

# Annual Report 2021/22



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## Welcome

Welcome to the Albyn Housing Society annual report for 2021/22. We hope you enjoy reading about what we have achieved in the year.

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We can provide this document in Braille, large print, and community languages. Please contact [governance@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:governance@albynhousing.org.uk) / 01349 801 007.

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## About Albyn

Albyn Housing Society serves over 70 communities in the Highlands, providing good quality, affordable housing for thousands of people across the region. Through nearly five decades we have listened and responded to the views of our customers, local government, communities, and businesses in meeting housing needs in the Highland.



### Our Values

Being caring  
Being adaptable  
Being professional



### Our Vision

Maintain and build quality homes, providing excellent customer service, and giving opportunities for people and communities to flourish.

## Our Objectives

### Our Customers

We will streamline our customers' journey and improve customer satisfaction by developing a customer experience strategy to deliver a truly brilliant customer experience. Underpinning this strategy will be the successful implementation of Project Phoenix, delivering on our digital transformation agenda, to enable our customers more flexibility in how they interact with us to ensure that every customer is supported and valued.

### Our People

Our working culture is respectful, effective, engaging, and inclusive and driven by our tenants' needs. We embrace agile and flexible working and the lessons we are learning from COVID-19, enabling cultural change, and driving the people agenda.

### Our Homes

We will provide high quality, affordable, sustainable, and energy-efficient homes by implementing an asset management strategy driven by tactical analysis of data and targeted investment.

### Our Finances

We will be efficient and effective stewards of our tenants' money and charitable resources to enable the delivery of affordable, quality services for our tenants. We will support the business to invest in stock improvement, systems, and our people.

### Our Partnerships

We will use our expertise to influence social housing policy and develop partnerships across the Highlands that add value to our communities.

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## Our Housing



3,374

tenanted  
properties



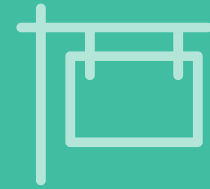
17

properties managed  
on behalf of others



113

shared ownership  
properties



202

properties leased to  
Highland Residential for  
MMR (mid market rent)

### Our Subsidiaries

Albyn has three wholly owned subsidiaries. Together, we are called the Albyn Group.

#### Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd

Formed to undertake factoring, mid market rent, and low cost home ownership.

#### Albyn Enterprises Limited

Formed to undertake activities of a non-charitable nature that will help Albyn to meet its objectives.

#### Suund Limited

Formed for the potential exploitation of innovation. Currently a dormant company.

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## Chair's Report

Welcome to Albyn's annual report for 2021/2022 – a year of new beginnings, new Board and Leadership Team members, and significant change in the organisation. All in our efforts to deliver excellent services to you and improve customer satisfaction.

Firstly, I am delighted to be writing this as the new Chair of the Board at Albyn, having been appointed in January 2022. I grabbed this opportunity to join Albyn with both hands given my role as an experienced housing association Chief Executive, serving remote communities. Therefore, I understand the varied challenges, needs and opportunities in delivering services to these rural communities, as well as our urban population in Inverness and surrounds.

Our Board has been supplemented by housing association colleagues across Scotland who bring a wealth of experience. We welcomed Angela Currie, Chief Executive of Hanover Housing Association. We also welcomed Nile Istephan, Chief Executive of Eildon Housing Association in the Borders, and David Cargill, Regional Lead (North) for Cairn Housing Association.

I am very proud of the performance of Albyn over the past year with a newly strengthened Board and a very passionate staff team who come together in their desire to support customers and provide an excellent experience in engaging with Albyn, across all our many services.

The Board at Albyn fully recognises that the increase in cost of living is a major pressure and challenge going forward. We are committed to supporting our customers through our TRUST Fund and our ENERGY Fund. We are also working with stakeholders and partners to ensure our customers are supported whether that be through income maximisation, referrals to other services, or accessing the aforementioned support grants. We also continue to lobby government to ensure we reduce the additional costs that only customers in the Highlands pay, such as increased energy costs.

I am looking forward to working with the new Board and Albyn's staff teams as we tackle these economic issues and ensure that we continue to deliver what you need, where you need it, as valued customers of Albyn.



Lesley McInnes

Chair of Albyn  
Housing Society



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## CEO's Report

As we welcome you to the annual report for 2021/22, I am delighted to be providing the introduction as the permanent Group Chief Executive Officer, after being appointed in June 2022.

My ambitions for Albyn have never been higher but I recognise that we have a lot of work to do in developing and modernising our services. I am truly privileged to be in this position after 20 years of working across local government and other housing associations. Housing is my passion as I believe it is the fundamental right of everyone to have access to safe, warm, good quality homes. The provision of affordable housing is core to all life opportunities - be that educational, wellbeing, equality, employability, health and happiness. Which is why at Albyn we strive daily in delivering our vision to:

“Maintain and build quality homes, providing excellent customer service and giving opportunities for people and communities to flourish.”

Strengthening communities and empowering our customers is a key aim of mine and our Board and staff. I am pleased that the leadership team at Albyn has been strengthened by the appointments of Maureen Knight as Director of Customer Service, and Audrey Murphy as Director of Governance and Business Improvement.

As we emerge from the pandemic, I am delighted that our performance has improved in areas such as reducing rent arrears, whilst operating against a backdrop of recovering repairs and maintenance services and delivering our affordable housing development programme. Both of which were delayed due to the impact of the pandemic. As we emerge into the “new normal” Albyn has taken the opportunity to ask customers how they would like services to be delivered – traditionally in our office bases, digitally, or in your own homes and communities. Never in my career have we had an opportunity like we do now to reimagine and redesign services, learning from the opportunities that the dreadful pandemic left us with. As always, we want to hear more from you on your views and ideas, and we are here to listen.

Our annual report sets out our key performance results in 2021/22, alongside the views and aspiration of our Leadership Team to continually improve our services and to increase your satisfaction with the services that we provide.

I am looking forward to our exciting plans for 2022/23 – delivering our new business plan and achieving our vision for Albyn.



Kirsty Morrison  
CEO of Albyn  
Housing Group

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## Customer Services

Customer Services aims to provide a truly brilliant customer experience. We are here to answer all your enquiries and ensure that you are directed to the right person. Last year we answered over 54,000 calls, many of these were calls to report repairs, to discuss rent or how to apply for housing. We believe that everyone deserves to live in a calm and safe environment and will support our customers where they are experiencing anti-social behaviours. Where and how you live is important to us and that's why we aim to provide quality homes and services at affordable rents.

Our focus in 2021/22 was to support our customers as we returned to a “new normal” and saw a year of recovery in the delivery of our services following the pandemic.

Despite the challenges of lockdowns, we continued to help customers to move into new properties, offering them welcome packs that included handy hints and practical items to help them settle into their new home.

We supported customers facing financial hardships, and our team worked tirelessly to assist those who were at risk of losing their home due to rent arrears accrued during the pandemic.

We want our customers to feel valued and to make sure that every time you contact us your experience is positive. Despite some of our challenging geographical locations we believe that customers should see us and meet with us, and we aim to be out and about in your community to discuss the matters that are important to you.

We know that many of our customers are likely to face financial uncertainty and our focus in the coming year will be on providing ongoing financial support from our TRUST and ENERGY Funds. As the cost-of-living soars, we are aware of the difficulties faced by our customers and will be here to support them.

*“Having joined Albyn in September 2021, my key focus has been on how we engage better with our customers and how we build strong communities that you want to live and work in. As we face an uncertain future and tough economic times, rest assured that Albyn will be your community anchor, and that we will provide financial support through our Energy and TRUST Funds to those in need.”*

Maureen Knight, Director of Customer Services

393

new tenancies set up

41

tenancies sustained through COVID grants

161

homeless households provided with a home

£49,000

distributed to customers via the TRUST Fund

95.5%

of ASB cases resolved

97.18%

of complaints responded to in full at Stage 1

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## Property Services

Property Services aims to ensure that our homes are of good quality, safe, secure and energy efficient, as well as being affordable for our customers. We work to maintain and improve our existing homes, as well as contributing to the delivery of additional housing stock for the Highland region through our development programme. It is our responsibility to understand current and future housing needs, and to deliver homes that meet those needs.

The pandemic resulted in the need to restrict some of our development, maintenance, and repair services in 2021/22. Despite this, we managed to invest in our homes by adapting our ways of working, with contractors, staff, and customers pulling together to enable services to be delivered safely. We delivered 90% of new properties due for completion in 2021/22 and were able to complete our planned component replacement programmes for kitchens, bathrooms, heating, windows, and doors.

Property Services and Customer Services have been working together to identify ways of improving the services offered to our customers in the areas of repairs, upgrades, and void works. We will continue this collaboration and improve the services that we provide to our customers in the coming year.

Like many other housing associations, in 2021/22 we faced challenges in recruiting staff with the specialist skills, drive, and passion needed to deliver our property services. Through using creative recruitment solutions, we now have a team in place who are fully committed to delivering the outcomes of our business plan. The team fully understand the need to involve our customers in decisions that affect their home, and we look forward to meeting many more of them in the coming months.

£15.4

million invested in development of new homes

Emergency repairs completed in an average of

5.44 hrs

86.58%

of reactive repairs 'right first time'

£2.2

million invested in improvement to existing homes

Non-emergency repairs completed in an average of

6.85 days

82.22%

of customers satisfied with repairs or maintenance

*"I am passionate about the need to provide good quality well maintained homes. Having joined Albyn in March 2022, I was delighted that as well as continuing to develop new homes Albyn has committed to significant investment in the existing housing stock. We know our customers are facing incredibly challenging times and the condition and energy efficiency of the home is fundamentally important, so we are visiting over half of our housing stock in 2022/23 to allow us to plan the most suitable programmes of work."*

Caroline Madden

Repairs & Maintenance Manager

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## Finance & Corporate Services

Finance & Corporate Services has provided support over past year to make sure that Albyn and its subsidiary companies have the infrastructure to deliver upon operational plans.

Our finance services include accounting for financial resources and making sure that we have sufficient cash liquidity to implement our plans, and that all matters of compliance with funders and regulators are evidenced. We also make payments to suppliers and staff.

Our corporate services include the provision of specialist support and advice across several areas including health & safety, ICT, marketing & communications, data protection, freedom of information, and governance matters.

The 2021/22 financial year delivered another positive performance to ensure that we maintained financial stability and strength during a period of time which posed many challenges across the external environment. These challenges were effectively managed to make sure that resources were made available to support our customers where needed, whilst delivering affordable rents and housing.

It remains of critical importance that our financial resources are effectively managed to minimise risk and support stability during the next phase of challenges, which include rising inflation and the cost of living crisis, coupled with a sluggish economic outlook.

At the end of the financial year, Albyn raised £15million of additional funding to provide the support needed to invest in the development of new homes.

We continued to embed data protection, freedom of information, and health & safety throughout Albyn to make sure we have a robust approach in these areas which is compliant with all relevant legislation.

As we move into 2022/23, we will implement our ICT strategic priorities to modernise our systems and deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness for our customers.

Further information about our financial performance in 2021/22 can be found in our audited financial statements which are available on our website.

£22.231  
million turnover

£3.392  
million operating surplus

£15,227,383  
rent collected

*"As the post pandemic environment continues to throw up many challenges, it remains important that Albyn operates from a sound financial footing, protecting the stability of the organisation for the benefit of our tenants. From this foundation, we are well placed to deliver the best outcomes for all of our stakeholders and ensure that Albyn is successful in meeting its goals."*

Andrew Martin

Director of Finance & Corporate Services

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## Human Resources

HR (Human Resource) is about ensuring the business meets its objectives for our customers by getting the right people with the right skills in the right jobs, then supporting them professionally and personally to be their best for our customers and for themselves.

We do this through our recruitment practices, induction of new employees, getting our staffing policies right, supporting health & well-being, coaching and training line managers, and offering all staff a development programme linking each of us in our roles to business objectives.

The impact of the pandemic was a challenge for our people and our services in 2021/22. It caused the cancellation of some staff events and had an impact on recruitment as the job market was squeezed. It also allowed us to consider new ways of working that have benefitted our people while not having a negative impact on our customers.

Our Board and all staff have benefited from sessions facilitated by Tree of Knowledge, and from these sessions grew our values of 'Being Caring, Being Professional, Being Adaptable'.

We launched a range of health and wellbeing initiatives which have supported our people, and we intend to develop and embed these further in the coming year.

We continued to create and improve our people processes and policies to ensure that they fitted the needs of Albyn and our people.

A highlight of the approach to developing our people has been the introduction of our new performance management review programme. Throughout the development of the programme, our people were encouraged to feedback on the language, the process, and the timetable. The past year was about ensuring understanding and confidence in the approach and we're using the coming year as our 'Year of Learning' to ensure we further improve what is a great tool to support business excellence and develop our people.

86

Albyn staff at  
end of 2021/22

5

all staff  
engagement  
events

4

training sessions  
for the Operational  
Management Team

4

performance  
management  
workshops

10.6%

turnover

*"The HR team and I are excited about supporting our people to live Albyn's values while we invest in them to support continuous improvement in the business. Our main priority for the future is 'Putting People First' so that our people feel they matter, they feel heard, they can grow, and they're supported to do so by leaders with passion and focus on meeting our customers' needs."*

Laurie MacLeod

Head of HR and Organisational  
Development

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## Customer Engagement

We engage with our customers in a variety of ways including our Customer Services Involvement Group (CISMG), our Tenant Editorial Group, and our new Tenant Performance Monitoring Group. We carry out consultations with customers on things such as the annual rent increase, and work with resident groups throughout the Highlands.

We've had a busy year working with our customers, developing better solutions, enabling improvements both in service delivery and customer experience. Despite the pandemic, we continued to successfully meet with tenant groups virtually.

Our tenants worked with Albyn staff to develop and design our Tenants Charter, the publication of which resulted in nearly 50 tenants indicating an interest in tenant participation with Albyn. The Tenant Charter was reviewed by our Tenant Editorial Group to make sure it was in plain English and engaging for tenants. CISMG reviewed the Tenant Charter and identified areas of service improvement and successes. The CISMG gave an excellent presentation of these findings to the board.

The CSIMG met four times, discussing issues such as our new housing management system, the customer involvement strategy for Albyn, and the business plan.

We set up a Tenant Performance Monitoring Group to design a scrutiny system at Albyn that could be replicated by others. In partnership with TPAS and our tenants, we developed an effective and innovative way of undertaking scrutiny that would be engaging for tenants.

*"This tenant designed scrutiny framework is a perfect example of how putting tenants at the heart of service design results in better outcomes. We are very excited about this new scrutiny model and it's potential for the sector going forward."*

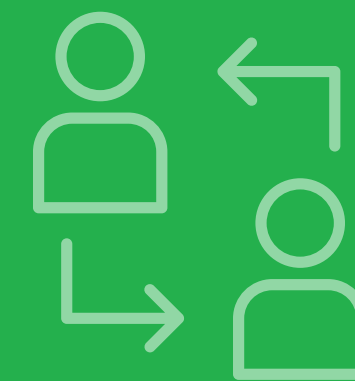
Elaine Scoular  
CEO of TPAS

70%

of customers satisfied with  
opportunities to participate  
in decision making at Albyn

4

CISMG meetings held





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## Change & Business Improvement

2021/22 for the Change Team at Albyn was focused on delivering our new housing management system. We were delighted that we managed, after many challenges and some delays, to be able to hand this over to our teams in May 2022.

Implementing our housing management system has been a significant learning experience for everyone at Albyn, given its inherent complexity. These learning points will provide valuable experience in how we approach our future projects.

Our new housing management system brings significant benefits to the way we work, but perhaps more importantly, provides us with the capability to truly transform how we offer service to our customers. It's a pivotal part in our ambitions to modernise our service offering by providing our customers and contractors the ability to access many of the services they need through our online portals. The delivery of this will be one of the key priorities for the change team in the year ahead.

The change team also supported the delivery of key foundational elements of the business including an ICT strategy, the performance framework, and the groundwork for our approach to customer experience.

The Change Team was recruited to support Albyn to put in place changes in the business that modernise the way we work and how we provide services to our customers.

*"I'm incredibly proud of the work the team have done over the last year, and perhaps more importantly, even more excited at some of the things we will be doing in the year ahead. It's truly an exciting time to be working at Albyn, and in helping support the delivery of the ambitious plans that will deliver on our business plan."*

Chris Ellis  
Change Manager

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## Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd

Highland Residential is a wholly owned subsidiary of Albyn and provides sales, lettings, and factoring services. Within the sales team we provide both LIFT NSSE (Low-income first-time buyer, new supply shared equity) sales and open market estate agency services. Within the lettings team we manage a large MMR (mid market rents) portfolio and have a number of private lets. We also provide an extensive factoring service throughout the Highlands.

Our team saw substantial changes in 2021/22, with new employees in post and new improved processes put into place. To support our staff, we focused upon staff development and training throughout the year to make sure we had the skills and knowledge to deliver excellent services to our customers.

We undertook a systematic review of our data and worked tirelessly to check and update the details of over 800 customers in the year, in preparation for the implementation of our new database management system. Our new system gives us the capacity to manage many aspects of lettings, sales, compliance, and tenancy management from a central secure base.

We faced the challenge of pandemic related delays to new build developments which impacted our LIFT NSSE sales in 2021/22. The re-sale market of NSSE LIFT properties in this period was very buoyant and we exceeded our targets in this area.

During the year, 31 MMR properties were handed over to Highland Residential and at the end of March 2022, our managed MMR units numbered 204. We achieved 16 relets in this period and succeeded in reducing relet days through improving our marketing and reviewing our applicant database continually.

At the end of 2021/22 we were providing factoring services to 3,942 homes (up from 3,652 last year). 72% of these homes were owned by Albyn, and 28% were privately owned.

*"I am extremely proud of the team and over the last 12 months, they have overcome many obstacles in their work path and have adapted to an ever-changing marketplace. The processes and changes have been embraced and we have worked together to make improvements to our business. We have shown that working together with Albyn Housing is a real positive and together we will always achieve more. I am excited to see what the future holds for team Highland Residential."*

Laura Bradley  
Manager of Highland Residential

Our change programme focuses upon:

### Putting People First

To make Albyn a great place to work, that people are proud of and a culture that supports this

### Truly Brilliant Customer Experience

To modernise and develop how we deliver a brilliant service to our tenants, from understand their needs to providing choice in how they do business with us

### Great Systems

Internal systems that support our ambitions and make our staff, and tenants' lives, easier

### Improving Homes

Create and maintain homes our tenants are proud of

### Strong Finances

We need our business underpinned by strong financial management to ensure we can continue to grow and expand our service offerings for tenants

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Highland Residential staff at end on 2021/22

47

MMR properties let

65

home sales

factoring services to  
**3,942 properties**

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## Our Board

The Board of Albyn is elected by our shareholding members. It is the responsibility of the Board to drive our strategy and overall direction, and our Board members undertake this work in a voluntary, unpaid capacity. In 2021/22 we undertook significant recruitment to strengthen our Board and attracted some great and talented members to support and scrutinise our work.

*"I was delighted to join Albyn's hardworking Board and Leadership team. Over the coming year I look forward to working with the Board to strengthen our governance and take forward our ambitious plans for improving services."*

Audrey Murphy  
Interim Director of Governance & Business Improvement

As of 31 March 2022,  
the Board included the  
following members:



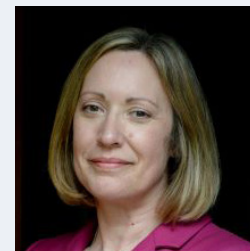
Lesley McInnes  
Chair



Carl Patching  
Vice Chair



Ian Fosbrooke  
Secretary



Clea Warner  
Board Member



David Cargill  
Board Member



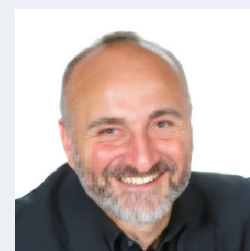
Fiona Mustarde  
Board Member



Jim Convery  
Board Member



Angela Currie  
Co-optee Board Member

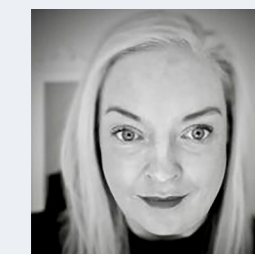


Nile Istephan  
Co-optee Board Member

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## Our Leadership Team

The Leadership Team is responsible for the day to day management of Albyn. It works closely with the Board to set the strategic direction of the society, and with the operational management team, to ensure its effective delivery of services to our customers.



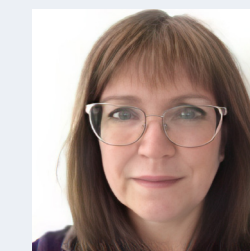
Kirsty Morrison  
CEO during 2021/22  
(interim to June 2022)



Andrew Martin  
Director of Finance &  
Corporate Services



Audrey Murphy  
Interim Director of  
Governance & Business



Laurie MacLeod  
Head of Human Resources &  
Organisational Development



Maureen Knight  
Director of Customer Services during  
2021/22 (interim to August 2022)

Morag Beers, Director of Property Services & Subsidiaries (until July 2022)





# Albyn Housing Society