



Massive £30 million bonanza for Conwy

A new housing association is creating a £30 million economic bonanza in Conwy.

Cartrefi Conwy is embarking on a massive programme to improve its 3,800 properties.

According to Chief Executive Andrew Bowden, it's great news for the local economy which has been severely hit by the effects of the recession.

Mr Bowden revealed that, under the terms of the scheme, contractors will be expected to employ local people and set up local supply chains.

Training and apprenticeships will also be available to young people from the area.

Cartrefi Conwy came into being last year when it took over all Conwy County Borough Council's houses and flats in a stock transfer voted for by council tenants.

The organisation has now been set a target of bringing all the properties up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

Mr Bowden said: "The Welsh Assembly Government has rightly set the bar very high in relation to the quality of accommodation tenants have a right to expect.

"It is the largest ever capital programme ever to be undertaken in the history of Conwy in relation to social housing."

After consulting tenants, Cartrefi Conwy decided against awarding one massive contract. Instead, they opted for three separate improvement packages.

Cartrefi Conwy's Operations Director Gwynne Jones explained: "Tenants told us they didn't want us to adopt a whole property approach where all the work was done in one go as that would mean some having to wait for four years before their home was improved.

"Their preferred option was to break the work down into three separate packages which means that everybody will benefit sooner rather than later."

In one package, homes will be fitted with double glazing and brand new doors.

There is also a heating programme which includes full central heating and the installation of energy-efficient condensing boilers.

The third programme will involve fitting new kitchens and bathrooms along with other improvements like re-wiring.

Some properties will also need re-rendering, re-roofing, new pavements, fencing and improved parking.

Mr Bowden added: "In housing terms, this is something of a revolution because this is the first time the Welsh Assembly Government has put down a benchmark so that properties are up to a 21st century standard.

"We are going to be spending in excess of the £30 million in addition to the day-to-day improvements that we carry out.

"Not only is it going to be very good for our tenants, this is also going to be excellent news for the whole of Conwy.

"One of the things that we have been set up to deliver is to use the investment programme as an economic stimulus to the county.

"We have therefore looked at a cutting edge procurement process using European legislation with social inclusion clauses inserted.

"These are a way of not only ensuring that you get the required quality and value for money but also opportunities for training and apprenticeships to benefit the local community.

"Importantly, we are looking at long-term stable relationships over the four years of the improvement programme.

"That's important because that gives you the job security needed to provide the training and apprenticeships for local people.

"Before being invited to tender, contractors had to demonstrate how they were going to add value to our objectives in benefiting the community of Conwy.

"Part of that involves setting up local supply chains so local service industries can benefit.

"For the successful contractors, we will issue pilot work because this is a type of contract that allows Cartrefi Conwy to do as much or as little work with them as appropriate.

“They will be given 20 or 30 properties to work on. As well as checking the quality of the work, we will also be checking where they are sourcing their labour.

“If they are not meeting their commitments in relation to the quality of work, price and employing local labour we have the right not to issue further work.

“If they deliver the values and objectives they promised as part of the procurement process they will be given extra opportunities.

“Given the current economic climate, this could not have come at a better time for Conwy.

“Our mission is to sustain existing jobs and develop new employment opportunities where we can.”