

APPROVED MINUTES

Approved Regional Networks
Meeting held on Wednesday 16 August 2023
at 10.00

Present:

Anne Cameron	AC	R3	Meeting Chair	South Ayrshire
Colin Stewart	CS	R1	Chair	Aberdeen City
Liz Richardson	LRi	R1	Vice Chair	Highlands
Jackie Bugden	JB	R1	Committee Member	Highlands
Linda Lennie	LL	R1	Committee Member	Orkney Islands
Kath Fennell	KF	R1	Committee Member	Orkney Islands
Gordon Saunders	GS	R2	Chair	Borders
Bill Campbell	BCa	R2	Committee Member	Fife
Bruce Cuthbertson	BCu	R3	Vice Chair	East Ayrshire
Margaret Dymond	MD	R3	Committee Member	Renfrewshire
Norma Ferguson	NF	R3	Committee Member	North Ayrshire
Shona Gorman	SG	R4	Chair	Falkirk
June Anderson	JA	R4	Vice Chair	Clackmannanshire
John Duffy	JD	R4	Committee Member	North Lanarkshire
Donna Murray	DM	R4	Committee Member	South Lanarkshire

In attendance:

Carolynne Watson	CW		Scottish Government	
Anne Cook	ACook		Scottish Government	
Suzanne Austin				Observer
Tiffany Ward				Observer

Apologies / Absent:

Alex Wilson	AW	R1	Co-optee	Apologies
Scott MacLeod	SMcL	R1	Co-optee	Apologies
Irina Lazarenko	IL	R2	Vice Chair	?
Isabella Vint	IV	R2	Committee Member	?
Alan Dalby	AD	R2	Committee Member	Apologies
Jeanette Arneil	JeA	R4	Committee Member	Apologies
Willie Derrick	WD	R4	Committee Member	Apologies
Frances McGonagle	FMcG	R4	Committee Member	?
June Todd	JT	R4	Committee Member	?

	Time	MAIN ROOM ITEMS	ACTION
1	10:00	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of interest</p> <p>AC welcomed everyone to the meeting. Under Declarations of Interest, CS noted his role as a Board member of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).</p> <p>AC noted apologies as per the above.</p>	
2	10:05	<p>Closed Discussion re: Regional Networks- Our Future</p> <p>The session was not minuted.</p>	
3	10:15	<p>Business Matters</p> <p>Prior to beginning the Business Matters, AC noted the recent passing of longstanding South West Scotland Regional Network committee member John 'Mac' McKenzie. The meeting paused for a minute's silence in memory of Mac before progressing with the Business Matters.</p> <p>AC also welcomed Tiffany Ward and Suzanne Austin who are observing today's meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Website update and quote approval</u>: CS updated on the background, highlighting the issues with the previous Regional Networks website. CS subsequently developed a new website and has circulated a proposal to members which sets out a quote for future maintenance and support charges. This also includes a comparison of proposed charges from the previous development company. CS asked members for their approval of the proposal and quote, and there was agreement from members. Agreement to the proposal and quote was proposed by GS and seconded by MD. CS noted there will be further discussion with members on the content of the website and the features members would like to see included. • <u>Correspondence</u>: CW updated on correspondence from The Lines Between, shared with Regional Network members on 9 August 2023, on research commissioned by Scottish Government on the shared understanding of affordability and forthcoming research to look at the experiences of those who rent homes in Scotland. CW also noted the publication of the consultation on <i>Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes: consultation</i> which opened on 29 June. Members agreed to discuss this further under item 5, subgroups. 	

		<p>Elaine Scoular, TPAS, has also written to CS and SG, with an explanation and apology for the hotel accommodation payment arrangements at the face to face meeting in Glasgow in June. CS and SG noted their appreciation of this, on behalf of Network members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Chairs Update</u>: Nothing to update on which is not already on the agenda for today’s meeting, or covered during the closed discussion session. • <u>Minutes of 22 June Main Room Discussion</u>: CS noted corrections on the finance report as follows: The figures for opening balance and funds received are correct, CS noted expenditure of £311.70, a closing balance of £4955.91 and cash in hand of £16.33, leaving a total balance of £4972.24. Apologies from JA were noted for the Central Scotland minute but not for the main room. These points will be corrected. The minutes were proposed by LR and seconded by GS. • <u>Finance report</u>: CS provided the finance report, noting an opening balance at 1 June of £4955.91. No income was received in this period. Expenditure during June was £1165.22 and during July was £405.29. The closing balance was therefore £3385.40, with cash in hand of £16.33. The balances of the 3 other Regional Network accounts remains per the figures at the June AGM. • <u>Matters Arising</u>: None. 	
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	Time	MAIN ROOM ITEMS	ACTION
5	11:00	<p>Sub Group Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>RN Accessibility Group & Scottish Government Accessible Housing & Independent Living group (AHIL)</u>: <p>LR updated on the June 2023 AHIL meeting which included a reflection on the life and contribution of Steve Byrne, committee member, North of Scotland, who passed away earlier this year. The meeting covered the group’s terms of reference, ongoing meeting schedule and an action plan to set out how the group will work moving forward. The consultation on <i>Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland’s homes: consultation</i> and the new Dementia Strategy were also discussed. JA also attended the meeting to provide a carer’s perspective on the agenda item on the Dementia Strategy.</p> <p>On the Dementia Strategy, LR noted her view that this is an aspirational document, which will need broader input around lived experience including resource challenges</p>	

around social care and nursing/ medical support. The aspirations of the document are sound, however the reality on the ground is that resources and services cannot currently live up to these aspirations. JA echoed these comments, noting that a lot of work has gone into the Strategy but this needs to be matched by resource on the ground.

As per item 2 above, the consultation on *Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes: consultation* opened on 29 June. The Networks agreed they are keen to discuss and agree a response to this after they have had the opportunity to attend one of the upcoming consultation events. CW noted she remains in contact with policy colleagues on this, and will update the group as soon as possible. Members will then agree a date to discuss the consultation and draft a response.

- Communications group:

The group last met on 31 July to discuss the upcoming work of the group. Tasks for the following year will include work on the future of Regional Networks – which will include a business plan – rebranding, membership criteria and the constitution. Promotion and recruitment will effectively be on hold until this work is complete, then more intensive promotion and recruitment will follow when rebranding is complete. The group agreed their upcoming meeting schedule – the last Monday of each month until the end of October.

- SHR Liaison group:

SG updated on the SHR Liaison group's meeting with representatives from SHR on 1 August. SHR tenant Board members Colin Stewart and Helen Trouten Torres were also in attendance. The primary purpose of this meeting was to discuss SHR's regulatory review, on which Regional Network members have now submitted a response to the initial discussion paper from SHR. The 2019 framework is working well, but with emerging challenges since the initial framework was produced around the cost of living crisis, homelessness, inflation and interest rates, the landscape has changed. The review looks to update the framework as necessary, taking into account the new landscape, with a more defined discussion paper due in the autumn.

The National Panel survey report was published at the end of June, with increasing cost of living challenges identified. An update was also received on the work being done by SHR's tenant advisors.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Housing to 2040/ Strategic Board:</u> CS updated on the June meeting of the Strategic Board, noting the schedule was increased from 2 to 3 meetings per year at the initial meeting. Scottish Government officials have now created a draft workplan which will inform the activity of the group, and will interact with other Scottish Government working groups as necessary. • <u>HRA:</u> AC provided some background on the HRA working group for the benefit of new members and observers. The group agreed that they have pursued a number of routes to addressing this issue, but remain frustrated at the lack of resolution. Members agreed they intend to raise the issue at the meeting with Housing Minister Paul McLennan at the end of September. Members also considered the option of a letter to the Minister prior to the September meeting to make him aware of the background to the issue and the action taken so far. • <u>Rent Affordability:</u> A draft report is now with group members to review prior to the next meeting on 31 August. When the report is finalised, CS will update the Scottish Government's Housing Affordability stakeholder group on the rent affordability groups findings, including the research commissioned per item 2 above. 	
6	11:30	<p>Working Group representation</p> <p>CS outlined the current composition of the working groups, noting in particular vacancies on the Communications group and HRA working group. Members discussed and agreed the working groups they are keen to join and CS agreed to update the working group membership lists to reflect the membership.</p> <p>Members agreed they are keen to find out if there is an option to add a second member to the Scottish Government's affordability working group given two members represented the social rented sector at the time the group was established, and CW agreed to follow up on this with policy colleagues.</p> <p>Topics for Ministerial meeting – 27 September</p> <p>The meeting will take place on 27 September at 10am via Teams, and a pre-meeting will take place on 23 August with attendees to discuss the topics members are keen to raise with Mr McLennan. Members can share any topics or questions they would be keen to raise on Basecamp, or via their Chairs.</p>	

		<p>JA agreed to raise the issue of the HRA at the meeting, and it was agreed that JA and SG will represent Central Scotland at the meeting. Other attendees will be determined prior to the September meeting.</p> <p>Update on meeting with Local Government, Housing and Planning committee: Damp and mould</p> <p>SG provided an update on the Parliamentary committee session she attended in May at which she represented Network members, noting a broad consensus amongst those giving evidence at the session on the scale of the issue and challenges inherent in addressing it. A combination of factors, including the rising cost of living and rising energy bills in particular, in addition to under-investment in insulation may mean that the damp and mould issues become more significant over the coming months with people unable to heat their homes sufficiently due to high energy costs. A culture shift will also be needed in order to tackle the culture of tenant blame around dampness and mould.</p> <p>Feedback on face to face meeting – June 2023</p> <p>Members were in broad agreement that the meeting was very useful, with great interaction. In terms of timing, there was agreement in future years it would be more helpful to have the first meeting following the AGM virtual, with the second face to face to make sure new members have ample notice of the meeting.</p> <p>Members also agreed it would be useful to begin the process of mapping out meeting dates for 2024 in the near future to ensure everyone has plenty of notice of meeting dates.</p>	
7	11:45	<p>A.O.C.B</p> <p>SG raised the Chairs recent discussion with Anne Cook, Scottish Government, noting that all members will be given the opportunity to contribute to decisions around the Regional Networks and branding moving forward, including a future name.</p> <p>LR raised the upcoming International Tenants Day and Scottish Housing Day and members are keen to do something to mark the occasion and celebrate the work of the Networks.</p> <p>CS also flagged the upcoming online session running in partnership between NETRALT and the Northern Tenants Partnership on 15 September – members are welcome to join and Colin shared the booking information for the session.</p>	

		MD also noted that the TIS conference is scheduled for November, and asked if the Networks could have involvement with this. CW will approach TIS to discuss this further.	
8	11:55	Date and Time of Next Meeting - Wednesday 11 October, via Zoom.	

Date	11-Oct-23
Proposed	JA
Seconded	MD