac mae'r trafodaethau yn fywiog a diddorol. Mae'n debyg ein bod i gyd yn profi pwysau busnes tebyg i sicrhau mwy o effeithiolrwydd o'r systemau presennol neu systemau'r dyfodol, gan sicrhau fod gwasanaethau arferol ar gael ac yn perfformio.

Nod y Rhwydwaith Technoleg Gwybodaeth yn y flwyddyn nesaf yw cefnogi Adrannau Technoleg Gwybodaeth Cymdeithasau drwy ysgogi trafodaethau, a dod â chyflenwyr igwrdd â ni gyda'n gilydd. Lle mae hynny'n ymarferol, medrwn ymuno i sicrhau gwell deliau neu gynyddu ein gwybodaeth ar y cyd, gan ffurfio partneriaethau i gyflwyno syniadau newydd.

Ar hyn o bryd rydym yn edrych ar brosiect Cydgasglu Band Eang y Sector Cyhoeddus gan Lywodraeth Cymru i weld os gall hynny ostwng ein costau a darparu gwasanaethau i hwyluso cynhwysiant digidol i denantiaid.

Rhwydwaith Cysylltiadau Cyhoeddus

**Cadeirydd: Sarah Manners,
Cymdeithas Tai Wales & West**



Mae hwn yn ddi-os yn gyfnod anodd ac mae aelodau ein Rhwydwaith Cysylltiadau Cyhoeddus yn gwybod fod gennym rôl allweddol i'w chwarae yn yr effaith a gaiff ein sector ar fywydau miloedd o bobl ledled Cymru.

Mae llawer o faterion i gael eu trin yn ogystal â chyfleoedd i fanteisio arnynt. Efallai mai tri o'r rhai mwyaf uniongyrchol yw:

Esbonio a hyrwyddo rôl sylfaenol tai fforddiadwy o safon wrth gynnal iechyd da, cynyddu cyraeddiadau addysgol, gostwng troseddau a chefnogi cyflogaeth.

Cyfathrebu manylion newidiadau i fudd-daliadau i'n preswylwyr, a chyfathrebu effaith newidiadau i fudd-daliadau i wneuthurwyr penderfyniadau, rhanddeiliaid, y cyfryngau a'r cyhoedd yn ehangach.

Manteisio ar y cyfleoedd a gyflwynir gan gyfryngau cymdeithasol newydd yn cynnwys Twitter a Facebook.

Rural Housing Network

**Cadeirydd: Steve Jones,
Tai Ceredigion**



Mae Carwyn Jones, sydd newydd ei ail-ethol yn Brif Weinidog Cymru, wedi dweud mai'r brif flaenoriaeth fydd delifro. Felly beth yw'r heriau allweddol sy'n wynebu tai mewn ardaloedd gwledig? A sut gall Fforwm Tai Gwledig Cymru helpu?

Mae'r heriau allweddol yn parhau'r rhai a nodwyd yng nghomisiwn cynhwysfawr ac annibynnol JRF ar dai gwledig yng Nghymru yn 2008, sef angen tai, digartrefedd, cyflenwad tir, cartrefi gwag a materion data, gwybodaeth. Ychwaneger diffyg ariannol at y rhestr wreiddiol hynny, a bod ffocws mwyaf y Blaid Lafur yn y Senedd ar ardaloedd trefol, a medrid dadlau fod gennym gynhwysion ar gyfer storm berffaith!

Felly dylai cyfarfod nesaf Fforwm Tai Gwledig Cymru baratoi am gorwynt a chyflwyno syniadau cadarnhaol ar sut y gall swyddogion tai ym mhob rhan o Gymru ddelifro datrysiadau blaengar i fynd i'r afael â'r problemau hysbys iawn mewn tai gwledig. Dim cwyno, dim angen mwy o gomisiynau, yr hyn ddylem wneud yw lobbio'n galed a DELIFRO – ni allwn ddioddef meddwl am ganlyniad arall i'r storm.

Rhwydwaith Adfywio Cymunedol

**Cadeirydd: Nigel Draper,
Cymoedd i Arfordir**



Mae'r fforwm yn ymchwilio materion datblygu cymunedol, adfywio a chyswllt â phreswylwyr, gan rannu profiadau ac arfer gorau a chynghori Cartrefi Cymunedol ar faterion o bwys strategol i'r sector tai cymdeithasol yng Nghymru. Un mater strategol o'r fath mewn blynyddoedd diweddar fu ein gwaith i sicrhau cyllid i'r sector o Gronfeydd Datblygu Rhanbarthol Ewrop, lle cafodd is-grwp ei greu i symud hyn ymlaen gyda chefnogaeth o Ganolfan Ewropeaidd Gorllewin Cymru. Er y bu'n daith hir a chymhleth, arweiniodd y gwaith hwn at nifer o ganlyniadau pwysig a llwyddiannus:

- Cydnabod rôl tai cymdeithasol mewn arloesi a datblygu mesurau carbon isel/effeithiolrwydd ynni - drwy raglen ARBED 1 a ariannir gan Lywodraeth Cymru ac yn y dyfodol drwy gyllid yr Undeb Ewropeaidd i Arbed 2
- Sefydlu a datblygu Canolfan Rhagoriaeth Adfywio Cymru fel canolfan rhagoriaeth yng Nghymru – wedi'i hariannu'n rhannol drwy gronfeydd yr Undeb Ewropeaidd ac o fewn fframwaith partneriaeth unigryw gyda Cartrefi Cymunedol
- Mewn egwyddor gymeradwyaeth WEFO i raglen yn cefnogi datblygu mentrau cymdeithasol drwy'r sector tai cymdeithasol
- Cynnydd sylweddol wrth ddatblygu rhaglen o gefnogaeth i bobl dan anfantais i fynd i mewn a chynnal cyflogaeth.

Wrth i'r gwaith hwn fynd rhagddo, rydym yn cydnabod yr angen i rannu ein profiad gyda'r sector ac i ledaenu'r gwersi a ddysgwyd. Yn ychwanegol disgwylw'n gynorthwyo LCC i gael mynediad i gyllid neu gefnogaeth drwy'r prosiectau a'r rhaglenni hyn. Wrth ochr hyn, rhagwelir y daw grwp ymgynghori strategol ar wahân i'r amlwg i fonitro cynnydd ein gwaith Ewropeaidd a pharhau i gynghori Cartrefi Cymunedol ar yr amgylchedd strategol.

Rhwydwaith Cynhwysiant Ariannol

**Cadeirydd: Jason Wroe,
Cymdeithas Tai Newydd**



Aeth y Rhwydwaith Cynhwysiant Ariannol o nerth i nerth ers ei sefydlu ym mis Medi 2008. Dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, mae'r Rhwydwaith wedi trafod cyngor arian, galluedd ariannol, nod ansawdd ar gyfer gwasanaethau cynhwysiant ariannol, ad-drefnu budd-daliadau a gwres fforddiadwy ymysg pethau eraill. Y ffocws dros y flwyddyn nesaf fydd integreiddio cynhwysiant digidol i'n cylch gorchwyl, edrych ar sut i fonitro fod gweithgareddau cynhwysiant ariannol yn cael eu perfformio'n effeithiol a, gyda Llywodraeth Glymbleidiol y Deyrnas Unedig yn gweithredu newidiadau i fudd-daliadau, sicrhau fod darparwyr tai yn barod i gefnogi'r tenantiaid y mae'r toriadau hynny'n effeithio arnynt.

Assembly Watch

Since the last edition of Cartref, the Assembly has been in recess due to the Assembly elections which took place on 5 May. At various points following the election it seemed that a number of options were likely in Cardiff Bay. Following negotiations, a Labour-only Government has been formed although they fell just short of a majority in the Welsh Assembly elections - winning 30 seats. Carwyn Jones has been sworn in as Wales' First Minister.

Here's a quick overview of the election results:

The results

Turnout was 37% - slightly lower than the 2007 elections (39.8%). The results were as follows:

- Labour won 30 seats - 4 more than they held in the last Assembly.
- The Welsh Conservatives won 14 seats - 2 more than they held in the last Assembly.
- Plaid Cymru won 11 seats - 4 less than they held in the last Assembly.
- The Welsh Liberal Democrats won 5 seats - 1 less than they held in the last Assembly.

Cabinet reshuffle

As a result of the cabinet reshuffle, housing has gained a prominent seat at the top table and has maintained its link with regeneration. The new Minister for Housing, Regeneration & Heritage is Huw Lewis AM. Mr Lewis was elected as the Labour and Co-Operative Party Assembly Member for Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney in 1999 and has held several cabinet posts including Deputy Minister for Education, Deputy Minister for Social Justice, a brief spell as Regeneration Minister and most recently the Deputy Minister for Children. He is a member of the Co-Operative Party, the Fabian Society and of the Union UNITE.

Other members of the new cabinet are:

Ministers

- Health & Social Services - Lesley Griffiths AM
- Environment & Sustainable Development - John Griffiths AM
- Education & Skills - Leighton Andrews AM
- Local Government & Communities - Carl Sargeant AM



- Finance & Leader of the House - Jane Hutt AM
- Business, Enterprise & Technology - Edwina Hart AM

Deputy Ministers

- Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes - Alun Davies AM
- Deputy Minister for Skills - Jeff Cuthbert AM
- Deputy Minister for Children & Social Services - Gwenda Thomas AM

The Chief Whip is Janice Gregory AM.

Looking ahead

In the six months before the election, Community Housing Cymru and its members undertook a range of lobbying activities to raise the profile which included face to face meetings with the political parties, attendance at the main political parties conferences as well as our pre-election 'Are you On Board' Events. 21 assembly members that have been voted into the new government attended one of these events.

Whilst much has been achieved in the past four years in the field of housing and regeneration, much still needs to be done. Housing associations in Wales have pledged to increase investment in housing and regeneration by a quarter of a billion pounds over the next four years, over and above any 'Welsh block' related funding, and to fund at least 1,500 affordable homes with no grant, on the basis that we sustain an intelligent partnership with the new Welsh Government.

CHC's Assembly manifesto included a range of actions and we will now be pushing to ensure that the new government implements policy to reflect our manifesto commitments.



Some of these actions include:

- Finding ways of financing more affordable housing and a greater range of affordable housing.
- The need to be innovative and tackle the issue of empty homes.
- Building on existing schemes in tackling fuel poverty and doorstep lending to boost spending power in the poorest parts of Wales whilst developing the green economy and supply chains for the future competitiveness of the Welsh economy.
- Continued support for Extra Care and Repair Schemes that are so important to help older people enjoy independent living.

CHC members now look forward to working with the Welsh Government to deliver mutual solutions for affordable housing, care and regeneration across Wales and to ensure that social housing investment has a critical role in overcoming the structural economic challenges that face Wales - economic inactivity, youth disaffection, urban blight, rural depopulation and ill health.

Summer recess usually occurs in the middle of July – so the next six weeks or so promise to be very exciting.

Shea Jones
Political Research and Information Officer



Housing services and the Equality Act 2010: Where are we now?

On 24 May, Tai Pawb held a seminar looking at the Equality Act 2010 which was jointly promoted by CHC, CIH and WLGA. The event was well attended with over 40 RSL and local authority delegates.

The event was a good opportunity to hear more about how the Equality Act 2010 affects housing associations. Nick Lambert from the Equality and Human Rights Commission delivered two sessions: looking at the Equality Act 2010 and its implications for service delivery, and gathering relevant information to comply with the act.

The event also had a range of speakers who shared their experiences including Lyn Bond, tenant board member from Newydd who gave a tenant's perspective; Gwyn Jones, Policy Officer at Wrexham County Borough Council who talked about Equality Impact Assessments; and finally Sarah Fotheringham, Tenant Involvement Officer from Linc-Cymru who discussed their intergenerational story telling project.

During the afternoon the seminar was split into two groups, RSLs and Local Authorities. The focus of the workshops was to discuss key challenges and concerns for organisations implementing the Equality Act 2010. From the RSL perspective, issues raised included the need to collect tenant profiling information as a starting point as well as practical guidance on what the Act means to them.

Delegates were advised that the Equality and Human Rights Commission will shortly be publishing non statutory guidance on the Equality Act which will be available on their website: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

Look out for a repeat of this seminar in North Wales soon!

Kevin Howell
Policy and Information Officer

Housing Round Up



Newydd staff are delighted after achieving the Investors in People Gold Standard Award.

Newydd get gold

Newydd has become one of only four HAs in Wales to achieve the Investors in People Gold Standard Award. Newydd, with 87 staff and over 2,500 homes in Wales, have been an IIP organisation for 13 years; however, the housing association has been awarded the Gold Standard this year on their first attempt. To secure the award, Newydd met a total of 188 different standards. These standards covered a wide range of areas including team working, innovation in learning and corporate social responsibility. Paul Roberts, Chief Executive, said, 'Achieving the Gold Standard is a tremendous achievement for Newydd. We have proved that our people are at the heart of everything we do for our tenants. Their individual skill and commitment are crucial in delivering quality services; we want our staff to continue to feel supported and valued, whatever their role, and we will continue to help them develop their potential.'



(left – right) Ian Bakewell (Head of Housing MCC), Kathryn Gardner (Chief Exec. Charter Housing), Judith Langmead (Chair of MHA Board), John Keegan (Chief Exec. MHA) and Mark Gardner (Chief Exec. Melin Homes) celebrate the launch of the New Choice Based Lettings Partnership in Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire Homesearch

Monmouthshire Homesearch is a new way of finding a home in Monmouthshire. Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA), Melin Homes, Charter Housing and Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) are working in partnership and officially launched Monmouthshire Homesearch in March at MHA's new offices in Mamhilad. This policy will make finding a home much easier for residents requiring social housing in Monmouthshire, with properties being advertised on the website, One Stop Shops, Libraries and the local press. The Common Housing Register provides a single point of access to the waiting list for customers which means that they only have to complete one application to be registered with all three RSLs. Kathryn Edwards, Corporate Director of Charter said: 'We have worked closely with our partners to ensure that applying for social housing in Monmouthshire is straightforward and easy to understand. We are confident that Monmouthshire Homesearch will make life easier for anyone wanting to apply for social housing, it's a big step forward'. For further information, please see www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk.



Tom Farr, Assistant Management Accountant at NCH, being grilled by visiting students from St. Woolos Primary School.

Unleashing aspirations at NCH

Newport City Homes (NCH) recently invited Year 6 pupils of St. Woolos Primary School to visit their offices as part of its 'Aspirations Project'. The aim of the visit was to introduce the children to the different roles and opportunities for employment within NCH and inspire them to make the right choices for themselves during the next stage of their education. A presentation about NCH was followed by a quiz - the 100% success rate was proof that the children were listening! Each group met six members of NCH staff who told them about their backgrounds, existing roles and how they got to where they are now. The children also took part in a treasure hunt around the offices which tested the knowledge they picked up during the tour. Before leaving, the children were given 'My day at NCH' project sheets, photos and other visuals in order for them to produce a collage of the day and write their thoughts about their experience. Sally Couch Year 6 teacher at St Woolos said: 'NCH was a fantastic host... The children and staff all enjoyed the day and my group said that it was their best trip ever.'

Hiker heroes raise funds for hospice

Residents, staff and friends from a scheme supporting homeless young people in Wrexham have raised over £900 for Hope House Hospice with a 10 mile Hike around Llyn Brenig. The 'Big Walk' was organised by residents from Hurst Newton, a scheme managed by Clwyd Alyn HA, and was supported by local Community Beat Police Officers, Universal Assist who provide accommodation of 16+ leaving care, and the Rathbone organisation. One of the residents taking part said that apart from the fantastic views and the fresh air, the best thing about the day was a conversation they had about 'superheroes': 'We reckoned that all who took part were heroes for the day, because by completing the walk they were helping raise money to improve the well being of a terminally ill child and their family and that gave us all a great sense of achievement.' A Just Giving web page for the event will remain open until the end of August - www.justgiving.com/Hurst-Newton.

Fresh support for homeless in Powys

People facing homelessness in Powys now have a better chance of finding somewhere decent to live while they get their lives back on track. Six new self-contained and fully furnished apartments have been created in the centre of Brecon by Wales & West HA to provide much needed short-term accommodation to the Powys area. Powys County Council will be responsible for housing those in priority need, and Cefni Lettings (part of homelessness charity Agorfa) will be responsible for linking residents with a range of support services depending on their needs. Cefni will also be working in the local community with private landlords to develop private sector lettings options in Powys. Anne Hinchey, Chief Executive of WWHA, said: 'We are very proud of this development... and it is another step in the right direction toward addressing the acute shortage of appropriate affordable housing in Powys. This is another good example of the excellent partnership we have with Powys County Council.'

Out of the Comfort Zone

Take 135 delegates, add 25 exhibitors, mix together with 35 entertaining, thought-provoking speakers, sprinkle with the surroundings of Mid Wales, add a dash of evening fun and games ... and you have the perfect recipe for a fantastic CHC Resources conference!

Delegates were quick to feedback via twitter and email that this conference was one of the best that they had attended. Here's a flavour of some of the sessions...

What do leaders really do?

Jeff Grout, former Business Manager to Sir Clive Woodward and listed in the '100 best business speakers in Britain' spectacularly kicked off the conference with his thoughts on what effective leaders really do. Despite being heckled on a number of occasions by Irish and Welsh rugby fans, Jeff delivered some key messages for delegates and asked them to challenge and question everything by asking the following questions:

What are the **good things** we do that we must **keep doing**?

What are the **bad things** we do that we must **stop doing**?

What things do we do **only occasionally** that we should **do consistently**?

What things **don't we do** that we should **start doing**?

He included quotes from successful business, leaders and sports stars including Seb Coe: 'If you don't know why you've failed how can you improve? If you don't know why you've succeeded it must be an accident', and FD Roosevelt: 'It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead and find no one out there.'

Taming Tigers – the Jim Lawless way

Kicking off the second day of the conference was another international business speaker, Jim Lawless. He is the only authority on change and personal development to have put his life on the line to prove his theories. In 2010 Jim broke the British No Limits free diving record and became the deepest British free diver in history. He was the first to break the magic 100m barrier on a single breath of air. He also put his life on the line to go from being a 36 year old, 12 stone, smoking, drinking, (and non-riding) business consultant to a 9 stone jockey competing in his first televised race in just 12 months to prove the power of the 'Ten Rules for Taming Tigers' and to fulfil a £1 bet.

Jim's entertaining session gave delegates a new set of possibilities and responsibilities, as he challenged them to change their ideas about what they can achieve and sent them away excited about making a difference in their associations.



Jeff Grout opened the conference and asked:
What do leaders really do?

The delegates that made it to Jim's 9am session on day two were thoroughly inspired and also slightly hesitant to discuss £1 bets with fellow colleagues after the session had closed!

The Difference Between Men and Women

The conference closed with a highly entertaining session taken by Emmanuel Aharoni. Delegates took part in a quiz which aimed to highlight differences between the sexes – who were the most direct? Who were the most intuitive? Who were the most talkative? Who were the most likely to lie? Some of the differences surprised many in the audience. The quiz results were used by Emmanuel to show that men and women behave differently, they communicate differently, they think differently, they see the world differently, and how these differences can be used to help workplace relations.

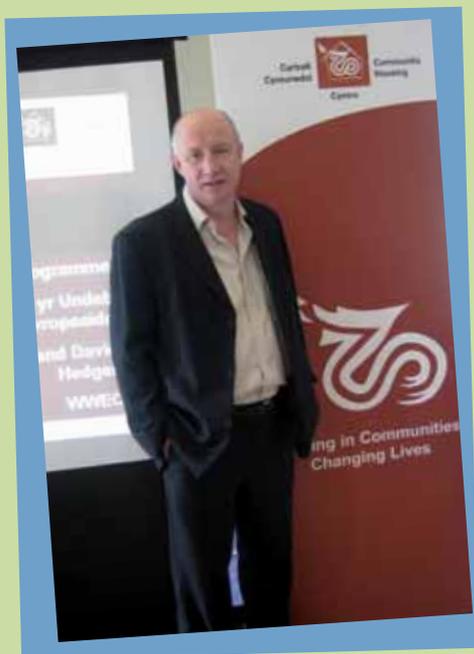
There were a wide range of other sessions and a varied mix of practical workshop sessions to appeal to IT, Finance and HR professionals throughout the two days – and of course, the evening entertainment of Wii and Xbox games, scaletrix and giant Connect 4!

I can officially report that the last five delegates retired from the bar at 5.45am, and all bar one made it to the first session at 9am... which goes to show that resources delegates not only play hard, but work hard too!

Thanks to all those who took part and attended the event. Conference presentations can be found our website.

Phillipa Knowles
Director of Central Services

Regulation



CHC has recently appointed Doug Elliot to support the sector in meeting the requirements and expectations set out in the new regulatory framework.

Doug is formerly the Head of the Audit Commission's Office in Wales and is now a consultant specialising in local government and public sector performance evaluation and review. He was one of the WLGA's external assessors for The Wales Local Government Excellence Wales Programme and, until October 2010, was acting as the Welsh Assembly

Government's Head of Regulation with responsibility for establishing the regulatory framework for housing associations as part of the Essex reforms.

Doug is also currently working as part of a Tribal Team supporting a major housing reform programme for the States of Jersey, and is also working for the WLGA as an advisor to the newly appointed Commissioners at the Isle of Anglesey CC.

CHC Governance Survey

Discussions on the regulatory framework have identified that there is no baseline data on housing association governance in Wales.

Following the launch of the CHC Charter for Good Governance and Supporting Guidance, CHC has decided to undertake a baseline survey on governance. This first survey does not cover all aspects covered by the Charter, but focuses on three areas:

- The composition of the Board,
- How Board members are supported in their role, and
- The role of CHC in supporting continuous improvement in governance.

Future surveys will focus on other aspects of the Charter.

Thank you to all who completed the questionnaire. CHC are currently analyzing and will give the findings in the next edition of Cartref.

For further information, please contact Amanda Oliver.



PR News

Eisteddfod

Final call for organisations to join us for the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham from 30 July to 6 August. It will be a great opportunity to engage with stakeholders and members of the public and to raise the profile of the sector.

Social Media



It's great to see so many of our members engaging with social media and utilising sites such as Twitter and Facebook as communication channels. If you're not already, be sure to follow us on Twitter (CHCymru) and like us on Facebook (Community Housing Cymru). We will be using social media at all our conferences and have allocated a hashtag to each one – so if you are attending a CHC conference, please get involved. If you still don't know your @ from your hashtags (#) or your tweets, we'll be running a Twitter breakfast seminar on 25 July. Further details to follow.

Last month CHC also hosted a successful online discussion focusing on social media. The discussion was facilitated by John Popham, an independent facilitator who uses social media for public good. In recent years, John has been working at a senior level on Digital Skills strategy, Digital Inclusion, Public Sector transformation using technology, and the role of ICT in regeneration. Much of his earlier career was spent in the fields of community development and social enterprise, including two years as Chair of Community Enterprise UK.

John was recently a panellist in the Guardian Q&A on social media in social housing, as he has some background knowledge of the sector. We discussed the suitability of various social media channels for different projects, the issue of controlling content, buy-in from senior management, linking board members with social media and using social media at conferences, to name just a few. To see a transcript from the online discussion, please see the PR Network page on the website. We will be putting together a timetable of online discussions for the coming months which are a great way to network with each other in between conferences and meetings, to pick up tips and to hear examples of good practice from other organisations – get involved!

PR Conference

Keep 15 September free for our one day PR and Communications conference which promises to be an exciting and informative one day event – with some twists! The event will be held in Cardiff this year and confirmed session include:

- Media relations in a digital age: Val Bodden, Head of Media Relations, The Royal Mail
- Turning customers into champions: MacMillan Cancer Support
- Working with the new Welsh Government: Darran Hill, Positif Politics
- A panel discussion including representative from BBC Wales, ITV Wales and Inside Housing.

Booking forms will be available soon.

Housing Benefits Communications Campaign

The next meeting to discuss evaluation and the way forward for the postcard campaign will take place in CHC's offices on 28 July at 3:30pm. Please RSVP if you'd like to attend.

Other activities which are being planned for the coming months include:

- Further lobbying with a letter campaign to all Welsh MPs and delivering our 'For Whose Benefit' petition to Westminster,
- Communicating to tenants - helping them help themselves, and
- A Wales wide media campaign highlighting the wider implications for communities.

For further information on any of the issues above, please contact Edwina O'Hart.

Edwina O'Hart
Communications Manager

CREW update



Many of the projects initiated in the early days of CREW are now coming to fruition and the next two months will see a lot of new material emerging from these activities.

Health Impact Assessment Toolkit

CREW has delivered a programme of training in Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and to develop a HIA Toolkit which will enable organisations and community groups to develop their own HIA. The training programme was delivered in locations throughout Wales and was heavily oversubscribed leading to additional sessions in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhyl. CREW would like to express its gratitude to the WHIASU team and Chloe Chadderton in particular for developing this essential resource.

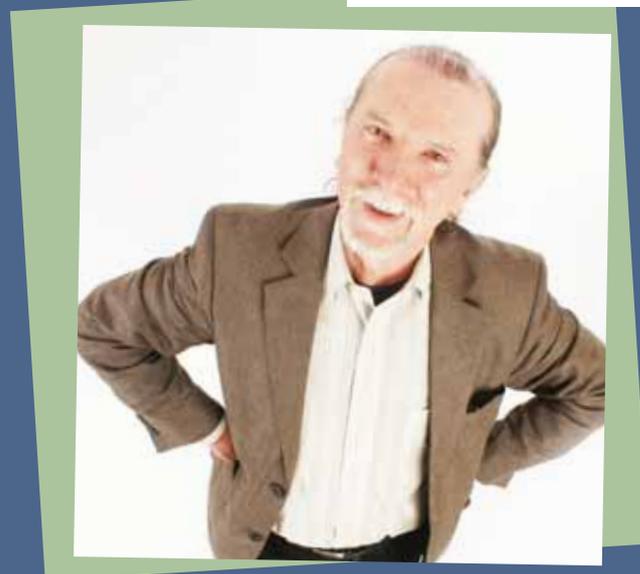
Directory of RSL Regeneration activity

This project has been delivered by a team from Taff HA and will present a directory of the regeneration projects currently being conducted by RSLs in Wales. We haven't yet had a full response from all RSLs but are looking at the best way to present this on our website. It is then hoped that those who haven't yet registered their work will be inspired to do so. Here thanks go to Claire Tristram, Gemma Watkins and Jackie Amos at Taff HA for their energy and commitment to this project.

Low carbon skills requirements for the regeneration and built environment professional services sector in Wales: This project examines the current skills issues for the professional services sector in Wales. An online survey was used to acquire the views of all the professions that contribute to regeneration and the built environment, and a range of skills deficits have been identified. At the next stage CREW will be working with partners including Construction Skills Wales, who were co-funders of this project, to see how we now move forward to address the issues identified in the report. CREW is very grateful to Richard Essex (RSCW) and Christina Hurst (RICS) for the extensive programme of research achieved within a very tight timescale.

The Community Appraisal Framework

From Concept to Toolkit Project: Funded by the WAG New Ideas Fund this project has developed the Atmosphere, Landscape and Horizon Framework first developed in a study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to create a toolkit for assessing the impact of regeneration initiatives at the community level. We are grateful to Rod Keeble at RCT Homes and Owen Davies of Hyder for allowing us to shadow their implementation of the framework in a study of open space in the RCT Homes area. Thanks also to Kyle Burgess of CREW who has led the project and developed the Toolkit.



The Transitional Trajectories Project

Funded by DCELLS this project has examined the contemporary context facing young people making the transition from school to work, training and higher and further education. Inevitably focusing on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), the project has used interviews and focus groups to directly tap the experience of young people throughout Wales. Our thanks here to those who gave their time to be interviewed or take part in focus groups and to Bethan Lindsay-Gaylard who conducted the research for CREW.

In addition to these activities CREW has conducted a range of events including a programme of Policy Seminars in partnership with the WCVA and Community Development Cymru. We were also very pleased to join the consultation programme that WCVA and CDC initiated to consider the future of Communities First. The exercise produced a paper, Communities First - A Way Forward, which has now been published and presented to the Welsh Government. The paper identifies a clear future for the Communities First programme in which community led social and economic development is sustained.

CREW is also hosting a Conference on Rural Regeneration in Dolfor, near Newtown on 7 July. Please contact jenny-horton@chcymru.org.uk for further details.

All the materials mentioned here will be available from the CREW website. Alternatively, email enquiries@regenwales.org and request anything you are interested in. If you wish to keep in touch with CREW you can also join our Thematic Networks at www.regenwales.org. You can also follow CREW on Twitter at @ProfDaveAdamson or on Facebook at the Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales.

Dave Adamson
CREW Chief Executive

Moneyline Cymru

Moneyline Cymru is going from strength to strength as calculations of debt interest savings continue to demonstrate significant savings for customers when compared to key competitors' lowest market rates – savings are currently estimated at between £1.5m and £2m.

Moneyline Cymru has to date:

- Loaned over £2 million.
- Opened 2,500 savings accounts.
- Approved over 5,000 loans.

Feedback from customers has been extremely positive; at recent Focus Groups, customers reported that they regard Moneyline Cymru as an important and valuable service and that flexibility and cost of borrowing are top priorities for them.

Nigel Draper, Chair of Moneyline Cymru said, 'Over the next few years we will work in partnership with East Lancs Moneyline, Social Finance and The Social Business Trust to explore opportunities for expansion and growth by reviewing corporate and management structures, securing further investment and seeking to create a Moneyline UK brand. We will also continue to work with the Department of Works and Pensions during 2011 to provide affordable and responsible lending to disadvantaged customers.'

Moneyline recently won the 2011 Credit Today Responsible Lender of the Year Award, beating wonga.com and quickquid.com.

Over the next three years it is hoped that an additional ten Moneyline Cymru outlets will open in Wales and an expanded telephone / postal / web service will be provided through existing housing association call centres.



CHC Money Advice Service

From July 2011, money advice will be available from Moneyline Cymru outlets in Cardiff, Bridgend, Newport, Cwmbran and Pontypridd, thanks to a £250k grant from the Big Lottery People and Places programme.

Five part time CHC money advisers and one supervising money adviser will provide money advice to those customers who have been declined loans due to affordability. Moneyline Cymru loan officers will refer customers to the money advisers who will help them with budgeting, income maximisation and priority debts. Evidence from the pilot money advice service, also delivered by CHC, suggests that customers who are in financial difficulties are approaching Moneyline Cymru for a loan at a much earlier stage in the debt process, that is, before they reach crisis stage, and that levels of non-priority debt are low in this group. The aim of the service is to prevent those who cannot realistically afford to take out a loan approaching doorstep lenders or even illegal money lenders.

Clare Williams, CHC's Financial Inclusion officer said, 'Until now we have had only one money adviser working at full capacity across the five Moneyline Cymru outlets. This has been a useful pilot which has enabled us to seek funding from the Big Lottery for an enhanced service, for which we are extremely grateful. Money Advisers will now be available at the busiest times of the day and will run for three years. Over 500 people to date have sought assistance from the CHC advice service and we hope that the five advisers will provide over 5,000 appointments over the lifetime of the project.'

For further information, please contact Clare Williams.

Clare Williams
Financial Inclusion Officer



Stock transfer update

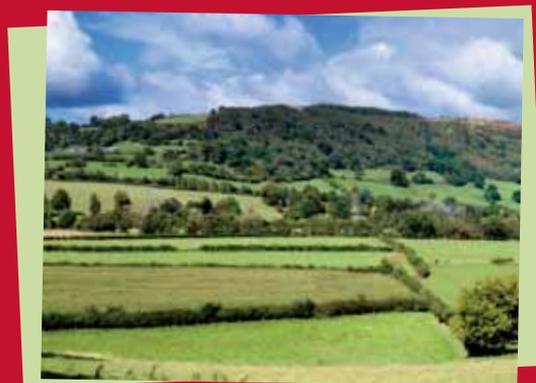
Vale of Glamorgan council tenants have voted to reject a proposal that would have seen their homes transferred to a new local housing organisation, Heritage Coast Homes.

In a secret ballot of tenants, in which 68.4% voted (3,245), 49.2% supported the transfer and 50.8% were opposed.

Nick Bennett, Group Chief Executive of Community Housing Cymru said:

‘We are disappointed with the news that the tenants of the Vale of Glamorgan have voted no to transfer their homes to Heritage Coast Homes. Although the council believe they have the ability to upgrade their housing stock to the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), an investment programme of £86 million over the initial five year period following transfer and a total planned programme of improvements of £254 million over the 30 year business plan of Heritage Coast Homes is now lost.’

Peter Cahill, Chair of CHC added: ‘Heritage Coast Homes, as a not for profit housing organisation would have been about so much more than bricks and mortar.



Within its investment programme, they would have had a budget of £25 million to be used specifically to tackle estate design issues. This investment represented a unique opportunity to create more employment opportunities to stimulate the local economy and to create sustainable communities. They would have had a budget of £5.7 million for the next five years for community improvements and community safety initiatives which would be administered by local residents’ groups across the county. There is also the issue of local job creation to consider – if tenants voted yes, there would have been job opportunities for people to undertake work associated with the works programme and they would have used a range of social clauses in contracts to create more job and employment opportunities for local people.’

If there was a positive result in the ballot, all rent would have been kept by Heritage Coast Homes, including (on average) around £25 of every tenant’s weekly rent which the Council currently has to pay to HM Treasury – this amounts to around £5m each year.

The Stock transfer picture in Wales is now as follows:

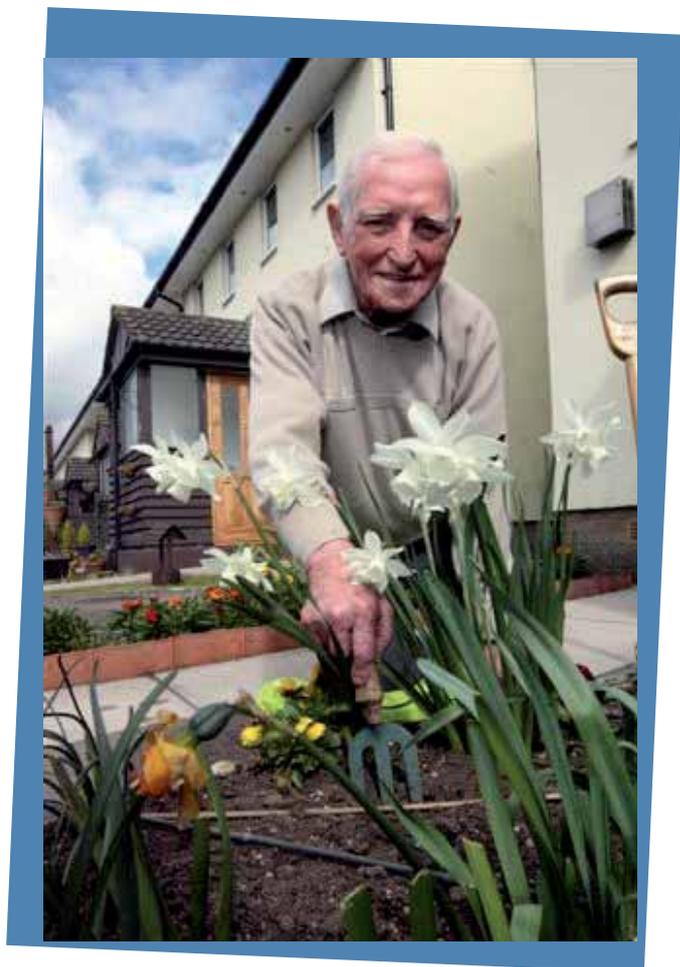
Those who have successfully transferred their housing stock as a result of a tenant ballot	Bridgend – Valleys to Coast Conwy – Cartrefi Conwy Monmouth – Monmouthshire Housing Rhondda Cynon Taf – RCT Homes Torfaen – Bron Afon Community Housing Newport – Newport City Homes Merthyr Tydfil – Merthyr Valleys Homes Ceredigion – Tai Ceredigion Gwynedd – Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd Blaenau Gwent – Tai Calon Community Housing Neath Port Talbot – NPT Homes
Tenants have rejected stock transfer in the ballot	Swansea Wrexham Vale of Glamorgan
Those still working on their options	Anglesey
Authorities able to reach WHQS	Cardiff Carmarthenshire Denbighshire Pembrokeshire Powys
Those who are going to ballot in the next 12 months	Caerphilly – ballot expected 2011 Flintshire – 2011/12

The Role of a Scheme Manager

CHC undertook a small scale study into the role of scheme managers across Wales following a request from members in late 2010. The aim was to try to establish the similarities and differences between scheme manager roles within housing organisations in Wales. We had 20 responses in total from members across Wales.

Some of the key points from the research are highlighted below:

- 66% of scheme managers work full time with the remaining 34% working part time.
- 39% of respondents offered flexible working policy for scheme managers.
- 79% of scheme managers do not live on site.
- A range of duties were undertaken by scheme managers in both housing management and support.
- Housing Management Tasks undertaken by scheme managers:
 - 100% liaised with maintenance.
 - 100% undertook tenant engagement.
 - 78% anti social behaviour.
 - 78% rent arrears.
 - 50% lettings.
 - 22% allocation.
- Support Tasks undertaken by scheme managers:
 - 94% daily checks.
 - 100% help completing forms.
 - 100% help making phone calls.
 - 28% shopping.
 - 56% support managing finance.
 - 56% support planning/risk assessment.
 - 100% liaising with outside agencies.
 - 100% organising activities.
 - The vast majority of scheme managers were providing services to their scheme only with a limited number providing services off site.



It is clear that scheme managers are undertaking a range of both support and housing management related tasks in their roles although there is clearly a diversity of tasks undertaken across Wales. For further information please contact Kevin Howell.

Kevin Howell
Policy and Information Officer

New Membership Packages

CHC are now offering a new category of membership to public sector organisations, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises.

The annual cost will be £300 and will include a free day delegate place at our Annual Conference, access to the member-only areas of the website, discounts on exhibition stands and delegate places, and choice of either a 12-month subscription to Cartref or a copy of our Housing Directory. Partnership working is becoming increasingly important in these challenging times, and we are eager to work with organisations from a number of different sectors.

We are also revamping our Commercial Membership package, four years on from when we created the membership category. We will now be offering commercial organisations a choice of Gold, Silver or Bronze membership status. New benefits include a free advert on the website, Twitter alerts and a free day delegate place at our Annual Conference.

The Silver category offers a free exhibition stand at the conference of your choice, along with all the benefits of the Bronze package, and the Gold category offers two exhibition stands and two conference programme advertisements.

Commercial members are presented with excellent opportunities to engage with our members and to gain essential information on the Welsh housing sector, and we are eager to help them to make the most of our membership package.



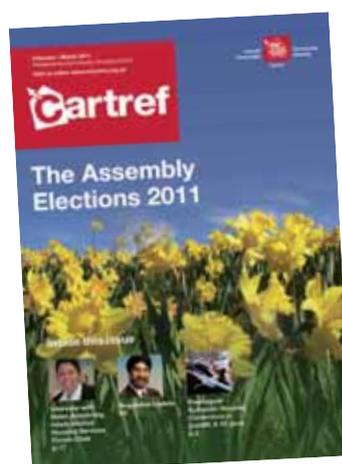
Nick Bennett addressing commercial members at one of our Briefing events.

If you would like any further information on our membership schemes, please contact Jennifer Horton or Rhian Robinson.

New Look Cartref

A big thank you to everyone who responded to our Cartref survey. We've reviewed the feedback and will be trialing the changes in the August/September edition.

The new look Cartref will be fully bi-lingual and will be launched at the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham in August. As we have seen an increase in the number of member stories we receive, we will be producing a monthly electronic member news bulletin starting in August... So keep those stories coming in...





HA in Focus - A new era for Rhondda Housing Association

Rhondda Housing Association has provided high quality affordable housing in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area for 30 years. We were established during the 1970s, when the closure of many collieries saw the Valleys suffer some of the highest unemployment rates in Wales. This led to massive urban deprivation in the Valley communities with a lack of good-quality affordable housing.

Four people founded the Association, with 15 houses funded by the Secondary Housing Association in Wales, in our first office - a small converted house in Tylorstown, Rhondda Fach. 30 years (and four office moves) later, we've moved into our current head office, which comprises 12,000 sq ft spread over five floors.

In addition to providing an efficient working environment for staff, our new office also provides excellent tenant and community facilities and a fully equipped large training room which is available for hire by outside organisations. Adjoining the offices, we also built flats providing much needed town centre accommodation.

What we stand for

Our values are: Professionalism, Fairness, Integrity, Respect, and Openness.

Our aim is to: Provide high quality sustainable housing, support and regeneration solutions with the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, by encouraging innovation and valuing the contribution of staff and tenants.

In practice we demonstrate this by:

- Our new £2.5m flats and head office development in Tonypany town centre, supporting regeneration and sustainability as well as providing easy access to our facilities by tenants and members of the community.
- Providing staff resources and director level leadership to community regeneration and support services. Our work has been recognised with many awards eg BITC Big Tick, UK Housing Award for Outstanding Achievement in Housing in Wales, BITC National Award for Excellence.



Prince Charles awarding RHA former chair John Andrews the National BITC Award.

- Providing a variety of opportunities for tenants to become involved in the Association, recognising volunteering, providing accredited training to our tenants, many of whom have gone on to further study including degrees - and winning many awards eg the Chartered Institute of Housing – UWIC Outstanding Academic Progress award, and NIACE RCT County Learners award.
- Extending our core housing management services by providing support services to all residents of RCT regardless of type of tenure.
- Providing in-house finance inclusion support services.
- Encouraging internal staff progression, succession planning and accredited training.
- Supporting partnerships including Treherbert, Trealaw, Tonyrefail and Maerdy Communities First teams.

We have a turnover of circa £6m, assets with a net book value of £73m, reserves of £8m and we provide approx 1500 homes. We also have 67 employees based in offices in Tonypany and Treherbert.



RHA tenants fayre.

Where we are going

Being an Association that works in one of the most deprived areas of Wales, the board felt that it was important that we remained representative of that area, and as such the Association regained independent status in May 2010. This marked the beginning of a new era and commencement of a 'new start strategy' to take the Association forward.



RHA tenants enjoying an intergenerational event.

Changing our status provided many challenges for the board and directors team. The board spent time focusing on its composition and teamwork and undertook a 'Passage of Rights' exercise. This involved much self analysis and we are grateful to Hugh Laird of the Board Development Agency who supported the board in this exercise.

Similarly, our change in status and other factors such as senior staff retirement also meant that we had to rebuild the directors team, and three new directors were appointed.

Like all associations, we face the challenges of tough economic conditions, reducing grants and increasing costs of loan finance, among other things.

However, change and challenge bring with it opportunities for innovation and different ways of working, and we are fortunate to have a very committed and professional work force, who are always willing to step up to the mark. It is through their skill and expertise that the association has been one of the leaders in the fields of tenant participation, community regeneration and support services.

Some of the areas we are progressing include:

- Combining new build schemes with support facilities eg mental health.
- Providing social enterprise retail space, enabling employment opportunities for residents.
- Extension of our direct labour organisation function, including offering apprenticeships.
- Increasing the involvement of tenants in assessing and helping to improve our core housing management service provision.
- Applying systems thinking and lean management to key processes.
- Recruiting share members who also want to actively engage with the association.
- Launching our new website in September.

Whilst the association works in partnerships with many organisations either in or linked with the sector, we are also forging links with large PLC organisations. These organisations can provide valuable business support and are often willing to share experiences of new management techniques that sometimes don't reach the public sector until much later.

Although we are working in challenging times, they are also exciting times. Demand is likely to increase, empty properties abound and provide opportunity for innovation and value for money solutions. Strong respectful relationships also exist between housing associations and the Welsh Government, CHC and CIH Cymru, which provide strong professional support and leadership and have raised the profile of the housing sector considerably over the last few years.

For RHA, I would like to thank those who have given us much support over recent times; Paul Roberts, of Newydd HA, for seconding staff at a critical time; John Williams, consultant, for his expertise, and finally all RHA Board Members for their unfaltering support of the association.



**Lesley Davies, Chief Executive
Rhondda Housing Association**

CHC Events

All courses take place in Cardiff.

June	
21	Rent Arrears Masterclass
22	Asbestos Awareness Training Workshop
July	
1	Introduction to Housing Management Law
4	Service Charges: Practicalities, Problems & Solutions
7	Managing Complaints
11	Introduction to Housing Associations
20	Repairs for Non Technical Staff
25	Twitter Breakfast Seminar
27	Managing Focus Groups
September	
20	Service Charges: Practicalities, Problems & Solutions
October	
3	Introduction to Housing Associations

For further information, please contact Jennifer Horton on 029 2055 7410 or Jennifer-horton@chcymru.org.uk.

Conferences

14-15 July
Development and Regeneration Conference Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells
15 September
PR and Communications Conference Parc Thistle Hotel, Cardiff
6-7 October
Housing Management and Maintenance Conference Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells
24-25 November
Annual Conference The Hilton Hotel, Cardiff



For further information, please contact Rhian Robinson, Events Programme Coordinator, on 029 2055 7413 or Rhian-robinson@chcymru.org.uk