



2008 - Progressive avoids the worst effects of the credit crunch.

The Society's held its 94th Annual General Meeting in Portadown on 28 April. Dr Joan Smyth, Chairman, reviewed Progressive's performance during 2008 and explained that, due to the Society's long-term strategy of steady growth only in safe areas of lending, the impact of the economic downturn had not been as great as it could have been. She said, "Our prudent policy has ensured that the safety and security of our savers' funds has been maintained and enhanced and we have been able to report a profit when many other financial institutions have been reporting heavy losses."



Progressive experienced record savings inflows with gross receipts rising by 17% to £418 million whilst the value of net savings receipts increased by over 60%.

Despite the problems in the housing market mortgage balances rose by 9%, helped by a lower level of mortgage redemptions. The Society's strong balance sheet supported lending growth in the first half of 2008 but demand for mortgages declined sharply in the second half of the year. Dr Smyth said, "Currently, we are pleased

to see that demand for mortgages is rising and we are hopeful that this may be the first signs of some recovery in the market."

Progressive grew its balance sheet by 11% to £1.66 billion with most of this rise being due to normal business activities but increased liquidity also added to the size of the balance sheet. "We considered it prudent to structure our balance sheet to provide even greater security for our saving Members. This was done at the expense of interest margin which was reduced from 1.07% in 2007 to 0.73% and contributed to lower profit levels in 2008." Also impacting on profit was the contribution that the

Society was required to make to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) in connection with the bail-out of Bradford & Bingley Bank. The total charge to Progressive for 2008 was £1.4 million.

Despite the problems in the housing market it was considered prudent to make a provision of £0.9 million for possible future bad debts. Dr Smyth said, "The quality of our mortgage book remains very high reflecting our cautious approach to lending over the years but we thought it sensible to make a provision as it is likely that some of our borrowers will be affected by the bad news coming out of the job market."

Before deduction of the FSCS levy Progressive reported a pre-tax profit of £4.0 million (£9.0 million in 2007). "Given the many problems that emerged in the financial services sector in the past year this was a very satisfactory result", said Dr Smyth.

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COLERAINE BRANCH CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

In November 2008 the staff of our Coleraine branch celebrated their 10th anniversary.

Coleraine has proved itself a successful and productive outlet over the years winning numerous awards including, Progressive Branch of the Year in 2002 and Savings Branch of the Year in 2003.

Proud of the success the branch has had over the last ten years, Lorraine Johnston, Assistant Branch Manager said; "I'm ambitious and even though we're all in a tough financial climate at the minute the Society is doing well, so I encourage new borrowers and savers to do business with us. I've set myself a goal of winning another Award in the not too distant future!"

Born and bred a Coleraine local, Lorraine is married with two children and sympathises with the tough financial era we are all experiencing at the minute. She says, "I encourage all our Members to call in or pick up the phone if they have a query or are looking for advice. We are here, we're local and we want to help by giving practical financial advice to help individuals and families save for their future."



The Coleraine branch ran an anniversary prize draw for its Members throughout November 2008. Pictured at the presentation of prize hampers to the winners are (front, l-r) Dawn McNicholl, Margaret Dickson, Hazel McIntyre, Progressive Customer Services Assistant, Maureen Kearney on behalf of her daughter Julie Ann Kearney, (back, l-r), Robert McCullough, Marie Clarke on behalf of Joan Magee, Lisa McNabb, Progressive Customer Services Assistant, Ruth Coulter, and Rosario Baxter.

REBECCA GAINS RESPECT AS TOP TALKER

Rebecca McKinty, a pupil of Glenlola Collegiate, Bangor, took first place in the 26th Annual Youth Award Public Speaking competition, supported for the third year running by the Society.

Organised by Soroptimist International, the Northern Ireland competition is annually open to female students who are in Years 12 & 13, and are in full time education. The final recently took place in the Dungannon Campus of the South West College.

At the final, first place went to Rebecca McKinty, (Glenlola Collegiate), 2nd place to Julieanne Elliott (Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar), 3rd place to Beth Eustace (Coleraine High School) and 4th place to Jessica Morrison (Dalriada School).

Congratulating all girls on making it to the final, Dr Joan Smyth, Progressive's Chairman said, "As Progressive is committed to supporting the local community, helping to encourage Northern Ireland's young women to develop

good communication skills is an activity that the Society is proud to support. I've been thoroughly impressed by the speeches. This competition is recognised within many educational establishments as one of the premier public speaking events in Northern Ireland. These young women have clearly developed the skills and abilities necessary to voice their opinions on topical subjects in an informed and confident manner."

Speaking at the event, Kate Courtenay, Regional President, Soroptimist International, said, "Soroptimist International has been running Public Speaking Competitions for young women since 1982 to encourage young women to meet, compete and widen their horizons. In recent years, our working alongside Progressive Building Society, has enabled us to promote and enhance our work with young women in Northern Ireland and we are very grateful for the society's continued and generous support. Thanks must also go to the participants, their schools and parents who take part."



COMMUNITY AWARDS

Progressive set up the Community Awards Scheme a couple of years ago as the Society was eager to hear about local community groups working to benefit their local communities.

The Community Awards Scheme panel of judges meet twice yearly. To apply simply pick up a form from your local Progressive Building Society Branch and return it promptly to ensure that the project will be considered for an Award in the next round. Awards granted range from £200 to £2000, depending on the estimated costs of the project.

In the last round of awards, Progressive donated around £5,000. The groups who received the awards included Cahoots NI, RNIB NI and Newforge Taggers.

Activities supported typically range from those requiring training or equipment, such as sports items, to those needing marketing support, for example to produce materials that will help raise awareness of their group's services.



Progressive Building Society's Area Manager, Graeme Norris (left), is pictured at the presentation of the Community Award to Cahoots NI, where he learned about a flea circus from actress Christina Nelson and entertainer Hugh Brown.



Progressive Building Society's Omagh Branch Manager, Amanda Wilson (seated), is pictured at the presentation of a Community Award to RNIB. She is being talked through RNIB's typical training that Omagh Leisure Centre staff receive by (left) Caroline Crawford, RNIB's Community Vision Coordinator (Regional Services West), supported by Ciara McCann, who has completed the RNIB's training for the Leisure Centre, and Conor McGarvey, Omagh Leisure Centre Manager.

BACK WHERE WE BELONG

In December 2008 the Society re-opened its Glengormley office after an absence from the village of 7 years. It was back in 2001 that the Society's management took the decision that Glengormley could no longer sustain a full branch presence due to the relatively low level of mortgage business. The subsequent transfer of savings business to an agency in the offices of McWhirter & Co turned out to be very successful but McWhirter & Co was subsequently sold and Abbey Real Estate stepped in to help out, again very successfully.

Meanwhile the branch premises were sold but later re-acquired by Progressive and rented to a small business pending a planned review of the Society's branch network strategy. During 2008 we were given the opportunity to

occupy the premises again and the decision was taken to refurbish the office and provide our savers in Glengormley with a stable service once again. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of Abbey Real Estate since their efforts in recent years have ensured that we retained and grew our business in East Antrim.

The Glengormley office is staffed by the two Melanies - Melanie Gaston and Melanie Mansfield who both worked previously in Head Office. They have been warmly welcomed to Glengormley by our Members there and we wish them every success in growing our business in East Antrim.

AWARDS FOR TOP PERFORMERS

At the 94th Annual General Meeting of the Society held in the Seagoe Hotel, Portadown, the Chairman, Dr Joan Smyth, presented the coveted Branch of the Year Award to Lyn Crawford—Customer Service Manager of the Newtownards Branch. Lyn was delighted to receive the award on behalf of her team.

Other awards included:

Mortgage Sales Award—Portadown

Savings Sales Award—Wellington Place, Belfast

Customer Service Award—Enniskillen

The Chairman offered her congratulations to the winners and commented that the Society really could not have achieved the level of success that we enjoyed without a tremendous effort from all parts of the Society.



RICHARD PLANS FOR SUCCESS

Our congratulations go to Richard Johnston of Progressive Agency, Sydney Johnston Financial Services in Carrickfergus, who recently gained a prestigious third place in the Certificate of Financial Planning examinations.

Richard studied Theology at Queen's before working for two years in the family business. He then returned to university to study for a Masters in Theology, in which Richard went on to achieve a Distinction. He is now back working with his father, Sydney, in Carrickfergus whilst studying for his CII Diploma. We wish him every success with his further studies.

COMPETITION

To be in with the chance of winning £50 worth of Marks & Spencer vouchers simply answer the following question and send your answer along with your name, address and contact number to Homegrown News Readers Competition, 33/37 Wellington Place, BELFAST, BT1 6HH or drop it into any branch or agent.

How many years has our Coleraine branch been open?

Employees and Agents of the Society and their families are not eligible to enter.

Competition closes: 31 July 2009. The winner will be notified in writing and his/her name will appear in the next edition of Homegrown News.

COMPETITION WINNERS

Survey Questionnaire Hamper Winner 08: Margaret Kerr, L'Derry

Survey Questionnaire Hamper Winner 09: Mrs Margaret Roberts, Portadown

Homegrown News: Gillian McBride, Belfast
