



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
**LOCAL HOUSING
STRATEGY 2017-2022**
ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22



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1. Introduction

The Housing [Scotland] Act 2001 places a Statutory Duty on all Local Authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy, framed by Statutory Guidance published by Scottish Government. The current Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy covers the five year period from April 2017 to March 2022. Due to a range of factors, principally the timescales for the development of the next Housing Need and Demand Assessment, Scottish Borders Council Executive Committee agreed to extend the current LHS for an additional year up to March 2023.

The strategy was developed with our partners, stakeholders and the voluntary sector over an 18 month period and was formally approved in September of 2017. The strategy addresses a wide range of challenges and issues as well as setting out outcomes, priorities and actions to deliver our shared vision for housing in the Scottish Borders.

The vision for the LHS is:

**Every person in the Scottish Borders
lives in a home that meets their
needs**



In order to deliver this vision successfully; the following four LHS priorities were defined:

- LHS Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities
- LHS Priority 2. More People Live In Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes
- LHS Priority 3: Fewer People Are Affected By Homelessness
- LHS Priority 4. More People Are Supported To Live Independently In Their Own Homes

Some of the key objectives within the Local Housing Strategy include:

- To help ensure adequate housing supply across all tenures to address the varying and diverse housing need in the Borders.
- To promote and increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty through the development and implementation of a new Home Energy Efficiency & Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- To increase the supply of new affordable housing that meets the needs of our community through the ongoing development and delivery of the next and future Strategic Housing Investment Plans.
- To tackle disrepair in the private sector and address landlord compliance in the private rented sector.
- To address the Housing, Support and Care needs of the growing Older People population through the implementation of an Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Support and Care Needs.
- To improve the health and wellbeing for people experiencing Homelessness; and ensure fewer people are affected by homelessness.
- To gain a better understanding of the housing aspirations and needs of young people in the Borders

This annual report provides an update on progress from April 2021 to March 2022, featuring key highlights and achievements, as well as ongoing challenges for the future.

2. Housing Supply

Addressing Priority 1: The Supply of Housing Meets the Needs of Our Communities

Highlights

- Scottish Government funding allocation in 2021/22 of £18.562m
- The 2022/27 SHIP proposed delivery of 1,213 new affordable homes, under-pinned by an estimated investment of £202m
- 314 Affordable homes were delivered throughout the Scottish Borders
- Work underway on the latest SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)
- Recruitment of an Empty Homes Strategy & Policy Officer
- CARS has delivered funding to 13 priority projects, 7 in Jedburgh and 6 in Hawick

Covid-19 Impact

The impact of the Covid pandemic has been massive, in particular causing delays to programmed site starts and completions due to the closure of the Scottish construction sector from late March to July 2020, with related impacts on budgets and project reprogramming. Fortunately the construction sector has restarted and there is a steady recovery across the affordable housing programme.

Affordable Housing Supply

Over the course of the current parliament the Scottish Government have set a national target for the delivery of 50,000 affordable homes within Scotland. The Scottish Government allocated £18.562m in Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding to assist with the delivery of affordable housing within the Scottish Borders in 2021/22.

Unfortunately the Covid pandemic adversely impacted on the affordable housing programme by reducing the numbers of homes which completed in 2020/21 with many of these homes being delayed and re-programmed with RSLs completing a new annual high figure of 237 additional homes in 2021/22, in addition to the purchase of 60 existing homes. As of 31st March 2022 there were 329 affordable homes under construction.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan [SHIP] is the sole strategic document for prioritising affordable housing investment within the Scottish Borders and sets out a rolling five year planning horizon. The SHIP 2022/27 was approved by Scottish Borders Council in September 2021 and proposes the delivery of 1,213 new affordable homes, under-pinned by an estimated investment of £202m over the period of the plan. Work has started to inform the development of the next SHIP submission in October 2022.

314 affordable homes delivered across the Scottish Borders in 2021/22

These were provided as follows –

237 new affordable homes provided by Registered Social Landlords

- 31 at Beanburn (Phase 1), Ayton by Berwickshire Housing Association
- 49 at Angraflat, Kelso by Eildon Housing Association
- 35 at Huddersfield Street, Galashiels by Eildon Housing Association
- 18 at South Park, Peebles by Eildon Housing Association
- 63 at Sergeant's Park (Phase 2), Newtown St Boswells by Eildon Housing Association
- 39 at Wilkie Gardens (Extra Care Housing), Galashiels by Eildon Housing Association
- 2 at Abbotsford Court Galashiels By Cairn Housing Association (remodelling)

60 RSL house purchases

- 54 by Eildon Housing Association
- 5 by Scottish Borders Housing Association
- 1 by Waverley Housing

1 Rural Homes for Rent grant - Roxburgh Estates (Long term empty)

16 Individual house purchases assisted by the Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity Scheme.

Addressing Housing Need

During 2021/22 Scottish Borders Council used Second Homes Council Tax and Affordable Housing Developer contributions to support:

- Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company's development at Kirkhope Steading, Ettrickbridge
- Eildon Housing Association to provide Extra Care housing at Ex Kelso High School
- Recruitment of an Empty Homes Strategy & Policy Officer



Completed Developments in 2021/22



Beanburn Phase 1, Ayton



Angraflat Phase 1, Kelso



South Park, Peebles



Sergeant's Park Phase 2 Newtown St Boswells



Wilkie Gardens, Galashiels



Huddersfield Street, Galashiels

Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)

The third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the period 2022-27 is being prepared on behalf of the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders Councils.

The project was split into three main themes comprising separate workstreams:

- Project initiation – consulting and agreeing on the project proposal, housing market partnership, governance, plan, methodology, consultation and participation statement.
- HNDA regional drivers – researching, analysing and consulting on aspects that inform decisions within the HNDA Tool including Housing Market Areas, demographic, affordability, economic and existing housing need assessments, plus HNDA3 scenarios around future growth.
- HNDA contextual information – providing information for local housing strategies and local development plans around the stock profile and management issues, plus specialist housing need, demand and provisions.



Over the course of 2020/21, officers of the HNDA3 Core Project Team have been examining the interaction of Housing Market Areas in South-East Scotland; key housing market drivers; the housing stock profile and pressures; the current and future housing need and demand; and the need for specialist housing.

The Project Team used the HNDA Tool to calculate housing estimates. This is a complex Excel database pre-populated with data, although the system can be adjusted to account for scenarios around future growth. The Project Team agreed six main scenarios (plus a bespoke scenario for Midlothian), providing a range of options for growth:

Scenario 1: HNDA Tool	Default position
Scenario 2: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need	An additional scenario was produced to test the HNDA Tool default position but replacing the default existing need calculation with the local authority-generated existing need figures.
Scenario 2a: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need / Midlothian Modelling	Was requested by Midlothian Council based on Scenario 2 but with a 10-year backlog clearance for Midlothian only.
Scenario 3: Strong Growth	Reflecting a very positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/ moderately high house price and rental growth across all local authorities.
Scenario 4: Steady Growth	Providing moderate real terms income growth, principal household projections, 'creeping' equality, moderate/trend house price and rental growth. The outputs of this scenario most closely reflect past trends.
Scenario 5: Slow Growth	Low inward migration reflecting below real terms income growth, greater inequality, moderately low / low house price and rental growth.
Scenario 6: Stalled Growth	Delay in recovery from Covid-19 pandemic to 2024 followed by moderate real terms income growth, principal projection, 'creeping' equality, moderate/ trend house price and rental growth.

Except the HNDA Tool default scenario, the existing need calculation was replaced by a local authority generated existing need figures, the view being that the default figures under-estimate increasing levels of homelessness arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, and other specialist housing requirements. These figures were also used to populate the responses to the Scottish Government's NPF4 minimum all-tenure housing land requirement (MATHLR) consultation in May 2021 in five of the six local authorities.

A wider housing market partnership was been established, allowing the project team to draw on the expertise of other housing, planning, economic development, health and regeneration partners, linking to specialist housing providers, lettings agents, tenant organisations, house builders, etc. This partnership has been a focal point for consultation and engagement at all key stages of the project with feedback informing the production of HNDA3. There were also three workshops that focussed on the results from the HNDA Tool and the Specialist Provision Chapter. All feedback received from the consultations was responded to and published on the webpage, showing how each comment had been addressed within the HNDA3 process.

HNDA3 was submitted to Scottish Government in March 2022 and it is anticipated it will take around six weeks to receive the formal appraisal

Masterplan for Upper Langlee, Galashiels Regeneration

The Council has been working closely with Waverley Housing to consider suitable options and progress regeneration of former public sector housing in and around the Beech Avenue area in Upper Langlee, Galashiels. In March 2021, planning consent was granted for 229 homes including the demolition of 159 homes.



Waverley Housing are progressing rehousing of remaining tenants affected by the intended block demolitions. Scottish Government have been supportive in working towards delivery of the regeneration vision and have assisted the rehousing effort by making available grant to assist Waverley Housing purchase a number of homes to provide additional rehousing options. In 2021, Waverley Housing funded and completed the refurbishment of the 68 flats being retained as one element of the regeneration strategy.

This is a high cost regeneration project with estimated costs in the region of £19.5m. This will be delivered over a number of financial years through a process including rehousing remaining tenants and demolition of vacant blocks. Waverley are working with a number of Utilities providers in order to clarify location of services to be retained, redirected or disconnected as a precursor to tendering for a demolition contractor.

South East Scotland City Region Deal

The Regional Housing Programme aims to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing and housing across all tenures, enable the development of seven major strategic housing sites and drive efficiencies across the public sector estate. It has two strategic objectives were identified for the Regional Housing Programme:

- Deliver a step change in innovation and inclusive growth in the housing and construction sectors; and
- Deliver a step change in the supply of new homes across the South East of Scotland

Regional partners collaborate, share best practices and lessons learned on strategic sites, infrastructure, affordable housing delivery, innovation, and skills.

There are seven strategic sites Blindwells, Calderwood, Dunfermline, Edinburgh's Waterfront, Shawfair, Winchburgh and Tweedbank in the Borders.

The Edinburgh City Region Housing programme also includes the Edinburgh Home Demonstrator project which will demonstrate the effectiveness of homes designed and constructed to net zero carbon, using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). MMC uses technology, new materials and contemporary on-site building techniques to improve efficiency and quality in buildings. Two Borders based RSLs have expressed interest in participating in this project and will be identifying potential sites in 2022/23. This work is in collaboration with:

- Scottish Government
- Scottish Futures Trust
- Off Site Solutions Scotland
- Edinburgh Napier University
- BE-ST (formerly Construction Scotland Innovation Centre)

Lowood, Tweedbank

At the Lowood site at Tweedbank there have been a number of developments through 2021/22:

- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Design Guide (DG) agreed by Council in June 2021
- In September 2021 Council approval secured in relation to the construction of road and service infrastructure into Business Zones 1 & 2 and into housing allocation.
- A planning application submitted for roads and service infrastructure was submitted in March 2022.

Further milestones looking ahead to 2022/23 will include:

- Establishment of Board to oversee delivery of housing, supported living and elderly care facilities at Tweedbank
- Identify funding for construction of a new bridge over the railway into the housing allocation;
- Anticipated approval of planning application for road and service infrastructure; and
- Preparation of a report to Council providing general update, information on Care Village proposals and information on the marketing strategy for the site.

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) is part of a national programme to conserve Scotland's traditional buildings and support the regeneration of town centres. CARS activity supports the Scheme of Assistance which helps address issues of housing quality and condition. Information and advice is provided

to owner occupiers, landlords and tenants of privately let properties; helping address disrepair and supporting owners of empty property to bring them back into use.

Jedburgh CARS



The scheme formally closed on 31st March 2022 with some projects granted a limited extension to complete works on site. At the end of year four a total of 59 individual grant awards were made for building repairs, towards 32 town centre buildings, totalling over £749k in spend.

Seven priority projects for Jedburgh CARS were offered funding totalling over £390k, including the Port House which is set to be in use again with the help of £187,500 of CARS funding. The Public Realm component of Jedburgh CARS was essential repairs to the Abbey Ramparts retaining wall. The works are now complete and the area re-opened to the public with very positive feedback received.

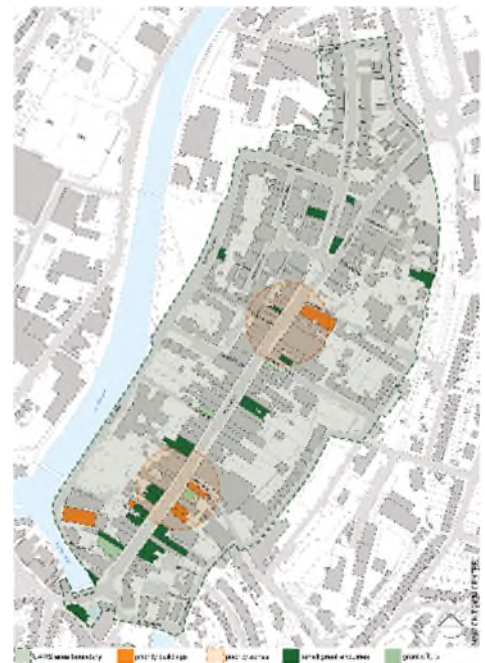
Jedburgh CARS successfully delivered, the project outputs identified at the outset of the scheme, and has also been successful in attracting some additional funding to support additional repair works in the town centre. The final year of the initiative was challenging, due to backlog of construction works, but the repair projects delivered have resulted in a significant impact within the town centre Conservation Area, and hopefully assist with the development of robust and sustainable regeneration opportunities for the future.

Hawick CARS

Hawick CARS formally launched in October 2019 and has been extended for an additional year due to Covid-19 until March 2025. Seven grant repair projects are now complete and awarded funding, and one is currently on site. Projects were able to progress on site once restrictions allowed, all of which provide a significant impact to the town centre due to their location and prominence on the high street.

Hawick CARS is also working with property owners to develop priority building repair projects at six locations in the town centre. Hawick CARS were delighted to issue grant offers for one of the more prominent priority buildings on the high street, which is in a bad state of repair. The project is 26, High Street – which has now been taken off of the buildings at risk register.

As per previous years, a complimentary missing shares initiative is available and delivered by Scottish Borders Council. This is a pilot scheme to run alongside Hawick CARS, originally for two years but now extended to the duration of the scheme. The scheme supports willing owners by paying the missing share of the contribution for essential works and recovers the cost.



Empty Homes

Scottish Borders Council now has a dedicated Empty Homes Officer working to actively engage with owners of Empty Homes across the Scottish Borders. Since starting in post, in August 2021, the Empty Homes Officer has an active case load of 110 empty homes, and has been making connections with owners, neighbours and communities being affected by empty homes.

This has been done by engaging with the owners of empty homes via direct lettering and promoting awareness of the advice, guidance and support that can be provided by the Council in relation to bring homes back into use. Also by responding to referrals from neighbours, councillors and council officers, actioning cases and attempting to engage with these owners, while also providing support and advice to the wider community who may be affected by a home being empty.

Projects Being Supported by the Empty Homes Officer



Eyemouth



Galashiels



Craic Forest



Roxburgh

Efforts have also been taken to ensure owners of Empty Homes are aware of all the support available to them including merchant discounts via The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership and potential VAT reductions and exemptions where applicable. As well as providing advice regarding council tax status and supporting applications of discretion where owners are active in bringing a home back into use.

In taking a data lead approach, work has been undertaken to review the data held on the empty homes within the Scottish Borders, which will create a framework for future activity. Further development of the existing Matchmaker scheme, to assist in connecting those looking to sell empty homes to those looking to buy projects to bring back into use. The intention behind this is to further promote the scheme with empty home owners looking to sell.

In understanding the issues around why homes become empty, the burden of cost is often cited as the greatest reason why action is not being taken. We are working towards launching an Empty Homes Grant

Scheme which will provide financial support directly to owners. Through the activity of the empty homes officer a number of projects have been identified that may benefit from this funding once available. The Empty Homes Office also presented at the Scottish Empty Homes Partnerships annual conference, highlighting the issues of Empty Homes in the Scottish Borders and the actions we are taking to bring these homes back into use.

3. Good Quality and Energy Efficient Homes

Addressing Priority 2: More People Live In Good Quality, Energy Efficient Homes

Highlights

- Scottish Borders Council received £1.78m EES:ABS funding for the 2021/22 scheme year.
- Scottish Borders Council have been allocated £1.8m grant funding from Scottish Government for 2022/23 EES: ABS Programme
- EES:ABS delivered renewable technology and decarbonised energy via ASHP systems in off gas areas and Solar PV Battery Storage
 - Ongoing focus on fabric first Internal Wall Insulation across the region
 - 6,391 advice interactions with Home Energy Scotland
- 4,949 registered landlords and 7,760 private rented properties at the end of the period
- 1,105 instances of support and advice administered to landlords
- Scheme of Assistance provided 38 instances of practical support to landlords and tenants

Covid-19 Impact

There continued to be significant challenges involved with delivering energy efficiency programmes across both the private and social sectors and works had to be delivered in line with Covid-19 restrictions. As restrictions eased then works could start again and be delivered in line with recommended Covid safety guidelines. There were some ongoing issues with the supply chain.

Private sector property inspections were impacted also. Initially and where possible these were carried out virtually, in person inspections being carried out in emergencies only. There were also impacts upon CARs, Scheme of Assistance and Missing Shares initiatives. As restrictions eased activities were able to resume.

Climate Emergency

On the 25th September 2020 Scottish Borders Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to a target of net carbon zero in line with government targets. The commitment adds further impetus to the need for an active delivery of the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEES).

The climate declaration supports the national commitment to achieving a net zero carbon in Scotland by 2045. The Scottish Borders can play its part in this by providing more energy efficient housing and affordable warmth as well as promoting decarbonisation, energy efficiency, sustainability and renewable technology within the region.

Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy

To support Priority 2 of the LHS the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) was launched in 2019. The Strategy runs to 2023 and is reviewed regularly by the Borders Home Energy Forum. It takes lead and inspiration from commitments on fuel poverty and home energy efficiency, as well as the ongoing wider Scottish Government support, to provide an effective Strategy that delivers for all in the Scottish Borders.

AWHEES continued to be a key strategy for SBC. The Scottish Borders Home Energy Forum continued to meet remotely during pandemic and supported the sharing of best practice by stakeholders during these difficult times which was invaluable. The Forum continues to inform delegates and share updates and best practice which, during the Covid pandemic was valuable in understanding responses to restrictions and how to best service householders and tenants.

The Strategy provides actions to deliver affordable warmth for those that need it most, and a commitment to increase the energy efficiency of all homes regardless of circumstance – providing multiple benefits that reach out to the householder, providers and the wider supply chain.

Covering the period 2019-23, the Vision is that ‘more people live in energy efficient and affordably warm homes’. The Priorities that work towards fulfilling this Vision are:

- Priority 1: To collectively work with our partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes.
- Priority 2: To explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home.
- Priority 3: To ensure that the AWHEEs provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders.

The first three years of this Strategy have now been implemented and a separate update report is currently being prepared.

SBC’s ongoing support and activity in relation to affordable warmth and energy efficiency will continue to be prioritised through the Local Housing Strategy, as a statutory requirement. This will be further supported by development and then delivery of a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, which also must be in place by the end of December 2023. This will be identified as key action in the LHS 2023-2028.

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) will be a key strategy and delivery programme for all local authorities to provide a long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings and improving energy efficiency across an entire local authority area. The 2 core drivers are:

- Reduce energy demand
- Decarbonise heat supply

LHEES are a place based, locally-led and tailored approach, covering a period of up to 20 years, with detailed actions set out in shorter term Delivery Plans.

Every building in the region will be assessed and have a plan to enable energy use reduction. Scottish Borders Council will consolidate energy reduction strategies, schemes and future plans within a cohesive overarching strategy. The LHEES cover all sectors: Domestic, Non-Domestic & Public Buildings and provides a framework for taking an area-based approach to heat and energy efficiency planning and delivery.

SBC are working with Scottish Government and internal colleagues to develop the LHEES in line with government timings and prescribed phased approach, taking due consideration of the LHEES priorities for delivery. SBC will be engaging with key regional stakeholders and ensuring that the LHEES aligns with



ongoing and existing priorities and council strategies and areas of delivery such as Climate Change and Sustainability.

Eildon Housing Association’s Green Homes Pilot

Four of Eildon Housing Association’s affordable housing projects have been selected for inclusion in the Pilot, which will involve the design, development and delivery of around 30 homes, using three different energy efficient solutions such as Passivhaus, Energiesprong and Off-site construction/ Volumetric Design, alongside a 12 house traditional build “control” project. Construction work on these homes started in March 2021. This follows on from the Association’s first Passivhaus development comprising 3 houses at Springfield Terrace Street Boswells which was completed in March 2020.

Independent monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by the Mackintosh Environmental Architecture Research Unit within the Mackintosh School of Architecture. The outcomes of the research will inform the Association’s new build design guide and its approach to component replacement and energy efficiency in existing properties. It will also influence the Association’s Rent Setting Policy.

Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes

The key delivery channel for addressing fuel poverty and improving domestic energy efficiency is the Energy Efficiency Scotland: Area Based Scheme (EES:ABS) This remains the cornerstone of both the Scottish Government’s and Local Authority’s energy efficiency improvements for private domestic properties since 2013.

Programmes typically involve the installation of “fabric first” external and internal wall insulation as well as cavity wall insulation. Recently the scope of eligible measures has widened with renewable technologies and decarbonisation playing an increasingly important role. In the last year Scottish Borders Council has introduced Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP), and Solar Photovoltaic and battery storage (PV Battery) to the programme and will be doing so in the next scheme year.

Over the period April 2013 to December 2021 Scottish Borders Council has secured **£15.3m** in funding to deliver the programmes. Table 1 shows a summary of outputs from April 2013 to December 2021.

Table 1: Summary of outputs April 2013 December 2021	
Summary	
Measures installed	4,494
Households supported	over 3,580

In the financial year 2021/22 Scottish Borders Council were awarded a cumulative total of £1.786m in EES:ABS funding. The Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a detrimental and had a significant impact on the programme’s delivery. Despite delivering within this challenging environment 155 of the 271 anticipated measures were installed, supporting over 125 households.

Table 2: Anticipated EES:ABS programme for 2021/22	
Description	2021/22
EES:ABS Funding	£1,785,667
Total Funding	£1,785,667
Hard to treat CWI (CWI Solution)	65
Internal Wall Insulation (Solid Wall)	56
Air Source Heat Pump	35
PV & Battery	55
Total Measures	271

ECO funding has been minimal over the last delivery cycle and as we move towards the revised ECO 4 the funding is no longer able to be used alongside EES:ABS funding. SBC and delivery partners have allowed for this by modelling spend on projects within ECO input. Ensuring that all other potential funding streams or uplifts are utilised and considered when developing EES projects.

As the new EES:ABS scheme mobilises and without Covid restrictions the aim is to return to local community events held to raise awareness of the schemes with residents (where safe to do so and in line with Scottish Government Covid-19 guidelines).

Furthermore, the project has partnered with Home Energy Scotland to run after-care events providing further support where external wall insulation measures have been installed.

Monitoring and evaluation activities this year include customer satisfaction surveys; energy usage monitoring and; enhanced monitoring on a sample to households to include effect on temperature and energy and carbon reduction.

Externall Wall Insulation in Kelso



Home Energy Scotland Referrals

Home Energy Scotland (HES) is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Energy Saving Trust to provide free and impartial advice on ways to save energy, reduce fuel bills and make homes cheaper and easier to heat.

They have a network of five advice centres across Scotland to help them reach householders, community organisations, businesses and local authorities in order to reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions. One advice centre covers the South East of Scotland and has good contacts and knowledge of the Borders.



SBC and stakeholders will always look to signpost or recommend householders speak to HES regarding energy matters and wider energy advice. The service acts as a referral mechanism to enable local householders to register for schemes such as EES:ABS and Warm & Well where appropriate.

They can provide advice on energy efficiency, switching suppliers, renewables, saving water, sustainable transport and refer people for benefits and tax checks. With increased concern and uncertainty due to increasing energy costs this service is as important as ever. Table 3 shows the last six years of interactions data from Home Energy Scotland for the Scottish Borders. Event numbers have been impacted by Covid restrictions, but there has been a big increase in social media and email interactions.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Inbound calls	1,175	934	1,245	1,130	1,039	1,130
Outbound calls	592	705	977	558	2,330	1,141
Events	299	1,379	945	516	43	17
Other (e.g. emails, letters, home visits)	2,521	2,106	2,244	2,973	2,089	4,103
Total advice interactions	4,587	5,124	5,411	5,117	5,501	6,391

Borders Home Energy Forum

The Borders Home Energy Forum continues to ensure that a strategic, multi-agency approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency and improve health and well-being in the Scottish Borders, particularly for the most vulnerable households within the region.

The Partnership comprises organisations representing housing associations, statutory bodies, advisory groups, bodies associated with energy, affordable warmth, health and income maximisation, and representatives from Scottish Borders Council. The forum continues to attract new members as more groups are established in the region to address climate change challenges and promote energy efficiency and affordable warmth within local communities. The Forum has acted as a catalyst for building collective support for ongoing strategies including;

- Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy
- EES:ABS and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)
- Funding opportunities such as the Warm and Well project
- Joint proposals have been planned and submitted by RSLs
- Upcoming funding opportunities are being discussed proactively and in advance of calls being released
- Facilitated the recent establishment of a new Construction Sector and Supply Chain Forum

- LHEES. Awareness of Scottish Government requirements and facilitate joint working and identifying areas of opportunity

It has additionally served as a platform to promote and facilitate measures and schemes that target alleviating fuel poverty and increasing energy efficiency in households; as well as improving health and wellbeing. The forum has continued to meet online and has been able to have guest speakers and new members attend the meetings. We have had ongoing attendance from the Highlands & Islands Housing Forum (and in turn attending their forum meetings) which continues to facilitate knowledge sharing and highlighting common issues that rural areas face while collectively seeking solutions. This has been especially useful during the recent energy cost increases.

Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (ESSH & ESSH 2)

The Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. The first milestone (ESSH 1) was for all applicable social housing to have reached the minimum rating of no lower than an EPC C or D by 31st December 2020. RSLs across the region achieved a cumulative average ESSH percentage of 92%.

RSLs are now working towards the ESSH 2 standards. The latest performance measured against the existing ESSH 1 standard is 91.2%. This represents a very slight decrease on last year and is due in part to reassessing some EPCs as part of wider stock review. ESSH compliance in the four local Housing Associations is:

- Berwickshire Housing Association: 76%
- Eildon Housing Association: 95%
- SBHA: 98%
- Waverley Housing: 96%

ESSH 2 Standard and timescales

A second milestone was confirmed in June 2019, for social rented houses to meet ESSH by December 2032

...“All social housing meets, or can be treated as meeting, EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible, by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent”...

RSLs will continue to develop and deliver scheduled maintenance and improvement programmes to address the ESSH2 standards across their housing stock. ESSH 2 represents a much higher EPC standard and will be more challenging and costly for RSLs to attain. The higher EPC reflects the government’s wider push for more energy efficient housing across Scotland.

Warm & Well Borders - 2

Scottish Borders Council previously secured two years of funding worth £551,000, from National Grid’s Warm Homes Fund to deliver the “Warm and Well Borders” project. The scheme was able to support 771 households and secured benefits and savings of £1.2 million for households across the region.

Primarily focussing on supporting householders in or at risk of fuel poverty, as the increasingly concern and uncertainty over energy price increases came into effect, more people within the region were impacted by fuel poverty drivers. The importance of the scheme and the support was increasingly required.

Following on from the initial success in the two year pilot, Warm and Well have been working with SBC colleagues and have been able to secure a further 12 months extension of the scheme in partnership with the Borders Citizens Advice Bureau. This has enabled the great work and support the service provides to continue, particularly in instances of fuel poverty and uncertainty around energy price increases.



Private Landlord Registration

Landlord registration allows local authorities to control and regulate who can operate legitimately as a private landlord. This provides Scottish Borders Council with an effective tool for dealing with the worst performing landlords who, by their behaviour and attitude, mismanage their properties or fail to act in respect of their anti-social tenants and cause misery for their own tenants, other tenants, neighbours and communities. At the end of the 2021/22 period there were 4,959 registered landlords and 7,760 properties within the private rented sector in the Scottish Borders. There were also 609 expired registrations at the end of the period, and the number of HMO properties was lower than the end of the last year at 51 compared to 59.

In recent years emphasis has shifted from registration enforcement to a liaison and support service for landlords and tenants. The service is focused on engagement and enforcement is only applied as a last resort. Key engagement activities include:

- Scrutinising prescribed information provided on applications and liaising with landlords where there are anomalies. This is an important point of engagement, landlords are offered guidance on legislation relating to letting properties. Rental properties are being improved as a result and landlords also gain a better understanding of the obligations when letting in the private sector.
- Prescribed information also includes for the provision of Energy Performance Certificates. Landlords are becoming increasingly aware of the need for energy efficiency and proposed future energy standards affecting the rental market. Advice and support is offered through our liaison service.
- To address repairing standard issues, advice is provided to landlords following property inspection. This was picked up remotely during the pandemic but as restrictions have eased home inspections have returned.
- In support of the Ukraine crisis, where homes or accommodation is being offered by the community, property condition inspections have been managed by the Housing Strategy team. Inspections that are required are allocated to a dedicated in-house team and properties are being inspected using the Scottish Government's Quality Assurance Housing Checklist. During inspections, the team are also responsible for the verification of identity documentation for disclosure purposes.
- Throughout the pandemic Officers have continued to support landlords by providing the latest Scottish Government Guidance; information on financial help available and how to go about daily

landlord activities including what checks should be being completed and how to undertake viewings. This information is also available on our website which has been regularly updated throughout the pandemic. Enforcement actions have resumed. Where a landlord continues to be adversely affected financially by Covid- 19 we will offer advice and guidance.

Throughout the year courtesy reminder letters are now sent to landlords prior to expiration of their registration – with 653 courtesy final reminders being sent over the year. This has resulted in fewer complaints in regard to late fees being applied. There have also been 461 follow up actions taken in relation to late registration during the year, which includes letters, phone calls and visits. In addition records in regard to prescribed information are being kept so that targeted advice can be provided to landlords to assist them with these forms, which has been supported by 1,105 instances of support and advice surrounding issues such as referrals and tenancies.

Despite the pandemic Scottish Borders Council continued to work in conjunction with Landlord Accreditation Scotland to provide training for landlords. Training moved to a virtual classroom, making it more accessible for many of the region’s landlords the latest session was preparation for possession actions.

Scheme of Assistance

The Scheme of Assistance helps to achieve the Local Housing Strategy’s vision, with particular contribution to Priorities 1, 2 and 4. These priorities are supported through a range of services which:

- Help older people and people with disabilities who are living in the private sector to make adaptations to their homes ensuring that they are able to live in a safe environment within their own property (Priority 4)
- Working with Environmental Health and Building Standards to address disrepair in private sector homes (Priority 2)
- Ensuring that properties in the Private Rented Sector meet the repairing standard and providing advice to both tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities
- Support owners of empty property to bring them back into use (Priority 1 & 2)

The Scheme of Assistance offers:

- Information and advice for private sector housing residents on home repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations.
- Common repairs work, engaging with and bringing together multiple owners to resolve complex repairs.
- Working with Building Standards to deliver enforcement work
- Financial help to cover some (or all) of the costs of eligible major adaptations.
- Information and advice to support empty homes owners to bring them back into use.

During the period 2021/22, 38 instances of practical assistance were given in the private sector including advice on repair and maintenance including common repair; empty homes advice; support to landlords and tenants and, as a last resort, enforcement.



In addition, general information and advice was also provided in regard to private property house condition concerns.

Missing Shares Scheme

In 2019 Scottish Borders Council agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme in the Scottish Borders. Initially this pilot targeted the Hawick Conservation Area over a two year period. The Missing Shares scheme operates in tandem with the Scheme of Assistance and primarily supports activity through the approved Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. Progress in the delivery of the missing shares scheme has been hampered by Covid-19, in light of this the scheme has been extended until the 31st March 2025 to mirror the duration of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.

4. Homelessness

Addressing Priority 3: Fewer People Are Affected By Homelessness

Highlights:

- During 2021/2022 the Housing support team received 265 new referrals. 83% of cases have been closed due to a successfully completed intervention.
- 94% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, where there was a known outcome, secured settled accommodation.
- Thirteen applications to the Housing Intervention Fund were approved in 2021/2022, total spend within this fund since launch has been £30,598.
- Homelessness services have distributed 20 iPads, 28 Chromebooks and 51 MIFI devices to 56 households in 2021/2022 through Connecting Borders.

Covid-19- Impact

Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHP) members continued to be at the front line of the Covid 19 crisis during 2021/22 and remain focussed to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness continued to receive the services and support they require. Homelessness services were delivered by telephone wherever possible, however, given the vulnerable nature of many homeless households, face to face access and support was provided where required.

To move forward into recovery from the pandemic, homelessness services and RSLs worked in partnership to significantly increase the stock of temporary homeless accommodation and ensured homeless applicants had continued access to permanent accommodation and support.

As part of the national public health response, local authority homelessness services across the country continued to have temporary additional duties to provide temporary accommodation regardless of an applicant's entitlement to public funds. Within the Scottish Borders temporary homeless accommodation was provided to three households with no recourse to public funds.

Changes to legislation relating to the Local Connection which were set to be introduced during 2020/2021 were further delayed into 2022/23.

Homeless Presentations

There was a 1% increase in statutory homeless presentations in 2021/2022 compared to 2020/2021, the response to each case continues to be increasingly complex and services had to adapt quickly to ensure every household had a place to stay. The percentage of applicants declaring 'Dispute within Household: Violent or abusive' as their reason for homelessness reduced by 3% in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

Key Homelessness Statistics

- 774 households approached Scottish Borders Council’s Homelessness team for advice and/or assistance.
- 692 households presented as statutory homeless, a 1% increase compared to 2020/2021. This is in aligned to the national data trend across Scotland which saw a 3% increase in homeless presentations during 2021/22.
- 577 households were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, this is an increase of 3% from 2020/2021. Of which, 566 were assessed as ‘unintentionally’ homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- The level of repeat homelessness applications in the Scottish Borders remains low, with 3% of applicants assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness having applied within the previous year.
- 94% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless, where there was a known outcome, secured settled accommodation. This compares favourably with the 2020/2021 national average of 82%.
- Contact with unintentionally homeless households was maintained until closure in 93% of cases, broadly in keeping with the 2019/2020 national average of 95%.
- For homelessness cases that closed in 2021/22 it took an average of 168 days from assessment to closure, this has increased from 141 days in 2020/2021 but compares favourably to the national average for 2021/2022 of 256 days.
- The proportion of homelessness assessment decisions completed within 28 days increased to 89% in 2021/22 compared to 86% in 2020/21.
- 277 statutory homeless cases were open at the start of the period and 327 cases at close of the period. An 18% increase in open statutory homeless applications during the period.

Care Leavers

The Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders, which was developed and implemented in partnership between Scottish Borders Council and the four locally based Registered Social Landlords in 2017/2018, seeks to ensure that the priority accommodation and support needs of care leavers are recognised in order that their needs for suitable housing are met in a planned and sustainable way. Key partners continued to support the ‘Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways’ to ensure that the housing needs of our care leavers are met in a planned coordinated way.

Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone’ (SHORE) standards

The Scottish Borders Council Homeless Service is the interface point for people leaving prison who have no fixed address.

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2022
28	34	21	23

In Scotland, the Scottish Prison Service and partners launched the Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards in December 2017. These standards represent a good example of preventative measures, which aim ‘to ensure that the housing needs of individuals in prison are handled at an early stage, in a consistent way across Scotland.

A multiagency SHORE working Group was established in the Scottish Borders in 2021/2022, key actions to date include;

- Further development of the information sharing protocol to allow sharing of information from the Scottish Prison Service with the four local RSL's to promote homeless prevention activities, the new arrangements will be implemented in 2022/2023.
- Developing a shared understanding of homelessness prevention activities when a tenant is incarcerated to ensure a consistent approach and support the no wrong door initiative.

Explored the potential to launch bail supervision and home leave accommodation pilot which will be jointly managed by Justice and Homelessness Services. Working with the local RSL's it is hoped two properties will be identified in 2022/2023 to be used for this purpose.

Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP)

The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) was established in 2018/19. The BHHSP includes senior officers from Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders with responsibility in homelessness, health and social care, public health, social work, property management and housing strategy. The four locally based Registered Social Landlords have representation from senior officers. The BHHSP has a key focus on the implementation of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. During 2021/2022 the work of the BHHSP was significantly impacted by Covid-19 pressures.

Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)

Rapid Rehousing is a key component of the whole-system approach whereby the responsibility for tackling homelessness lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support. The Covid-19 emergency has delayed the full application of resources and has consequently impacted on the development of the Borders RRTP.

We are mindful of the changing landscape brought about by the Covid-19 emergency and Ukrainian programme and the impact this has had on the development of our RRTP. As a result it has been agreed that the RRTP action plan should undergo a review to reconsider the priorities of the BHHSP during 2022/2023.

Housing First Service

Housing First provides general settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs, recognising that a safe and secure home is the best base for recovery, it offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs.

Scottish Borders Council in partnership with Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association, Waverley Housing and Cyrenians launched the Scottish Borders Housing First pilot in October of 2021. The pilot is funded for 2 years from monies received from the Scottish Governments Ending Homelessness Together funds and aims to provide housing and support to 30 households over the two year period.

Cyrenians are a homeless charity that tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness supporting people towards more positive and stable futures. The support provided by Cyrenians is person centered and tailored around the needs of the individual on an assertive outreach basis. Support empowers

individuals to develop towards their full potential and works closely with specialized services such and addiction services.

Crisis and Housing Intervention Funds

The Housing Intervention Fund is a discretionary fund aimed at preventing homelessness for households in rent arrears and at risk of homelessness.

Prior to making an application to the Housing Intervention Fund reasonable steps should have been taken to address the rent arrears by other means. Homelessness Officers work in collaboration with both the applicant and other interested parties to bridge that gap and help the customer remain in their tenancy. The applicant's landlord and the homelessness team are required to work together to ensure reasonable milestones are met by the applicant that aim to address the underlying cause of the arrears.

Thirteen applications to the Housing Intervention Fund were approved in 2021/2022, total spend within this fund since launch has been £30,598.

This fund successfully prevented the eviction of a large family who were accommodated in two tenancies with two separate RSL's, which was a really positive outcome for the household.

The second fund to launch in 2021/2022 was the Homelessness Intervention Fund accessible by front line workers within homelessness services to use in the prevention or resolution of homelessness. This fund has been very well used, including assisting applicants to access identification documents, allowing them to open a bank account enables better budgeting skills, attend community based activities to assist them to integrate into their locality.

Digital Inclusion

Housing access and housing stability can be greatly improved for those who have consistent access to the range of services that are offered digitally. Homeless applicants are often digitally excluded and assessment process have been reviewed to help identify homeless or potentially homeless households who require additional support in this area. Homelessness services welcomed the launch of Connecting Borders and have worked closely with the Live Borders team in the provision of 20 iPads, 28 Chromebooks and 51 MIFI devices to 56 households in 2021/2022. Several officers from the homelessness service have completed 'Digital Champion' training to support people to use both devices and the internet confidently and safely. The RRTTP will continue to explore ways of getting homeless households digitally included throughout its lifespan.

Housing Support

265 new referrals have been received into service. The Housing Support team have continued to provide vital service provision to supported people throughout 2021/2022. 83% of cases have been closed due to interventions being successfully completed. There were 415 cases open within Housing Support Services during 2021/22.

We sought the views of our partners in 2021 in order to improve practices, identify service development opportunities and contribute to improvement planning. The survey in cooperated different areas of service delivery, accessibility, communication, partnership working, quality of service and

responsiveness. 94.4% agree or strongly agreed that the Housing Support team provide high quality support.

'Professional involvement. Team have been helpful and gone out of their way to support our service.'

'Always go above and beyond to help.'

The Housing support Team sought feedback from the support people during 2021. 100% of feedback received confirmed they were satisfied with the service they received. 100% of the feedback received supported people advised they had achieved the personal goal set out in their support plan.

'At a time in my life which I found extremely challenging it was incredible to find such a wonderful and kind team of people to help get safely through it! I felt truly blessed.'

'Can't believe the support I got'

During 2021/22 Housing Support staff were consulted on service delivery, management and Leadership, Training and development, staffing and COVID-19.

'I find my role well managed and supported with appropriate training and access to regular updates on changes to benefits/services that are relevant to communicate to our clients. We have a very positive team dynamic, which makes working with complex and challenging cases more manageable.'

'I feel well informed and confident to perform my duties during the various challenges Covid-19 can present to front line working.'

5. Support to Live Independently

Addressing Priority 4: More People Are Supported To Live Independently In Their Own Homes

Highlights

- 39 Extra Care Housing units completed by Eildon at Wilkie Gardens, Galashiels
- Delivered 48 wheelchair standard homes
- HNDA sub group progressed work on Special Housing Provision
- During the 2021/22 a total of £129,273.37 was spent on adaptations in the private sector
- 33 major adaptations delivered
- Borders Care & Repair were awarded £5,000 to supply and install smoke alarms for those on low incomes to comply with updated Scottish Government Legislation on Fire Safety and detection Borders Care & Repair assisted 21 households to the end of March 2022, fitting a total of 78 units. Works were carried forward into 2022/23 with an additional £10,000 funding made available for the region.

Covid-19 Impact

Whilst the impact of Covid-19 can be felt, there are been a lot of progress over 2021/22 with new extra care housing being delivered. Covid-19 has continued to impact upon delivery of major adaptations where numbers were down but these are starting to rise from numbers in 2020 when there was tighter restrictions.

Extra Care Housing

39 units were completed by Eildon Housing Association at Wilkie Gardens, Galashiels in November 2021.



Extra Care Housing at Wilkie Gardens, Galashiels

Following Covid related reprogramming, the next project is now underway at the former High School Kelso which is being converted and remodelled by Eildon Housing Association to form 36 flats. Current information estimates that this will complete in summer 2023.

“The Integrated Strategic Plan for Older Peoples Housing Care and Support 2018-28” also identified the issue of ‘not fit for purpose’ older person’s housing. Council Housing Strategy staff have met with all the RSLs with affected housing stock regarding this issue, most of which are developing their respective asset management and investment strategies. Therefore it is envisaged that affected RSLs will bring forward future project proposals to address these issues through potential modernisation and/or remodelling in due course. Eildon Housing Association has 2 such projects in this SHIP, i.e. Elm Court Hawick which is pending handover, and Oakwood Park Galashiels which is under construction. In addition, in 2021/22 Cairn Housing Association completed a project at Abbotsford Court Galashiels. Finally Berwickshire Housing Association are considering additional potential remodelling opportunities for their development at Gowanlea in Coldstream

Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target

During the period 2021-2022, Registered Social Landlords delivered 48 wheelchair standard homes. These were located as follows, 2 houses at Beanburn Phase 1 in Ayton by Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association delivered 7 flats at Huddersfield Street Galashiels and all 39 flats within the Wilkie Gardens Extra Care Housing development in Galashiels. However, no wheelchair standard homes were delivered by the private sector.

To set this in some context, during 2020-2021, RSLs delivered 2 wheelchair standard flats, and the private sector delivered none. Delivery of new housing typically has a 3 to 4 year lead in time from design to completion. Covid related factors have delayed construction work and delayed previously planned site starts dates during 2020-2021. RSLs have demonstrated their support and willingness to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible homes through the Affordable Housing programme, and it is envisaged that RSL funding bids to the Community Renewal Fund may potentially also contribute to boosting delivery of new homes.

Therefore it is anticipated that increased numbers of wheelchair accessible homes will be delivered by RSLs in future years. However effort will have to be made to encourage delivery of wheelchair accessible homes from the private house builders.

HNDA Specialist Provision

As part of the development of the third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) a sub group was established to work specifically on the Specialist Housing Provision section. Based on the previous HNDA, this was an area that required more focus and as a result four members of the project team have been meeting regularly to work on this section.

Specialist Provision refers to three broad categories of need covering six types of housing or housing-related provision. These support independent living for as long as possible and help to enable people to live well and with dignity.

The group have worked on developing a comprehensive specialist housing section of the HNDA3 that meets all the core outputs:

- Identifies the contribution that Specialist Provision plays in enabling people to live well, with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

- Identifies any gap(s)/ shortfall(s) in that provision and the future level and type of provision required.
- Considers evidence regarding property needs, care and support needs and locational/ land needs.
- Undertakes consultation with all appropriate stakeholders who represent the views of those people who this chapter may impact upon and reports on the findings of such consultation.
- Gives due consideration to the provisions of the Equality Act (2010)

Borders Care and Repair



Caring, Committed, Connected, Creative

Scottish Borders Council has a contract with Eildon Housing Association to deliver the Borders Care and Repair Service.

The aim of the service is to enable older people and people with disabilities living in the private sector to have warm, well maintained and safe homes. Care & Repair helps to achieves this by:

- Providing help and advice on housing repairs, improvements and adaptations, and to ensure the work is carried out in accordance with The Care & Repair Standards.
- Providing a Home Handyperson service to help to support community care groups (prioritising older people and people with disabilities), to continue to live at home through the provision of practical household help and support.

The service is available to:

- home owners over 60 years of age
- private tenants over 60 years of age
- disabled owners or private tenants of any age



Disabled Adaptation Outcomes

A major adaptation involves permanent changes to the structure of a person's home. These works are subject to mandatory grant provision and are prioritised for financial assistance by Scottish Borders Council. These include:

- Provision of standard amenities which can include an extension to provide any or all of the standard amenities;
- Provision of structural adaptations with the exception of extensions, to provide living accommodation.

During the 2021/22 period a total of £129,273.37 was spent on adaptations throughout the region in the private sector. Recovery from Covid-19 restrictions remained an issue but despite this a total of 33 adaptations were delivered. Table 5 details the types of adaptations that were installed within the Scottish Borders.

Adaptation Type	Number Completed
Curved Stair Lift	4
Door Widening & Replacement	1
External Ramp	4
Level Access Shower	15
Rails	1
Stairlift	3
Wet Floor Shower	2
Wet Room	1
Through Floor Lift	1
Modular Ramp	1
Total	33

Within the Scottish Borders there are currently 914 signed up members subscribed to the Handyperson Service. During 2021/22, the Care and Repair Handyperson Service fitted a total of 1,943 grab rails, at a total cost of £8,388. Table 6 details information on small repairs and adaptations and the Handyperson's Service.

	Number Completed	Spend
Small Repairs & Adaptations	199	£44,874
Handyperson Jobs	3,931	Subscription Service

In 2011 there was a significant move to the development of a 'One Stop Shop' model for all adaptations in the Borders, which was achieved through an agreement with each of the four larger Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This provides a consistent adaptation service to all people in the Borders regardless of tenure.

Through the One Stop Shop approach, Care and Repair effectively spend the funding awarded from the Scottish Government national budget, referred to as Stage 3 funding, for each of the RSLs. Table 7 details the number of major adaptations and spend by each RSL.

During 2021/22, Borders Care & Repair were awarded £5,000 to supply and install smoke alarms, supporting those on low incomes to meet the new Scottish Government legislation on Fire safety and detection. Funding came from Scottish Government and was distributed by Care & Repair Scotland. Access to funding was for those aged over 60 or any age with a disability who owned their own home, property was council tax band A-C and with a qualifying benefit of either Pension Credit or Employment Support Allowance. Borders Care & Repair assisted 21 households to the end of March 2022, fitting a total of 78 units. Works were carried forward into 2022/23 with an additional £10,000 funding made available for the region.

RSL	Number Completed	Spend
Berwickshire Housing Association	11	£60,518
Eildon Housing Association	22	£82,176
Scottish Borders Housing Association	26	£155,171
Waverley Housing	13	£47,972
Total	72	£345,837

6. Developments for the year ahead

The period 2021/22 has seen changes to all of our lives, the ways in which we work have changed. Housing services across the Scottish Borders have had to innovate in the way we interact with service users to continue to provide an excellent service that is inclusive to all. Housing will play a key part in the economic recovery of the country as well as addressing some of the inequalities that exist within our society. There are a number of key challenges that residents face in the Scottish Borders, including:

Legacy of Covid

COVID-19 had a huge impact on all aspects of our lives, and it continues to do so. It slowed down the provision of essential services and the delivery of projects across the Scottish Borders – from housebuilding to landlord engagement and enforcement – with many services being moved online. While its impact is still being felt across the region, and the country, the council, RSLs and other services are on their way back to normal operations which aim to catch back up after the pandemic.

War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has forced thousands of people to flee the country and seek refuge elsewhere. In order to support the ongoing crisis private households have been encouraged to host displaced people from Ukraine. Housing Strategy Policy and Development have contributed to the development and co-ordination of housing and disclosure checks which ultimately will provide affected persons with homes in the Scottish Borders

Cost of Living Crisis

The cost of living crisis and rise in energy prices is having an impact on households in the Scottish Borders. The region is an area that already has higher than average levels of fuel poverty and the cost of living crisis will only make this more profound. It is important that we make efforts to combat this and make sure that people are able to live in safe and warm homes no matter where they stay.

The year ahead will see continued efforts to help ensure that every person in the Scottish Borders lives in a home that meets their needs, through the delivery of more affordable homes; ensuring people live in good quality, energy efficient homes and ensuring people have the support that they need to live independently. Scottish Borders Council greatly appreciate the hard work that our local partners and communities have contributed towards the delivery of our ambitious targets set out in the LHS and will continue to build on those excellent foundations, maintaining the momentum of delivering on the Local Housing Strategy.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028

The SHIP 2023/28 is due to be submitted to Scottish Ministers by the 31st of October 2022. Uncertainties in the housing sector and higher costs will impact the delivery of the SHIP but Scottish Borders Council will continue to work closely with RSLs to deliver affordable housing across the Scottish Borders. The council and its partners have been advised to plan on the basis of a £16m allocation for 2022/23.

Preparatory work has started to draft the next SHIP 2023/28. Current indications are that, all being well, up to 211 affordable homes could potentially be delivered during the 2022/23 period.

Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Work has begun on the next Local Housing Strategy and it will cover the period 2023-2028. This new plan will build on the significant progress made on the issues identified in the current LHS 2017-2022 and will address newly arising housing matters particularly in response to the publication of new LHS guidance and the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are four stages to the preparation and delivery of the next LHS:

- Stage 1 – Preparation
- Stage 2 – Early engagement and evidence gathering
- Stage 3 – Preparation of first draft
- Stage 4 – Formal consultation

Scottish Borders Council have commissioned Altair Ltd to carry out consultation and engagement (stage 2) throughout 2021. In early 2023 the proposed LHS will be presented to the appropriate Council Committee for consideration and, if approved, will be submitted to the Scottish Government no later than the 31st of March 2023.

Housing to 2040

Published in March 2021 Housing to 2040 is Scotland's first long-term national housing strategy with a vision for what we want housing to look like and how it will be provided to the people of Scotland, no matter where they live and what point in their life they are at. Housing to 2040 sets out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. It aims to deliver upon the ambition that everyone should have a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be.

The vision and underpinning principles inform the Housing to 2040 route map and describe the ambition for everyone to have access to a warm, safe, affordable and energy efficient home that meets their needs, in a community they feel part of and proud of. Housing to 2040 sets a new ambition to deliver 100,000 affordable homes by 2031/32 which will make an important contribution to tackling child poverty and continuing work towards ending homelessness.

It puts place at the heart of the strategy, with an intention to invest in our town centres and make it easier for homes to be the heart of strong communities with housing that is well designed, without compromising on the aesthetics. Housing to 2040 also aims to take action to stem rural depopulation and help communities in all corners of Scotland to thrive.

Private Sector House Condition

The private sector is the biggest tenure in the Scottish Borders with a large percentage of the population either owning their own homes or renting privately. One of the key challenges in this sector is to ensure everyone is living in good quality homes. Good quality housing makes an important contribution to many aspects of a successful Scottish Borders including supporting local economies, improving individual's health and well-being and by making communities safer.



We will continue to work to improve our understanding of the condition of private sector housing. Through review of the scheme of assistance and considering exploration into introducing a Private Sector Housing Condition Improvement Action Plan. The scheme of assistance and plan will set out how Scottish Borders Council, with partners, will support the improvement of private sector house conditions by supporting property repair and maintenance and property standards across tenures

The team has worked closely with landlords, developing new processes to improve our service and have engaged with them throughout the pandemic, providing relevant and up to date advice on Scottish Borders Council website along with support from our Private Sector Liaison and Enforcement Officer, who has been on hand to advise local landlords. The team will continue to support landlords moving forward for example keeping landlords up to date with proposed changes within the sector.

Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Living in a warm, comfortable and energy efficient home is something that everyone should have access to and this is why it is a priority in the LHS. The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy was originally conceived and developed in 2018/19 and will be implemented by March 2023.

Affordable warmth and energy efficiency will be remain a key area of focus in the next Local Housing Strategy 2023-28. In addition, Using the powers under Section 44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order is expected to come in to force in 2022 and will place a statutory duty on local authorities to produce Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies and Delivery Plans by 31 December 2023, and subsequently on a 5 yearly cycle, in line with guidance provided by Scottish Ministers.

With resource funding now confirmed officers, alongside relevant stakeholders, have considered options for initiating the development of the LHEES strategy and delivery plan. The LHEEs will continue to support affordable warmth and address fuel poverty as well as decarbonising energy.

The Borders Home Energy Forum maintains good support and its key position to deliver, and monitor progress against, the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy and in turn the LHEES. It will continue to work closely to deliver against Scottish Government Energy Efficiency Scotland route map,

Scottish Borders Council continue to support strategic development and actively participates and responds to government consultations, such as the Improving Energy Efficiency in Owner Occupied Homes, New Build Heat Standard and the Heat in Buildings Strategy and the Local heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.

Officers will continue to support the development of the renewables and construction supply chain forum as well as the ongoing influence of the Borders Home Energy forum.

Empty Homes Grant Scheme

Bringing empty homes back into use is an important part of addressing some of the issues surrounding housing supply, and ensuring that we can retain vibrant and safe communities.

One of the main reasons empty home owners cite as a barrier to bringing their empty properties back into use is the financial burden. To that end over the next year the council will be introducing an empty homes grant scheme. So far £500,000 has been allocated from the second homes council tax fund. The grant scheme is open to those either looking to live in the property or those who are seeking to rent their properties out. For those seeking to rent out properties it would be required that the rent is set at local housing allowance rates for a minimum of 5 years.

Initial enquiries have identified a number of empty homes which may benefit from the scheme, and the council looks forward to sharing details of these in due course.

Homelessness

The homelessness function experienced unprecedented frontline service delivery pressures throughout 2021/2022 as a consequence of COVID-19. Service priorities and resources were realigned to mitigate this and ensure that essential service delivery was maintained and the council complied with its statutory duties in these exceptional times. Correspondingly, this impacted on full delivery of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Frontline pressures are expected to continue in 2022/2023 and may be exacerbated by the Ukrainian Programme.

During 2022/2023 homelessness services will focus on reviewing the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and working towards the 'Ending Homelessness Together' commitments, with our RSL and Health and Social Care partners to ensure that priorities reflect the new challenges and changing landscape brought about by the coronavirus crisis and Ukrainian programme.

Housing and Communities

Housing is a vital component within in our communities, not just by providing safe, secure and affordable homes but by contributing on a wider scale to the places and spaces in which we live and where communities can thrive. This has been highlighted during the pandemic.

The development of new housing stimulates the local economy. In addition, Housing Associations provide support to a wide range of initiatives within the local community and provide a wide scope of additional services such as befriending services, support services, financial inclusion activity, community gardens, supporting the third sector and many other examples from our local RSLs.

There are remain a number of challenges facing us over the lifetime of this Local Housing Strategy, however, Scottish Borders Council and LHS Partners recognise the opportunities not only to provide good quality homes for all within sustainable communities, but to also stimulate community regeneration, the local economy, protect the environment and improve social wellbeing and inclusion.

It is also important for the council to support the development of Local Place Plans – community-led initiatives which set out proposals for the development of land in a local area. It is important in place-making that new developments not only address the housing need of the area, but also fit into the local landscape. For the Scottish Borders especially this involves taking into account not just the economic and social benefits, but the uniquely rural landscape and heritage and the logistical challenges these can offer.

Working collaboratively to deliver on the ambitions of this LHS is paramount and through continued effective partnership working the vision of the LHS is being driven forward. Collectively we aim to build upon the achievements in this year's report to continue to ensure that the Scottish Borders remains a place where everyone is able to enjoy affordable, good quality housing in a pleasant and safe environment.

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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