



# Innisfree Housing Association Annual Review 2011





Sinéad McQuillan

# Introduction

After more than nine years on Innisfree’s Board, I’m stepping down and passing on the role of Chair to Anne McLoughlin. I am sad to be leaving but very proud to have been involved with Innisfree and to be handing over an organisation in such good shape.

Innisfree will always be, at its deep heart’s core, an Irish organisation. We were founded in 1985 to help the many homeless and badly housed Irish people in the Kilburn area, some of whom had faced serious discrimination. There are, thankfully, fewer people sleeping rough or living in such desperate conditions but we still see many vulnerable clients, including people who have been victims of institutional abuse. We also see plenty of people who have turned to alcohol or drugs as a way of combatting loneliness or forgetting about past unhappiness. This is important work and we believe that our “Irishness” makes it easier for people to turn to us.

We are also, first and foremost, a professional, well-run housing association, exceeding the standards expected by the regulator. This year we appeared in a list of the eleven associations nationally with the top grade for governance and viability. But top of our list of priorities is to provide our tenants with a first class service. Our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, which met nine times in the last year, keeps us on our toes. We are constantly challenged by them – and quite rightly so.

The economic climate will make life even more difficult in the next few years. We are all worried about the impact of cuts and all we can promise is that we will do our utmost to defend the living standards of our tenants and maintain services.

I would like to thank Clare and the staff team for their hard work and my colleagues on the Board for their continued dedication.

**Sinéad McQuillan**  
Chair

Front cover  
Innisfree is grateful to the artist, Michael Cahillane, for letting us use his painting. This gathering of folk to listen to the finals of the All Ireland Match took place in Crownhill Road, Harlesden outside the old convent, where our sheltered scheme, Clochar Court, now stands. People had discovered that they got better transmission from their transistor radios if they positioned them beside a telegraph pole!

Register of Friendly Societies Registration Number: 24847R  
Housing Corporation Registration Number: LH3829

# A new Chair for Innisfree

Anne takes over from Sinéad as Chair in November 2011.

*“It is a great honour to have been selected as the new Chair and I look forward to getting to know the residents and friends of Innisfree over the coming years. My parents came over to London in the 50’s to work in building and nursing and raised five of us in Harlesden, before we moved out to Aylesbury in the 70’s. From Cork and*

*Mayo they raised us to be proud of our roots, culture and traditions. Though a little daunted by the responsibility I am delighted to have the opportunity to work for our community, alongside the excellent staff team and committed board.”*



Anne McLoughlin

## Governance

Innisfree prides itself on its good governance. Despite no more than a cursory interest in our affairs from the Tenant Services Authority, we still rank in the eleven top performing associations for governance and viability. We have signed up to the NHF’s code, Excellence in Governance, published in July 2010. This year we are employing Debby Ounsted, an

independent consultant, to assist with our annual board and committee review.

## Shareholding membership

Shareholding membership is open to anyone who shares the values and aims of the association and meets our membership criteria. We currently have 38 shareholding members

## Board membership

Board members are expected to act in the best interests of the association and to adopt the highest standards of probity, integrity and good behaviour when representing Innisfree. They are expected to attend meetings, to read reports and to contribute to the effective control of the association. Members are also expected to support our values, to have an understanding of the issues facing Irish immigrants and, collectively, to contribute to the wide knowledge and experience necessary to fulfil all our regulators’ requirements. We recruit new members on a regular basis to ensure membership remains fresh and active.

Most recently, the board has been joined by **Tim Holden**, **Sue O’Connor** and **Professor Richard Tomlins**. Three members have recently resigned: **Annette Beckett**, **Terry Jones** and **Barbara Regnier**. They are warmly thanked for their services. A full list of board and committee members is shown on page 16.



Richard Tomlins



Tim Holden



Sue O’Connor



# Report from the Chief Executive

**The successes of the past year have been overshadowed by the impact of government spending cuts and the resulting threats to tenants' living standards and the services we provide. As we go to press, it seems likely that we – along with many other providers – may lose some if not all of our Supporting People funding. We are resolved to look at every possible way of safeguarding the interests of our most vulnerable tenants. Among other measures we shall be talking to the Irish government about their plans for supporting vulnerable emigrants.**

Many of our tenants in supported housing have not worked for long periods of time. We were therefore pleased to be the recipients of a Lottery Grant enabling our tenants to familiarise themselves with new technology which will help with job applications and other tasks.

A recent visit from Irish government Minister, Michael Finneran, enabled us to demonstrate the important work Innisfree does for the Irish community. He and a party of civil servants met tenants at our sheltered housing scheme in Harlesden as well as visiting Innisfree House. Sarah Keogh, one of our long-standing tenants, showed him round the garden.



As always, we have continued to recruit and train new board members and very much welcome their close involvement with Innisfree. We are sorry to lose a number of long standing members.



Annette Beckett

A vital part of members' induction is seeing the properties in which our tenants live and in which so much money is invested. Earlier in the year, a group of members and office-based staff were taken on a tour. They were able to see the recently re-furbished kitchen in a supported house as well as some of our newer schemes in Camden.



Kitchen at Kilburn Lane



Tenants, members & staff at Clochar Court

The staff team remains one of our strongest assets. Though we may fail to win the annual softball competition or the Solomon Quiz, this is a group which is unfailingly loyal and committed to Innisfree and its tenants.



Michael Adams, Scheme Manager

We said goodbye during the summer to Cecilia Greene, one of our Scheme Managers at Clochar Court. However, we were delighted that Michael Adams was in a position to move from part-time working to full-time. Otherwise, staff turn-over remains very low, with no new staff joining since May 2009.

During the year, we employed independent consultant, John Barry, to help us identify and quantify weaknesses in our service delivery. He spoke to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, to staff and to contractors. We now have a clear action plan to work on during the coming year. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will oversee its implementation. See page 4 for more on the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

# The Tenant Scrutiny Panel & the Localism Agenda

Formed in May 2010, Innisfree's Tenant Scrutiny Panel has quickly found its feet and become an established and respected force within the association. The TSP, as it is known, meets roughly every 6 weeks and is now setting its own agenda and deciding what needs to be discussed.

It has come a long way since the first few meetings when the group was trying to make sense of the rather complicated guidelines from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) on their National Standards. However, the TSA is one of the many quangos to be chopped by the government and, with it, most of their regulatory requirements.

## Members of the TSP

Susan Brennan  
Des Browne  
Jacqui Buchanan  
Margaret Carroll  
Bernadette Gallagher  
Geraldine Gordon  
Sue O'Connor  
Jennifer Rahman  
Gerry Shanahan

They represent all forms of tenure within Innisfree: general needs, sheltered and supported.

Housing Associations still need to follow certain guidance in respect of the Tenancy Standard. But more important now is the expectation that we provide our tenants with a "local offer", that is

to say an offer on the service standards that they can expect to receive from us. The TSP has been working with staff to develop this.

Some of the other work undertaken in the last year included the following:-

- Developing our customer service promise (our local offer);
- Discussing our policies on complaints, disabled adaptations and the fire safety process;
- Advising on the planned website re-design;
- Commenting on government consultation documents.

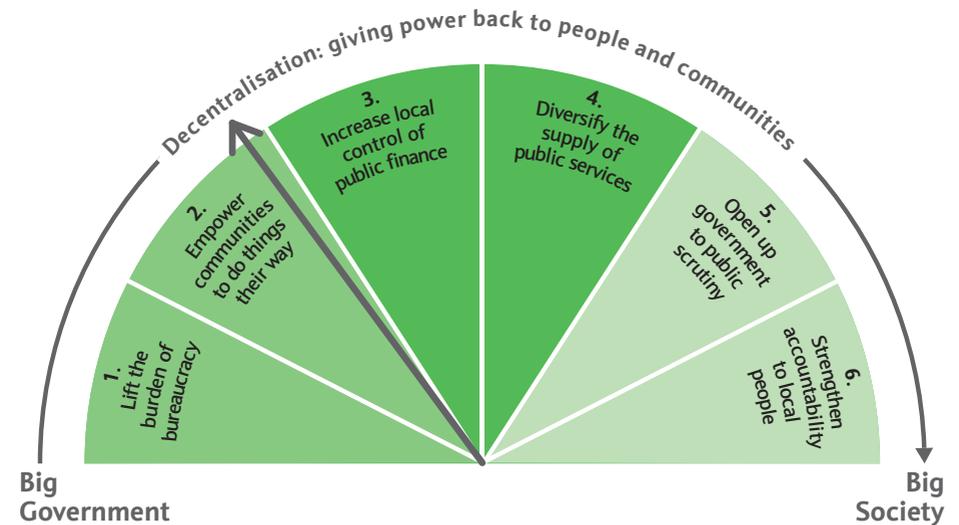
Localism – one of the government's new mantras – will become increasingly important. In their *Essential Guide to the Decentralisation and Localism Bill*, they set out how they expect to see power shifting. It makes the case for a radical shift of power from the centralised state to local communities, and describes the six essential actions required to deliver decentralisation down through every level of government to every citizen.

They say *"the Big Society is what happens whenever people work together for the common good. It is about achieving our collective goals in ways that are more diverse, more local and more personal. The best contribution that central government can make is to devolve power, money and knowledge to those best placed to find the best solutions to local*

*needs: elected local representatives, frontline public service professionals, social enterprises, charities, co-ops, community groups, neighbourhoods and individuals."*

So, we can expect to hear a lot more in the future from our various local authority partners about how we fit into their idea of local neighbourhoods.

However, we're pretty certain that it will be Innisfree's TSP that will be calling the tune for Innisfree's tenants. We're all clear that we want the same standards of service for every single Innisfree tenant, whether they live in Lambeth or Ealing, Camden or Brent. And we intend to bring lots of our local influence to bear.



Members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

# New Connections at Maldon Road, Ealing and beyond.

We have received lottery funding to fund training and activities for our supported tenants in Ealing. Many of these have low literacy skills and have had no prior experience of using computers.



Learning new skills at Maldon Road

Professional artist, writer and educator, **Anthony Luvera**, is collaborating with tenants on the *New Connections Project* so they can benefit from his widely acclaimed expertise in working with homeless and vulnerable people. He is running workshops to encourage the tenants to make the most of digital photography, focussing on *visual literacy*, to establish areas of interest, learn to edit and to develop their social skills.

This is part of a wider plan to promote digital inclusion among Innisfree's supported and sheltered housing tenants.

We are also running a series of learner engagement sessions to introduce basic IT skills including the use of Email, Skype and the Internet. This has opened doors for tenants seeking employment

or training, who are now able for the first time to make applications on line.

The ability to use computers and browse the internet is increasingly assumed by public authorities. However, many tenants wishing to move home or apply for a job are dependent on others to help them.

Choice-based lettings schemes, for example, which are dependent on IT literacy, are known to be under-used by vulnerable applicants.

Housing & Support Officers now all carry laptops with them on visits so that every opportunity can be used to work with tenants on line.

The introduction of new technology to our older tenants in Clochar Court has already proved to be a huge success, bringing many back into contact with their families in Ireland.



Anne Bray & Julie Horgan at one of the Clochar Court computers

The New Connections project will now be extended more widely among Innisfree's tenants.

# Gardening competition

**Kina Lady Avebury, our stalwart friend and main judge of the gardening competition for more than ten years, was bowled over by this year's entries.**



*"The standard this year was miles ahead of anything I've seen in all the time I've been visiting Innisfree's gardens. Many people have faced huge challenges in their lives and, despite this, they have channelled their energies into creating something that is truly marvellous."*

Kina was joined this year by Andrew Olney, better known to many of you as the photographer at most of our big events. Also a keen gardener and allotmenteer, Andrew was really impressed by what he saw. He is keen to remain involved and wants to see us all giving more thought to sustainability. "Gardeners need to think ahead all the time and take more account of our

changing weather conditions. That means drought resistant planting, more shrubs, less use of annuals and ..... everyone should have a water butt."

The results this year were as follows:

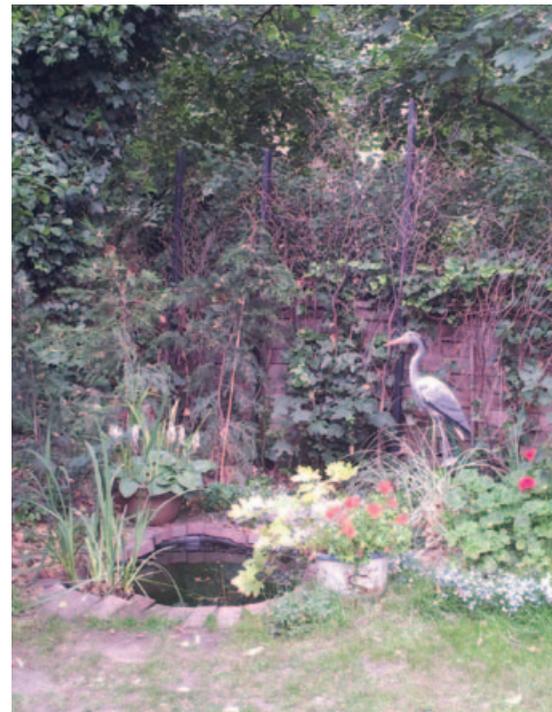
Anson Rd	Best shared garden
Belsize Sq	Garden transformation
Clochar Ct	Best community garden
Erconwald Rd	Best garden
Kilburn Lane 1	Highly commended
Kilburn Lane 2	Highly commended
Maldon Rd	Commended
Mowbray Rd	Best mature garden

Individual award for the most enthusiastic new gardener to Susan Brennan.

And we have inaugurated the Avebury Cup, to mark Kina's ten years of judging for Innisfree. It was awarded this year to Gerry & Mary Shanahan for their wonderful garden at Erconwald Road.



From L-R, Des Brittain, Mary & Gerry Shanahan, Michael Groarke, Margaret Carroll, Seamus Harvey and Des Browne, gardening competition winners



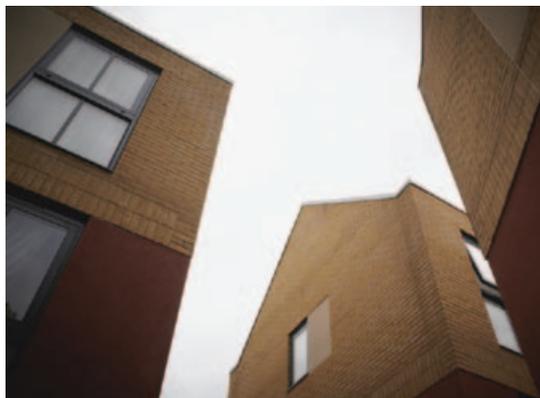
# Maintenance

## Stock condition survey

Last July, following a successful tender submission, Rand Associates were appointed to carry out our 4th stock condition survey. We surveyed all of our properties externally and 30% internally.

The preliminary findings from this survey were very positive:

- 98.5% of our homes meet Decent Homes standards
- We have no homes with statutory health and safety hazards
- Our average energy rating (also known as SAP rating) is 66.8% (the national average is 63%)
- Generally properties are in a reasonable state of repair and have benefitted from regular planned maintenance both internally and externally.



Since the survey was completed a working party of staff and board members have analysed the results and developed short, medium and long term maintenance programmes and strategies to manage investment in our properties over the next 30 years.

A big thank you to all residents who participated in this survey – the information gained will be of considerable benefit to all residents.

## Decent Homes Standards

Our stock condition survey helped us to identify which properties would not meet the Decent Homes Standards by December 2010, the deadline set by the government.

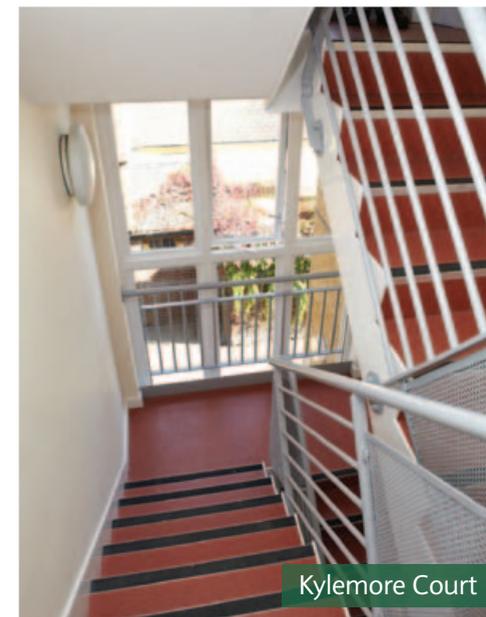
We had 8 properties which were considered “non-decent” under Criterion B because one of more of the key building elements were old and needed replacing. This included renewing roofs, windows, kitchens and electrical installations. Works have been completed successfully to all of these homes and we are pleased all our homes now meet the required standards.

But this does not stop at December 2010. There is an on-going need to monitor the performance of homes with respect to the Decent Homes Standard beyond this deadline and to invest in these properties to ensure they continue to remain decent and comfortable places for people to live in.

## Planned works

In 2010/11 over 52% of our maintenance budget was spent on planned and cyclical maintenance works. Over 200 properties benefitted from some form of planned works or improvement. This included investing money in

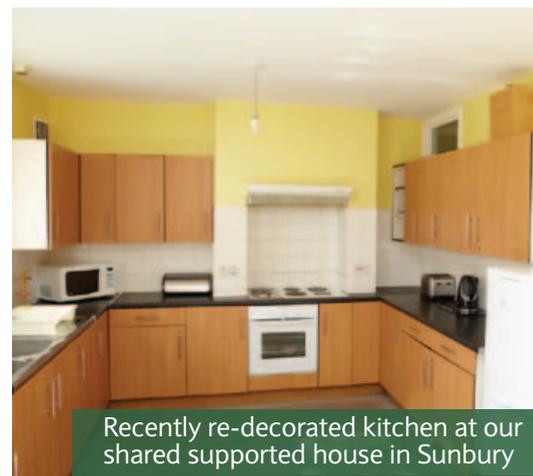
- Cyclical decorating
- Communal lighting upgrades
- Kitchen and bathroom replacements
- Window replacements
- Roof renewals
- Central heating upgrades
- Door entry system upgrades
- Communal floor covering renewal
- Fire alarm system upgrades



Kylemore Court

## Philip Lane

We are on site in Philip Lane in Tottenham developing our first housing scheme as a member of the Sanctuary Development Consortium. The site was previously a hotel which had partially burned down. It is being redeveloped to provide eight rent to buy and four social rented homes. Part of the original building is being refurbished and a new extension is being added to the rear. Completion is due at the end of March 2012.



Recently re-decorated kitchen at our shared supported house in Sunbury



New development in Tottenham

# Summary of Audited Accounts

Income & Expenditure	2011 £'000s	2010 £'000s
Turnover	3,330	3,325
less repairs and administration costs	2,213	2,130
leaving an operating surplus of	1,117	1,195
less interest paid on loans	552	581
plus interest received	2	3
leaving a surplus of	567	617
Available surplus	567	617
Balance Sheet		
Cost of investments in homes	56,349	56,389
Investments in fixed assets	79	78
Funds we hold (cash plus money we are owed less bills to be paid)	862	375
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,290</b>	<b>56,842</b>
Social Housing Grant	38,438	38,438
Long-term loans for housing	13,324	13,442
Available reserves	5,528	4,962
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,290</b>	<b>56,842</b>

## Principal Bankers

Barclays Bank  
PO Box 2764  
London NW3 6JD

## Lenders

Dexia  
Orchardbrook  
THFC

## External Auditors

PKF  
Farringdon Place  
20 Farringdon Road  
London EC1M 3AP

## Internal Auditors (to 2011)

Beever & Struthers  
Alperton House  
Bridgewater Road  
Wembley HA0 1EH

# Financial Commentary

During 2010-11 we strengthened our financial viability through:

- increasing our available free reserves by £567k to £5.528m
- spending £844k on maintenance
- rent cash collection rate of 100.61%
- occupancy rate of 99.06%
- reducing loans by £118K
- 538 homes in management and 527 homes in ownership at year end

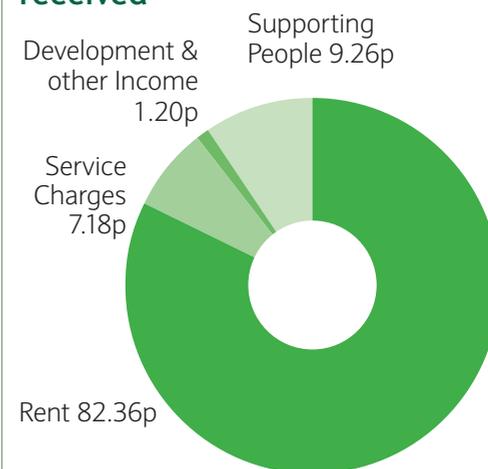
Innisfree's maintenance spend ensures that our tenants live in well-maintained homes. The high rent cash collection rate helps Innisfree residents to sustain their tenancies.

At 31 March 2011, Innisfree had used £5.2m of its cash reserves to fund the purchase of homes. Innisfree has sufficient cash resources to take its last scheme in management into ownership during 2011/12. This will help keep interest costs under control.

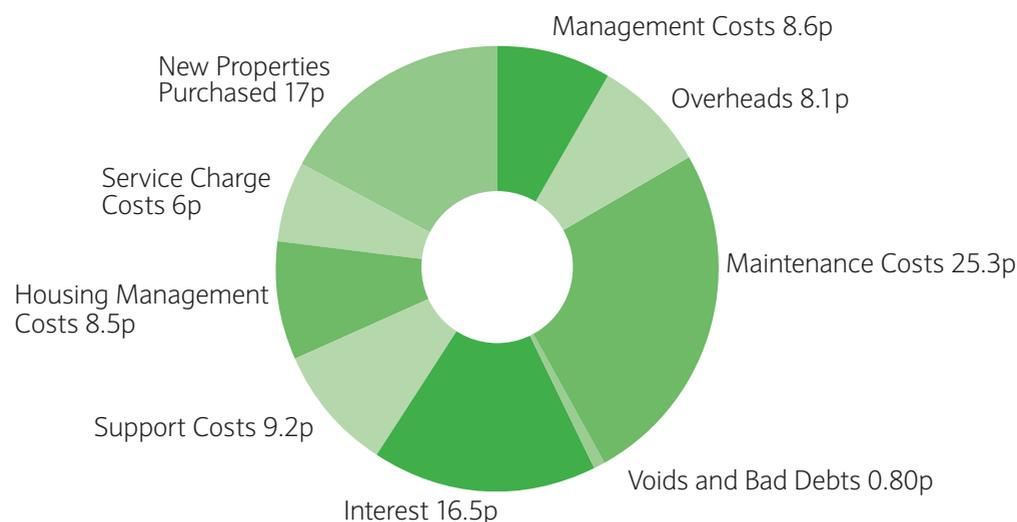
## Salaries

The CE's salary was £73,570. She received no other benefits apart from membership of the Pensions Trust. The salaries of the four members of the senior management team, excluding the Chief Executive, totalled £ 205,694.

## How £1 of Innisfree income is received



## How £1 of rent income is spent at Innisfree



# Performance information

This year we have put a good deal of our performance information in our Annual Report to Tenants. Here we give only a snap-shot of some key facts and figures.

## Average rents

Permanent housing average rents (in £s)

Size	31/3/11	31/3/10
Studio	80.20	80.41
1 Bed	90.39	90.37
2 Beds	99.91	99.50
3 Beds	116.22	116.07
4 Beds	121.56	120.79
Weighted average	101.27	101.05

The average rent increase for 2010-11 was 0.22 %. This was in line with rent restructuring guidelines

## Lettings

During the year there were no new lettings. We re-let 19 general needs homes, 1 sheltered flat and 21 rooms in supported houses.

## Rent arrears

Rent arrears at the end-of-year were:

General needs 6.3%

Supported housing 7.03%

Sheltered housing 2.8%

## Overall cash collection

100.61%

## Complaints

During the year we received 17 complaints. All of these were resolved satisfactorily.

## Equality & Diversity Information

100% of lettings were to nominations or existing tenants from a Black and Minority Ethnic background.

## Repairs & maintenance

In 2010-11, we spent £844,284 maintaining our homes. Most of this expenditure comes from tenants' rent and we must make sure it is spent as efficiently as possible. The two main areas where we spend money are "planned" and "responsive" maintenance. 97% of all repairs were completed within the target timescale.

## Properties owned and managed

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2011
Owned	3	110	302	314	527
Managed	12	133	21	79	11
Total	15	243	323	393	538



Paul Daisley Court

# Staff Team

Michael Adams

Deirdre Fehilly

Cecilia Greene

Brenda Hirst

Saoirse Keating

Cassandra Kelly

David Lowe

Kathy Macdonald

Deirdre McGale

Gerry Molloy

Mairead Mooney

Jean O'Rourke

Melanie O'Rourke

Liam O'Shaughnessy

Sarah Ruddock

Samantha Scantlebury

Grace Scully

Jim Sheeran

Devon Stewart

Gurpreet Tokhi

Matthew Wicks

Clare Winstanley

A special mention to **Soraya Sediq** who has been working with us on a variety of projects throughout the year.



Innisfree staff team with friends and family at the annual softball competition at Regents Park.

## Consultants & contractors

We would like to thank the following companies and individuals who have worked for Innisfree and whose services we value:

1st Choice Clearance, A.C.S, Busy Bees, Carfrey Ltd, Sean Doherty, Doorphone Services, M T Maloney & Sons, S M Maloney & Sons, M J Ronan Ltd, Paul Ronan & Associates, Trekdean Ltd,

John Barry, George Gawlinks, Shirley Otto, Debby Ounsted and Maggie Piazza

# Board of management & committee members

## Sean Baine

Consultant  
Appointed 2010

## Annette Beckett

Project Manager  
2006 - 2011

## David Blackburn

HR Director  
Appointed 2009

## Bernadette Gallagher

Tenant  
Appointed 2009

## Tim Holden

Property Consultant  
Appointed 2011

## Terry Jones

Housing Policy Officer  
2007 - 2011

## Peter Kerr

Treasurer  
Accountant  
Appointed 2010

## Ruairí McCourt

Housing Professional  
Appointed 2009

## Anne McLoughlin

Chair Elect  
Housing professional  
Appointed 2010

## Sinéad McQuillan

Chair 2009 - 2011  
Company Secretary  
2002 - 2011

## Sue O'Connor

Tenant  
Appointed 2011

## Antoine Pesenti

Risk analyst  
Appointed 2010

## Barbara Regnier

Consultant  
2009-2011

## George Sheerin

Vice Chair  
Retired housing professional  
Re-joined 2008

## Carole Smith

Housing consultant  
Appointed 2010

## Richard Tomlins

Academic  
Appointed 2011

A number of other people served on the committees of the board during 2010-11:

**Des Browne, Margaret Carroll, David Devoy, Isabel Hudson, Yemi Kunuyi, Jennifer Rahman, Margaret Spiers, Peter Sullivan, Sebastian Taylor, Cathy Walsh, John Welch, Marek Wiluszynski, Maurice Wren, Ken Youngman.**

**They are warmly thanked for their services.**

## Friends of Innisfree

Di Arthur, Kina Lady Avebury, Annette Beckett, Angela Brady, Liam Brady, Rod Cahill, Margaret Canter, Gerard Carton, Gene Clayton, Jim Cleary, Dympna Cunnane, Mary Cunnane, Maureen Curran, Lee Daly, Jack Dempsey, Helen Dent, Rachel Dickinson, Linda Diggin, Mike Donnelly, Professor James Driscoll, Fiona Fagan, DB Feehely, Bernard Gallagher, Frank Gill, Gerry Harrison, John Harte, Terry Jones, Donal Kelleher, Brian McCarthy, Richard McCarthy, John McDonnell MP, Pauline McLynn, Colm Meagher, David Meghen, Foster Murphy, Adrian Norridge, Ardal O'Hanlon, Sean O'Haire, Larry O'Leary, Jan Phillips, Vince Power, Barbara Regnier, Damian Roche, Margaret Rochford, Michael Ryan, Patricia Smith, Richard Sweeney, Mary Yorke-Cleary

If you are interested in becoming a Friend, see our website for more information  
[www.innisfree.org.uk](http://www.innisfree.org.uk)

## Partner local authorities

Brent, Camden, Ealing, Elstree, Enfield, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham

## Housing Association Partners

Family Mosaic  
MHT  
Network  
Newlon  
Octavia Housing & Care  
One Housing Group  
Origin Housing Group  
Shepherds Bush Housing Group  
Willow Housing

We also work closely with two groups of small housing associations:

## Solomon Project

(of which we are a member)

ARHAC  
Hornsey Housing Trust  
Shian HA  
Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation  
Waltham Forest HA  
Women's Pioneer HA

## SolFed

Ekaya HA  
Housing for Women  
Lambeth & Southwark HA  
New World HA  
Southwark & London Diocesan HA



Clare Winstanley speaking at last year's staff conference.

## Affiliations & memberships

Federation of Irish Societies  
Housemark  
National Housing Federation  
NCVO

## Solicitors

Devonshires  
HPLP  
Morgan Cole LLP  
Trowers & Hamblins

## Registered Office

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London NW6 2HL

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**Innisfree Annual Review 2011**

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