

PUTTING OUR TENANTS AND OUR COMMUNITIES FIRST

WINTER 2024

Tenants First

COWAL EDITION



Christmas Card Competition Winner!

Congratulations to Jessica, Age 7, from Arrochar, who won our 'Design a Christmas card competition' and received a £20 voucher.



TECHY
Tea Party

P8

Help and Advice in the Community

Seeking housing advice for yourself, your friends or families?

November saw Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) introduce a new initiative to take our services into the local community when we held our first drop in session at Dunoon Library, in conjunction with Live Argyll and the Addictions Recovery Café (ARC). Our goal was to answer any housing related queries, to sign post other services and to provide assistance and advice.

The drop in sessions will be held at the Queen's Hall, from 10am to 11am, on the first Monday of each month in the Library space and at the ARC café, on the first Wednesday

of each month, between 11am and 12pm, at 93 John Street, Dunoon.

There will be other events around the area so please look for the dates and venues on our websites, "What's on Dunoon" and our Facebook page.

If you are part of a neighbourhood or voluntary group and think that a session would benefit your members, please let us know so that we can include your group in next year's calendars.

Don't forget, we still offer one to one appointments at our new Fairmile offices in Sandbank. Call our Dunoon team on **01546 605950** to arrange one at a time to suit you.

Play areas

Our play areas are very important to us at ACHA. They not only give the children a chance to play but can help parents and guardians meet up and get to know each other. We hope this creates a healthier and a fitter community.

Our staff have been RoSPA qualified to inspect these and they report any needed repairs every month. If you spot anything, please contact us as soon as possible. Some of our areas such as Graham's Point are shared with the local community council and they invest along with us in equipment and landscaping.



Exemplar estates

The planting is now complete at Finbracken and the new table and benches made from the old trees has been designed and made - ready for installing for spring time. It is looking great.



Consultation on Servicing of Common Closes

Letters were sent to residents in selected shared closes to ask for feedback on a professional cleaning service. We believe that the introduction of close cleaning will benefit all occupants by having a well maintained and clean close. Main close doors and internal close windows would be included and it would ensure it's not left for residents to agree a rota for cleaning. We asked for the responses by the 22nd of November and these are now being gathered. We will write back to everyone included once the decision is made whether to go ahead.

Garden in Bloom Winner

Mr and Mrs Bruce, Queen's Road, Dunoon



Estate Inspections and walkabouts

Your local housing and neighbourhood services and property services team are often joined by a board member for the local walkabouts.



Your local team in Cowal

Andrea McCuish – Housing and Neighbourhood Services Officer

Louise Bell and Lynne Rennie – Housing and Neighbourhood Services Assistants

Andy McCann and Wendy Anderson – Property Services Officers

Please come along for some or all of the events and let us know your ideas for the area you live in. If you can't manage along, the team can knock on your door for a discussion and if the dates don't suit you, please get in touch for a chat on **01546 605950**.

The next ones planned for Cowal are:

- 15th January at 10am, we will visit Broxwood,

Ferguslie Place and McDonald Avenue in Sandbank

- 30th January at 10am, we will visit Westfield, Brae Cottages and Strone Place
- 13th February at 11am we will visit Matheson Terrace, Miller Ave, Royal Brae, McLennan Cottages and Tor Aluinn

You may get a reminder card through your door and if you meet any of us in the area on our day to day estate visits, please stop us to let us know your views or ideas you have.

Please check the Estate Inspection performance section on our website for further information

- <https://www.acha.co.uk/services-estate-management/>.



**WE ARE
HERE TO
HELP!**

ACHA's Welfare Rights Officers are here to help tenants with all aspects of benefit advice. The benefits system can often be challenging and overwhelming to navigate, further complicated by the fact that benefits, grants and rebates can come from a variety of agencies and so it is often difficult to know where to go for the right support. Our team can assist you with the new benefits detailed below (Pension Age Disability Payment and Carer Support Payment) - to speak to a Welfare Rights Officer call **0800 028 2755** or email **welfarerights@acha.co.uk**.

Pension Age Disability Payment

Pension Age Disability Payment replaced Attendance Allowance in Scotland on 21st October 2024 and is now administered by Social Security Scotland. If you currently receive Attendance Allowance, you do not need to take any action as your award will be automatically moved over to Pension Age Disability Payment.

Recipients will be moved to Pension Age Disability Payment in phases, with the first cases expected to be transferred in early 2025. This benefit is available for new claimants and can give you extra money if you have care needs because of a disability or a long-term health condition and have reached State Pension age.

The amount you receive depends on your care needs and is paid at 2 rates, the lower rate is £72.65 a week and the higher rate is £108.55 a week. If you are terminally ill you will automatically get the higher rate.

Pension Age Disability Payment is not means-tested, your income and savings are not taken into account and will not affect any award you might receive. Please note that you do not need to have someone caring for you in order to get Pension Age Disability Payment. If someone does care for you, they could get Carer Support Payment.

Read more about Pension Age Disability Payment eligibility here: <https://www.mygov.scot/pension-age-disability-payment/applicants>.

Carers Support Payment

Carer Support Payment, is a payment of £81.90 per week paid by Social Security Scotland. You could be entitled to this benefit if you are a carer aged 16 or over, provide care for 35 hours or more a week and your 'take home pay' is not more than £151 a week. Read more about Carers Support payment eligibility here: <https://www.mygov.scot/carers-support-payment/who-can-apply>.

This benefit became available across Scotland from November 2024 and replaces Carer's Allowance in Scotland. If you currently receive Carer's Allowance, you do not need to take any action as your award will be automatically moved over to Carer Support Payment. This is happening between February 2024 and spring 2025.

Do you have a pre-payment meter?

ACHA has been working in partnership with the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT), to access fuel vouchers, that will help you to pay for your energy, if you use a prepayment gas or electricity meter. The scheme awards up to £294 in energy vouchers per household.

Households have received over £89,000 so far in energy support, helping 343 households manage their energy costs more effectively. This critical financial aid has been a lifeline for many, ensuring that vulnerable families can maintain a warm and safe living environment.



Radio Teleswitch Service switch-off

Following an update from energy industry trade body Energy UK, tenants with Radio Teleswitch (RTS) meters are urged to contact their electricity supplier at the earliest opportunity to discuss the replacement of their RTS equipment with a smart electricity meter.

Preparations are underway to close down the RTS by 30 June 2025, with Energy UK looking at how this could be done on a gradual basis.

How to find out if you've got an RTS meter

If you're not sure whether you have an RTS meter, there are a few things you can look out for:

- there may be a separate switch box near your meter with a radio teleswitch label on it;

- your property is heated using electricity or storage heaters;
- there is no gas supply to your area. This includes households in rural areas and high-rise flats;
- you get cheaper energy at different times of day. Your tariff might be: Economy 7, Economy 10 or Total Heat Total Control;
- If you're unsure if you have RTS equipment, contact your electricity supplier who will be able to confirm for you.

Please click on the link to the Energy UK information leaflet: <https://www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/the-radio-teleswitch-service-switch-off-what-you-need-to-know/>.



Challenge Poverty Week 2024

CHALLENGE
POVERTY
WEEK

ACHA supported Challenge Poverty Week, between 7th and 13th October 2024. Challenge Poverty Week is an annual event to raise awareness coordinated and delivered by The Poverty Alliance.

The aims of the week were:

- To raise a unified voice against poverty and show that we all want to live in a more just and equal Scotland;
- To build awareness of and support for solutions to poverty;
- To change the conversation around poverty and help end the stigma of living on a low income.

During Challenge Poverty week our teams donated to local food banks all around Argyll and Bute. As a result of the cost of living crisis, the demand for food banks has risen dramatically. Their dedicated teams of staff and volunteers provide essential food supplies to those who need it most. Using local networks in communities across Argyll and Bute, they reach people who are struggling to feed themselves and their families. Their teams are true heroes within the community.



Pictured above are staff from our Oban office, who made donations to the local food bank.



Pictured above – Donations made by staff in Campbeltown and Senga McKerral from ACHA, and Mhairi Reid, from Kintyre foodbank

Supporting customers with the cost of living – TV Licensing



TV Licensing has a range of support available to customers and have added new web pages packed with information and resources.

Cost of Living

The 'cost of living' page gives details on everything you need to know about the discounted TV Licences that are available and who is eligible for a concession. This web page also includes details about the following concessions and how to apply:

- Those aged 75+ and receiving pension credit can apply for a free licence

- Anyone who is severely sight impaired is eligible for a 50% concession

Follow the link for more information - <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/costoflivingsupport>

The most affordable way to pay

The 'helping customers' page includes information about an affordable and flexible payment plan. The Simple Payment Plan is designed for those in need of extra support and who are struggling financially. Follow the link for more information - <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/helpingcustomers>.

The Digital Phone Switchover

Between now and January 2027 most UK telephone providers will be moving their customers from old analogue landlines over to new upgraded landline services using digital technology. This means services that rely on the old landline system such as home phones, telecare and health devices will need to be compatible.

How will it affect me / what do I need to do?

The good news is – your landline isn't going anywhere and for most customers this change will be straightforward. In fact, many customers are already making the switch when they upgrade to fibre broadband.

Your telecoms provider (for example, Vodafone or BT) **should contact you before the switchover** to check in and discuss what you need to do to make sure any reliant services you may have aren't affected. The change may be as simple as plugging your phone into a broadband router rather than the phone socket on the wall, or you may be given a new router to do this.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your telecoms provider directly.

If you care for a vulnerable person, please keep an eye out for correspondence notifying of a switch over date.

If you or a relative uses a Telecare alarm (or community alarm) - contact your provider to check that it is compatible.

In the event of a power outage digital landlines cannot carry an electrical power connection, so they will not work. If you have a mobile phone this can still be used, but if you have no other means of calling the emergency services, your telecoms provider will offer a solution to allow calls to be made to emergency services.

You should tell your telecoms provider now if you have no other way of making emergency calls.

Visit <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-community/digital-phone-switchover> for more information on how the changeover may affect you.



TECHY Tea Party



ACHA became a member of the Good Things Foundation, which is the UK's leading digital inclusion charity. As digital technology develops many older people are feeling left behind by the technological tide. Digital Inclusion can help people to stay in touch with family and friends, which can help improve well-being by reducing social isolation and maintaining independence by enabling online shopping, online banking, paying bills and much more in this ever-growing digital world.

As part of the Good Things Foundation's "Get Online Week" we held Techy Tea Parties at our Sheltered Housing Complexes at Cragroy, in Dunoon and Wallace Court, in Sandbank.

Modern Apprentice Charlie Robertson (pictured right) supported Community Development

Manger Gayle Power to lead the learning at the tea parties, providing tenants with much appreciated assistance getting online, and had a slice of cake and a cuppa!



Pictured: Laurance Irving (tenant at Cragroy), Charlie Robertson (ACHA), Christine MacDonald, and Winifred Sommerville (tenants at Cragroy).

We received some lovely words of thanks and feedback from residents who have attended 'Techy Tea Parties' to help them make the most of their tablets and phones.

Christine MacDonald said *"Splendid work from the staff. Learned so much and very grateful for the help. Hope to see them again."*

Winifred Somerville said *"I learned a lot from Charlie and Gayle. They were splendid at explaining the iPad and phone. I hope to see them again, thank you."*



Christine MacDonald and Winifred Sommerville, tenants at Cragroy



Andrew Failes and Elizabeth Hopcraft tenants at Wallace Court

2024 Good Neighbour Award WINNERS!



Our Good Neighbour Award recognises big hearted tenants in the community who go 'above and beyond' for others and our winners have certainly done that!

ACHA's Board of Management judged this year's nominations and we are delighted to announce that Mr and Mrs MacLean from Taynult are this year's Winners and received £100 worth of vouchers!

Mr and Mrs MacLean were so kind and generous to their neighbours when they moved into the community. They supported their neighbours by looking after their home when away, lending garden tools and knitting clothing for their children. The list goes on - they are truly deserving of this recognition and we would also like to thank everyone who nominated their neighbour for this award. It is heartening to see so many people who care about their communities.

Scottish Housing Day

Coffee mornings were held in three sheltered housing complexes to celebrate Scottish Housing Day on 18th September 2024. Tenants shared their views and suggestions.

One tenant said that, "in my experience ACHA maintain their properties extremely well having installed insulating cladding, air source heat pump and latterly solar panels. So gold star to ACHA for that future proofing which not only makes tenants lives more comfortable and cost effective, but guarantees a home for life for most people."



Betty Rhodick

It is with great sadness we mark the loss of our colleague and friend, Betty Rhodick. Betty's dedication and passion as a volunteer on our Board of Management was inspiring and she has left an indelible mark on the Association. She brought wisdom, kindness and a tireless commitment to everything she did. Betty was a no nonsense, down to earth person who put the tenants of the Association first. She was a warm and caring person and her generosity touched the lives of everyone she met and she will be deeply missed, but her spirit will continue to inspire us in all that we do.



Scotland Housing Awards 2024



ACHA were delighted to be shortlisted in two categories at this year's Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland Housing Awards. Our development at Eton Avenue, Dunoon was shortlisted in the Excellence in Regeneration and Sustainability category and the Working in Partnership category. We were nominated in the second category due to our partnership working with Argyll and Bute Council Housing Services and Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to build the four specially designed properties for families with particular needs.

Though we were unsuccessful at the Award Ceremony on 8th November 2024, we are very proud of the project and the difference the homes have made to our customers.

Congratulations to the winners in the categories, West of Scotland Housing Association and River Clyde Homes.



Dunoon opens doors to the future



Our Dunoon office based staff have now moved from Dolphin hall to a new offices at The Fairmile Building, Sandbank Business Park, Highland Avenue.

This move is more than just a change of address – it's one of many changes that are taking place across ACHA as part of a future strategy to provide customers and staff with an even better experience.

The move to newer offices has resulted in a cost saving

to the Association, which is to be welcomed but this is only one benefit. Our new location offers a more comfortable environment when you need to call in to see us, a better working space for staff and improved access for wheelchairs and prams.

This office is the first to benefit from a new way of planning, designing and using office space across the whole of ACHA, but it won't be the last. In future, as and when they are ready to be upgraded, all



office upgrades will be styled in the same way, creating fresh, modern and welcoming environments that enable positive experiences for staff and tenants alike.

The Dunoon office is open on Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning between 9am and 12.30pm, and you are welcome to drop in - the team look forward to meeting you. As our teams move to agile working they are happy to visit you at your home at a time that is convenient to you.



New Director for Assets and Sustainability

Following the departure of Fiona Campbell in July this year, Willie Mulheron took over the post of Director of Assets and Sustainability in August. William joined ACHA from the Home Group (Scotland). He has significant experience in strategically leading repairs and maintenance teams in the commercial and social housing sectors. William is also committed to delivering high quality services that put ACHA's customers at the heart of what we do.



ACHA's 10 10 10 initiative

2024 is Year 8 of ACHA's 10 year "10 10 10" initiative, which was set up in 2016 by ACHA's Board of Management to commemorate the Association's 10th anniversary. The Board approved a £100,000 donation that would give Argyll and Bute local authority schools £10,000 a year for ten years to support the learning and development of young people in primary and secondary schools.

This year, 13 schools received funding of between £500 and £1,000 each for a variety of exciting and innovative initiatives. The schools which received an award were Bowmore Primary, Clachan Primary, Kilmartin Primary, Oban High School, Rhu Primary, Sandbank Primary, Virtual School for Care Experienced Children and Young People, Innellan Primary, Park Primary, Rhunahaorine Primary, Rosneath Primary, Tarbert Academy and Toward Primary.

The funding requests covered a wide range of ideas, including therapy play bikes, a community radio station, a sound system project, equipment to enhance cooking skills, help with putting on a live theatre arts, and to provide a welcome box for care experienced children when they move schools.

The applications were well thought out and covered activities and projects which are not normally funded by the schools' budgets.

ACHA's 10 10 10 funding initiative is open to all local authority schools in Argyll and Bute and details of how to apply and application forms are issued to all schools in February of each year by Argyll and Bute Council. The closing date for applications is the 31st May annually.

ACHA Membership Prize Draw

We are delighted to announce this year's share membership prize draw winner as Mr Milne from Garelochhead.

On winning the £100 gift card Mr Milne commented *"thank you ACHA for a very welcome surprise just before Christmas. A good investment on £1 paid 12 years ago! I wish all ACHA tenants and members a Happy Christmas and a safe 2025"*.

Life membership of ACHA is open to anyone over the age of 16 and costs £1.

Being a shareholder of Argyll Community Housing Association entitles you to be involved in our activities and have a say in how we run the business. You will:

- Be invited to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which is held each September. You will receive an agenda for the meeting and a copy of any reports that require approval. In addition, a copy of the annual accounts for the previous financial year, which require to be approved at the AGM will be available on the website.

- Be invited to any Special General Meeting (SGM)
- Be able to vote at the AGM on:
 - The appointment of the external auditor
 - Election of Board members
 - Other matters on which a vote may be called
- Be able to stand for election to become a member of the Board of Management
- Be able to nominate other shareholders for election
- Receive a copy of the Association's Rules and Share Certificate
- Be invited to any shareholder meetings
- Be entered into the Share Members Annual Prize Draw

To become a share member of Argyll Community Housing Association, please complete an application form, which can be found on our website <https://www.acha.co.uk/get-involved-membership/> or you can pick up an application form at any of our offices.

ACHA's Community Action Fund

As the year goes on, several registered charities have benefited from ACHA's **Community Action Fund**. 26 registered charities have already received up to £500 in funding in 2024 to help realise their ambitions and ideas.

The Route 81 Youth Project in Garelochhead used their donation to help run their summer holiday programme for 25 young people. Activities such as canoeing, raft building, sponsored cycling and an inter-generational picnic with Cosslett Residential Home, Dumbarton residents were on the programme. The group also visited Ardyne Fish Farm, Dunoon, Hill House, Helensburgh, The Sealife Centre, Loch Lomond and M&Ds Theme park in Motherwell.

Another charity which benefitted from a donation was Oban Winter Festival for their annual 10-day event in Oban in November. This year the theme of the Festival was "Oceans and Seas" There were markets for local produce and arts and crafts, a Haggis Festival, Winter Woodlands illuminations and a grand finale concert as well as



Lexi McDonald, aged 6, enjoys a visit to Oban's Winter Festival



numerous other exhibitions and events. The festival was enjoyed by the local community and the many tourists it attracts to Oban.

The Community Action Fund is open all year round for registered charities in Argyll and

Bute to apply for up to £500 to assist with their projects and initiatives. If your charity could use some funding, please think about submitting an application to the fund. Applications are considered by ACHA's Board of Management who meet every 8 weeks.

Further information and an application form is available at <https://www.acha.co.uk/services-community-action-fund/> or contact us on **01546 605922**.

Christmas Card Competition Runners up!

Runners ups Rowan MacDougall, aged 11 and Evie Wardle, aged 12 (both from Oban) each won a £10 voucher.



Rowan



Evie

Our Performance

Our 2023/2024 Annual Landlord report provides information on our progress towards meeting the performance requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and is available to download from our website – previous copies are also available to download - <https://www.acha.co.uk/news-landlord-report/>.

You can also view and compare ACHA's performance against other landlords on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk. A copy of the ACHA Engagement Plan for the forthcoming year is available via the following link—<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/argyll-community-housing-association-ltd/engagement-plan>.

Report a Significant Performance Failure

A significant performance failure is a serious concern about a landlord which significantly affects a number of tenants. A group of tenants or an individual acting on behalf of tenants, such as a representative of a registered tenants' organisation, can report a significant performance failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

When a service failure affects only one tenant or a small number of tenants, this will be dealt with as a complaint.

Further information on significant performance failures can be found via the link below or you can contact us to request a hard copy of the factsheet - <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-tenants/read-our-factsheets-for-tenants/significant-performance-failures-information-for-tenants-of-social-landlords/>.



If you want to tell us about an extra special service that a member of staff has provided you or a repair carried out promptly and efficiently—feel free to let us know.

Please Contact our Customer Service Centre—0800 028 2755.

You said

We listened

When you give us feedback, we listen. Whether this is through a compliment, complaint or through our wide range of involvement and engagement platforms. Take a look at all the things you said about our services and how we responded.

You said

Face to face meetings should be held with elderly tenants accompanied by a family member or representative when implementing our new Decant Policy. To Decant is a term used to explain the process where tenants are required to move from their homes to alternative accommodation, either temporarily or permanently whilst repair work is undertaken, or due to health and safety concerns or in the event of an emergency.

We listened

We are developing new internal processes which include face to face meetings being held with elderly tenants accompanied by a family member or representative when implementing the Decant Policy.

You said

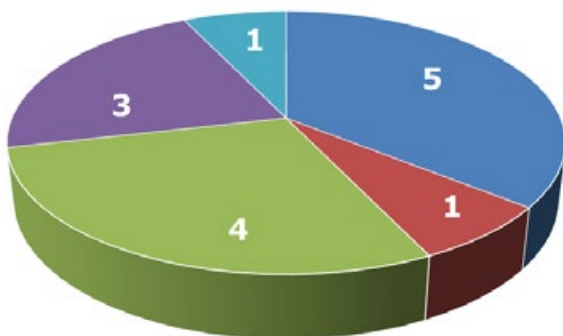
Allotment rents should remain affordable when incorporating the Allotment policy into the Estate Management policy.

We listened

Allotment rents will no longer go up automatically each year at the same percentage increase as our flats and houses, instead the allotment rents will be set separately and the rent approved by ACHA's Board of Management.

Compliments

We received a total of 14 compliments between April and the end of September 2024, the majority of which were from tenants, and fall under the following categories.

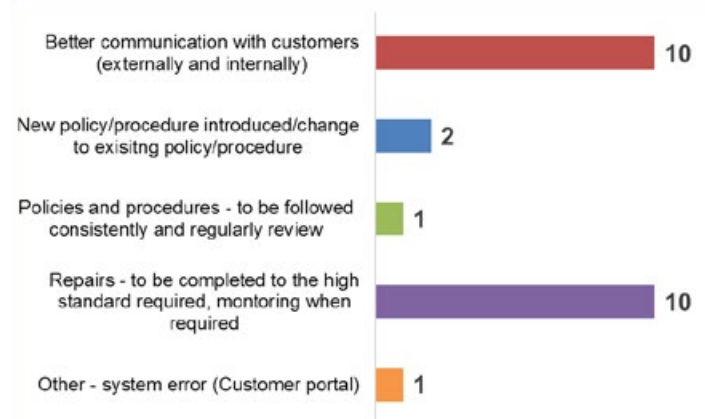


- Welfare rights and energy assistance
- Tenancy (advice and assistance)
- Repairs
- Grounds / tree maintenance & winter works
- Estate management

Complaints

Of the 44 complaints responded to by the end of September 2024, 57% were upheld, partially upheld or resolved, 43% were not upheld.

54.5% of the complaints to which we responded to identified lessons that could be learnt by the association.



Winter Gas Safety

Winter weather highlights how many of us rely on gas to keep us warm, provide hot water and cook our meals. It is important that gas appliances are working properly and safely and don't break down when they are needed most. Therefore, allowing access to your home to have your gas appliance serviced every year by the AHFA gas engineers helps keep your appliances working safely and efficiently. In addition to this the gas engineer checks that your appliances are not producing harmful or deadly carbon monoxide.

Every year in the UK there are around 60 deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning. It is dubbed the "silent killer" according to the NHS.

Although providing access for your annual service and having your CO alarm checked by the gas engineer is one of the safest things you can do, you should also be aware of the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.

These include headaches, dizziness, nausea, tiredness and breathlessness. If you have any



of these symptoms, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do symptoms improve if you leave the house?
- Are others in the home suffering the same, including pets?

If you suspect there is a carbon monoxide or gas leak, leave the house and ring the appropriate emergency phone number (**Gas Emergency Service 0800 111 999**). Always seek medical advice if you suspect you have been exposed to it.

How to avoid frozen pipes

During the winter months the water pipes in your home are at risk of freezing when the temperature drops. Frozen pipes can leave you without running water and they are at risk of bursting and flooding your home.

There are some steps you can take to prevent your pipes from freezing during the cold weather:

- **Leave your heating on if possible**
Set your thermostat at 12-15C when you're away from the property. This keeps the air inside warm to help stop internal pipes from freezing.
- **Open cabinet doors and loft hatches**
Allow warm air in your home to circulate around pipes under sinks or in the attic.
- **Run your taps**
It is harder for water to freeze if it's running, so turn your taps on and off regularly.

It is very important to know how to turn off the water in your home just in case the worst happens, so familiarise yourself with the location of your stopcock.

More advice regarding this can be found on the following link from Scottish Water:

<https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Your-Home/Campaigns/Be-Prepared-in-Winter>. If you have any issues relating to your water pipes freezing or bursting, then please contact us directly on **0800 028 2755**.



Our service during adverse weather

Over recent years, travel disruptions have become more frequent due to the worsening weather conditions. These disruptions could be caused by last minute delays, closures or cancellations, and could affect both road and ferry travel.

Travel updates can be found below:

Road Delays/Closures:

<https://trafficscotland.org/currentincidents/>

Ferry Delays/Cancellations:

<https://www.calmac.co.uk/service-status>

<https://www.western-ferries.co.uk/servicestatus>

Please know, we will do our very best to keep any appointments we have made with you. Sometimes short notice cancellations may be unavoidable. If this is the case, one of our staff will contact you to arrange another suitable time for our visit. If your appointment with AHFA is affected by poor weather and last minute cancellations, we thank you for your patience and cooperation to get appointments rearranged.

Should our day to day delivery of services be affected by a weather event we will communicate with tenants via our website and Facebook pages. In some instances, there may be a decision to suspend normal repairs and maintenance services. This may be done to allow for our staff to be deployed to assist our most vulnerable tenants and the local authorities.

Gritting

As we are coming in to Winter, the requirement for roads and paths to be gritted will become more frequent. The ACHA Group does not carry out gritting on a reactive basis and it doesn't have the resources to carry out a gritting service throughout every estate where our homes are. The following parties are responsible for gritting in the area:

- Argyll and Bute Council are responsible for gritting the majority of the roads and paths;
- Tenants, Occupiers or Owners are

responsible for gritting their own paths and driveways from the boundary inwards;

- The ACHA Group will routinely grit our office areas and sheltered housing complexes. Where possible we will look to identify areas where a high proportion of tenants may be considered as vulnerable.

There are grit bins located throughout the areas we cover and working with Argyll and Bute Council we will endeavour to keep this topped up, but it should be noted that occasionally this material is in short supply.

Storms and Floods

The ACHA Group doesn't have the resources to provide preventative measures for flooding, but we will respond to requests made via the repairs service for help if a home is flooded.

During a storm surge any call outs to water ingress from roofs during the storm will be

limited to emergency measures only. The full repairs of these issues will be scheduled when weather conditions return to safe levels.

If our repairs and maintenance services is affected tenants will be informed as mentioned above.

Getting the most out of your Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) this Winter

Some of you will be entering Winter with an ASHP system in your home as your main heating source for the first time, others may have had theirs installed for a longer period of time. With this in mind along with the current cost of living crisis, providing some reminders about your ASHP may be helpful.

ASHPs work in a similar way to a fridge, only in reverse. Powered by electricity, they

collect naturally occurring heat from the air (even when temperatures are below 0°) and boost it. The resulting heat is then used to heat your home. With ASHPs working in this way they are considered to be one of the most efficient and sustainable heating solutions for homes.

Follow the link to view a video from the Energy Saving Trust for some hints and tips on ASHPs and how to get the best out of

the system: <https://youtu.be/EqIGRGbXF0o>

It is always important that your ASHP is working properly, particularly at this time of year. So, if you receive notification from AHFA that we need carry out safety checks or services to your ASHP please ensure you allow us access to your home.

If you have any issues relating to your ASHP please call **0800 028 2755**.

Emergencies sometimes happen! Don't worry, we're here 24/7!

Reporting emergency repairs

Emergency repairs are ones which are needed to avoid serious health and safety risk, or prevent serious structural damage to your home. If you are in doubt, you should phone and give the operator as much information as possible, and they will be able to advise you if your repair is an emergency.

All emergencies must be phoned in on the Freephone number **0800 028 2755** – this service is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you need to phone us with an emergency:

- Please have your postcode ready, it helps us to quickly locate your property and confirm that it belongs to ACHA;
- Operators will talk you through the problem and try to find a fix if possible (e.g. tripped fuse switch). If we cannot find a fix we will arrange for someone to visit you;
- Please remember that we are here to help – emergencies can be worrying, but the more information you can give us then the faster we can help you;
- We can't guarantee to complete a full repair when we attend but we will at least make it safe, and provide further support as needed.

New partnership with Bield Response 24

ACHA is pleased to announce that we have entered into a partnership agreement with Bield Response 24 (BR24) Alarm Receiving Centre. BR24 will now be taking all of our out of hours repairs calls and monitoring our warden call systems at our Sheltered Housing complexes. BR24 took over this contract from Hanover Scotland in October. Our customers should not have experienced any disruption during this change. All repairs should continue to be reported on **0800 028 2755**.



Ventilating your home during Winter

In the summer most of us are able to open the windows when the weather is good, but during winter it's more difficult to ventilate your home, particularly when you don't want the heat escaping. Ventilating your home is important to your health, as well as the maintenance of your home. Polluted and humid air can cause coughs and headaches and also encourages the spread of damp and mould.

Here are some tips to ventilate your home during the winter:-

- Open windows on both sides of your home – this way you don't need to open them for very long as the cross-draft will drive out polluted air quickly and you can close your windows again. This should be done at least once a day;
- Use any ventilation systems that you have, for example extractor fans, window vents. This is particularly important in kitchens and bathrooms where you get more condensation;
- Do not dry laundry on radiators. Where possible hang outside to dry, but if you need to dry indoors use a clothes airer, ensure you leave a window open nearby to allow the laundry to dry and avoid build-up of condensation.

ACHA Customer Portal

Check your
balance

Make a payment

Update
personal details

Log a
communication/
query



Check existing
repairs

Request a
new repair

Update
contact details

Report
anti-social
behaviour

Register at **acha.co.uk** or phone **0800 028 2755** for assistance

Due to the Christmas and New Year holidays, Argyll Community Housing Association will be closed from 2pm on Tuesday 24th December, until 9am, Monday 30th December and closed again from 2pm on Tuesday 31st December 2024, until 9am on Friday 3rd January 2025.

Best Wishes for 2025 and a peaceful and prosperous New Year from Argyll Community Housing Association's Board of Management and Staff.

If you would like this newsletter in larger print, in an alternative language, in an audio or electronic format or you would like someone to read it or explain any of it please contact Charlene Munro on **01546 605855** or communications@acha.co.uk.

All our newsletters are available on our website - www.acha.co.uk

Bute

Haig House, 13-16 Longhill Crescent, Rothesay, Bute, PA20 0JT

☎ **01546 605870**

✉ **housing.bute@acha.co.uk**

Cowal

Fairmile, Highland Avenue, Dunoon PA23 8PB,

☎ **01546 605950**

✉ **housing.cowal@acha.co.uk**

Helensburgh and Lomond

Lamont House, 9-19 Stuckleckie Road, Helensburgh, G84 7NL

☎ **01546 605920**

✉ **housing.lomond@acha.co.uk**

Islay

11 Flora Street, Bowmore, PA43 7JX

☎ **01546 605890**

✉ **housing.islay@acha.co.uk**

Kintyre

Old Quay Head, Campbeltown, PA28 6ED

☎ **01546 605880**

✉ **housing.kintyre@acha.co.uk**

Mid Argyll

Dalriada House, Lochgilphead, PA31 8JL

☎ **01546 605800**

✉ **housing.midargyll@acha.co.uk**

Oban, Lorn and Isles

Menzies House, Glenshellach Business Park, Oban, PA34 4RY

☎ **01546 605930**

✉ **housing.lorn@acha.co.uk**



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