



## The last year has been one of the most exciting in our history.



We've opened up a whole new world of services through our on-line housing office at [elha.com](http://elha.com). Over 1,000 people now visit our on-line office each week. Our 'live help' service means we can 'chat' to people on-line in the same way that we talk to people face to face and over the telephone. We have become leaders in our sector in the way we provide services.

We have also extended our office opening hours, by over 8 hours per week. So our traditional ways of providing services are easier to access too.

This work will carry on in the coming year, as we introduce a range of new services, and carry out reviews of our two most important services – our allocations service and our repairs service.

At the same time, we continue to grow. We secured over £5.6m in Housing Association Grant (HAG) funding from the Scottish Government during the year – our highest ever. Our flagship development, of 54 new homes at The Hedges, Tranent (where every home is heated by a ground source heat pump), was opened by the Minister for Communities and Sport, Stuart Maxwell MSP, and attracted significant national attention.

Our performance across the year has been excellent. We have made a surplus of over £400,000, which we will use to re-invest in our homes.

Despite a significant turnover of staff, we have achieved all our major targets in managing our business (including meeting our tougher rent arrears and empty home management targets), and progressed work in several key policies to improve our services even further.

We have achieved much in the last 12 months. But we are very aware that in many ways we have only scratched the surface. There is much more to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. P. Hayman".

Peter Hayman  
Summer 2008

We started the year by taking a fresh new approach to Tenant Participation. We upgraded our part time post to full time, and appointed Claire McMillan as our new Tenant Participation and Support Officer. Vicky Higginbottom moved from our property team to fill Claire's Housing Assistant post, and Jocelyn Gale joined us as our new Property Assistant. The year ahead was a busy one for Claire:

"My role includes working with our tenants to improve our services, as well as arranging tenancy support where people need it. I write our newsletter, TalkBack, work with tenants and residents groups, and also provide holiday and sickness cover for our Housing Officers – so my job is very varied! Last year I was particularly busy working on the website development and developing the new tenant handbook – with our tenants of course!"

Spring also saw us review two key policies. We changed our Comments and Complaints policy and launched a new complaints service, with the aim of ensuring that complaints are dealt with more quickly and by the right person. We also combined three previous policies into one Tenancy Management Policy, to ensure our services are delivered seamlessly. This was also important in developing our new Tenant Handbook.

We started our website and on-line housing office project, setting out our vision for the future, and thinking through how we would design and deliver our new on-line services.

Our improvements programme for the year started with painterwork to 65 homes in Whitecraig, Prestonpans and Pencaitland, and new heating systems to 10 homes in Musselburgh and Whitecraig.

We said goodbye to our Housing Manager, Diane Bateman, who moved on to pastures new after 9 years with us.



## We now advertise Shared Ownership opportunities alongside our regular properties for rent.

We continued to take a tough stance against Anti-Social Behaviour, following on from the much-publicised ASBO's of the year before. We obtained our first Closure Order in Wallyford (one of only a handful of successful applications in Scotland to date), ending drug dealing from the property. Partly because of this problem, complaints about drug dealing rose during the year to 16 – 6.5% of all the anti-social behaviour reports we received.

Dealing with these reports is one of the top priorities of our new Housing Manager, Karen Barry, who took up the post in the summer:

“We know how anti-social behaviour can ruin people's lives, and we take all reports seriously. We work confidentially and in partnership with both the Council, other housing providers and

Lothian and Borders Police in doing all we can to deal with problems when they arise.”

We also reviewed our Shared Ownership policy and improved our service so that we now advertise any Shared Ownership opportunities alongside our regular properties for rent.

We reviewed our Asset Management Strategy (our approach to the long term maintenance of our homes) and Communities Scotland (now The Scottish Housing Regulator) signed off our Standard Delivery Plan which sets out how we will meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 (in short, our Regulator approved our plans to improve and maintain our homes).

Our improvement programme continued with painterwork to 23 homes in West Barns and Stenton, new doors to 19 homes in Whitecraig, and new windows and doors for 16 homes in Cockenzie.

Finally, we set up our Green Team, to reduce our energy use and minimise our waste, so we leave a lower carbon footprint going into the future whilst also reducing costs.



We welcomed two new members of staff, and said goodbye to three: Elaine Hill, who was PA to the Chief Executive, one of our Housing Officers, Tracy Urquart, and Caroline Fletcher, one of our Housing Assistants. In Elaine's place came Janice Thomson, in a new role of Executive Assistant. We also welcomed Mary Hargreaves as our new Web Officer who immediately set to work on our on-line housing office project.

Autumn also saw some other key building blocks for the development of the business put into place. We fully revised our approach to Risk Management, ensuring we have one of the most robust processes in our sector. We also increased our stock condition survey to 40% of our stock – meaning we have detailed information on the

condition of 40% of our homes (which will increase to 100% over the next three years).

And we also had some fun. The Minister for Communities and Sport (and who is also responsible for housing), Stuart Maxwell MSP, opened our new development at The Hedges, Tranent.

We arranged an open day so kids from the local school could learn more about the ground source heat pumps that each property has, and we asked the Minister to turn on the Christmas tree lights on the village green.

The Open Day was a great success, and we even featured on Scottish TV news. Stuart Maxwell MSP said "The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the number of quality affordable homes like these here in Tranent which are a tribute to the partners involved in building them.

It is important that we continue to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Scotland.

This makes them warmer and more economic to heat. It also strengthens the important links between creating more homes and tackling fuel poverty, improving energy efficiency and our commitments on climate change"

We carried on with our improvement programme, with painterwork to 19 homes in Dirleton and Port Seton, and replacement doors and windows to 78 homes in Musselburgh, Cockenzie and Wallyford.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour 2007/08**

246 reports received

93% responded to on time

38% related to noise

## The website was an immediate success, with over 1,000 people now visiting the site every week.

Although it might have been dark outside, we were burning the midnight oil as we put the final touches to our website and on-line housing office project.

We started by launching our new look and new logo, quickly followed by the website, and then our new Tenant Handbook, Tenancy Agreement and our new look TalkBack newsletter. The website was an immediate success, with over 1,000 people now visiting the site every week. Over half of these are returning visitors meaning people are finding what they need on-line, and are choosing to return again.

As far as we know, the website is unique for a housing association in the UK, because it is the only one to have a live help facility. This means our staff can 'chat' to users whilst they are on-line, and also help by

highlighting areas of the screen, or by opening new pages or websites for them. If you haven't tried it yet, please visit us at [elha.com](http://elha.com)!

Our Chief Executive, Martin Pollhammer said "It was great to see people come on to the site so quickly and in such large numbers. We feel we have done more in opening this one on-line office than we ever could by opening new offices on the high street, and for a fraction of the cost. And we'll be making more improvements and offering more new services as a result over the course of the year."

Our improvements programme concluded with 16 homes in Stenton receiving new kitchens. Meanwhile, following a consultation exercise with our tenants, we also reached agreement with East Lothian Council for them to take on the ownership and future

maintenance of the landscaped areas we own amongst our stock. This will result in significant cost and management time savings in the future for us.

Finally, we reviewed our approach to letting empty houses and developed new standards to improve our service in this area. We were pleased to welcome two new staff: John McNally joined us as Housing Officer, and Denise Cran as a Housing Assistant. And we were sad to say goodbye to one of our longest serving Management Committee members, Robert McNeill, to whom we wish all the best for the future.

All in all, quite a year!

## performance information

### Letting our Homes

96% of all allocations were made to Priority Pass holders, who account for only 14% of Registered applicants. On average, we received 121 applications for each property we advertised as available to let – an increase of 53% over 2006/07 showing just how acute the housing shortage in East Lothian is.

As at 31 March 2008 our housing register had:

3,399 live Registrations (up 5% on 2006/07)

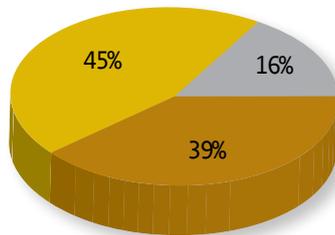
80 Registrations 'on hold' – 2.4% (down 53%)

466 applicants with Priority Passes (up 6%)

45% Gold

16% Silver

39% Bronze



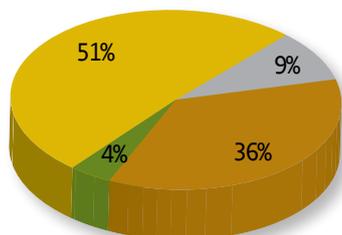
We created 111 new tenancies:

51% allocated to Gold Priority Pass holders

9% allocated to Silver Priority Pass holders

36% allocated to Bronze Priority Pass holders

4% allocated to applicants with no Priority Pass



### Managing our Homes

We met or exceeded our housing management targets (which were lower than those set in 2006/07). We only carried out 1 eviction (for rent arrears), down from 5 in 2006/07. We met our overall repairs targets, but just missed one of the detailed repairs targets.

Rent Arrears	target 2.7%	actual 2.45%
Void Period	target 22 days	actual 21 days
Void Loss	target 0.75%	actual 0.68%

Repairs completed on time:

Overall	target 90%	actual 95%
Emergency (2 hours)	target 98%	actual 97.4%
Urgent (3 days)	target 92%	actual 96.4%
Routine (10 days)	target 93%	actual 94%
Satisfaction with the repairs service	target 90%	actual 93%

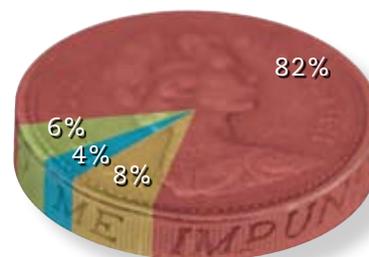


## financial performance for the year 2007/08

We increased our reserves, cash balances and housing stock in 2007/08. Fifty four new properties were completed for letting during the year and seven were sold.

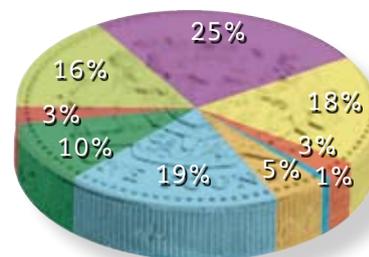
### Income

	£	
Rents and Service Charges	£3,273,656	▶
Gain on Sales of Housing Properties	£305,937	▶
Interest Receivable	£172,254	▶
Other Activities (inc. Care and Repair)	£256,114	▶
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£4,007,961</b>	



### Expenditure

	£	
Services	£100,759	▶
Management	£651,577	▶
Reactive Maintenance	£999,692	▶
Bad Debts Recovered	(£9,286)	
Major Repairs	£710,263	▶
Depreciation of Properties	£120,640	▶
Other Lettings Costs	£49,230	▶
Other Activities (inc. Care and Repair)	£204,374	▶
Interest Payable	£773,407	▶
Surplus (Transfer to Reserves)	£407,305	▶
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£4,007,961</b>	



Paula Oliver, Head of Finance and IT says:

“We made a surplus this year of £407,305, which was in line with our expectations. We transferred the surplus to reserves, increasing the total capital and reserves balance to £4,064,186.

Of this, £2,640,398 (65%) is designated (set aside) specifically for the future maintenance of our properties.”

If you would like a full copy of the audited Financial Statements, please contact us.

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