



Our Reference:

BY EMAIL ONLY

15 October 2015

Dear

Request for Information

Thank you for your email dated 17 September 2015 requesting information on the LinkedUp project in Pennine Lancashire. We have considered your request and below we have answered your question in two parts.

- 1. Could H&CA provide details of its involvement in what appears to be called the “LinkedUp” project undertaken in Pennine Lancashire with H&CA funding, quoted as £5.6m to bring back into occupation 515 empty properties, from 2012 to 2015: with details of the approved funding application, how and where it was to be used, the local government, RSL and other organisations who would deliver it, and the methods of procurement, monitoring and audit to be used during it progress.**

A consortium led by Rossendale Borough Council bid for funding under the Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use initiative part of the 2011 -15 Affordable Homes Programme and were allocated £4,837,100 to deliver 474 new homes. The consortium was known as Pennine LinkedUp. The allocation provided for the delivery of Lease and Repair properties rented on a revolving loan basis, standard Lease and Repair properties (which did not permit recycling of rental income) and a number of Purchase and Repair properties. Two contracts were signed, one with Rossendale alone to deliver Revolving Loan properties and one with the full consortium led by Rossendale to deliver standard Lease and Repair properties and Purchase and Repair properties.

The programme to be delivered by the consortium broke down into two distinct areas of delivery, empty homes to be acquired refurbished and rented out as affordable homes (Purchase and Repair properties) and empty homes that were to be leased from their current owner for a period of time, refurbished and rented out as affordable homes (Lease and Repair properties).

Rossendale came to an agreement with four neighbouring Authorities, Pendle, Hyndburn, Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley to deliver properties in their areas.

The consortium was led by Rossendale Borough council who acted as development lead and were supported by Calico Homes and the Together Group comprising Twin Valley Homes, Green Vale Homes, Housing Pendle. The consortium contract was signed by all of the above.

Together Group and Calico took the lead on those properties to be acquired however Together also leased a number of properties from their owners under the standard Lease and Repair model. Rossendale alone delivered properties leased from their owners for a period of time under the revolving loan element of the programme.

The Pennine LinkedUp consortium bid for the allocation via the IMS system as directed by the Bringing Empty Homes back into use Bidding guidance document issued in 2011. The bid was reviewed locally and submitted for National moderation before allocation in 2012.

Members of the Consortium may have procured additional support however the HCA has no part in this process.

The Affordable Homes Programme is managed through the project management system IMS. All claims and programme updates are logged onto the system generally by the lead provider, in this case Rossendale Borough Council. The HCA require that independent Compliance Audits are carried out annually to ensure the work as claimed for by the provider has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Capital Funding Guide and the contract between the HCA and the consortium or provider.

- 2. This might include a detail “build up” of allocations for: leases of empty properties to LA and RSLs, loans to owners of empty properties, capital works to enable their occupation, fees or “on-costs” to organise such leases, loans and works; and then maybe an element of subsidy for hard to manage properties for costs not covered by their residents rents and benefit payments.**

The HCA does not have access to details of any loans given to property owners, a detailed breakdown of costs or other subsidies. IMS requires the provider to provide some basic details of total capital investment per property broken down by cost type e.g. Substructure, Superstructure, Fittings Furniture and equipment or Services. The HCA does not have access to a detailed cost breakdown that might include boiler replacement costs, redecorating or the like. The provider is required to confirm rent levels to ensure rents are compliant with Affordable Home legislation.

If you have any questions regarding this response or any further queries you can contact us at the following addresses and quote your unique reference number found at the top of this letter:

Email: mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk

Mail: Information Access Officer
Homes and Communities Agency

Homes and Communities Agency
Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

0300 1234 500
homesandcommunities.co.uk

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

If you are unhappy with the way Homes and Communities Agency has handled your request you may ask for an internal review. You should contact

Head of Legal Services
Homes and Communities Agency
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Naomi McMaster
Information Access Officer
Homes and Communities Agency