

Putting Tenants First

Winter 2012



Southerly gales push the loch over the green at Lochgilphead.



Mrs Scott (above) and Mrs McWhinnie (below) with ACHA staff member June Wright



December threw some extreme weather at Argyll and Bute and it caused disruption to our tenants.

With the highest recorded winds in 23 years and the first Red Alert weather warning in 10 years it was no wonder that there were power cuts and trees down. Amazingly the only damage to ACHA homes was minor—some slates came off roofs and some fences blew down.

Power cuts causing loss of heating and cooking facilities becomes worrying if it's off for long periods and affects older and vulnerable people. This was the case when ACHA's Crisis Management Team swung into action to mobilise staff to phone tenants to make sure they had water, warm food and were not cold.

High winds and snow caused multiple problems and emergency lines were issued to contractors to clear fallen trees. Lots of small and rural communities suffered power cuts and in Inveraray where power was out for just over 24 hours staff came to the rescue. An emergency supply of torches, hot food, flasks of hot water and hot water bottles was provided to elderly residents of Chalmers Court sheltered housing.

ACHA staff phoned elderly tenants in all the communities where we knew that there were power cuts and made any necessary arrangements to protect them from harm or discomfort.

Make sure you are prepared for any more winter weather and have blankets, emergency food and water supplies, torches and batteries to help keep you safe this winter.

The 'eagle-eyed' among you will have noticed the new addition to our front page. ACHA is delighted to announce that it is now a registered charity. This means that we will display our new charity number on all public documents.

As I write this article it is hard to believe that for the third consecutive year we have encountered severe winter weather. This time, unlike the past two, we have seen severe gales and red/amber warnings instead of sub-zero temperatures. As you will have seen from the front page feature, the Association's Crisis Management Team were called into action to help tenants, particularly in relation to power cuts caused by fallen trees bringing down power lines. While incidents like this are never pleasant or easy to deal with they do bring out the best in community support and well being with so many people pulling together to help one another. Could I also ask throughout the Winter that you keep an eye on your neighbours particularly the elderly and please contact the Association if you feel someone is vulnerable or if you haven't seen them out and about. In these difficult financial times we got some good news recently from the Scottish Government. The Association was successful in obtaining funding approval for a housing development in the village of Dalmally. This will allow us to build 8 desperately needed homes. All going well the scheme will start on site in the Spring of 2012. In terms of other housing development initiatives, the Association's new build schemes in Campbeltown, Dunoon and Lochgoilhead are progressing well and we look forward to their completion when they will provide 64 new homes in these 3 communities. The Association continues to carry out the modernisation work in our 5,100 homes to bring them up to the Scottish Quality Standard by 2015. All going well we hope to invest around £16million in our homes in the current financial year.



Best wishes, Alastair MacGregor, Chief Executive

Suspension of the 'Right to Buy'

Argyll and Bute Council have recently approved the designation of some housing settlements as 'Pressured Areas'. This decision, which does not affect Bute or Kintyre, means that for some ACHA tenants their right to buy will be suspended for a period of ten years, commencing in January 2012.

The decision for the Council to designate some settlements as 'pressured areas' was made in partnership with ACHA and Dunbritton Housing Association in a bid to help address the acute shortage of affordable housing in many parts of Argyll. Homes which may have been sold under the 'right to buy' scheme will now remain available to let until at least 2022. If you have any questions on how this may affect you please contact your local ACHA office.

You will be affected by this if you took over your tenancy on or after 30th September 2002 and live in one of the following areas:-

COWAL - Ardentinn, Blairmore, Colintrave, Dunoon/Kirn, Glendaruel, Innellan, Kames/Tighnabruich, Kilmun, Lochgoilhead, Sandbank, Strachur, Strone, Toward.

MID ARGYLL - Lochgilphead, Achahoish, Ardrishaig, Cairnbaan, Clachan, Crinan, Ford, Furnace, Inveraray, Kilmichael/Glassary, Minard, Tarbert.

ISLAY, JURA and COLONSAY – Ballygrant, Bowmore, Bridgend, Bruichladdich, Keills/Port Askaig, Port Charlotte, Port Ellen, Portnahaven, Jura, Colonsay.

LORN - Oban, Appin, Barcaldine, Bonawe, Clachan Seil/Easdale, Connel, North Connel, Dalmally, Dunbeg, Kilchrennan, Kilmore, Kilmelford, Kilninver, Lochawe, Taynuilt, Luig.

MULL and IONA – Bunessan, Craignure, Salen/Aros, Tobermory.

COLL and TIREE – Coll, Tiree

HELENSBURGH and LOMOND – Arrochar, Cardross, Garelochhead, Kilcreggan, Helensburgh, Luss, Rhu, Rosneath.

ACHA had a stand at the **Take Time** event at Rothesay Joint Campus in September last year. Pupils were offered information on employment, further education, health and housing. Many of the pupils were very keen to learn more about housing and the range of work done by a housing association. This group of pupils were particularly interested in the FISH project (financial inclusion) and Courtney said "It's good that tenants are given a Money handbook to assist them and keeping a spending diary is a good tip".



From left to right: Courtney (holding our Money handbook), Mairi, Chloe, Laura and Chloe
All pupils in 4th Year at Rothesay Joint Campus

Good Neighbour Award 2012

Is your neighbour one in a million?

Do they make a difference to your life or the lives of people in your community?

We're looking for nominations of ACHA tenants for this award which was introduced by ACHA last year. The award gives neighbours a chance to say 'thank you' to someone they know who goes out of their way to help others, someone who shows kindness and consideration.

The winner will be selected by representatives from each of our four Area Committees and the winner will receive a **£50 shopping voucher** and a commemorative certificate presented at the Associations AGM in September. We would also like the winner to be featured in a press release on the award and to highlight why they won it. The closing date for nominations is Friday 10th August 2012.

Please fill in this form and send it to us if you would like to nominate your neighbour for an award and we will send you a nomination form. Further information and a copy of the nomination form are available on our website

www.acha.co.uk

Name

Address

Tel number





We asked you what you think about ...

All your comments are included in each report to the Board so they can see what you've said.

The new Tenants Handbook

We've been working hard on a brand new Tenants Handbook, packed with information and is set out in an easy to read format. From July to October last year we asked the Tenants Panel, staff, Tenants Consultation Register and Area Committees to give us their thoughts which resulted in 76 comments/suggestions on how to make this the best possible handbook. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this - the new Handbook will go to the Board for approval in the new year and be sent out to you over the coming months.

How do you rate our services when you visit our area offices

Each year staff at our area offices ask tenants who visit their local office to complete a short questionnaire and enter everyone into a prize draw as a thank you. The questions are designed to give you the opportunity to tell us how you rate the service and gives us the chance to listen to you and improve services where we can.

Rent consultation

Please read the document which was sent out along with this newsletter and give us your comments on page 4. The Director of Finance & IT, Nick Pollard, attended the November Tenants Panel meeting to discuss rent setting for 2012/13.

Estate Management Policy

In July 2011 the Tenants Panel, Tenants Consultation Register, Staff and Area Committees provided 32 comments on the draft policy. It was overhauled with 8 new aims, 12 new objectives, improved consultation procedures and more emphasis on working in mixed tenure estates. It was approved by the Policy Committee in November 2011



Low Demand Strategy

Occasionally when a house becomes empty it takes a bit longer than normal to re-let. This new strategy provides staff with a range of options to increase the demand for these homes. We consulted with the Tenants Panel, Tenants Consultation Register and Area Committees and received 110 responses. The strategy was approved by the Board in November 2011

Anti Social Behaviour Policy

In June 2011 we consulted with the Tenants Panel, Tenants Consultation Register, Area Committees, Staff, Strathclyde Policy and Argyll and Bute Council. There were 13 responses and while the basis of the policy was still fit for purpose the new policy was updated in terms of the legal and regulatory framework. It was approved by the Policy Committee in November 2011.

Welfare Rights project

Satisfaction forms were sent out in December to 441 tenants who had help from the FISH Welfare Rights Officers in 2011. From the 149 responses, 98% said it was an excellent/very good service and 39% said that it had reduced the threat of losing their tenancy.

From old to new at Longsdale in Oban



The first re-rendering and roofing contract in the Oban and Lorn area has been hailed as a great success with the project including enhanced insulation, new gutters and downpipes. One tenant, Mrs MacKelvie said "I'm very happy with the work, it's just like having a new house and it's very cosy with the new insulation". Alastair MacGregor, Chief Executive commented that he was delighted and said that the re-rendering and roofing contracts will be rolled out across Argyll and Bute.

New Way to Report your Repair ...



You can now go to the ACHA website to log your repair
www.acha.co.uk

For emergencies and all other repairs please use the Freephone number
0800 028 2755



Payment Facilities

Due to the great success of ACHA's new increased payment options and following recent consultation with tenants, ACHA will no longer be taking payments at offices from the 1st of April 2012. Offices will remain open and staff will continue to be available for customer enquiries and advice.

Tenants can make payments to their rent and insurance through local Post Office and Paypoint outlets using their ACHA Payment Card, online at www.acha.co.uk, by direct debit, standing order or by using ACHA's Customer Service Centre freephone number: 0800 028 2755 where staff can also advise you on balance enquiries.

If you would like to enquire about your nearest Paypoint location or would like further information on the changes, please do not hesitate to contact your local ACHA office.



Pictured left are ACHA staff proudly holding their Certificate from the Institute of Leadership and Management. The awards were made when staff completed the 'Future Leaders' course. The purpose of the course was to improve management skills including motivation, communication, delegation, planning/prioritising and team building. Iain McLeod, Local Manager Property Services in mid Argyll & Kintyre said "Most importantly I feel I have gained a better understanding of how to develop and encourage my team".

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

Mull

Breadalbane Street, Tobermory, Mull PA75 6PX

telephone 01546 605930



There was standing room only at the MacMillan Coffee Morning at Cragroy Sheltered Housing complex in Dunoon.

This annual event has become extremely popular and is for such a good cause. Well done to everyone involved and for all those who contributed to the total raised a staggering £1,063

ACHA's Community Action Fund

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

Argyll & Bute Women's Aid -children's room
Port Ellen Primary School Gaelic Choir
Tobermory Endeavour
Rothesay Playgroup
Oban Winter Festival

Are you a Member (£1 for life) of ACHA?

If not, you could be missing out on the chance of winning a lovely food hamper. Each year just before Christmas, ACHA puts the names of all our Members into a hat and draws out one name for each of the four areas. Ask any member of staff about applying for membership. Below are the lucky winners for 2011:



Mr Passey,
McIntyre Terrace,
Lochgilphead



Mr Coates,
Buchanan Rd,
Helensburgh

Winners in our other areas were Mrs Allan, from Strone and Mrs MacIntyre from Oban.

Congratulations to all the winners.

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.mcinnis@acha.co.uk

All our newsletters can be downloaded from our website www.acha.co.uk