



**LINKGROUP**

Business Plan 2014-19



valuing people, providing homes, building communities, working together

# Link Group Business Plan 2014-19

## Introduction

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This abridged version of the group Business Plan has been produced to focus on the aims, action plans and performance requirements.

As with previous Business Plans, the strategic objectives allow for all departments to develop their specific plans, and for all of us to link our job plans to the achievement of these objectives.

If you have any comments or suggestions for next year's plan please get in touch.

**Helen Bayne**

Director of Human Resources

# Vision, Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives

Link's vision, mission and strategic objectives were agreed at the Link Group Board's strategic planning day in September 2013.

## VISION

Link's vision is to be a provider of choice and excellence in the delivery of a wide range of socially inclusive regeneration, housing and support services.

This vision is underpinned by its mission statement, which provides the guiding principles for all of our activities contained in this business plan.

## MISSION STATEMENT

- **Providing Homes**
- **Building Communities**
- **Valuing People**
- **Working Together**

**Our aim is to improve the lives of more people.** We will do this by providing homes that people want to live in and by delivering high quality services that are affordable – especially to people on low incomes.

### PROVIDING HOMES

- Build at least 1000 new rented homes over the next five years that meet people's needs
- Ensure Link homes are well maintained, efficient to heat and are adaptable as people's needs change

### BUILDING COMMUNITIES

- Work with people to improve their communities
- Support social enterprises through our purchasing choices and provide help to organisations that share our social enterprise principles

### VALUING PEOPLE

- Find out from customers what they want from us and work with them to achieve these aims
- Support and encourage our employees, volunteers and board members to reach their potential

### WORKING TOGETHER

- Help more people to fulfil their potential through employment, training or volunteering
- Take care of our resources and use them to benefit our customers
- Use our networks to learn from and influence others, and use our knowledge and experience to help others to maximise our impact

## Previous Performance

In preparing our revised Business Plan, a review of how well we performed against the objectives and targets in 2013/14 was carried out.

### PROVIDING HOMES

- Enhance excellence in design
- Invest in appropriate technologies to improve customer satisfaction and quality of accommodation
- Maintain an annual development programme delivering new or improved social rented homes including housing for disabled people
- Explore, develop or re-introduce alternative tenure to increase access to affordable homes

#### What we achieved in 2013/14:

- Exceeded target of 150 new homes (100 social rent and 50 other tenures) – we completed 192 new homes in 2013/14
- Developed a volunteer programme in North Lanarkshire
- Link Property's In House Trades Team rolled out in the west region in July (18 months ahead of schedule) and in central region in October 2012
- Significant increase in customer satisfaction with repairs since roll-out
- Repair response times on target
- Advice Pro software rolled out to advice teams
- Larkfield "live" with Aareon system
- New Horizon website launched
- Mobile App for tenants launched
- Online application form for Help to Buy set up
- Three households assisted through Access Ownership

#### What we did not achieve in 2013/14:

- 10% of properties built to wheelchair user standard – increase achieved but only to just over 5%
- Digital Deal application unsuccessful

### BUILDING COMMUNITIES

- Encourage community regeneration and reduce homelessness
- Seek and take opportunities for growth according to social enterprise principles

#### What we achieved in 2013/14:

- Scottish Social Enterprise of the Year Award
- UK Social Enterprise of the Year Award
- Secured external funding for wider action – £415,000 over next two years
- Secure £100,000 of external funding for non-statutory services – just under £741,000 secured over next five years
- West Lothian Care & Repair contract retained

#### What we did not achieve in 2013/14:

- Produce business plans for four potential social enterprise development or acquisition opportunities
- Submit tender for CEC Let First contract – decided against pursuing this

## VALUING PEOPLE

- Develop and provide excellent service and support to customers to ensure health, wellbeing and tenancy sustainment
- Continue to develop and support our employees and board members

### What we achieved in 2013/14:

- Highest tenant home contents insurance take up of all Thistle Tenant Risks / RSL partnerships in Scotland
- Plans and actions in place to minimise the impact of Welfare Reforms on tenants
- Full Customer Satisfaction Survey completed and results reported to Board and included in Annual Return on the Charter
- Online Data Protection training rolled out
- Aspiring Leaders Programme rolled out
- Maintained Gold Investors in People award
- Maintained Gold Healthy Working Lives award
- 75% of LinkLiving staff qualified to SSSC approved level

### What we did not achieve in 2013/14:

- Grade 5 reports or above for all LinkLiving services
- Internal work placements to be provided to assist in talent development

## WORKING TOGETHER

- Increase Link's contribution to improving individuals' employability prospects
- Explore new or changing markets to increase profitability for reinvestment

### What we achieved in 2013/14:

- Mentors fully trained and supported
- Provide six mentoring opportunities in-house – 10 assignments completed

### What we did not achieve in 2013/14:

- Provide six apprenticeships and eight work placements through the Community Benefits in Procurement initiative
- Planning consent for Letham Moss windfarm

# Strategic Objectives

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## PROVIDING HOMES

Link's approach to providing homes goes far beyond bricks and mortar. We believe that it is our responsibility to provide housing that allows individuals and families to feel safe, where their well-being and good health are encouraged by their physical surroundings and where they are able to enjoy good amenities in their local area which foster positive relations within the community. We also believe in socio-economic benefits that new house building brings to communities in that it can stimulate a positive sense of place-making and provide opportunities in both training and employment. The implementation of our Design Guide challenges us to ensure our developments are future-proofed and support sustainable communities.

In achieving this broad aim, there is a significant number of streams of work which require to come together successfully, and Link is committed to involving all relevant people in arriving at the best possible outcomes. The financial and economic context in which we are currently operating makes it even more important to work towards getting the best possible outcomes, (first time and taking account as far as possible of individual needs and aspirations).

### **Build at least 1000 new rented homes over the next five years that meet people's needs**

Link fully intends to maintain its track record of developing affordable housing for those most in need. Link has been very successful in securing grant funding for new projects, and with the improved benchmark funding levels, social housing development is the mainstay of the programme. Effective private finance is an essential element of Link's development programme and we will continue to secure the most cost-effective short and long-term funding to support it.

Our broader, commercial activities also support our development of affordable housing and provision of quality, affordable support services. We will continue to explore new commercial ventures which would increase our capacity to develop more homes and services.

Link is committed to building on its success of 192 completions in 2013/14 and to continue developing affordable homes to help meet the increasing levels of need. In 2014/15, we have the potential to deliver over 300 new homes making a significant contribution to the country's housing crisis. We aim to achieve an overall level of development programme of around 1000 homes either completed or approved for construction in the period of this plan, subject to our own financial capacity and the continuation of HAG at revised levels.

Link's success in development has in part been as a result of an effective land bank and acquisition programme. To pump-prime future development activity, further land investment will be essential and both feasibility and short-term funding will be secured to facilitate this.

Link will continue to maximise the supply of new social housing which is accessible to people with disabilities. Our joint aim with Horizon HA is to develop 'exemplar housing' which future proofs accessibility in new homes providing for current or future tenant needs by increasing space standards. This aim is stretching and we envisage that funding this level of provision of housing for disabled people will be one of the main challenges in achieving it.

Another strand of our work during this Business Plan is for Link Group and Horizon Housing Association to work with partner organisations to explore development and funding opportunities to meet specific needs of disabled people. We will be working with the Royal Blind School, Edinburgh to integrate specialist supported housing within Phase 1 of the City Park Development.

## **Ensure Link homes are well maintained, efficient to heat and are adaptable as people's needs change**

Link's Design Guide is now established and in order to meet the aim of deploying excellent design, Link will continue working to secure opportunities which will allow for the realisation of its design principles. To help realise Link's Design aspirations, we recognise that we will need to continue to seek input from tenants, work in close partnership with the design professionals we engage, and our local authority partners. The expertise of colleagues in Horizon will help us in our aim of implementing inclusive design of housing and communities. Our goal is to have 10% of new rented housing developed by Link being built to wheelchair standard.

Link is investing significantly in information systems to enhance our ability to record, monitor and improve upon service delivery. The cumulative outcome of these improvements will result in more efficient use of resources, and more importantly, better information to customers including further improvements to websites for all areas of the group. We are taking a measured approach towards the full implementation of our new system and anticipate that the continued roll-out will take us into 2015/16.

Ensuring effective repair service delivery is central to our aims and with the extended roll-out of Link Property to West and Central areas initial results demonstrate that a vast improvement in customer satisfaction and performance will be achieved. Enhanced management control of external contractors will be required to ensure overall performance is achieved.

Fuel poverty continues to be an area of concern across the group, and we know that many of our tenants and customers face difficult decisions in relation to prioritising expenditure on housing, food or heating. Link will develop its new homes to 'silver' sustainability standards to mitigate the effects of future volatility in the utility supply market.

Across the Link group, we will continue to explore routes to develop, re-model, and where appropriate, re-introduce alternative tenure forms which would provide a viable option for people who are unlikely to access homes for outright purchase or social renting. To broaden our tenure development portfolio we will re-introduce housing for sale to recycle profits into the provision of additional affordable homes. We will also ensure that any proposals can be robustly tested in relation to financial viability both from Link's interests and the interests of potential customers.

We will work with local authority partners to deliver Empty Homes Initiatives, having already secured funding for 50 properties with our partner the City of Edinburgh Council.

Reviewing housing need and correlating this with demographic data reinforces the need for appropriate options for older people. Current offering of housing for older people (for instance Sheltered Housing) does not always meet lifestyle aspirations for people who are in, or are moving towards, their senior years. Link will review contemporary forms of housing for the elderly and consider the introduction of amenity housing (subject to local authority demand) into our medium term development programme across all tenures.

The Link and Horizon Access Ownership programme has to date provided shared ownership housing for 13 disabled people and families, including older people. Horizon intends to make funding available in 2014/15 for a further 3–5 purchases and plans to explore the financial options for expanding this programme to offer shared ownership and mid-market rent options to meet the unmet needs of disabled households.

We acknowledge the difficulties that disabled people have in getting a home that meets their needs, and we will invest in developing accessible housing registers, adaptations and individual house purchases for rent or shared ownership.



<b>Where we are now</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>	<b>Objective this will help us meet</b>	<b>Risk(s)</b>
The quality of our repairs service has fallen below desired standards in recent years	Improve on performance of reactive and void repairs from Link Property and external contractors	KPIs achieved and customer satisfaction improved	Ensure Link homes are well maintained, efficient to heat and are adaptable as people's needs change	External contracting controls
Maintain an annual development programme delivering new or improved 'social rented' homes including housing for disabled people	Ensure promotion of new projects in line with local authority strategic local programmes to secure HAG to meet minimum 150 unit completions p.a. target	HAG funding secured Development completions	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Adequate resources to deliver short and long term funding
Pipeline projects and land banking are integral to Link's future housing development programme	Identify and evaluate future development acquisitions to ensure a future supply programme	Options and/or acquisitions to support a future (minimum) 150 unit per annum housing development programme  Ensure existing landbank is utilised and disposals effected as required	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Without adequate land supply/funding delivery will be compromised  Unnecessary holding cost of land without SLP support
Develop further new income streams for the Group to reinvest in additional affordable housing	Develop a housing for sale programme:  Identify suitable mixed projects that can deliver market sale and affordable housing.  Identify small scale standalone sales projects	Developments identified and sales projections worked up on a project by project basis.	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Sales outcome not achieved



Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
Develop further new income streams for the Group to reinvest in additional affordable housing/services	Develop new commercially advantageous activities	New opportunities fully appraised as being viable commercial activities.	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	New and viable opportunities not identified.
Maintain the gained momentum in delivering housing for people with particular needs	Develop new 'exemplar homes' which provide optimum space and activity requirements to meet tenants' current and/or future needs.	Developments can be designed with the future needs of tenants in mind. Increase on current provisions >6%	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Increase in costs are not covered by exceptional HAG
Continue to meet and exceed sustainable homes standards	Achieve 'silver standard' in sustainable construction using 'fabric-first' approach	All new developments achieve silver standard	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Additional construction costs will be incurred.
Continue to meet the needs of older people	To develop a contemporary form of housing for the elderly and introduce into our medium term development programme consisting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amenity housing (social rent)</li> <li>• Amenity housing (intermediate rent)</li> <li>• Private retirement</li> </ul>	Conclude a review based on demand, local authority strategic priorities and Scottish Government support.	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Additional costs in provisioning
New homes: Excellence in Design	Link will continue to encourage innovative and contemporary design using the Design Guide as a platform for our Architects.	New developments receive positive feedback from new occupants. External recognition of design quality.	Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.	Poor design standards receiving negative feedback

<b>Where we are now</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>	<b>Objective this will help us meet</b>	<b>Risk(s)</b>
<p>The supply of housing to wheelchair standard is below requirements.</p> <p>1 in 4 wheelchair users say that their home is not suitable for their needs</p> <p>Link's Design Guide supports excellence in design.</p>	<p>Develop skills and capacity within Horizon to support Link with information and advice on demand, need and specifications across tenures</p> <p>Commission research into allocations, use of (and access to) wheelchair-users' housing and barriers in Choice Based Letting processes</p>	<p>Link provides wheelchair standard housing in appropriate locations. (Targets of an average of 10% of Link Group new social housing provision; 5% of alternative tenure development; and increasing trend.)</p> <p>Research commissioned (2014) and recommending practical changes in allocations processes (in 2016)</p>	<p>Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.</p>	<p>Lack of resources</p> <p>Failure to work on this objective jointly with Link colleagues and other key partners</p>
<p>1 in 4 wheelchair users say house isn't suitable for needs</p> <p>Meeting about 7% of need from 187 households on Horizon's list needing wheelchair users' housing</p> <p>Good partnership with Housing Options Scotland</p> <p>Access Ownership has almost reached £1million investment – capacity for growth constrained by lack of loan funding</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Acquire three further properties under the Access Ownership initiative.</li> <li>2 Research potential funding partners and financing options to increase the Access Ownership programme and extend its tenure options.</li> <li>3 Group-wide resourcing of occupational therapist</li> </ol>	<p>Three households assisted through Access Ownership.</p> <p>Funding opportunities identified to allow more Access Ownership property acquisition</p>	<p>Build at least 1000 new homes over the next five years that meet people's needs.</p>	<p>Homehunt can't be sufficiently adjusted to meet the needs of disabled people.</p> <p>Time and skills to explore funding options not available.</p>

Link has a long history of successfully demonstrating that it goes beyond simply providing accommodation. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the sense of well-being and satisfaction from living in a community that is pleasant to live in, where there is a feeling of being safe, supported, and where people in the neighbourhood are able to realise their potential. Numerous social commentators have noted and tracked the negative impacts of poor housing quality, poor levels of health and reduced access to health professionals, lower levels of educational attainment and significantly lower levels of employment in comparison to more prosperous areas. Link is well aware of these, and will continue to work across a broad range of activities to improve the sense of well-being for our tenants.

### **Working with people to improve their communities**

Throughout the period of this business plan, we will continue to establish Link as a “community anchor” by delivering community events, developing community assets and working with community partners to improve access to support and services. The framework of our Neighbourhood Plans will be developed to review and plan for activities in specific localities. Link’s Community Regeneration Team exists to ensure that Link works with its tenants, their respective communities and a range of partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors to develop and deliver a range of projects and initiatives that make a positive difference to people’s lives

Employment and training initiatives supported by Community Benefits in Procurement will be maximised as will Link’s commitment to supporting and mentoring Community Jobs Fund trainees, modern apprentices and access to employment. Link Property will establish three apprenticeship positions in plumbing, electrical and painting trades to add to its portfolio of employability measures and providing a direct link to Link’s communities. Link’s gains in employability have been considerable in the past 12 months but we recognise a more focussed approach could enhance this. Consideration will be given to formalising our employability efforts which will draw together Link’s significant resources and employment-related activities from across the group which will aim to present a more co-ordinated employability and training experience.

Financial inclusion is a key aim for Link. In this business year, Link will assess the potential for developing its own Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). A Link CDFI would make loans available to tenants that may find it difficult to access finance from more mainstream or traditional sources based on a fixed range of eligibility.

We recognise the increasing expectation that people will engage with online and digital services and understand how much this opens up an individual’s ability to access advice, information, support and services. Similarly, we are concerned at the adverse impact on individuals and families that the inability or lack of access to digital services has. Link’s Digital Inclusion Strategy has seen some good progress over the past year and we intend to increase the extent and range of activities we are undertaking in this area over the course of 2014-15 and beyond.

Reducing homelessness remains a key priority for Link and we will continue to work in partnership with Local Authorities to address homelessness. Link has a recognised expertise in a range of rental options and continues to work to develop and deliver a wide range of tenures. These tenures include, Private Sector Leasing for people who are in priority housing need, Intermediate Rent for those people who cannot afford to buy but are not dependant on benefits, and shared equity scheme for those who are first time buyers.

To help applicants choose the tenure that is right for them, staff in the Customer Service Centre have been trained in the different housing options available within Link. In addition, we can sign post people to other organisations who provide help and support.

Link will continue its development of tenancy sustainment activities to assist tenants to maintain their tenancies, and we will continue to act quickly to address issues of anti-social behaviour. Our approach is focussed on building strong, active and vibrant communities where people feel able to – and are welcomed to – participate. Link aims to be accessible to our tenants – whether online, by phone, or in their local communities and has decentralised arrears and welfare advice services, to provide advice and support in each of our four offices across the central belt of Scotland.

Older people make up a significant proportion of our tenant population and, with the demographics showing that the numbers of older people will continue to rise, we intend to focus on assessing our services to older people and working to ensure that these services are in line with the varying needs and aspirations of older people.

Our commitment to understanding and trying to meet the needs of disabled people extends beyond provision of housing and we intend to reflect on the current range of services we offer and look to expand these in meaningful ways.

### **Supporting social enterprises**

Link is a social enterprise and seeks to generate a surplus for reinvestment in areas where there is an established need. The areas for consideration to support this principle are wide and extremely varied and include acquisition of businesses; collaboration with partners; tendering for contracts; extending successful models of operation all of which are underpinned by a need to deliver social benefit within a viable business model. Central to Link's social enterprise principles is measuring the impact of our undertakings. Having delivered a significant development programme of new homes for social rent, Link will set out a framework to undertake a social impact assessment of its new build programme of social rented properties. Link is a significant purchaser of services and goods and we will continue regularly to review our procurement plan to ensure that our decisions have a positive social impact wherever possible.

Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
<p>The Financial Inclusion strategy aims to make access to lending for Link's tenants more affordable. The current market place for this product is location-limited and does not provide the required coverage for all Link tenancies</p>	<p>Develop Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) Model for a potential introduction for limited lending.</p>	<p>Link tenants are able to access more affordable loans to improve their personal financial position</p>	<p>Work with people to improve their communities</p>	<p>Tenants default on loan payments</p>
<p>Continue with the Community &amp; Regeneration Team's successful approach to secure external funding</p>	<p>Maximise levels of external funding secured to support Link and local community objectives</p>	<p>Funding secured to enable new and existing services to meet Link's community based objectives</p>	<p>Work with people to improve their communities</p>	<p>Funding restricted or unsuccessful</p>
<p>Our knowledge of our customers abilities and facilities to access digital services is incomplete</p> <p>Our work in improving digital inclusion for our customers can be expanded</p>	<p>We intend to review accessibility and capacity of our customers to access digital services</p> <p>Our engagement with other partners to improve capacity and capability of our customers will be strengthened</p> <p>Our own contribution to improve access to digital services and the skills of our customers will be increased.</p>	<p>More of our customers will have access to digital services and the skills to exploit this.</p> <p>More of our customers will use digital services and information sources</p>	<p>Work with people to improve their communities</p>	<p>Our resources are insufficient to achieve this.</p>

Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
Continue to establish Link as an organisation recognised and valued at a community level	Secure and develop community – based services that can underpin Link’s community anchor credentials	Develop local community services and partnerships developed supported and community assets	Work with people to improve their communities	Link’s national credentials work as a barrier if communities are not engaged.
<p>New West Lothian care and repair contract – five year planning possibility</p> <p>1 more year for North Lanarkshire – strong local team</p> <p>Enthusiastic and creative front line staff</p> <p>Significant and growing unmet needs from ageing population</p> <p>Reshaping care agenda and other strategies offer funding and partnership opportunities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Pursue accreditation to national standards of both Care &amp; Repair services</li> <li>2 Carry out Social Return on Investment on NL service</li> <li>3 Develop and source finance for complementary projects to supplement Council funded services</li> </ol>	<p>High satisfaction levels for service users and commissioners</p> <p>SROI completed</p> <p>Range of services/projects and number of active volunteers is increased</p>	Work with people to improve their communities	<p>Fail to achieve accreditation in required timescale for contract.</p> <p>SROI project plan not developed or delivered.</p> <p>SROI does not show favourable return on investment.</p> <p>Lack of skills and resources constrains development potential.</p>
Successful development of RealLiving model for older people	Secure funding to sustain the project in West Fife for 2014/15 and beyond and secure funding for additional projects in other localities	<p>RealLiving will continue in West Fife</p> <p>Funding for additional projects will have been secured.</p>	Work with people to improve their communities	Funding not secured, existing project closes, no new projects developed

<b>Where we are now</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>	<b>Objective this will help us meet</b>	<b>Risk(s)</b>
Successful development of Real Connections model for people with mental health problems.	Secure funding for 2015/16 to sustain the project in Kirkcaldy beyond and secure funding for additional projects in other localities	Real Connections will continue in Kirkcaldy beyond current funding period and funding for additional projects will have been secured.	Work with people to improve their communities	Funding not secured, existing project closes, no new projects developed
Link is a significant purchaser of services, goods and materials.  Our procurement strategy and annual procurement plan provide the framework for making decisions that have a community benefit.	Review our corporate procurement plan and revisit our ability to increase community benefits as a result of our purchasing activity	Our review demonstrates that we achieving maximum community benefit or indicates where further gains can be made.	Support social enterprises through our purchasing choices and by providing help to organisations that share our social enterprise principles	Insufficient time to conduct review



All of Link's areas of activity are guided by the principle of valuing people. This includes all the people we work with and for – tenants, service users, volunteers, board members, staff, and our partners. The full range of stakeholders is available in the full Link Group Business Plan.

### **Working with our customers**

Link's customers deserve excellent service and support to help them protect their health and well-being. Our priorities are to deliver services that are responsive to customers' needs, whilst ensuring that they are treated with respect, encouraged to be independent and are fundamentally involved in the future development of homes, services and support. Practical steps that we will be taking across the group to make these improvements include meeting the expectations of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the Care Inspectorate, pursuit of Investors in Diversity accreditation, maintenance of our Investors in Volunteers accreditation, and working towards customer excellence. Our pursuit of external accreditation is firmly rooted in having a framework for continuous improvement, as well as allowing Link to engage with identified good practice within other organisations. The benefits we anticipate are customer-driven improvements to our full range of services with new services being co-developed in conjunction with our customers.

Tenancy sustainment is another key strand of work in this theme. It requires a determined, co-ordinated and proactive approach to ensure timely and successful interventions. Link believes that this work begins at the point of allocating homes by ensuring a close match between homes offered and individuals' aspirations, and that advice, information and support is given to help tenants meet their obligations. Link has the benefit of having expertise in welfare advice, care and support, tenancy sustainment as well as support and advice for particular groups such as Horizon Housing Association's work with disabled people. This expertise is shared across the group, and we intend to focus on additional customer groupings specifically through our Older Persons' Strategy and our plan to develop our support to young people moving from care settings towards securing and sustaining their own tenancy. The importance of excellent advice especially in the face of Welfare Reform has been recognised and front-line advice resources have been increased.

### **Support and encourage our employees, volunteers and board members to reach their potential**

Link firmly believes that its employees and board members are integral to our success. We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated, committed, enthusiastic and skilled group of people working to ensure that Link continues successfully to meet the requirements of our customers.

The pride that the organisation shares in achieving the Gold Investors in People award is tangible, and we fully intend to retain this accolade. Link recognises the need to invest in the development of our employees and board members and to ensure that they are supported within their role and ultimately to reach their potential through career and personal development. We will continue to look for improvements in the delivery of training to ensure that we are achieving best value in our investment and intend that we will introduce an extensive range of online training over the course of this Plan.

The well-being of our employees is vitally important and we intend to retain our Healthy Working Lives award, and to extend Gold accreditation to include Larkfield Housing Association. Our focus on health promotion activities and access to specialist health advice will be sustained through this Business Plan.

Succession planning for employees and board members continues to be a priority for this business plan period and we intend to refocus our work in this area to ensure that we have clear development routes for staff and board members who wish to develop their career with Link. Practical steps to achieve this will be to create a greater number of internal development roles, job shadowing, mentoring and offering appropriate formal qualifications.

### **Tenant Scrutiny Panel**

Link's Tenant Scrutiny Panel was established in 2013 and members benefitted from extensive training and developing a shared understanding of the Panel's role and interaction with Link Housing's Board. The early work of the Panel is demonstrating a positive and challenging impact and we intend that the Panel will continue to review our services and recommend further improvements in service delivery.

Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
Full Customer Satisfaction Survey completed	Develop an action plan for addressing issues raised by customer responses	Satisfaction levels improve External recognition of quality of customer service delivered by Link	Find out from customers what they want from us and work with them to achieve these aims.	Reputational – failure to follow up effectively will adversely affect customers' opinion of Link
Tenant Scrutiny Panel in place	Senior Management Team to meet staff to reinforce the culture of customer first and the function of the Panel	Dynamic panel which produces recommendations that Link acts upon.	Support and encourage our employees and board members to reach their potential.	Poor response from Link – Panel loses interest
Reviewing services for older people both in sheltered and mainstream accommodation	Prioritise and co-ordinate actions identified in the Older Persons Strategy Develop an engagement strategy with Health Boards and Social Work departments	More customers living independently Fewer people in hospitals, extra care available	Find out from customers what they want from us and work with them to achieve these aims.	Limited buy-in Authorities non-responsive
Improvement in Care Inspectorate grades required	Work with focus groups of service users to review the 2013/14 Satisfaction survey results and have input into the next Inspection	Grades of good or above are achieved.	Find out from customers what they want from us and work with them to achieve these aims.	Lower grades could affect LinkLiving's chances of winning tenders etc

Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
<p>64% care and support staff qualified to SVQ3</p> <p>22.5% care and support staff working towards SVQ3 qualification</p>	<p>Support staff to undertake qualification to SVQ3 resulting in 85% of staff qualified or working towards qualification at SVQ3 level.</p>	<p>85% staff qualified or working towards</p>	<p>Support and encourage our employees and board members to reach their potential.</p>	
<p>Investors in Volunteers, Investors in People, Healthy Working Lives accreditation in place</p>	<p>Work to retain accreditation, improve levels of recognition and implement action plans</p>	<p>Our staff, Board and volunteers will continue to recognise and appreciate Link as a responsible and supportive organisation</p>	<p>Support and encourage our employees and board members to reach their potential.</p>	<p>Link's aims and objectives are not implemented as intended</p> <p>Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring we treat people fairly and with respect</p>
<p>Succession plans and developments plans are in place for all key posts and which provide stretching opportunities for career development</p>	<p>Succession plans to be reviewed for all boards and key posts in Link.</p> <p>Development plans are developed which help us meet future organisational needs</p>	<p>Plans are developed and relevant actions implemented.</p>	<p>Support and encourage our employees and board members to reach their potential.</p>	<p>Plans are not developed with sufficient thought to potential impact of the loss of key postholders.</p> <p>Insufficient thought is given to development needs that will help us meet future requirements of our customers</p>

## WORKING TOGETHER

Link cannot meet its aspirations without the contribution and support of a wide range of partners, customers and staff. Working Together is a firm expectation of all component parts of the group and we look forward to formalising our relationship with West Highland Housing Association as a member of the group early in the 2014-15 business plan year.

### **Use our networks to learn from others and use our knowledge and experience to help others and to maximise our impact.**

Working with others is a key component of all of our activities. The reasons for working in partnership with others are varied: strength in numbers; receiving or imparting the benefits of knowledge, skills and experience and; to garner financial capacity for optimum impact. Whatever the reason for joint working, we will always seek to understand the aims of other partners, treat all partners with respect, be open and transparent, and seek to reach positive outcomes for all people with whom we work.

### **Help more people to fulfil their potential through employment, training or volunteering**

Link aims to build on the success in employability and training achieved in 2013-14. Link recognises that the need for improving employability prospects for customers is a key lever in building confidence and self-esteem, increasing individuals' capability and developing independence. We also acknowledge our responsibility to provide suitable work experience opportunities for students who are interested in the work we do within the group.

The ways in which we intend to address this aim include providing practical support to tenants and service users through signposting to other organisations, extension of successful models of support such as our SmartLiving projects, delivering workshops, providing work experience opportunities, offering mentoring support and taking advantage of external funding streams to increase our capacity to work across this range of activities.

### **Take care of our assets and resources and use them to benefit our customers**

Link has a wide range of assets and resources which have a considerable [and often underestimated] value to the organisation, our staff, customers and stakeholders. In that regard, we are responsible for a huge wealth of property, knowledge, skills, resources which we must ensure are cared for and used to best effect. Within our group, we acknowledge that we all have different areas of expertise and we use these to support, encourage and challenge each other to continue to improve for the benefit of our customers and the wider community.

Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
Our work with West Highland Housing Association is at a point where both organisations are content to formalise our relationship by WHHA joining the Link Group	Complete due diligence and all approval requirements – from WHHA tenants, the Scottish Housing Regulator, Lenders, and WHHA and Link Group Boards	WHHA joins as a member of the Link group	Take care of our resources and use them to benefit our customers	Approvals are not received as expected
Continue Link's ambition as employer of choice and extend new opportunities to tenants	Recruit three Apprentices in plumbing, electrical and painting trades from Link communities	Recruitment from April 2014	Help more people to fulfil their potential through employment, training or volunteering	Potential that the positions cannot be filled because of a qualification gap.
Continue Link's success and pursuit of employability and training aims	Consolidate Link's considerable activities and resources as a vehicle to deliver employability and training services	Develop key parameters for a Skills Academy	Help more people to fulfil their potential through employment, training or volunteering	The various strands are not pulled together – failing to provide the gains of a more holistic approach
Measure the social impact of Link products and services	Undertake a review of the social impact of Link's considerable development programme and the need for public funding to support it	Produce a report that defines the positive impact of Scottish Government funding	Use our networks to learn from others and use our knowledge and experience to help others to maximise our impact	The scope of the programme would have to be sketched out to determine deliverability

Where we are now	Activity	Measure of Success	Objective this will help us meet	Risk(s)
<p>Continue to Influence decision-makers by participating in key working groups and partnerships</p>	<p>Support Glasgow Centre of Inclusive Living with introduction of Homes2Fit</p> <p>Play active role in improving national policy and practice on housing related issues for disabled and older people</p> <p>Research and publish good practice in allocation of housing for wheelchair users</p>	<p>More adapted properties are allocated to those who need this type of housing</p> <p>Fewer people record that their home is not suitable for their needs.</p> <p>Grant system includes specific allowance to encourage building for wheelchair users.</p> <p>Research published on under-utilisation of wheelchair users' housing, and good practice promoted.</p>	<p>Use our networks to learn from others and use our knowledge and experience to help others to maximise our impact</p>	<p>Homes2Fit is marginalised and not well used by applicants or housing providers.</p> <p>Scottish Govt. lack of real interest wheelchair users' housing</p> <p>Lack of partners for partnership research project.</p> <p>Lack of funding for research.</p>



## Key to Abbreviations

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<b>AAM</b>	Assistant Area Manager
<b>AM</b>	Area Manager
<b>ASB</b>	Anti-Social Behaviour
<b>BP's</b>	Business Partners
<b>CBiP</b>	Community Benefits in Procurement
<b>CDFI</b>	Community Development Finance Institutions
<b>CEC</b>	City of Edinburgh Council
<b>CSC</b>	Customer Service Centre
<b>EHI</b>	Empty Homes Initiative
<b>GCIL</b>	Glasgow Council for Independent Living
<b>H &amp; S</b>	Health and Safety
<b>HA</b>	Housing Association
<b>HAG</b>	Housing Association Grant
<b>HHA</b>	Horizon Housing Association
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>HO</b>	Housing Officer
<b>HRBP's</b>	Human Resource Business Partners
<b>HSM</b>	Housing Services Manager
<b>HWL</b>	Healthy working Lives
<b>IID</b>	Investors in Diversity
<b>IIP</b>	Investors in People
<b>IHTT</b>	In-House Trades Team
<b>IS</b>	Information Systems
<b>LHA</b>	Link Housing Association
<b>LL</b>	LinkLiving
<b>MD</b>	Managing Director
<b>MW</b>	Megawatt
<b>OPAS</b>	Older Persons Advice Service
<b>PSL</b>	Private Sector Leasing
<b>RTO</b>	Registered Tenants Organisation
<b>SDM</b>	Housing system previously used by Horizon
<b>S&amp;BS</b>	Strategy and Business Support
<b>SG</b>	Scottish Government
<b>SLA</b>	Service Level Agreement
<b>SMG</b>	Senior Management Group
<b>SROI</b>	Social Return on Investment
<b>SSSC</b>	Scottish Social Services Council
<b>SVQ</b>	Scottish Vocational Qualification
<b>TLO</b>	Tenant Liaison Officer
<b>TO</b>	Technical Officer
<b>TS</b>	Technical Services
<b>TSP</b>	Technical Services Planning
<b>TSM (D)</b>	Technical Services Manager (Delivery)
<b>TP</b>	Tenant Participation
<b>T &amp; D</b>	Training and Development
<b>WLDA</b>	West Lothian Development Alliance

# Performance Requirements

## 1. LINK GROUP – DEVELOPMENT

KPI Indicator	Target 2014-2019		Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
		Tenure	Actual	Overall
Build/acquire new homes for social renting, shared ownership and shared equity	1000 units	Rent	156	110
		Shared Ownership	0	0
		Shared Equity	6	2
		Agency	18	0
		Intermediate Rent	12	171
		<b>Overall</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>283</b>

## 2. LINK GROUP – REPAIRS AND ADAPTATIONS

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>1</sup>	Target 2014/15
% of emergency repairs carried out within timescale	96.4%	100%
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (11)	3.72 hours	4 hours
Average number of days to carry out non emergency repairs (12)	6.18 days	6 days
Percentage of repairs appointments kept (14)	94.3%	90%
Percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time (13)	Currently unable to report	70%
Customer satisfaction with reactive repairs (16)	92%	90%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with their home when moving in (9)	94%	95%
Complete all gas servicing by anniversary date. All gas properties to have current landlord certificate (15)	100%	100%
The average time to complete application [for adaptations] (23)	47 days	75 days
Average customer satisfaction for major projects (Planned Maintenance)	96.3%	90%

<sup>1</sup> Fourth quarter Link Group Board KPI report, May 2014

KPI Indicator		2013/14	2014/15
Achieve target budget expenditure for Planned and Cyclical Maintenance in accordance with the quarterly financial forecasts	Quarter	Actual	Target
	Quarter 1	11.76%	11%
	Quarter 2	21.24%	24%
	Quarter 3	25.69%	28%
	Quarter 4	36.38%	37%

## HORIZON

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>2</sup>	Target 2014/15
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (11)	NA	< 7 hours
Average number of days to carry out non emergency repairs (12)	6 days	6 days
Percentage of repairs appointments kept (14)	NA	None set
Percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time (13)	98.17%	90%
Customer satisfaction with reactive repairs (16)	99%	90%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with their home when moving in (9)	86%	90%
Complete all gas servicing by anniversary date. All gas properties to have current landlord certificate (15)	100%	100%
The average time to complete applications [for adaptations] (23)	NA	12 weeks
Average customer satisfaction for major projects (Planned Maintenance)	86%	90%

<sup>2</sup>Fourth quarter Link Group Board KPI report, May 2014

## LARKFIELD

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>3</sup>	Target 2014/15
% of emergency repairs carried out within timescale	97%	100%
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (11)	2.3 hours	2 hours
Average number of days to carry out non emergency repairs (12)	NA	6 days
Percentage of repairs appointments kept (14)	NA	NA
Percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time (13)	Currently unable to report	85%
Customer satisfaction with reactive repairs (16)	96.5%	95%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with their home when moving in (9)	6.6%	85%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with their home when moving in (9)	66.6%	85%
Complete all gas servicing by anniversary date. All gas properties to have current landlord certificate (15)	100%	100%
The average time to complete applications [for adaptations] (23)	25 weeks (175 days)	12 weeks
Average customer satisfaction for projects (Planned Maintenance)	NA	90%

<sup>3</sup>Fourth quarter Link Group Board KPI report, May 2014

### 3. COMPLAINTS

#### LINK GROUP

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
% of 1st and 2nd stage complaints responded to in full, within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) timescales (4 & 5)	85%	90% 1st stage
	77%	95% 2nd stage

#### HORIZON

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
% of 1st and 2nd stage complaints responded to in full, within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) timescales (4 & 5)	86%	90%
	46%	90%

#### LARKFIELD

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
% of 1st and 2nd stage complaints responded to in full, within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) timescales (4 & 5)	92%	95%
	100%	95%

#### 4. LINK GROUP, HORIZON AND LARKFIELD – HUMAN RESOURCES

##### TURNOVER

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
Link Group	11.3%	<10%
Link Living	14.8%	<12%
Link Housing	12.4%	<12%
Link Property	6.8%	<10%
Horizon	9%	<10%
Larkfield	10.5%	<5%

##### SHORT-TERM ABSENCE (% DAYS V AVAILABLE DAYS)

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
Link Group	0.9%	1.5%
Link Living	1.4%	2.5%
Link Housing	1.3%	1.75%
Link Property	0.4%	0.75%
Horizon	2.3%	<2%
Larkfield	1.9%	<2%

##### LONG TERM ABSENCE (NUMBER OF CASES IN PERIOD)

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
Link Group	5	<10
Link Living	24	<25
Link Housing	20	<20
Link Property	5	<5
Horizon	2	No target set
Larkfield	3	<2

##### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Incident	2014/15
Number of accidents	Numbers to be reported but no target set
Number of near misses	Numbers to be reported but no target set

## 5. LINK GROUP – FINANCE KPIs

	KPI Area	Target 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Purpose
FINANCIAL	<b>FINANCIAL CAPACITY</b>			To indicate the extent by which the interest payable on loans is covered by cash generated from operations, with the following adjustments:
	Interest cover			All LG activities, but excluding income from property sales
	– All activities, excl property sales	301%	164%	All LG activities, including income from property sales
	– All activities, incl property sales	309%	167%	To consider the proportion of debt to retained surplus and grant
	Gearing	36%	36%	To indicate the extent by which the interest payable on loans is covered by cash generated from operations
	Income cover	762%	558%	To indicate the extent by which the interest payable on loans is covered by cash generated from operations, excluding the effects of Component Accounting
	Interest cover adjusted to match Loan Facility Agreements (All activities incl. property sales)	–	141%	To indicate the extent by which the interest payable on loans is covered by cash generated from operations, with the following adjustments:

## 5. LINK GROUP – FINANCE KPIs

	KPI Area	Target 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Purpose
FINANCIAL	<b>PROFITABILITY</b>			
	Gross surplus ( % of Turnover)	40.3%	31.2%	To measure operating performance, before loan interest
	Net Surplus (% of Turnover)	28.0%	28.5%	To measure operating performance, after property sales and loan interest
	<b>FINANCING</b>			
	Net Debt per unit	£11,914	£14,171	To show the average amount borrowed, less cash, to finance each unit owned
	Debt per Unit	£13,248	£14,391	To show the average amount borrowed to finance each unit owned
	Net Interest per Unit	£464	£670	To indicate the average cost of financing for each unit owned. A negative result indicates that the RSL has more cash than debt.



## 6. LINK HOUSING – CONTRACT, AGENCY AND FACTORING

KPI Area	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
Generate a profit from non-core commercial activities – commercial factoring, LIFT (including Help to Buy) and PSL	20%	20%
Deliver LIFT project in accordance with the Scottish Government’s targets	881 purchases £32.4m	950 sales (£38m budget)

## 7. LINK HOUSING – PRIVATE SECTOR LEASING

KPI Area	Achieved 2013/14	Target 2014/15
Number of properties let and managed	1699	1700
Average days void	11 days	10 days
Active rent arrears	£376	5%
Number of tenancy engagements	11,018 (918 per month)	50%
Number of gas services outstanding	0	0
Percentage service delivery satisfaction	97%	>96%

## 8. HOUSING MANAGEMENT

### LINK HOUSING

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>4</sup>	Target 2014/15
Lettings (average re-let times – calendar days) (35)	36.49 days	30 days
Lettings to homeless households (numbers and % of lets)	21%	30%
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as a percentage of rent due (31)	2.88%	3.5%
% Former tenant arrears	0.6%	1.0%
% Tenancy offers refused (18)	39.75%	40%
% ASB cases reported and resolved within locally agreed targets (19)	73%	74%

<sup>4</sup>Fourth quarter Link Group Board KPI report, May 2014

## HORIZON

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>5</sup>	Target 2014/15
Lettings (average re-let times – calendar days) (35)	16 days	18 days
Lettings to homeless households (numbers and % of lets)	NA	No target set
% rent due lost through properties being empty (34)	0.38%	<0.3%
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as a percentage of rent due (31)	4.76	<4.3%
% Former tenant arrears	NA	<0.8%
% Tenancy offers refused (18)	NA	No target set
% ASB cases reported and resolved within locally agreed targets (19)	NA	No target set

<sup>5</sup>Fourth quarter Link Group Board KPI report, May 2014

## LARKFIELD

KPI Indicator	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>6</sup>	Target 2014/15
Lettings (average re-let times – calendar days) (35)	21 days	14 days
Lettings to homeless households (numbers and % of lets)	NA	35%
% rent due lost through properties being empty (34)	0.5%	0.3%
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as a percentage of rent due (31)	3.2%	3.0%
% Former tenant arrears	0.3%	0.5%
% Tenancy offers refused (18)	Currently unable to report	<40%
% ASB cases reported and resolved within locally agreed targets (19)	Currently unable to report	90%

<sup>6</sup>Fourth quarter Link Group Board KPI report, May 2014

## 9. LINKLIVING

KPI Area	Achieved 2013/14 <sup>7</sup>	Target 2014/15
Care Inspectorate Grading – grade 5 to be achieved on the three services	Dougall Court average 4 Care and support average 2.7	Grade 4 Grade 4
% of staff qualified to SSSC standard	86.8%	75%
Service users participate in recruitment process	100%	100%
Amount of care and support income received through direct payments/individual budgets/self funded	6% of all care and support income 25% of social care income	10%
Volume of support and care hours delivered against target	98% Delivered 146,631 hours Target 149,458 hours	95%
Outcome reporting for local authorities is compliant with contractual requirements	100%	100%
Bid for contracts for care and support services	3 bids submitted	4 bids submitted
Void Loss – West Bridge Mill (Supported Accommodation)	17.2%	12%
Maximise income from non statutory sources	£161,670 secured (£576,689 for future years)	£100K



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