

Putting Tenants First

August 2009

ACHA's First New Build Homes



ACHA's First Newly Built Homes

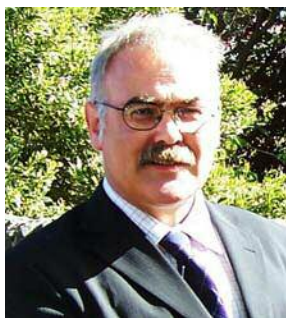
Jackie Baillie MSP cuts the ribbon on Smiddy Court, Whistlefield Road, Garelochhead on 19th June. Pictured above are also the new tenants of this first phase along with Bill McIntyre the Chairman of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee. ACHA was delighted to be able to let their first new build homes and this first phase provides 4 flats for affordable rent. The next phase will provide an additional 8 homes which will be completed in the spring of next year.

Another First for ACHA

ACHA was delighted to be the first housing association in Scotland to receive Accreditation from TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service). In winning this award the Director of TPAS said that ACHA is "genuinely committed to both listening to tenants and learning from them". The engraved glass trophy will be displayed at each of ACHA's area offices in turn.



Alastair MacGregor and members of the Argyll Tenants Panel with the TPAS trophy.



Chief Executive's column

This newsletter gives some examples of ACHA's progress in providing new build and refurbished affordable housing. At a personal level it was a moving day for myself and colleagues to attend the opening of our first completed new build houses at Garelochhead in June. The value of good quality, affordable housing in providing stability for families and a good environment is often overlooked in our busy daily lives. While the media has become totally focused on MP's expenses, another scandal doesn't get the coverage deserved and that is the number of people in this country without

the most basic commodity - a warm comfortable home. Through our expanding new build programme we hope to address this issue across our communities. At the present time there are over 5,000 waiting and transfer applicants on the Association's lists. The scale of the challenge is huge but at a time of economic uncertainty new housing can deliver not just hope for people poorly housed but jobs for the building industry.

You will also see in the current newsletter that the Association will be carrying out its first tenants satisfaction survey later in the year. I would encourage you to participate. It is absolutely vital that the Association, in terms of future plans and service delivery, takes evidence on what we do well but more importantly, on what we can improve on. Our tenants are the key to that information.

Could I conclude by thanking our tenants who have worked with us recently in tackling the scourge of drug dealing in our communities. We continue to have success in the courts in evicting drug dealers. This would not be achieved without the support and the quality of information provided by you.

Best wishes, *Alastair MacGregor*, Chief Executive

New Energy Performance Certificates

From this year onwards all newly let homes will have an inspection and a certificate which details the energy performance of the home. This includes an analysis of windows and doors, heating systems and insulation measures. This will help ACHA plan improvements to the energy performance of homes in the future.



ACHA has 4 **Area Committees** and you are cordially invited to attend the 2009 AGM of your local Area Committee:

Oban, Lorn & Isles - 28th August

Mid Argyll & Kintyre - 31st August

Helensburgh & Lomond - 20th August

Cowal & Bute - 19th August

Please speak to your local ACHA staff who will be happy to give you the time and venue. **Come along and hear what has been happening in your area.**

Brought Back to Life in Inveraray

Major refurbishment work to create 5 new flats at Relief Land in Inveraray is underway. The flats haven't been lived in for around 10 years due to their poor condition. The building is category A listed, built in 1775 (one of the oldest buildings in Inveraray) and definitely our oldest property. The flats are due to be completed and let to new tenants in August of this year. Pictured above are some of the local staff who came to see progress with the flats.



New Tenants Eagerly Await the keys to their new homes.

The first phase of our new build development in Campbeltown will be ready in September this year with further phases due for completion in Spring of next year. New Parliament Place homes were designed in collaboration with local tenants and feature back and front gardens, allotments and highly energy efficient spaces, including solar panels.

Members of staff and ACHA's Mid Argyll & Kintyre Area Committee were very impressed when they visited New Parliament Place in Campbeltown recently.

Pictured right are students from Dunoon Grammar at the official opening of the Ardenslate shop project. ACHA was involved in the refurbishment of an area near the school with these unusual new railings and bins based on designs done by local young people.

Members of the ACHA Bute and Cowal Area Committee attended along with project partners from the Councils Community Learning and Regeneration Dept.



Ardrishaig is ACHA's latest site for new homes where work has begun on 18 flats at a former builders yard. This will provide badly needed new homes in mid Argyll and the flats will be ready around August next year. There are currently around 5,000 applicants on the HOME Argyll waiting list so any new homes that ACHA can build are very badly needed.

In addition to providing new homes these developments also provide employment for local people through local builders.



This is the architects impression of what the new flats in Ardrishaig will look like.

Croft Avenue, Oban

Last year ACHA demolished 4 houses which were suffering from serious subsidence. We are tendering at the moment for 2 houses and 6 flats on the site. These new homes are due to be completed next summer. Pictured are some of the Oban, Lorn & Isles Area Committee and ACHA staff who recently came to see progress with the site.



Highfield, Bowmore, Islay

We purchased this house from Islay & Jura CVS (Council for Voluntary Services) and we are currently tendering for the refurbishment of this building which will provide 3 new homes on the island.



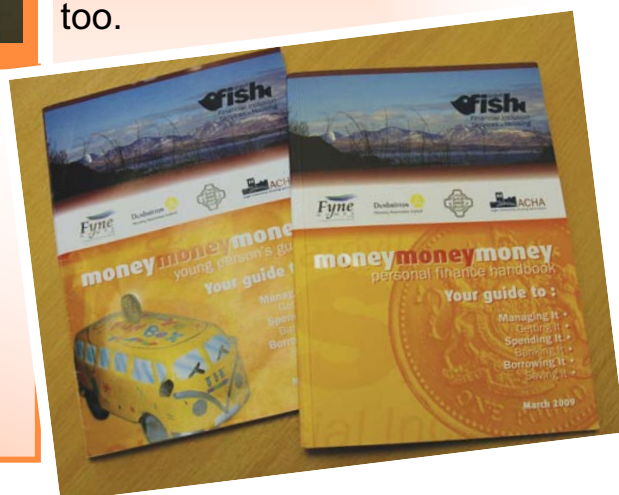
“Helping tenants is what makes this job so worthwhile”. This was the comment from Jackie Hardie, Housing and Neighbourhood Services Officer in our Helensburgh office when she helped a tenant recently. After attending a welfare benefits training course Jackie helped a lady to claim the welfare benefits due to her. This enabled the tenant to keep her part time job and also keep up her rent payments.



“I love my new kitchen” Mrs McLean from Crinan wanted to tell us how pleased she was with her new kitchen and how considerate the contractors had been. “I had very little inconvenience and the water and power were only off for short periods”. Also pictured is Lee Buckley the Property Services Officer in ACHA's mid Argyll office.

Money Money Money

All tenants received a copy of this handbook in April and we hope you've found it useful. ACHA and the other housing associations have also produced a similar one for young people (pictured below) which will be distributed through schools. Find it on ACHA's website too.





With a Little Help From my Friends Strachur Play Park (which is leased by the tenants association) has been given a lovely new make-over. Connaught (one of ACHA's major contractors) agreed to donate materials and some labour for this worthy cause. ACHA staff volunteered to help out along with tenants and their families and in no time had the play area looking great—well done to everyone!

Discretionary Housing Benefit

This is not a benefit that is well known and is a top-up for people who receive some Housing Benefit. It can be paid if you are working or not and is a discretionary benefit normally paid for six months but can be renewed if your circumstances have not changed. Discretionary Housing Benefit can be paid if:

- You are having financial difficulties
- There are extra costs due to illness or disability in your family
- You have recently started work after a period of unemployment

Contact Argyll and Bute Council's Housing Benefit staff or your local ACHA office

INSPECTION TIME

The Scottish Government inspects the work of all housing associations and is due to be with ACHA in early September. The inspection team wanted us to pass on to you that getting tenants views, good or bad, is key. "We would encourage tenants to get involved in the inspection and a Tenant Assessor will be part of the team to get the issues that matter to ACHA tenants".

We will be given a rating (A,B,C,D) and pointers for improvement which we will pass on to you in future newsletters.

TENANTS SATISFACTION SURVEY

ACHA will be carrying out it's first full survey of tenant opinion very soon. You will be sent a postal questionnaire or may be offered a telephone questionnaire. Please help us improve our services by taking 5 minutes to fill this in. You will also be sent a reply paid envelope so it won't cost you anything to return it to us. Thank you for your time.

ANNUAL REPORT

ACHA 's first annual report was issued recently and the summary of the report was included in your last tenants newsletter. Thanks to all our members who provided feed back to us. Everyone will get an individual reply and we'll be bearing the comments in mind as we look to improve our services and our next annual report.

How To Contact the ACHA Area Offices

Helensburgh & Lomond telephone 01436 658700
31 James Street, Helensburgh G84 8AS

Cowal telephone 01369 708688
Dolphin Hall, Manse Avenue, Dunoon PA23 8DQ

Bute telephone 01700 501314
Union Street, Rothesay PA20 0HD

Mid Argyll telephone 01546 604800
Dalriada House, Lochgilphead PA31 8ST

Kintyre telephone 01586 559055
Old Quay Head, Campbeltown PA28 6ED

Islay telephone 01496 301312
Jamieson Street, Bowmore PA43 7HP

Oban, Lorn and Isles telephone 01631 567962
Albany Street, Oban PA34 4AW

Mull telephone 01688 302051
Breadalbane Street, Tobermory, Mull PA75 6PX

How Do I Report A Repair?

phone our FREEPHONE number

0800 028 2755

(remember that calls from a mobile will not be free)
When your repair has been done ask for a Repairs
Satisfaction Survey and tell us how it went.



Argyll & Bute Rape Crisis Centre was set up in February 2006 and offers confidential support and information. We acknowledge the brave step taken to seek support. We never judge. We believe. We empower and offer informed choices.

tel 0800 121 4685

E-mail support@rapecrisiscentre-argyll-bute.org.uk

Website www.rapecrisiscentre-argyll-bute.org.uk

ACHA's

Community Action Fund
Enable (Helensburgh)
Kirkmichael Tenants Assoc
Link Club (Kintyre)
Senior Citizens (C'town)
KADAS
New Start, Oban
Mid Argyll under 14 football
Achnamara Village Hall
Ardrishaig Youth Sailing

These are just some of the groups who have been successful in a small grant of up to £300 from ACHA in recent months. If you are involved with a community group who could make good use of a grant then please contact ACHA on 01631 567912 and ask for an application form for the **Community Action Fund**.

Check out our new website:
www.acha.co.uk



Staff in the Helensburgh office took part in 'Fruity Friday' recently to raise money for World Cancer Research—thank you to everyone who donated.