



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
**LOCAL HOUSING
STRATEGY 2017-2022**
ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20



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1. Introduction

The Housing [Scotland] Act 2001 places a Statutory Duty on all Local Authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy, framed by Statutory Guidance published by Scottish Government. The current Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy covers the five year period from April 2017 to March 2022.

The strategy was developed with our partners, stakeholders and the voluntary sector over an 18 month period and was formally approved in September of 2017. The strategy addresses a wide range of challenges and issues as well as setting out outcomes, priorities and actions to deliver our shared vision for housing in the Scottish Borders.

The Local Housing Strategy sets out the vision and priorities for the future of housing and all housing related services across the Scottish Borders

It considers all tenure and types of accommodation and reflects both national priorities and local needs



The vision for the LHS is:

Every person in the Scottish Borders lives in a home that meets their needs

In order to deliver this vision successfully; the following four LHS priorities were defined:

- LHS Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities
- LHS Priority 2. More People Live In Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes
- LHS Priority 3: Fewer People Are Affected By Homelessness
- LHS Priority 4. More People Are Supported To Live Independently In Their Own Homes

Some of the key objectives within the Local Housing Strategy include:

- To help ensure adequate housing supply across all tenures to address the varying and diverse housing need in the Borders.
- To promote and increase awareness of energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty through the development and implementation of a new Home Energy Efficiency & Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- To increase the supply of new affordable housing that meets the needs of our community through the ongoing development and delivery of the next and future Strategic Housing Investment Plans.
- To tackle disrepair and below tolerable standard in the private sector stock and address landlord compliance in the private rented sector.
- To address the Housing, Support and Care needs of the growing Older People population through the implementation of an Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Support and Care Needs.
- To improve the health and wellbeing for people experiencing Homelessness; and ensure fewer people are affected by homelessness.
- To gain a better understanding of the housing aspirations and needs of young people in the Borders

This annual report provides an update on progress from April 2019 to March 2020; including key highlights and significant achievements, as well as ongoing challenges for the future.

2. Housing Supply

Addressing Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities

Highlights

- Record level of Scottish Government funding allocation in 2019/20 of over £19m
- The 2020/25 SHIP received very positive feedback from the Scottish Government
- Work continues on proposals for the regeneration of Upper Langlee in Galashiels. The proposals envisage the demolition of 159 homes, refurbishment of 68 homes and revised provision of 109 new build homes
- 141 Affordable homes were delivered throughout the Scottish Borders
- Eildon Housing Association recently won the “Best Small Affordable Housing Development of the Year” at the Scottish Home Awards for their development at High Street/ Chapel Street in Selkirk

Affordable Housing Supply

Over the course of the current parliament the Scottish Government have set a national target for the delivery of 50,000 affordable homes within Scotland. In total almost £16 million of Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding was provided by the Scottish Government to assist with the delivery of affordable housing within the Scottish Borders Council area over the 2019/20 period.

The allocation was used and an additional £3.377m was made available via slippage from other Council areas, therefore the total annual grant spend increased to a record £19.375m. As a result of this and previous annual grant funding, at 31 March 2020 there were 342 affordable homes (15 projects) under construction, 157 homes (5 projects) at the pre-site start stage and 105 homes (3 projects) at the planning application stage.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan [SHIP] is the sole strategic document for prioritising affordable housing investment within the Scottish Borders and sets out a rolling five year planning horizon. The SHIP 2020/25 was approved by the Council in November 2019 and proposes the delivery of 1,066 new affordable homes, this will be under-pinned by an estimated investment of £158m over the period of the plan. Work has started to inform the development of the next SHIP submission.

141 affordable homes delivered across the Scottish Borders in 2019/20

These were provided as follows –

114 new build affordable homes provided by Registered Social Landlords

- 25 at The Glebe Chirside by Berwickshire Housing Association
- 27 at Millar Court Duns by Berwickshire Housing Association
- 10 at High Street Selkirk by Eildon Housing Association
- 17 at Station Yard Cardrona by Eildon Housing Association
- 28 at Somerville Way Jedburgh by Eildon Housing Association

- 3 at Springfield Terrace St. Boswells by Eildon Housing Association
- 4 at Somerville Way Jedburgh by Waverley Housing

5 Individual house purchases

- 2 by Eildon Housing Association
- 1 by SBHA
- 2 by Waverley Housing

8 assisted by the Scottish Government's Rural Housing Grant

- 6 at Cessford Farm Cottages
- 2 at The Glen Innerleithen

There were also 14 purchases assisted by the Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity Scheme.



Completed Developments in 2019/20



Station Yard, Cardrona



Springfield Terrace, St. Boswells (Passivhaus Project)



Cessford Farm Cottages



Millar Court, Duns



The Glebe, Chirnside



High Street, Selkirk

Addressing Housing Need and Demand

During the 2019/20 period the Council used Second Homes Council Tax to support:

- Trust Housing Association to provide Extra Care Housing at Todlaw Duns;
- Eildon Housing Association to provide Extra Care housing at Langhaugh Galashiels;
- Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development to provide five affordable homes at Ettrickbridge

During 2019/20 the Council also used Affordable Housing Developer Contributions to support the following programmes:

- A wheelchair accessible housing need study;
- To support Eildon Housing Association's "Green House Pilot" home energy efficiency action based research initiative;
- Eildon HA in providing a wheelchair standard house at Springwell Brae in Broughton.

Masterplan for Upper Langlee, Galashiels Regeneration

The Council and Waverley Housing have been working closely to consider suitable options for the future of an estate in Upper Langlee, Galashiels. There are 229 homes in the study area and the proposals envisage the demolition of 159 homes, refurbishment of 68 homes and provision of 109 new build energy efficient homes for social rent which will better meet the needs of tenants and residents in the local community and address future housing demand in the Galashiels area.

This is a high cost regeneration project with estimated costs of £23m which will be delivered over a number of years.



The refurbishment element of the regeneration proposals to 68 homes has been awarded to a contractor with work starting on site in January 2020 with a planned completion date of November 2020.

Various consultation methods have been utilised to gauge residents views on the estate

regeneration proposals and useful feedback has been obtained on a range of issues such as location of play parks, street names and the types of housing to be provided these were incorporated into the detailed planning application for the new build housing which was submitted to Scottish Borders Council in June 2020.

Bridge Homes

Bridge Homes is the second limited liability partnership established in recent years to provide affordable housing for mid-market rental. Bridge Homes has ended its development phase and now owns 54 affordable homes throughout the Scottish Borders. The Council is now considering how best to retain these homes in the affordable rented sector whilst also safeguarding tenancy rights as well as the Council's financial interests.



Lowood, Tweedbank

Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in the Borders Railway Corridor and in the South East Scotland City Region Deal that is situated within the Scottish Borders. Following a considerable amount of work, draft Supplementary Planning Guidance has been developed and was agreed by the Council during the 2019/20 period. This has now been published as a Consultative Draft with public consultation open until May 2020. This guidance, once finalised and agreed, will steer future work to agree a master plan for development, help assemble infrastructure investment and implementation phasing packages. Work has also continued in the development of ideas for a care village as one element of the future development of Lowood. The SHIP 2020/25 proposes a first phase of affordable housing by Eildon Housing Association a project which it is estimated could complete during the period 2024/25.

South East Scotland City Region Deal

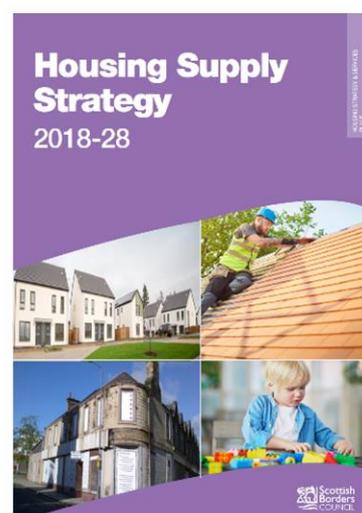
Building on previous Council joint working through the South East Scotland Plan arrangements, City Region Deal joint working has developed on a number of fronts, with new governance arrangements being developed and agreed upon. A new Regional Housing Board was established in the spring of 2019 as a means of better engaging the housing sector and harnessing its potential contribution towards the wider City Region Deal objectives. A number of work streams have been, or are being developed. There is a particular focus on the development of a "Regional Growth Framework", the potential requirement to commission or deliver a Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 and the development of greater understanding of infrastructure requirements and challenges as well as opportunities for modern methods of construction and funding bids.

Housing Supply Strategy

The Housing Supply Strategy 2018 - 2028 has been developed to help better understand how the council and its partners can more effectively respond to the challenge of increasing the supply of new and suitable housing for the local area, while achieving our strategic vision for housing growth in the Scottish Borders over the next ten years and beyond. The Housing Supply Strategy supports the Local Housing Strategy (2017-2022) with particular focus on strategic priority 1 of the LHS: The supply of housing meets the needs of our communities.

Providing an adequate supply of new affordable, high quality and appropriate housing will not only aid in sustaining the council's rural communities but also with attracting potential new residents to the area.

Partnership working is an essential element of developing and implementing the Housing Supply Strategy which aims to deliver high quality housing across the Scottish Borders. Some of the actions currently being progressed are:



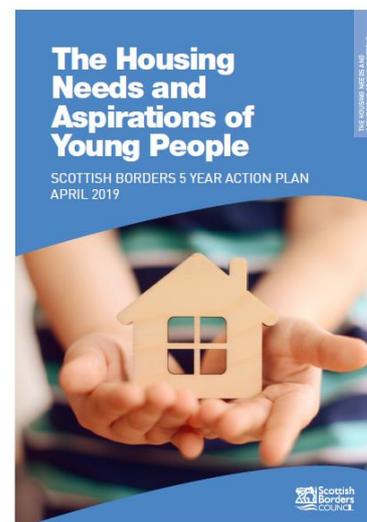
- Providing information and advice on shared equity schemes and promoting alternative home ownership options
- Creating housing profiles for each of the five localities within the region
- Developing a profile of empty homes
- Reviewing levels of second/ holiday home ownership and consider any potential interventions
- Promoting the self-build loan fund

Young People's Housing Study

At the beginning of 2018 Scottish Borders Council commissioned The Indigo House Group to undertake an assessment of the housing needs and aspirations of young people in the Scottish Borders. This resulted in the production of a five year action plan which identified four outcomes.

The five year Action Plan aims to improve the housing options and outcomes available to all young people aged from 16 to 34 across the Scottish Borders. The plan has developed a range of policy and practical responses, with commitment from a range of partners. This will enable young people to make more successful and sustainable transitions into their own housing. Work is currently underway towards ensuring these actions are delivered and that Scottish Borders Council works closely with our partners. Some of these actions are:

- Engage with transport initiatives and seek to link with housing to maximise impact e.g. Explore opportunities to subsidise first months travel for new Modern Apprentices at SBC
- Develop and implement the private rented sector strategy to improve access to and quality in the private rented sector.
- Work with community councils and other community representatives to consider whether there is interest and capacity within communities to enable new community led housing development
- Review model of access to social housing in Scottish Borders across all providers to minimise time in temporary accommodation and achieve Rapid Rehousing
- Housing leads to support the development of the Child Poverty Plan in 2019



Town Centre Work

Housing has a significant role to play in contributing to and helping to maintain the vibrancy of town centres. Through implementing actions outlined in the LHS, in 2019/20 Scottish Borders Council has continued to work with partners on initiatives to improve town centres, including support to reduce the number of vacant properties, the ongoing preparation of Town Centre Housing Contribution Statements for Hawick and Eyemouth, targeting energy efficiency measures within areas, such as Jedburgh; as well as piloting a missing shares scheme in Hawick supporting scheme of assistance approaches in regard to housing condition, including common repair.

Work has been completed on the Town Centre Housing Contribution Statement for Hawick and work is currently underway in regards to developing a statement for Eyemouth.

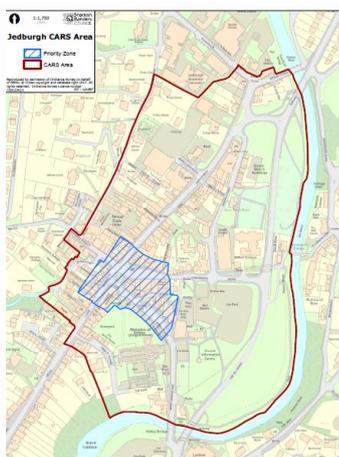
Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) is part of a national programme to conserve Scotland's traditional buildings and support the regeneration of town centres. CARS activity supports the Scheme of Assistance which helps address issues of housing quality and condition. Information and advice is provided

to owner occupiers, landlords and tenants of privately let properties; helping address disrepair and supporting owners of empty property to bring them back into use.

Jedburgh CARS

Jedburgh CARS completed year three of its five year duration at the end of 2019/20. Over 75 enquiries for building repair funding have been received.



By the end of year three a total of 29 individual grant offers for building repairs, towards 19 town centre buildings, totalling over £250k had been made with a number projects progressing on site. Further applications have been received which require development and assessment which will likely result in the Repair Grant fund being oversubscribed.

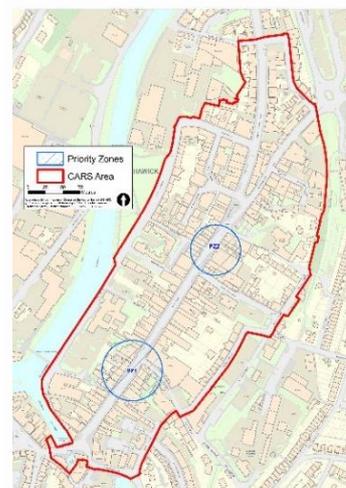
Two of the priority projects for Jedburgh CARS have been offered funding totalling over £220,000 and these will be progressed on site during 2020/21.

An additional component of Jedburgh CARS is the development of a Public Realm project which has focused on the essential repairs to the Abbey Ramparts retaining wall. The works are now fully tendered and are ready to proceed on site once a suitable start date can be identified by the contractor.

Hawick CARS

Hawick CARS formally launched in November 2019 and is scheduled to run until March 2024. There has already been significant interest in the funding available with over 20 enquiries received seeking funding for building repairs. Many of these enquiries are in the process of actively developing repair work projects and it is anticipated that a number of these will make formal applications for Hawick CARS funding during 2020/21.

The first three grant offers have already been made and these projects are due to progress on site in 2020/21 providing a significant impact within the town centre at the outset of the CARS Initiative. Hawick CARS is also assisting owners in the development of Priority Repair projects at six key locations in the town centre. Two of these projects are currently being tendered and are expected to be delivered in either 2020/21 or 2021/22.



A complementary Missing Shares initiative is also being delivered in the town to assist willing owners in progressing with essential repairs where one or more other owners has not engaged. This initiative has gained some interest and may be developed and delivered on a number of projects in the future.

Empty Homes

The Local Housing Strategy and supplementary Empty Homes Strategy sets out how Scottish Borders Council aims to identify and bring back empty homes into residential use. It identifies potential for new investment to help return empty homes to use, particularly as affordable rented accommodation.

Work has begun on the creation of an updated empty homes profile for the Scottish Borders. This will provide a more complete picture of empty homes within the region. In addition further analysis on the

current data held by the council in order to gain a better understanding of exemptions and long term empty properties has been carried out. Officers have engaged with empty home owners providing them with advice in relation to bringing empty homes back into use, including realistic timescales for the necessary work involved in doing so.

Furthermore, officers have also promoted initiatives such as the matchmaker service for empty home owners and advised owners in relation to potential VAT exemptions available for qualifying repairs as well as any potential funding opportunities such as the rural housing fund where these are applicable. In addition, council tax is levied at 200% on long term empty homes. Discretion on this higher level of Council Tax can be applied where a package of work to return the property to use is agreed.

One example of our empty homes work involved a property at High Street, Coldstream where Officers' guidance and specialist advice has helped the owner to progress works and secure VAT exemptions. Support has also been provided to assist the owner's application for the rural housing fund, with the intention of assisting the owner with bridging any funding deficit in the renovation of the listed property bringing it back in to use.



3. Good Quality and Energy Efficient Homes

Addressing Priority 2: More People Live In Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes

Highlights

- SBC allocated £1.34m grant funding from Scottish Government for 2019/20 HEEPS: ABS
- HEEPS:ABS Air Source Heat Pump installation scheme developed to support properties in off gas areas
- 724 referrals for support via Home Energy Scotland on energy efficiency and fuel poverty
- Pilot of Missing Shares Scheme initiated in Hawick Conservation Area
- Scottish Borders Council currently has over 5,000 approved registered Landlords and over 7,800 rental properties approved
- Landlord Forum held in Galashiels with around 100 Landlords/agents attending.
- LAS and SBC training course in Tenancy Agreements & Notices for private landlords and letting agents within the Scottish Borders held in Hawick in November 2019.

Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy

To support Priority 2 of the LHS, the new Borders Home Energy Forum was established, and the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) was launched in 2019. The Strategy will run to 2023 and will be regularly reviewed by the LHS Partnership Group and the Borders Home Energy Forum. It takes lead and inspiration from commitments on fuel poverty and home energy efficiency, as well as the ongoing wider Scottish Government support, to provide an effective Strategy that delivers for all in the Scottish Borders.

The Strategy provides actions to deliver affordable warmth for those that need it most and, a commitment to increase the energy efficiency of all homes regardless of circumstance – providing multiple benefits that reach out to the householder, providers and the wider supply chain.

Covering the period 2019-23, the Vision is that ‘more people live in energy efficient and affordably warm homes’. The Priorities that work towards fulfilling this Vision are:

- Priority 1: To collectively work with our partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes.
- Priority 2: To explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home.
- Priority 3: To ensure that the AWHEEs provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders.

The first year of this Strategy has now been implemented and a separate update report is currently being prepared.

The report will measure the impact and delivery of the Scottish Borders Home Energy Forum. It will look at what impact the forum has had as well as seeking feedback from members as to any changes that could be introduced to further strengthen its position and positive impact. This will enhance delivery against the forums key priorities and ensure that it remains relevant.

Eildon Housing Association's Green Homes Pilot

Eildon Housing Association has previously secured £100,000 from Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and Scottish Borders Council in order to carry out an action based research and independent evaluation exercise, which is known as the "Green House Pilot".

Seven of the Association's affordable housing projects have been selected for inclusion in the Pilot, which will involve the design, development and delivery of around 79 homes using three different energy efficient solutions such as Passivhaus, Energiesprong and Off-site construction/ Volumetric Design alongside a twelve house traditional build "control" project. The first Passivhaus development comprises three houses at Springfield Terrace Street Boswells and was completed in March 2020. The remaining 76 homes aim to be built to low or zero carbon energy efficiency standard, with estimated house completions in 2020/22.

Independent monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by Mackintosh Environmental Architecture Research Unit within the Mackintosh School of Architecture. The research will use monitoring processes designed to measure energy efficiency and return on investment throughout the life of the Pilot. The outcomes of the research will inform the Association's new build design guide and its approach to component replacement and energy efficiency in its existing properties. It will also influence the Association's Rent Setting Policy. Eildon Housing Association propose to share the experience gained with other Registered Social Landlords and Councils across Scotland.

Home Energy Efficiency Programmes Area Based Schemes (HEEPS:ABS)

Over the last ten years of working on private tenure energy efficiency programmes in the Scottish Borders, there have been a significant number of installations of a range of measures. Key achievements over ten years of programmes in the Scottish Borders include:

- 11,465 measures have been installed across 8,221 households;
- This has been funded using £18.2 million of Scottish Government funding and leveraged £3.8 million of CERT and ECO funding;
- Installations have resulted in lifetime financial savings of £42m.
- Installations have resulted in lifetime CO2 savings of 35,238 tonnes

External Wall Installations in Town Yetholm:



The total amount of Scottish Government HEEPS: ABS 2019/20 grant awarded in the Scottish Borders is £1.34m.

It is anticipated that around 250 homes will receive free or subsidised insulation measures across the region and for the first time HEEPS:ABS also includes an Air Source Heat Pump installation scheme. The programme is live and is due to finish in December 2020.

The 2019/20 programme targets the following areas:

- External Wall Insulation (EWI): Targeting specifically Langlee, Burnfoot, Jedburgh and Hawick
- Internal Wall Insulation (IWI): Targeting all HEEPS:ABS areas across the Borders
- Hard to treat Cavity Wall Insulation (HTTCs): Targeting all HEEPS:ABS areas across the Borders

Both the Internal Wall Insulation and Hard to Treat Cavity Wall Insulation programme will enable eligible households to qualify for the scheme regardless of area. Following a successful trial in 2018/19 working in partnership with trusted voices within selected local communities to promote HEEPS: ABS, this year HEEPS:ABS is looking to identify and work in a similar capacity with further communities to replicate the positive impacts of this trial.

As HEEPS:ABS mobilises there will be local community events held to raise awareness of the external wall insulation scheme with residents (where safe to do so and in line with Scottish Government Covid 19 guidelines). Furthermore, the project has partnered with Home Energy Scotland to run after-care events providing further support where external wall insulation measures have been installed. As part of the HEEPS:ABS scheme delivery a decarbonisation Air Source Heat Pump installation proposal was developed to support properties in off gas areas.

Following data analysis of the Borders region a suitable area was identified with properties that would benefit from the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump heating system. The technology and specification was determined and a contractor appointed to deliver the measures. Table 1 shows the estimated fuel bill and CO2 savings for 2019/20.

Table 1: Estimated fuel bills and CO2 savings for 2019/20 HEEPS:ABS based on anticipated measures

Measure	Tenure			Total	CO ₂ Savings (tonnes)		Financial Savings (£)	
	Owner Occupied	Private rented	Social Landlord		Annual	Lifetime	Annual	Lifetime
Internal Wall Insulation (solid wall)	56	0	0	56	43	321	10,080	362,880
External Wall Insulation (solid wall)	86	0	0	86	65	493	15,480	557,280
Hard to treat CWI (CWI solution)	126	0	0	126	57	434	12,600	529,200
Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP)	10	0	0	10	25	500	6,950	139,000
Total	278	0	0	278	190	1,748	45,110	1,588,360

Monitoring and evaluation activities this year include customer satisfaction surveys; energy usage monitoring and; enhanced monitoring on a sample to households to include effect on temperature and energy and carbon reduction.

Home Energy Scotland Referrals



Home Energy Scotland (HES) is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Energy Saving Trust to provide free and impartial advice on ways to save energy, reduce fuel bills and make homes cheaper and easier to heat. They have a network of five advice centres across Scotland to help them reach householders, community organisations, businesses and local authorities in order to reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions. They can provide advice on energy efficiency, switching suppliers, renewables, saving water, sustainable transport and refer people for benefits and tax checks.

Table 2 shows the last five years of interactions data from Home Energy Scotland for the Scottish Borders.

Table 2: Number of Home Energy Scotland interactions

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Inbound calls	1,223	1,175	934	1,245	1,130
Outbound calls	815	592	705	977	558
Events	330	299	1,379	945	516
Other (e.g. emails, letters, home visits)	1,343	2,521	2,106	2,244	2,973
HEEPS:ABS	238	0	0	0	0
Total advice interactions	3,949	4,587	5,124	5,411	5,117

Energy Efficient Scotland (EES) Pilot Project

The Energy Efficiency Scotland Route map is to define a set of actions aimed at making Scotland’s buildings near zero carbon by 2050, in a way that is socially and economically feasible. It considers two main policy areas: fuel poverty and climate change. The two main objectives are to:

- Remove poor energy efficiency as a driver for fuel poverty.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through more energy efficient buildings and the decarbonisation of heat supply.

There are 5 measures proposed to improve the energy efficiency in domestic buildings:

- By 2040 all Scottish homes achieve an EPC C, where technically and financially feasible.
- Maximise the number of social rented homes achieving EPC B by 2032.
- Privately rented homes to reach EPC E by 2022, EPC D by 2025, and EPC C by 2030, where technically and financially feasible.
- All owner occupied homes to reach EPC C by 2040, where technically and financially feasible.
- All homes with households in fuel poverty to reach EPC C by 2030 and EPC B by 2040, where technically and financially feasible.

The Energy Efficient Scotland pilot project in Peebles (Change Works in Peebles hub – CWiP) has now been extended to the whole of Tweeddale until June 2020 and focuses specifically on behavioural change and in engaging and supporting local householders and businesses to reduce energy consumption and fuel bills as well as increasing the uptake of energy efficient measures.

This is seen as the first stage in covering all five localities during the funding period of Energy Efficient Scotland. The primary target for this self-funded project is owner occupiers with an EPC banding lower than C.

Additional funding received enabled the CWiP Hub to expand to cover the whole of Tweeddale, exploring specifically the self-funded market. The primary target for this self-funded project is owner occupiers with an EPC banding lower than C.

Additionally, workshops and events were held regularly; a survey of all Peebles based businesses has been carried out; Peebles High School had received £400,000 funding and support through the capital works programme and Energy Efficient Scotland funding; there has been research across the supply chain on barriers and opportunities to implement energy efficiency measures.



Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) is designed to be a coordinated programme to support the local planning and delivery of improved energy efficiency in homes and buildings in the public, commercial and industrial sectors in addition to supporting the decarbonisation of their heat supply.

To date, local authorities have been encouraged, on a voluntary basis, to develop district heating strategies, as well as to outline plans to improve energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation within households across their areas

Over the past two years, the Council have worked in collaboration with Changeworks and the local community to develop a pilot LHEES in Peebles. The output is a draft pilot strategy and implementation plan to increase the level of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heat in Peebles.

The implementation plan will provide a series of short term and aspirational targets for the support of owner occupied, private and social rented as well as fuel poor households.

Borders Home Energy Forum

The Borders Home Energy Forum continues to ensure that a strategic, multi-agency approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency and improve health and well-being in the Scottish Borders, particularly for the most vulnerable households within the region.

The Partnership comprises organisations representing housing associations, statutory bodies, advisory groups, bodies associated with energy, affordable warmth, health and income maximisation, and representatives from Scottish Borders Council.



The Forum has acted as a catalyst for building collective support for ongoing strategies including;

- HEEPS:ABS and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)
- Funding opportunities are also being discussed at the Forum
- Joint proposals have been planned and submitted by RSLs
- Upcoming funding opportunities are being discussed proactively and in advance of calls being released

It has additionally served as a platform to promote and facilitate measures and schemes that target alleviating fuel poverty and increasing energy efficiency in households; as well as improving health and wellbeing.

Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)

The Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. Social landlords are required to reach a set energy efficiency rating for a household based on the housing type and fuel type used to heat it. The first milestone (ESSH 1) is for all applicable social housing to reach the minimum rating of no lower than an EPC C or D by 31st December 2020.

Progress for 2019/20 against EESSH includes:

- Waverley Housing – 96% EESSH compliance as of February 2020
- SBHA – 93% EESSH compliance by the end of January 2020
- BHA – 71% EESSH compliance with a large 140 property home improvement scheme set to deliver further improvements across 2019/20
- Eildon – 95% EESSH compliance as of March 2020

Warm & Well Borders

SBC has recently secured two years of funding to the amount of £551,000, from National Grid’s Warm Homes Fund to deliver the “Warm and Well Borders” project. This project will help develop a multi-agency approach to reducing fuel poverty, improving the energy efficiency of homes and improving the health and well-being of the most vulnerable households in the Borders.



The project will be delivered through a partnership between Scottish Borders Council, Changeworks, three local Citizens Advice Bureau, Home Energy Scotland, health and social care teams and community health organisations. By the end of the project period Warm and Well Borders aims to have supported 1,420 fuel poor households to live affordably warm at home by tackling high fuel bills, fuel debt, and supporting skills to be in better control of energy costs as well as building resilience to tackle the causes of fuel poverty.

Private Landlord Registration

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring a well-managed, thriving private rented sector in Scotland that provides quality and security for tenants.

Mandatory registration is an important strand of the Government’s wider policy framework for the private rented sector, designed to secure good management, good standards and good behaviour across the sector, and by so doing to reinforce the positive contribution it makes to meeting housing need in Scotland.

Landlord registration gives local authorities the ability to control and regulate who can operate legitimately as a private landlord. This provides local authorities with an effective means of dealing with the worst performing landlords who, by their behaviour and attitude, mismanage their properties, or fail to act in respect of their anti-social tenants and cause misery for their own tenants, other tenants, neighbours and communities.

Better understanding of the sector has led to more relevant and effective local policies to improve, regulate and support the contribution that the private rented sector makes, to local economies and local housing markets.

At the end of the 2019/20 period there were over 5,000 approved registered Landlords and more than 7,800 rental properties within the Scottish Borders.

Statutory guidance emphasises the importance of liaising with private landlords and their tenants, including considering a range of actions to help landlords reach the standards required in privately letting properties, and keeping them informed of any changes in legislation.

In recent years emphasis has shifted from registration enforcement to a liaison and support service for landlords and tenants. The Service provided is focused on engagement, and enforcement is applied as a last resort. Key engagement activities include:



- Scottish Borders Council, in partnership with Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS), hosted a free Landlord Forum for landlords and letting agents registered with the council. The event took place in Galashiels in October 2019 covering subjects such as the new energy efficiency legislation.
- In November 2019 the Council along with LAS provided a training course, held in Hawick, on Tenancy Agreements & Notices for private landlords and letting agents
- Updating the website to provide relevant information to landlords such as Scottish Government guidance during Covid-19
- The introduction of an additional expiry reminder letter to lessen the number of landlords missing their renewal date
- After the introduction of prescribed information checks, officers have been working closely with landlords to help them understand their obligations
- Rent penalty notices have been issued as a last resort where landlords fail to meet legal standards
- Fit and proper tests have been carried out in line with Scottish Government legislation to ensure the suitability of landlords within the region

The Liaison & Enforcement Officer has initiated 275 actions involving private landlords in relation to registration issues in 2019/20.

In addition there have been a total of 50 inspections undertaken in relation to complaints regarding condition, repairing standards and management practices. This work involves working closely with affected parties to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Scheme of Assistance



Introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, to address issues of housing quality and condition in the private sector, the Scheme of Assistance changed the way local authorities can help home owners and the private rented sector to carry out repairs, maintenance and improvements.

The Scheme of Assistance is aimed at private home owners including owner-occupiers, landlords and tenants of privately let properties, who are looking for advice and assistance regarding property repairs and adaptation works.

The Scheme of Assistance helps to achieve the Local Housing Strategy's vision, with particular contribution to Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 4. These priorities are supported through a range of services which:

- Help older people and people with disabilities who are living in the private sector to make adaptations to their homes ensuring that they are able to live in a safe environment within their own property (Priority 4)
- Working with Environmental Health and Building Standards to address disrepair in private sector homes (Priority 2)
- Ensuring that properties in the Private Rented Sector meet the repairing standard and providing advice to both tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities
- Support owners of empty property to bring them back into use (Priority 1 & 2)

The Scheme of Assistance offers:

- Information and advice for private sector housing residents on home repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations.
- Common repairs work, engaging with and bringing together multiple owners to resolve complex repairs
- Working with Building Standards to deliver enforcement work
- Practical assistance through services offering help relating to repair and maintenance of private sector homes.
- Financial help to cover some (or all) of the costs of eligible adaptations.
- Information and advice to support empty homes owners to bring them back into use.

The Council have further developed the information and advice available, in particular relating to organising common repair which includes working towards a pilot project to introduce missing shares.

During the reporting period practical assistance was given to 40 cases; repair and maintenance including common repair; empty homes advice; support to landlords and tenants and, as a last resort, enforcement. In addition general information and advice was also provided in regard to private property house condition concerns.

Missing Shares Scheme

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 a local authority can consider paying a missing share where the majority of owners have agreed to carry out necessary common repairs and maintenance but they cannot progress the repair because either an owner is unable or is unwilling to pay or it is unreasonable to require the owner to deposit the sum in question or where the owner cannot be identified or found by reasonable inquiry. This can hold up much needed repairs.

Under this scheme and, depending on the circumstances and eligibility criteria, the Council could choose to pay a missing share on behalf of an owner and recover the contribution. This means that owners can get on with their repairs.

In 2019 Scottish Borders Council agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme in the Scottish Borders. Initially this pilot will target the Hawick Conservation Area over a two year period. The intention is to manage the Missing Shares scheme in tandem with the Scheme of Assistance and to support activity through the approve Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. The pilot will be reviewed regularly and progress monitored.

4. Homelessness

Addressing Priority 3: Fewer People Are Affected By Homelessness

Highlights

- During 2019/2020, 928 households approached the Council's Homelessness Team for advice and/ or assistance
- 628 households were assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness
- 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless secured settled accommodation
- During 2019/20 the Housing support team received 388 new referrals. The number of cases closed during 2019/20 was 255 of which 80% were closed due to a successfully completed intervention.
- RSLs have made changes to their Allocations Policies that will help to resolve homelessness quicker
- The Council and its partners commenced implementation of its Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
- The TCAC Supported Accommodation Project reach its 10 year anniversary. 91% of care leavers who stayed there went on to maintain successful tenancies

Key Homelessness Statistics

- 928 households approached the Council's Homelessness team for advice and/or assistance
- 770 households presented as homeless, this remains a relatively stable figure with 768 statutory homeless presentations in 2018/2019
- 645 households were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, this is an increase of 2.5% from 2018/2019 but is lower than the national increase of 4%. Of which, 628 were assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness
- The level of repeat homelessness applications in Scottish Borders remains low, only 4.5% of new homelessness assessments had applied within the previous year. This is lower than the most recent national average of 5.7%.
- 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless secured settled accommodation. This compares favourably with the most recent national average of 82%.
- Contact with homeless households was maintained until closure in 88% of cases, maintaining the same level from 2018-2019.
- For homelessness cases that closed in 2019/20 it took an average of 117 days from assessment to closure, compared to the national average for the same period of 224 days.
- The use of bed and breakfast as a temporary accommodation option in Scottish Borders remains minimal with only 8 households entering bed and breakfast during the year.
- 256 statutory homeless cases were open at the start of the period and 224 cases at close of period, which represents a 4.5% reduction and a reduction of 14.5% since 1st April 2018. This indicator is especially encouraging in the



context of the Scottish Governments 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitment, and our corresponding Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan commitment, to reducing the 'backlog' of homelessness cases and, correspondingly, the level of need for temporary accommodation.

Partnership Working

Scottish Borders Council continues to work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and other providers to ensure a wide range of services are available to ensure that fewer people are affected by homelessness.

The Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders, which was developed and implemented in partnership between the Council and the four locally based Registered Social Landlords in 2017/2018, seeks to ensure that the priority accommodation and support needs of care leavers are recognised in order that their needs for suitable housing are met in a planned and sustainable way. One of the key aims of the protocol is to ensure that care leavers do not need to enter the homelessness system in order to access housing. Continuing application of the Protocol during 2019/2020 saw seven care leavers achieving a permanent housing solution and three accessing supported transitional flats within Through Care After Care (TCAC) Supported Accommodation Project at Albert Place.

The Through Care and After Care Supported Accommodation Project reach its 10 year anniversary this year. Over the past ten years, 36 care leavers have lived there and moved on to permanent housing in the community. Out of those 36, 33 of them have been successful in maintaining a tenancy for 12 months or more. This equates to a success rate of 91%

The 'Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone' (SHORE) standards, which were launched nationally 2017, are intended to ensure that the housing needs of individuals in prison are addressed from an early stage and in a consistent way across Scotland. The standards are designed to ensure that people leaving prison can access services and accommodation in the same way as people living in the community. During 2019/2020, the council continued worked closely with the Scottish Prison Service on an information sharing protocol which was adopted and has improved the information sharing arrangements and has contributed to the aspirations of SHORE, allowing for earlier intervention both in terms of the prevention and resolution of homelessness.



In May 2019 Scottish Borders Housing Association implemented a new allocations policy which changed the way in which homeless applicants were allocated permanent housing. The new process involves the matching of homeless applicants to void properties and has increased the percentage of let's being allocated to homeless households from 23% in 2018/19 to 39% in 2019/20 and is in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan.

Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP)

The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) established in 2018/19 continues to operate with a key focus on the implementation of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. The BHHSP includes senior officers from Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders with responsibility in homelessness, health and social care, public health, social work, property management and housing strategy. The four locally based Registered Social Landlords who own the majority of the social rented housing stock in the Borders have representation from senior officers. These are; Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) and Waverley Housing.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)

Rapid Rehousing is a key component of the whole-system approach whereby the responsibility for tackling homelessness lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support. Housing First is a key element of this.

Housing First provides general settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs, recognising that a safe and secure home is the best base for recovery, it offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs.



Development of the Scottish Borders RRTP has been led by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership and has included consultation with key partners including the Borders Housing Alliance and the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Planning Group.

Implementation of the RRTP commenced in March 2019 (2019/20), which includes the development of projects to be launched from late 2020 onwards.

A Rapid Rehousing Development Officer was appointed in January 2020 and will play a key role in the implementation of the RRTP and achieving the aims and objectives of the plan.

November 2019 saw the publication of the national 'Way Home Scotland' guidance, which aims to improve housing pathways for care leavers. Scottish Borders Council welcomes the guidance and is committed, in principle, to its recommendations as we work towards ending homelessness in Scotland and implementing the Scottish Borders RRTP.

Housing Support

The Housing Support Service forms part of the Council's Homelessness and Financial Support Team and consists of an internal Housing Support team and a commissioned service.

Housing Support offers accessible, flexible and personalised support to individuals in critical need to enable them to secure, establish, manage and maintain their home. The team's objectives are to:

- Prevent homelessness through the provision of person centred housing support
- Prepare individuals/households for independent living, and help them maintain their housing independence
- Assist and support households towards securing suitable, affordable, sustainable permanent accommodation
- Support households regardless of accommodation status i.e. in temporary accommodation, at home and no fixed abode
- Promote the health, wellbeing and social integration of homeless households

During 2019/20 the Housing support team received 388 new referrals, while the number of supported people who received a service during the reporting period was 395. The average number of working days it took to engage a supported person within the service was 9 working days. The number of cases closed during the period was 255 of which 80% (204) were closed due to a successfully completed intervention.

During 2019/20, 100% of the feedback received from supported people confirmed that they were satisfied with the service they received and had achieved their personal goal set out in their support plan.

Table 3 highlights partner feedback during 2019/20. Partners were asked to rate how well they felt the Housing Support team worked in partnership with them, clearly showing that over 80% of partners felt that the Housing Support Team worked either extremely or very well with them.

Table 3: Partner Feedback to Housing Support Service

Partner Feedback	%
Extremely well	36%
Very well	45%
Somewhat well	13%
Not so well	3%
Not at all well	0%
Not Answered	3%

Partners were also asked to rate the quality of support that the Housing Support team provided, Table 4 shows that the vast majority of partners rated the quality of support as being either very high quality or high quality.

Table 4: Partners Feedback on Quality of Support

Quality Option	Percent
Very high quality	36%
High quality	45%
Neither high nor low quality	13%
Low quality	0%
Very low quality	0%
Not Answered	7%

Below are a few comments from partners who were asked what they felt the Housing Support Team were doing well and what was working:

- 'I feel the service is a vital component of homelessness services and we rely on their hard work and expertise to support vulnerable clients in their resettlement. Without them I have no doubt there would be a massive increase in the failure of tenancies and people would struggle to maintain them.'
- 'Great communication, partnership working, active problem solving and ability to look for solutions out of the norm'
- 'Huge amount of knowledge and skill with regards to all tenancy issues. Provide flexibility and compassion for services users and an understanding as to the complexities of working with particularly vulnerable and at times challenging service users.'

- ‘Good joint working - and communication with the Justice Service.’
- ‘It is a great service that is essential for other professionals and service users alike’
- ‘Individualised support provision where tenant’s needs are identified.’

Scottish Housing Day



Scottish Housing day was held on the 18th of September 2019. To mark Scottish Housing Day, Scottish Borders Council joined up with RSLs, other Local Authorities and other organisations across Scotland to promote Housing as a Human Right.

Councilor Mark Rowley, SBC’s Executive Member for Business and Economic Development said:

“Everyone should have access to a safe, secure and affordable home and Scottish Housing Day brings together the entire housing sector to celebrate the positive impact that good quality housing makes to the lives of people and communities right across Scotland, as well as highlighting the range of housing options that are available”.

Throughout the day information on housing was publicised across the Council’s social media platforms to provide information, advice and awareness of all the services the council offers in relation to homelessness, housing and other housing related services.

A bake sale was held at Council HQ reception in Newtown St Boswells, raising a total of £315 for Home Basics. Home Basics is a small local charity which helps families on low incomes in the Scottish Borders furnish their homes.



5. Support to Live Independently

Addressing Priority 4: More People Are Supported To Live Independently In Their Own Homes

Highlights

- 5 wheelchair accessible units delivered throughout the region
- Extra Care Housing under construction at sites in both Duns and Galashiels
- A study on Wheelchair Accessible Housing in the Borders has been completed. The finalised report “Space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders” was finalised in January 2020
- 116 major adaptations provided by RSLs

Extra Care Housing

The “Integrated strategic plan for Older People’s Housing Care and Support 2018-28” sets out a number of strategic actions, in particular development of Extra Care Housing in the main towns within the Scottish Borders. This helps to tackle “not fit for purpose” older people’s housing and supports the delivery of 300 new homes for older people. Individual project proposals to deliver on these have been identified in the SHIP 2020/25.

New governance arrangements are being developed which will integrate the 2018-28 strategy into new work streams in order to develop a wider Scottish Borders interagency Older Persons Strategy. The Extra Care Housing working group will continue to oversee the delivery of the programme. Developments are currently under construction in both Duns and Galashiels.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing Need Study

Based on commitments in its Delivery Plan, in March 2019 the Scottish Government issued guidance to councils requiring them to set targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures and to develop plans for meeting these. In response to this, the Council’s Housing Strategy Team commissioned consultants to investigate:

- The numbers, profile and views of wheelchair users and other people with substantial mobility issues who are likely to require wheelchair or similar forms of accessible housing.
- The current stock of housing suitable for wheelchair users, particularly in the social housing sector.
- The challenges wheelchair users and their families experience in securing a suitable home and the factors that have contributed to this.
- Current and potential shortfalls in the provision of wheelchair accessible homes with particular reference to affordable housing provision.

Following the delivery of the finalised report titled “A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders” by consultants in January 2020, work has continued to engage stakeholders. It is intended that the action plan will now be delivered and integrated with the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 actions through the LHS monitoring and reporting processes.

The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges which will need to be addressed at national as well as at a local Scottish Borders level by the council and partner agencies. The core findings indicate

that up to 20 new wheelchair accessible homes will be required, per year, across all tenures in order to address current unmet and future need. It is anticipated that this report and its findings will be used to inform interagency planning and resource allocation processes.

The finalised report will be used to inform setting a revised proposed Scottish Borders Council wheelchair accessible housing target with a committee report being drafted for consideration by the Executive Committee in 2020-21. The finalised report will also influence the house type/size mix of individual pipeline affordable housing projects being developed by Borders Registered Social Landlords.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing Delivery

During the 2019/20 period five units have been delivered which meet wheelchair accessible housing standards. Units were delivered by Berwickshire Housing Association at The Glebe in Chirnside as well as at Todlaw Park in Duns. Eildon Housing Association also provided properties at Howdenburn in Jedburgh and the former GP surgery in Town Yetholm.

Care and Repair

The Council has a contract with Eildon Housing Association to deliver the Borders Care and Repair Service. The aim of the service is to enable older people and people with disabilities living in the private sector to have warm, well maintained and safe homes. Care & Repair helps to achieve this by:

- Providing help and advice on housing repairs, improvements and adaptations, and to ensure the work is carried out in accordance with The Care & Repair Standards.
- Providing a Home Handyperson service to help to support community care groups (prioritising older people and people with disabilities), to continue to live at home through the provision of practical household help and support.



The service is available to:

- home owners over 60 years of age
- private tenants over 60 years of age
- disabled owners or private tenants of any age

During 2019/20, Care and Repair handymen fitted a total of 2,038 grab rails throughout the Scottish Borders.

Disabled Adaptation Outcomes

A major adaptation involves permanent changes to the structure of a person's home. These works are subject to mandatory grant provision and are prioritised for financial assistance by Scottish Borders Council. These include:

- Provision of standard amenities which can include an extension to provide any or all of the standard amenities;
- Provision of structural adaptations with the exception of extensions, to provide living accommodation.

During the 2019/20 period a total of £439,345 was spent on adaptations throughout the region. Table 5 details the types of adaptations that were installed within the Scottish Borders.

Table 5: Major Adaptations (Private) Completed in 2019/20

Adaptation Type	Number Completed
Curved Stair Lift	4
Closomat	2
Convert Garage to Bedroom & Wet Floor Shower	1
Convert Room into Bedroom & Shower Room	1
Create Downstairs Shower Room	1
Extension with Wet Floor Shower	1
External Ramp	3
Level Access Shower	39
Ramp	2
Stair Lift	18
Wet Floor Shower	5
Wet room	3
Widen Doorways	1
Widen Path for Wheelchair Access	1
Total	82

Within the Scottish Borders there are currently 1,065 signed up members subscribed to the Handyperson Service. During 2019/20, the Care and Repair Handyperson Service fitted a total of 2,038 grab rails, at a total cost of £7,085. Table 6 details information on small repairs and adaptations and the Handyperson's Service.

Table 6: Small Repair & Adaptations & Handyperson 2019/20

	Number Completed	Spend
Small Repairs & Adaptations	400	81,946
Handyperson Jobs	4,060	Subscription Service

In 2011 there was a significant move to the development of a 'One Stop Shop' model for all adaptations in the Borders, which was achieved through an agreement with each of the four larger Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This provides a consistent adaptation service to all people in the Borders regardless of tenure.

Through the One Stop Shop approach, Care and Repair effectively spend the funding awarded from the Scottish Government national budget, referred to as Stage 3 funding, for each of the RSLs. Table 7 details the number of major adaptations and spend by each RSL.

Table 7: Major Adaptations carried out by RSLs in 2019/20

RSL	Number Completed	Spend
Berwickshire Housing Association	23	£79,451
Eildon Housing Association	24	£86,369
Scottish Borders Housing Association	54	£197,468
Waverley Housing	15	£45,252
Total	116	£408,540

6. Some key developments for the year ahead

As the Annual Report for 2019/20 is being finalised, work and life has changed dramatically due to the coronavirus crisis. Each Local Authority and Housing Association across the country has had to adapt the way they work, while ensuring tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness continue to get the services and support that is needed now more than ever.

Local Authorities and Housing Associations have been on the front line of the crisis, supporting communities to adjust to the huge challenges they now face. Continuing our commitment to ensuring everyone has a home which meets their needs is more vital than ever and looking to the year ahead SBC and partners will be working hard to deliver on the ambitions of the Local Housing Strategy and working towards ensuring that people have access to affordable, good quality housing and feel safe and supported in their homes.

The impact of the pandemic has already been felt within the region, development at sites has been put on hold or delayed and project teams are now planning how to restart sites in the safest way possible when lockdown restrictions are eased.

Advice has been given to the region's landlords throughout the pandemic, they have been kept up to date with the latest Scottish Government advice through our webpages which have been regularly updated as the situation evolves.

The year ahead will see continued efforts to help ensure that every person in the Scottish Borders lives in a home that meets their needs. As far as possible given the uncertain context of the impacts of Covid-19 this will be through the delivery of more affordable homes; ensuring people live in good quality, energy efficient homes and ensuring people have the support that they need to live independently. Scottish Borders Council greatly appreciate the hard work that our local partners and communities have contributed towards the delivery of our ambitious targets set out in the LHS and will continue to build on those excellent foundations, maintaining the momentum of delivering on the Local Housing Strategy.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021-2026

The Scottish Government has allocated £16.972m to the Scottish Borders in 2020/21. Work has begun to draft the next Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2021-26 to set out affordable housing project priorities, which currently indicates that all being well, it is anticipated that up to 383 affordable homes could potentially be delivered during 2020/21.

It is expected that the SHIP 2021/26 will be due to be submitted to Scottish Ministers by the 30th of October 2020. However, there are considerable uncertainties in the housing sector regarding the future level of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme budget allocations beyond the Scottish Parliamentary election which is due to be held in May of 2021.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)

The previous HNDA for the SESPlan area¹ was signed off as robust and credible by the CHMA in March 2015. Since then, and in particular over the last 12 months, there have been significant changes to the legislative, policy and guidance context, impacting on SESPlan, the City Deal and SESHoF (South East Scotland Housing Forum) activities.

¹ City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and part of Fife

SESHoF have been working closely with Heads of Housing across the respective local authorities to raise awareness of HNDA3, and communicating with the SESPlan Project Board and the Edinburgh City Region Deal Housing Partnership to agree a project plan for HNDA3.

SESHoF have discussed how to prioritise work for HNDA3 and how this will align with the National Planning Framework (NPF4). It is anticipated that the proposed timescales could ensure the HNDA3 receives robust and credible status from the CHMA by the end of 2021/22 financial year.

Housing to 2040

The Scottish Government have begun to consider longer term aspirations for housing in Scotland and the opportunities for how this might be achieved. Following on from the Housing Beyond 2021 paper that published in September 2018 and aimed to help inform discussions on the future of housing, a report on these discussions was published in May 2019 and the paper was renamed 'Housing to 2040'

The purpose of Housing to 2040 is to plan together how homes and communities in Scotland should look and feel in 2040, taking account of the range and variety of places across Scotland, from urban to rural to island.

The draft housing vision for 2040 describes in more detail what the housing system will look and feel like in the future. It is meant to be ambitious and aspirational:

- High quality sustainable homes
- A well-functioning housing system
- Sustainable communities
- Homes that meet people's needs

The 15 principles underpinning the vision are a high-level guide to how policy decisions might be made to make the vision a reality. It is expected that the final version of the Housing to 2040 Report and Route Map will be published later on in 2020.

Town Centre Work

Housing has a significant role to play in contributing towards and helping to maintain the vibrancy of our Town Centres.

Through implementing actions outlined in the LHS, in 2020 the Council will continue to work with partners on initiatives to improve our town centres, including support to reduce the number of vacant properties, the preparation of Town Centre Housing Contribution Statements, targeting energy efficiency measures within CARS areas, such as Jedburgh and Hawick; as well as the missing shares pilot in Hawick an initiative which has gained interest which will hopefully be built upon.

Implementing the Wheelchair Accessible Housing Study

Following the delivery of the finalised wheelchair housing study report titled "A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders" by consultants in January 2020, the council have continued to engage with stakeholders to discuss how the report will be delivered. The action plan was developed by the consultants as part of the stakeholder engagement workshops and will now be delivered and integrated



with the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 actions through normal action monitoring and reporting processes.

The finalised report will be used to set a revised proposed Scottish Borders Council wheelchair housing target once this has been considered by the Council's Executive Committee in 2020-21. The finalised report will also influence the house type and size of individual pipeline affordable housing projects being developed by Borders Registered Social Landlords through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

Undertaking an assessment of Supply and Demand in the Social Housing Sector

Undertaking an assessment into the demand and supply of housing in the Scottish Borders will provide key information around the mismatch that may be present within the Scottish Borders social housing sector, as the gap between demand and supply of housing of the right type and quality in the right places is considered to be an issue in some areas. With social housing under increasing pressure it is important to understand what can be done to better utilise current stock and ensure that future stock is addressing the need and demand of the Borders population, including those at risk of, or currently facing, homelessness.

This study will be of particular support to Priority 1 and 3 of the LHS and the development of the next LHS expected to cover the period 2023-2028. This research will also play a vital role in the delivery of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, which aims to prevent, and ultimately eradicate, homelessness through the timely provision of a stable and suitable home.

Private Sector Housing

The private sector is the biggest tenure in the Scottish Borders with a large percentage of the population either owning their own homes or renting privately. One of the key challenges in this sector is to ensure everyone is living in good quality homes. Good quality housing makes an important contribution to many aspects of a successful Borders including supporting local economies, improving individual's health and well-being and by making communities safer.

Over the next year, the Council will be undertaking a significant amount of work to improve our understanding of the condition of private sector housing through the development of the Private Sector Housing Condition Improvement Action Plan.

The plan will set out how the Council, with partners, will support the improvement of private sector house conditions by tackling disrepair and below tolerable standards across tenures.

The team has worked closely with landlords over the past year developing new processes to improve our service and will continue to do so moving forward for example keeping landlords up to date with proposed energy efficiency measures in the private sector and providing advice where needed.

Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Living in a warm, comfortable and energy efficient home is something that everyone should have access to and this is why it is a priority in the LHS. The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy was developed in 2018/19 and the first year of the strategy has been implemented.

The Borders Home Energy Forum is in a strong position to deliver, and monitor progress against the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy. It will continue to work closely to deliver against Scottish Government targets, as well as targeting efforts to work collectively on issues of fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

The recent consultation on improving energy efficiency to support national efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to address fuel poverty has seen a response from officers within the department who are well placed to provide support and guidance to property owners in the event of any new measures introduced.

Beyond Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH2)

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) was introduced in March 2014 and sets a milestone for social landlords to meet for social rented homes by 31 December 2020. As stated earlier in this report Registered Social Landlords in the Scottish Borders are on track to meet this standard and have made significant investments in properties to meet these targets.

Under EESH2, all social housing must meet, or can be treated as meeting EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent.

This will have implications in the Scottish Borders due to the rural nature of the region higher percentage of pre-1945 solid walled properties that are more expensive to bring up to the required energy efficiency standard. Similarly, having a large percentage of properties off the gas grid also brings additional costs and challenges in improving the energy efficiency rating of a property.

Homelessness

With the appointment of dedicated Rapid Rehousing Development Officer and additional development resources allocated to Rapid Rehousing we look forward to working towards the 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitments, by progressing the Scottish Borders RRTP with our Housing Association and Health and Social Care partners. We are mindful of the changing landscape brought about by the coronavirus crisis and the impact this has had on the development of our RRTP, however, we are equally aware of the significant contribution that our RRTP can make during our recover period and the opportunities that have generated from the strengthened relationships during the pandemic.

Housing and Communities

Housing has an important role to play in our communities, not just by providing safe, secure and affordable homes but by contributing on a wider scale to the places and spaces in which we live and where communities can thrive.

There is a significant stimulus to the local economy with the development of new housing, in addition Housing Associations support a range of community initiatives and provide a wide scope of additional services such as befriending services, support services, financial inclusion activity, community gardens, supporting the third sector and many other examples from all our local RSLs.

In addition new more environmentally friendly construction methods are being trialled throughout the region as well as the regeneration of areas such as Upper Langlee.

Berwickshire Housing Association are currently developing the 'Bumblebee Garden' a dementia friendly sensory garden at Todlaw in partnership with A Heart for Duns, Community Integrated Care (CIC) and with HARTS who are main contractors in the housing development at Todlaw.

In addition a Community Garden at Todlaw in a slightly larger gap site between new housing developments is being developed. This will be completed in partnership with Abundant Borders and will include an orchard, raised beds and other facilities to encourage use of the garden by tenants and their families.

Berwickshire Housing Association sponsored and supported the Living and Caring for Dementia Event held in Duns in October 2019 which gave information about the services, organisations and practical support that is available locally to people affected by dementia and their carers / families.

In addition Eildon Housing will be looking to continue their green pilot scheme with sites at Denholm, Westruther, Innerleithen and Galashiels.

There are a number of challenges facing us over the lifetime of this Local Housing Strategy, however, Scottish Borders Council and LHS Partners recognise the opportunities not only to provide good quality homes for all within sustainable communities, but to also stimulate community regeneration, the local economy, protect the environment and improve social wellbeing and inclusion.

Collaborative working to deliver on the ambitions of this LHS is paramount, and through continued effective partnership working the vision of the LHS is being taken forward. Collectively we aim to build upon these achievements to ensure the Scottish Borders remains a place where everyone is able to enjoy affordable, good quality housing in a pleasant and safe environment.



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HOUSING STRATEGY, POLICY & DEVELOPMENT

Council Headquarters | Newtown St Boswells | MELROSE | TD6 0SA

tel: 01896 661392 | email: housingenquiries@scotborders.gov.uk | www.scotborders.gov.uk

