

Scotland Defend Council Housing

VOTE NO TO PRIVATISATION



THE GOVERNMENT WANTS councils in Scotland to sell off our homes – it's a scandal. They say we can have millions of pounds worth of improvements to our homes, AND have lower rents. It's a con.

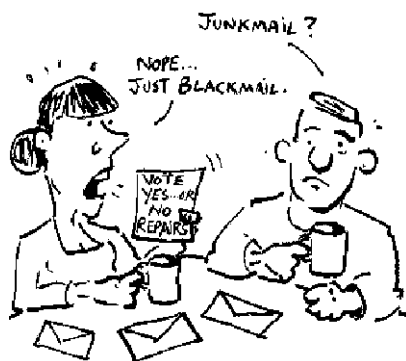
They don't tell us that stock transfer is privatisation and that the banks will be making a profit out of what is now a public service. Council housing may not be perfect, but it has served generations well. As council tenants we have a special relationship with our landlord. If we don't like the way they manage our homes, we can vote them out at the next election. But the new housing association landlords will be run by a board of directors who will be accountable to the company, not to tenants.

Transfer is risky. Housing associations operate in the big business world of private finance, where they are under increasing pressure to expand, merge, and 'diversify' into building luxury homes for private sale. If promises are broken we won't have any redress: the offer document is a contract between the new landlord and the council – not between the new landlord and tenants.

The money is there to do up our homes, and to build the new affordable housing Scotland so badly needs. There is £0.7 billion of public money available to write off councils' historic debt if we transfer; and hundreds of millions in grants to build new homes (see page 2 for details). They try to blackmail us by saying they will only do this if we agree to transfer.

It doesn't make any sense. Council housing is cheaper to build, manage and maintain than 'social' housing. If the government and Executive can spend over £1 billion subsidising transfer, it can give the same to Local Authorities to both improve and increase the supply of council housing.

We demand that the government enable councils to improve homes and estates, which is what tenants want. **Don't take the risk – if you don't know, vote NO!**



There is an alternative

TRANSFER IS DEEPLY unpopular across the UK. Out of 32 councils in Scotland, only three have transferred their homes. 20 out of 29 authorities who had to make a decision have chosen retention. Following the Edinburgh NO vote there is already huge pressure on the Executive to provide direct investment for Scotland.

In Wales only one area has ever transferred, one has voted NO to transfer, and there is massive reluctance among the rest to go down the transfer route. In England, 98 councils have decided they will keep the ownership and management of their homes.

The call for direct investment is supported by tenants, all the major trade unions, more than 250 MPs from across all parties, a new organisation of authorities retaining council housing (ARCH), and an overwhelming vote at Labour's conference.

This pressure is already having an effect, with the government now looking again at housing finance.

We shouldn't give in to the blackmail, when the support for direct investment is stronger than ever before. Vote NO, and tell politicians we want the debt written off for council housing in Scotland – without strings attached!

GLASGOW SELL-OFF A FAILURE

Stock transfer has been tried in Glasgow. It has been a failure.

RENTS UP

The rent guarantee only applied to existing tenants – new tenants moving in after transfer have been charged at a higher rate. Tenants have been threatened with eviction for just one month's rent arrears. Despite a 10-year 'guarantee' after just 3 years rents are to be 'restructured'.

PROMISES BROKEN

Glasgow Housing Association's chief executive was forced to acknowledge to the BBC that the GHA were "not going to meet every target" and that "there will be a whole lot of people with expectations who we will, to some extent, let down for a while" (BBC Scotland, 21 October 2003)

"We warned people that despite all the guarantees that were on offer, once the banks and moneylenders got involved with their housing they would eventually have a price to pay" (Glasgow community activist and GMB steward)*

"We were promised the world by GHA and look at it now. I have been waiting years for dampness to be sorted and I cannot find anyone to tell me when it will be fixed." (Glasgow tenant)*

TENANTS DISEMPOWERED

Tenants Billy MacAllister and Colin Deans (both prominent 'NO' campaigners subsequently elected by tenants to the board) have been kicked off the board and their replacements have been hand picked by the GHA. The promise of second-stage transfer to local organisations has been cynically broken.

PRIVATISATION AND HIGH COSTS

Glasgow's housing debt was written off only to be replaced with a new, bigger debt to finance the improvements and 'regeneration' – borrowing from the private market has meant higher rates of interest and the banks in control. On top of that GHA's management costs are higher than the amount they spend on repairs and major investment combined. (GHA Annual report 2003/04)

HOMELESSNESS IS UP

Large-scale demolitions have provoked protests across the city. Despite promising to build between 6,000 and 10,000 new homes, the GHA has not built a single new house (The Herald April 20 2004). With thousands more homes due to be demolished re-housing is turning into a major issue.

"The really sad thing about the whole issue is that we have sold off for next to nothing something that is not ours to sell in the first place. If my parents had voted for stock transfer in the 1960s I don't think that there would have been a house like this one for me to rent in the 1980s. Can we really look at our kids now and say they'll be okay that there will be a council house for them in the future? This is going to come back and haunt us all, believe me." (Glasgow tenant campaigner)*

*Quotes from Marginalised Voices: Resisting the Privatisation of Council Housing in Glasgow by G Mooney & L Poole (Local Economy, Feb 2005)

"The impact of the Edinburgh NO vote has sent shock waves across the whole Scottish political spectrum. It has created a debate about how to fund decent affordable council housing where none existed. As debt write off comes from the Westminster Treasury we should unite our forces north and south of the border to secure a future for council housing across the UK" **Jenni Marrow, Secretary, Scottish Tenants Organisation**

Strong cross-party support for council housing: see inside >>>

Campaign grows across the UK >>>

“As a tenant I am opposed to stock transfer as it will lead to higher rents, poorer services to tenants and less accountability for those making decisions. I am also a shop steward for UCATT and we as a union are opposed to stock transfer as it will mean a drop in working conditions for members and inevitable job losses as the Housing Association will cut costs and services.” **Joe McDonagh, Stirling Against Stock Transfer**

“We are sure we can convince Highland tenants to follow the lead shown by Edinburgh tenants and reject the false promises of privatisation.” **Donnie Kerr, Chair, Highlands Against Stock Transfer**

“As an Edinburgh Labour MP I strongly support the contribution which Council housing can make in urban and rural Scotland. I am proud that Edinburgh council tenants in their ballot rejected whole sale stock transfer of our houses to what in effect would have been a super-quango with minimal effective accountability. I hope that council tenants in other areas in Scotland will follow Edinburgh's lead and vote No.” **Gavin Strang MP**

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

The money is there

WE SHOULD DEFEND AND improve council housing for our children and for future generations – it's their right as well as ours.

The money is there to do up our homes. Over £1 billion of public money has been made available in Scotland to subsidise the current transfer programme. If there was a level playing field and the same money was made available to the councils direct, there would be more than enough to bring our homes up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and do the environmental improvements on our estates.

Between us tenants in Scotland pay £832 million a year in rent. We expect that that money will be spent on repairing, managing and improving our homes. But instead of that councils have to spend a fortune towards the repay-

ment of historic debt – 41p in every £1 of rent in the Highlands for example.

The UK Treasury has already spent £1.3 billion subsidising debt write-off in Scotland and is prepared to spend another £0.7 billion as well. A new report from Audit Scotland shows that writing off debt costs the public nothing:

“This form of debt repayment is not in itself a cost to government in cash terms... there is no net effect (cost or benefit) for the Exchequer or the taxpayer when the Treasury provides grant aid to allow repayment of a council's PWLB loan debt.” (*Council housing transfers*, Auditor General for Scotland, March 2006)

On top of this the Executive are prepared to spend £136m on ‘dowry’ payments (or ‘gap funding’) to make the transfers viable; and £362m on other inducements (like the £200m in Edin-

burgh for new housing or £32m in Stirling for ‘regeneration’). But there is no financial reason whatsoever why this investment should depend on transfer. It would cost exactly the same if it was given to councils direct.

The tenants of Scotland demand that if the money is there, and it costs nothing, then the debt should be written off and tenants should not be blackmailed into selling off our homes and our futures.

Look how much money the government is prepared to pour into subsidising transfer in Scotland.....

	Debt Write-Off	Gap Funding & Setup Costs	Other Inducements	Total
Edinburgh	£320m	£0m	£200m	£520m
Highland	£166m	£0m	£50m	£216m
Inverclyde	£??m	£41m	£59m	£100m
Renfrewshire	£172m	£76m	£21m	£269m
Stirling	£25m	£19m	£32m	£76m
TOTAL	£683m	£136m	£362m	£1,181m

(figures from HA business plans and reports to local authorities)

Edinburgh doubles investment programme after NO vote

“Before the transfer ballot Edinburgh council gave us the impression our homes would fall apart if we voted NO, and we wouldn't be able to get any extra funding from the Executive.

But according to the council's new Housing Service Plan, despite the NO vote they are able to fund “a £40m capital programme in future years, almost double what it has typically been in the past.”

On top of this they have “successfully negotiated with the Scottish Executive to keep the extra £15m each year for new housing...”

We welcome this, but the council should do more. Tenants shouldn't have to be punished with rent rises to pay for much-needed investment. We call on the council to join with tenants, unions and other councils from around Scotland to demand all the money that was available for transfer be given to Edinburgh council direct.”

Duncan Smith, Unison Services for Communities Convenor (Housing)

Transfer is deeply unpopular

TRANSFER IS VERY UNPOPULAR in Scotland. Of the 32 local authorities in Scotland, only three have transferred their homes and one of those (Glasgow) has been fraught with problems ever since.

The 29 remaining authorities with council homes were required to submit a plan to the Executive by 29th April 2005 saying how they intend to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015. In Dundee and Aberdeen tenants rejected large-scale transfer at the consultation stage and Edinburgh tenants recently voted NO in a ballot. Two-thirds of Scottish councils, after consultation, have chosen to retain their housing.

Councils in Scotland have a lot of flexibility when it comes to deciding how to fund investment in council housing. So while councils like East and West Lothian can afford the standard out of their current level of resources, others have chosen a variety of ways to close the gap:

- Aberdeenshire council has chosen to fund investments through raising rent by 3% above inflation for 5 years and 2% above for the rest.
- South Lanarkshire, where tenants voted by a majority of 96% to stay with the council, is using prudential borrowing.
- Fife has chosen to raise rents by 1% above inflation and make savings in management costs.

• East Dunbartonshire is using a mixture of prudential borrowing, directing all of its right-to-buy receipts into investment, and raising rents by 1% above inflation.

A number of councils have not only chosen retention but are calling for a level playing field to help investment in Scottish council housing. Some councils, such as Fife, Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Shetland gave evidence to the House of Commons Council Housing Group to express their support for direct investment in council housing.

Why are a few Scottish councils pushing transfer? Our elected councillors should be representing our interests, not ramming the policies of the Scottish Executive and Westminster government down our throat.

Campaign grows across UK

THERE IS MASSIVE SUPPORT for council housing across all political parties, right across the UK.

Last year tenants in Edinburgh joined the thousands of tenants across the UK voting NO to transfer. Many of the biggest trade unions are supporting the campaign, (Amicus, CWU, GMB, PCS, RMT, TGWU, UCATT, UNISON) on behalf of members who work in housing and /or are council tenants or need more council housing.

The select committee of MPs which oversees the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has criticised current government policy; while the parliamentary Public Accounts

Committee found that transfer is more expensive. There is now a group of MPs in the commons who support council housing, including ex-Ministers such as Frank Dobson, Clare Short, Michael Meacher and Kate Hoey.

A big campaign of tenants, councillors, unions and MPs has left the government's position completely isolated and untenable.

- Delegates at the Labour Party conference have criticised government policy two years running. Last year's motion called “on government to provide the ‘fourth option’ of direct investment to council housing as a matter of urgency”.
- In February 2006 the Labour Party set up a policy review group to address the

terms of the conference motion.

• In June 2006 the new Minister in charge of housing, Ruth Kelly, issued a discussion paper on Decent Homes and announced a pilot scheme of six councils to look at ways “to create long term sustainability for council housing.”

All of this shows that government is wobbling. No-one can now say that government policy is set in stone – it clearly isn't. But it's up to us to keep up the pressure. Ministers hope that tenants in Scotland will be bullied into privatisation. If we call their bluff and join all those who have already voted NO across the UK, we'll send a huge message to the government: we want direct investment – with no strings!



Tenants, trade unionists and councillors from across Scotland

Support in the

There's strong cross party support for our Early Day Motions calling for a level playing field for council housing. The current one, EDM 48, has 146 signatures including the following Scottish MPs:



Gavin Strang, MP for Edinburgh East



Alex Salmond, Leader, Scottish Nationalist Party



Anne Moffat MP



Menzies Campbell, Leader, Liberal Democrats



Frank Doran MP



Jim McGovern MP

“Stock transfer is a negation of political responsibility and democratic accountability. In effect Stirling council are privatising council homes. This is completely unacceptable.”
Cllr Scott Farmer, Stirling Council

“Following the 2 to 1 tenant vote against transfer, Dundee City Council announced plans for large-scale demolitions of around 2,000 homes. But this would mean tenants being forced out of the city centre and west end into peripheral estates, it's expensive, and tenants are opposed to their plans. Dundee housing is being demolished because Westminster and the Scottish Executive won't find the much smaller amount needed to allow the council to pay off its historic debt and bring its homes up to the long overdue new standards.” **Dundee Defend Council Housing**

“Everyone wishes the investment in housing to go ahead, but not at the cost of council tenancies. It would be wrong to go down this road.” **John McNaughton, Paisley and District trades council**

ALTERNATIVE

The case against transfer



...ss the UK joined together to lobby MPs at Westminster in February. Picture: Andrew Wiard

Transfer is privatisation. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs or housing associations) are private companies in law and they borrow on the private market. The transfer of council housing to an RSL means a less democratic housing service, increased homelessness, and big pay rises for senior managers.

Sell-off is risky. Rent guarantees and glossy promises are often broken. There is a high risk either that the new Housing Associations will get into financial trouble and have to be taken over; or that they will expand and diversify into a huge business empire. And if anything goes wrong – there is no return.

Sell-off Is Expensive

To improve our homes after transfer to a private company is far more expensive. In March 2006 an Audit Scotland report into Council Housing Transfers concluded that there is no ready assurance that transfer provides value for money. The Glasgow transfer for example was estimated to be £120m (over £1400 a house) more expensive than if the council had been funded to do the work itself.

Privatisation is more expensive because councils are able to borrow money at a lower rate of interest than private companies. The 'management costs' of transfer associations are also higher – in other words they pay fat-cat salaries to senior executives, and spend

a fortune on new office buildings and glossy self-promotion.

Set-up costs are also massive. In Renfrewshire, for example, they plan to spend £7.4 million of our rent money just on setting up the company after transfer (RHA Business Plan). Someone has to pay for this.

Risk

In England, many transfer associations get into financial difficulties – one fifth have had to be placed under supervision by the Housing Corporation, the equivalent of Communities Scotland (*The Guardian*, 25 May 2005)

Two out of three large-scale transfers of council stock in Scotland have already experienced problems because their finances haven't stacked up.

In Glasgow a £350m hole in the financial plan has meant that promises made to tenants are not being carried out (see article below). In Scottish Borders the transfer landlord is suing the council because they claim the homes were valued wrongly, while according to Audit Scotland the investment there hasn't been any higher than it would have been with the council.

Privatisation

Housing associations are private companies in law and practice. The bulk of the promised 'investment' will in fact be a loan from the banks. This will

create enormous pressure on the new housing associations to concentrate on making a good return for the banks.

If we agree to transfer the housing companies will be given all the land our estates are built on. A lot of that land will be seen as prime development sites. Many housing associations set up profit-making subsidiaries in order to build luxury homes for sale – on what used to be our green spaces.

We need more affordable housing for our children, not the gentrification of our estates.

Broken Promises – No Return

A survey of tenants in the Audit Scotland report found regarding "increased investment and improvements in housing service" that "26 per cent considered transfer had made no difference in this respect, while ten per cent thought it was worse."

And if it all goes wrong and promises are broken there will be no return and no redress for tenants. As the report says:

"Councils do not appear to be well-placed to enforce guarantees to tenants in the case of any non-performance by the new landlord. In such cases, the remedy available to the council under the transfer contract would be a claim for damages... ultimately, tenants would pay any claim for damages upheld against the landlord."

More homeless

The council has a statutory responsibility to provide homes for the homeless. RSLs do not. A Shelter report said that where councils have transferred their houses "homeless applicants spend longer in temporary accommodation, have fewer long term housing options and in some cases are unable to access affordable housing at all." (*Out of stock: Stock transfer, Homelessness and Access to Housing*; Shelter, 2001)

"The latest figures show that 20.1% of allocations by large-scale voluntary transfer housing associations are to homeless families. This... is less than the 34% by local authorities." (*Housing Today*, 29/04/05)

"An area of ongoing concern to [Glasgow] City Council is the impact that the stock transfer has had on its ability to meet its obligations under the homelessness legislation. The use of bed and breakfast has gone up markedly" (*Stock Transfer in Scotland: Impact and Implications*, APSE, Sep 05).

Promises broken in Glasgow

One of the key promises made to tenants in Glasgow was that there would be a second stage transfer to 63 small, local housing organisations (LHOs). But the promise has been dogged with problems. First of all they discovered that EU procurement rules meant the secondary transfers would have to be opened to European-wide competition rather than given to LHOs. Then there were rows over the valuation of the stock. And finally a massive shortfall in funding was discovered, at which GHA cynically tried to deny ever having made promises in the first place!

"A Glasgow Housing Association report compiled for the Scottish Executive... reveals GHA is more than £350 million short of the funding it needs to carry out secondary stock transfer.

...The association has also denied any responsibility for following through on the secondary transfer

process. '[Our] promises make no specific mention of second stage transfer or community ownership,' a note accompanying the statement said.

...Neil Elliot, tenant chair of Glen Oaks Darnley LHO, said: 'Second stage transfer was at the core. It was what everybody campaigned about. If they never promised anything, why is it part of its ethos?'

Sources close to GHA said both the executive and the association had always been aware of the funding shortfall, but had pushed ahead regardless... One housing association chief executive close to the transfer said the focus had been on winning the ballot, rather than the economics of the eventual secondary transfers." (*Inside Housing* 03/03/06)

Second stage transfer is one of the promises being made by the Highlands Housing Association why should we trust them?

...the Parliaments...



"If you've got a ballot coming up, fight like hell to persuade people to vote no. The more people who reject it the better chance we have of turning over this stupid policy."
Frank Dobson MP (Labour)

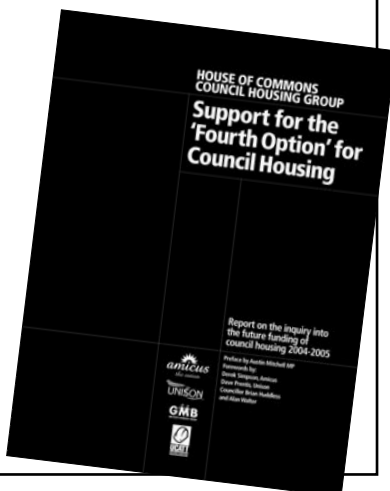


"I hope that the Government will heed the report of the ODPM Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Audit Commission and the Defend Council Housing group report, and rethink their policies."
Paul Holmes MP (Chair, Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Group)



"Attempts to coerce tenants into stock transfer because of the need for substantial repairs to housing is completely unacceptable. We will back tenants who want to see their homes remain under council ownership all the way."
Colin Fox MSP, (Scottish Socialist Party)

Order your copy of the MPs report from Austin Mitchell MP, Chair of the House of Commons Council Housing Group:
 Tel: 0207 219 4559



Rents: read the small print

- Housing associations offer us a rent guarantee of five years – but if you read the small print you'll find that the guarantee is not written into the new tenancy agreement. The offer document is a legal agreement between the housing association and the council, not between the housing association and tenants. So if they break the rent guarantee (or any of the other glossy promises) tenants will not be able to obtain redress.
- New tenants have no guarantees

at all – this could lead to different rents being charged for properties in the same block or street.

- Housing association rents in Scotland are higher than council rents – 11% on average across the country and sometimes as high as 43%. (Statistics from Communities Scotland: RSL rents at March 2004 compared to local authority rents for 2004/05).
- In England transfer RSLs used to offer 5-year rent guarantees. The

National Audit Office found that 17% of transfer RSLs broke them. Research done for the MPs Group showed that 15 of the 20 fastest-increasing RSL rents between 1997 and 2004 were in districts which had undergone transfer.

- Service charges are higher too. Since GHA took over in Glasgow, they have added VAT to service charges and started charging up to £40 a year for communal lighting.



Having crunched the figures we think the best thing for the tenants is to keep the service in-house. We think it is much better to have social services under the one organisation so that when people get into difficulties they can come to us and have access to all the housing stock belonging to North Ayrshire council. Housing association management costs are far, far higher than local authorities so for every pound spent there is a bigger proportion going to management. Rents are also far higher.”
Cllr David O'Neill, Leader, North Ayrshire council



I am unhappy that the case being made for housing stock transfer has become so one-sided, I don't believe that tenants are being briefed on the full picture.

I am also frustrated that the material RHA were producing says that transfer is the only way to get investment, when, who knows what will happen at the Scottish Parliament elections next year, when stock transfer may not be the only game in town!” **Cathy McEwan, former tenant board member, Renfrewshire HA**

“I feel very strongly about the way that the Highland Council, TPAS and Highland Housing Association are steam-rolling ahead with this so called stock transfer, and are not letting the tenants know the strengths and weakness of staying with the Council versus the strengths and weakness of transferring to a Housing Association. The Highland tenants are not and I repeat not getting a fair deal in tenant awareness in this case and if they go for stock transfer they can't turn back, and could end up like Glasgow (back in more debt) tenants have really to be put in the picture for the future of affordable Council Housing.” **Nigel Slater, Chairperson, Highland Tenants & Residents Federation and West Caithness TA**

Tenants will have less power after sell-off

COUNCILS CLAIM THAT HAVING tenants on the board of the new Housing Associations will give tenants more power. This is a con!

At the moment individual tenants and tenants associations can lobby their local ward councillors and, if we don't like the way they run our homes, vote them out. This direct democratic relationship will be lost after transfer.

Tenants who sit on the boards of Housing Associations find they are gagged. They are in a minority and their hands are tied by company law. They are constantly told the information they receive is 'in confidence' and they can't publicise it. Many who have spoken out

for the interests of tenants have been kicked off the board, as happened in Glasgow.

The Audit Commission has criticised councils for "mis-selling" the role of board members: "tenants are often led to believe they will have an explicit role in representing the interest of their fellow tenants on the board" when really "the directors responsibility takes supremacy". (*Improving Services Through Resident Involvement*, June 2004).

Look at what happened in Glasgow: "those who bought the dream of community ownership have become increasingly disillusioned by the lack of progress; justifiably so. Those running

GHA make frequent use of terms such as "tenant participation" and "community empowerment" but many tenants claim that the change of landlord from the city council to GHA has given them no more say in local housing management..." (*The Herald*, October 28th 2005).

"Any proposition put in front of the tenants was put in front of the money-men first... tenant participation is little more than window dressing." (Glasgow UNISON activist, BBC Scotland, 2003)

This isn't tenants power. A strong, independent tenants movement, with tenants associations in every estate and street, is a much more effective defence of tenants' interests.

This campaign needs your help!

It's wrong that councils can spend £millions of taxpayers' money on their propaganda and trying to make out there is no alternative to stock transfer. Defend Council Housing can't use public funds and relies on donations. Please help us to help you reach an informed decision about the future of your home:

- Distribute this broadsheet to every council home in your area;
- Put up posters on your estate and in your window;
- Organise a meeting and invite a speaker from the campaign to debate with the council so all tenants can hear both sides of the argument;
- Raise money to pay for the campaign; any donation will be appreciated, no matter how small.
- Most important... talk to your family, friends and neighbours and get them to VOTE NO.

A FAIR DEBATE?

Why are councils so keen to keep the case against transfer hidden? Even the so-called "independent tenants advisors" are paid for by the council – hardly independent! We challenge Scottish councils to hold a fair and balanced debate, with equal resources for both sides, so tenants can hear all the facts and arguments.

We can stop them: use your vote

The council would like tenants to believe that the outcome of this ballot is inevitable – but it isn't. An effective campaign can win the argument. NO Votes in Birmingham, Wrexham and Edinburgh have shocked Ministers and policy makers and made MPs sit up and take notice. If tenants across Scotland vote NO then it adds to the real pressure on government to give us direct investment – with no strings attached.

HOW TO CONTACT US If you live in...

HIGHLANDS
Write: Highlands Against Stock Transfer, 22 Upper Kessock Street, Inverness, IV3 8JQ
Tel: 01463 223578
(9am-11am or 5pm-10pm)
Email: nostocktransfer@yahoo.com
Website: www.HAST2006.org.uk

RENFREWSHIRE
Write: Renfrewshire Defend Council Housing, 17 Main Rd, Elderslie, Renfrewshire, PA5 9BQ
Tel: 01505 335371 Email: oldgeriatric@hotmail.com

STIRLING
Write: Stirling Against Stock Transfer, 33 Firs Crescent, Bannockburn
Tel: 01786 813794 Email: rowland.sheret@bopenworld.com

EDINBURGH
Write: Edinburgh Against Stock Transfer, c/o LTUCR, Basement 26/28 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QH
Tel: 0131 555 6357 Email: stopstocktransfer@hotmail.com
Website: www.stocktransfer.info

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Trade unions back fight for council housing

"GMB Scotland believes that the best way to achieve good quality housing is through Local Government provision.

GMB Scotland opposes the Government's Policy of Stock Transfer and Privatisation of Housing as the only way of dealing with the current housing debt faced by many Local Authorities.

GMB Scotland supports the Campaign to Defend Public Housing and encourages tenants to follow the example in Edinburgh and vote no.

GMB Scotland also calls on the Government to make the same financial commitment to remove housing debt where tenants vote to keep their homes within the Local Authority control." **Alex McLuckie, Senior Organiser for Public Services, GMB Scotland**

"The Housing Stock Transfer, which is ongoing in Stirling, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and the Highlands in Scotland, will do nothing to ensure the tenants of a decent home for the future.

With less opportunity for affordable housing being available, it is imperative that these council tenants reject council housing transfers. We have seen over the years, an increase in waiting lists spiraling to 50% in just eight years.

Councils like South Lanarkshire, having committed themselves to a complete refurbishment programme, will see it completed in half the time, at half the cost." **Harry Frew, Scottish Secretary, UCATT**

"UNISON Scotland opposes housing stock transfer as it reduces democratic accountability and tenant choice while rents and service charges rise.

Research has shown that council housing could be improved and brought up to a higher standard if the councils were allowed to invest in their properties. Direct investment by councils is quicker and cheaper than investment via stock transfer. It's time for a level playing field on housing investment – if the housing debt can be cleared for stock transfer then the same rules should apply for direct investment."

Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary, UNISON Scotland

"STUC has consistently opposed housing stock transfer in Scotland because of the implications for local authority staff as well as the potential loss of democratic accountability. STUC calls for genuine choice for tenants, which must include the option of retention of existing stock in council hands with the same levels of financial support from the Scottish Executive as is being pledged under transfer."

Dave Moxham, Assistant Secretary, STUC

"The T&GWU is opposed to any Council housing stock transfer. This is just another form of Privatisation, which in the long term costs tenants dearly in terms of higher rents and poorer maintenance and repair services. It also affects jobs of the Council housing support staff who are likely to see their terms and conditions changed to their detriment and in some cases there is likely to be job losses. It is for all these reasons that we oppose the housing stock transfer. Staying with the Council that has provided quality housing and repair services for years is the best thing tenants can do."

Tommy Campbell, T&G Regional Industrial Organiser

The following trade unions are affiliated to the Defend Council Housing campaign:



Demand direct investment in council housing – with no strings attached