

Ninth Annual International Housing Partnership Leadership Exchange in London Focuses on Capital and Sector Transformation

Leaders from more than 60 leading housing and community development organizations in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States met in London the week of October 6th for a series of high-level peer exchanges on the transformation of the sector, access to capital and social investment, collaboration, and leadership development. The meeting was hosted by Housing Partnership United Kingdom, a network of two dozen of the most entrepreneurial housing associations in the UK, and was held in central London.

This was the ninth annual leadership exchange of the International Housing Partnership (IHP), which brings together 175 leading housing and community development organizations from the four countries, with a collective portfolio of more than one million affordable homes serving two and a half million people.



The opening forum on Monday afternoon was held at London City Hall and explored the transformation of the sector across IHP countries, which is ushering in new business models, a changing customer base, and new collaborations and partnerships. Following a welcome by departing IHP Chair Hunter Johnson, incoming IHP Chair Paul Tennant set the context for the discussion. Richard Blakeway, London's deputy mayor for housing, shared his perspective on how the city is dealing with its tremendous shortage of affordable housing. He was followed by David Orr, chief executive of the UK's National Housing

Federation, who urged participants to think differently about their organizations. Rather than focus on how they have historically created and managed housing, they should be looking at their missions, which prescribe the "what" and not the "how." No amount of government funding and traditional programs are going to be able to address today's need, so it is critical to look for new ways to work, new partnerships, and alternative sources of funding for affordable housing.

Dee Walsh of the Housing Partnership Network reviewed results of a recent business strategy survey of IHP members, which showed clearly that most people expected to be looking at new partnerships and collaborations much more than in the past. CEOs from each of the four countries then reflected on the key policy issues impacting the industry, new business drivers in their countries, the impact of changes on mission and objectives, and how these changes are being implemented.



On Tuesday, a day-long forum probed the current investment climate in housing and community development, with a focus on the capital markets and the social investment world. Robert Grundy of Savills, a global real estate consulting firm, set the stage with an overview of real estate markets around



the world, particularly IHP countries. IHP chief executives presented case studies illustrating various approaches to capital raising and financing housing development projects. Piers Williamson, chief executive of the UK's Housing Finance Corporation, spoke of the successful individual and aggregated approaches to the bond markets by UK housing associations. A segment on social investment included an overview of social impact investing in the UK by Rodney

Schwartz, chief executive of ClearlySo. Mike Mantle of Morgan Stanley spoke of his firm's Institute for Sustainable Investing, and Allison Clark of the MacArthur Foundation addressed what funders look for in impact investing. Terry Simonette of Capital Impact Partners spoke about the role of community development financial institutions (CDFIs) in the US and Mick Leggett of Cross Keys Homes and Gary Orr of Yarlington Housing Group highlighted the use of community land trusts. Matthew Bailes, the UK's chief housing regulator, talked about the role of regulation and stress testing of housing associations and how that provided an edge in raising capital. A dinner on Tuesday evening was hosted by Cannacord Genuity and featured speakers from ratings agencies and institutional investors.



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Over the following two-and-a-half days, the focus was on peer exchange among the participating IHP leaders. One session centered on how IHP members are managing talent and developing leadership in their organizations. This included reviewing case studies from around IHP and discussing the results and implications of the most recent IHP leadership survey, which was developed by participants in the GEM (Graduate Employment and Mentoring) program, which is working to attract young professionals to the sector. The session also featured expert insight on how to work



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Another session discussed new tools and advanced practices that are playing an increasingly important role in managing large housing portfolios and attracting investors. There were conversations on how IHP members are forging collective social and business impact through collaborative efforts and there was a first look at IHP Marketplace, an online platform that will enable IHP members to interact virtually with one another and extend the global peer exchange beyond just the senior leadership. The exchange also featured a tour of Tottenham Hale Village, a 542-home major regeneration effort carried out by the

Newlon Trust; a discussion on the future of housing and community development led by Lord Richard Best, one of the UK's most influential social housing leaders for the past four decades, and Grainia Long, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing; and a celebratory dinner at House of Commons hosted by Lord Best.



More than two-thirds of participants completed an evaluation survey, with more than two-thirds of them giving the meeting the top rating of “very valuable.” One of the Australian chief executives described the IHP London Exchange as “the most valuable housing related forum I have ever participated in.” New IHP Chair Paul Tennant said the meeting featured very balanced contributions from all four countries and showed that IHP is really beginning to gel as a four-country collaborative.

The 2015 IHP Leadership Exchange will be held in Chicago the week of October 5th. For more information, contact [Manuel Muelle](#).