



albyn housing society : annual report



albyn

Housing Society

building homes...supporting communities



Our values

OPENNESS

We are committed to openness, accountability and integrity in all our business activities.

RESPECT

We respect diversity and each other and we help our colleagues to deliver their best.

TRUST

Our relationships with each other, with tenants and with our partners are built on trust.

DEDICATED

Collectively we are dedicated to providing real homes in balanced Highland communities.

INNOVATIVE

We have a track record of delivering innovative developments throughout the Highlands.

SUSTAINABILITY

We deliver long term housing solutions which contribute to community sustainability.

QUALITY

We strive to deliver a quality service, to build quality homes and to provide best value.

AFFORDABLE

We provide a range of housing to ensure that it is affordable to a wide range of people.

Chairperson's report

2007/08 has proved to be another successful year for Albyn Housing Society Ltd and we've worked hard to meet ambitious yet realistic targets in a number of areas. £25 million was spent on new properties of which £19 million came in grants from Communities Scotland (now The Scottish Government) and The Highland Council. The remaining funding came from Dunfermline Building Society and the Royal Bank of Scotland. Our new shared equity properties were front-funded to the tune of £3 to £5 million at any one time, and overall, we succeeded in building 144 new rented homes plus 78 shared equity properties throughout the year.

A high point of the year was the completion of a major refurbishment and expansion of our head office in Invergordon and the new build of our office in Inverness. The Inverness property is designed to accommodate our Housing Support team who work with the most vulnerable of our tenants as well as those of other landlords. This service is funded by a Supporting People grant through The Highland Council on a year-to-year basis and it is our hope that a three-year contract will soon be finalised to allow this valuable work to continue.

Albyn staff are to be congratulated on winning the contract for LIFT shared equity open market purchases for the whole of the Highlands early in 2008. To date, we have also completed 68 shared equity sales built by ourselves through Albyn Enterprises Ltd under the badge 'Homestake Highland'.

2007/08 saw a reduction in major repairs investment due largely to the cyclical nature of this work. The good news for our tenants is that we have a large-scale programme of bathroom replacements scheduled to begin soon and we are continuing with our very successful

partnering approach to major repairs, with tenant and Committee representatives meeting regularly through a joint working group.

An area of concern for us this year relates to major changes in the level of HAG funding and the way such changes have been implemented by The Scottish Government. Our calculations show that new HAG levels for a typical new build development means that each property will make a loss from the start and it will take many years before new build properties contribute towards the management and maintenance of our housing stock – a situation that has serious implications on our ability to deliver high quality services and housing to our tenants. Much work remains to be done on this issue.

After several years of hardworking partnership activities between the main housing associations in the Highlands and The Highland Council, a single applications procedure was introduced in April 2008, the benefits of which for applicants and staff are only now beginning to be realised.

I hope I have given you a flavour of how busy and productive the year has been and to cap it all, we now have a new logo which expresses the essence of what Albyn Housing Society Ltd is all about - 'Building homes...Supporting communities'.

In conclusion, I would like express my sincere thanks to our dedicated and hard working staff; our partners including The Scottish Government's Highland & Islands office, The Highland Council, The Highland Housing Alliance, The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust and The Highland Housing & Community Care Trust; the many different communities across the Highlands with whom we work; our many suppliers, consultants and contractors; and last but not least, my fellow Committee members for their hard work on behalf of the Society and for the support they have given me over the last year.



Special thanks are due to Anne MacLean who is standing down from the Committee after ten years of service including five as our chairperson. I also wish to thank fellow Committee members Fiona Samson and Jennifer Cameron who stood down during the year for their contribution to the work of Albyn Housing Society Ltd.

Ella MacRae, Chairperson,
Albyn Housing Society Ltd

Chief Executive's report



One area of responsibility we have been keen to develop and strengthen during 2007/08 is being an employer of choice. Although we always receive a high level of interest in advertised positions, we don't rest on our laurels. To this end, we have established a new Corporate Services team and where previously there was one post, we now have four, developing our human resources capabilities and providing more effective support to myself as chief executive and to our Committee of Management.

During the year, the Committee commissioned a review of our governance arrangements and engaged an external consultant, DTZ Consulting, to look at aspects of management and to identify areas for improvement. With the new Corporate team in place, I am now able to assist the chairperson and Committee in putting systems and structures in place to further improve performance.

This year, a number of staff have undertaken accredited training programmes to develop their levels of professionalism. Housing Management and Housing Support staff undertook CIH Level 2 training and our Management Team has been involved in ILM Level 5 Leadership training, delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy.

A concrete example of leadership training in action has been the development of Albyn's new vision, mission, direction and goals. These were drafted in part at our combined Committee and Staff Strategy Day, held in March 2007, and were then adopted the following June. Our vision is **'of everyone in the Highlands well housed in sustainable communities'**, while our mission is expressed as being **'to build, manage and maintain quality housing in the Highlands, and to support communities to thrive'**.

This year, there have been many examples of our stated mission in action. These include:

- » prioritising applicants on the Highland Housing Register who will help sustain the wellbeing of a community
- » accessing Wider Role grant and Highland Year of Culture 2007 monies for a variety of community organisations

It is important to underline the fact that we see our remit as extending beyond our core activities of management and maintenance of affordable housing, for example, in our employment of the Highland Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme's development officer. The purpose of this post, managed on behalf of The Highland Council and Highland Housing and Community Care Trust, is to assist people in accessing private sector rented housing by acting as a guarantor for individuals where upfront deposits are often required of tenants by private sector landlords.

During the year we introduced a new Sub-Committee structure as a way of improving monitoring arrangements and to allow our Committee to assess our performance against key performance indicators. One area where we are determined to see improvement is in rent account management. Housing Management staff had already begun major work on this core activity before publication of the regulator's report, and will continue to make further improvements over the coming months. Excellent results were, however, achieved by Housing Management staff with regard to the allocation of properties, particularly new build houses and flats. Throughout 2007/08, the allocations team handled the letting of well in excess of 300 properties.

At one point in the year we experienced a very unfortunate incident connected with the death of one of our tenants. This resulted in external auditors undertaking a review of our performance in relation to the incident. We have learned the lessons we needed to learn, and have been working closely with other agencies exercising similar responsibilities to ensure we reduce the likelihood of a situation of this nature occurring again.

Last year I reported that our staff had received training on using Plain English. As a result, we hope our tenants and others have enjoyed clear and concise communication from us on a range of issues. Our intention is to ensure that all printed and online documents and resources are written in Plain English.

I wish to echo the words of our chairperson, Ella MacRae, by expressing my thanks to my colleagues for all their hard work during the year and to the Committee of Management for their support in helping us achieve some remarkable results. And of course, in supporting so many Highland communities to flourish.

Calum Macaulay, Chief Executive,
Albyn Housing Society Ltd





FAST FACTS

- » Invergordon office refurbishment completed in January 2008
- » handover of new office premises to staff at MacLennan Crescent, Inverness, in June 2007
- » £27.6 million allocated to new housing projects in 2007/08
- » 252 new properties built (190 for rent and 62 Homestake/LIFT) during 2007/08
- » Albyn Housing Society Ltd now providing affordable housing in 60 communities across the Highlands

Corporate Services

NEW YEAR, NEW OFFICES IN INVERGORDON AND INVERNESS

In January 2008 we celebrated the opening of our newly refurbished head office in Invergordon. £1.15 million was spent expanding and improving the property, including £75k support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). The decision to develop our Invergordon offices was influenced by our commitment to strengthening our base in the area where we enjoy a good relationship with the local community and benefit from a wide pool of skilled staff. As a result, we are now able to offer staff and customers much improved working and meeting spaces with room for future expansion.

Touchwood Recycling Limited, an award winning social enterprise company based in Uig, Isle of Skye, was commissioned to manufacture and fit reception desks for both our Invergordon and Inverness offices using recycled whisky barrels. The results exceeded all our expectations and have provided us with very attractive – and environmentally friendly – office furniture.

A DECADE OF CHANGE AND CHALLENGES: former Albyn chairperson Anne MacLean talks about her time with the Society

Anne MacLean's involvement with Albyn Housing Society began in 1997 and just over a year later, she was elected as chairperson for a five-year term. She continued as a member of the Committee of Management until August 2008. Here, she describes some of the challenges and successes she experienced during her time as chairperson and committee member:

'Some fairly radical changes took

place during my time as chairperson for Albyn. The political landscape shifted significantly with the advent of devolution, and for the first time there was specific legislation on Scottish housing matters in the form of the Housing Scotland Act 2001. As an organisation, we were concerned about 'right to buy' initiatives, particularly in rural areas. The right to buy threatened the availability of affordable housing in rural areas – an issue which is fundamental to Albyn Housing Society. Eventually, the right to buy was qualified by imposing certain conditions on buyers.

'One area where I feel the Society has gained considerable expertise over the years is in the area of community consultation. We'd seen situations where housing developers had gone into a community without spending adequate time talking to potential tenants about their needs, with the result that people weren't always happy with the development. Now, any proposed development involves a considerable amount of community consultation. This is vital. The creation of even a dozen new homes can have a significant impact on a community, can help regenerate that community.

'If I had to pinpoint a highlight of my time with Albyn, I would say it was the quality of successful partnership working with other agencies in the Highlands. What is now the Highland Housing Alliance grew out of an earlier innovative partnership, the Highland Housing and Community Care Trust. The Highland Housing Alliance is widely considered to be a model of good practice across Scotland.

'I always felt delighted visiting a new development and finding out what a difference it had made to that particular town or community. When people tell you how pleased they are at being able to stay in their own communities, close to their families and with a high quality house they can actually afford to live in, it is very rewarding. And that's what Albyn is all about.'



Property Maintenance Services

NEW BATHROOMS FOR INVERGORDON TENANTS

During 2007/08 we invested £242k on major repairs, continuing our programme of kitchen and bathroom replacements of earlier years which saw us commit £1.7 million in 2005/06 and £1.8 million in 2006/07. Following on from kitchen replacement and heating contracts carried out in Wick during 2006/07, we undertook another extensive repairs project in 2007/08 – providing 350 properties in Invergordon with new bathrooms.

Representatives from Albyn Housing Society Ltd, tenants, residents groups, consultants and contractors came together to form a contract team responsible for taking the repairs project forward. A range of consultation meetings with tenants was organised to agree a timescale for repairs and installation plans were outlined to have a working bathroom connected within a day, with additional tiling and floor vinyl works completed in a maximum of two days.

MAJOR REPAIRS PROGRAMME: more customers set to benefit

The next phase of our ongoing major repairs programme will be a £1m contract to provide new bathrooms to over 430 of Albyn's properties in Alness, Dingwall, Evanton, Invergordon, Nairn and Tain. Following a lengthy selection process, representatives from Albyn Housing Society Ltd, tenants, residents' groups, consultants and contractors have come together to form a working group responsible for ensuring that this contract is a success. A timescale for completion of the bathroom installation is to be agreed with all parties as well as

ensuring that as much information as possible is available to all those people who are to receive new bathrooms, tiling and slip-resistant vinyl floor coverings. It is hoped that each tenant will have their new bathroom installed within two days. The contract, due to commence in Nairn in the autumn of 2008, will take around a year to complete.

Property Maintenance Services staff will also spend the next year concentrating on compiling a programme of works to ensure that all housing stock meets Scottish Housing Quality Standards by 2015. These works, mostly linked to energy efficiency improvements, will be carried out in tandem with the existing major repairs programme.

Tenant's delight at new bathroom replacement...

The year got off to a terrific start with a new bathroom replacement contract involving 432 properties in Nairn, Evanton, Invergordon and Tain. Public meetings were arranged prior to work beginning to give all tenants the opportunity to find out what to expect during the replacement process. The meetings were well attended and served to reassure tenants that every care would be taken to minimise disruption. Following the establishment of a working group, Albyn partnered with consultants Armour & Partner and contractors Robertson Highland to carry out the 60 week contract. Violet Walker, an Albyn tenant

from Nairn, describes how the replacement went in her home:

'The site manager, Clarke Fraser, and his team worked very well together. They were all very pleasant, worked in a tidy manner and even hoovered up after themselves regularly. My new bathroom is beautiful and I am absolutely delighted with all the work.'



"My new bathroom is beautiful and I am absolutely delighted with all the work"



FAST FACTS

- » £242k invested in major repairs in 2007/08
- » over 7000 job orders completed
- » £136k spent on adaptations to allow disabled tenants to remain in their homes
- » £180k spent on external redecoration
- » £190k spent on landscape maintenance to communal areas
- » additional property maintenance officer and maintenance assistant posts created to deal with increasing stock numbers

Development Services

2007/08 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SETS NEW RECORD

Development Services began the year with our largest ever programme for the provision of affordable housing. This ambitious programme – designed to create 250 new homes for rent and low cost sale in more than 20 locations across the Highlands – was supported by a substantial grant award of £18.81 million from Communities Scotland.

Partnership working remains crucial to the success of our developments and we worked closely with the Highland Housing Alliance, Highland Council and the National Health Service on specific projects.

Other key areas of involvement this year have included participation in master planning exercises in Lochcarron and AIness and taking part in early discussions as part of the Whiteness development on the site of the former Ardersier fabrication yard. In addition, Development staff contributed significantly to major planning exercises such as the A96 Growth Corridor Framework, The Highland Council Land Audit, the new Local Plan in Sutherland and the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan process.

TURNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS INTO SUCCESSFUL ALLOCATIONS

Recent projects handed over to Housing and Community Services for allocation or to Albyn Enterprises Ltd for sale under the Homestake shared equity scheme include projects in Muir of Ord, Kirkhill, Conon Bridge, Invergordon, Aviemore, South Kessock, Fort Augustus and Inverness (Kinmylies and Woodside). Work is well underway on projects at Strathpeffer, Invergordon, Brora and Auldearn to provide much-needed affordable housing for rent and low-cost sale.

In addition, by the end of March 2008 we were successful in securing a substantial land bank of future housing opportunities amounting to over twenty sites in locations as far apart as Bettyhill and Nethy Bridge.

NEW CRAIGS HOSPITAL REPROVISIONING PROGRAMME

A milestone was achieved in January 2008 with the handover of seven specialised homes as part of the New Craigs Hospital Reprovisioning Programme. The closure of the hospital meant challenging deadlines for the provision of 26 new homes on different sites, with Albyn chosen as the preferred partner of NHS Primary Care Trust and The Highland Council's Social Work Department. The project scores a double first as the first of four projects designed to provide custom-built housing with support and the first set of homes to be completed on a site provided by the Highland Housing Alliance. The Highland Housing Alliance is a not-for-profit development company set up by the Housing Associations, Trusts and The Highland Council. A key aim of the Alliance is to provide land for affordable housing where Housing Association members can then build new homes.

HOMING IN ON KEY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: Conon Bridge & Fort Augustus

The Highland Council's policy to use Council assets to boost affordable housing provision was demonstrated effectively in a project devised to create a 14 home courtyard-style development for rent using significant amounts of reclaimed stone from a demolished building. The building was the old school building in Conon Bridge, previously damaged in an arson attack. Once the site had been identified, a community consultation exercise was implemented and assisted by a state-of-the-art 3D visualisation process produced by the project architect, Trevor Black of Invergordon.

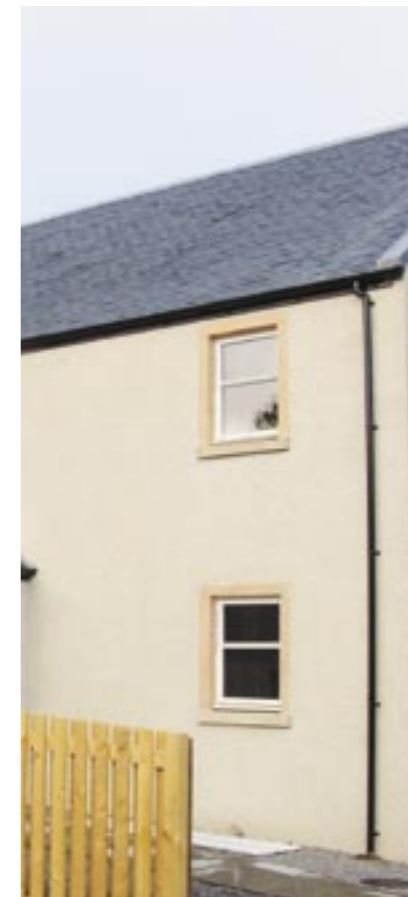


Another important milestone was the completion in March 2008 of an eight-house project at Jenkins Park, Fort Augustus, for rent and shared equity sale. This was the first site to be made available through the Forestry Commission's innovative National Forest Land Scheme and, appropriately, allowed Albyn to pilot the promotion of local timber products (in this case Scottish spruce) as external cladding. The Society's design team led by HRI Architects of Inverness created a high quality, sustainable living environment in a contemporary and pragmatic style. We believe this practical approach encourages architecture for social housing which is both aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly.



LIFT-OFF FOR NEW SHARED EQUITY SCHEME

In a major new venture, Albyn's subsidiary company, Albyn Enterprises Ltd, has been selected to operate The Scottish Government's new Low-cost Initiative for First-time Buyers (LIFT) scheme. The scheme allows eligible applicants to buy a property off the open market with some equity grant funded by Communities Scotland. Equity stakes generally fall between 60% and 80% of the price of a property. In all cases, the maximum initial stake is 80%



of the property price. However, in exceptional circumstances, applicants may be able to take a stake of less than 60% per cent but no lower than 51%.

One of the first people to benefit from the scheme was James, a chef from AIness, who works in Inverness and bought his property in the city with grant assistance through the LIFT scheme. The property was the second James had considered buying under the open market LIFT scheme, his first bid proving unsuccessful.

FAST FACTS

- » £18.81 million received in grants from Communities Scotland in 2007/08 against a target of £18,750,000
- » 250 properties built in more than 20 locations across the Highlands
- » Albyn Enterprises Ltd selected to operate the Scottish Government's new Low-cost Initiative for First-time Buyers (LIFT) scheme in the Highlands
- » 312 units approved against a target of 241 by Communities Scotland
- » first housing provided on site in Woodside, Inverness, by Highland Housing Alliance

“If it wasn't for the LIFT scheme I wouldn't have been able to get on the property ladder in Inverness. I would definitely recommend this scheme to other people in my position and I am very grateful for the financial help I received to make this possible. I'd like to thank Albyn Enterprises for making it happen. The service was great!”



Housing & Community Services

PRIORITISING TENANT PARTICIPATION

Involvement and participation of tenants and other Albyn customers remains a priority and following a full audit of our tenant participation practices and a tenant conference in 2007, we have been working with TIGHRA to develop proposals for new regional structures to encourage greater tenant participation. Meanwhile, we continue to work with residents by offering clear and concise information on a range of issues for our tenants; supporting new residents groups; issuing policy consultation bulletins to all tenants and registered groups; and keeping our website up to date. A new internal working group has been established to develop comprehensive strategy on customer care issues.

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALBYN'S CLIENTS

In order to make our services more user-friendly and to extend them to all sections of the local community, we have continued our contract with Highland Wide Interpretation and Translation Service for customers of public service. We have also introduced the 'BrowseAloud' service onto our website and have installed hearing loops and dual handset telephones in our main reception areas. Better access for people with mobility difficulties has also been achieved as part of our recent programme of office refurbishment.

FASTER RE-LETTING TIMES TO MAKE HOMES AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE IN HOUSING NEED

We continue to work on reducing time taken to re-let or let properties as this maximises our effectiveness in housing people in need and reduces costs. The number of void properties let increased again this year from 307 to 367 with the proportion of those let within four weeks or less increasing steadily from 43% last

year to 52% (including new builds) in 2007/08. Work is continuing to improve this figure further, especially for our re-let properties. Although the number of new properties to let increased, our turnover of existing tenancies fell from almost 17% to just over 11% during the year.

Of course, behind each of these statistics are families and individuals, each with a unique set of personal circumstances. The work of our housing management team is crucial in helping people manage their tenancies successfully while responding to neighbourhood issues proactively.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: celebrating Highland culture in 2007 and beyond

Albyn continues to actively promote its role in regeneration by assisting community-based groups across the Highlands access funding for key projects. During the year, we supported a number of community projects bidding for grants from Highland 2007 including:

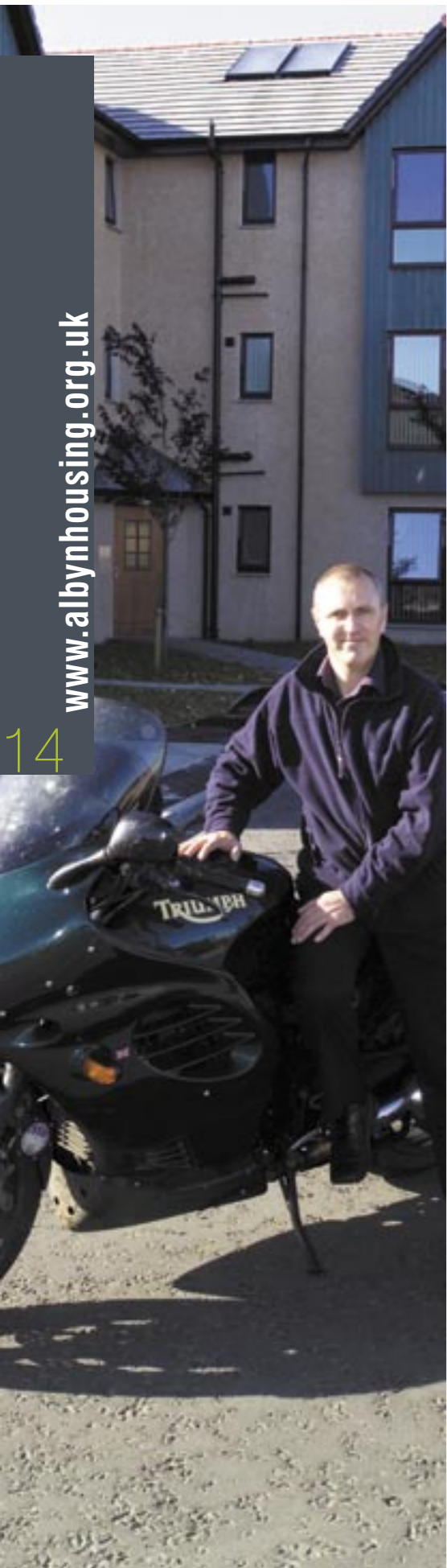
- » **The Calman Trust, East Highlands.** £8,000 was spent on 'Monsterness', a giant model of the Loch Ness monster created to develop team work and raise awareness of youth homelessness
- » **Pulteneytown People's Project, Wick.** £30,000 from Highland 2007 plus a Scottish Environmental Grant and direct funding of £100,000 from Albyn was used to finance a community art project and improve the street environment at Bremners Walk
- » **Golspie Film Society, Sutherland.** £2,100 allocated to archive film and slides from Sutherland for educational, social and cultural purposes
- » **Milton Community Woodlands Trust, East Ross.** £6,000 received to develop 'Stepping Stones' project, delivering a

FAST FACTS

- » single-application Highland Housing Register introduced in April 2008
- » void properties let increased from 307 in 2006/07 to 367 in 2007/08
- » 52% of properties were let within four weeks – an increase on 2006/07 figure of 43%
- » rent lost while homes were empty remained steady at 1.6% of rental income
- » overall rent collection rate stands at 93% with outstanding net current arrears at the year end reducing to 4.5%
- » comprehensive Housing Support Services review carried out during 2007/08
- » £670k invested in new Inverness office development for Support Services team
- » Support Services team worked with over 200 clients and allocated 216 hours a week to individual clients under the terms of a contract with The Highland Council

wide range of arts and crafts activities and community events

- » **Dunain Community Woodland Association, Inverness.** A £5,000 bid involving three local schools in planting over 1,200 native woodland trees
- » **Inverness City Centre Management.** £15,000 was awarded towards the provision of a temporary ice rink for the Inverness Winter Festival
- » **18th Inverness Scout Group, Merkinch.** £2,000 allocated to purchase Canadian canoes



Other projects supported demonstrate a range of community benefits: Newstart Highland's HitSquad project helps new tenants gain basic decorating and garden maintenance skills; a financial inclusion project researched the availability of affordable credit in the Highlands; a new play park at South Lodge led by Invergordon Residents Association resulted in environmental improvements as well as a vastly improved play area; and The Highland Council's community warden schemes in Inverness, Invergordon and Wick continue to bring benefits to local communities.

STREAMLINING HOUSING APPLICATIONS: the Highland Housing Register

The six main providers of rented accommodation in the Highlands – Albyn Housing Society Ltd, Cairn Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association, Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, Pentland Housing Association Ltd and The Highland Council

– joined forces to make it easier for applicants on housing waiting lists to access housing by producing a single housing register based on a common allocations policy. As of 1st April 2008, applicants are only required to fill in one form when applying for housing from any of the aforementioned landlords.

ALBYN VISIT BRINGS EXTRA BENEFITS FOR CLIENT

While making a home visit to help a client complete a housing benefit review form, Albyn's housing officer noticed that the client's health had deteriorated and she was now almost house bound. Following discussion about the client's particular difficulties, the housing officer made a referral for assessment and a series of adaptations to the client's home was arranged. During her time with the client, the housing officer also became aware that the client was only receiving her state pension – despite the fact that the client's husband was her sole carer and entitled to a carer's

allowance. A few weeks later, the client contacted Albyn to express her thanks and delight at the fact that she had been awarded a backdated payment of unclaimed benefit and was now receiving £44.48 a week on top of her state pension.

MOVING PREMISES, MOVING FORWARD: Support Services finds a new home

Albyn Housing Society provides a housing support service in Inverness and Nairn to people who are homeless or potentially homeless and who need help with keeping a tenancy. Many of our supported service users are our own tenants, but some are also tenants of other landlords, or are housed in temporary accommodation. Support Services experienced a year of major change during 2007/08. In June 2007 we moved from our offices in Church Street to our new, purpose built offices at MacLennan Crescent in the regeneration area of Merkinch. £670k was invested in the new premises, creating superb office accommodation for staff and enhanced accessibility for people with mobility difficulties. Situated in close proximity to our MacLennan Crescent development, the offices provide an ideal base for our Support Services team and for visiting staff at the same time as placing us in the heart of regeneration activities in the Merkinch and South Kessock areas of the city.

Our new offices are giving us the opportunity to liaise more closely with local groups by allowing them to use our large meeting room. The Citizens Advice Bureau, Homeless Action Inverness, The Highland Housing Register, Ness Soaps, Highland Housing and Community Care Trust and others have all made use of the new facility. Our large room has also enabled staff to enjoy lunchtime yoga sessions with a local tutor.



ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION a client's story

Iain Davidson, an Albyn Housing Society support worker based in Inverness, provides one-to-one support for a number of clients seeking to take on the responsibility of a housing tenancy. Here, he describes the experience of one of his clients:

'Kenny is a young man with mental health issues which has meant that for some periods of his life he has required long-stay hospital treatment. In March 2007, Kenny was offered supported accommodation by Albyn Housing Society. Supported accommodation has worked well for Kenny and he tells me that he feels more confident and able to cope in this kind of environment. He has found the motivation to go to the gym a couple of times a week and has

seen his physical health improve as a result. Now he feels he is living his life as it ought to be lived.

'Kenny's positive attitude and refusal to let his illness dominate his life has impressed me immensely. He is a very gifted writer of poetry, songs and music and has used these skills to produce a DVD raising awareness of mental illness amongst young people for Highland Users Group (HUG). Together with other members of HUG, Kenny has also been involved in delivering training in mental health awareness to Highland Council councilors, social care students and student nurses. Supported accommodation provides Kenny with stability and back-up when and where he needs it while allowing him to focus on making real progress in other areas of his life where he excels.'

NEW START HIGHLAND

Albyn has been successful in securing wider role funding for a new initiative from New Start Highland. The scheme aims to help vulnerable tenants into a new tenancy and to learn new skills when doing up their new home. Full time employees, trainees and volunteers of New Start will work alongside new tenants to help them be able to clean and re-decorate their homes, manage their tenancies and improve their confidence and employability skills.

RENT DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEME

A new Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme now operates in Highland, based in our Inverness offices and co-ordinated by Jayne Williams. The initiative was originally piloted by Highland Housing and Community Care Trust (HHCCT) and is funded by The Highland Council. Referrals are made through the Council's homeless service. The Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme offers a written guarantee for a period of six months in place of a cash deposit. The applicant is supported in finding a home, signing agreements, claiming housing benefits and negotiating with landlords.



This financial year, we made a surplus of £1,479,000 (2007 - £1,616,000) before any expenditure on major repairs. Albyn invested £242,000 (2007 - £966,000) of this year's surplus on major repairs through contracts to fit new kitchens in various areas and new heating systems in East Ross. The surplus will be added to our cash reserves, which is kept to allow us to have a major repair investment programme and to meet the new Scottish Housing Quality standards over the next few years.

Even though we are managing more homes than ever before, we have been able to sustain the huge improvements we saw last year with our Housing Management team succeeding in maintaining the same level of rent collected, despite increasing financial pressures for many tenants. A substantial piece of work to review our policies and practices to improve performance and provide more help to stop tenants falling into

arrears has begun and performance in achieving targets for emergency and routine repairs continues to be of a high standard for an increasingly high level of repairs reported.

EXERCISING BETTER CONTROL: Albyn undertakes insurance tendering exercise

During the summer of 2007, Albyn undertook an insurance tendering exercise. It was our intention to enter a three-year arrangement and previous insurance costs had been in excess of set limits, so this tender was completed under EU procurement rules. The tendering exercise was supervised by external consultants ERA Insurance Cost Management, a company with specialist knowledge of tendering processes and the insurance market. The result of the exercise was a large reduction in our annual insurance costs of some 40%, a saving achieved due to a much improved claims history over recent years, a more competitive insurance market and the quality of the tender documentation.

FAST FACTS

- » increase in turnover of £2.022 million representing an increase of 17%
- » operating surplus of £1.193 million increase on previous year of 83%
- » spend on new properties over £28.7 million
- » cash in bank at year end £1.8 million
- » total loans at the year end £29.5 million



Albyn now uses an insurance broker, Willis UK, as opposed to a direct contract with one insurance company, allowing for a much more flexible approach to our insurance requirements and providing independent and impartial advice on insurance matters.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Each year in April, Albyn Housing Society provides a range of information and statistics to the Scottish Housing Regulator. This helps both them and us keep a check on how we are performing in key areas. Here are some of our key results for 2007/08:

REPAIRS

Repair type	Maximum response time	Number of repairs	Completed on time
Emergency	8 hours	507 *(436)	97 % (98%)
Urgent	2 working days	2,914 (2,821)	87% (86%)
Routine	10 working days	3,704 (2,872)	89% (91%)

*Figures in white show 2006/07 results for comparison

RENT COLLECTION

Rent due	Actual collected
£6.5 million (£5.7 m)	94.4% (94.6%)

EMPTY HOUSES

New homes let	Re-lets	Rent loss from empty homes	Average time to let
145 (114)	222 (207)	1.6% (1.6%)	6 weeks (6 weeks)

HOUSING APPLICATIONS

Number of applicants on housing list at end of year	Average number of new applications per month	Average time to process new applications
5,380 (5,380)	170 (170)	14 days (14 days)

RESIDENTS SATISFACTION SURVEY: 2007/08 results

Each year, CA Market Research Ltd carries out a satisfaction survey on behalf of Albyn amongst a third of our residents. The key results from the survey are available on our website or from our office on request.

Once again, the overall results are very positive. Customers reported very high levels of satisfaction with Albyn as landlord (93%), with the quality of services provided (89%) and with the quality of advice and assistance provided by staff (91%).

Customers also felt that Albyn was very good at keeping them informed and taking account of their views. 89% of tenants reported being highly satisfied with the overall design and layout of their homes and with the general neighbourhood (88%). The majority of tenants (81%) believe rents are good value for money and that enough information about how it is decided is made available (75%).

When asked about the success of our allocations process, 98% of new tenants reported very high levels of satisfaction, particularly with regard to the speed of the process, effectiveness of communication and our explanation of the terms of tenancy agreements.

Areas for improvement included the provision of information on heating and hot water systems in new homes and better contact between Albyn offices and staff working away from office premises.



Income & Expenditure account

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2008

	2008 £000's	2007 £000's
Turnover	13,901	11,879
Operating Costs	(11,758)	(10,715)
Operating Surplus	2,143	1,164
Sale of fixed assets	650	733
Interest receivable	89	42
Interest payable and other charges	(1,689)	(1,289)
Surplus on ordinary activities	1,193	650
Donations	44	1,650
Surplus on ordinary activities before tax	1,237	2,300
Taxation on surplus on ordinary activities	0	0
Surplus for the year	1,237	2,300

Tangible fixed assets

Housing properties - gross cost less depreciation	129,247	111,455
less Housing Association Grant	(91,329)	(76,418)
less Other Grants	(6,705)	(6,528)
	<u>31,213</u>	<u>28,509</u>

Investments

Homestake Loan	3,843	1,864
Homestake Grant	(3,843)	(1,864)

	0	0
Other fixed assets	<u>2,210</u>	<u>1,847</u>
	<u>33,423</u>	<u>30,356</u>

Current assets

Stock - Homestake	2,966	2,876
Debtors	3,828	1,954
Bank and Cash in hand	1,770	1,185
	<u>8,564</u>	<u>6,015</u>

Current liabilities

Creditors due within one year	(4,682)	(4,906)
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Net current assets	<u>3,882</u>	<u>1,109</u>
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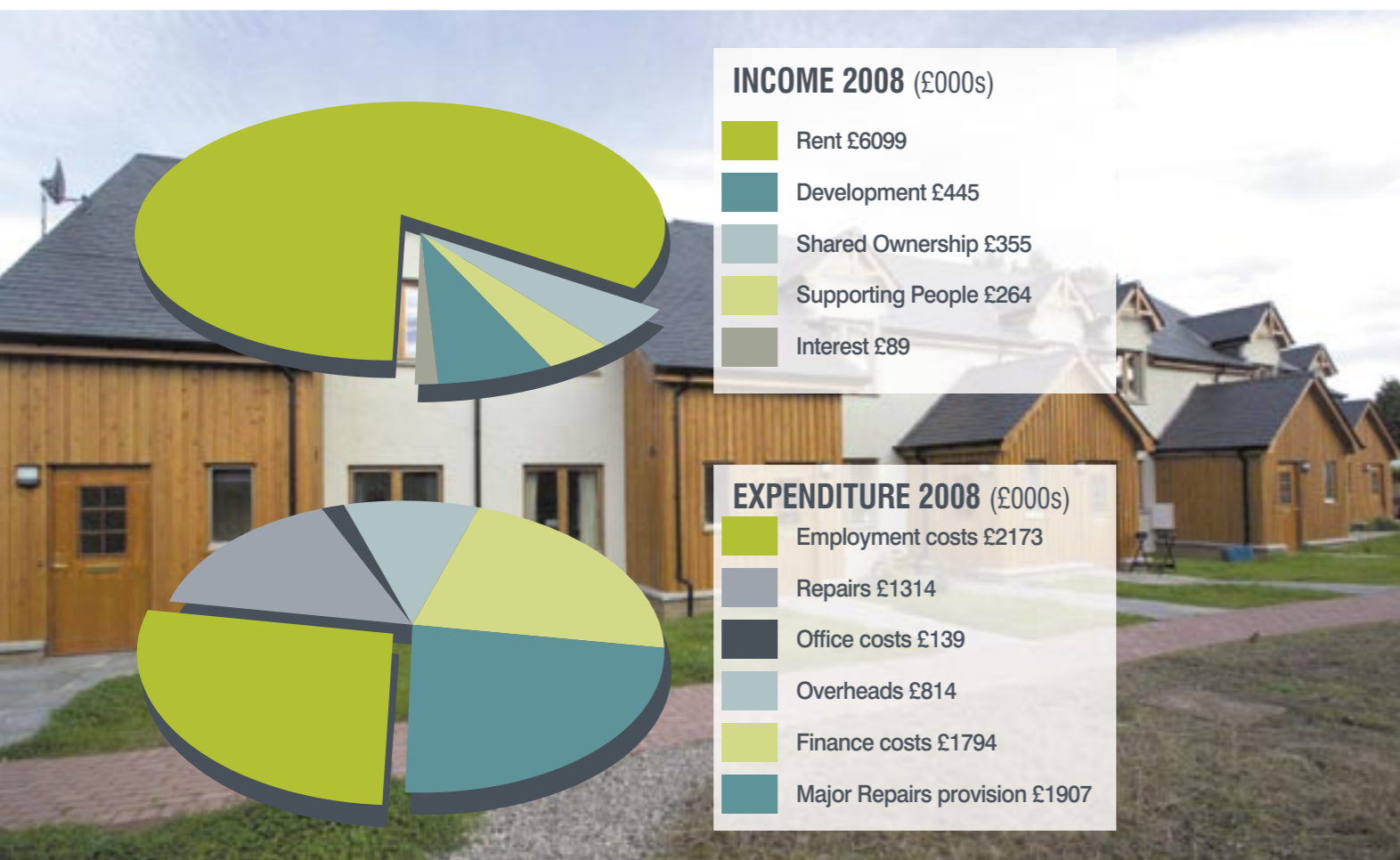
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>37,305</u>	<u>31,465</u>
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Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(28,997)	(24,394)
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Net assets	<u>8,308</u>	<u>7,071</u>
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Capital and reserves

Share capital	1	1
Designated reserves - major repairs	7,710	6,510
Designated reserves - furniture replacement	215	208
Revenue reserves	382	352
	<u>8,308</u>	<u>7,071</u>



Committee of Management



THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT OF ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY DURING THE YEAR 2007/08 WAS AS FOLLOWS:

Mrs I MacRae	(re-elected 2 August 2006)	Chairperson (from 14 August 2007)
Mrs I McLaughlan	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	Vice-Chairperson
Mr G Kelman	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	Secretary
Mr J Oag	(re-elected 22 August 2006)	Chairperson (until 14 August 2007)
Mr J Convery	(re-elected 22 August 2006)	
Mrs J Cameron	(re-elected 22 August 2006)	
Ms A MacLean	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	
Mrs M Cairney	(re-elected 22 August 2006)	
Miss C Cameron	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	
Mrs M Smith	(elected 14 August 2007)	
Mrs M Duncan	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	
Mr B Summerfield	(elected 14 August 2007)	
Mr W Milne	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	
Mrs F Samson	(re-elected 14 August 2007)	





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