

London Tenants Federation

Annual Report 2011-12



*Photographs on the front page cover are from London Tenants Federation's
Central London sub-regional meeting 22nd September 2011*

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Overview

It has been another very busy year for the LTF and there is increasing evidence of the cumulative, positive impact of its work over the past few years, some of which is detailed in this report.

As a consequence LTF is increasingly seen as a key player amongst London's wide range of regional housing, planning and homelessness organisations having invaluable grass roots knowledge, experience and expertise. Its continuing development of positive links with other tenant, community and voluntary sector groups and with London university academics that are specialists in housing, planning and regeneration has contributed to this.

Over the last year, LTF work and debate has necessarily focused on national and regional policy changes that impact on the kind of homes and social and community infrastructure that might be built in London, the security that households who are renting will have and the increasing unaffordability of housing in London. Specifically this has covered policy changes contained in the Localism Act, the Welfare Reform Act, the new National Planning Policy Framework, the London Plan 2011, consultations on early proposed alterations to the 2011 London Plan and the 'revised' London Housing Strategy.

National issues

LTF held the first conference on Localism in London after the publication of the Localism Act in November 2011 in partnership with Friends of the Earth and Just Space. Attendees - tenant representatives from 23 London boroughs and representatives of 30 other voluntary and community sector organisations had the opportunity to discuss community perspectives on Localism in workshops on: draft London Plan Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance and the Revised London Housing Strategy; the housing and homelessness sections of the Localism Act; the changing context of planning from the local to the national level; neighbourhood planning; sustainable development and community right to buy and to challenge. Speakers from the Mayor's Office, London Councils and the Planning Officers' Society London provided regional and local government perspectives. Camden Empowerment Network and West End Community Network provided perspectives on Neighbourhood Planning. Friends of the Earth gave a presentation on the National Planning Policy Framework

LTF gained Government *Building Communities Fund* match funding (through Locality) to support the attendance of additional voluntary and community groups

at the conference. Locality has since commissioned an evaluation of the Building Communities Fund, with the LTF event included as a case study. The conference report and event pack containing speakers' presentations, briefings and signposting of additional information are on the LTF website.

LTF's 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods - tenants definition' drawn up at its 2009 London Plan Conference is included in the Government's report on Lifetime Neighbourhoods which was published in December 2011. The report brings together existing writings, research and practice examples of Lifetime Neighbourhoods (places designed to be inclusive regardless of age or disability). The LTF's definition uniquely includes a social element, including provision of good quality involvement in decision-making.

Regional issues

Analysis of the 2011 London Plan shows the impact of LTF members' engagement in the Examination in Public of the draft plan in 2010. Positive changes were made to policies on: housing choice, (specifically relating to older people's housing), improving health and addressing health inequalities, the Olympic Legacy, optimising housing potential, children and young people's play and informal recreation facilities, building London's neighbourhoods and tall and large buildings.

The Mayor has already proposed alterations to the housing chapter of the London Plan 2011 relating to the introduction of affordable rent tenancies. LTF responded to the early consultation with the London Assembly members as well as the formal public consultation in March 2012. Some LTF member organisations also responded to the latter. A formal Examination in Public of the alterations are due to be held at City Hall in November this year, which it is anticipated LTF will be invited to attend.

After the Examination in Public of the draft replacement London Plan, LTF was asked to nominate a delegate to join a GLA steering group on a new Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. LTF's delegate has consistently argued for a new housing needs assessment to be carried out at the same time as the land availability assessment. Another LTF delegate has been invited by the GLA to take part in interviews and workshops as part of its work in producing the London Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance on Lifetime Neighbourhoods.

LTF held a special meeting on the London Mayor's draft revised London Housing Strategy and housing supplementary planning guidance (to the London Plan) that was also attended by 10 other London voluntary and community sector groups. Alan Benson, GLA head of housing, and Duncan Bowie, previous London Plan strategic planner and now a senior lecturer in spatial planning at the University of Westminster gave presentations at the meetings.

LTF made its own response to the consultation and also co-ordinated a collaborative and comprehensive response contributed to / supported by 16 voluntary and community sector groups: *London Civic Forum; Homeless Link; Just Space; London*

Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies; Housing Justice; London Voluntary Service Council; London Federation of Co-operative Housing; Camden Federation of Private Tenants; Kings Cross Railway Lands Group; Zaccheaus 2000 Trust; Hayes Community Development Forum; London Tenants Federation, Stonewall Housing; London Gypsy and Traveller Unit; 4in10, Age UK London

LTF's Affordable Housing Con, which includes detailed analysis of the poor delivery of social-rented homes in London 2007-10 compared to London Plan targets and the GLA's own evidence of need, was published in 2011. Some of the analysis was used in Trust for London and the New Policy Institute's London Poverty Profile 2011. Dr Paul Watt, Senior Lecturer in Urban Studies, Birkbeck, UCL, provided a foreword to the publication and LTF analysis gained some coverage in planning and housing publications and the national press. LTF delegates have continued to raise issues about the Affordable Housing Con at the Mayor's Housing Forum meetings.

Building links

LTF continues to build links with other tenant, community and voluntary sector groups - some London wide and some local. It is an active member of the Just Space network, with LTF representatives attending its meetings, events and conferences. Just Space members frequently attend LTF open meetings and conferences as workshop facilitators and speakers.

It has engaged in Housing Benefit roundtable meetings co-ordinated by Shelter and LVSC and has recently been asked by the Child Poverty Action Group and Save the Children's 4in10 to consider engaging in some joint work with them.

LTF has strengthened its relationships with university academics in London. After representatives met with an academic from Kings College London to discuss their experiences of engaging in the Examination in Public of the new London Plan, a joint piece of work has been proposed (with them applying for a small grant from Antipode - a radical geography journal). The focus of the proposed work is displacement (of existing communities) in large regeneration schemes .

The London Federation of Co-operative Housing joined LTF as an associate member this year and LTF has continued to support the London Friends of Parks Network.

London's sub-regions

LTF's two sub-regional meetings this year, covering Central London and parts of South and West London (planning) sub-regions, focused on the large developments planned (as defined in the London Plan) in those sub-regions, the types of new homes and jobs that are to be delivered and whether or not they meet the needs of local communities. Speakers and workshop facilitators at the events included Peter Eversden, London Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies, Marion Laragy, Kings Cross Railway Lands Group, Robin Brown, Hayes Community Development Forum, Ian Gordon, London School of Economics and Richard Lee, Just Space.

Sharing and exchanging

LTF share and exchange sessions have, as always, been popular agenda items at LTF general meetings. The sessions are important in terms LTF members analysing commonality and differences across London as well as understanding how national and regional policy impacts at the local level.

LTF's two annual newsletters and e-bulletins were distributed by email to almost 600 tenant and other community representatives that are now included on its extended email list and to London MPs and London Assembly members. More than 1,500 hard copies of its newsletter continue to be distributed to TRAs across London, most through LTF member organisations' own distribution networks and some via local authority tenant participation officers.

LTF's website has had a redesign and is looking clearer and easier to navigate. Its stop press section on each page facilitates regular updating on important regional issues and LTF work. The website project page includes a growing number of accounts of tenants' histories and struggles, some of which have been put together directly by / through LTF (with more to be done).

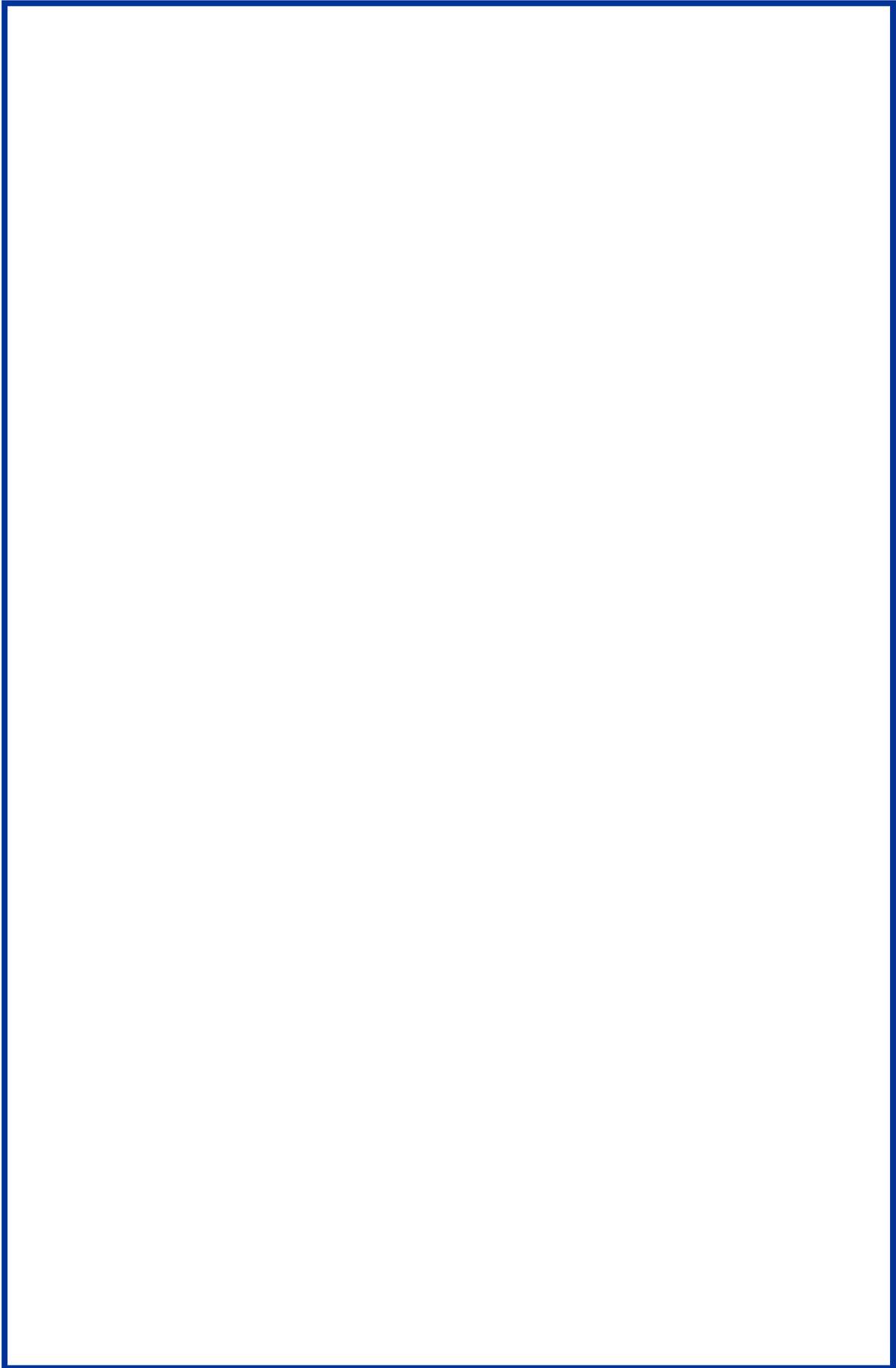
The future

Having operated very successfully for almost 10 years as an unincorporated organisation, LTF is on the verge of setting up as a company limited by guarantee with charitable objectives.

This is an important step forward for LTF, both in terms of being able to bid for funds in its own right and in the future being able to employ its own members of staff. Its articles of association will also accommodate membership of housing association as well as council tenant organisations that operate on a borough-wide, sub-regional or London-wide basis. It is hoped that this will widen and strengthening the voice of London's tenants.

At present, funding for LTF's work is by no means secure long term. Positively, London Councils is proposing to extend grants for some of the organisations that it currently fund from the end of September 2012 to the end of March 2013. This includes Camden Fed for the LTF project.

LTF has, in its own right, recently made an application for funding to the Trust for London and will know within a month whether it has been shortlisted or not. If shortlisted, a final decision will be made in October.



London Tenants Federation is an umbrella organisation, bringing together London's borough wide council tenants federations and organisations. It aims to provide a strong regional voice for London's council tenants.

It does not aim to supersede any of its member organisations, but rather to strengthen them by bringing them together to share and exchange information, to respond to consultation and at times to campaign.

LTF has representation on the Mayor's Housing Forum.

LTF is a democratic and accountable organisation that operates by consensus.

Representatives of its member federations and organisations are elected in their own boroughs and accountable to tenants in their own boroughs. Each federation and organisation is of equal importance to the LTF.

LTF has links with many other tenant, voluntary and community organisations that have an interest in housing, planning and community related issues.