Sustainability Strategy
2026-2029

Contents

Foreword 3
Building a resilient future together

About Apex 4
Scope and size of the organisation

Our sustainability achievements 5
How we did during 2023-2026

Vision, mission and values 6

Sustainability vision & strategic purpose ... 7

Strategic focus 8

Strategic drivers 9
The difference we will make

Roadmap to 2029 11

Our sustainability pathway 12

Pillar 1: Sustainable Homes 13

Pillar 2: Sustainable Association 14

Pillar 3: Sustainable Communities 16

Delivering the strategy 17
Monitoring and review

Foreword

by Liam Hannaway Chairperson, and Sheena McCallion Chief Executive

Housing associations play a vital role in providing safe, affordable homes while responding to broader challenges, such as social inequalities and environmental change.

At Apex, we understand that sustainability is not a standalone initiative but the fundamental driver of our social purpose: delivering for our communities today while protecting them for the future.

We recognise the environmental responsibilities we face as an organisation and the significant challenges regarding the delivery of high-quality, energy efficient homes. While our first Sustainability Strategy established a solid foundation, from 2026 onwards, we have set more rigorous and strategic targets. This comprehensive plan is designed to address the needs of our tenants and residents while cultivating a high-performing, values led culture for our people.

To ensure this strategy is a living commitment, we have anchored our ambitions in our new CORE corporate values:

Care: Protecting our tenants from fuel poverty and ensuring healthy, future-proof homes

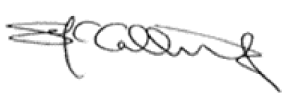
Ownership: Embracing departmental responsibility to meet our strategic milestones

Respect: Fostering inclusive communities and treating every tenant and resident with dignity

Excellence: Leading the sector in decarbonisation and community resilience.

By structuring our priorities around our three core pillars: Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Association, and Sustainable Communities, this strategy provides a strong foundation for progress, reinforcing the importance of resilience, efficiency, and long-term ambitions over the next three years. Through collective effort, we will provide safe, sustainable homes, support resilient communities, and ensure Apex delivers long-term value now and into the future.

Liam Hannaway
Chairperson



Sheena McCallion
Chief Executive

About Apex

We provide and maintain more than 7,000 high-quality homes and provide support to more than 18,000 tenants and residents across Northern Ireland.

As a not-for-profit housing association, we work to social enterprise principles and employ more than 650 staff. Over the next three years, the number of Apex homes is expected to grow to around 8,500.

We provide:

- *General needs housing for families and single people*
- *Purpose-built accommodation for older people and families with complex needs*
- *Supported housing for people with mental ill health, learning disabilities, or alcohol/drug addictions; young people in need of support; and older people*
- *Housing support for vulnerable groups under the Supporting People programme*
- *Support services for tenants and the wider community through our community investment programme*
- *Community buildings managed by local community groups*

We work with others

Apex works with Newington Housing Association, using our joint resources for mutual benefit. We also provide services on behalf of Apex Housing Association (Ireland).

High-quality homes

more than **7,000**
high-quality homes provided and maintained by Apex

Tenants and residents

over **18,000**
tenants and residents live in Apex accommodation

Apex staff

more than **650**
staff are employed by Apex

Our sustainability achievements during 2023-2026

DfC regulatory rating

1

the highest regulatory rating '1- meets the standards'

Homes under management

7,200+

homes under management

Satisfaction with service

89%

of tenants satisfied with overall service

Satisfaction with home

89%

of tenants satisfied with heating and energy efficiency

Nearly zero-energy buildings

6 NZEB homes

delivered as part of pilot project in Newtownabbey

Governance/viability

A-

retained Standard & Poors investment grade credit rating

'Decent homes'

100%

'decent homes'

Energy rating

87%

of homes are EPC-C or above

New homes

April 2024

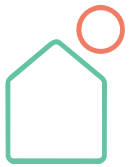
New development contracts delivering EPC-A rated homes

Carbon Literacy

11

members of Apex Steering Group upskilled in Carbon Literacy

Transparency



May 2025

adopted the Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS) for Social Housing

Procurement

10%

social value weighting introduced into high-value tenders

Upgrades & maintenance

£23m+

invested in planned upgrades and cyclical maintenance

Climate Essentials

Reporting platform launched to track greenhouse gas emissions

Waste innovation

Transitioned to a new waste management partner ensuring rigorous waste segregation and disposal

Vision, mission and values

Our vision, mission and values continue to underpin everything we do as an organisation, both collectively and individually.

Vision

For every person to enjoy great quality homes and support in vibrant and caring communities.

CORE Values

Care
We want to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Ownership
We are all responsible for ensuring we deliver our mission.

Excellence
We lead the way, aim to get it right and continuously improve.

Respect
It's how we treat everyone! We are better together.

Mission

To lead the way in building sustainable communities through the delivery of quality, affordable homes including tailored support and care services.

Sustainability vision & strategic purpose

Corporate values alignment

The sustainability strategy is an integral part of the wider 2026-2029 Corporate Strategy. It is anchored by the new CORE values, which underpin everything we do collectively and individually. These values serve as the ethical lens for our operations, ensuring that sustainability is not a standalone initiative, but a shared responsibility that complements our daily mission.

Vision impact statement

To lead the social housing sector as a Sustainable Association, fostering Sustainable Communities and providing Sustainable Homes. Through inclusive leadership and shared ownership, we ensure our social purpose and environmental responsibilities are inseparable, driven by our corporate values to make a positive difference for our people and our planet.

Care:
We demonstrate care by protecting tenants from fuel poverty and delivering high-quality, energy-efficient homes that make a positive difference in people's lives.

Ownership:
We take ownership by ensuring every member of the team is responsible for delivering our mission and achieving our strategic targets together.

Respect:
We treat our tenants and residents with dignity and foster inclusive, vibrant, and caring communities where people can thrive.

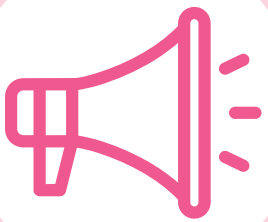
Excellence:
We strive for excellence by leading the way in building sustainable communities through continuous improvement and high-performing services.

Strategic focus

To translate our vision into reality, we utilise a comprehensive Environmental, Social, Governance & Economic (ESGE) framework to align our social purpose with our sustainability pillars. This ensures that our wide ranging responsibilities, from financial resilience to environmental impact, are embedded into the heart of the organisation.

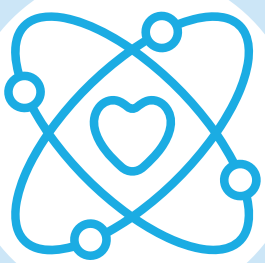
A strategy built on insight

Our priorities are not set in isolation; they are shaped by a deep understanding of our stakeholders and our mission:



The tenant voice:

We listen to our tenants and residents to ensure our actions reflect real world needs and give tenants a meaningful role in sustainable decision making.



Our CORE values:

We view every challenge through the principles of Care, Ownership, Respect, and Excellence, ensuring sustainability is a shared responsibility across Apex.

Integrated impact:

Our plan is fully aligned with our Tenant & Resident Engagement Strategy and Community Investment Strategy, ensuring environmental action also drives social and economic growth.

Strategic drivers

Focusing on what matters: our material issues

By filtering these insights through our ESGE framework, we have identified ten core material issues. These represent the areas where Apex can make the most significant impact through to 2029. By focusing on these priorities, we ensure our resources are directed toward where they are needed most: creating warm homes, fostering strong communities, and building a transparent, ethical association.

Sustainable Homes	Sustainable Association	Sustainable Communities
Decarbonisation of our buildings	Financial management and retrofit funding	Collaborative community resilience
Resilient living environments	Circular operations & waste reduction	Empowered tenant voice
Healthy, energy efficient & affordable homes	Workforce skills and culture	Nature-based solutions & climate readiness

Ethical governance & integrity

Strategic drivers: the difference we will make

To turn our material issues into a living commitment, we have focused on the impact we want to achieve by defining strategic drivers. These drivers define exactly how we will deliver our targets and the tangible difference we will make for our tenants, our people, and the planet.

These drivers are aligned with our sustainability pillars and underpinned by ethical governance and integrity, ensuring statutory compliance, transparent reporting, and fairness in every decision Apex makes.

Pillar 1: Sustainable Homes

- **Energy performance & decarbonisation:** Directly addresses the decarbonisation of our buildings and the need for high-performance homes to ensure energy affordability.
- **Environmental stewardship:** Captures the commitment to resilient living environments and healthy, futureproof homes through proactive land and asset management.

Pillar 2: Sustainable Association

- **Empowering our people:** Concentrates on workforce skills and culture, fostering an environment of growth and excellence.
- **Resource efficiency:** Integrates circular operations, waste reduction, and responsible procurement into the daily operational heart of the organisation.

Pillar 3: Sustainable Communities

- **Financial safeguarding:** Focuses on collaborative community resilience by providing the financial management and support necessary to protect tenants.
- **Tenant health & wellbeing:** Prioritises health, wellbeing, and inclusion, ensuring an empowered tenant voice is central to community success.

Roadmap to 2029

Global Impact: Our UN SDG Alignment

While our strategy is rooted in the local needs of our tenants and residents, we recognise that our objective contributes to a much larger global agenda. We have adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a vital anchor, linking our sustainability commitments to the wider societal and environmental needs. Through a detailed assessment, we have identified 8 core SDGs and 27 associated targets to guide our strategic direction:

Apex UN SDG alignment

SDGs 1 & 7:
Addressing energy equity through fuel poverty support and large-scale home energy upgrades

SDG 10:
Promoting social inclusion and reducing inequalities within our communities

SDGs 11 & 13:
Enhancing climate adaptation through flood-resilient infrastructure and cutting operational carbon

SDG 12:
Implementing a circular 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' mandate across all operations and procurement

SDG 16:
Upholding ethical governance and transparency to ensure fairness and an empowered tenant voice in every decision

SDG 17:
Partnering with others to share knowledge and resources, driving collective social and environmental impact

Our sustainability pathway

Pillar 1: Sustainable Homes

Providing high-quality, future-proof homes that prioritise energy efficiency and environmental health.

Material issue	Outcome	2029 Target
Decarbonisation of our buildings	Energy efficiency	Achieve a minimum of EPC Band C across 92% of all existing housing stock
	Retrofit investment	Allocate and secure a designated fund/external investment for retrofit programmes
	Smart energy data	Launch a smart metering pilot scheme to gather live energy data from a representative sample of general needs homes
	Total carbon accountability	Publish a full annual account of our carbon footprint, covering our direct energy use and our most significant operational indirect impacts where we have the greatest opportunity for change
	Sustainable transport & infrastructure	All maintenance fleet used within Apex are electric/hybrid models
		Establish a rollout plan for EV charging points for 10% of supported living
Resilient living environments	Asset quality & longevity	100% integration of planned maintenance schedules with building fabric preservation to ensure long-term building comfort
		Incorporate energy efficiency and sustainable design standards into 100% new builds
Healthy, energy efficient & affordable homes	Health-supporting housing	Achieve 100% compliance with the Decent Homes Standard across all properties
		Maintain 85% tenant satisfaction in the energy efficiency and heating of their homes

Pillar 2: Sustainable Association

Leading with integrity and ensuring a values-led culture and financial stability.

Material issue	Outcome	2029 Target
Financial management & retrofit funding	Sustainable financial viability	Develop long-term investment and retrofit financial modelling
Circular operations & waste reduction	Waste management & operations	Maintain, through annual audit, an internationally recognised environmental certification
		Achieve zero-waste-to-landfill for maintenance operations and office waste
		Implement circular material reuse for all planned asset maintenance
		Transition to a paperless office through 100% staff IT training, full digitisation of records, and a 15% reduction in printing
		Move all new tenant communications and non-legal documents to the digital tenant portal
	Responsible leadership & transparency	100% of new or renewed assets contracts include specific circularity clauses
		Circularity audit completed for the top five assets contract types
		All above-threshold contracts delivered are reviewed against the Social Value Delivery Plan and must achieve at least one circular action

Pillar 2: Sustainable Association

Leading with integrity and ensuring a values-led culture and financial stability.

Material issue	Outcome	2029 Target
Workforce skills & culture	Values led ethical culture	100% completion of CORE values awareness training and evidence a consistent ethical culture through improved staff retention and survey results
	An empowered & inclusive workforce	Maintain a 70% employee engagement score across Apex
Ethical governance & integrity	Responsible leadership & transparency	Demonstrate the successful achievement of strategic goals through documented, collaborative action across all service areas
		Establish a mature cycle of internal quarterly reporting, verified against recognised external benchmarks
		Maintain a diverse and inclusive Board that reflects our communities through specific targets for gender, ethnicity, and lived experience

Pillar 3: Sustainable Communities

Empowering tenants and building supportive networks to ensure residents can thrive.

Material issue	Outcome	2029 Target
Collaborative community resilience	Stronger, connected communities	Ensure 100% of eligible households are offered welfare and energy advice
		Embed community-led social value into contracts to build inclusive support systems and community resilience
		Achieve a minimum of 300 good relations initiatives
		Retain a minimum 85% tenant satisfaction with community support and safety
Empowered tenant voice	Active partnership	Evidence clear service improvements and policy shifts triggered by direct, tenant led reviews
		Achieve measurable, continuous growth in tenant voice satisfaction scores and increased participation across focus groups and regional networks
Nature-based solutions & climate readiness	Enhanced estates	Deliver green space enhancement projects on three key sites
		Empower Apex's Gardening Team to design and lead sustainable planting programmes focused on native species and pollinators
		Embed biodiversity education and nature-based workshops within the tenant engagement framework
		Maintain long-term support for existing community allotments through active local partnerships
		Integrate sustainable drainage into 100% of new developments

Delivering the strategy

This strategy is part of a wider suite of strategies for 2026-2029 including:

- **'Where people thrive' Corporate Strategy**
- **Community Investment Strategy**
- **Tenant & Resident Engagement Strategy**

Utilising the ESGE framework, the material issues identified have been translated into action through measurable 2029 targets and will be supported by annual action plans. This process ensures our ambitions are grounded in data and aligned with sector-leading standards for transparency.

Delivering the strategy

Reporting with integrity (SRS alignment): As an official signatory of the Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS) for Social Housing, we utilise this industry leading framework to benchmark our progress. This commitment ensures a new level of transparency and accountability in our annual reporting, providing stakeholders with verified evidence of our performance.

By integrating these targets into daily business, we foster collective ownership and a continuous review cycle that builds trust through visible accountability. This governance structure is reinforced by our Annual Business Plan and action plans which provide the roadmap for delivery and are reviewed quarterly by the Apex Board.

Operational delivery against this strategy will be coordinated through our Sustainability Delivery Group which meets quarterly to review and report on progress. This Group involves senior representatives from all areas of our operations, in recognition that embedding sustainability in Apex is everyone's responsibility.

Establishing the baseline (2027): We are focused on rigorous data collection to ensure all future targets meet legal requirements and remain operationally achievable across all departments.

Driving performance (2029): We will transition from baseline data collection to active, performance-based targets that drive measurable environmental and social impact.

All-Ireland
Pollinator Plan
www.pollinators.ie
Implementation coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre
Pollinator Friendly Zone
apex

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