

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Statistics: Scottish Local Authority Housing Income and Expenditure 1997-98 to 2018-19 (actuals) 2019-20 (estimates)

Overview

This annual publication provides information on recent trends in:

- **The balance of HRA housing income and expenditure** - the amount councils earned from housing and other council stock, how they spent this income and whether there was a surplus or deficit at year end.
- **Council housing stock and rents** - the number of council homes and the average weekly rent.
- **HRA expenditure on management and maintenance of stock** - the amount councils spent on housing maintenance, repairs and management.
- **Lost income due to empty properties and rent arrears** - including the number of current and former tenants in arrears and the amount of arrears.
- **Housing debt** - the amount spent on loan charges, interest, capital repayment and loan fund expenses.
- **Additional Capital Expenditure** - on new build council housing and enhancements to existing council stock.
- **Tenant Participation** - in how the HRA funds are managed.

These data are used by councils to monitor, manage and plan housing finances. The HRA survey data are checked by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. 2018-19 data are actuals (unaudited) whilst 2019-20 are estimates. The bulletin is accompanied by tables, charts, the survey form and guidance. Some of the capital investment figures are taken from a different source, the Scottish Government Local Finance returns, CRFinal (actual, 2017-18) and CPOBE (provisional, 2018-19) Historical data are available at <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/HRAmainpage>.

Key Points

Balance of HRA housing income and expenditure

- Total HRA housing income was £1.21bn in 2018-19, of which around £656m was spent on the day-to-day management and maintenance of housing and around £277m on loan charges.
- This left a surplus of around £234m, of which was transferred to the council's housing capital expenditure account and then invested in new build council houses and improvement to existing houses.
- In 2018-19, rent rebate subsidy for council house tenants from Housing Benefit was £519m or 45% of total income from standard rents. This has decreased each year since 2014-15 when it was 57%.

Scottish council housing stock and rents

- There were 311,240 council houses in Scotland as at March 2019. This is an increase of around 1,100 houses since March 2018. The number is forecast to rise to 312,540 (up 1,300) by March 2020. Average rent per house was £72 per week in 2018-19, up by just over £2.00 on 2017-18. In 2018-19 average rents ranged from £60 per week in Moray to £97 in the City of Edinburgh.
- Council rents have increased by around 16% (£10) since 2008-09 in real terms i.e. over and above general inflation.

Management and maintenance of stock

- Average expenditure on management and maintenance was £2,080 per house in 2018-19. Within this supervision and management costs were £810 per house, whilst repairs & maintenance costs were £1,270 per house.

Empty properties and rent arrears

- Councils lost almost £20m due to all empty properties (void losses) on all properties in 2018-19 or 1.7% of the Standard Rental Income on these properties, about the same in the last two years but below the peak of 3.7% in 2002-03.
- As at March 2019, rent arrears on all council properties was £74m, up around £9.0m (14.0%) on last year, representing 6.2% of Standard Rental Income from these dwellings. These arrears have been rising steadily year on year since March 2013.
- During the same period, the number of council tenants in arrears has increased by around 2,940 tenants to 102,702 and the number of former tenants in arrears decrease by 2,180 to 30,400 as at March 2019.

Housing Debt

- In 2018-19 councils spent around £277m on loan charges to the HRA (which includes interest, capital repayment and loan fund expenses), the same as in the previous year.
- Total estimated council housing debt stood at £3.8bn in 2018-19 an increase of £225m (6%) on the previous year. Councils borrowed this money to improve and build council houses.

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Introduction

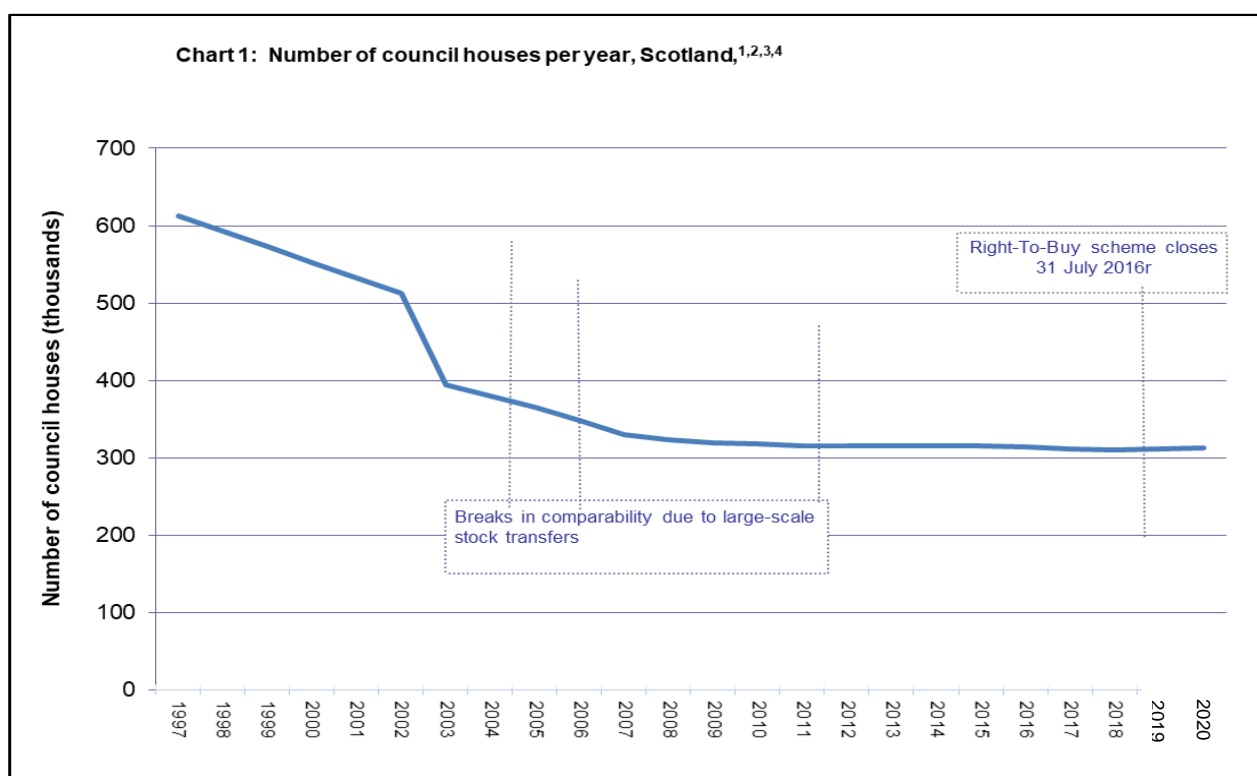
1. This bulletin presents statistics on Local Authority housing income and expenditure in Scotland from their Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs) statistical returns.
2. The HRA survey data in this bulletin covers the period 1997-98 to 2018-19 (near actuals)¹ up to budgeted estimates for 2019-20 which may be revised next year.
3. Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, the largest of these being Glasgow from 2003², which affect comparisons over time.
4. Most figures presented in this bulletin have been rounded for ease of presentation. The requirement to separately account for the income and expenditure associated with council-owned stock in Scotland is laid out in [sections 203\(1\) and 204\(4\) of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#).
5. This bulletin (tables and charts) include two data sources. Most data are based on HRA survey returns and some data are based on Local Government Capital Returns, CPOBE and CRFinal. The HRA records mainly income from, and expenditure on, council housing.
6. If there is a surplus in the HRA i.e. HRA income exceeds HRA expenditure, this may be transferred into the councils' housing capital expenditure accounts to be spent on a range of housing capital investment projects.
7. As authorities can borrow to fund capital expenditure, there is a clear separation between the revenue and capital accounts, and tight restrictions on how capital resources can be used. In general, this means that revenue resources can be used for both revenue and capital projects, but capital resources can only be used to fund capital projects. As such capital expenditure is separate to, and in addition to, any HRA expenditure on housing.

¹Near actual figures refer to un-audited figures. The auditing of these figures is overseen by Audit Scotland who finish the auditing process in September of each year. The figures in this bulletin are collected before that time.

²The transfers were: from 2003 - Glasgow, Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders – just over 100,000 houses transferred, from 2006 - Argyll & Bute, Eilean Siar – just over 7,000 houses transferred, from 2007 - Inverclyde – just under 8,000 houses transferred.

Local Authority housing stock (chart 1)

8. There were 311,240 council houses in Scotland as at March 2019. This is an increase of around 1,100 houses since March 2018. However, the number is forecast to rise to 312,540 (up 1,300) by March 2020. The number of council houses has fallen by around 50% since 1997. About 150,000 of the 315,000 reduction was due to sales to sitting tenants under Right-To-Buy (RtB), around 115,000 was due to the transfer by 6 councils of their total housing stock to Housing Associations and about 50,000 was due to demolition of unsuitable stock.
9. The decrease in council housing stock has slowed in recent years, particularly from 2008 and has increased in the latest year of reporting. This is mainly because of reductions in council house sales under RtB to sitting tenants and additions to council housing through new council house building³. Sixteen councils had increases in their council housing stock at March 2019. It should be noted that the provision to end RtB - with a two year notice period - was included in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and the scheme subsequently closed to all new applicants on 31 July 2016.



Source:

Scottish Government , Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account return provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

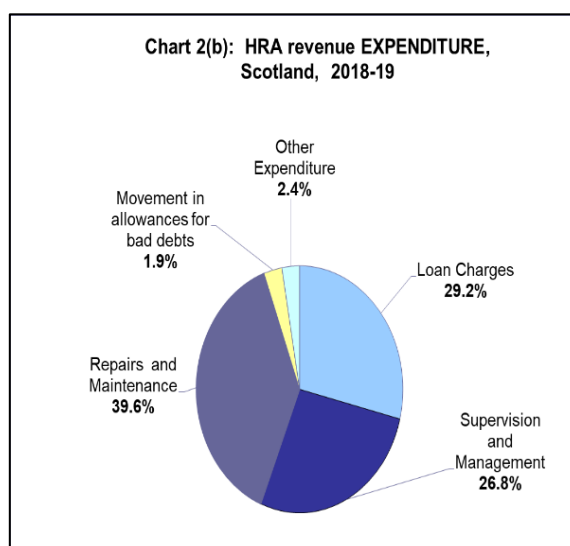
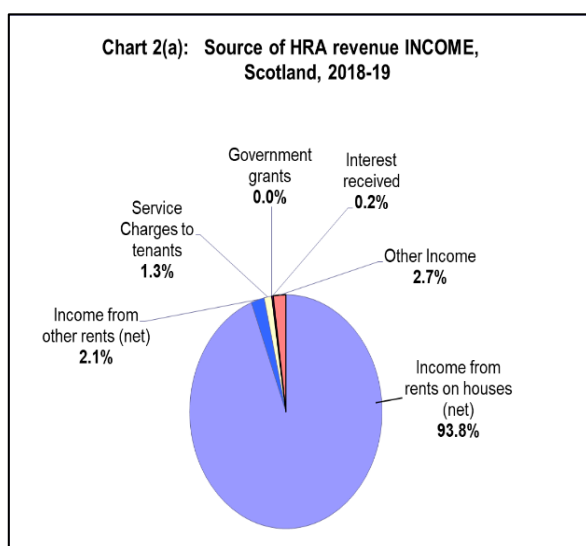
Notes:

1. From 2007 the HRA return asks for housing stock at 31 March each year. Prior to this figures were recorded at September each year.
2. Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, therefore HRA information is not available (n.a.) for them.
3. Dotted lines indicate breaks in comparability following transfer of housing stock as follows from Glasgow, Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders, Argyll & Bute Eilean Siar and Inverclyde.
4. The provision to end Right-to-Buy with a two year notice period - was included in the Housing (Scotland) Act which received Royal Assent on 1[†] August 2014, and the scheme subsequently closed to all new applicants on 31 July 2016.
r = revision on 31/10/2017. The date was reported as 1 August 2016. The correct data is 31 July 2016.

³The Scottish Government Housing Statistics [website](#) provides more detailed information on new building, demolitions and R

Housing revenue income and expenditure (charts 2a & 2b)

10. In 2018-19, rents from council houses account for around 94% of revenue income to the HRAs. Managing and maintaining the houses accounts for nearly 66% of the expenditure, while loan charges (i.e. the cost of servicing housing debt) account for just under 30%.
11. Other sources of income for Local Authorities include rents on hostels and other properties such as garages or lock-ups and also interest and other charges to tenants for special services. Money is also spent on things such as, upkeep of hostels (in some council areas) and other properties, writing-off rent arrears and paying council tax on void properties.
12. The cost of maintaining and managing housing stock is usually less than the income received i.e. council housing makes a revenue surplus at the Scottish level. This remaining income (the surplus) is used to fund capital investment in the council housing stock as part of the Capital Programme. The use of income in this way is known as Capital Funded from Current Revenue (CFCR).
13. In 2018-19 total HRA income (net) totalled just over £1.21bn across Scotland and total expenditure was just over £979m. Further details of expenditure and income are set out in Chart 2(a) and 2(b) below. At year end, when income is compared to expenditure there was a surplus of £234m, £257m was transferred to councils' housing capital expenditure accounts and then invested on housing capital projects including new build council houses and enhancements to existing council stock (in addition to any day-to-day maintenance).



Source:

Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account return provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

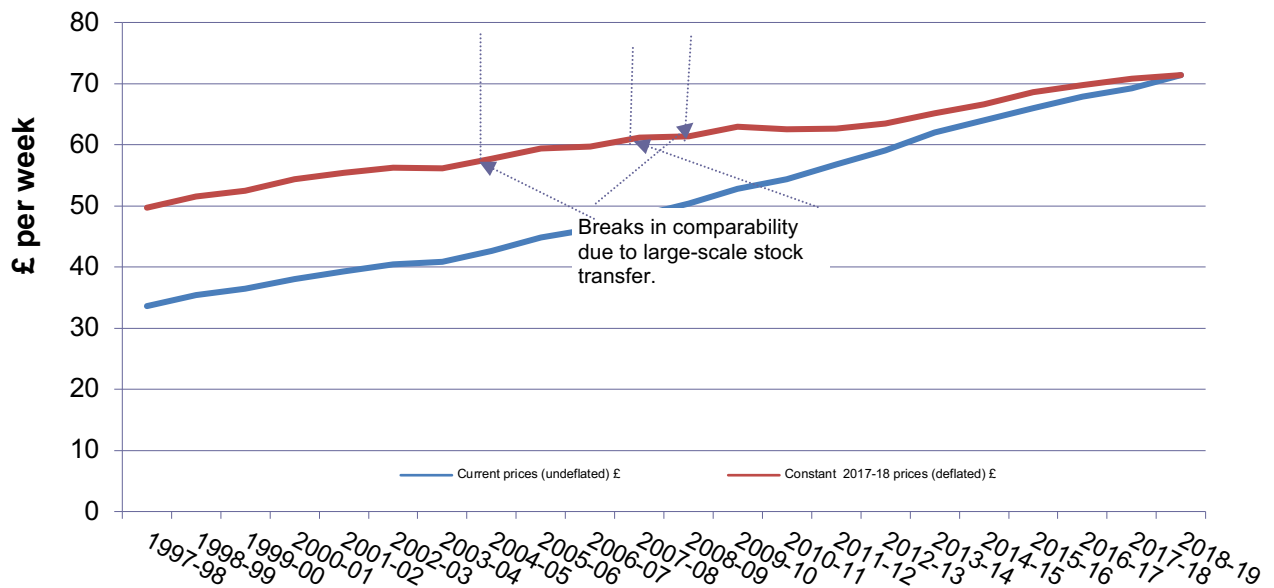
Rent levels and income from rents (charts 3 & 4)

14. In 2018-19 of the 26 Local Authorities with their own housing stock raised a total of just under £1.14bn in income (net of losses from empty properties) from standard rents on dwellings and a further £25m in rent from other HRA properties such as garages.
15. The average rent per dwelling (including both let and un-let properties) was £71 per week in 2018-19⁴ an increase of just over £2.00 since 2017-18. In the decade since 2008-09 average rents have increased by £10 or 16% in real terms i.e. over and above general inflation. In 2018-19 there is variation between councils in average rents, from £60 per week in Moray to £97 per week in the City of Edinburgh.
16. These figures may be lower than rents reported in other publications⁵ as, rather than taking a weighted average of set rents charged to tenants, they instead reflect the amount earned by the council in respect of each property owned (calculated by dividing the Council's Standard Rental Income on houses by the total letting stock). This method takes into account the proportion of housing which spends some time un-let and those for which rent is not successfully collected.
17. Housing Benefit accounted for a high proportion of council rental income. In 2018-19, rent rebate subsidy for council house tenants was around £519m, representing 45% of total income from standard rents. This has decreased each year since 2014-15 when it was 57%. In 2018-19, rent rebate subsidy as a proportion of standard rents varied from 30% in the East Lothian and Shetland Islands to 60% in Renfrewshire.

⁴As this includes un-let house the actual amount of rent paid by tenants is likely to be slightly higher.

⁵For example the rent figures produced by the [Scottish Housing Regulator](#).

Chart 3: Average rent per HRA property per week, Scotland, 1997-98 to 2018-19^{1,2,3,4}



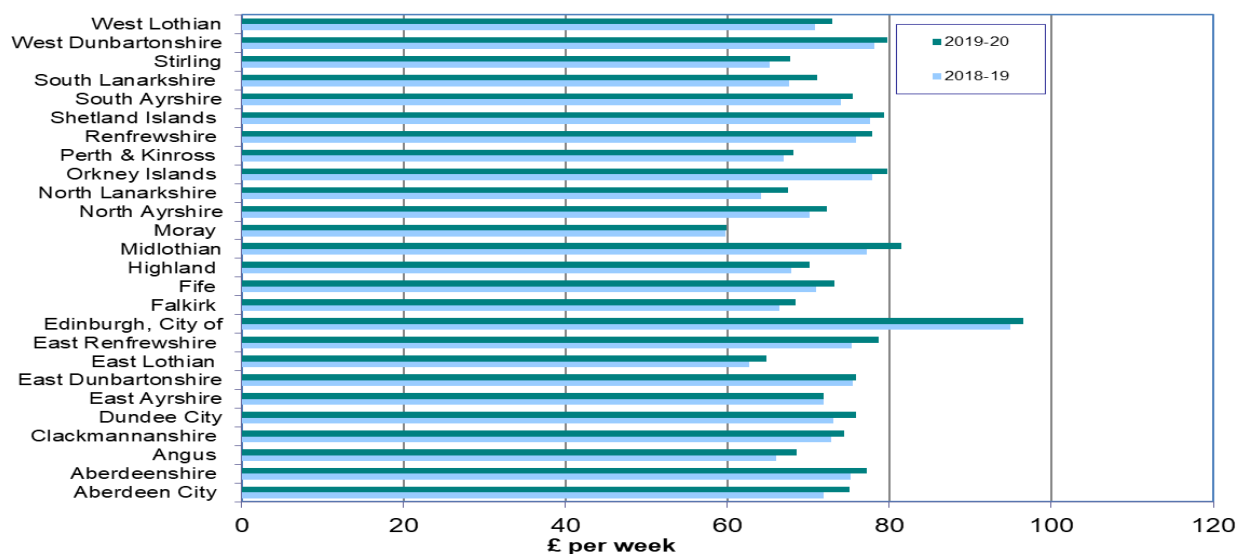
Source:

Scottish Government , Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account return provided by Scottish Local Authorities. Consumer Price Index (source - ONS) CPI all Items Index. (2015 = 100).

Notes:

1. Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, therefore HRA information is not available (n.a.) for them.
2. Dotted lines indicate breaks in comparability following transfer of housing stock as follows:
 - from 2003-04 transfer of housing stock from Glasgow, Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders,
 - from 2006-07 transfer of housing stock from Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar,
 - from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.
3. Current (or nominal) prices are in the value of currency for that particular year. Current price are affected by inflation. Constant (or real) prices adjust for the effects of inflation and used to measure the true growth of a timeseries. Constant prices have been deflated using the Consumer Price Index (by ONS).
4. This calculation includes both let and un-let properties and therefore the amount of rent actually paid by is likely to be slightly higher.

Chart 4: Average weekly rent, by Local Authority¹, 2018-19 (actual) and 2019-20 (estimated)



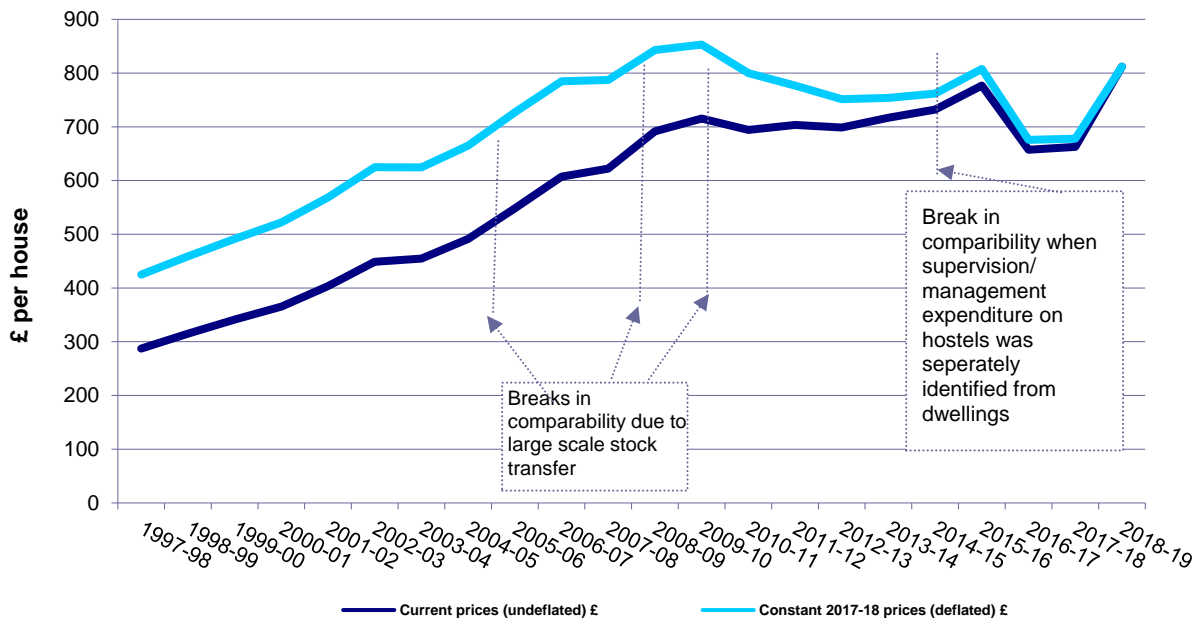
Source:

Scottish Government , Communities Analytical Services Division - based on Housing Revenue Account return provided by Local Authorities.

Expenditure on housing management and on repairs and maintenance (charts 5, 6 & 7)

18. In 2018-19, the 26 Local Authorities with council dwellings spent around £2,080 per house on management and maintenance, which is forecast to rise by 2.9% to around £2,140 in 2018-19.
19. Spending on management and maintenance for 2018-19 ranges from £1,677 per house in West Lothian to £2,738 in the City of Edinburgh. Differing accounting practices and differing service provision amongst councils mean that the figures for individual councils may not always be directly comparable and the estimates for management and maintenance expenditure should be treated with caution.
20. Supervision and management costs in 2018-19 were around £810 per house and is forecast to increase to £880 per house in 2019-20. As Local Authorities differ in the extent to which central administration and related service costs are included, individual figures may not always be directly comparable.
21. Average annual expenditure on repairs and maintenance was around £1,270 per house in 2018-19 and is forecast to decrease to around £1,260 or 0.5% in per house 2019-20. Spending on repairs and maintenance in 2018-19 ranges from £844 per house in Perth and Kinross to £1,744 per house in the City of Edinburgh.
22. Please note that the HRA repairs and maintenance expenditure referred to in the above paragraphs is separate, and in addition to, the capital investment in council housing stock enhancements referred to elsewhere in this bulletin

Chart 5: Supervision & management expenditure per house¹, Scotland, 1997-98 to 2018-19^{1,2}

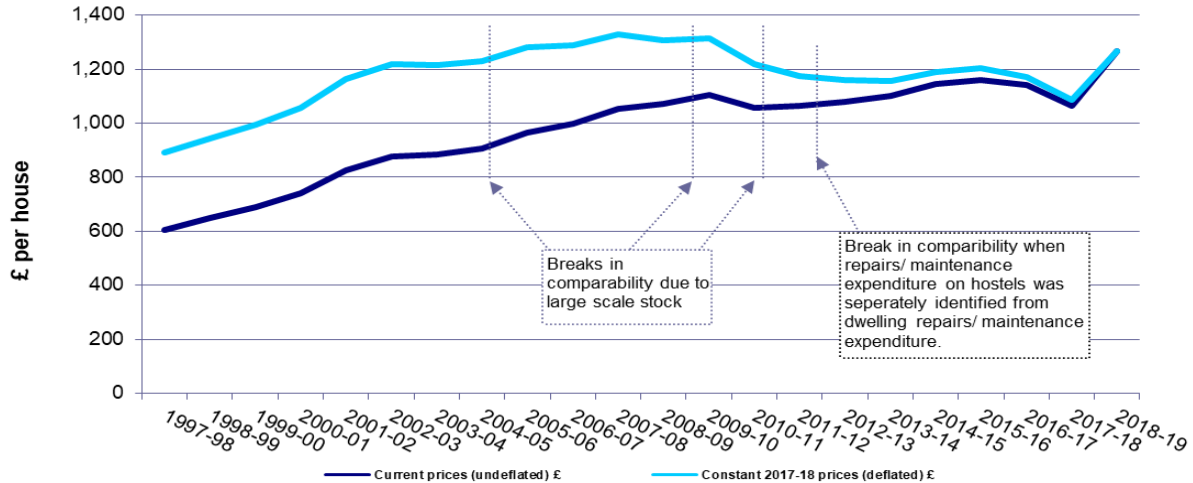


Source: Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Local Authorities. ONS CPI Overall Index (CHZQ).

Notes:

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 - from 2006-07 transfer of housing stock from Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar,
 - from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.

Chart 6: Repairs and maintenance expenditure per house¹, Scotland, 1997-98 to 2018-19^{1,2}

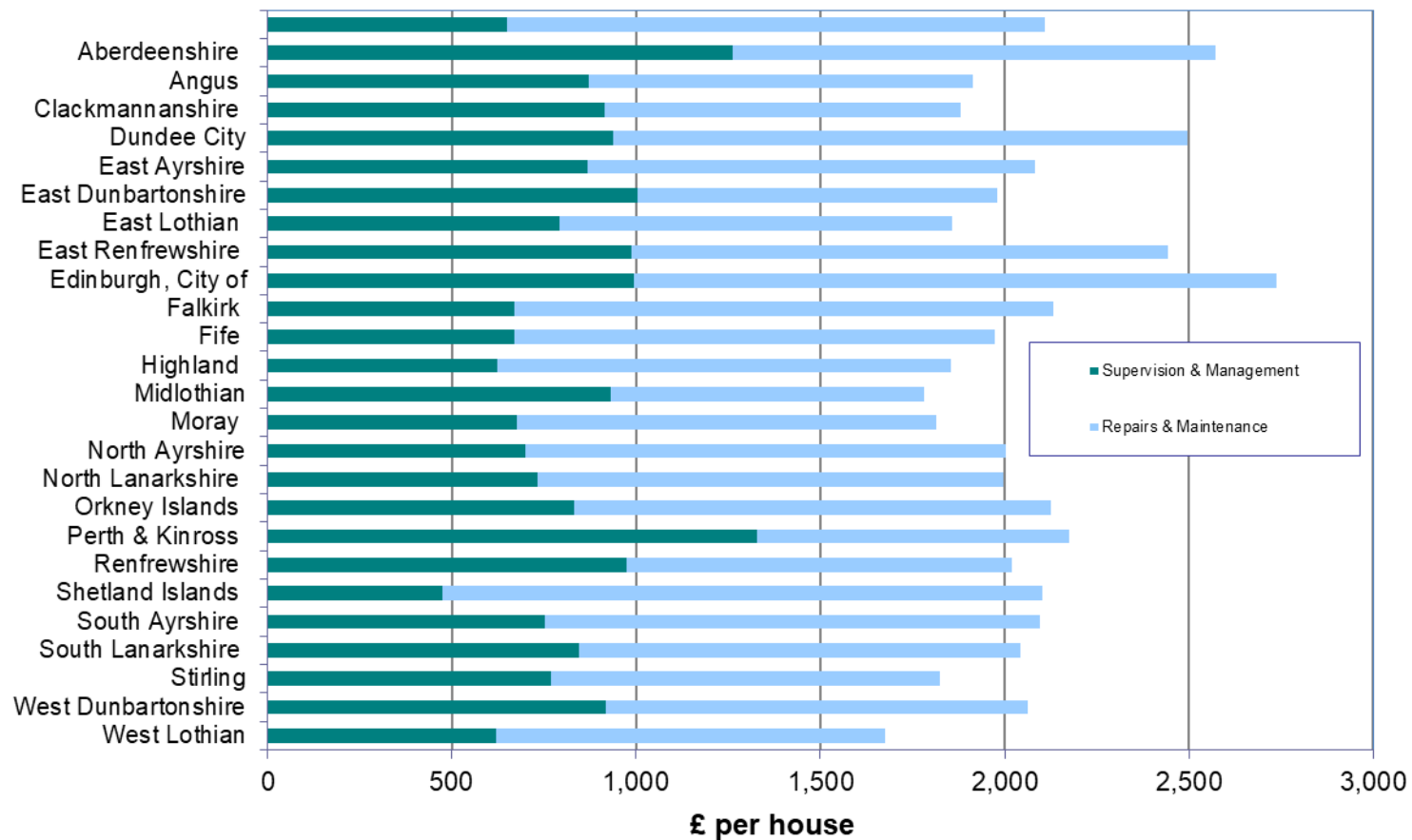


Source: Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Local Authorities. ONS CPI Overall Index (CHZQ).

Notes:

- Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, therefore HRA information is not available (n.a.) for them.
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 - from 2006-07 transfer of housing stock from Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar,
 - from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.

Chart 7: Management and maintenance expenditure per house¹, by Local Authority, 2018-19



Source: Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account return provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

Notes:
1. Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, therefore HRA information is not available (n.a.) for them.

Expenditure on loan charges

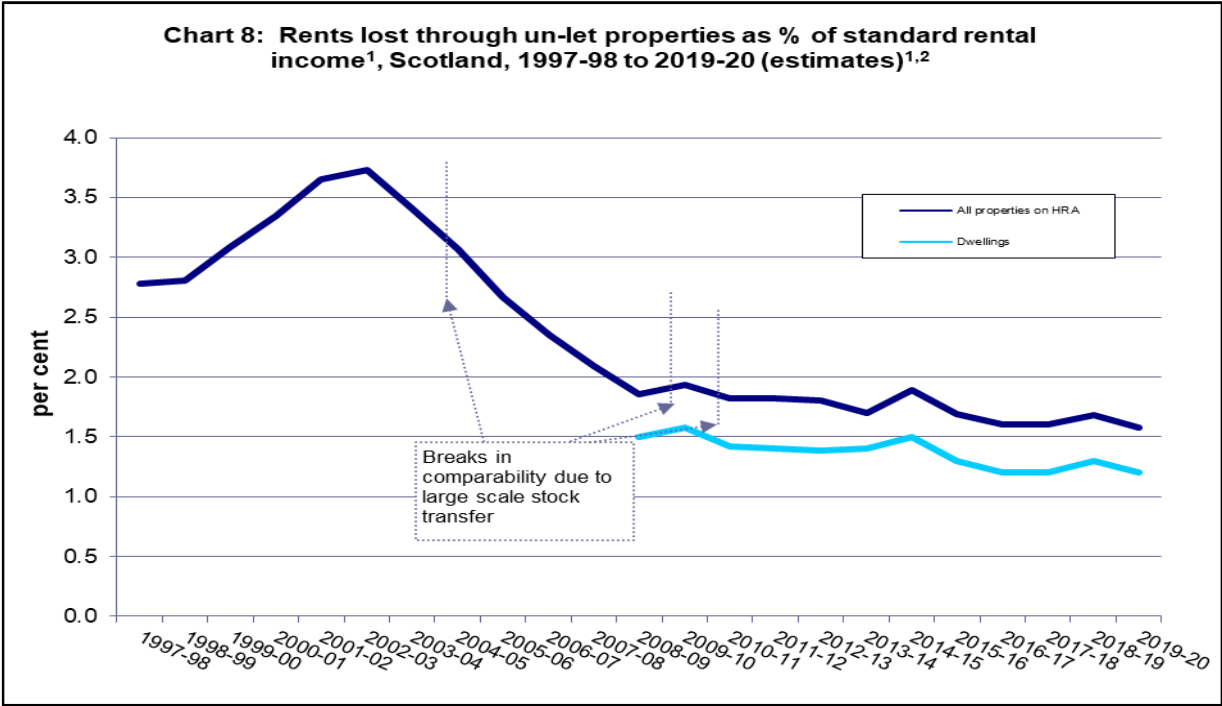
23. Loan charges are the repayment of principal and interest on outstanding debt on council houses. Local Authorities spent around £275m on loan charges to the HRA in 2018-19 which is approximately £1.5m more than in 2017-18. Loan charges represent around 28% of all Local Authority housing expenditure (excluding capital spend) in 2018-19.

Rents lost due to empty properties (void losses) (charts 8 & 9)

24. Councils lost around £20m due to un-let all types of properties held on their HRAs in 2018-19. This represents 1.7% of Standard Rental Income and is at about the same level as the two previous years, well below the peak of 3.7% in 2002-03.

25. From 2008-09 the statistics collected from Local Authorities have separately identified rents lost from un-let dwellings. For Scotland as a whole rents lost amounted to around £15m in 2018-19 representing around 1.3% of total rent income on these dwellings.

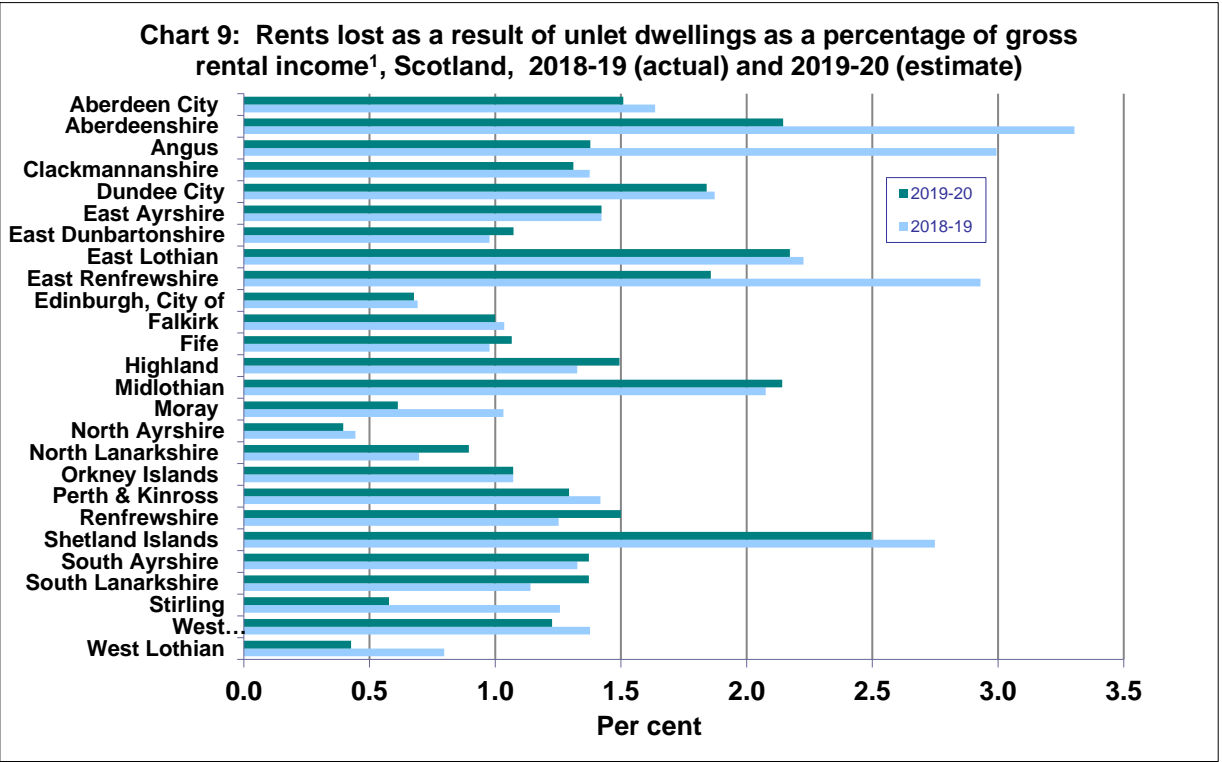
26. The percentage of rent on dwellings lost through voids in 2018-19 was highest in Aberdeenshire and (3.3%) and lowest in North Ayrshire (0.4%). Levels of rent lost may be strongly influenced by factors such as different levels of demand for properties, different void management practices and targets, decanting for improvement or investment programmes or the inclusion of properties awaiting demolition.



Source:
 Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

Notes:

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 from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.



Source:
 Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

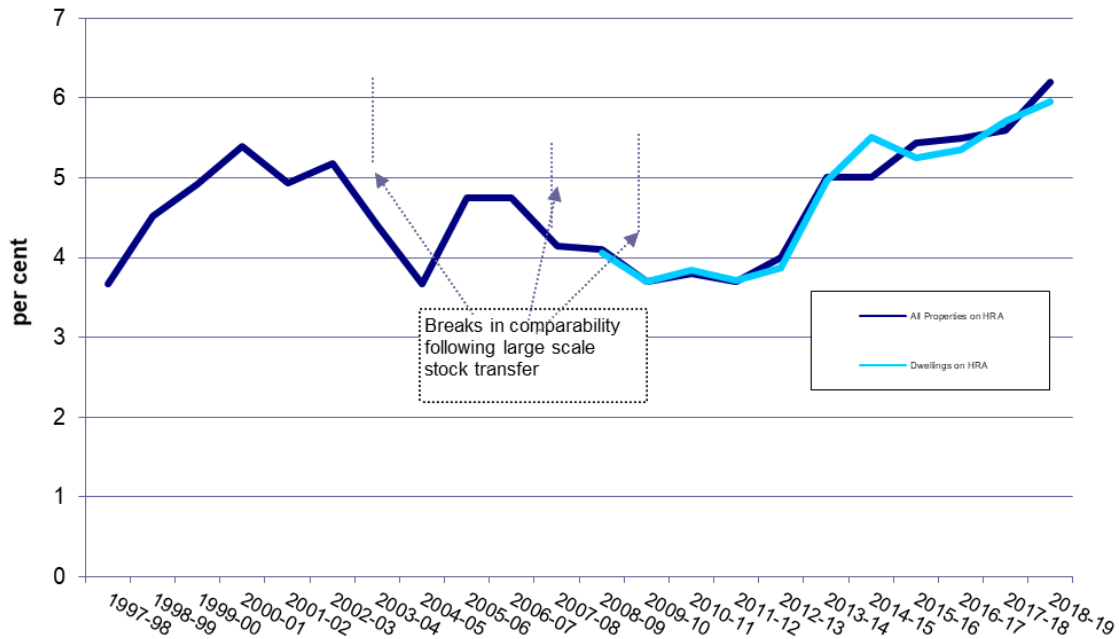
Notes:

- Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, therefore HRA information is not available for them.

Rent arrears and the rents written-off (charts 10 & 11)

27. Total rent arrears on *all* properties on HRAs at 31 March 2019 was £74m, a rise of around £9.0m (14%) since 31 March 2018. Nationally, rent arrears at 31 March 2019 represent 6.2% of Standard Rental Income on *all* properties on the HRA compared with 5.6% as at 31 March 2018 and is the highest value recorded since this series started in 1997-98.
28. From 2008-09 the statistics collected from Local Authorities have separately identified rent arrears on dwellings from rent arrears in other properties held on councils' HRAs.
29. As at March 2018, rent arrears on council dwellings was £71m, up £5.2m (7.8%) on last year, representing 6.0% of Standard Rental Income from these dwellings. Rent arrears on dwellings varied from 11% of Standard Rental Income from dwellings in East Dunbartonshire and Stirling to 1.4% in East Renfrewshire.
30. As at 31 March 2018 there were around 102,702 council tenants in arrears, an increase of around 2,940 tenants (a 3% increase) compared to 31 March 2018. The number of former tenants in arrears decreased by around 2,180 (a 7% decrease) from 32,575 at March 2018 to around 30,400 as at 31 March 2019.
31. In 2018-19 budgets, councils wrote-off nearly £10.8m of outstanding rent as unrecoverable (this represents 1.0% of Standard Rental Income) compared to £10.1m in the previous year. Write-offs for 2018-19 varied from around £0.04m in Dundee City, Stirling, Shetland and Orkney to £1.4m in Fife. Amounts of arrears written-off by councils can be influenced by councils' accounting policies and judgements on whether arrears are recoverable.

Chart 10: Rent arrears as percentage of total rental income on all properties on the Housing Revenue Account,¹ Scotland, 1997-98 to 2018-19²



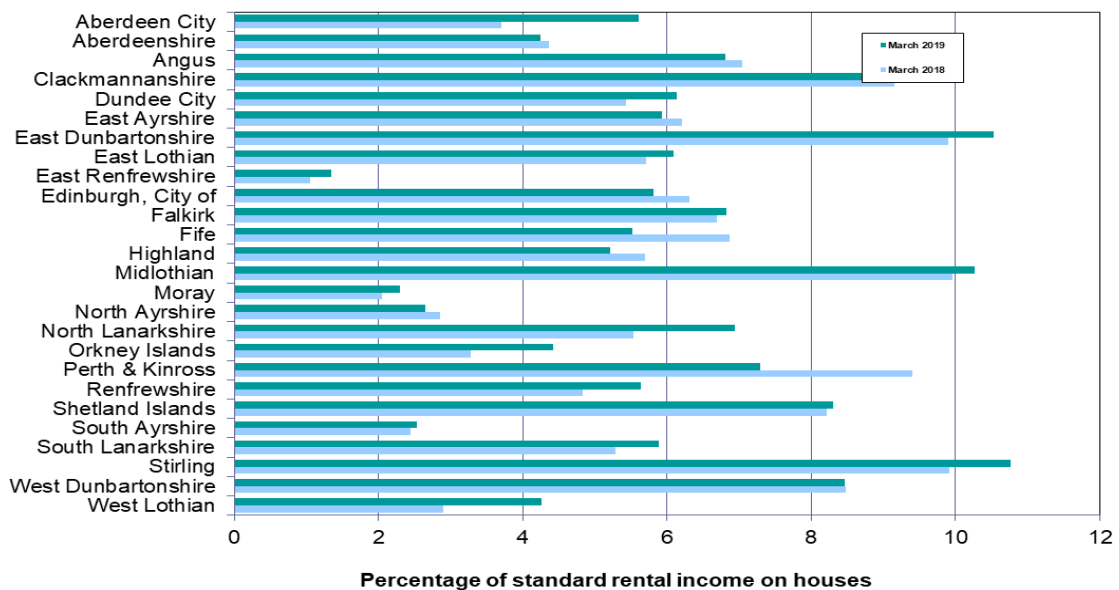
Source:

Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

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 - from 2006-07 transfer of housing stock from Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar,
 - from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.

Chart 11: Rent arrears at 31 March as a percentage of annual standard rental income on houses¹, by Local Authority, March 2018 to March 2019



Source:

Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

Notes:

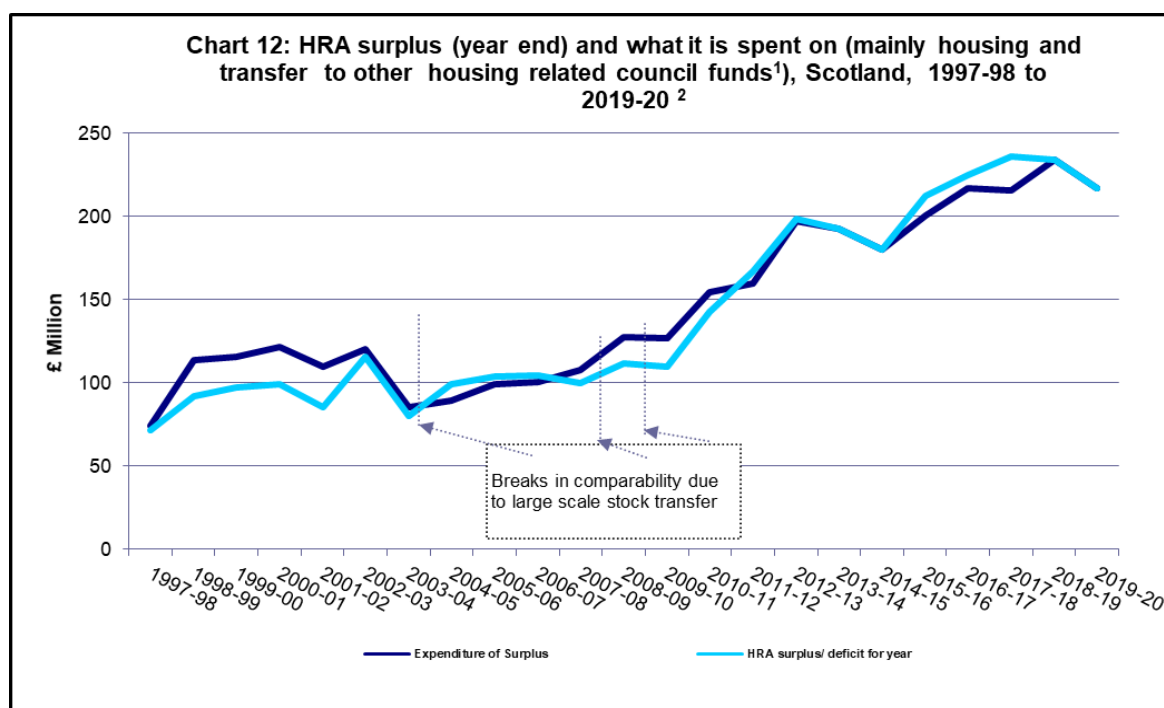
- Six councils transferred their housing stock to the housing association sector, therefore HRA information is not available for them.

Movement in the HRA reserves (chart 12)

32. In any given year, expenditure on the day-to-day maintenance and management of council housing tends to be less than the income from council house rents. The surplus income is spent on capital investment in housing including new council houses and improvements to existing stock (these improvements are in addition to the day-to-day maintenance) or added to the HRA reserves.

33. In 2018-19 Scottish Local Authorities had a surplus on their HRA (i.e. income minus expenditure) totalling around £234m, which contributed to around a £257m of capital funded from revenue when added to other transfers into the HRA from other funds.

34. In 2018-19 around £13m, was transferred out of the HRA fund into other council funds such as the Housing Repairs and Renewals Contingency Fund Funds transferred or to fund such items as the HRA Capital Plan. Equally some small sums were transferred into the HRA fund (around £31m in 2018-19).



Source:

Scottish Government, Communities Analytical Division - based on Housing Revenue Account returns provided by Scottish Local Authorities.

Notes:

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 - from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.

Capital debt

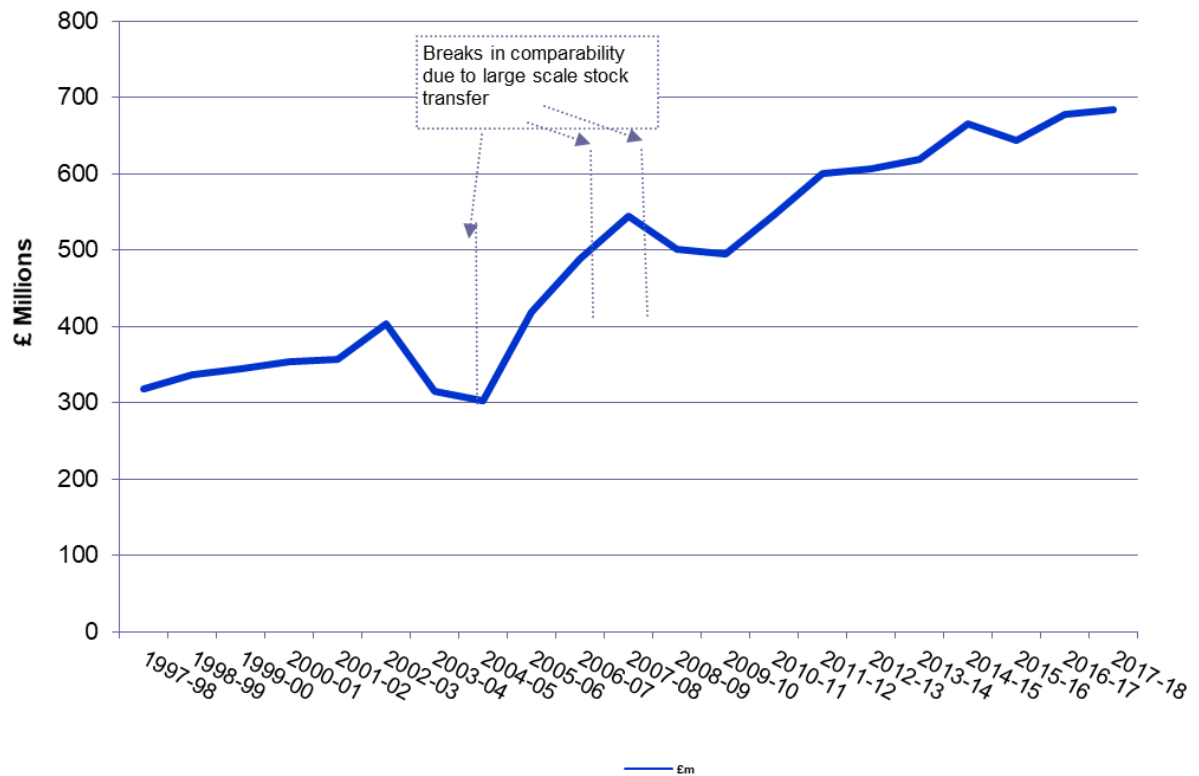
35. A Local Authority may borrow to fund capital expenditure. Local Authorities may borrow from a number of sources including banks and other financial institutions. Most Local Authorities borrow from the UK Government's Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). In addition to borrowing Local Authorities may finance capital investment through other credit arrangements, such as finance leases, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) or Public Finance Initiatives (PFI). The sum of borrowing and any credit arrangement to finance capital investment is termed Capital Debt.
36. Total council housing debt stood at £3.8bn in 2018-19 an increase of around £225m (6%) on the previous year and cost £277m in loan charges. Part of the increase in debt since 2007 is a consequence of increased borrowing by councils to meet the capital costs of new build housing and improvements to existing houses and reductions in receipts from the sale of council houses under RtB scheme which closed on 31 July 2016. Total HRA debt is estimated to rise to £4.3bn by 2019-20 (up £480m).

Capital investment (charts 13 & 14)

37. These capital investment figures are taken from the Scottish Government Capital Provisional Outturn and Budget Estimate (CPOBE) Return 2018-19. The figures discussed here are provisional outturn figures and are therefore subject to revision. Final, audited capital expenditure figures will be published next year.
38. Local Authorities' total, provisional, capital investment on housing, financed from all sources (including new borrowing, useable receipts and financed from the CFCR from the HRA surplus) in 2018-19 is £738m. This includes £389m on improvements to existing council houses, £286m on new council houses and £63m on all other capital expenditure⁶. This expenditure is in addition to the day-to-day maintenance referred to above. The councils with the greatest capital investment in new council dwellings were the City of Edinburgh (around £47m) followed by South Lanarkshire (around £27m).

⁶ Other sources includes use of Council Tax discounts on second homes/ long term empty properties.

Chart 13: Gross HRA capital expenditure, Scotland¹, 1997-98 to 2017-18²



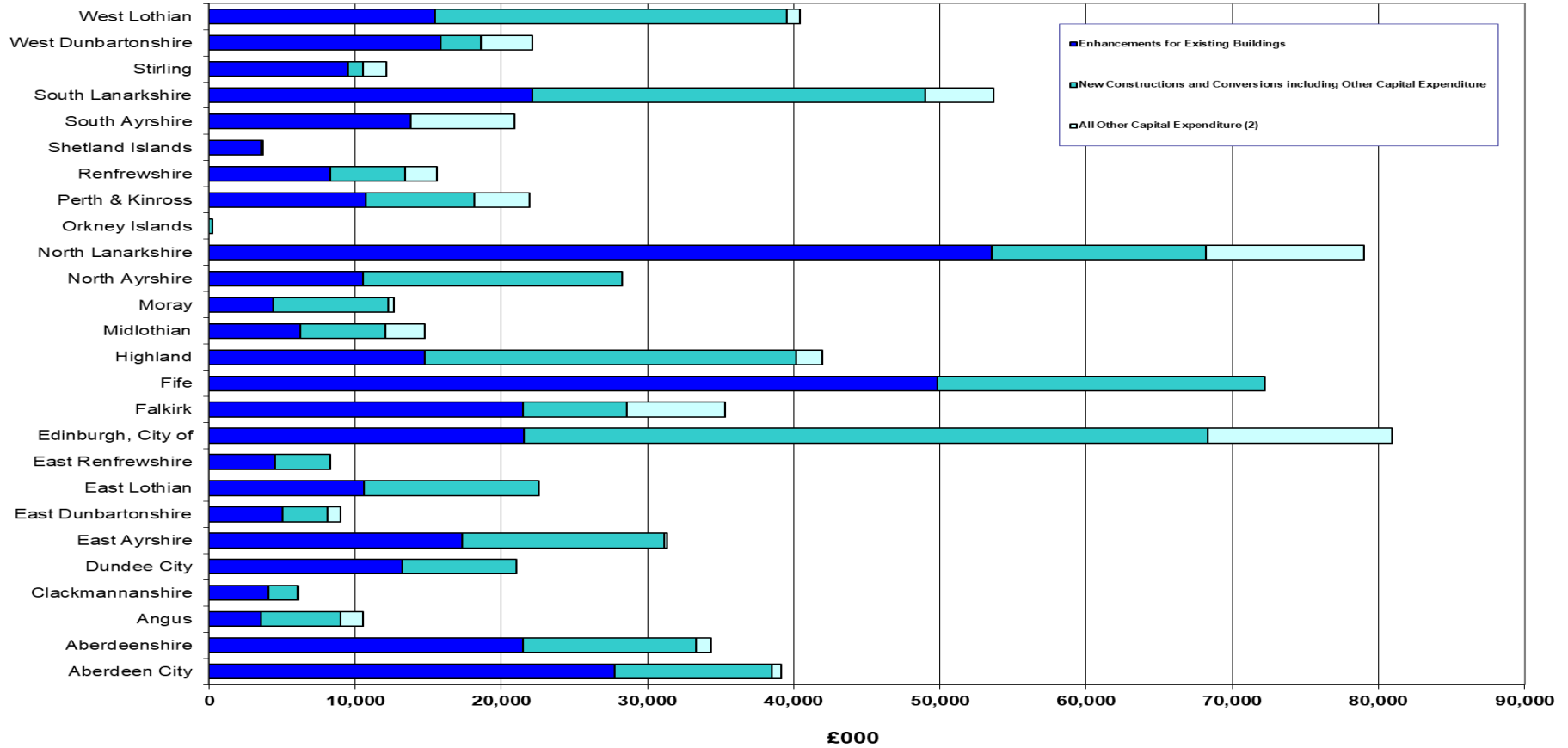
Source:

Scottish Government Capital Returns, CRFinal (2017-18).

Notes:

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 - from 2006-07 transfer of housing stock from Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar,
 - from 2007-08 transfer of housing stock from Inverclyde.

Chart 14: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Expenditure and Financing, Provisional Outturn, 2018-19 (£000) ¹



Source:

Scottish Government Capital Returns, CPOBE (2018-19)

Notes

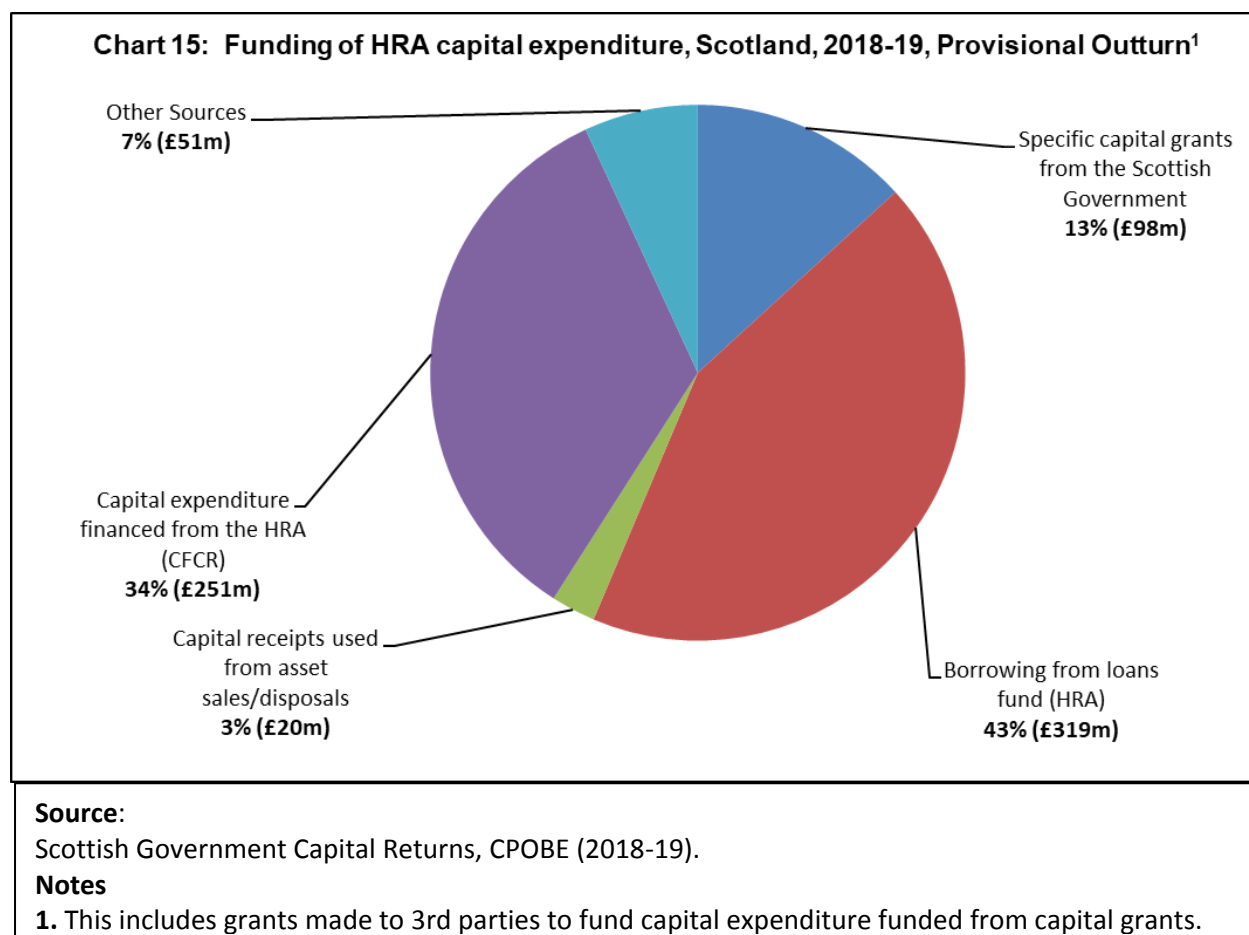
1. This includes grants made to 3rd parties to fund capital expenditure funded from capital grants.

Funding of capital expenditure (chart 15)

39. The capital expenditure figures below are taken from a different source than the HRA statistics return. These capital investment figures are taken from the Scottish Government Capital Provisional Outturn and Budget Estimate (CPOBE) Return 2018-19. The figures discussed here are provisional outturn figures and are therefore subject to revision. Final, audited capital expenditure figures will be published next year.

40. In 2018-19, provisional figures show 43 per cent (£319m) of the funding for HRA capital expenditure was from borrowing, 34% came from the Housing Revenue Account (CFR) (£251m), whilst 13% (£98m) came from capital grants from the Scottish Government. Councils raised around £20m of capital receipts from asset sales in 2018-19.

41. As noted earlier the provision to end RtB - with a two year notice period - was included in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and the scheme subsequently closed to all new applicants on 31 July 2016. However, capital receipts can also come from sales of housing land following demolition, or voluntary sales to private individuals and businesses and other parts of the wider public sector and transfers of small groups of properties to housing associations or transfers of HRA assets to other parts of the Local Authority.



Tenant Consultation by Councils about HRAs

42. In the 2018-19 HRA survey councils were asked about the extent and nature of any consultation they had undertaken with tenants in the previous year, for example, in terms of how the HRA budget had been spent or plans for future HRA expenditure. This follows the publication of 'Guidance on the Operation of the Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts in Scotland' (2014) <https://indd.adobe.com/view/b5bb0a29-9cd7-4b3d-a596-f21c5dcfc19f> <https://indd.adobe.com/view/358417f4-e346-4442-b5df-9d801bf4589f> which sets out a framework for the involvement of landlords and tenants regarding HRAs.

43. Seventeen of the twenty-six councils reported that they had undertaken tenant consultation about the HRA in 2018-19, two reported no consultation undertaken and seven didn't provide a response to this question. The most frequently reported consultation topic was about rent rise proposals and HRA spending plans. Other topics included:

- > sale of council land parcels
- > council housing stock improvements
- > service delivery
- > value for money
- > new housing building programs
- > voids
- > affordability
- > new build programs

44. Council reported a variety of methods used to consult tenants about the HRA, the most frequent of which were tenant surveys (postal, online and telephone) and tenant meetings, panels or forums. Other consultation methods included:

- > tenant working groups
- > newsletters
- > tenant conferences
- > public meetings
- > report cards
- > housing magazines
- > tenant newsletters seeking feedback.
- > homelessness and Gypsy/ Traveller groups

45. Councils were also asked if they had done an audit of compliance with the 'Guidance on the Operation of Local Authority HRAs in Scotland' <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/03/1837>. In 2018-19 ten councils reported that they had, ten said no, three gave no response and three said they planned to undertake an audit.

46. Thirteen councils reported they had used the HRA self-assessment framework, eleven said no and two have no reply.

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