

gentoo

Great homes
Strong communities
Inspired people
for Sunderland

**Annual
Report**

**20-
21**
Annual Report

Roker Pier, Sunderland

Welcome

from Nigel Wilson, Group Chief Executive Officer

I am delighted to welcome you to Gentoo Group's Annual Report for 2020/21 and hope you enjoy reading about the significant progress and important achievements the organisation has made working with tenants, colleagues and our partners.

This report marks two full years in the role as Gentoo Group Chief Executive Officer and it is fair to say it was not the second year I could ever have imagined. The COVID-19 pandemic rocked the whole world, and we have all endured an extraordinary 18 months.

Throughout the pandemic there was one common theme that really stood out for me and that was the togetherness of the nation. We witnessed this at first hand here in Sunderland, with the people of the city and communities really rallying together to look out for one another. I am really pleased with how my colleagues stood up to the challenge and continued to provide vital services. We can be very proud that we were there for tenants and residents when they needed us most.

Beyond the pandemic, we were delighted to be given a G1 Governance rating from the Regulator of Social Housing, following an In Depth Assessment in the summer. This was a monumental achievement for the organisation after a turbulent and challenging few years.

“We can be very proud that we were there for tenants and residents when they needed us most.”

The hard work and determination of my colleagues to repair the damage caused is something I am extremely pleased about.

We have also launched our new Corporate Strategy up to 2025, which is underpinned by our 5P's: Place, People, Perform, Partner and Pride. It sets out a clear direction of travel for the organisation and clear performance metrics that we can be held to account against.

We have transformed our approach to tenant engagement to put our tenants' voice right at the heart of both our organisation and decision making. We have created a new Tenant Voice Team and we are already seeing the positive impact of a fresh approach.

We have continued to put right the underinvestment in our housing stock by investing heavily in modernising, maintaining and repairing our properties. Around £66m was spent last year on property maintenance and investment and we are fully committed to keep our spending at this kind of level to ensure the homes we provide to tenants are safe and secure.

Decarbonisation and building safety are two key areas of focus moving forward, and our significant investment in our pioneering Core 364 scheme and in the modernisation of our River Quarter building are both examples of our commitment to keep tenants safe in their homes, and to ensure we are playing our part to support the local and national efforts to achieve carbon net zero.

It's not just in our existing properties that decarbonisation is a priority, we're also investing heavily in the energy efficiency of our new affordable homes, to ensure we are minimising the impact of the homes on the planet. Our programme will see 1200 new affordable homes brought to the city by 2026. As part of our £165m investment in these homes, we're introducing a range of features and technologies that make the homes 70% carbon neutral.

The progress that has been made across Sunderland over the last two years has been remarkable and I am pleased Gentoo is contributing to the changing landscape. There is a huge amount being invested to ensure the city is delivering against the City Plan and Sunderland is visibly changing.

Sunderland is a city on the up, a city reborn, with a renewed sense of optimism. I know that the amazing passion and ambition of local people will ensure we continue to build a strong, vibrant and prosperous future for all.

Nigel Wilson
Group Chief Executive Officer

Foreword

from Keith Loraine OBE, Group Chair

“There has been a great deal of progress made and achievements accomplished over the past year.”

It gives me great pleasure to provide a foreword to our Annual Report for 2020/21.

The past year has been immensely challenging, and the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on all aspects of our business and service delivery. I would like to start by thanking colleagues and tenants for everything they have done to help us through the crisis. I am enormously proud of the way in which everyone at Gentoo responded compassionately, effectively, and collaboratively to the emergency, helping one another and digging deep to support tenants and communities. I would like to thank tenants for their patience and recognise the resilience they have shown throughout such an extraordinary period.

I would also like to recognise the leadership shown by Nigel Wilson and his Executive Team in leading the organisation’s response and in maintaining focus and motivation throughout the pandemic.

Dealing with the pandemic was a huge challenge, however, there has also been a great deal of progress made across the organisation over the past year, with some major milestones and achievements accomplished. In particular, the Group Board and I were absolutely delighted at the outcome of the Regulator’s In Depth Assessment of Gentoo. To be given a G1 governance rating meant so much to us all and I would like to personally thank everyone at the Group for playing their part in our recovery over the recent years.

The hard work, commitment and determination of colleagues has been immense, and I am very grateful for everything they have done to put things right and restore trust in our organisation.

During the past year we have continued to strengthen the Gentoo Group Board. We bid a fond farewell and owe much gratitude to long serving and supportive Board Members, Brian Spears and Les Herbert, who both stood down after their 6-year term. Our new board members, Clare Long, Dianne Sharp, Kehri Ellis and Brenda Naisby all bring a range of skills, expertise and diversity of thought to the Board and I look forward to working with the Board on tackling the big challenges facing the organisation and the sector as a whole during the year ahead.

Gentoo Group and indeed the housing sector face some challenging issues in the years ahead. I am confident however that Gentoo is in a strong position – we have made consistent progress and continued to drive positive change and improvement over recent years. We have an excellent Board and first class Executive leadership backed by colleagues across the business who believe that Gentoo is about far more than just bricks and mortar. With those thoughts in mind, we will deliver our ambitious plans for the future wellbeing of those who need our support.

Keith Loraine OBE
Gentoo Group Chair

About us

We're a housing association that provides more than 60,000 people in Sunderland with a place they can call home.

We believe everyone has the right to live in a good quality home they can afford and as part of our commitment to deliver on this, we invest millions of pounds every year in keeping our existing homes safe and secure.

Our vision

Great Homes
Strong Communities
Inspired People
For Sunderland

Our values

Do the right thing
Give all you've got
Keep learning
Make a difference
Work together

Our corporate strategy and Our 5Ps

Our corporate strategy centres around five strategic aims and our 5Ps:

Place

Provide homes and services that enable our customers and communities to succeed

People

Invest in people and communities to help realise opportunities and release potential

Perform

Be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly, investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose

Partner

Work with others to influence and generate sustainable change

Pride

Harness the collective passion and energy of our people to support the city

Supporting tenants and communities through the Covid-19 pandemic

We're proud that we continued to provide front line services to tenants during the pandemic - at a time they needed us most.

The welfare of tenants, residents and employees is our number one priority and we continued to provide a number of vital services during the pandemic.

Our colleagues made thousands of phone calls to tenants as part of their commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of local people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tenants who are known to be vulnerable or living alone were prioritised, with phone calls made to check on their welfare and to offer support to those who need it. We also worked alongside partners in the city including Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Foodbank and other community organisations to ensure residents had access to the appropriate help and support.

We worked hard to ensure our offices and depots were all COVID secure and opened them up as soon as it was safe to do so. We also implemented robust Safe Systems of Work to allow our trades people to carry out work in tenants' homes.

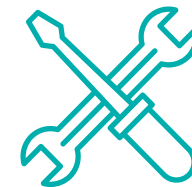
56k+
phone conversations to check on tenant's welfare



3,177
tenants supported through our Money Matters and Universal Credit Teams

5,307
calls or texts made by our Victim Support Team

161,250
repairs and servicing carried out, of which
22,400
were emergencies



e.g Window replacements and external decoration

£30.9m
invested in property improvements

72
people given employment support and advice through our Wise Steps programme

8,400+
tenants registered on our MyGentoo portal



709
properties allocated to new Gentoo tenants and;
249
priority moves for existing tenants who were registered with a priority housing need

Keeping neighbourhoods safe

We worked in partnership with Northumbria Police
3 injunctions served and **202** tenancy breaches due to tenants not following social distancing

145
cases of domestic abuse supported



Through Empower Sunderland Community Fund, we've coordinated
£104,000
in donations to 30 local community groups



Place

We believe that everyone deserves to live in a good quality, safe and secure home they can afford, in a community they can be proud of.

Our aim is to provide homes and services that enable our customers and communities to succeed. To deliver on this, we will:

- Invest significantly in repairs and upgrades to our properties
- Ensure our homes are safe and secure
- Develop for rent and sale, quality homes that are affordable and that people aspire to live in
- Improve our communities, and their environment, through investment in local priorities

Thousands of tenants benefit from £66m property investment and maintenance work

We provide more than 60,000 people in Sunderland with a place they can call home and believe everyone has the right to live in a good quality home they can afford. We invest millions of pounds every year in keeping our homes safe, secure and compliant. This past year has been no different, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to invest in maintaining and repairing our housing stock, **investing £66 million** in properties and buildings.

Our comprehensive Property Investment Plan included a number of major schemes including boiler replacements, roof replacements, and internal modernisations, including kitchens and bathrooms.

We also completed the second year of our major window replacement scheme, which will ensure all Gentoo properties have double glazing installed throughout by December 2023. This programme was naturally impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, **1279 properties** received replacement double glazing.



Summary of our investment plan completed in 2020/21

1,274
heating systems upgraded

517
buildings had roofs replaced

1,279
properties were fitted with double glazed windows

112
low rise blocks received communal decoration

1,114
properties decorated externally

19
properties received gable end works

Keeping tenants safe throughout the pandemic

Our responsive repairs service is vital in ensuring we keep our tenants safe and secure in their homes and we're proud that we were able to continue delivering the service safely throughout the pandemic. Some providers chose to stop carrying out routine repairs altogether, however, we believed it was more important than ever to keep our tenants and residents safe – as everyone was spending a lot more time at home. We carried out emergency repairs during the first lockdown and restarted urgent and routine repairs later in the summer. Despite the lockdown, we still managed to exceed **161,250 repairs** visits and safety checks!

161,250
repair visits carried out

88%
of our repairs were completed right first time



100%
of homes meeting Government Decent Homes Standard

Building safety continues to be a top priority

Building safety continues to be top priority for Gentoo and throughout 2020/21, we invested almost **£4.5m** in Fire Risk Assessment remedial work, **£5m** in the modernisation of River Quarter, and completed the **£9.4m** Core 364 scheme, which saw the installation of state-of-the-art sprinkler systems to every flat and communal area in seven high rise tower blocks.

Following on from the removal of gas supply from the seven towers within our Core 364 project, we also removed the gas supply from a further three high rise tower blocks in Sunderland city centre as part of a **£600,000 investment**.

We started the full replacement of the Group's intercom system, which links most of our residential buildings and the properties in them to our Concierge Service, providing safety and security to thousands of residents in Sunderland 24 hours per day, seven days per week.



Taking care of our outdoor space

Throughout the pandemic, we have all spend a lot of time at home and in our gardens. Sunderland is a beautiful city and we know lots of tenants have enjoyed spending time outdoors over the last 18 months. We're proud of our neighbourhoods and want our tenants to be proud too. That's why we continue to provide important services to keep our neighbourhoods safe, clean and attractive places to live.



572
safety inspections to play parks

200
Rate Your Estate inspections with local residents

3.4
million square metres of grass cut – that's the equivalent to 478 football fields every two weeks

5,979
trees inspected

94%
overall tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood

2,248
fly-tipping and reports actioned

98
graffiti reports actioned

Major affordable homes plan

We have made huge progress in making our new Affordable Homes Plan a reality by successfully gaining planning permission on our first six new developments on Wearside.

A total of **170 new high-quality new homes** have been given the go-ahead by Sunderland City Council, with construction work on the affordable rented properties now well underway. We're delighted to have appointed a range of contractors to help us in delivering these new homes, with partnerships struck with Equans, Esh and T.Manners and Sons.

These schemes will see our brand-new house types built in Sunderland for the first time ever and we're so excited for tenants and residents to see them.

The new developments mark the start of a new era of affordable housing in Sunderland, supporting **693 jobs** in the city, with an estimated 279 jobs created on site and 441 in the wider economy, putting our new housing schemes and other key construction schemes on Wearside, such as Riverside Sunderland, at the heart of post COVID-19 recovery in the city.



These developments are located right across the breadth of the city to ensure we are delivering new affordable homes for tenants and residents in all corners of Sunderland, including:

- **Austin Place, Pennywell**
- **Bellmen Green, Silksworth**
- **Crosstree Park, Central Downhill**
- **Leeway Green, Carley Hill**
- **Liberty Grange, Hylton Castle**
- **Wellspring Park, Town End Farm**

And all of this new housing is in addition to our existing Keelman Rise and Brockwell Green developments, in Downhill and Fencehouses, with 100 new homes combined on these two schemes nearing completion.



Gentoo Homes strikes gold for second year running

Our private housebuilding arm, Gentoo Homes, recorded a record year in 2020/21.

For the second year running the housebuilder achieved a five-star rating from Homebuilders Federation (HBF) – an amazing achievement and fantastic run of consistently delivering outstanding homes for customers right across the North East.

The UK economy saw an unprecedented downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which many would have expected, but one industry that performed stronger than most was the housing market. 2020/21 was one of Gentoo Homes' strongest ever years in terms of performance, with the sales target for the year met by November – five months ahead of the financial year end.



Profit for social purpose!

Did you know Gentoo Homes is profit for purpose? It's not like any normal private housebuilder, where profits move into the hands of shareholders. Instead, the financial surplus Gentoo Homes generates, which last year was **£2.2m**, is reinvested back into Gentoo Group. We then use the contribution to fund services that make a real impact on tenants and residents, including our affordable homes plan, victim support service, or through our Money Matters Team.

People



We believe that by putting people at the heart of all that we do we can build great homes and create strong communities.

Our aim is to invest in people and communities to help realise opportunities and release potential. To deliver on this we will:

- Always provide a great service to our tenants and communities
- Help our tenants and communities to become more resilient and support independent living through a range of support services
- Be an inclusive employer of choice in Sunderland by offering a range of recruitment opportunities, including apprenticeships, and by investing in and developing our colleagues to achieve their potential

We were there for tenants when they needed us most

The financial wellbeing of our tenants is of paramount importance and our specialist Money Matters Team continues to provide specialist advice and support to help tenants maximise their income, reduce debt and remove financial barriers to ensure they can maintain a tenancy. This past year was hugely challenging financially for many families in Sunderland, as many families dealt with furlough and unemployment, and the team was on hand to ensure tenants that were willing to engage with us did not fall into financial difficulty. We can be proud that we were there for tenants when they needed us most.

£1,075,421 in benefit claims and gains facilitated

1,041 tenants supported to make financial gains and improve their financial management skills

3,013 referrals to water rate discount schemes, resulting in £340,015 in financial discounts to tenants

£3,434 in grants given out via our crisis fund



More tenants helped into employment through Wise Steps

Our Wise Steps programme has continued to provide one to one specialist support to help tenants take positive steps towards securing employment. We have partnered with other organisations to create employment and training opportunities for our tenants, as we aim to remove barriers to work.

72 people supported by Wise Steps job coaches

2 people successfully completed vocational training

6 people moved from claiming benefits to job searching activities

5 people successfully gained employment



Safety and support service continued to protect most vulnerable tenants

We have continued to provide various specialist services to our most vulnerable tenants throughout 2020/21, offering vital domestic abuse and social inclusion support, as well as a specialist anti-social behaviour service.

Unfortunately, we're aware that the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in domestic abuse right across the country. Gentoo's Victim Support Team has continued to support tenants who have been victims of domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, with 221 people benefitting from specialist support over the past year. We continued to work in partnership with Northumbria Police, Sunderland City Council and other third party agencies, such as Wearside Women in Need, to protect and safeguard tenants from abuse and violence.

Our Positive Engagement Team has also continued to support vulnerable tenants in need, supporting 200 people in relation to mental health and drug and alcohol addiction and empowering them to overcome problems in these areas so they could improve their quality of life.

Our Safeguarding Team has coordinated safeguarding alerts across our properties, working closely with the city's children's services, Together for Children, to protect more than 290 adults and children.

200 tenants supported through positive engagement

221 domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour cases

166 child safeguarding alerts

71 adult safeguarding alerts

Brenda Naisby: Board Member, TPAS Tenant of the Year and star of BEATCOVIDNE campaign

We hugely value the commitment of all our engaged tenants and residents and we were delighted that Brenda Naisby, an inspirational tenant who became a domestic abuse champion in her local community, was crowned 'Tenant of the Year' at the National Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Awards.

This major accolade was awarded to Brenda for her active role in the community, including her role as Chair of our Washington Tenant Voice Panel.

Since winning the award, Brenda has joined our Board of Directors to ensure the voice of tenants is at the heart of Gentoo's decision making, as well as playing a leading role in the North East's BeatCOVIDNE advertising campaign, which was coordinated by seven local authorities in the North East in a bid to engage residents and encourage public support for measures in place to protect residents from COVID-19 in the North East region.

We are immensely proud of what Brenda has achieved in her role as an involved Gentoo tenant, and we are very grateful for the active role she continues to play to help us improve our services. Thank you Brenda!



You are Gentoo, thanks for everything you do!

As a values-driven organisation with Investors in People Gold, rewarding and recognising the efforts and achievements of our colleagues is something that is very important to us. We're proud of the people we employ and the difference our colleagues make to the lives of our tenants every day.

Our 'You Are Gentoo' Awards continued through 2020/21, despite the pandemic and various lockdowns, we still managed to acknowledge and celebrate the brilliant work provided by our colleagues by delivering our awards in a COVID-Safe way. We opened our award nominations windows twice over the course of the year and were inundated with nominations, with **more than 400 colleagues** recognising the hard work of their peers throughout the year.

We were delighted to surprise
45
colleagues with their awards over the course of the year

Perform

We believe that in order to achieve our goals, we must operate as a compliant, efficient and effective social housing provider.

Our aim is to be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly, and investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose. To deliver on this we will:

- Always listen and respond to the voice of our tenants and communities
- Through digital technology seek to improve our tenants' and communities' experience of our services
- Demonstrate how our services deliver value for money
- Continue to ensure our corporate and governance structure is compliant and maintains high standards of governance

Top governance rating awarded by the Regulator

We were absolutely delighted to be awarded a G1 governance rating by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in recognition of the way we have transformed the organisation by making huge improvements and positive change across the business.

We have changed our culture, structure and strengthened our governance controls to provide comprehensive reassurance that previous issues and concerns could not, and will not, happen again. The recognition is testament to Gentoo colleagues and tenants who have worked tirelessly to refocus the business on our core social purpose of servicing our tenants in Sunderland.



As a social housing provider, we work to be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly and investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose.

We pride ourselves on performing to the highest possible standard and delivering the quality of service our tenants deserve. This year we are pleased to have performed at a consistently high standard.

100%
of tenants satisfied
with our Positive
Engagement service

93%
of tenants were
satisfied with the
condition of their
new home when
moving in

94%
of tenants were
satisfied with the
service they received
from our Property
Maintenance Team



94%
of tenants were
satisfied with the
work carried out
during upgrades
to their home



Putting tenant voice at the heart of our decision making – we are listening!

This year, we launched our Tenant Voice Team as we seek to be proactive in how we listen, learn and put issues right.

The team has been put in place to deal directly with any complaints, work with our tenant groups and liaise with community and voluntary organisations.

We are honest in acknowledging there are times when we fail to do our job properly. What we cannot do today is change or fix issues from the distant past. We are here today to get things right, to listen to tenants and to work with tenants.

Gentoo has a 20-year history Sunderland and we are responsible for almost **29,000 properties**, investing millions every year to modernise, maintain and repair them. Our 1,000 dedicated colleagues work every day to deliver services to our tenants and want to do their best to get things right.

We also work with North East Tenants Voice (NETV), who work with other tenant voice

groups to provide a forum for the unique views of the North East to be shared. It provides a platform to lobby and influence policy at regional and national level, as well as a channel for tenants in the North East to share ideas and best practice working collectively on issues that impact upon them.



Continuing to drive the most efficient services for tenants

We believe that in order to achieve our goals, we must operate as a compliant, efficient and effective social housing provider. Our aim is to be well governed and financially resilient, operating efficiently and responsibly, and investing wisely to fulfil our social purpose.

Value for money is a key driver in determining the services we provide to tenants and residents. It is embedded in everything we do and we recognise that it is not just simply about cost, it is about identifying the right balance in how our resources are best utilised to ensure the best possible outcome for the end user.

Over recent years, we have transformed the organisation and have implemented a renewed focus on our core activities. This has allowed us to prioritise investment in our housing stock that we recognise should have been completed way before now, as well as launch a new Affordable Homes Programme that aims to increase the supply of new affordable housing in Sunderland.

Throughout 2020/21, we have continued to meet the Group’s strategic and operational value for money objectives, while ensuring external benchmarking continues to be carried out to understand how our costs and performance compare to others in the sector.

Value for money is central to the future success of the organisation and critical to ensuring we deliver an efficient service to our tenants. We continue to develop our capacity to invest in new and existing homes to meet the housing needs of local people.

My Repairs improves repairs experience for tenants

This year, we have seen thousands of tenants take advantage of our new online repairs system, ‘My Repairs’, which is a new way for tenants to report and book repairs 24/7. **8,439 tenants** are signed up to report repairs online via My Gentoo.

Accessed via tenants’ ‘My Gentoo’ accounts, tenants can report a range of most commonly reported routine repairs online, such as a broken door handle, a leaking radiator and cracked brickwork. You can also choose the most suitable date and time for the appointment, as well as being able to change an existing booking you have made.

The new online service has improved the experience of booking a repair for tenants, by reducing telephone call waiting times during peak hours and allowing them access 24 hours a day.

8,439

tenants are signed up to report repairs online via My Gentoo

Every Voice Matters

Earlier this year we were delighted to launch our ‘Every Voice Matters’ campaign, an initiative which coincided with the launch of a new and exciting training programme for our board members of the future.

In partnership with leading national housing charity, Housing Diversity Network (HND), we launched the programme at our offices with other partners from Beyond Housing, North Star Housing and Thirteen, to recruit the next generations of board members from underrepresented groups and backgrounds.

As part of the campaign, we were delighted to welcome local residents Kumareswaradas Ramanathas and Hayder Qureshi as members on the programme to represent Gentoo.

Over recent years we have improved the gender diversity of our board of directors, with a number of new faces to help us freshen up our thinking and to ensure we have people with the right mix of skills and expertise governing the organisation. We do however recognise that we need to continue to improve the diversity of our board, particularly by improving diversity of thought



and having board members who are from underrepresented groups. The programme is the first to be delivered in the North East and we’re so proud to be involved. We want a healthy variety of people from different backgrounds and cultures who can help shape the future of Gentoo.

People from such backgrounds continue to be significantly under-represented at board level - locally, nationally, and internationally - and we are proud to have helped create and support this programme with HDN to change such underrepresentation.

It is fantastic to be part of the training programme and to create opportunities for local people from underrepresented backgrounds who can become our board members of tomorrow.



Partner

We believe that by working with others we can achieve far more than we can on our own, for the good of our tenants, communities and the city.

Our aim is to work with others to influence and generate sustainable change. To deliver on this we will:

- Develop Sunderland into a vibrant, healthy and dynamic city through effective partnerships with Sunderland City Council and other local anchor institutions
- Working alongside organisations such as Northumbria Police, local schools, community groups and businesses to improve the safety of our neighbourhoods and wellbeing of our tenants and communities
- Collaborate with key partners and other housing associations to influence matters that affect our tenants, communities, colleagues and society locally, regionally and nationally

Supporting the city’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic with 1000+ hours volunteering

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we moved quickly to support the efforts across the city to support the most vulnerable tenants and residents who were unable to leave their home for food. We worked in partnership with Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Foodbank to prepare and deliver food parcels throughout the lockdown.

In total, our employees gave up more than **1000 hours** of their time to volunteer at the Foodbank

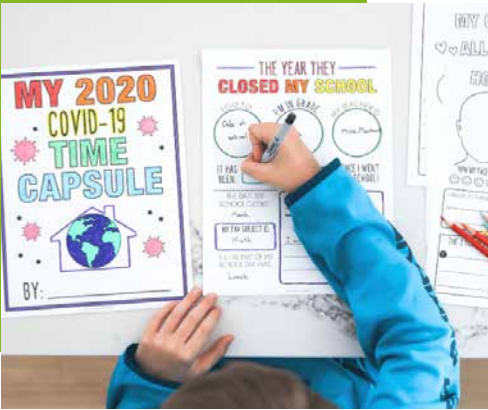
to help those isolating and most in need. We are proud of the way in which we worked closely the city council and the city’s voluntary and community sector, setting up various hubs across Sunderland to support the city’s most vulnerable tenants and residents, whilst working closely with community organisations who continued to provide services to our tenants and residents on the frontline.

COVID time capsules planted by local school children

In addition to the food workshops, we worked in partnership with the North East young people’s mental health charity Mindstars, to create COVID time capsules. The capsules encourage participants to recall their memories of the last year – what they liked and disliked, and their own emotions reflecting on the experience – which were then buried in the community

centre’s garden. 200 children participated over the four days.

We’re committed to having a positive impact on our local communities and are proud to use our ongoing investment into our properties and neighbourhoods to volunteer with local community organisations such as Pennywell Community Centre and deliver vital support for those who need it most.



Providing homes for those in need

Everyone deserves the right to live in a safe and secure home. We work with Sunderland City Council and the charity, Changing Lives, to provide homes for people sleeping rough in the city.

During 2020-21, we helped to provide a home for four adults who had to permanent home and were sleeping rough. We also provided secure housing for **45 adults and families** who were living in temporary accommodation.

The voluntary sector is at the heart of Wearside and we’re extremely proud to be helping The Voluntary Sector Alliance to build the foundations for the voluntary sector to thrive even more in Sunderland.



The Alliance has been driven and owned by the Area Voluntary and Community Sector Networks and while it is being initially funded and developed by NHS Sunderland Health and Gentoo Group , it is hoped that more of the city’s anchor institutions will come on board as the alliance continues to grow.

Northumbria Police

We work closely with Northumbria Police to tackle issues such as anti-social and criminal behaviour in our neighbourhoods and during the COVID-19 pandemic we supported the Police to enforce emergency coronavirus laws.

As part of the partnership, our Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers investigated all reports of Gentoo tenants breaking social distancing guidelines and worked with the police to investigate reported households and deter any further breaches.

The aim was to protect other residents who were at risk and help to reduce the spread of the virus by ensuring social distancing was adhered to.

Over the height of the pandemic, we served three injunction notices and more than **200 tenancy breaches** to tenants who decided to put the health and wellbeing of themselves and others at risk.

Influencing positive change nationally

We continue to work with a range of partners at local, national and regional level, striving to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones. Through our membership of the National Housing Federation, Northern Housing Consortium, Placeshapers, Housing Partnership UK and the Chartered Institute of Housing, we have continued to promote the great work we carry out in Sunderland, as well as championing social and affordable housing in the North East.

We also play a key role with our membership of Homes for the North, which our Chief Executive Officer, Nigel Wilson, is currently Chair of. We will continue to push for greater support for the social housing sector from national Government and continue to campaign for further levelling up of investment in the north.



Positive Footprints

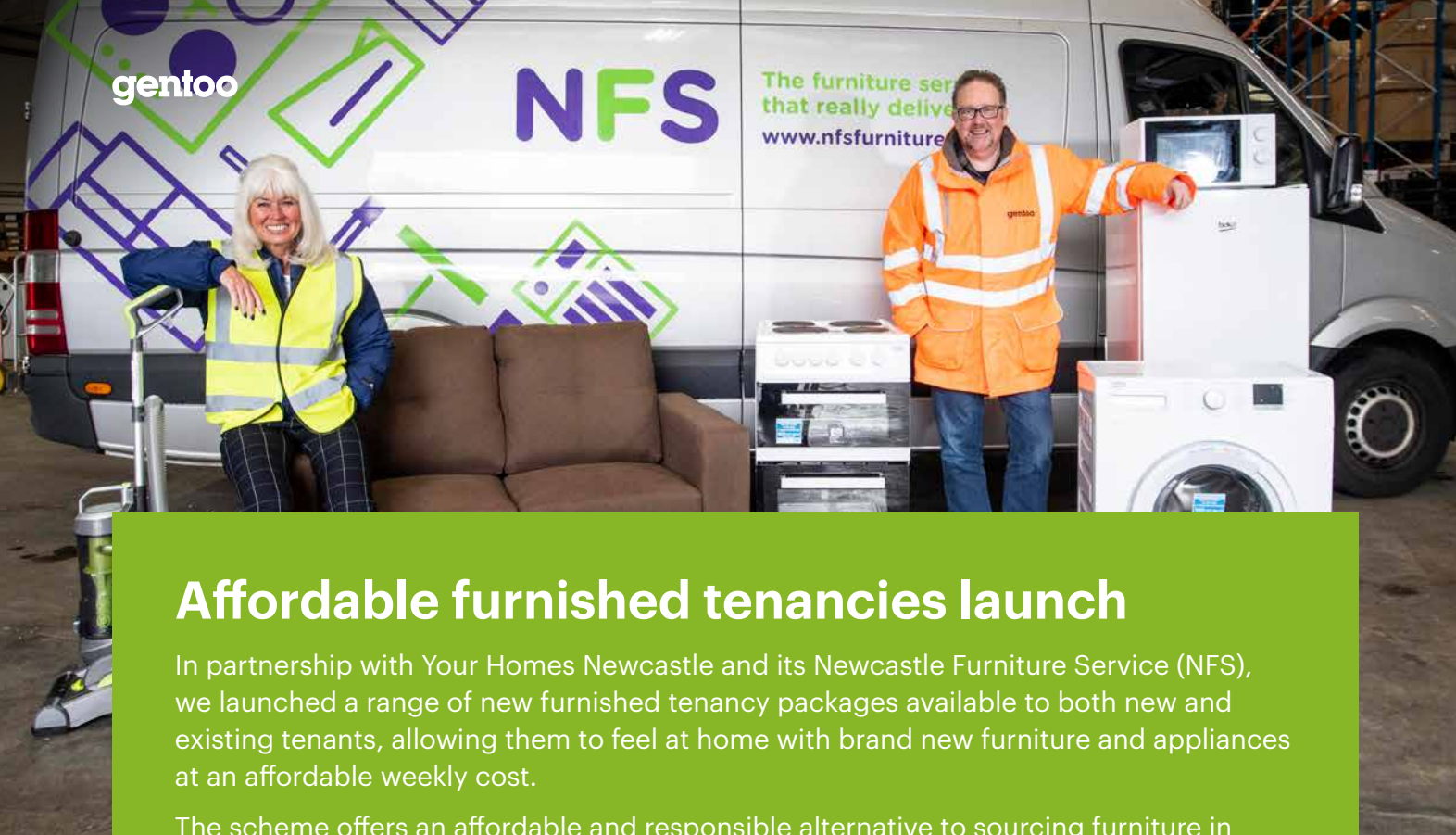
Our work with Positive Footprints changes the lives of children and young people by delivering personal development programmes in local schools that allow self-discovery, raise aspirations, and open the world of work.

The closure of schools and phased reopening due to COVID-19 impacted the ability to deliver as intended, but three local schools completed the programme using technology to stay connected. The programme is potentially life changing and the benefit to young people can be seen for years to come.

Foundation of Light

We’re an official community partner of Sunderland AFC (SAFC) and Foundation of Light (FoL), a registered charity of the football club.

The FoL delivered a number of activities and employability courses to help our tenants build skills for employment such as self-esteem, and literacy and numeracy and supported one person into part time employment.



Affordable furnished tenancies launch

In partnership with Your Homes Newcastle and its Newcastle Furniture Service (NFS), we launched a range of new furnished tenancy packages available to both new and existing tenants, allowing them to feel at home with brand new furniture and appliances at an affordable weekly cost.

The scheme offers an affordable and responsible alternative to sourcing furniture in comparison to some 'rent-to-own' high street lenders. The weekly cost of the furniture is added to tenants' weekly rent charge and can be paid for by Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.

The furnished tenancy packages further expand our support services and commitment to creating sustainable tenancies, by providing all tenants including victims of domestic abuse, young care leavers and vulnerable tenants with the best possible start in their homes.

Spreading Christmas cheer

Christmas is a time for fun and celebration and while the festive season was a little different last year, at Gentoo we still helped to spread some much-needed Christmas cheer.

From pantomime performances to donating hundreds of toys to families across Sunderland, we partnered with organisations across Wearside to guarantee it was still the season of giving.



21 Christmas pantomime performances in local schools in partnership with Engie

Hundreds of gifts donated to local tenants and their families



200 Christmas dinners and desserts were delivered to our tenants in partnership with Sunderland City Council

Working with our contractors

As a social housing provider, we work closely with our principal contractors to help fulfil our social purpose in our communities.

Throughout 2020-21 we worked closely with four contractor partners, Engie, Tolent, Kier and Bell Group.

From working with local community organisations and schools to supporting our Give it a Grow gardening competition, our contractors have worked across the city to provide unique and exciting opportunities for our tenants and Sunderland's residents.

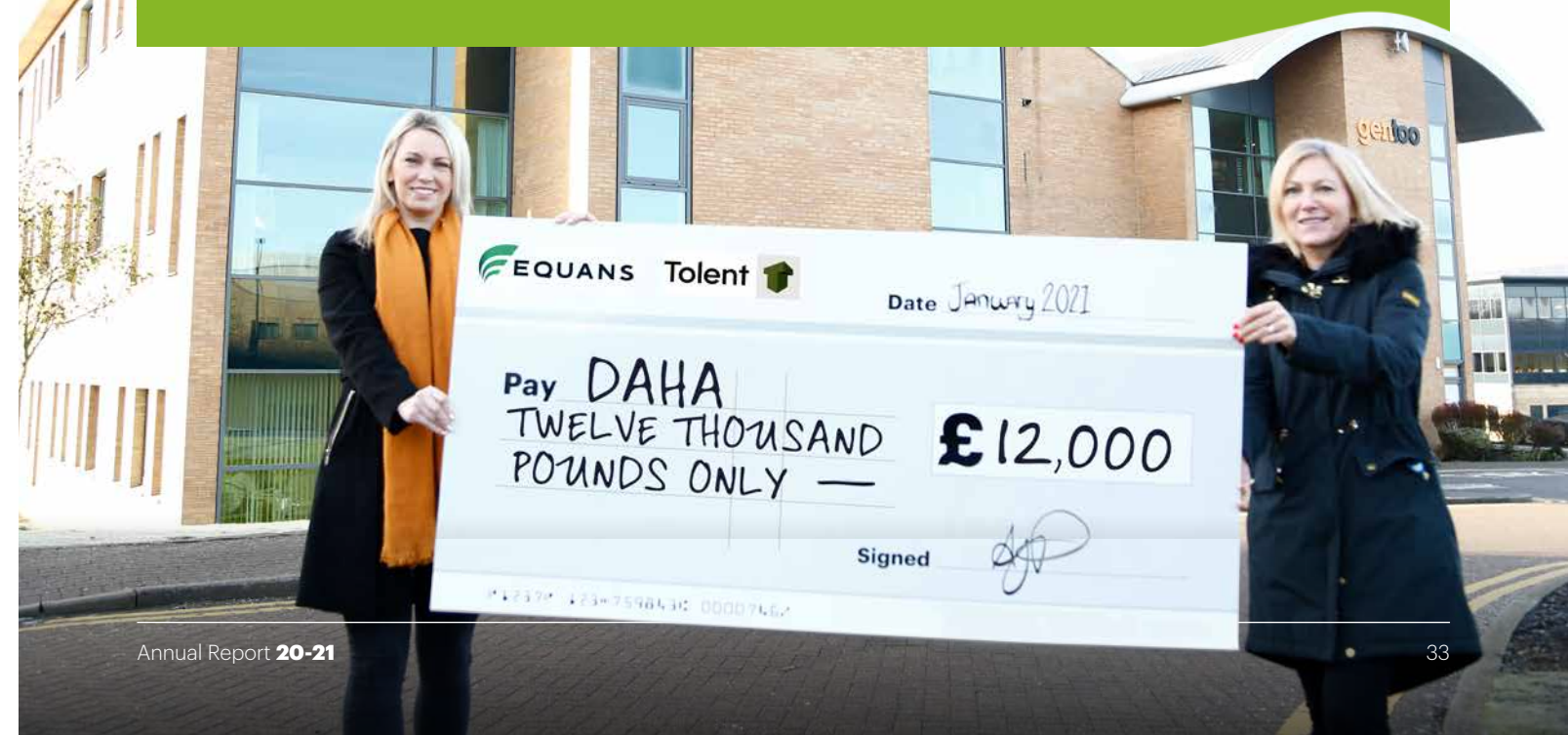
More than **£20,000** was donated to local schools and colleges in Houghton-le-Spring to fund new laptops to support at-home learning, fund breakfast clubs and provide Christmas toys to local families.



Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)

We're a proud co-founder of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and this year we donated **£21,500** to support the organisation. We play a key role within DAHA's work, including providing domestic abuse training to other housing associations.

This year, our partners EQUANS and Tolent donated **£12,000** to DAHA to help fund their work with individuals and businesses to educate and help victims.



Pride

We believe that Sunderland is an outstanding city. It is our heart, our homeland, and somewhere we will always be proud to shout about and give something back to.

Our aim is to harness the collective passion and energy of our people to support the city's plan. To deliver on this we will:

- Remember our roots in all that we do
- Celebrate the history and heritage of our city
- Be an excellent provider of housing in Sunderland, demonstrating the quality of our service
- Actively work to reduce our carbon footprint in line with Sunderland City Council's ambition for the city to be carbon neutral by 2040

Empower Sunderland Community Fund

Gentoo is contracted by Empower Community Solar to manage more than **5,000** solar panel systems in Sunderland. In 2020-21, profit share from the portfolio generated income of **£90,221**, all of which was reinvested back into the Group's housing services.

Other shared profit from the solar panel scheme is allocated to Empower Sunderland Community Fund – which is run independent of Gentoo. The pandemic led to a surge in demand for the services of the voluntary sector, and to ensure these voluntary and community groups were supported, Empower funding was donated to community and voluntary groups that were delivering frontline services to the city's residents.

30 organisations in Wearside received donations totalling over **£104,000**, using **£87,000** of grant funding from Empower Sunderland and an additional **£17,000** donations from Gentoo's Tenant and Community Voice Forum budgets. The funding was granted to organisations to continue with key volunteering services ranging from delivering hot meals to shielding tenants to supporting the victims of domestic abuse.

30 organisations in Wearside received donations totalling over £104,000



Supporting the voluntary and community sector

We are proud to support the voluntary and community sector in Sunderland and have worked closely with a number of key groups across the city to further support services for our tenants and residents. Sunderland has an extremely strong voluntary and community sector and we have been delighted to work with many of them over the past year, including Fans Museum, Shiny Advice and Resource Project,

Fulwell Community Library, Ryhope Seaview Angling Club, Young Asian Voices, Box Youth Project and Easington Lane. We have continued to support voluntary and community groups by providing grants through our Aspire Grant Programme. The programme, which is overseen by our tenants who are part of our Community Engagement Forums, awarded **£11,526** to 24 groups in 2020/21.

Taking pride in our city by tackling climate change and decarbonisation

Climate change is the challenge of our generation and Gentoo is fully committed to helping to reduce the national carbon reduction targets set out by Government and local targets in Sunderland, via the Sunderland Low Carbon Framework.

Through innovative property investment schemes such as Core 364, and the inclusion of carbon reduction and environmentally efficient technology in our new build developments, we're working to reduce the carbon emissions of our housing stock and also creating new homes that are 70% carbon neutral so they are fit for the future.



Green fingered tenants rewarded for garden pride

This year we continued to celebrate the efforts of our green fingered tenants who take such pride in where they live, via in our annual gardening competition, Give it a Grow, in partnership with Engie and Tolent.

We received more than 25 entries from tenants across the city who wanted to show off their garden transformations and lockdown love shown to their outdoor spaces. Lockdown allowed many people to spend extra time in their gardens and communal outdoor space and we were delighted with the standard of gardens in this year's competition. We were thoroughly impressed with all entries and were pleased to be able to recognise five tenants for their amazing efforts.





Gold Award from the MOD

We've been recognised as one of the most supportive organisations in the UK for Britain's Armed Forces, scooping the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Gold Award in its Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). We're incredibly proud of the work we have done, and continue to do, on supporting the armed forces and local veterans.

Veterans in Crisis is an important local organisation that carries out vital work in the local community and we are proud to

support Ger Fowler and the organisation's efforts to support local veterans.

Since 2016, we have rehoused more than **500** UK Armed Forces personnel and reservists and gives priority to returning service personnel through its housing allocations policy. We're also an active member of Sunderland Armed Forces Partnership, which works to develop links between businesses and Armed Forces across the city.

 **2,500** families benefited from Easter egg appeal



Easter Egg appeal

More than 2,500 families in Sunderland will benefit from an Easter gift this weekend thanks to the generosity of local businesses and their employees.

With help from Gentoo Homes, Engie, Bell Group, Tolent and Kier, as well as our colleagues, we managed to collect the largest amount of eggs we ever have.

The eggs were sent to families who are struggling to afford eggs for children and those who are isolating alone, as well as a number of local charities and voluntary and community groups including Sunderland Foodbank, Together for Children, Grace House, More Than Grandparents and a range of homelessness services operating in the city.

Fundraising for our corporate charities

Despite living and working under COVID-19 restrictions for most of the year, our colleagues rallied together to raise much needed funds for both Action on Dementia Sunderland and St Benedict's Hospice.

£17,000 was raised across the year through fundraising activities including raffles, bonus balls and a regular payroll deduction scheme. These charities play a vital role in the local community and we are proud to be supporting them through both resources and fundraising again in 2021.



Our performance

As at financial year end (2020/21)

We have developed a clear and concise dashboard to demonstrate our performance as a landlord to our tenants. The data below shows how we have performed against key performance indicators for the financial year 2020/21. During the beginning of the pandemic, we were operating an emergency only repairs service, which had an impact on the number of routine repairs we were able to complete on time. Our housing allocations service was also paused for 12 weeks, while tenants were still able to terminate their tenancies, significantly increasing our average time to re-let a property.


| | 2020/21 | 2019/20 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Current rent arrears | £1.58m | £1.65m |
| Average time to re-let a property | 81 days | 49 days |
| Total number of calls received | 263,270 | 418,264 |
| Formal complaint performance | 100% | 78% |
| Tenant satisfaction with repairs | 94% | 94% |
| Repairs completed on time | 81% | 84% |
| Repairs completed right first time | 88% | 83% |


Governance


We would like to thank the Gentoo Group and Gentoo Homes Board for its commitment and direction this year.


Our board members have played a key role in ensuring Gentoo has strong oversight and outstanding governance, demonstrated by our maximum G1 Governance rating from the Regulator of Social Housing. The Group has worked hard to build a board that is challenging, experienced, technical and diverse and this past year it has continued to drive positive change across the organisation, albeit remotely at times due to the pandemic.


Our Board and Committee Members

- 


Keith Loraine
OBE (Chair)
(Appointed 1 February 2017)
- 


Alison Fellows
(Appointed 27 February 2019)
- 


Brenda Naisby
Tenant Board Member
(Appointed 25 November 2020)
- 


Carol Long
(Appointed 26 September 2018)
- 


Chris Watson
(Appointed 27 September 2017)


- 


Claire Long
(Appointed 1 May 2020)
- 

David Murtagh
(Appointed 1 February 2017)
- 

Dianne Sharp
(Appointed 1 May 2020)
- 

Emily Cox, MBE
(Appointed 27 February 2019)
- 

Karen Noble
(Appointed 1 July 2021)
- 

Kehri Ellis
(Appointed 1 April 2021)
- 

Philip Tye
(Appointed 18 June 2015)

Board Members who reached the end of their term in office

Brian Spears
(Resigned 31 December 2020)

Les Herbert
(Resigned 14 November 2020)

Board Members who have resigned

Debra Waller
(Appointed 23 July 2020, resigned 19 May 2021)

Michael Essl
(Appointed 15 May 2019, resigned 10 June 2020)

summary 20/21

Our social impact

£4,035,434

total social value generated

Place

94%
overall tenant satisfaction
with their neighbourhood

£30.9m
invested in major works and
improvements to properties

100
homes under construction

170
new homes approved by
planning committees

People

221
victims of anti-social
behaviour and domestic
abuse supported

Advised tenants on more than
£1m of debt

72
people supported by the
Wise Steps work programme

Brought an additional
£1,075,421
income to our tenants

Perform

£144,000
of community grants to
local people and groups
via Empower Sunderland

£2.2m
reinvested back into the
Group from Gentoo Homes

93%
of tenants satisfied with the
standard of work in their home

Partner

200
Christmas dinners
donated to tenants

49
adults and families
provided with emergency
temporary accommodation

£249,653
in social value generated
through principal contractors

Pride

Over
90
veterans re-housed

£17,000
fundraised by our
colleagues for our
corporate charities

2,500
Easter eggs donated
to beneficiaries

Our financial summary 2020/21

Consolidated statement of comprehensive income

| | 2020/21 £m | 2019/20 £m |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Turnover | 165.6 | 172.2 |
| Cost of sales and operating expenditure | (141.4) | (145.3) |
| Other operating income | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Surplus on disposal of tangible assets | 0.5 | 1.5 |
| Operating surplus | 25.0 | 28.6 |
| Net interest charges | (20.7) | (22.2) |
| Revaluation of fixed asset investments | (0.9) | 0.6 |
| Fair value adjustment for investment property | 0.8 | (0.6) |
| Deficit on disposal of investment properties | - | (0.1) |
| Fair value adjustment | 0.2 | (0.1) |
| Taxation | (0.1) | (0.2) |
| Surplus for the year | 4.3 | 6.0 |

Turnover has reduced during the year by £6.6m. This is predominantly due to a reduction in income from properties developed for outright sale (£5.3m) and shared ownership property sales (£0.9m) due to a reduction in house sales during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cost of sales and operating expenditure has decreased by £3.9m, reflecting a reduction in house sales during the year.

Reduced Right to Buy and Right to Acquire receipts have also impacted upon the current year's operating surplus. The core business has continued to perform well throughout the pandemic, with good income collection and operational performance.

Consolidated statement of financial position

| | 2020/21 £m | 2019/20 £m |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Net book value of tangible assets – housing properties | 1,028.4 | 1,023.1 |
| Other tangible fixed assets and investments | 59.5 | 58.4 |
| Net current assets | 29.3 | 69.5 |
| Debtors due after one year | 3.5 | 4.1 |
| Total assets less current liabilities | 1,120.7 | 1,155.1 |
| Creditors due after one year | (518.9) | (558.2) |
| Pension liability | (3.3) | - |
| Net assets | 598.5 | 596.9 |
| Revaluation reserve | 155.1 | 156.1 |
| Revenue reserve | 178.2 | 168.4 |
| Other reserve | 265.2 | 272.4 |
| | 598.5 | 596.9 |

Housing property assets have increased by £5.3m. This reflects the Group's priority of enhancing existing properties and developing new properties with £35.8m invested during the year. This investment in housing properties is offset by depreciation of £28.1m and disposals of £2.4m.

Consolidated statement of cash flows for the year ended 31 March 2021

| | 2021 £'000 | 2020 £'000 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Net cash flows from operating activities | 64,919 | 72,279 |
| Net cash from investing activities | (28,494) | (32,970) |
| Net cash from financing activities | (67,364) | (24,430) |
| Net (decrease) / increase in cash and cash equivalents | (30,939) | 14,879 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at 1 April | 31,008 | 16,129 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at 31 March | 69 | 31,008 |

The Group's policy is not to hold significant cash balances, but to ensure that loan facilities are in place to fund future requirements. Short term cash balances are placed on short term deposits at competitive rates.

The Group had cash balances of £5.1m (2020: £36m) comprising cash and cash equivalents of £0.1m (2020: £31.0m) and an unutilised overdraft of £5m (2020: £5m) at 31 March 2021.

The £30.9m decrease from the prior year was due to a draw down in March 2020 to ensure sufficient liquidity during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the year the Group generated cash of £64.9m (2020: £72.3m) from operating activities. Net cash of £28.5m (2020: £33.0m) was invested in both existing and new housing stock with net loans of £67.4m (2020: £0.8m) being repaid in the year.



gentoo



Wearmouth Bridge, Sunderland



Great homes
Strong communities
Inspired people
for Sunderland

Gentoo Group Limited

Emperor House
2 Emperor Way
Doxford International Business Park
Sunderland, SR3 3XR.

www.gentoogroup.com

Gentoo Group Limited is a charitable community
benefit society, registration number 7302

**Annual
Report**

**20-
21**
Annual Report

