



Our environmental commitment

**Taking steps to reduce our impact on the
environment**

2011-2013

Contents

Contents.....	1
Our commitment	2
<i>Our Sustainability Strategy 2011-13</i>	3
Goal 1: Provide the most energy efficient and highest quality affordable homes that our resources allow.....	4
Goal 2: Reduce our energy and resource use, and maximize our recycling.....	6
Goal 3: Consult with and invest in the individuals and communities that we house and support.....	8
Goal 4: Support our staff, customers and contractors to be as environmentally responsible as possible	10
How can we tell how sustainable we are?.....	11

Our commitment

Seren's Sustainability Strategy confirms our strong commitment to improving the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the homes we provide, our business activities, and the lives of the individuals and communities that we serve.

What is Seren's Sustainability Strategy?

Our Sustainability Strategy is a group-wide document that sets out Seren's approach to improving the sustainability of what we do and the lives of those we house and work with.

The strategy links to our Plan for 2011-13, our wider strategies for Growth, Asset Management, Community Investment and Affordable Warmth, and addresses the key aspect of sustainability within the Welsh Government's Regulatory Requirements. It also supports key objectives within the Welsh Government (WG)'s One Wales: One Planet vision for a sustainable Wales, and the WG's 2010 Climate Change and Fuel Poverty strategies.

Seren's Purpose and Values

Our Sustainability Strategy has Seren's purpose and values at its heart:

Our Purpose

We provide housing and support that makes a real difference to people's lives.

The aim of our strategy is to ensure that the difference we make is as sustainable as possible.

Our Values

Responsibility: we use our resources in the most sustainable way that we can

Openness: we are 'real' about our impact on the environment and how we are doing in meeting our sustainability goals

Respect: for the world we live in and the lives and communities that we affect through our work

Integrity: we consistently take steps to turn our plans into reality

Fairness: we act fairly in the way we use our resources

Ambition: our aim is to become a business that is socially, economically environmentally sustainable to the core

Our Sustainability Strategy 2011-13

Our aim is to take active steps to reduce our impact on the environment, the natural resources we use and the carbon emissions we produce, and to support and encourage our people, our customers and our wider partners and communities to live in a more sustainable way.

As a business, there are four main ways that we go about doing this:

- **Minimising** our energy use
- **Maximising** our waste reduction
- **Supporting** those we house and work with
- **Influencing** attitudes and behaviours

We use these principles across the whole range of our activities, in particular:

- **Our homes** – the way we design, build, maintain and improve them
- **Our business activities** – the resources we spend our money on and how we use them, e.g. paper, energy, travel
- **Our community investment** – helping those we house and support
- **Our staff, customers and partners** – their attitudes and lifestyle choices

To make this a reality, we have 4 main goals over the next 2 years:

1. Provide the most energy efficient and highest quality affordable homes that our resources allow (both new build and existing homes)
2. Reduce our energy and resource use, and maximize our recycling
3. Consult with and invest in the individuals and communities that we house and support
4. Support our staff, customers and wider partners to be as environmentally responsible as possible

Goal 1: Provide the most energy efficient and highest quality affordable homes that our resources allow

We recognise the impact that both our new homes and our existing homes have on the environment. We are working hard to deliver new homes that minimise their impact on the environment both in construction and in occupation, that are comfortable and affordable to run and are easy to maintain and live in. We are also looking at how we can ensure that our existing homes are as energy efficient as possible and are comfortable and affordable to run for our customers.

We have made excellent progress in this area over the past 2 years with some notable successes, in particular:

- the ground-breaking 101-home development at Mariners Quay in Newport which has delivered the largest Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 scheme in the UK;
- a Technology Strategy Board-funded retrofit project piloting the use of renewable and other energy saving technologies;
- a bespoke Site Waste Management Plan implemented by construction partner Leadbitter during the construction of Mariners Quay leading to a significant reduction in waste going to landfill: this followed Leadbitter Group's voluntary sign-up to the 'Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment' in late 2009 under the Government-backed Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP);
- sustained investment of over £500,000 per annum through our Care & Repair agency helping to deliver affordable warmth and other home improvements for older persons in the Newport area;
- Charter's multi-million pound, high-impact, cross-tenure 'Arbed' project in the community of Markham near Blackwood in partnership with Warm Wales, npower, Job Match and the Welsh Government, which saw several hundred homes benefit from a range of grant-funded energy efficiency measures including external wall insulation and solar photovoltaics along with local job creation and training opportunities;
- Planned maintenance work carried out through Charter's Welsh Housing Quality Standard Home Improvement Programme in 2010/11 alone resulted in an estimated CO2 reduction of over

1,000 tonnes per annum and a potential saving of more than £160,000 on tenants' fuel bills year on year going forward.

The positive social, economic and environmental impact of these projects is in the process of being measured, and the early results are just beginning to emerge. We need to use our 'learning' from these schemes to inform what we do next and help us to be even better, and share our knowledge with others as extensively as possible.

Our strategic goal as an organisation is to continue to do all that we can to make the homes that we design, build and manage as energy efficient as possible. To achieve this we will:

New Homes

- 1. Deliver a pilot scheme pioneering more cost effective construction methods which provide high levels of energy efficiency and flexible design.** We will do this by working closely with partners to deliver mutual objectives and encourage new partnerships aimed at delivering innovation and more homes for less money.
- 2. Meet and where possible exceed the required levels for Code for Sustainable Homes, BREEAM, and Building Regulation requirements** for all new build developments.
- 3. Use our exemplar Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 scheme at Mariners Quay, Newport** to continue to provide information for partners, stakeholders and other parties to encourage further innovation in environmentally sustainable housing design and construction methods.
- 4. Progressively implement our development and refurbishment waste controls with partner contractors under the WRAP initiative** to improve recycling and minimise waste to landfill.
- 5. Work with partner contractors to reduce energy and water use** on our development and refurbishment projects.

Existing Homes

- 6. Deliver a £7m self-funded programme of solar photovoltaic installations to Charter's existing homes** linking to the UK Government's Feed in Tariff scheme.
- 7. Secure further funding opportunities for energy efficiency improvements to Charter's existing homes** in collaboration with key strategic partners (e.g. Warm Wales), including Arbed Phase 2 (2011-2013), Renewable Heat Incentive Phase 2 (2012), and the Community Energy Saving Partnership (CESP).
- 8. Use the BRE EcoHomes XB baseline set in 2010** to monitor and report progress in improving the sustainability rating of Charter's existing homes.

Outcomes:

- Reduced Carbon Footprint for our new and existing homes
- Fuel bill savings for residents (both tenants and home owners)
- Reduced risk of residents falling into fuel poverty
- Increased average SAP rating for our existing homes
- Improved EcoHomes XB sustainability rating for our existing homes

Goal 2: Reduce our energy and resource use, and maximize our recycling

There are lots of good reasons for us to reduce our energy use and the amount of waste we produce. Fuel and energy costs are rising, and the emissions they create harm our environment. Landfill space is getting scarcer, disposal costs are rising and the types of waste that can be recycled into useful products are greater than ever. We aim to reduce our waste and recycle as much as we can.

Our progress in this area over the past 2 years has been encouraging. Seren's own Facilities Management team has been at the forefront of increasing the range and quantity of our recycling, and managing the efficiency of the group's energy usage and utilities expenditure, including the installation of a more energy efficient cooling system at our Devon Place office. Overall this is a difficult task in the face of considerable growth activity and rising fuel and water costs. **A key area for development is the need to improve our data gathering and performance measurement so that we can show how sustainable we are as a business, and set targets to help us get better.**

Seren has recently started working with local energy consultant UES, based in Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach, offering a comprehensive utility and environmental management service geared towards cutting our energy costs and reducing our environmental impact with an emphasis on sourcing deals in the local economy. We also know from our own self-assessment that Seren is operating at between Level 2 and 3 of the Green Dragon environmental standard. Over the next 2 years we will work with UES to reduce the group's carbon footprint and collect the evidence to show how well we are doing and set targets for future improvements.

Our strategic goal is to minimise our energy use and resource consumption across the group, and to reuse and recycle as much as we can as part of our day to day business activities. To achieve this we will:

- 1. Gain Green Dragon accreditation** by December 2012.
- 2. Work with energy consultancy UES to reduce Seren's carbon footprint** in 4 key areas:
 - Reduce our energy and water use and costs
 - Reduce the amount of material that we consume
 - Increase the amount of material that we recycle
 - Reduce our travel use, business miles and costs

3. Consider whether it is appropriate for Seren to gain accreditation of BSEN ISO14001 to help drive continuous improvement in our environmental performance.

Outcomes:

- Environmental performance baselines established across our business activities.
- Targets set for delivering measurable and continually improving environmental performance across Seren's business activities, in particular:
- reduced consumption of key resources, in particular gas, electricity, water, travel/fuel and stationery;
 - reduced CO2 emissions;
 - increased volume of recycling;
 - reduced volume of waste to landfill.

Goal 3: Consult with and invest in the individuals and communities that we house and support

At Seren we are not just about providing energy efficient high quality affordable homes; we want to create thriving, vibrant and sustainable communities in places where people want to live. We are working hard to make a positive difference to the lives of those we house and support, with a particular focus on areas like building social networks, improving financial sustainability and increasing employment opportunities through training and life skills.

We are also working hard to reduce the risk of fuel poverty to our residents. High energy prices and energy-inefficient properties mean that many people in Wales and the wider UK suffer throughout the winter because they cannot afford to heat their home. We want to make fuel poverty a thing of the past and affordable warmth a standard of the future for Seren's residents.

We have seen great progress in building sustainable communities over the past 2 years. We are supporting our residents to get the most out of their household budgets and energy spending with Charter's Money Savers and Utility MOT services. We have also undertaken major community regeneration projects such as Mariners Quay and Arbed in Markham, both of which have focused on making a positive difference to people's lives socially and economically through job creation, training opportunities, support and advice, as well as driving down carbon emissions, energy costs and the risk of fuel poverty through significant investment in the energy efficiency of our new and existing homes.

Our strategic goal over the next 2 years is to consult with our residents to learn from the investments we have been making, understand how to get even better at improving the sustainability of our homes and communities, and share this knowledge extensively with others. Our Arbed evaluation for the community of Markham will be available Autumn 2011, and a major evaluation programme involving the Welsh School of Architecture and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) Wales will be undertaken with the residents and homes at Mariners Quay during the next 2 years. The learning from these projects will be shared with others, and help us to shape new projects for the Group, including Charter's planned £7m photovoltaic programme. To achieve this we will:

1. Complete the consultation/evaluation process for Arbed in Markham and Mariners Quay in Newport and identify key learning points in order to improve the community sustainability benefits of our future investment projects (e.g. Charter's photovoltaic programme and Arbed Phase 2), and share our knowledge/learning with others.
2. Measure the wider social, economic and environmental benefits that our future investment activities have on our communities and the environment in key areas such as health, financial and digital inclusion, training and employment, and carbon emissions.
3. Help our older customers and those on benefits to access Winter Fuel and Cold Weather payments
4. Introduce where practicable clauses within our development, asset management and facilities management procurement contracts supporting a range of measures to benefit the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the communities that we invest in, including:
 - targeted recruitment and training opportunities for local residents with our framework contractors;
 - supply chain procurement giving priority to locally sourced, recycled and low environmental impact materials which help to support the local economy

Outcomes:

- Improved consultation/evaluation process with residents
- Improved ability to demonstrate the benefits of our investment activity to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of our home and communities
- Reduced risk of fuel poverty for our residents
- Build on the considerable achievements of GENU5 in making a positive environmental contribution to local communities as identified in the consortium's recent Impact Study.

Goal 4: Support our staff, customers and contractors to be as environmentally responsible as possible

We know that our staff teams across Seren are already working in an environmentally responsible way (check out our top 20 Seren carbon cutting measures at the end of this strategy).

It is really exciting to see staff working in a sustainable way, and we are sure that the environmentally friendly culture that we are building across Seren will help our people to make responsible choices at home as well.

However, we would not be Seren if we did not want to help others to be 'green' too! Our strategic goal over the next 2 years will be to look for as many ways as we can to support our staff, our residents, our contractors, and our wider partners and stakeholders to be more sustainable in what they do. To achieve this we will:

1. Promote awareness of environmental issues through our internal and external communications (Seren's Hub, group web sites, magazines, newsletters).
2. Provide regular advice to staff, residents (tenants and homeowners), contractors and suppliers on how they can reduce their carbon footprint at work, at home and in their communities.

Outcomes:

- Staff, customers and wider stakeholders think and act in a more environmentally responsible way, reducing waste, recycling more, saving money on energy bills, and making greener lifestyle choices.

How can we tell how sustainable we are?

For the past 2 years we have been measuring the positive impact of our planned maintenance investments in the Group's existing homes in terms of carbon savings and reduced fuel bills for our residents. We have also been measuring the amount that we recycle and our energy usage as a business.

This is great news, and we will continue to measure these impacts as we move forward to start building a robust baseline of environmental performance information and our improvement trends across our business. At the same time, we want to broaden the scope of our performance measurement to other areas of our work so that we can develop a more complete picture of the effect that our strategy is having in terms of the wider social, economic and environmental return on our investments.

During 2011-13 we will continue to report our environmental performance through existing performance indicators to establish our baseline position. In addition, we will start to collect information using a wider range of new indicators, including:

Seren (working with energy consultancy UES)

- Fleet vehicles
- All stationery items
- Business mileage
- Gas
- Electricity
- Water

Development and Asset Management Contracts

- Tonnes of waste to landfill
- % recycled material on sites

Community Regeneration Projects

- Training and employment opportunities
- Savings from Money Savers and Utility MOT