



NIFHA
NORTHERN IRELAND
FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

**Annual Report
2010-11**

working together for better housing





Members of NIFHA's Council 2010-11

Our Council Members for 2010-11 were

Council Member	Association
Chris Alexander	Triangle
Kevin Butler	Connswater Homes
Peter Caldwell (from 06/10)	Apex Housing
Arthur Canning	Trinity Housing
Ray Cashell (Until 06/10)	SHAC
Aideen D'Arcy (from 03/11)	Helm Housing
David Duly	Habinteg (Ulster)
Frank Dunne (Until 06/10)	Apex Housing
Ian Elliott (Vice Chair)	Oaklee Homes Group
Jean Fulton (Until 03/11)	Helm Housing

Council Member	Association
Tom Gardiner (from 10/10)	Alpha Housing
John Gill	Dungannon
Peter Howard	Abbeyfield UK (NI)
David McCallum	Co-ownership Housing
Clare McCarty	Clanmil
Joe McKnight	Wesley
John McLean	Fold
John Patterson (Chair)	Flax
Robert Roulston	Ulidia
Mark Turner	South Ulster

Foreword



John Patterson
NIFHA Chair

As NIFHA Chair I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2010-11. In my view the past year was a challenging time for all involved in Northern Ireland's housing association sector. As the global recession continued to affect our operational environment we felt the consequences at local level.

Together, we faced a period of significant pressure to increase delivery, make the budget go further and explore proposals for radical change. This coincided with intense departmental scrutiny and greater media interest than ever before; meanwhile attention from our political representatives reached new heights. However, this did not diminish our combined effort to produce beneficial outcomes for our community.

Against this backdrop NIFHA's members started the highest annual number of new homes since the government's housing policy review of 1996 asked housing associations to develop all new social housing by mixing public and private funding. Moreover, the figure of **2,418 social homes started** in 2010-11 is a 36 per cent increase on the previous year and well exceeds the set target of 2,000. By the year end Co-Ownership Housing had a total of **492 properties in contract to purchase**; in addition they had 121 homes where clients stair-cased to full ownership and a further 32 cases where people increased their equity shares.

Collectively, registered housing associations directly invested some **£100m of private loans** in this substantial building programme - significantly enhancing the government grant of £167m. NIFHA calculates, thanks to

the associations involved in the programme, the spin off for Northern Ireland's economy is in the region of **£650m**. Our members' overall economic impact was increased during this financial year as Co-Ownership drew down a further £9m of its **£48.5m** facility (total loan drawn down was £24.5m), with a further **£32.5m** mortgage lending made available against its acquisitions of properties.

I am proud to record the significant contribution housing associations made to our economy and by **letting almost 4,000** high quality affordable homes to people in housing need in 2010-11. I commend our members for their success in such a testing period. I am delighted to echo Minister Attwood's recognition when he wrote thanking associations:

"for all you have done over the past 12 months in helping me to meet the housing challenge head on."

I appreciate both the Minister's thanks and his diligence in keeping social housing high on the agenda. I realise we achieve greater impact by working together, so on behalf of my colleagues across the voluntary housing movement I thank our counterparts in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Department for Social Development who contributed to such positive outcomes.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the support and dedication of the NIFHA team whose role in representing a diverse movement is often challenging. I offer equally appreciative thanks to my fellow NIFHA Council members who shared their time, skills and experience so willingly.

John Patterson
NIFHA Chair

Introduction

From the outset this year was a mixture of positives and negatives. On the positive side we moved into our new permanent NIFHA office in Citylink Business Park, which has enabled us to host a greater number of both Federation and inter-agency meetings. However, the ability to deliver more was tempered by the loss of Department for Social Development (DSD) grant-in-aid which impacted on our budget for the year.



NIFHA's Office at Citylink Business Park

Despite the many challenges we faced throughout the year NIFHA's six full-time and two part-time team worked hard to deliver services which met members' needs. Inevitably, production of NIFHA's Annual Report has encouraged consideration of our achievements over the past year and evaluation of how we performed against the targets set.

Our report is presented under the following four main headings:

- Promotion
- Representation
- Member Services
- Financial Information

This report concentrates on the main issues or activities in each area of operations to highlight the wide range of work undertaken by NIFHA in the last year.

Promotion

Promotion remained an essential element of NIFHA's service provision. During the year growing media attention, the general election and increased engagement with our political representatives underscored the importance of good communications. Our team made every effort to promote the excellent work of our member housing associations and to ensure their messages were heard.

Political Engagement

Much of NIFHA's promotional activity concentrated on developing our engagement at the political level. As our devolved government at Stormont matures it has become ever more important for regular interaction with our Assembly Members and Committees as well as engaging with our MPs and MEPs. We therefore allocated significant resources to meetings with political representatives and lobbying during the last year.

The work of housing associations certainly gained greater prominence in the political arena but not necessarily in relation to the delivery of high quality homes and services. Undoubtedly, some of the media and political interest dealt with serious matters, for example the findings in the Northern Ireland Audit Office report and collectively we have taken action to resolve those difficulties. Our main concern, however, was that focus on the important issue of housing need was diminished as a result. As NIFHA firmly believes in *'working together for better housing'*

we were disappointed by this situation.



Simon Hamilton
MLA with John
Gartland, Ulidia

Engagement with Stormont

We had more frequent contact with the Minister responsible for housing in Northern Ireland during the year. This reflects a clear advantage of devolution, and also the importance Ministers Ritchie and Attwood attributed to housing and their decision to prioritise social housing development in their tightly constrained budgets.

The meetings involved robust discussion of strategic issues including the budget, our members' public-spirited offer to *sweat their assets* even more vigorously and the quality of service to tenants during the exceptionally cold weather. NIFHA also contributed to the deliberations of the Assembly's Social Development Committee, submitting both written briefings and presenting oral evidence.



'In Camera' Event with the former Social Development Minister Alex Attwood MLA and Strategem

Elections 2010

Last year elections to Westminster took place in May, resulting in a change of Minister at DSD. As part of our campaign strategy we contacted all candidates and asked them to sign our housing pledge:

'I pledge to back the building of more affordable homes and to work towards all constituents having access to decent, affordable housing in safe and sustainable communities.'

At least one representative from each party confirmed their willingness to support our pledge. We received pledges from **20 candidates** of whom five became MPs - Sammy Wilson, Margaret Ritchie, Nigel Dodds, Gregory Campbell and Naomi Long. A number of sitting MLAs also pledged their support. We built upon this pledged support and lobbied the remaining MPs when social and affordable housing in Northern Ireland was at risk of being adversely affected by Westminster decisions.

As the Northern Ireland Assembly approached the end of its first full term, the Federation agreed a set of *Asks and Offers* that provided a useful basis for discussion with political parties. By stressing what the housing association movement was prepared to contribute we could more confidently ask the parties to include our requests in their manifestos. There was widespread support for our priorities of *Building Homes, Sustaining Communities and Supporting Northern Ireland*.

Social Networking

During the year NIFHA dipped its toe in the world of social networking by opening a Twitter account and creating a Facebook page. The team committed to using social networking as a tool to spread our messages.



Tweeting came first, the account was opened early 2010. NIFHA currently has

122 followers including individuals, local and GB based organisations with an interest in housing matters. It is a simple cost effective way of sharing information about NIFHA, our members, our associates and social housing in Northern Ireland.



NIFHA on Facebook was launched late October 2010. It is early in

its development but impressions suggest information from NIFHA was widely viewed on our fans walls and in their newsfeeds. In the first four months of NIFHA on Facebook the most popular stories were about our members' successes at the CIH awards - receiving some 624 impressions - whilst the single most popular story was Baroness Julia Neuberger's visit to Abbeyfield in February.

Along with NIFHA's website our Twitter and Facebook outlets are regularly updated to keep them fresh and interesting.

Website

NIFHA's website remained a useful communications vehicle, showing a 33 per cent increase in traffic since the same period last year with nearly **88,000 visits**.

www.nifha.org was again a first port of call for many wishing to work with housing associations in the development of properties. Consequently the most popular part of NIFHA's site remained the 'Tenders' section. Our statistics reflected a sizeable volume of traffic to this area with over **41,000 visits** last year viewing **136 tenders**. By using NIFHA's tenders online service our members collectively saved almost **£105,000*** in 2010-11.

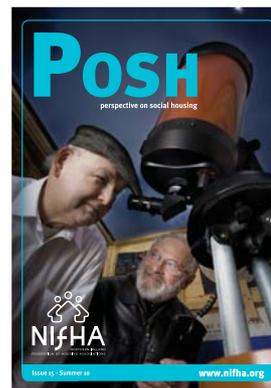
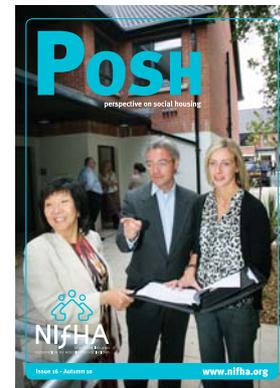
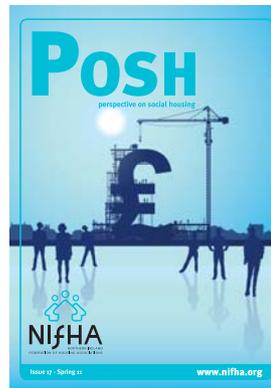
The Members' Only section of NIFHA's website also benefitted members by:

- Offering a secure place for uploading tenders and job advertisements
- Providing up-to-date information on the political scene in Northern Ireland and beyond
- Sharing Assembly information, relevant EU documents, noteworthy correspondence and significant policy materials.

*Figure calculated on a 2clm x 19cm advertisement in the Belfast Telegraph tender section which cost £1,020 less £250 charged by NIFHA.

Perspective On Social Housing (POSH)
In 2010-11 POSH had a well received make-over. The magazine's layout became cleaner and crisper whilst articles focused more on the significant social and economic contributions our members make to Northern Ireland. Its remit was extended to cover the challenges facing the movement and provide articles or commentary on current issues impacting on our members' work.

As POSH's core objective is *'to increase the profile of our members' work'* we continued to highlight the valuable and innovative work our housing associations undertake. Our recently introduced 'Focus on...' section, where a member association details its work and achievements, further advanced this aim.



NIFHA eNews
Our electronic briefing again proved itself as a readily accessible method of disseminating information to our members' boards, managers and teams. During 2010-11 it was distributed 25 times across the housing association network.

Representation

Effective representation of our members through influencing housing policy and promoting the work of Housing Associations in Northern Ireland is the essence of everything we do at NIFHA. We strive to make sure our members' voices are heard and their views expressed when housing matters are discussed or decided upon.

In 2010-11 we again depended on our structure of committees and fora to inform our representative role. NIFHA's Housing Operations, Resources and Standards and Federation Business committees met regularly during the year. The committees discussed and recommended action to NIFHA Council on a range of operational matters including:

- Rates and Water Rates issues
- Joint Management Agreements
- Inspection and Regulation
- Statutory Equality Duties
- Welfare Reform Implications
- Research into Rent Levels
- NIFHA's Internal Budget

NIFHA benefitted from, and provided support to, **eight self-help groups** for specific business functions. During the year we revitalised the Maintenance Forum which received positive feedback. Like the other fora, members view it as a beneficial platform for discussing areas of mutual concern and for sharing good practice principles throughout the movement. These quarterly meetings also offer NIFHA valuable insights which enable us to respond more effectively to consultation exercises.

Consultation Responses

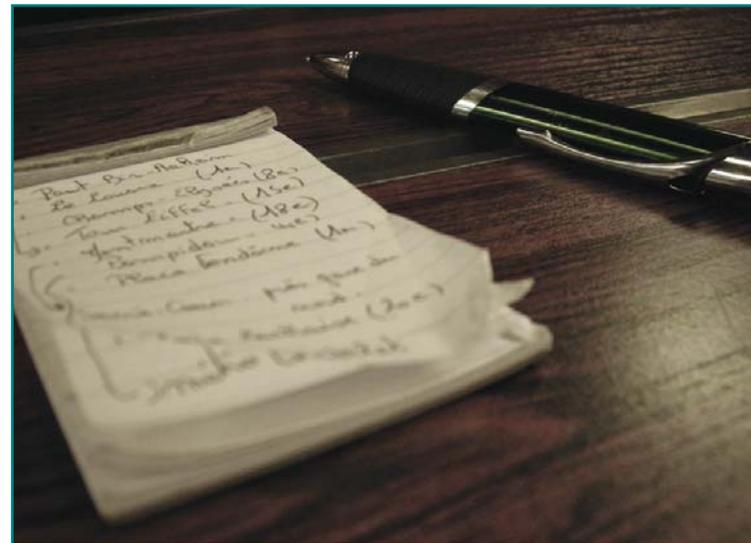
During the year NIFHA responded to **42 consultation** documents on behalf of our members. These consultations covered a wide spectrum from planning and social inclusion to health and legislation such as the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill and registration of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

While all were relevant to our members' business, in our view the most important related to the Housing Association Guide and the Budget proposals.

Housing Association Guide

This review by the DSD has been ongoing for some time. In the past year NIFHA responded to consultations on eight separate sections of the Guide including:

- Property Management Guide
- Repairs and Maintenance Guide
- Update to the Procurement Guide



Draft Budget Proposals

The tough financial climate of 2010-11 brought unprecedented challenges; especially with regard to Northern Ireland's share of the block grant. Given the potential implications for housing associations NIFHA made strong responses to the budget proposals from the Northern Ireland Executive, DSD, DHSSPSNI, and OFMDFM. Our representations highlighted the following specific areas of concern for our members:

Departmental Budget	NIFHA Response
N I Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sought an acceptable level of sustained Capital and Revenue funding - necessary to protect the most vulnerable in our society and to stimulate growth in our economy. • Explained the rationale for Housing Association reserves and why they should not be used to fill the funding gap. • Lobbied for a realistic budget for DSD which meets the needs of the increasing number of households who are applying for homes in the social rented sector.
Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed protection of the budget for Housing Support Services. • Welcomed capital and revenue funding for Bamford accommodation. • Called for the protection of the social house building programme. • Confirmed our willingness to work with the Minister to explore sources of additional income.
Health Social Services and Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on gaining assurance that finance for care services would not be reduced and should complement the funding supplied by DSD through the Supporting People Programme.
Office of First Minister / Deputy First Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted the support given to the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration and asked that this programme be funded and maintained. • Sought support for driving investment and sustainable development.

Strategic Alliances

The past year presented a variety of challenges for our members especially in areas where the strategic direction for housing policy was still emerging such as the development of the Supporting People and Homelessness Strategies and the budgetary implications for the future funding of the Social Development Programme. However, regular participation by NIFHA personnel in many groups across the wider housing and political arena ensured our members' priorities were represented.

NIFHA has developed sound working relationships with a number of organisations to keep the views and interests of our sector to the fore. These alliances enable all of us who work in the voluntary, social economy, public and private sectors to work together to deliver the common goal of the provision of high quality housing and support services which suit the needs of tenants and people in the wider communities within Northern Ireland.



Members of the Social Economy Forum

In 2010-11 we routinely engaged with a variety of stakeholder organisations. Details below:

Interagency Working Group	Purpose
Asset Skills	To encourage the development of skills in the housing sector.
Chartered Institute of Housing NI	To help achieve shared policy outcomes and develop professional standards across the housing sector.
Committee Representing Independent Supporting People Providers (CRISPP)	To represent the voluntary and private-sector providers of housing support services and promote good practice.
Council for the Homeless NI	To develop and promote policies of mutual interest.
DSD Fuel Poverty Advisory Group	To work with DSD to develop policy and discuss areas related to fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.
DSD Housing Association Guide Project Board	To represent Housing Associations' interests during the review of the Housing Association Guide.
DSD Procurement Board	To develop policy and resolve issues regarding procurement in Housing Associations.
DSD / NIHE / NIFHA Housing Futures Group	To improve delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme in Northern Ireland.
Green New Deal Group	Cross sector initiative to provide a joined up approach to resolving issues around climate change, the recession and rising energy prices.
Joint Housing Adaptations Fundamental Review Group	To ensure housing associations' perspectives on housing adaptations are taken into account.
Joint Housing Adaptations Steering Group	Ongoing policy development in relation to housing adaptations.
NI Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)	To promote areas of common interest across the voluntary sector.
NIHE Equality Consultative Forum	Represent Housing Associations and offer constructive feedback to NIHE Equality unit.
NIHE Home Energy Conservation Advisory Group	Contribute to the development of energy policy in Northern Ireland.
NIHE House Condition Survey Working Group	NIFHA helps shape areas of the survey relevant to associations.
NIHE Research Committee	Exchange information on research projects.
Rural Housing Policy Group	Policy development and joint work to progress rural housing.
Social Economy Network	To promote not-for-profit enterprise and represent the views of social enterprises in Northern Ireland.
Supporting Communities NI	To further develop the links between housing associations and existing local community networks.
Voluntary Sector Housing Policy Forum	Initiative to jointly address common issues for the housing and homelessness sectors.

DSD and NIHE Liaison

Our main liaison activity continues to be with the DSD and NI Housing Executive as the key statutory bodies involved in the development and management of social housing.

In our quarterly meetings with DSD we discuss the Department's inspection of housing associations; how best to share the learning from the reports; and thus help all registered associations improve. In February 2011 the Committee decided to review its terms of reference in the light of the Department's confirmation it would not necessarily work through NIFHA when consulting the registered housing association sector.

Regular liaison with NIHE continued at two levels: strategic and operational. The main issues discussed at our six-monthly Strategic Liaison meetings included the government's Comprehensive Spending Review and the housing budget, the Department's fundamental review of the NIHE, the Supporting People programme, a proposed small-scale stock transfer and co-operation on the proposed energy brokering initiative.



Chris Williamson (NIFHA Chief Executive) and Will Haire (DSD Permanent Secretary)

The Operational Liaison Group met quarterly and discussed the progress of the Social Housing Development Programme, the government's changes to Housing Benefit and work on the Common Selection Scheme.



John McLean (FOLD), Brian Rowntree (NIHE Chair) and Chris Alexander (Triangle)

Housing Federations

The four federations of housing associations in the United Kingdom continued to liaise on a range of shared interests. Specific joint work was undertaken, to very good effect, on three strategic issues:

- common themes for lobbying candidates for the 2010 General Election,
- the Coalition government's welfare reforms, and
- the review of the European Procurement Directives.

This UK joint work on public procurement was fed into the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS-Housing Europe) and contributed significantly to the submission that influential body made to the European Commission.

CRISPP

During 2010-11 the Committee Representing Independent Supporting People Providers (CRISPP) co-chaired by NIFHA and CHNI maintained its work on behalf of organisations delivering Supporting People (SP) services. They took the opportunity to strengthen the Committee by refreshing its membership.

Over the last year there were a number of significant issues regarding the Supporting People programme as well as the Supporting People Guidance consultation to which NIFHA responded on behalf of members. Our other CRISPP activities focused on three issues:

- the potential adverse impact of the ongoing SP budget cap on service providers and recipients in a period of increasing delivery costs;
- DSD's Evaluation of the Impact of the Supporting People Policy and its Administration; and
- DSD proposals to phase out the payment of Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA) from April 2011.

Through CRISPP we lobbied strongly on each with some success. Whilst the funding regime for Supporting People was not changed our concerns about recommendations in the DSD Evaluation Report were recognised. For example, the implications transferring of a significant amount of SP funding to the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). As a result of our robust response to the evaluation, CRISPP was asked to give evidence to the Social Development Committee at the Northern Ireland Assembly.

NIFHA played a full role in the Committee by providing evidence to highlight the serious implications for the delivery of essential housing services and the value the SP programme brings to some of the most vulnerable people in our society. We also made several representations to DSD on the SNMA issue and, while no resolution has been reached, decisions regarding the proposal were postponed.

Voluntary Sector Housing Policy Forum

VSHPF met bi-monthly and discussed a range of common interests. In particular, we collaborated as a sector to deliver a collective approach to the following:

- NI Budget Implications for Housing
- Welfare Reform
- Homelessness Strategy
- Supporting People Evaluation

Research

The information NIFHA gathers through our NICORE and property databases again proved an excellent resource for member associations and informed our work on their behalf. In

addition to ad hoc requests from DSD and NIHE for lettings information, we noted queries on stock and provision of data on older people featured highly in the research requested.

NICORE

The **5,500** general needs, sheltered and supported housing logs processed in 2010-11 enabled us to provide members with twelve annual and four quarterly NICORE reports. These reports informed individual associations' annual and quarterly returns to DSD and were relevant during inspections.

We were pleased to see innovative use of the data provided. For example, several associations drew on our NICORE time series reports as part of the Customer Excellence process or when reviewing rents. Our NICORE database was used to supply information on household characteristics and the types of social housing available in certain postcodes for a member association participating in a joint National Lottery funding application for a health project.

Property Database

We updated our Housing Association Property Database, checking and validating the data in the last year. The updated data was shared with NIHE for uploading onto their Geographic Information System. As a result of this work in the next financial year all housing associations should be able to access and map their property data using the NIHE 'Portwise' system.

Throughout the year NIFHA devoted significant resources to resolving difficulties around the rating of sheltered and supported accommodation. We worked with Land and Property Services (L&PS) to improve the accuracy of the information they held on housing association stock so the appropriate rate could be allocated to these properties.

Benchmarking

In 2010-11 we expanded our Housing Association Annual Benchmark Review to include an agreed outline Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The first benchmarking report for the

tenant satisfaction survey will be available late 2011. This work produced a useful resource for both NIFHA and our members. The **24 participating associations** were able to benchmark across the wide range of service areas contained in our report whilst we gained valuable data about the movement - the 2010 Benchmark Review highlighted housing association maintenance spend of **£20 million** in 2009-10.

Surveys

We conducted various evaluations during the year including our Annual Conference Feedback surveys, a Training Needs Analysis,

a survey on NIFHA's Associate Membership option and research in relation to Voluntary Board Members. This work informed our events programme, our offer to Associates and identified development priorities in relation to Board Members. This research is available to all members and can be accessed on www.nifha.org.

Toward the end of this reporting year NIFHA Council initiated a major research project. It will gather our members' views on the best way forward for their own association, the sector as a whole and the Federation.

Member Services

Provision of practical assistance for our members remained a core activity for NIFHA. We provided a mix of both standard and optional services. Some services maximise the cost savings and shared learning to be gained from collaboration such as our joint approach to implementing the Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties; others offer a more efficient solution to managing a routine activity.

We delivered assistance through a variety of organisational and business support work; examples of which are detailed in the following sections.

Data transfers

Since 2002 NIFHA has provided several electronic data transfers to aid member associations with certain regular data processing activities. In 2010-11 we transferred Housing Benefit data to **30 housing associations** on a weekly basis. We introduced encryption for the Housing Benefit transfer to increase information security and compliance with Data Protection legislation. The remaining transfers were issued monthly:

- Supporting People data for 13 members
- Rates Relief to all registered housing associations
- Lone Pensioner Allowance to all relevant associations

Online services

We use our website to manage bookings for NIFHA training and events. This improves efficiency and offers consistency to service users. Our Tenders Online provision, (see pg 6 - promotion), continues to be highly valued and contributes effectively to members' efficiency savings. We also offer member housing associations a free online job advertising service. In the last year **49 jobs** in the sector were advertised on www.nifha.org.

Voluntary Board Members



Participants at the event for potential Voluntary Board Members

The voluntary housing movement has over **400 voluntary** board members contributing the equivalent of some **£4m per year** in voluntary expertise. NIFHA recognises their vital contribution to the movement in Northern Ireland. To support associations' recruitment of voluntary board members we hold and develop a register of individuals who have expressed interest in serving our community in this way.

Recruitment is ongoing and in 2010-11 NIFHA received 54 enquiries about the register. Of those who enquired 38 completed and returned an expression of interest. By the end of the reporting period almost **70 people** were included on our *Expression of Interest Register*. During the year several of our registered housing association members used the list to refresh their Board with 12 individuals joining an Association.

NIHE Housing Management System

NIFHA worked with our members and the Housing Executive to assist in the implementation of the new Housing Management System. Throughout 2010 a number of our members worked with NIHE testing this new computerised programme. In turn they provided training on the new system to over 180 housing association staff. Feedback indicated the training was well received, provided with great expertise and to a high standard. NIFHA recognises and commends all the staff involved in this for their valuable contribution to our movement.



Members of the Modernising Services Team

The implementation of the new system was not without challenges, for both NIFHA's members and NIHE as the 'go live date', had to be postponed for various technical reasons. NIHE plan to implement the system as soon as practicable. We look forward to co-operating with them on this.

Training

Training is a key element of NIFHA support. Our 2010-11 programme was shaped by the issues and priorities highlighted by member associations. Over the year almost **400 delegates** participated in our general seminars and events.

Given the concerns raised by the inspection process we continued our series of *On Board* sessions aimed at helping voluntary Board Members understand the regulatory requirements attached to the different functional areas of housing association business.



Training on Combating the Threat of Money Laundering

Other notable topics covered were:

- Combating the Threat of Money Laundering
- Health and Safety
- Management of Repairs by Frontline Staff
- Confidence in Presentation Skills
- SORP and Component Accounting

In response to member demand our Housing Policy and Research Manager also delivered

training through a combination of open sessions and in-house seminars to raise awareness of the Housing Association Guide. Our records show **17 associations** and **180 individuals** availed of this training.

Responding to member need is the primary goal of NIFHA training. During the summer of 2010 we therefore undertook significant research to enable a more strategic approach to NIFHA training. Unsurprisingly, members confirmed organisational need and forthcoming policy changes as the essential drivers for training decisions. We appreciate their input since their top priorities informed our planning for future programmes.

Like many NIFHA services our training must cover its costs so we are delighted to report a small surplus. Such enterprise income is extremely valuable as it is reinvested in the services we provide for members.

Conference

Our 2010 Annual Conference, held in Belfast, was also a financial success and scored highly with participants too. Nuaire, our lead sponsor, and 17 other exhibitors together with **130 delegates** helped us examine ways of *'Working Together for Better Housing'*.

On the first day a packed audience had the opportunity to hear Minister Attwood's views on our sector and to put questions both to him and later to political representatives during a cross-party panel debate.



Nuaire, our Key Partner at Conference 2010, with housing association representatives



Adrian Watson (Asset Skills) and David McCallum (Co-Ownership Housing/CIH)

Over two days participants gained information on new products, initiatives and exemplar projects as well as engaging in lively debate and discussion on a range of topical issues, such as:

- Sustainability and Energy Efficiency
- Funding Opportunities and Initiatives
- Disabled people's experience of the Disability Duties
- The Art of Lobbying
- New ways of engaging with tenants

As our 2010 conference came to a close the economist, John Simpson, shared his analysis of *'What's in store for social housing'* giving us all food for thought.

Overall the Conference was rated positively, with 100% of committee members, 79% of housing association employees and 63% of delegates from other organisations ranking the Conference as either excellent or good. We appreciate this feedback and the contributions of our speakers, stakeholder organisations, sponsors and not least our member associations. This event benefits greatly from their involvement. The Chair's Charity, NIHACT also profited from the generosity of delegates to the tune of £582. Thank you to all who donated to this worthy cause; its work is detailed in the accompanying NIHACT report.

Chief Executive's Conclusion



Chris Williamson

Looking back, 2010-11 was an extraordinary year for NIFHA and our members.

I consider it paradoxical the housing association movement was the subject of repeated public criticism when we:

- started building an all-time record number of homes
- supplemented the taxpayers' budget with £100 million of private loans
- sustained what is left of the building industry
- made a substantial offer to help fill the hole in the housing budget
- pursued service improvement and value for money
- responded magnificently to the cold weather crisis
- facilitated mergers or collaboration between associations when that would produce more benefit for the community
- engaged constructively with elected representatives and other stakeholders.

In my opinion, the whole housing association movement warrants an achievement award, akin to those we present to individuals and groups during our Annual General Meeting.

The Federation is determined to meet the challenges ahead so we have embarked on a fundamental review involving members and key external stakeholders. This exercise will take account of the procurement consortia required by the DSD's procurement strategy, the former Minister's views on the structure of the housing association movement and the Department's tendency to by-pass the Federation. Our review will be comprehensive and the results will shape the strategy adopted by NIFHA Council.

Society in Northern Ireland needs the housing association movement more than ever and the future is promising despite real and immediate challenges.

In these testing times let us remain focused on our community benefit objective and co-operate wholeheartedly with the government and all others who share that aim.



Development of homes



Record starts by NIFHA registered housing association members

Financial Information

Summary of Financial Information

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2011

	2011 £	2010 as restated £
TURNOVER	427,198	410,824
Net operating expenses	<u>(439,677)</u>	<u>(350,997)</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(12,479)	59,827
Other interest receivable and similar income	-	1,119
Interest payable and similar charges	(2,098)	(647)
Other finance (costs)/ income	<u>(24,000)</u>	<u>(42,000)</u>
SURPLUS ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	(38,577)	18,299
Tax on ordinary activities	<u>-</u>	<u>(357)</u>
SURPLUS ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES AFTER TAXATION	(38,577)	17,942
Transfer from/(to) designated reserve for office replacement	-	42,000
Transfer from/(to) designated reserve for future major repairs	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>-</u>
RETAINED SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	<u>(40,577)</u>	<u>59,942</u>

The turnover and expenses all relate to continuing operations.

Summary of Financial Information

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2011

	2011 £	2010 as restated £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible Assets	<u>458,009</u>	<u>452,552</u>
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors: due within one year	16,789	32,418
Investments - short term deposits	67,012	961
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>8,035</u>	<u>149,373</u>
	91,836	182,752
CREDITORS: DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	(36,373)	(28,108)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	<u>55,463</u>	<u>154,644</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	513,472	607,196
CREDITORS: DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR	(141,853)	(240,000)
	<u>371,619</u>	<u>367,196</u>
Pension liability	197,000	572,000
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Accumulated fund	172,619	(204,804)
Major repairs reserve	<u>2,000</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>371,619</u>	<u>367,196</u>

Advantage has been taken, in the preparation of the financial statements, of special exemptions applicable to small companies. In the Council's opinion the Federation is entitled to those exemptions as a small company.

Note: The full accounts are available on request.

Audited by: CRAWFORD SEDGWICK & CO., Chartered Accountants

The gap between the Trust's expenditure and its income was much smaller than for many years mainly because fewer grants were issued. The deficit in 2010-11 was £451 and the Trust fund stood at **£155,088** on 31 March 2011.

Although it is not shown on the balance sheet, the charity is indebted to the volunteer Committee members who willingly contribute their time, expertise and enthusiasm. The Committee was further strengthened by the appointment of Joe McKnight in February 2011.

HACT 50th Anniversary

Finally, in November 2010 the Trust was delighted to take part in the jubilee celebration of its British parent, the charity now known simply as HACT. Derek Rankin and Ray Cashell represented NIHACT at the impressive event in Westminster.



NIHACT representatives, Derek Rankin and Ray Cashell, at HACT's 50th anniversary celebrations

Extracts from NIHACT's Audited Accounts for 2010-11

Income and Expenditure Account

Sources of Income	£
Donations received (10 housing associations)	9,800
Charity Dinner	582
Bank Interest	410
Loan Interest	<u>1,875</u>
Total Income	<u>12,667</u>
Grants Issued	£
Children's Safety Education Foundation	5,000
Energy Fitness	1,575
Esporta Karate Club	4,020
Threshold	<u>149</u>
Sub-Total	<u>10,744</u>
Bank Interest & Charges	35
Administration Costs	<u>2,339</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>13,118</u>
(Deficit) for year	<u>(451)</u>
Accumulated Funds at 31 March 2011	<u>£155,088</u>

Overview

Throughout 2010-11, Northern Ireland was firmly in the grip of recession, unemployment rose steadily and the UK government and our Stormont Executive approved budgets that will significantly reduce public expenditure over the next four years.

Consequently, the Committee of the Northern Ireland Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (NIHACT) expected more calls for assistance but in fact it received fewer than usual!

Since social need seems likely to grow, the Trust agreed steps to increase awareness of the charity among groups likely to meet the Trust's funding criteria. These are under-resourced but sustainable organisations that improve the quality of life of communities in which housing associations are operating.

Applications Granted

Seven applications for assistance were received. One was rejected because it did not fulfil NIHACT's funding criteria, three were approved and three were still under consideration at the year-end.

The grants awarded by NIHACT were mainly directed towards young people. **Energy Fitness** received the second of three annual tranches of money to encourage physical activity among primary school children and the **Children's Safety Education Foundation** was funded to deliver its service to a more secondary schools – this time in the western counties. The CSEF programme, which fits neatly into the Northern Ireland Curriculum, is designed to enhance pupils' self-respect, respect for others and ability to make healthy choices.

NIHACT recognises the health and community benefits of sport and has helped several projects in this field. It gladly assisted the **Esporta Karate Club** to purchase safety matting but also decided not to accept applications from sporting organisations for the next few years. The Trust wants its limited resources to address a range of community needs.

The balance of a previously-approved grant for a therapeutic project in north Belfast was also paid to the mental health charity, **Threshold**.

NIHACT agreed to invest in a project helping vulnerable young people gain self-confidence and independence. The grant to the **Success Foundation** is likely to be paid in the new financial year.

Trust Income

The housing association movement continues to provide the lion's share of NIHACT's income and the Trust is deeply grateful to the relevant associations – especially the regular donors. Ten associations contributed a total of **£9,800** and individuals in the sector gave another **£582**. All three figures are lower than the record-breaking previous year and probably reflect the climate of austerity.

To make best use of its cash deposits, NIHACT made a six-month loan to the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and earned £1,875 – which compares very favourably with the £410 earned on the rest of the Trust fund.

Interest earned from these investments brought NIHACT's total income in 2010-11 to **£12,667**.



NIHACT

NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS
CHARITABLE TRUST

**Annual Report
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helping people to live fuller lives

