

Scottish Churches  
Housing Action



no room for homelessness!

# Strengthening Communities

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**Annual Review 2019**

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“They shall build houses and inhabit them”

Isaiah 65:21a

# Message from the Chief Executive



This is my first annual review and I am delighted to have this opportunity to write to all of you about Scottish Churches Housing Action and the work of its staff and volunteers.

Once again we have drawn people and organisations together to address common issues, as demonstrated in other parts of this report. Additionally there are a number of important projects in development and we have taken significant steps to improve the measurement of our impact. Although a small organisation our body of work is extensive and our impact, especially when measured over time, is remarkable. This is one of the many aspects of the organisation which has impressed me

since my arrival in May.

We have also actively participated in consultations and in raising the issues around homelessness and affordable housing.

Of course, like many organisations, Scottish Churches Housing Action has had its challenges in the past year and I have been particularly taken with the way in which Trustees, staff and volunteers have pulled together to ensure the continued delivery of our commitments. I say “our” because I can say without hesitation that since I have taken up my post I have been made to feel very welcome and part of the team. My thanks to all concerned.

However, whilst I acknowledge the hard work of the past year my report is going to conclude by looking forward. Homelessness and the threat of homelessness, the struggle for many to access affordable housing, remains a blight on our society. We intend to step up our efforts to both speak for the churches and to the churches on matters relating to homelessness and housing. In particular we will make the issue of rural homelessness our priority. We will seek to expand our community development work into rural areas to both inform our campaigning and help local communities find solutions to the issues they have identified.

Finally our third big drive will be to use our connections with all denominations, along with our proven model, seeking to ensure that more opportunities are realised to develop redundant church property into affordable housing. Land is one of the most significant aspects of affordable housing, and churches are often ideally placed in communities, providing unique opportunities to build housing where it is most needed. This is particularly the case in rural areas, where the inclusion of even a small number of homes can have a transformational impact.

This upcoming year will be a time of continued change, challenge and opportunity. I am confident that SCHA will play a dynamic and innovative role in communities across the country.

**Richard Howat – Chief Executive**

# Community matters



I began my report for the 2018 Annual Review with the following words, “This past year has been a time of change and transition”, and I have to say that this remains an accurate reflection for this last year too! Regrettably, we had to bid farewell to our new Chief Executive, David Cressey, in December 2018 after only 9 months in post. While this was obviously of considerable disappointment to us I believe it was in the best interests of SCHA and for Mr Cressey personally. Clearly this meant having to recruit a new Chief Executive for the second time in 12 months, however the work done during the previous recruitment process helped us to move quickly.

In this regard, we were pleased to welcome Richard Howat to the role of Chief Executive in May 2019. Richard has some 27 years of experience in the care and homelessness sector and he is keen to enable SCHA to be a voice *for* the churches in the field of homelessness and affordable housing policy at a national level, and to be a voice *to* the churches in helping them to understand, and make a difference, in their local communities. Richard also has a passion for, and a sensitivity to, the distinctive challenges of rural homelessness.

I wish to place on record my deep appreciation and thanks to Brian Graham and John Kitson on the Executive Committee who, along with myself, took up a large part of keeping the organisation moving forward in the interregnum. We were also blessed with the positive attitude of Heather, Lauren and Graham in the office who took on extra responsibilities to ensure that all aspects of our work remained fully covered. The prayerful and practical encouragement of the Board and our many supporters was also very much valued.

Despite this time of transition, as a Board we have continued to identify and source new income streams to alleviate any potential pressure on our finances. Above all, the Board remains deeply committed to issues of housing justice and to eliminating the causes of homelessness. In particular, we are keen to further develop our work in assisting churches to convert redundant property into affordable housing and we see this as an ongoing area of growth. We continue to work with our partner denominations in this respect and we are establishing useful paths forward with members of the Scottish Parliament.

Home is a matter of community, of human dignity and well-being. Home is a matter of the homecoming God. To quote Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of John 1:14, “*The Word became flesh and blood, and **moved into the neighbourhood**. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.*” Our hope and prayer is that in the name of the homemaking and homecoming God, Scottish Churches Housing Action will continue to strive towards our vision that there is ‘*no room for homelessness*’ in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland.

**Rev Dr Graeme R Wilson – Convener**

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## First year celebration: East Lothian Starter Packs



The new Starter Packs project in East Lothian celebrated its first year on 23 May at Recycling First's Macmerry premises. Project partners from SCHA, Recycling First, Fresh Start & East Lothian Council gathered to mark the occasion – during the year 695 packs were distributed to 156 individuals who moved into a new tenancy, having experienced or been at risk of homelessness. Unfortunately this demand is likely to continue, if not increase. We record our thanks to East Lothian Council, which has agreed to fund the project for 3 years. We

thank the 11 local churches which have agreed to help this project, and it's hoped more will follow. [Photo (L-R): James Bruce (Board director, Recycling First); Heather Zajac (Development Manager, SCHA); Cllr Jim Goodfellow (EL Council); Biddy Kelly (Managing Director, Fresh Start); Nicola Sandford (EL Council); Tom Logan (Project Manager, Recycling First)]

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## Starter Packs Networking Conference

Our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual joint Starter Pack Networking Event was held on 29 August at Falkirk Trinity Church, the theme "Community Resilience in Times of Need". We and co-hosts CRNS were delighted with the turn-out and warm atmosphere at Falkirk Trinity Church. Judging from feedback, the talks and sessions were all interesting, encouraging and informative. The benefits of gathering together were amply demonstrated when Colin Bruce from Furniture Plus responded to Fresh Start East Dunbartonshire's storage problems, as mentioned by Margaret Redpath in her talk. Margaret from Fresh Start, East Dunbartonshire, has been in touch to say: *"We all thoroughly enjoyed yesterday, thank you for the opportunity to speak at the Conference and let our story be told. I am delighted to tell you that we have a new storage unit... This is such a brilliant example of how we can all work together and help each other."* Find a full report on our website at <https://www.churches-housing.org/starter-packs-national-conference-2019/> [photo: Kevin Wilkie, Homelessness Policy Manager, Scottish Government, addresses the conference]



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## CrossReach partnership

*"I have used a great amount of the information you shared with me which has been fantastic and very much appreciated."* We are delighted to announce we now have a Befriending Co-ordinator in place in Cale House, CrossReach, Inverness. Over the past year CrossReach and SCHA have worked in partnership to create this role and secure funding. The new post will oversee the delivery of a befriending service for individuals who are moving from supported accommodation, or who have recently experienced homelessness. We hope to continue to support CrossReach in the process of the Co-ordinator's induction and first year of development. This has been a great example of partnership-working supporting community projects to connect with the local churches.

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## Wider strategic input

SCHA has continued to engage with the Scottish Government and other bodies both proactively and reactively over a range of housing and homelessness related issues. We responded to a number of Government consultations, most recently in August on short-term letting, with the full response on our website at <https://www.churches-housing.org/short-term-letting-churches-housing-response-to-scottish-government-consultation/>.

In addition the organisation has started to actively promote its model on developing more affordable housing to a range of agencies and political representatives, building a network of support for the concept.

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## Walk of Unity



On 26 June, 26 walkers from 9 different churches in Edinburgh, representing several denominations, walked together from St John's, West End to St John's, Portobello. The purpose was to bring the churches together in an act of unity to raise awareness of homelessness. Between us the walkers raised over £2000 for SCHA's work. The route took us from Princes St, West End to Portobello, with options of a 2.5 mile, 3 mile or all-the-way 5.5 mile walk, visiting URC Duke St Church, Leith, en route. The walk

certainly helped raise our profile and funds, this may be an idea to take out to other towns and cities across Scotland. *"I am so glad that everything went so well, it could not have gone better. What lovely company and a beautiful sunny day. Great news about the money too. Hope to see you next year. God willing. Every good wish to you and your friends who organised the day."* **Joyce Fegan, Walker**

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## The Kiltwalk

Three Board members signed up to walk the Kiltwalk to support and help raise funds for SCHA: Steven Turner in Dundee, Peter Donaldson in Aberdeen & Graeme Wilson in Edinburgh, all tackling the 25 mile Mighty Stride. Graeme was looking ahead to our anniversary next year, with his "25 miles for 25 years". During his training Peter had to withdraw on health grounds, but will complete the walk at a later date and sign up for next year. For every penny raised an additional 40% is contributed from the Hunter Foundation. Between them the walkers have raised over £3000, an amazing effort. Thank you to all involved, walking over 25 miles in a day is not easy. This is something SCHA could highlight as part of a profile-raising and fundraising campaign.



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## Developing church property

Throughout the year SCHA has been actively developing its model for enabling the redevelopment of redundant church property into affordable housing. Although there have been several projects in development, none has yet reached the stage of putting a spade into the ground. This is understandable, as it can be a very emotive subject for congregations. Individuals and communities generally have a long history of involvement in and with their church. Recognising this investment is one of the strengths of our model: with this knowledge we can help congregations work their way through the challenges.

It is our intention to drive forward the redevelopment model during the next year, as we believe that significant opportunities to help address the shortage of affordable housing will emerge. Land is a key aspect of building affordable housing, and church property is invariably well placed in communities for this type of development.

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## Graham Jaques retires



Churches Housing bids farewell and a very happy retirement to our Finance Manager, Graham Jaques. Graham has kept the accounts and covered all aspects of SCHA's finances for seven years. He very graciously agreed to postpone his retirement for three months in the light of staffing circumstances, but on 26 September the time has now come! At the September Board meeting, Convener Graeme Wilson thanked Graham on behalf of all for his outstanding contribution to Scottish Churches Housing

Action, for his meticulous work, wise advice and spirit of positivity. We will miss Graham and wish him a very happy retirement. A new Finance Manager has been appointed, Paul Bannon, and we very much look forward to working with Paul from 21 October.

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## Thank you to our volunteers

We have amazing, dedicated volunteers. SCHA would not function without them, not only do they bring their time and expertise, they provide support to staff that is immeasurable. BUT if we were to measure it, our 11 volunteers have given:

- **856** hours
- **£7,490** donated as equivalent of hourly living wage.

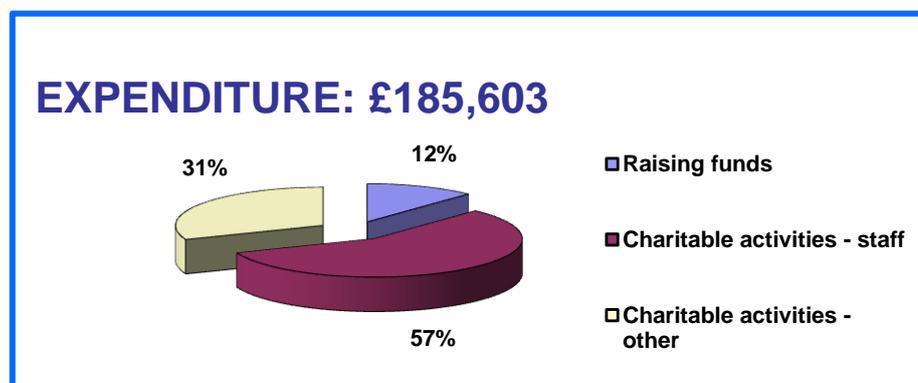
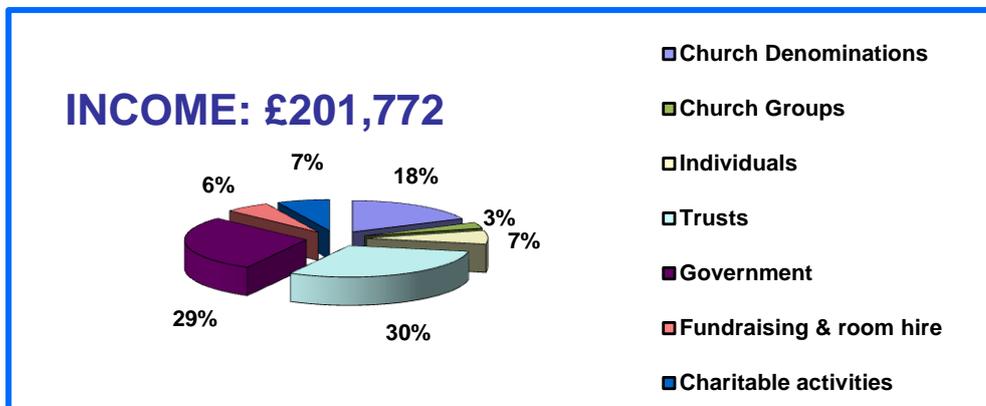
This does not include the hours, travel and input from our dedicated Board, who have been an incredible support to staff. Not only have they shared their knowledge, they have been a tower of strength and compassion throughout.



[Photo: Celebrating Volunteers' week, L-R Brian Graham, Robert Davidson, Graham Jaques, Heather Zajac, Morag Donaldson, Richard Howat, Celia Spence, Andrew Guild]

# Income & expenditure 2018-19

Finance Manager [Graham Jaques](#) looks after the books and prepares the accounts for examination.



This summary is taken from the Directors' Report and Financial Statements for 2018-19. We thank [Stanley Wynd](#) for his work as our independent examiner.

We thank all our contributors for their financial support – member denominations, the Scottish Government, local churches and groups. We thank individual donors, including anonymous donors, whom we have been unable to thank directly. We particularly appreciate those who commit to regular giving; this allows us to plan ahead with confidence.

We thank the following trusts and organisations for their generous support during the financial year: Tennant Southpark Trust, Kuenssberg Foundation, Walker Family Trust, the Hope Trust, Cruden Foundation, Appletree Trust, JTH Charitable Trust, Main Street Consulting and Foundation Scotland.

We are grateful to the volunteers in the office, who help with our IT, our records, our mailings and other communications. Last year we have calculated that they contributed £7,490 to SCHA. We thank all our supporters, together with colleagues in the many organisations, large and small, with whom we work.

## Scottish Churches Housing Action



no room for homelessness!

The members of Scottish Churches Housing Action are twelve Christian bodies in Scotland.

At September 2019, they are represented by:

Baptist Union of Scotland	Vacant
Church of Scotland	<b>Peter Donaldson</b>
Evangelical Alliance	Vacant
Free Church of Scotland	<b>Rev Douglas MacKeddie</b>
Iona Community	<b>Carrie Gooch</b>
Methodist Church in Scotland	<b>David Easson</b>
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	<b>Mary Cox</b>
Roman Catholic Church in Scotland	<b>Miriam McHardy</b>
Salvation Army	Vacant, appointment pending
Scottish Episcopal Church	Vacant, appointment pending
United Reformed Church	<b>Brian Graham – Vice-convener</b>
United Free Church of Scotland	<b>Rev Ann Purdie</b>
Co-opted Board members	<b>Rev Dr Graeme Wilson – Convener</b> <b>John Kitson – Finance Convener</b> <b>Rev Muriel Pearson</b> <b>Jenny Cornfield</b>
Chief Executive & Company Secretary	<b>Richard Howat</b>
Associate Conveners	<b>Rt Rev Bruce Cameron</b> <b>Very Rev Dr Russell Barr</b>

We thank **Steven Turner**, Salvation Army representative on the Board from Sept 2016 to March 2019. We thank him for all his participation as a Board member, his contribution on the interview panel in December 2017, and his recent 25 mile Kiltwalk for SCHA.

**Staff & office volunteers:** **Richard Howat**, Chief Executive; **Heather Zajac**, Development Manager; **Graham Jaques**, Finance Manager; **Lauren Forbes**, Administrator. **Robert Davidson**, **Morag Donaldson**, **Andrew Guild**, **Bridget Lee**, **Lynne Pow** and **Ray Rennie**, Volunteers. We warmly thank all our faithful volunteers, including our wonderful newsletter packing team.

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**Scottish Churches Housing Action, 25 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh EH8 9BX**  
0131 477 4500 ❖ [info@churches-housing.org](mailto:info@churches-housing.org); ❖ [www.churches-housing.org](http://www.churches-housing.org)

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