



Fact Sheet

Homes for Wells (HfW) works to tackle the chronic shortage of affordable housing in Wells next the Sea and the surrounding area. The association was created in 2006 to find affordable houses for local people. According to a Housing Needs survey in 2011, 21 households had experienced a family member having to move away in the previous five years due to high house prices. With the average cost of a two bed house at £285,000 many people simply cannot afford to live in the town. The Homes for Wells Board is comprised solely of volunteers who bring their time and expertise to the organisation.

October 2012: Norfolk County Council (NCC) accepted a £500,000 bid from HfW to purchase and convert the Field Studies Centre in Polka Road, Wells-next-the-Sea, into housing for keyworkers and other local people with a proven connection to the town. HfW has since succeeded in raising considerable funds but are still seeking to raise more.

October 2013: NCC granted planning consent to Homes for Wells for the development of ten new homes at The Wells Field Study Centre. HfW board members were delighted with the announcement. Erstwhile Chairman Anne Phillips said: *"We are so pleased that we now have the go-ahead to put our plans into action to create ten lovely new homes."*

Each of the new homes will have: gas central heating, parking spaces and access to a communal area. All the work will be carried out within current boundaries as required by conservation officers, as the Field Study Centre is a Grade II listed building. The Norwich-based architects are A Squared Architects Ltd.

December 2013: North Norfolk District Council's Big Society Enabling Fund granted HfW £150,000 following a unanimous vote at the Council's cabinet meeting.

Following that decision, North Norfolk District Councillor, Tom Fitzpatrick said: *"Homes for Wells is a fabulous organisation which is determined to solve local problems."*

Anne Phillips said at the time: *"We are enormously grateful for this grant. It is wonderful to have recognition from the Council for the work we are doing to support people in need of affordable housing in Wells."*

January 2014: HfW was officially named as non-profit providers of social housing by The Homes and Communities Agency - a recognition which resulted in a grant of £410,000.

This was seen by the HfW organisers as a wonderful recognition of Homes for Wells as an organisation that is able to achieve the necessary and exacting standards required in all areas of housing and governance.

Trustee Carol Jennings said: *“For a small organisation run largely by volunteers, this is a great achievement and one which puts us on a par with the large housing associations. As registered providers we will be receiving an HCA grant of £410,000 towards the cost of creating 10 affordable homes at the Field Study Centre (FSC) which is being developed specifically for the benefit of local people and keyworkers.”*

March 2014: The Homes for Wells office moved to the newly converted Sackhouse, Wells next the Sea.

March 2014: Building work to convert the Field Studies Centre started with a launch event at 10am.

The tender for the work was awarded to Pentaco Construction Ltd. A spokesman said: *“Pentaco Construction Ltd is pleased to have been awarded this prestigious contract and is delighted to be associated with this project, which will benefit the local community.”*

The Field Studies Centre was Wells' first school, built in 1838 on land given by Holkham Estate. It closed in 1965. The school was run by Mary Gamble, daughter of the famous sea captain John Fryer, who was remembered for being the Sail Master in 1792 during the Mutiny on the Bounty. To mark the building's illustrious beginnings, it was decided to name the development **'The Old School'**.

May 2014: HfW recruited Steve Tuck as Housing Agent to improve liaison with tenants and deal with queries and problems even more efficiently.

June 2014: HfW was invited to attend an event at the Houses of Parliament to celebrate the successes of the Government's Community Land Trust initiative. HfW was highlighted as a good example of how to organise and run a voluntary CLT.

October 2014: HfW expects to complete the Old School development in early 2015 and a preview of dwellings has been arranged for January 2015.

October 2014: The Old School development was chosen as an exemplar by the Government's Rural Housing Advisory Group. RHAG representatives filmed at the site in order to feature HfW in a training video which will share best practice in the delivery of affordable housing in rural areas across the country. RHAG were very impressed with the development, making special mention of the space available and

the location. The Old School is particularly remarkable as a re-development rather than a new build. HfW is delighted to have been selected for this accolade.

November 2014: A three bedroomed house acquired by the owners of the Globe Inn was gifted to HfW's portfolio for the next ten years. Following a thorough refurbishment, another family will benefit from the work of HfW and the generosity of our supporters.

January/February 2015: Open days were held at the Old School to give donors and the public an opportunity to view the ten stylish and state of the art new homes created from the building. Large numbers of supporters and many former pupils enjoyed meeting up and taking a peek.

February 2015: Following completion of the project, happy tenants moved into their new homes at the Old School. All ten new homes are now let to a mix of local people: some single, some with a partner, some living alone, some with children. The eleventh property on the site – Caretaker's Cottage – is in the process of being renovated ready for a new family

March 2015: A family of 5 have now moved into a newly refurbished 3 bedroom house on Westfield Avenue, The Property has been leased to Homes for Wells for 10 years from Stephen and Antonia Bourne.

April 2015 The Caretakers Cottage on the site of The Old School renovations were completed and a family have moved in. Homes for Wells launched a new campaign to raise vital funds and awareness, Buy a virtual brick is an opportunity for supporters to buy virtual bricks with a chance of winning a weekend stay at The Victoria, Holkham. The prize very kindly donated by Lord Leicester will be drawn in November.

May 2015 – Landscaping at the Old School continues with new turf, paving and shingle being laid. New benches kindly donated by the Carnival committee will be put in place for the enjoyment of the tenants. Nigel Leftley presented a cheque for £1000 to support our work. Leftleys is a member of the Nisa group of independent retailers who run a scheme where 1p from each own-brand product purchased in-store is donated to a local organisation

June 2015 – The Old School development was nominated for 2 Awards, CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Askham Award and The Graham Allen Award. The Askham award looks for projects which show, for example, a creative and imaginative approach to revival and regeneration and sensitive development of brownfield sites and/or featuring under-utilised buildings. The Graham Allen Award for Conservation and Design was inaugurated 1982 as a memorial to the late Councillor G.S.Allen, first chairman of North Norfolk District Council. Since then the

award, in the form of a bronze plaque, has been presented annually by the Council to the scheme considered to make the most successful contribution to the conservation of the built environment within the district.

July 2015 –Campden Cottage located on Freeman Street, another property leased to Homes for wells has had some remedial works were carried out on the property and new tenants will be moving in the near future.

The Future: HfW hopes to continue looking towards new projects to enable them to provide affordable homes in Wells and the surrounding areas: Stiffkey, Warham, Wighton and Holkham. For this, the organisation is always looking for land or suitable buildings to convert and welcomes the gift of funds to finance this work.

For more information, please contact Homes for Wells

01328 711703

office@homesforwells.co.uk

www.homesforwells.com