

karbon
homes

Annual Review 2022/2023

About us

At Karbon Homes, we build, manage and look after affordable homes for people across the North. And then we go further, we give them the strong foundations they need to get on with life.

Since our formation in 2017, we have focused on delivering our three strategic aims - to provide as many good quality homes as we can, to deliver excellent service to our customers, and to shape strong, sustainable places for our communities.

Our footprint covers the North East of England and Yorkshire, with around 32,000 homes across diverse communities, all facing different opportunities and challenges. We always make the effort to understand our customers. We believe that everyone deserves respect and everyone's voices should be heard.

Some customers just need an affordable home, or a way onto the property ladder. Others might need more – financial advice, community services, sheltered accommodation or even training that can lead to a new job. Whatever people need to feel more secure, confident and happy with where they're at, we work hard to provide it. As a profit-for-a-purpose organisation, we invest any surplus we generate into improving our properties and communities, building new homes and delivering services which provide sustainable outcomes for our customers and communities.

We believe that by combining a sound business head with a strong social heart and staying true to our values, we can build strong foundations for even more people.

Key highlights from 2022/23

Homes

Development (number of new homes built) **529**

Decarbonisation (percentage of homes rated at EPCC or above) **72.16%**

Customer

Customer experience (Net Promoter Score) **+39.8***

Homes occupied (percentage of units occupied) **99.39%**

Safety (percentage of health and safety compliance) **99.96%**

Place

Neighbourhood satisfaction (percentage of customer satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live) **87%**

Enablers

Colleague engagement (Employee Net Promoter Score) **+23****

Financial capacity (operating margin overall) **26.6%**

Value for money (social housing cost per unit) **£3,809**

*The Net Promoter Score calculates how likely customers are to recommend Karbon to others.

**The Employee Net Promoter Score calculates how likely our colleagues are to recommend Karbon as a place to work

Commitment through a challenging year

Karbon Homes' aim to provide a strong foundation for life has never felt more relevant in a year in which cost-of-living pressures have been a sharp reality for our customers, many of whom have been the hardest hit in these difficult economic times.

Our colleagues have worked hard to ensure that living in a Karbon home remains a safe and secure experience. So, we continue to invest in the planned and responsive maintenance of our properties to ensure that they remain good quality, and that we respond quickly to concerns when they are raised.

In addition, for those who need more help, we have made sure they can access it, not least through our Money Matters financial support service.

At the same time, we are committed to building new, affordable homes so that a new generation of customers have a decent home in which to live.

In many parts of the North East and Yorkshire, we have a significant presence. That means we can shape for the better the communities where our customers live, working closely with other public, private, and voluntary sector organisations.

Indeed, our new subsidiary 54North Homes – a merger between Leeds & Yorkshire Housing Association and existing Karbon subsidiary York Housing Association – expands our influence and will, I am sure, offer an excellent experience to our customers, old and new.

Finally, I thank the colleagues of Karbon Homes for their continuing commitment as it is because of them that the organisation continues to be a leader in social housing.

Sir David Bell KCB DL
Group Chair, Karbon Homes

With challenges come opportunities

The last year has been an incredibly challenging one for the housing sector and for our customers.

From rising inflation, the growing cost of living, contractor uncertainties and difficulties in the supply chain, to the scrutiny the sector has found itself under from many stakeholders and customers, the past 12 months have seen us face a series of hurdles right across the organisation.

But despite the difficult external environment we have found ourselves in, facing lots of competing demands and expectations, we haven't lost sight of our core purpose, to provide our customers, colleagues and communities with a strong foundation for life.

The rising cost of living has hit our customers hard and many of them are coming to us for help, some of whom have never needed to ask for help of this kind before. To ensure we can provide crisis support for those who need it, we have invested heavily in our hardship fund, providing a lifeline for customers facing going hungry or without heating and electricity.

Our newly launched Winter Wellbeing Fund has also enabled us to help more community projects with initiatives that support local communities with the rising cost of living.

Ensuring our homes are as safe and secure as possible is a top priority for us and we have continued to invest in the maintenance of our homes.

This has included an extensive review of our systems, processes and procedures when dealing with cases of damp and mould, and the completion of stock condition surveys in all customer homes and communal areas.

This review has helped ensure we are able to proactively identify any damp and mould problems in our homes, as well as promptly respond to any issues customers raise.

The net zero challenge remains front and centre in our planned investment programme, and we have continued work to bring more of our homes up to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2030.

Our first major retrofit programme, part funded by Wave 1 of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, has been a great success. Seeing the difference this work has made to our homes has been impressive and it is fantastic to hear from our customers about the benefits they have seen. We are delighted to have secured further funding from the fund's Wave 2, to deliver energy efficiency improvements to an additional 218 homes.

Our new homes development programme has also had a successful year, despite a host of challenges including the rising cost of materials and difficulties faced by our construction partners.

We have invested £95m in delivering more affordable housing, with each new development designed to meet customer needs and strengthen local communities.

But with all these challenges come opportunities and we have remained ambitious in our plans for growth.

A highlight for the year was welcoming 54North Homes to the Karbon Group in December 2022, a merger between Leeds & Yorkshire Housing Association and our subsidiary York Housing Association.

It has been fantastic to work with 54North's Managing Director Mark Pearson and his team through the last quarter of the financial year. We are very proud of what has already been achieved and believe 54North will enable an even greater positive impact for more customers in the Yorkshire area in the years to come. We have also refreshed our approach to

placeshaping, to help our 'left behind' communities to thrive with the launch of our Fair Foundations Report. Our new approach moves away from investment in alleviating the problems communities face, and instead focuses on setting new goals that help tackle the roots of these problems in order to prevent them and facilitate long-lasting change.

On taking the time to reflect on our achievements over the last 12 months, there is a lot to be celebrated. But what makes me immensely proud is seeing how colleagues, through what has been a very testing year in many ways, have remained committed to the delivery of our key strategic aims, providing good quality homes, an excellent service for our customers, and strong, sustainable places for our communities.

Paul Fiddaman
Chief Executive

Providing as many good quality homes as we can

A home is more than just bricks and mortar and we believe everyone should have access to a good quality home from which they can thrive.

We are highly ambitious in our development plans and aim to build 4,000 new homes across the North East and Yorkshire by 2028.

Despite a challenging environment, our new homes development programme has remained strong. We have celebrated the start of 762 and completion of 529 new homes across the region.

Our achievements through 22/23, as well as our ambitious plans for the next five years, have been boosted by our Strategic Partnership (SP) with Homes England, which will support the delivery of 2,200 mixed tenure homes, just over half of our ambitious target. Around 90% of these homes are now either underway or in the pipeline.

We committed to ensuring 10% of our SP-funded homes are for people who have additional support needs. In partnership with South Tyneside Council, we're embarking on the delivery of a 96-home Extra Care scheme in Hebburn town centre, offering housing and care to adults of varying ages with additional support needs, and which will include a number of apartments designed for people with dementia.

Home ownership remains an aspiration for many of our customers and around half of the grant funded new homes we build provide opportunities for people to take their first steps on the housing ladder. We have seen a growth in demand for affordable home ownership tenures and had a strong year of shared ownership sales, handing over 74 homes. We have also supported a number of customers to progress up the ladder, either increasing their Shared Ownership percentage or converting from Rent to Buy to Shared Ownership.

The challenge of achieving net zero by 2050 remains front and centre within our programme, and we have continued to explore more ways in which we can ensure the homes we build are as energy efficient as possible.

For example, we supported 54North Homes to deliver 20 energy efficient homes in Pickering, North Yorkshire. Built to the Government's new 'Future Homes' standard, producing around 75% less carbon emissions than homes delivered under current regulations, all homes have an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating A and boast a range of energy efficiency measures including triple glazing, higher specification insulation, solar panels and air source heat pumps.

Total new homes completed **529**

Homes for Affordable Rent **415**

Shared Ownership and Rent to Buy homes **78**

Total investment in building new homes **£94.9m**

Rent to Buy helps Kris and Alex take their first steps onto the property ladder

After nine years together, thanks to the Rent to Buy scheme, Kris and Alex have taken their first steps onto the property ladder together and are enjoying life in their new, three-bed house on a Karbon development in Sunderland.

With the Rent to Buy scheme, rents are set at 20% less than local market rent, which offers the opportunity to save towards a deposit.

Kris said: “We’ve always rented because saving the considerable amount of money needed for a house deposit was never something we were in a position to do. The Rent to Buy scheme was just what we needed.

“Having always lived in two-beds we were looking for a three-bed to give us some much-needed extra space. We enquired about the new Karbon houses and the homes available ticked all the boxes for us.”

“We can see ourselves being here for the foreseeable future.”

We have also continued to invest in improving the energy efficiency of our existing homes, spending £3.2m on improvements to help bring our lowest performing homes up to EPC C by 2030.

This includes a £2.5m retrofit programme to improve the energy efficiency of 97 homes across Northumberland and County Durham. The project, which received funding support from the

Government’s Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, included fitting homes with external wall, cavity, loft and underfloor insulation, as well as new roofs and PV panels.

We closed the financial year with the news we had successfully secured funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2. Add this grant to the money we already have earmarked for retrofit work over the next two years and we’ll be investing £3.6m in improving the energy efficiency of a further 218 homes in Northumberland and County Durham.

Ongoing routine planned and responsive investment to ensure our homes are of good quality remains a top priority and last year, through our planned maintenance programme, we spent over £30.5m on ensuring our existing homes continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

This includes an ongoing suite of modernisation works to 796 of our homes on the Byker Estate, which involves the installation of new bathrooms with showers and replacement of internal doors, and 100 homes across the Tees Valley have benefitted from interior upgrades and home improvement works.

The safety and security of customers in their homes is of the utmost importance to us and we have invested £12.6m in a range of building and customer safety programmes of work, including replacing fire doors, upgrading smoke detection in homes, our annual gas servicing programme and maintenance of communal fire alarms and lighting. The recent high-profile cases of damp and mould in the media have put this issue into sharp focus for us. We began to review our approach to tackling damp and mould early last year and continue to look to improve it to ensure it is as robust and proactive as possible.

We have been carrying out extensive stock condition surveys of every one of our homes and will have attempted to gain access to 100% of homes by the end of the summer 2023. We have also implemented a new damp and mould inspection process which specifies that we undertake repeat visits to affected properties at set times to ensure any issues have been resolved.

Total amount invested in our existing homes **£30.5m**

Investment in ensuring our residents are safe and secure in their homes **£12.6m**

Number of repairs completed in response to customer needs **119,945**

Number of new roofs fitted **414**

Number of new kitchens and bathrooms fitted **958**

Number of boiler and heating system improvements **1251**

Delivering an excellent customer service

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We aim to provide them with an excellent experience each and every time they come into contact with us, by delivering a service that recognises and caters to their individual circumstances and expectations.

A crucial part of achieving service excellence is through continually measuring performance. The measure we look to first is our customer Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is established through asking customers how likely they are to recommend us to their friends and family if they were in a similar situation and looking for housing.

At year end we had achieved an NPS of +39.8.

The score indicates our customers' overall satisfaction with Karbon and their willingness to recommend us to others. With scores ranging from -100 to +100, any score above 0 is considered good and above 50 is excellent.

We also received a trust score of 8.2 (out of a maximum of 10). In a year where the social housing sector has come under heavy scrutiny, we are very proud of this score which shows that our customers overwhelmingly trust Karbon as an organisation.

We have progressed with our 'Building Excellent Service Together' action plans, which were developed last year and set out our main areas of focus in reaching a higher level of excellence in our approach to internal and external customer experience.

A big element of this was the rollout of a new suite of customer service skills training modules, to improve the way we handle customer enquiries. Modules include training on empathy, active listening, body language, paraverbal communication and managing difficult and tense interactions.

Despite our hard work in this area, sometimes things do go wrong and we are always looking at how we can improve our complaints handling so we can make it right. We've updated our Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy and Procedure, to make it as clear as possible to residents what they can expect from us when they make a complaint and how to progress their complaint. It also helps us to swiftly resolve any complaints raised and use what we learn from complaints to improve our services.

Alongside this we have made some improvements to our complaints management system, helping all colleagues, both office and field based, to accurately capture, monitor and update case work relating to customer complaints. We have also carried out complaints policy, process and systems training with appropriate colleagues across the organisation to ensure they understand the changes we have made and are able to use the new system to its full potential.

Net Promoter Score (NPS)* **+39.8**

Average trust score **8.2**

*The Net Promoter Score calculates how likely customers are to recommend Karbon to others

We have continued to grow and strengthen the additional services we offer that support customers beyond our landlord-customer relationship.

As we continue to see the cost of living rise and more customers turning to us for help, our Money Matters Team, who help customers maximise their income through money, benefits and debt advice, have worked with 4,569 new customers, generating close to £4million of income gains.

Through these tough economic times we are seeing an increase in the number of customers in crisis situations coming to us for help, some who have never needed to ask for help of this kind before. To ensure we can support them in times of great need, we have invested more into our customer hardship fund.

The aim of the fund is to help customers avoid going hungry or without heating and electricity, and enables our frontline colleagues to make non-repayable awards of up to £100 to customers, in a combination of cash and fuel vouchers. Last year we issued 380 crisis vouchers totalling close to £15,000.

We have also continued our partnership with Northumbrian Water, helping eligible customers to get reductions on their water charges through the Northumbrian Water Support Plus scheme. Discounts last year totalled close to £200,000.

To ensure customers remain at the heart of Karbon, we are committed to ensuring their voices are heard and that they are given the opportunity to influence, challenge and help deliver the work that we do.

At the start of the year we set up our Customer Scrutiny Bank, to provide opportunities for customers to scrutinise different Karbon Homes' services. The bank consists of nine customers from across our geography, and each have received 'introduction to scrutiny' training to help them in their role.

The bank's first review focused on customer and building safety, where they were asked to advise us on customer needs, communications and engagement in building safety assurance. A number of recommendations from the review have been implemented, including their input in producing a series of safety leaflets for customers.

Customer satisfaction with the quality of their homes **87.9%**

Customer satisfaction with rent providing value for money **87.4%**

Number of compliments received **334**

“If we all make a little bit of difference, it adds up to something pretty powerful”

Phil Thornton, a Karbon resident from Blyth, is a member of both our Customer Environment Group and our Customer Scrutiny Bank.

“I got to the grand age of 60 thinking it didn’t matter if you spoke up because nothing ever really changes. But I’ve finally realised that if you put a bit of effort in, you get a lot back.

“Both groups I’m involved in are very friendly and welcoming. Everyone speaks freely and openly. You don’t have to be an expert in anything, just have some common sense and be prepared to share what you think.

“I’d always been a shy and quiet person and I’d never really come out of my shell. But this has given me an opportunity to have a voice and it’s a really good feeling to be listened to.

“Karbon takes on board our ideas and opinions and I’ve realised if I can make a little bit of a difference, and everyone else does too, it all adds up to something pretty powerful.”

Shaping strong sustainable places

Our mission is to provide people with a strong foundation for life from which they can fulfil their potential. However, in some areas, place-based challenges can hold local communities back and have an impact on whether people living there get that opportunity.

In early 2023 we launched Fair Foundations, our refreshed approach to supporting our communities, which moves away from a concentration on investment in alleviating the problems they face and instead focuses on setting new goals that help tackle the roots of these problems, in order to prevent them and facilitate long-lasting change.

Our campaign report was well received in the social housing sector and beyond. Since the launch we have met with many senior stakeholders, including MPs from different political parties, to lobby for the key policy asks in the report, which focus on tax and benefits reform, greater investment in affordable housing and a role for Homes England in delivering regeneration.

We are piloting this refreshed approach in two Karbon Impact Areas - Byker, a diverse ward east of Newcastle Upon Tyne, and Stanley, an ex-mining town in North Durham. Alongside exploring the data on issues such as employment, people, infrastructure and transport, we have worked closely with customers, colleagues and the local community there to understand the challenges they face and what sustainable difference we can make.

A top priority of those we engaged with in Stanley, was the regeneration of derelict buildings on the high street. One of the biggest and most prominent is the Stanley Board School and in March 2023, we purchased the building. Over the coming months we will be consulting with local residents, our colleagues and key stakeholders to understand how we can regenerate it to positively impact the high street and wider town.

A resounding theme heard in both places is that employment opportunities are lacking and often completely out of reach. To help tackle this, we launched our second round of New Start, our innovative paid placement programme providing career starter roles with a range of local employers. The programme has created 15 paid, five-month long work placements, helping residents overcome the biggest barriers to getting into employment and taking a new career direction.

Another recurring theme was the impact that the declining physical fabric of places has on the quality of life of those who live there. Based on feedback from residents on the Byker Estate, who reiterated the need for investment plans that address the individual needs of the community, Karbon is embarking on an extensive £11m neighbourhood improvement plan on the Estate.

Made up of 11 individual neighbourhood masterplans, each influenced by the residents who live there, the plan has been designed to address each neighbourhood's specific challenges, from waste management improvements to car parking and safe play spaces for families.

Customer satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live **87%**

Alongside the intensive work we are doing in our two impact areas, we intend to make a positive contribution across our geographical footprint.

We have continued investing in community organisations and projects in various towns and villages in the region, enabling them to continue delivering a range of support services.

Through our Community Investment Fund, our Community Connectors have supported 176 initiatives with grants totalling over £317,000.

We launched our Winter Wellbeing Fund to support projects helping local communities with the rising cost of living, providing 29 organisations with grants to provide food, hygiene and basic household essentials. We also partnered with The Bread and Butter Thing, a mobile food club, to launch a number of new hubs across the region, offering regular, affordable provision of food and toiletries for people in low-income households.

The social value commitments from our suppliers and contractors has also helped us support communities further.

We used £25,000 of social value to help bring a previously vacant community room on our Benwell estate in the west end of Newcastle back into use. The grant enabled one of our community interest partners, NE14 Productions, to take over the lease of the building and employ a community development worker on the estate. The project, in its infancy, has already seen great engagement.

We also provide various pathways of support into employment for residents across our geography. During the year, our Foundations for Life Team of coaches and advisers have supported more than 400 customers, 169 of which they have helped into employment or to complete training or qualifications. We also had three new apprentices join the organisation, all of whom are Karbon customers.

We know from our customers that we make a largely positive difference to the communities in which we work. Our end of year score for neighbourhood satisfaction was 87%. This score is measured through asking customers 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?'

We were the winner of the Outstanding Charity Support by Large Companies at the North East Charity Awards 2022.

Investment in community projects **£317,000**

People supported into employment and training **169**

Creating Ready Made Homes for our customers

We know when customers move into any new home, there are lots of things to buy and often some expensive items, like flooring to sort too. As part of our place programme, we have carried out a 'Ready Made Homes' trial, offering homes that are ready for the customer to move into, freshly painted and with new flooring.

The trial is being carried out in 20+ properties across Byker and Stanley. Through the trial we are looking to understand if providing new flooring and decoration makes homes quicker and easier to let, results in customers staying in their tenancy longer, has a positive impact on the time/cost of getting the property ready to relet should the customer move out, and most importantly, saves customers money and gives them a better customer experience.

The results of surveys carried out with customers moving in show:

- 100% of customers are satisfied with the flooring of the property, 65% are very satisfied
- 82% of customers are very satisfied or satisfied with the decoration of the property
- 100% of customers said that having flooring already has made things more affordable for them

"I am so grateful for this new scheme, it has helped me so much after a separation from my husband and starting a new home"

Stanley customer

Create enablers of success

We work hard to help our customers shape and develop their own futures through our three strategic aims, but we can only achieve this if we provide our colleagues with the right environment and a supportive culture.

We are constantly investing in our people and ways of working, using colleague feedback to create a culture which prioritises employee engagement and supports everyone to thrive.

We track this through regular colleague engagement surveys, which encourage honest, anonymous feedback and help us understand what is going well and what we can look to improve. For our autumn engagement survey we achieved our highest response rate yet of 78%.

For the year, our Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), a metric which measures how likely employees are to recommend an organisation as a good place to work, sat at +23. Scores between +20 to +40 are considered very good or excellent.

Feedback from colleagues highlighted the importance they place on coming together as an organisation to celebrate successes and feel connected.

As a result, in May 2022 we held our first in-person, all colleague conference. Led by our leadership team, the conference was designed to show colleagues they're valued within a forward-thinking organisation with clear strategic aims and a strong culture, help them feel connected to our purpose, the leadership team and each other, and understand their role in delivering our mission.

We formalised our blended and agile working approach. Acknowledging the opportunities and challenges the journey has brought to Karbon and our people so far, we co-created with colleagues an agile working approach, which empowers and trusts them to find the right balance between their needs and the needs of the business and customers.

Alongside this we refreshed our flexible working policy and have granted 30 flexible working requests for colleagues in the last year.

To support agile working we rolled out our Get Back 30 project. With a mission to release, on average, 30 minutes per colleague per week, our ICT and Digital Transformation team has worked with departments across the organisation to identify processes which could be optimised or streamlined through digitalisation and automation. So far, we have implemented 21 new digital and automated processes, enabling colleagues to maximise their time and improving the efficiency of lots of our day-to-day operations.

We have continued to develop our wellbeing support offer for colleagues as we want all colleagues to feel supported during their employment journey with us - to enjoy a good work-life balance, to feel equipped to successfully navigate their way through different personal and work transitions and to be well informed about health and wellbeing issues.

Through our commitment to helping colleagues look after their mental and physical health, we achieved the Better Health at Work Gold Level accreditation. Gold is the third of five levels of the award and work is already underway towards us achieving the next level of the award, Continuing Excellence.

Alongside our investment in our people and organisational development, we are always looking for new opportunities to build our capacity, creating efficiencies through growth or developing stronger revenue streams to offer additional financial capacity.

In December 2023 we welcomed 54North Homes to the Karbon Group, a merger between Leeds & Yorkshire Housing Association and our subsidiary York Housing Association. The 3,000-home new organisation has created a stronger, more effective organisation, with a continued local approach and understanding of its customer base, and has strengthened Karbon's presence in Yorkshire.

Through our cost sharing vehicle, Karbon Solutions, we deliver a range of services to 9,043 homes, owned and managed by other tax-exempt organisations. Last year we further expanded the service to provide value for money services to two new North West housing associations, Eden Housing Association and Mitre Housing Association. Through the partnership, we're delivering heating servicing and heating responsive repairs to 1,200 EHA and MHA homes and helping the two associations make VAT savings on labour.

We've continued to maintain the highest standards of governance practice and have retained our G1/V1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing. The rating certifies that we continue to meet its high governance standards (G1) and its financial viability requirements (V1), demonstrating our financial capacity to deal with a range of adverse scenarios. We've also had our external group credit rating boosted from 'stable' to 'positive', reflecting our strong key financial metrics despite challenges affecting the social housing sector.

Introducing our colleague mental health allies

In the autumn we introduced our first colleague mental health allies, to help make mental health support even more accessible.

Thirty-three volunteer colleagues from across the organisation have been trained in how they can support their fellow colleagues, as well as customers they come into contact with, with their mental wellbeing. The allies learn about the fundamentals of mental health, mastering how to listen without judgment, recommend the right resources and provide a safe space where people can be heard.

Chris Claytor-Scott is one of the colleague volunteers who has completed the mental health allies training.

“Having benefitted from counselling and therapy in the past, I wanted to be able to support others who may be struggling themselves and hopefully help them through difficult times. I think having mental health allies at Karbon is a great way to give staff a positive work environment where they know there is always someone to turn to if they need help.”

Priorities for the year ahead

Looking ahead to 2023/24, remaining focused on the delivery of our key strategic aims, we are faced with both great opportunities and significant challenges. The hard work will come in balancing our business head and our social heart, to ensure we are doing right by our customers, colleagues and the organisation.

The road to net zero is a long one and we will continue to invest in reducing the carbon footprint of our homes in support of the UK Government's ambition to meet its UN Sustainable Development Goal of Carbon Net Zero by 2050.

We will carry out more energy efficiency improvement works to our homes, boosted by funding from Wave 2 of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, and will continue to explore more ways in which we can lower the carbon footprint of our day-to-day operations.

Through our ongoing Strategic Partnership with Homes England we will also continue to build more new homes, helping communities across the North East and Yorkshire that are lacking enough good quality, affordable homes to support local people to fulfil their potential.

We already have 21 developments pipelined to start in the next 12 months and have set ourselves the ambitious target of 725 completions within this next financial year.

This includes starting work on our largest development project yet, 750 affordable homes at Seaham Garden Village. We're a key partner, responsible for over half of the site's total number of homes.

We will continue to focus on improving the quality of our existing homes, ensuring that we remain committed to identifying and resolving issues of damp and mould as quickly as possible, focussing on the comfort and safety of our customers throughout.

We are already well on with completing full stock condition surveys of all our homes and communal areas, to ensure they are decent and safe for our customers, and aim to have a 100% record of attempted access and a close to complete picture of our housing stock by the end of summer 2023.

We will continue to focus on how we can further improve the customer experience we provide. This includes an important piece of work to bring the customer wait times down for our responsive repairs service, which is still recovering from the huge influx of jobs logged as a result of the UK storms in early 2022, and the call wait times for customers contacting our customer contact centre.

Having refreshed our approach to place, over the coming year we will be working hard to further develop our Fair Foundations approach and continue to take forward our plans for our two Karbon impact areas, Byker and Stanley.

This will include launching a community consultation around the future of the Stanley Board School, a building we have acquired on Stanley Front Street, and rolling out the first pilot schemes in our Byker neighbourhood improvement programme: the installation of new communal bin stores and recycling facilities at Dunn Terrace and Headlam Green.

From 1 April 2023, we started collecting data for the Regulator of Social Housing's new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), working with our long-standing research provider Acuity to collect customer feedback on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints.

The measures are designed to help customers understand how their housing providers are performing and be able to hold them to account, and in Summer 2024 we will submit our TSM data to RSH to be published in an autumn report.

Alongside all this, we will continue to innovate and explore new growth opportunities which will not only build our strength, capacity and capabilities as an organisation, but will build on the services and support we offer to help provide our customers and communities with a strong foundation for life.

We don't underestimate the ongoing challenges of the current economic landscape and ever-changing regulatory environment our sector finds itself in and will continue to maintain the highest standards of governance and risk management.

We are monitoring the RSH's implementation plan for new consumer regulation and preparing for the new approach to come into force in 2024.

This leaflet has been approved for publication and we've made a digital version available on our website.

We also aim to make our information and services more accessible by using plain English in our communication and offering sign language and language interpreters where required. If you would like this document in an alternative format or have any questions relating to this guide, please email: **inclusion@karbonhomes.co.uk**

This guide has been produced with involvement from Karbon customers.

Contact us

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