



There's no better place

# Annual Highlights 2015–2016

A year at Lowther Homes



# Message from Lowther Homes' Chair

Ronnie Jacobs looks back over  
the year's highlights.



# 189

full market properties  
acquired



**Ronnie Jacobs**  
Chair of Lowther Homes

Lowther Homes provides mid and full-market homes to let and has a growing portfolio of over 700 homes in communities from Inverkip to Leith.

By providing a range of affordable homes for rent, Lowther gives people across Central Scotland, including those who don't have priority for social housing but can't get on the property ladder, more options to access quality housing.

Here are some of our highlights for 2015-16.

### Building our portfolio

Lowther is going through a period of growth which saw the portfolio increasing by 233 properties during 2015-16.

Lowther acquired 189 full market properties across developments in Glasgow, South Lanarkshire, Inverclyde and West Dumbartonshire.

A total of 20 new affordable homes in the East End of Glasgow were built by Cube and are managed by Lowther. The development is a mixture of two and three bedroom houses and two bedroom flats and was built with support of almost £1.2m of funding from the Scottish Government Greener Homes Innovation scheme.

This development proved popular with the homes being fully let quicker than anticipated. The new homes have solar panels and excellent insulation which maximise energy efficiency and help reduce energy bills.

Lowther also bought 24 new-build full market flats in Ferry Village, Braehead. The one and two bedroom flats were released in December 2015 and were fully occupied by January. The flats benefit from a high specification and energy-efficient features which again help customers save on their fuel costs.

Plans for 2016-17 include an additional 46 new mid-market homes in Yoker and 21 full market homes in Hamilton, due to be ready in Summer 2016.

### Performance

Lowther Homes continues to deliver a high level of performance across a number of measures.

In 2015-16, Lowther's average number of days to let a mid-market property was five days. For full-market rent properties, average days to let was 19 days, which compares favourably against an industry average of 27 days.

Lowther's void rate is 2.2% against a target of 3% for the year.

Hundreds of Lowther customers have had their say through the very first customer survey. Four out of five (81%) customers were satisfied with Lowther services, including 43% who were very satisfied. 70% were satisfied with internal repairs and 81% satisfied with the overall quality of the property.

Location and condition of Lowther properties were key factors in people choosing to rent from Lowther Homes.

Positively, 45% of Lowther customers are classed as promoters meaning they would highlight the good experiences they had with Lowther and recommend them to others.

Areas for improvement include response times, dealing with issues and communication. Lowther Homes is committed to implementing improvements in these key areas.

### Online services

More than 100 customers signed up for our new improved online services which went live in summer 2015.

Tenants can now see their account, with details of all their payments and charges, as well as pay their bills, book a repair or request other services.

The online services are part of our channel shift strategy and our drive to give people more choice about how they get in touch and transact with us.

Lowther tenants have carried out a total of 564 interactions on the new online channel and made £103,000 of payments towards their rent.

### Jobs and training

Lowther Homes continues to support young people into work.

Lowther's modern apprentice successfully completed his apprenticeship and has now secured a permanent job within the team as a Letting Agent.

Lowther Homes is committed to having highly skilled and trained staff to comply with all relevant legislation.

Each member of the Lowther team is undergoing training and development to prepare them for changes to legislation, particularly around the changes to the current tenancy agreement and the new requirement to have an electrical installation condition report carried out at least every five years. Staff also attend regular training sessions to ensure their knowledge is up to date making sure they have the skills to allow them to deliver excellent customer service.



### Recognising excellent service

Lowther's award-winning development at Croftfoot Road in Glasgow's south side gained another trophy at the 2015 Herald Property Awards, winning the Affordable Housing Development of the Year award.

During 2016-17, Lowther Homes will work towards gaining Investors in People accreditation for the first time.

Our focus on customer service excellence was again recognised this year when Wheatley was awarded accreditation to a prestigious UK scheme.

Wheatley gained Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation - the national standard for excellence in customer service in public sector organisations - with one of the best ratings in the scheme's history.

CSE accreditation is overseen by the UK Government's Cabinet Office and recognises how organisations serve the people they work for.

Lowther Homes was part of the assessment which saw Wheatley awarded 16 ratings of Compliance Plus and 34 ratings of Full Compliance. It is understood that only one other organisation has achieved a higher number of Compliance Plus ratings in the history of the Standard.



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### Engaging with customers

To keep customers up to date with new developments and services, Lowther Homes launched its first customer newsletter.

The first newsletter included information about the latest acquisitions, how to access new online services, customer satisfaction and gas safety and much more.

Feedback has been positive with at least two issues planned every year.





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