

Putting Tenants First

Summer 2012

“First new affordable homes in a generation”

These were the words of the Leader of Argyll and Bute Council, Councillor McCuish, at the opening of the site in Dalmally where ACHA will be building eight new houses in the village. With funding contributions from the Scottish Government, Argyll and Bute Council and Scottish Water, the homes will be built by Lochgilphead based construction company M&K MacLeod and are scheduled to be completed by May 2013.



Pictured at the opening of the site for new homes in Dalmally on 29th May are pupils from Dalmally Primary School who planted a commemorative Scots Pine tree at the site.

Also pictured from left to right is Councillor McCuish (Leader of the Council), Alastair MacGregor (Chief Executive of ACHA) and Bill McIntyre (Chair of ACHA's Board).

There are currently 3,900 households in need of housing in Argyll and Bute

ACHA has three sites currently underway for new housing, Park Square in Campbeltown - 32 homes which should be ready in April next year, Ardenslate Road in Dunoon - 24 homes which should be ready by The end of this year and Scott Terrace, Dalmally - 8 homes which are scheduled to be completed by June next year.



Ardenslate Road, Dunoon



Park Square, Campbeltown

In July we'll reach the milestone of the 5th year of the investment programme to Improve all homes by 2015. The first priority was for kitchens and bathrooms which was agreed as a result of consultation during the 2004/2005 stock transfer. We are well on course to complete this work this year with less than 200 homes out of 5,000 still to have a new kitchen and bathroom installed. During the coming year we plan to invest nearly £21million into home improvements. A major part of this will be installing over 1,860 new heating and rewire systems this year. We will continue to improve energy efficiency to homes with 500 packages planned.



New build housing will continue to be a priority; we have just completed 4 new homes in Lochgoilhead and are on site with 32 in Campbeltown and 24 in Dunoon. We were delighted that the Leader of the Council, Councillor Roddy McCuish was able to launch our latest new build housing in Dalmally. The 8 new affordable homes will be the first built in the village since the 1980s. Adding to this we plan to build 8 new homes in Port Ellen on Islay. All going well this scheme will start on site in September 2012.

The Government's welfare reform proposals come into effect in 2013. A new all-encompassing benefit called Universal Credit will roll up all benefits including Housing Benefit. This will be paid to you directly and it's important that you make arrangements to pay this to us when the time comes. There will also be a cap on housing benefit based on what size of property the Government thinks is fair for you to receive benefit on. In practice this means that many of you who are not pensioners who currently have their housing costs paid, whatever size of home you occupy, will have your benefit capped. We will be contacting as many of you as possible that will be affected by this and on the wider issues of welfare reform. However, if you have any concerns in this area please contact your local ACHA area office.

I would like to finish off by thanking everyone who is entering our Garden in Bloom competitions. In the last couple of years, the gardens entered have been a testimony to hard work and green fingered commitment.

Best Wishes Alastair MacGregor, Chief Executive

You could win £100 every year....

With increased postage and printing costs we are hoping to send more of our tenants newsletters out by e-mail in the coming months. We do appreciate that not everyone has an email address but if you do you could be entered into a prize draw every year and win £100 of one-4-all vouchers which can be used at a multitude of shops. To enter the prize draw all you have to do is contact us and give permission to use your e-mail address to send out correspondence to you including this quarterly newsletter. Your e-mail address will not be shared with any other person or organisation and will be stored securely.

Send an e-mail to the following address to give us permission to use your e-mail address:

enquiries@acha.co.uk

Remember to tell us your address so we can take you off the postal mailing list.

Are you under 25?

If so, read on

We are working on our first Youth Strategy and would like your comments on the draft.

The strategy contains information about employment, money matters for young people, grants for youth groups, play areas, care and support, young people in their own tenancy, other agencies, partnerships and more. We're talking to the Argyll and Bute Youth Forum in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council on the subject but we'd really like to hear from you. If you can spare 10 minutes to read the strategy and fill in our short questionnaire we would be very grateful. Log on to www.acha.co.uk and look for the link to **Youth Strategy** on our home page.

thanks





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With the programme of work for the replacement of kitchens, bathrooms, heating and re-wiring well underway we've been turning out attention to external walls and roofs.

Pictured left are four examples of homes which recently had a dramatic face-lift. We've also been working with people who bought their flats to help them get grants to enable those buildings to also get this badly needed work done.

While the results look really nice, the outside render helps to protect the building and where the render is broken or missing the building can suffer serious problems.

A programme of roughcasting is being undertaken across Argyll and Bute with priority being given to buildings most in need. To achieve this we will be working closely with our private neighbours to improve our houses.



Glebelands, Rothesay ▲ ▼



	kitchens and bathroom		windows and external doors		heating and rewire		roofs and roughcast	
	Total up to end March 2012	2012/2013	Total up to end March 2012	2012/2013	Total up to end March 2012	2012/2013	Total up to end March 2012	2012/2013
Bute & Cowal	2,045	579	874	447	1,042	392	132	165
H'burgh & Lomond	1,732	60	522	213	666	309	44	165
Lorn & Isles	2,138	91	960	162	521	599	104	165
Mid Argyll & Kintyre	2,032	389	1,229	198	595	563	102	165
Total completed	7,947		3,585		2,824		382	



Scottish Housing Regulator

The Scottish Government has agreed a Social Housing Charter which will set out the standards and outcomes that you can expect from ACHA, your landlord.

The new Scottish Housing Regulator will monitor and report on how well ACHA is doing in terms of achieving what will be set out in the Charter. This will give you an insight into ACHA's performance compared to other landlords.

The Regulator will use a set of indicators and it would like to consult on the proposed range of indicators and information that will be used to measure ACHA's performance. The Regulator would also like your input into how they should report their findings to you. The consultation runs from 1st June to 24th August and you can get in touch by **telephone:** 0141 271 3810 **e-mail:** consultation@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk or going to the Regulators **website:** www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/consultations

Tenants Home Contents Insurance Scheme

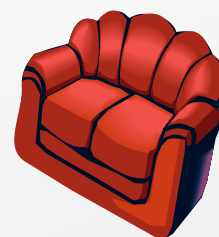
Peace of mind at an affordable cost

This insurance policy covers your household goods and contents, the protection ranges from the loss of your keys to the contents of your freezer. An additional option to consider is the Accidental Damage Cover which is only a few pence extra a week.

If you are over 60 the weekly payment is reduced and we would be more than happy to give you information on what your weekly payment would be for different levels of cover and how to make payments as easy as possible.

One simple application form is all it takes to join ...

... call our home contents insurance section on 01546 605978 or 01546 605818



Home Fire Safety Visit

A visit consists of a short tour of your home where helpful fire safety advice is given specific to your home. This advice ranges from the safe use of electrical extension cables to what action you should take if you are unfortunate enough to have a fire in your home. During the tour, Fire Service personnel will test to make sure your smoke detectors are working properly (call ACHA now if you need smoke detectors).

The Fire Service would be delighted to arrange a Home Fire Safety Visit for you.

Call now on Freephone 08000 731 999

Dog owners have to be responsible for their dog at all times, including in their own home and garden. Following a change to the Dangerous Dogs Act in 2011 a dog owner can be held criminally responsible where a dog is found to be dangerously out of control in any place.

Under the new legislation, dog owners could be issued with an ASBO. Children are particularly at risk as they often don't recognise the warning signs a dog will give and may unknowingly increase a dog's anxiety and fear which could cause it to bite.

Help to keep your child safe by encouraging them from an early age not to approach dogs they don't know.



As you know the Government has introduced the new Welfare Reform Act 2011.

This is likely to have implications for many of you and we wanted to create this new regular feature in our newsletter to keep you up to date with changes and how they might affect you.....



If you get Housing Benefit to help pay your rent, from next April the amount you get will go down if you 'under-occupy' your home. This means that your home has more bedrooms than the Government (not ACHA) say that you need. You might have heard about this in the news referred to as the **bedroom tax**.

The change to Housing Benefit by the Westminster Government means that from next year, you may have to find around £10 a week more to pay your rent or have to pay towards rent for the first time.

It will affect you whether you currently just get *some* housing benefit to help with your rent (because maybe you are working but have a low wage) or *all* of your rent paid (for example because you are unemployed or unable to work due to health problems). It will also apply even if, when you moved into your home, you weren't under-occupying and if you have already asked us about trying to find a smaller home. The only exception is for pensioner tenants (those born before 6th October 1951).

ACHA is committed to helping you plan for this change at a time when money is so tight. Over the next few weeks, based on the records we have about who lives in your home, we will be writing to you to tell you what we think this change means for you.

Please get in touch now or when you receive your letter and we'll arrange for you to speak to one of our Welfare Rights Officers about how this change might affect you. We can try to help you reduce the amount of money you will have to find to pay your rent from next April. You might receive one of these letters because we think that you under-occupy, even if you currently don't get any housing benefit. If this is the case, it's still a good idea to give us a call.

Every week we find ACHA tenants who are missing out so help us help you claim what you are entitled to. Even if you don't receive a letter from us ... please phone your local area office to arrange to see one of the Welfare Rights staff.

Household Tips !

If your kitchen sink or bathroom basin becomes blocked or the water drains away very slowly try these remedies:

Pour down boiling water and washing up liquid (good for clearing build up of fats). If that doesn't work, try putting some Soda Crystals down the sink (available at most hardware shops). If all else fails use a trusty plunger and that should clear any blockage.

If you report this as a repair you may be charged for unblocking it.

Clearing a blocked waste pipe



How to Contact ACHA:

Customer Service Centre 0800 028 2755

(Freephone but mobile charges will apply)

Helensburgh & Lomond

31 James Street, Helensburgh G84 8AS

e-mail: housing.lomond@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605920

Cowal

Dolphin Hall, Manse Ave, Dunoon PA23 8DQ

e-mail: housing.cowal@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605950

Bute

Union Street, Rothesay PA20 0HD

e-mail: housing.bute@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605870

Mid Argyll

Dalriada House, Lochgilphead PA31 8ST

e-mail: housing.midargyll@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605800

Kintyre

Old Quay Head, Campbeltown PA28 6ED

e-mail: housing.kintyre@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605880

Islay

Jamieson Street, Bowmore PA43 7HP

e-mail: housing.islay@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605890

Oban, Lorn and Isles

Glenshellach Business Park, Oban PA34 4RY

e-mail: housing.lorn@acha.co.uk

telephone 01546 605930

AGM

If you are a member of ACHA, our annual general meeting this year will be held on Wednesday 19th September in Inveraray. If you would like to apply for membership, ask at any local ACHA office.

Guide to a Successful Tenancy and The Householders Guide to Saving Energy

These are two handy little information booklets which you can get from our website. If you don't have access to a computer you can ask for a paper copy from your local ACHA office.

ACHA's

Community Action Fund

Oasis

Befrienders

Helensburgh and Lomond Games

Tarbert Youth Group

Multiple Sclerosis Mid Argyll

Mid Argyll Music Festival

Mid Argyll Youth Development Services

Innellan and Toward Family Centre

Enable Gathering Games

Young Cowal and Bute Carers

Lochgoil Community Trust

If you are part of a registered charity that could make use of a grant up to £500, then contact ACHA on 01546 605922 and ask for our Community Action Fund application form - it's only one page. Good luck!

Home Start

Support and friendship for families

Home Start supports families with one or more children under the age of five.

Everybody could do with a helping hand at times!

Nobody gives you a parenting manual when you become a parent if you would like to talk to someone about receiving free help in your home for yourself or someone you know that could do with an extra pair of hands give Dee Hancock at Home Start a call on 07887 511 022 to see what we can do to help.



made from
sustainably
sourced paper

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 Gillian McInnes on 01546 605801 or gillian.mcinnnes@acha.co.uk All our newsletters are available on our website

www.acha.co.uk