

SAHF UK & NORTHERN IRELAND STUDY TOUR - JUNE 2008



The SAHF delegation were invited guests of Diana Johnson, MP for Hull North to the House of Commons and were able to observe parliamentary debates. Pictured here from left are: Leon Fredericks - Garden Cities, John Hopkins - SAHF, Diana Johnson, Grace Blouw - City of Cape Town and Alex Shimuafeni - NHE Namibia.

SAHF forges links with Northern Ireland

John Hopkins, CEO of the SAHF was invited to make a presentation on South Africa's housing situation at the 40th Civil Rights Anniversary Conference on "Housing for All" in Armagh, Northern Ireland on 22 June 2008.

The conference was attended by the Northern Ireland Minister of Social Development, Minister Margaret Ritchie MLA for South Down and Civil Rights Activists as well as a delegation from South Africa. "There are great similarities between South Africa and Northern Ireland" said John Hopkins, "and the two countries can learn a lot from each other with regard to breaking down barriers between previously segregated communities."

At a meeting in Belfast held between the SAHF and the Housing Executive (the largest Housing Organisation in Europe) attended by Brian Rowntree, Chairman and Paddy McIntyre, Chief Executive and staff, Brian Rowntree stated that the Housing Executive's intention was to formalize ties with South Africa through the SAHF with a view to exchange programmes and support housing education and development. Professor Paddy Gray, Professor of Real Estate, Spriu Haret University and Senior Lecturer -

University of Ulster, previously a guest of the SAHF who presented a paper at the 2007 SAHF International Conference in Cape Town, would be tasked to organise further links and exchange programmes between the Housing Executive and the SAHF. "This is exciting news", said Prof. Paddy Gray. "Communities in both countries can greatly benefit from this initiative."

The SAHF will invite Northern Ireland organisations to attend and participate in future conferences held in Southern Africa to further galvanise these links.



From left: Dennis Haughey, John Hopkins-SAHF, Malefetsane Moekoena-Manguang Local Municipality, Alex Shimuafeni - NHE Namibia, Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie MLA, Grace Blouw-City of Cape Town, Leon Fredericks-Garden Cities, Austin Currie-former Minister of State, Northern Ireland & Prof. Paddy Gray





Leon Fredericks, Operations Manager of Garden Cities said, “The one thing that stood out for me was our trip to Belfast to experience the segregation that is still taking place today. The trip on the whole is an experience of which only you can experience. The trip was well planned and extremely busy. The problems we experience in South Africa is not unique as England have their own social problems. Unfortunately their problems are not exposed to the rest of the world as South Africa or Africa is.”



Malefetsane Mokoena the General Manager - Housing, Mangaung Local Municipality said: “Having been part of the Chartered Institute of Housing's Annual Conference in 2008, the largest housing event in the United Kingdom as well as the housing exhibitions, offered me a unique experience in this sector. The conference dealt with the most challenging issues of our time in terms of supplying new housing but also in terms of how and why Housing Associations are so successful in the UK. The visit to various social housing projects arranged by the SAHF practically answered my questions about the achievement of self-sustaining housing schemes. I hope more colleagues who are involved in this sector will also have this opportunity in future”.



Grace Blouw the Manager of the Existing Housing Department of the City of Cape Town's Directorate of Housing said: “The UK Study tour arranged by SAHF is an excellent opportunity for local Housing professionals to experience and obtain an international perspective on Housing. I was fortunate to be part of a delegation who recently visited the UK on such a tour. This two weeks whistle-stop tour took us from the International Housing Conference in Harrogate hosted by the Chartered Institute for Housing (CIH) to Sheffield and then to Northern Ireland where we visited various Housing Associations. The Housing field is serious business in the UK. I think as professionals in the field of Housing, we can learn a lot from our European counterparts. The need for housing in our country has reached crisis proportions and yet the delivery and management thereof is not receiving the same kind of importance as it does in the UK.



I was particularly interested in the management of public Housing stock. Their focus is towards building cohesive communities that allows for better interaction and management. We need to understand our communities and our Housing policies must listen to and speak to that understanding.

This is an ideal opportunity for comparative studies and international exchange relations. An opportunity we must definitely utilize.”



