

Delivering for our communities...

Annual Report

Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd

2010/11



Welcome



It gives me great pleasure to present Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd's first Annual Report. It's hard to believe that CCG was only established in April 2010; so much has been achieved since then. As with any new organisation, it has taken time

for everything to come together and we have overcome some inevitable difficulties. We still have various job vacancies, and it would be good to think that someone who may read this report could be interested in joining our team.

What's important to me as Chair and to the rest of the Board is that the promises made to tenants before transfer are met.

These days, everyone should be able to enjoy a safe, warm and comfortable home at a rent they can afford. Our main priority, therefore, is to ensure that homes under our care are improved to a high standard. This investment in the stock also means that we employ local workers, giving Gwynedd's economy a substantial boost.

Another priority is to ensure that the neighbourhood is peaceful and safe. You will read in this report that we employ community wardens, and are investing to improve the environment on our estates. We do not tolerate antisocial behaviour which affects our tenants and neighbouring residents' quality of life.

From the outset our aim has been to encourage tenants to participate in our work. I wish to pay tribute to those who voluntarily give up their time to take part on the Management Board, the Tenant and Residents Partnership, forums and numerous meetings. It is by listening to tenants that we can improve services. It would also be good to see more tenants becoming shareholders in Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd allowing them to become an integral part of the organisation and influence decisions.

I would like to thank members of the Board for their support, their contribution and their commitment, they also give their time voluntarily. With the job comes much responsibility, but it gives us great satisfaction to see the improved living conditions of tenants.

I am also grateful to the staff, under the careful leadership of our Chief Executive, Ffrancon Williams, for their hard work which has given the organisation a solid foundation in such a short time.

John Glyn Jones, Chair.

Our Vision

To become the leading community-led provider of affordable homes in Gwynedd, using our knowledge, skills and resources to develop and enrich local communities and protect our unique environment and culture.

We aim to be fair and open, to build relationships based on respect and to act with integrity.

Values:

- We are effective and reliable – we keep to our word and deliver our promises
- We are flexible and provide the services people want in ways which suit them
- CCG provides accessible and local services
- We are fair and honest with our customers
- We aim to be innovative and welcome new ways of working to increase choice
- We are committed to developing and protecting the economy and culture of Gwynedd

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Our customers and communities... at the heart of our business

Giving our tenants and their communities a voice is important to us and the way we work.

From the Management Board to the various forums, we want to make sure that the tenant's voice is heard across CCG. This has been a priority for us since the beginning, with the Offer Document setting out how our customers can have their say and how they can tell us the sort of services they want to receive.

Since April 2010 much work has been done to create a framework which makes it easier for tenants to get involved in a way which suits them. A menu of options is now available for tenants to participate:

- **TENANTS AND RESIDENTS PARTNERSHIP**
This is the main tenant body that works closely with CCG on every aspect involving tenants and residents.
- **TENANTS' FORUMS**
 - Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Delivery Forum** – Members work closely with CCG on every aspect of the improvement programme including appointing contractors and suppliers.
 - Quality Customer Service Forum** – This forum looks at individual services to ensure that they focus on customer needs and services.
 - Community Benefit Forum** – We are committed to improving communities. This forum ensures CCG's activities work towards achieving this.

Communication Forum – This forum looks at all communications with tenants including CCG News and the website.

Maintenance Forum – As the name suggests this forum looks at the maintenance service.

- **CUSTOMER PANEL**
Attending meetings is not everyone's cup of tea, this is why we have set up the customer panel to give tenants a chance to have their say from the comfort of their own homes, over the phone or via email. We already have 150 members on the panel and we will be consulting with them every quarter.
- **SHAREHOLDERS**
CCG has shareholders and for £1, the price of one share, tenants have the right to vote at the AGM.
- **SURGERIES**
In several areas across Gwynedd surgeries have been set up with the community wardens to give tenants a chance to talk about issues that concern them.

We can offer training to develop skills on how to contribute in a meeting and we can offer financial assistance towards transport and child care costs.

The message is, if a tenant has something to say and would like the opportunity to express their views then there is a host of different ways they can do this. Our hope is that there is something to suit everyone.

Family fun

We are keen to go the extra mile when it comes to tenant participation and being at the heart of our communities. That's why this year, to note our first anniversary we held two family fun days, one in Bangor and one in Dolgellau.

Hundreds of tenants joined us for two full days of activities and to meet staff and prospective suppliers of kitchens and bathrooms. The events were an opportunity for our customers to tell us what they thought about suppliers and their products, and their comments were taken on board and fed into the process of appointing suppliers for the WHQS internal programme.



Delivering our promises

The Offer Document 'Your Home Your Choice' was the basis for the successful vote to transfer stock to CCG.

The document has 170 individual promises and since day one of CCG's existence, plans were put in place to achieve those promises. At the end of our first year, we are proud to report that 83 have been achieved, and we are working hard to ensure that the remaining promises are achieved on time.

Promises fulfilled so far include:

- Providing modern apprentice opportunities within the maintenance service
- Establishing a Tenant and Residents Partnership
- Making it easier for tenants to contact us
- Establishing a Community Investment Fund worth £250,000 a year
- Appointing community wardens across the county

CCG has also protected tenant's rights and the rent promise has been met.



DELIVERING OUR PROMISES – TACKLING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Our Neighbourhood Services team has found that tackling antisocial behaviour means getting to the root of the problem and that educating youngsters on the effects of such behaviour on communities can achieve positive results. This is what lies behind our Junior Warden project.

Over the summer holidays 15 year six pupils from different schools across the county had the opportunity to attend a series of workshops and sessions with our Community Wardens. The aim of the project was to encourage the children to become more engaged, promoting respect and pride in the communities in which they live and play.

As part of the project the group took part in various activities including a drug and alcohol awareness session; a first aid course; a visit to Danger Point Village in St Asaph; a session with the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service; as well as taking part in litter picks and gardening on estates.

The scheme has been a positive experience for our wardens. Christian Hughes, CCG Warden in Caernarfon said: "The response has been fantastic in the schools and amongst the children. Not only did they get to learn some basic skills they also met up with friends and made some new ones. I enjoyed the experience and got to know our tenants a bit better as well as the issues which face the area in which I work."

At the end of the scheme the children were rewarded for their hard work with a day at Green Wood Park, Felinheli. There was also an awards ceremony at Meifod Hotel, Bontnewydd where they were presented with certificates to mark their achievements.

Building a brighter future

CCG INVESTMENT BOOSTS ECONOMY

Even before transfer, playing a key role in the economic regeneration of Gwynedd was high on our list of objectives, and we are still very aware of our responsibility and the significant role we can play.

The need to deliver WHQS improvements was the driver for change in Gwynedd like in many other areas of Wales. The transfer from local authority to independent association has secured an investment of £136 million over a period of 5 years, and £446 million over 30 years.

It is clear, therefore, that the investment programme will not only mean better homes for tenants but will also bring with it a real boost to the economy of Gwynedd. It offers new business opportunities as well as creating jobs, and with just over a year since CCG was set-up, the programme is already underway and some of those opportunities are now becoming a reality.

Maximising local economic benefits and securing a lasting legacy is central to our vision as an organisation. To make sure this happens we have introduced an innovative procurement model which gives smaller businesses a greater chance of securing WHQS related work.

The model is unique to CCG and has been put in place to bolster and develop the local economy. The traditional model used by housing associations to deliver investment programmes like ours means using one or two major contractors to deliver the whole scheme. In Gwynedd this would not necessarily be beneficial to local enterprise, so, from the outset we decided not to take this particular procurement route.

Our strategy at CCG is to divide the WHQS investment work, with almost half the contracts available to SMEs and the remainder to one main service provider. The pre-qualification criteria to tender for the smaller contracts were simplified to encourage local companies to put in a bid. To facilitate the procurement model CCG has employed officers directly to manage the supply chain and to provide support to the SMEs to manage the requirements of their contract.

NORTH WALES BUSINESSES SECURE CONTRACTS WORTH £9 MILLION



"We are delighted to be part of such a unique and large scale project, in particular as the work is in our area. The programme will help secure work for a number of existing employees as well as create new jobs." Jason Jones, Falconer Electrical Ltd, Penrhyndeudraeth

Five north Wales companies have won contracts totalling nearly £9 million with CCG. They include G M Jones Ltd from Llanrwst; Falconer Electrical Ltd and Gelli Civil Engineering from Penrhyndeudraeth; Evans Wilson and Evans; and Aled Jones both from Caernarfon.

The five successful companies have been awarded four year contracts rather than 12 months, which offers more stability and means they can plan for the future, employ more staff, trainees and apprentices and grow as businesses.

Construction company GM Jones Ltd based in Llanrwst will be working on internal and external improvements.

Jenny Jones, Commercial Manager for the company said: "As an established north Wales company we are delighted to have been successful in securing the contract. We look forward to working with CCG to deliver the WHQS works, and the opportunities that this framework will provide both for our business and the local community. The contract will allow us to secure employment for our existing workforce, and to offer employment and training opportunities to a number of skilled workers in the area. We are very pleased and look forward to a new era at G M Jones Ltd."

Making a difference

KAREN'S NEW KITCHEN

As part of the WHQS improvement programme, CCG will be installing 5,000 modern kitchens, 4,200 bathrooms, windows and doors in 2,500 homes as well as other internal and external improvements.

A tenant who's already seen the benefit of the investment and who's delighted with her improved home is Karen Williams from Llanllechid near Bethesda.

"I never thought I'd hear myself say this, but I now look forward to being in the kitchen, I look forward to cooking and even look forward to cleaning the place – I love my new kitchen!"

Karen, who originally comes from nearby Bethesda, shares her family home with husband Arfon and their children, Liam 20, Cieran 13 and 2 year old, Sian Marie.

Having lived in her home for 16 years, this is the first time such improvements have been made to the four bed house.

"The kitchen was very dated and in really bad condition to tell you the truth. There were red tiles on the floor which were very cold and the walls were in a state," explains Karen. "It wasn't a nice room at all. I didn't like being in there and it didn't matter how much I cleaned, it never looked clean!"

"But the new kitchen is fantastic. There were plenty of cupboard doors and worktops to choose from and it was nice that I was able to choose which kitchen I wanted."

As well as a new kitchen, Karen has also had a new electric fire and bathroom with a shower above the bath.

"Our bathroom was as old as our kitchen! When the workers removed the old tiles, parts of the wall came off with them! Having a shower has made such a difference to us as a family. With five of us in the house, a shower is a lot quicker than everyone having to wait for a bath!"

All the improvements to Karen's home were done over a three week period, three weeks of dust and disruption, but worth it according to Karen.

"Yes there was some disruption, but like someone told me, you can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs! We had a lot of stuff on top of each other for a while and cooking for five people without a kitchen was a bit of a challenge. But we knew there would be some disruption so it was ok."

"It was easier to have all the work done at the same time because it meant that the house was a mess for just one period of time – it also meant that workers were here together and left together. But all the mess and disruption was definitely worth it. I don't think I'll ever leave here, that's me now, this is where I'm going to be, I love my home."



Karen Williams with daughter Sian Marie



Local opportunities for local people

As one of the largest employers in the region and an organisation with a strong sense of social responsibility it is important to us that we offer quality jobs and training opportunities locally.

In a period that has seen both public and private organisations cut back because of the economic climate, CCG has been creating jobs. In April last year 170 members of staff transferred from the Council to CCG. Since then we have been recruiting and now employ around 240 people at 10 sites across the county.

Without doubt most of the jobs have been created as a result of WHQS investment, and we will be working hard throughout the improvement programme to make the most of this unique opportunity. As a result of the investment there are prospects in different areas from direct employment with CCG, to jobs and contracts with our main service providers as well as training opportunities across the board.

But CCG can also play a key role in the local jobs market in areas other than through the WHQS programme. We have recently been recruiting on all levels with jobs including apprentices to join our internal maintenance team, sheltered housing wardens, human resources officers, corporate services director and assistant directors. And our team continues to grow.

In August we launched a consultation on our Welsh language plan which sets out our policy to recruit Welsh speakers. The plan which is currently in draft form has been welcomed by the Welsh Language Board which recognises

our commitment as an organisation to operate bilingually and to offer opportunities for local people to work through the medium of Welsh. This also means that our customers receive a first class service in the language of their choice.

Another important aspect of our staff development is to work with education and training institutions in Gwynedd. One example is the multiskill course we have been offering staff in partnership with Coleg Menai. It is part of our long term commitment to develop staff and means workers get the chance to extend their expertise and learn new skills.

Twelve CCG workers have been attending the course, learning skills such as joinery, plumbing and plastering. By attending the course one day a week they will add to their skills whilst gaining valuable work experience as well as achieving NVQ Level 2.

Developing a local workforce is important to us and is something we committed to in the Offer Document. As the investment programme gets underway and as we develop as an organisation the hope is that we will be able to attract and retain quality staff and become a local employer that people aspire to work for.



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