

HousingScot

INSIDE | 2 Wheatley Group | 2 SHARE | 3 CCG Group | 4 Shepherd & Wedderburn

‘Innovation consortium’ to modernise house building

Offsite industrialisation to deliver homes faster

BY WILLIAM PEAKIN

A collaborative innovation project, which aims to help tackle the UK housing crisis by using industrialised offsite solutions to deliver high quality homes faster, more reliably and at the same cost of masonry-built homes, has been awarded funding under the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, which is administered by Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation.

The £6.5m research and development project, known as Advanced Industrialised Methods for the Construction of Homes (AIMCH), is a collaboration between Stewart Milne Group, Barratt Developments PLC, London & Quadrant Housing Trust Ltd, Tarmac, the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CSIC) and Forster Roofing Services as the SME partner. The project will be managed by Limberger Associates.

The Government has stated that the UK needs an additional 120,000 homes each year. The housing sector faces many challenges in meeting this target, including skills shortages, an ageing workforce, poor productivity, low output and low affordability.

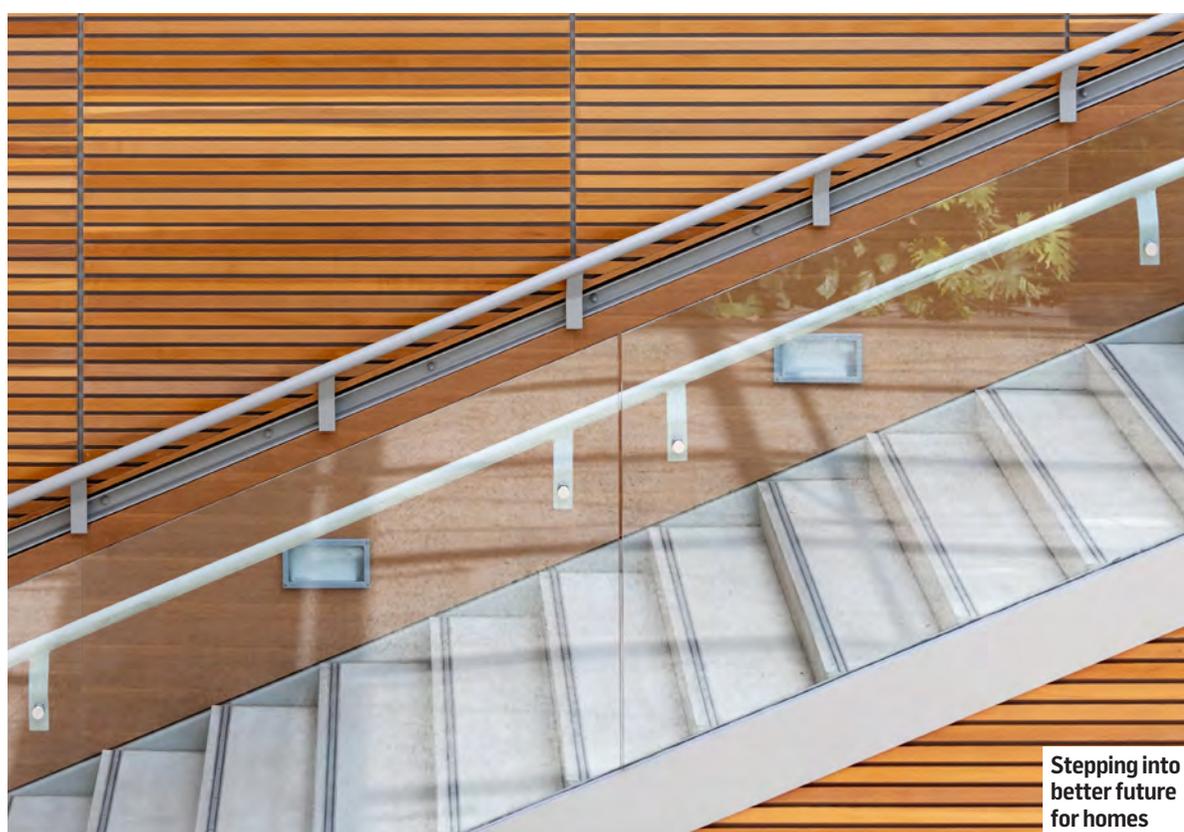
The three-year AIMCH project aims to tackle all these challenges and become a major player in the housing

sector by identifying and developing industrialised offsite solutions needed to meet current and future housebuilding demands. These will be trialled on live housing projects, with successful new methods then being commercialised and brought to market in volume.

It is expected that AIMCH will result in new digital design tools, manufacturing advancements, improved near-to-market offsite systems and lean site processes. The ultimate goal of the project is to support the sector by delivering the target of 120,000 homes for the same or less cost than traditional craft methods, 30% more quickly and with a 50% reduction in defects. The project has potential to impact on 35,000 homes being delivered by AIMCH partners across the UK each year.

Stewart Dalgarno, AIMCH Project Director and Director of Product Development at Stewart Milne Group said: “We need tens of thousands of new homes across the UK every year, but it’s also vital that these new homes are of a higher quality, leading to increased customer satisfaction and improved building performance. Digital working and industrialised offsite construction can be part of the solution, but they have not yet broken through as viable mainstream alternatives to traditional methods of building homes.

“AIMCH’s ambition is to use industrialisation to transform how we build our homes in the UK, leading to more homes that can be built quickly and



Stepping into better future for homes

viably. We believe it will be the catalyst the housing sector needs to move towards advanced digital integrated manufacturing, whilst overcoming the challenges that stand between the sector today and where it needs to go in the future.”

Mike Pitts from Innovate UK said: “We are excited about the possibilities of this project, which we hope will be a game-changer for the housing sector. The partners are experienced innovators and offer scale to showcase a world-leading solution. It brings CSIC

and MTC’s innovation and industrialisation capability together with high profile housing and offsite manufacturing providers, who provide scale and a clear route to market. It has the potential to deliver wider sector benefits in terms of jobs, investment and growth.”

Affordable housing, shaping Scotland

The sector plays a critical role - more so now than ever before

BY CALUM MACAULAY

A Highland-based registered social landlord, Albyn Housing Society has served the region for over 45 years. Our origins are deeply rooted in the period of social and economic change that hit the area in the 70s and 80s,

and ever since, this experience has informed our growth, as well as the wider development of the communities we serve.

At that time, ‘housing’ was about volume, and the need to provide homes in concentrated communities in order to serve the workforce needs of emerging industries – Dounreay in Caithness, the Nigg fabrication yard and the aluminium smelter in Invergordon for example. The population was growing, and it needed homes, fast.

Today, most of these industries and

the associated jobs are gone, but the people and families remain, providing a workforce for both surviving and newly established industries, sustaining local schools and services and supporting local enterprise. As a result, the region, and Inverness in particular, is thriving. In fact, it was recently named one of the fastest growing economies in Europe.

This period of growth has transformed the Highlands, and the local housing sector along with it. Increasing numbers of people are now choosing

to stay and build lives in the area – both native and newcomer – creating new challenges and opportunities across the region’s rural and urban communities. Consequently, housing providers like Albyn have had to redefine their purpose to ensure they meet the needs and aspirations of modern Highland residents.

Today, our purpose extends far beyond delivering social housing at scale. It is about supporting successful tenancies, helping communities to thrive and developing solutions to

challenges, old and new. Ultimately, it is about ensuring our homes enable their residents to live the lives they aspire to lead.

To achieve this, we have set out an ambitious, long-term build programme, restructured our business to enhance our focus on customer service, and developed new services and partnerships underpinned by innovation and cross-sector collaboration.

Firstly, our aim is to develop 750

Continues on page 3

Brave new world of engagement

Why it's time for the housing sector to review how it engages with communities

BY MARTIN ARMSTRONG

The housing sector has a long track record in tenant engagement. Housing associations are at the very centre of the communities they serve and, as a result, are often well placed to build strong relationships with the people who live there.

We are also fortunate that here in Scotland, where almost a quarter of households live in social housing, tenant participation is at the heart of Scottish Government housing policy.

But as we look to the future through the lens of an increasingly digital world, one of the big questions for our sector, and for others, is how we can best engage and involve our tenants, including young people and those who have traditionally been harder to reach.

It is that challenge which led

Wheatley Group to commission The Democratic Society to carry out an international study of best practice in engagement. We were determined to capture new thinking from around the world, going beyond the housing and care sectors and learning from what is happening across all public and private sectors.

The goal was to define and develop a new relationship with customers, shifting the balance of power from executive command and control to decision making by communities, families and individuals. And to do this by encouraging customers to become more closely involved in the decisions taken about their homes and the services they receive, as well as the programmes and activities aimed at providing them with better lives.

The aim is to help people build new skills and confidence, to better engage and empower them to make things happen for themselves, and in the process creating and supporting stronger, more resilient communities.

The Democratic Society's work and contributions were drawn from around



Wheatley Group Chairman Alastair MacNish, Housing Minister Kevin Stewart MSP, Wheatley Group tenants Cathy McGrath, Lara Lasisi and Margaret McMillan, Michelle Brook of the Democratic Society, and GHA Chair Bernadette Hewitt

the world - from California to London, Gothenburg to Minnesota, and Rio de Janeiro to Vienna - and was the first of its kind to be undertaken in the UK. It involved organisations and institutions ranging from Stanford University to the respected think tank RSA and the International Association of Public Participation USA. Crucially, it engaged the real experts: social housing and mid-market tenants, the people we work for in care and factored homeowners. They all had their say.

The resulting report, published on 29 January, throws a new light on the relationship organisations strive to develop with their customers. It emphasises that we should adopt fresh, new engagement approaches, tools and techniques - all of which are outlined in the report.

“The aim is to help people build new skills and confidence, empower them to make things happen for themselves”

I am confident this report will stimulate discussion and debate. I hope it will also inspire other business leaders to put customers at the heart of all they do, recognising meaningful engagement as a mainstream priority, not an optional extra.

Good engagement is good business. By truly listening and responding to the people we serve, we will create not only excellent services, but also outstanding levels of customer satisfaction.

Martin Armstrong is chief executive of Wheatley Group.

To read the international engagement research commissioned by Wheatley Group and CIH, go to <http://www.wheatley-group.com/democracystartsat home>

SHARE ensures sector is up to speed

Bitesize Briefings enable housing staff to hear direct from a number of speakers

SHARE, the learning and development organisation for Scotland's housing sector is bringing new events to the sector in March and April.

“Our Bitesize Briefings enable housing staff to hear direct from a number of speakers on each topic with each event generally having a very healthy Q&A,” says Pauline Munro, SHARE's Marketing and Events Manager. “These events also provide a great networking opportunity to mix with colleagues from across the sector and as they are delivered over a half day staff don't need to be away from their day job for long.”

The first event, Allocations - Guidance which takes place on 11 March, looks at the important changes to the law brought in by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 in relation to Allocations. This event coincides with the launch of the Scottish Government's detailed Guidance in support of the Act and delegates will hear from Anne Cook, Scottish Government as well as a number of speakers whose case studies appear within the Guidance. The Scottish Government commissioned CIH and Craigforth to develop this Guidance.

The next event, Anti-social Behaviour - Different perspectives on the



issue on 22 March, looks at Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) from various different perspectives and promises to deliver some interesting insights. Speakers will discuss some complex areas of ASB, some of the more nuanced problems housing staff may encounter and the range of assistance and remedies that are available.

Figures released last year showed

that incidences of antisocial behaviour (ASB) rose by 5% between 2017 and 2018 with more than 1,000 incidents every day in Scotland and approximately 154 per day in Glasgow alone.

In January 2018 the Scottish Housing Regulator consulted with registered social landlords (RSLs) and tenants on their regulation and what is needed to support social housing's con-

tinued and future success. The new Regulatory Framework and guidance is schedule was launched in February. SHARE's Bitesize Briefing - Regulatory Framework on 10th April, will provide an overview of the Framework and hear from a number of speakers about the impact these changes will have on the sector.

SHARE is also in the process of

“These events provide a great networking opportunity to mix with colleagues from across the sector”

planning a Bitesize Briefing - Tackling Domestic Abuse on 30th April. This issue is rightly receiving a lot of media coverage and the housing sector are ideally placed to help tackle this issue. This is a joint event with the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

All events are held at the Bob Allan Conference Centre in Glasgow with further information and how to book your place/s can be found at www.share.org.uk in the events section. Allocations - Guidance - 11 March Anti-social Behaviour - Different perspectives - 22 March Regulatory Framework - 10th April Tackling Domestic Abuse - 30th April

Reducing heat loss in housing

R&D into modern construction methods is a 20-year journey for the CCG Group

ONE of Scotland's leading contractors and manufacturers has taken the next steps to improve the energy performance of the typical home with research and development into heat loss.

CCG (Scotland) Ltd has worked in partnership with energy and sustainability consultancy Carbon Futures to reduce the impact of 'thermal bridging' in the modern home.

Thermal bridging describes an area of a building which has a significantly higher heat transfer than the surrounding materials, typically where there is either a break in the insulation or in masonry elements of a build or with openings such as windows and doors.

Carbon Futures' 'thermal modelling' assessment has considered the use of the firm's 'iQ' timber frame system in the construction of housing and the results indicate that it is possible to reduce heat loss - associated with thermal bridging - by up to 30% when compared against government accredited construction details.

In a typical 2-storey home, this facilitates a 5% reduction in annual carbon emissions and an 8% reduction in energy required for space heating.

The 'iQ' system is manufactured in

CCG's bespoke 'OSM' facility in Cambuslang



CCG's bespoke 'OSM' (offsite manufacturing facility) in Cambuslang and is used to support the delivery of more than 1,000 homes per year, over 80% of which are for the public sector.

David Wylie, managing director of CCG said: "At CCG, we pride ourselves on producing homes that are delivered to the highest standards of quality and

environmental performance.

"The research undertaken with Carbon Futures will enable us to enhance our offering in these areas ensuring long-term benefits to our clients and the end user of our homes marking a significant step forward in helping tackle fuel poverty for people across Scotland."

David Russell, director of Carbon

Futures said: "A lot has been said about the performance gap in new-build housing, therefore CCG should be commended for having the foresight to invest in the thermal performance of their timber frame product.

"As accredited thermal modellers, Carbon Futures were able to facilitate improved thermal performance in

a cost-effective and practical way by using our technical experience and commercial awareness.

"Moving forward, the thermal improvement in CCG's 'iQ' system puts them in a strong position to deliver carbon reduction targets in new-build housing whilst maintaining commercial viability."

About CCG

Established in 1974, CCG has since grown into one of Scotland's largest privately-owned construction and manufacturing companies with a turnover of £144m in the last financial year. After private investment in 2007, the firm launched one of the UK's most advanced offsite manufacturing facilities, CCG OSM, in 2010 with the production of the 'iQ' panelised timber frame system. This system is utilised to support CCG's housebuilding programme which will see up to 1500 homes constructed per year across the central belt of Scotland.

'Housing has a critical role in shaping our present, and future'

Continues from page 1

quality new homes for social and mid-market rent and low-cost home ownership in the next five years. This will bring our total estate to around 4000 properties in an area spanning Bettyhill to Kingussie, and Applecross to Dyke. However, gone are the monolithic estates of previous decades; our vision is to deliver high quality, mixed-tenure developments within established communities and with direct access to local services, transport connectivity and support networks. This, we believe, creates a fairer society by supporting cohesion, equality of opportunity and a shared sense of community.

This plan has, so far, been supported by around £50m in Scottish Government funding and over £40m in private finance secured through BAE Pension Fund, RBS and Triodos Bank, which only funds projects that create positive social, cultural or environmental value. Recent examples of the projects this approach has delivered includes a development of 23 homes in Nairn, and a small settlement of 10 homes in Dornoch. We have also recently signed an agreement with national housebuilder, Barratt Homes, to take handover of 44 homes for affordable rent and low

cost home ownership at its major new masterplan development in Stratton, Inverness.

Secondly, organisational change has allowed us to make the transition from the old way - landlord services - to the new way - customer services - giving tenants a stronger voice and greater influence in shaping of the service we deliver. This has given us a fresh insight into the processes that underpin allocations, managing voids and working with support agencies. For example, we have trialled different ways of working, such as 'choice based letting', which could potentially make our allocations process more efficient and less competitive by reducing the pool of applicants to only those directly interested in a specific property, rather than the entire housing list for a specific area.

We have also gained a greater understanding of the challenges facing tenants, and taken a leading role in shaping the region's response to welfare reform, specifically the 'Bedroom Tax' and Universal Credit. We now actively lobby for improvement on behalf of tenants, while also investing in money advice and other services for tenants, with support from the likes of the Big Lottery Fund and local Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Finally, our organisation wouldn't

Developing 750 quality new homes for social and mid-market rent and low-cost home ownership in the next five years



be where it is today without innovation and collaboration. Albyn has a designated innovation team, whose role is to develop new revenue generating opportunities for the society, while tackling some of the sector's biggest challenges. One of these is the region's aging demographic.

Today, the lack of suitable care facilities, combined with the fact that people are living longer, means bed blocking is costing public health services millions of pounds every year. Working in partnership with NHS Highland, Albyn Housing Society has developed the FitHome, which uses

the principals of artificial intelligence and IoT to allow people to live safe and well in their homes for as long as they want.

Health and housing go hand in hand, so it is our aim to develop this innovation further to enable other housing providers, and even private homeowners, to utilise this technology, allowing health and care services to support patients from the comfort of their own home, for as long as they can do so safely.

These illustrations are just a snapshot of Albyn Housing Society's recent activity, which I believe demonstrates

how the role of housing has transitioned - and us along with it. Housing, given its unbreakable links with themes such as the built environment, sustainability, health, wellbeing and the economy, has a critical role to play in shaping our present, and future. But, it is up to the industry to take up this challenge, set the right example and demonstrate leadership, innovation and best practice. The Highlands, I believe, are a shining example that others can follow.

Calum Macaulay is chief executive of the Albyn Housing Society

Simply not enough

The current housing situation is unsustainable, but how do we solve the problem?

BY EWAN MACLEOD

The Planning (Scotland) Bill is due to be debated in the Scottish Parliament in the next couple of months. It has taken a long time to get here. In 2015, then Planning Minister Alex Neil announced a review of the planning system, which he said would “aim to increase delivery of high quality housing developments by delivering a quicker, more accessible and efficient process, and it will reinforce our commitment to a fair and open planning system that works for everyone, especially local communities”.

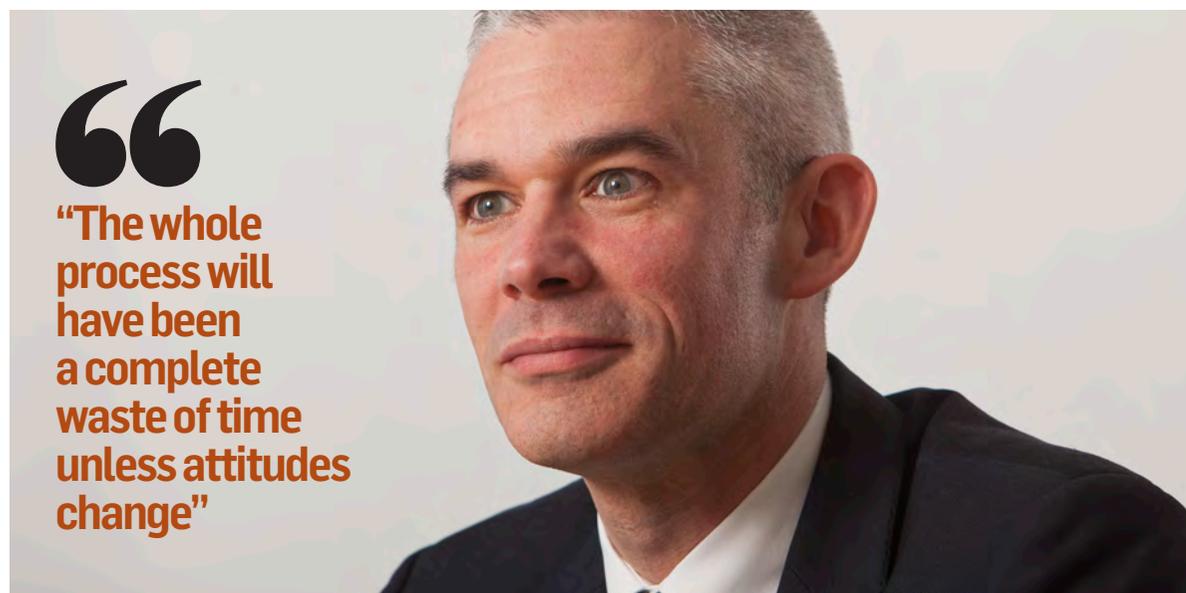
The draft Bill didn't inspire confidence that Mr Neil's aims would be achieved, and last year it was roundly savaged by the Local Government and Communities Committee. The Committee approved literally hundreds of amendments (many of which are inconsistent), and the Bill now imposes

more than 60 new duties on under-resourced planning departments. In its current amended form, it would seriously undermine the operation of the planning system in Scotland.

Personally, I didn't think that planning law in Scotland needed any significant change. What did need to change were attitudes within the planning system and, in particular, attitudes towards house building. The tortuous passage of the Bill to date has not helped with that at all.

We are simply not building enough housing in Scotland. For anyone who has tried to buy a property in Scotland in the last five years, that is obvious. House prices increased more than 4% last year as demand continues to outstrip supply. A recent “mid-market” rent development of 138 flats in Edinburgh attracted more than 3,000 applications of interest. The current situation is clearly unsustainable, but how do we solve the problem?

First, government and the public at large need to understand how many homes the country actually needs. The current system ignores young adults who can't afford their own home and are still living with their parents in



their childhood bedrooms. The most recent information from the Office of National Statistics shows that, across the UK, more than a quarter of 20 – 34 year olds are still living at home with their parents. These ‘home trapped’ individuals don't feature in councils' planning housing targets and national guidance currently allows this to happen. Again, this is unsustainable. If our young (and not so young) adults can't find a suitable home of their own in Scotland many will leave the country, taking their drive and potential with them. Those that remain are likely to resent a planning system that implies they don't matter.

Secondly, councils must produce aspirational development plans in partnership with the development

industry and, of course, local communities. The situation in south east Scotland is a good case in point. Homes for Scotland, the national industry body for home builders, was forced to object to the Strategic Development Plan for the area. It succeeded in persuading a Scottish Government Reporter that the planning authority needed to add at least 30,000 affordable homes to the target that it had previously set. The Plan is currently sitting with the Minister, along with a letter from Homes for Scotland that explains why, legally, even that number is too low. Change can be difficult but, if properly and collaboratively planned from the outset, new housing development can deliver significant social and economic benefits.

The Planning (Scotland) Bill, as it stands, introduces layers of complexity to the planning process and is very unlikely to deliver on its original objectives. The final stage of the legislative process at Holyrood does give MSPs a chance to amend the Bill to simplify it back into a form that is more workable. However, in my opinion, the whole process will have been a complete waste of time unless attitudes change and Scotland makes a concerted effort to deliver the homes required to meet current and future needs.

Ewan MacLeod is Partner in Shepherd and Wedderburn's planning team and a Law Society of Scotland-accredited specialist in planning law.

Care and Repair services offer personal, financial and technical support to people facing the difficult task of repairing, improving or adapting a home which is no longer suitable to the person's needs.

The provision of advice and information is a central part of Care and Repair's role, as well as providing practical assistance with grant applications and co-ordinating repairs. Care and Repair is a home-based and personalised service, which puts the client in control

of decisions. Staff visit people at home and assist them through the process of deciding what work is to be done, arranging finance and organising the building works.

Each case involves a different approach and often staff must cross disciplinary and departmental boundaries, working closely with health, housing and social work staff to achieve the overall aim of improving the quality of older and disabled people's lives through improving their housing conditions.

Care and Repair is a cost-effective solution. We know that Care and Repair services are valued, but we also know that there are many more people who could be helped. The population is growing older, with some rural areas seeing a rapidly shifting balance. More people, including younger people, have disabilities that affect their daily lives, and require adaptations to their homes. There are also many houses in the private sector in poor condition. In short, more people need the help of Care and Repair teams than ever before.



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