

### ACHA welcomes First Minister to view new housing in Oban

Argyll Community Housing Association, ACHA, welcomed Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, to Oban. The First Minister visited the Association's offices at Menzies House where she met tenants Andy Birnie, Yvonne McHardie, and Linda Swann, ACHA staff and the Association's Chair, Mike Brown.



The First Minister then visited the Association's new build development completed recently at Catalina Avenue in Oban where she met Andy and Euphemia Birnie and was shown round their new home. Pictured right with Brendan O'Hara MP

The First Minister was also briefed on the next phase of housing to be built by the Association at Catalina Avenue which started on site in July and will provide 17 one, three and four bedroom homes to add to the 40 already completed.

Alastair MacGregor, ACHA's Chief Executive commented

"The First Minister was keen to see the partnership working between the Scottish Government and ACHA which is delivering new homes to meet housing need in Oban. We were pleased that she was able to take the time from a busy schedule to meet with tenants, staff and voluntary Board members to see the partnership delivery on the ground."

He further added

"The visit also gave us the opportunity to brief the First Minister on the establishment of the Association's Welfare Rights Information Project which has recently been awarded £196,000 from the Scottish Government to provide advice and assistance to the Association's tenants."

## Alastair MacGregor, Chief Executive



I have had the pleasure of recently visiting tenants who had moved into the Association's new build development on the outskirts of Bowmore on Islay. My first observation of the new homes was that they fitted in very well with the architectural tradition of the island. On going into the homes I was struck by the impressive space standards and the quality of the finishes. On speaking to our new tenants their initial comments were about how energy efficient the homes were and how the layout and design met their needs. My reflections, having visited our new development on Islay, we had delivered quality homes that met housing needs for the future on the island. The visit also struck me about the importance of continuing to build to meet housing needs across Argyll and Bute.

The Scottish Government has recently announced its willingness to help Syrian refugees. ACHA, as a charity and a housing provider, has intimated to the Scottish Government and Argyll and Bute Council that we will work with them in any practical way we can to help in this humanitarian crisis. In practical terms this will involve the Association offering housing and appropriate support along with our partners. At a personal level, I feel humbled with the messages of support I have heard across Argyll and Bute offering help to fellow human beings in a time of crisis.

I would like to finish by thanking once again everyone who has entered Garden in Bloom. It has been a challenging growing season but yet again so many of our tenants have provided stunning displays which are a credit to so many in terms of hard work and horticultural innovation.

Alastair MacGregor  
Chief Executive

## Repairs—we want to hear from you!!

Whenever a repair is carried out to your home our operatives from Argyll Homes For ALL (AHFA) will leave you a satisfaction card for you to complete. We really appreciate you taking the time to let us know if things have been done well or not so well - your comments, good and bad, help us make our services better for everyone!



The next time you have a repair carried out please take a few moments to complete the satisfaction card then just pop it in your nearest post box – you don't even need a stamp. If you lose it or are not left a card just give our Customer Service Centre a call on **0800 028 2755** and we'll get a card sent out to you.

## Email address prize draw

We offer our tenants various ways to communicate with us. All tenants who register their email address with us are entered into a prize draw to win £100 worth of vouchers. To register your email address simply email, telephone or visit your local office, (as per the details on the back page).

Congratulations to Mr G Lochrie from Dunoon who was picked as the winner of the Email address prize draw this year and wins £100 of high street vouchers.



## Your Voice—Tenant Scrutiny Panel

We are delighted to announce that the 'Your Voice' Panel held their first meeting in August. The Panel, made up of 6 tenants representing areas of Argyll & Bute decided that they would scrutinise ACHA's Minimum Letting Standard – the standard a property should meet before it is let to a new tenant.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) were there to support the Panel and talk them through the practicalities of scrutinising services. They also received information on the process ACHA follows when a property becomes empty.

Stephen Allcroft, a member of the Your Voice Panel said *"it is great that tenants can get involved at looking in more detail at the services that ACHA deliver to its customers. The Panel members task is to check to see if ACHA actually do what they say they do. We are going to be visiting empty properties to test this and we hope that new tenants will be happy to speak to us and tell us their views and experiences when they moved into their new home. Once we have completed the exercise we will report our findings to ACHA's Board of Management"*.

The "Your Voice" group was set up to encourage tenants and other service users to get directly involved in looking at everything ACHA does, and in particular, what information is given to the Scottish Housing Regulator and our tenants in terms of our performance.

The Group is independent of ACHA but is supported by us to achieve their goals. It is up to the "Your Voice" group as to which areas of services are scrutinised and to what degree.

If you think you might like to spare a little time to be involved in this then please contact any ACHA office and ask a member of staff to put your name and contact details forward.

## Annual Garden in Bloom Competition



Our Area Committees take into account the geography of Argyll & Bute and agree how each Garden in Bloom competition is carried out.

Pictured left are the winners of Best Garden (Mid Argyll), Mr and Mrs McLeod, along with ACHAs Charlie Summers.

A full list of the 2015 Garden in Bloom competition winners is available on our website.

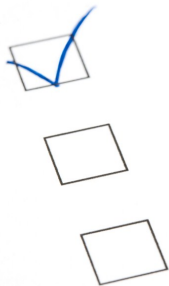
**Mid Argyll, Kintyre, Helensburgh and Lomond** all have Grow the Biggest Sunflower competitions. This year the winners were:

**Kintyre**—Brooke Davies from Dalintober pre-5 unit who's sunflower grew to 198 cm (pictured right with ACHA's Katie Anderson and Fiona Paterson).

**Mid Argyll**—Archie Moran from Badden Farm Nursery, who's sunflower grew to 257 cm.

**Helensburgh & Lomond**—the Kiwi Group from the Mulberry Bush Nursery Pre 5 Unit, grew a sunflower to the height of 151.6 cm.





Many of us do not answer to a withheld telephone number, so ACHA have changed our systems to show caller ID information.

All ACHA telephone numbers begin with 01546.

## Tell us what you think of our Landlord report

Our 2014/15 Landlord Report is available to download from our website—  
[www.acha.co.uk](http://www.acha.co.uk).

A printed copy is also available from your local office, alternatively you could phone 01546 605855, or email us at [communications@acha.co.uk](mailto:communications@acha.co.uk).

## If you have ever asked to speak to the manager, please read on...

There are times when all of us believe that speaking to a manager is the only way to get the answer we are looking for. However, did you know our Customer Service Assistants (CSAs), your first point of contact when you ring or visit one of our local offices, will be able to deal with your enquiry swiftly and professionally, without the need to speak to a manager.

Our CSAs are extensively trained in all areas of the services we deliver and, as they provide a Duty Officer Service in our local offices, you will usually not need a pre-arranged appointment.

Our CSAs can deal with enquiries about a wide range of matters including rent, arrears, invoices, factoring, repairs, applications for housing and just about any other enquiry you can think of! They are also able to make referrals to ACHA's Welfare Rights Service if you are having difficulties with Housing Benefit or other benefit claims. The CSAs at our Customer Service Centre are also able to deal with all of these enquiries plus they are the primary contact for reporting all repairs. It's free to phone them from a landline on 0800 028 2755 or you can report repairs using our online service at [www.acha.co.uk](http://www.acha.co.uk). Our Customer Service Centre staff can also accept debit and credit card payments for rent, invoices and new membership applications.

Occasionally you may find it necessary to use ACHA's formal complaints process. If that is the case, our CSA team are trained to deal with matters quickly and efficiently. Please see our website [www.acha.co.uk](http://www.acha.co.uk) or contact one of our offices for more details. You can find all local office information on the back of this newsletter.



Left to right—Elaine Murray, Lynne McKenna, Paula Darbyshire, Alison MacQueen and Annette Scullion.

### Mid Argyll & Kintyre Area Committee

After a summer of very challenging weather, our 6<sup>th</sup> 'Garden In Bloom' competition has been judged. Since the competition began in 2010, prize winners received a vase along with garden vouchers.

This year for the first time, the winner has been presented with a handsome trophy. The names of new and previous winners will also be displayed in our local offices as a permanent record of all the winners of the competition.

Mrs McGhee of 16 Chalmers Court, Inveraray was presented with her trophy by ACHA Board Member, Councillor MacMillan. Mrs McGhee said, "I am over the moon to have won the garden in bloom competition, although I couldn't have done all this work to my garden without the help of my neighbours, Mr & Mrs Baillie".



### Helensburgh & Lomond Area

**Committee** are delighted with the improvements that have been made to Maitland Court, Helensburgh.

ACHA along with the support of Argyll & Bute Council and the 26 owners who have properties at Maitland Court, the building was re-roofed and roughcast was renewed at 2 of the blocks.

The work was carried out by CCG to a high standard. Mrs E Hendrie, an owner at Maitland Court said "*I have lived in Maitland Court since 1982 and as an owner I am delighted with the result of the recent refurbishment ACHA have been pushing to get this work done for a few years and finally it has happened*".

The Committee are delighted that the owners at Maitland Court supported this project. We hope that more owners will engage with ACHA and agree to necessary works being carried out to their properties where they are in blocks with ACHA owned properties.

The **Bute & Cowal Area Committee** is urgently seeking members. Without members the committee will need to fold - if there is no Bute & Cowal Committee decisions won't be made locally.

Serving as a Committee member is both interesting and worthwhile and you can make a difference to your local community by joining and have more of a say in how your housing is managed. You don't need to be an ACHA tenant, you only need to be an ACHA member by completing the application form and paying £1.00. All members are invited to the AGM where election of members take place.

The Committee meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> month - on average 6 times a year and meetings last no longer than 3 hours – travelling expenses can be claimed. ACHA supports all members to play a full role so no specialist skills required.

If you are interested and want more details on how to become a member contact:

Garrick Collier, Bute & Cowal Area Administration Officer on 01546 605950  
Or call into the Rothesay or Dunoon local ACHA Office.

### Members of Oban, Lorn & Isles Area

**Committee** are seeking motivated individuals with an interest in the decision making processes of the Association within their local area.

The Committee currently has vacancies for 1 tenant and 1 independent member.

Meetings are held bi-monthly at ACHA's Oban Office: Menzies House. Area Committee membership is voluntary and unpaid, but expenses covering travel, subsistence and child care costs are paid.

If you would be interested or would like to nominate someone, please contact Amanda MacKenzie on 01546 605930 for further information or to express interest.



**How to Contact ACHA:**  
**Customer Service Centre**  
**0800 028 2755**

**Bute**

Union Street, Rothesay PA20 0HD  
e-mail: [housing.bute@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.bute@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605870

**Cowal**

Dolphin Hall, Manse Ave, Dunoon  
PA23 8DQ  
e-mail: [housing.cowal@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.cowal@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605950

**Helensburgh & Lomond**

Lamont House, 9-19 Stuckleckie Road,  
Helensburgh, G84 7NL  
e-mail: [housing.lomond@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.lomond@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605920

**Islay**

Jamieson Street, Bowmore PA43 7HP  
e-mail: [housing.islay@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.islay@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605890

**Kintyre**

Old Quay Head, Campbeltown PA28 6ED  
e-mail: [housing.kintyre@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.kintyre@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605880

**Mid Argyll**

Dalriada House, Lochgilphead PA31 8JL  
e-mail: [housing.midargyll@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.midargyll@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605800

**Oban, Lorn and Isles**

Glenshellach Business Park, Oban PA34 4RY  
e-mail: [housing.lorn@acha.co.uk](mailto:housing.lorn@acha.co.uk)  
telephone 01546 605930

**ACHA's Community Action Fund**

If you are part of a registered charity that could make use of a grant up to £500, then contact ACHA on 0800 028 2755 and ask for our Community Action Fund application form - it's only one page. The application form can also be downloaded from our website at [www.acha.co.uk/Services/Communityactionfund.html](http://www.acha.co.uk/Services/Communityactionfund.html). Good luck!

Recent grant recipients included:

1st Port Bannatyne Boys Brigade  
Argyll Voluntary Action  
Bute Advice Centre  
Bute Tiddlers  
Kintyre link Club  
Mid Argyll Pipe Band  
Multiple Sclerosis Centre Mid Argyll

**Are you a Member of ACHA? Only £1 for Life**

If not, you could be missing out on the chance of winning a lovely food hamper.

Each year before Christmas, a draw takes place in our 4 areas, with the lucky winners winning a luxury food hamper. If you would like to become a member of ACHA please contact our Customer Service Centre or any of our local offices.

Please note our offices will be closed on  
25th December, 28th December.

In **2016** our offices will be closed on  
1st January, 4th January, 25th March,  
28th March, 2nd May, 27th May, 30th May  
23rd September, 26th September,  
10th October, 26th December,  
27th December

Every year we have a prize draw for everyone who pays their rent by Direct Debit. The draw takes place at our Annual General Meeting, and this year the lucky winner of £100 high street vouchers is JHR McNeil from Rothesay. If you would like to discuss paying your rent by Direct Debit, please contact your local ACHA office.

If you would like this newsletter in larger print, in an alternative language, on audio CD or in an 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](mailto:communications@acha.co.uk)

All our newsletters are available on our website [www.acha.co.uk](http://www.acha.co.uk)