
Argyll Community Housing Association – Annual Update

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cowal and Bute Area Community Planning Group (CPG) with Argyll Community Housing Associations (ACHA) Annual Update.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Area CPG are asked to note the content of this report.

3. Background

3.1 ACHA have given a commitment to provide an annual update on the work being undertaken by the Association.

4. Detail

4.1 Stock

ACHA have a total of 5185 properties across Argyll and Bute. For the Cowal and Bute area this is broken down as follows:

- Cowal – 897
- Bute – 443

We also have a total of 24 garage sites (19 in Cowal and 5 in Bute).

4.2 Regeneration Programme

There was a feasibility study undertaken a number of years ago to investigate the future of a number of flats at Eton Avenue, Dunoon. This study highlighted issues around the layout of the flats, the external environment and the costs and difficulty to upgrade the properties to meet the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing set by the Scottish Government.

ACHA's Board of Management made a decision to demolish these properties and replace with 4 much needed purpose built, specially adapted properties to meet the specific need of four families.

4.2.2 Buying stock on the open market

ACHA have support from Argyll & Bute Council to acquire 'second hand' stock that is for sale on the open market, if this is the most appropriate method of meeting housing need in a particular area. So far ACHA have been successful in acquiring properties in the Bute area and looking at possibilities in the Cowal area.

4.3 Investment Programme

4.3.1 In previous years extensive programmes of investment have been carried out. This has resulted in the programme this year being targeted at any fails which have been identified as part of our stock condition survey.

4.3.2 For Cowal and Bute this year we have carried out the following improvements

Windows and Doors – 30

Kitchens and Bathrooms - 19

Heating and Rewire – 34

Roof and roughcast – 85

Refurbishment – 0

4.4 Warm Homes Fund

4.4.1 Our warm homes fund through various projects is continuing to replace inefficient electric heating and install external wall insulation.

4.4.2 The uninsulated project - This project involves installing External Wall Insulation to properties where we have installed Air Source Heating in a previous project. There are 7 properties affected in Cowal, they are programmed in to be completed by June 2024.

4.4.3 EEPS/ABS Project – External Wall Insulation to multi tenure blocks. 200 properties were insulated in Cowal/Bute through this project.

4.4.4 BEIS Project – Whole house retrofit programme - This project involved installing energy efficient measures to low EPC rated properties to bring them up to a higher standard. Through this project across Cowal and Bute 12 properties received External Wall Insulation, 11 had Air Source heat pumps installed, 21 had new windows/door installed and 12 had Solar PV and battery storage installed.

4.4.5 Refurbishment project – 20 properties in Bute High Street and Russell Street are to be refurbished including external wall insulation, new windows and doors, air source heat pumps, Solar PV, new kitchens and bathrooms and the properties are to be reconfigured and designed for open plan living due for completion June 2024

A further 6 properties at Glebe Terrace in Bute are to receive external wall insulation and Heliotherm heating to be completed by May 2024.

4.5 Sheltered Housing

4.5.1 ACHA is currently reviewing its Sheltered Housing Service. We have carried out a comprehensive consultation with our sheltered housing residents. The review is being carried out in phases and will take account of our tenant's views and preferences. Our sheltered housing Complex at Ferfadd Court, is to be included in Phase 2 of the review and Cragroy and Wallace Court in Dunoon which are two of our more traditional complexes will be included in phase 3.

4.5.2 The aim of the review is to:

- Provide a bespoke service for our tenants over 60 in mainstream accommodation as well as sheltered housing.
- Reclassify sheltered housing to remove stigma and make the best use of housing stock
- Change workload dynamics to release capacity
- De-register with the Care Inspectorate.

It is anticipated that the changes from Phase 1 of the review will take place from April 2024.

4.6 Allocations & Reletting of Properties

4.6.1 ACHA are part of the HOME Argyll partnership (Housing Options Made Easy), along with Argyll & Bute Council, West Highland Housing Association, Fyne Homes and Dunbritton Housing Association. We currently have just over 3,500 applicants on our house waiting lists.

4.7 Exemplar Estates

4.7.1 ACHA has committed £300,000 per year through our Exemplar Estates initiative to improve the environment in and around our properties. Works completed and planned for this year include:-

- Shuna Gardens, Dunoon
- Finbracken, Sandbank, Dunoon
- Ferfadd Court, Bute

4.8 Estate Walkabouts

4.8.1 During 2023 ACHA introduced Estate Walkabouts for all areas. This is where we invite our residents and any other interested parties to join our staff on Estate Inspections to give their ideas and improvements for the neighbourhoods in which they live. The dates of Estate Walkabouts for the different areas are advertised on our website under Estate Management and we would encourage anyone who is interested to participate.

4.9 Customer Involvement Strategy

4.9.1 ACHA have worked with our tenant scrutiny group “Your Voice” to develop a draft customer involvement strategy. We are currently consulting on this draft strategy and have made contact with all ACHA tenants and factored owners to gain their views on the draft strategy. The consultation is also promoted on Facebook and our website. We will then use respondent views to develop the final customer involvement strategy. If you are interested in providing us with your views, please visit our website.

4.10 Welfare Rights

4.10.1 – ACHA’s welfare rights service for Cowal and Bute has brought in a total of £1,057,313.32 income since 1st April 2023 to 15th March 2024 and 437 cases were opened throughout this period. All ACHA tenants are offered an appointment with our Welfare Rights Officer.

4.10.2 – Argyll community Housing was successful in obtaining Lottery funding (Warm & well Argyll & Bute) of £20,000.00 for the provision of air fryers, slow cookers, electric blankets, winter duvets, microwaves, thermal curtains etc. This funding allowed ACHA to provide assistance to 88 of our most vulnerable customers in Cowal and Bute with the provision of 78 air fryers and 10 electric blankets. The project was designed to offer customers benefits advice as well as small appliances and other household items to help reduce energy costs.

4.11 Adaptations

4.11.1 ACHA have been successful in obtaining £450,000.00 in Scottish Government grant to allow us to progress essential aids and adaptations for our most vulnerable customers. In Cowal and Bute we have recently completed 108 adaptations with a further 12 planned but not yet complete.

4.12 Scotland Housing Awards 27th October 2023

4.12.1 ACHA is delighted to announce that our Tenant Scrutiny Group the “Your Voice Group” won the **Excellence in Tenant Scrutiny award**. This award is for Landlords and their tenants who can show excellence in working collaboratively to scrutinise work and embed scrutiny within the culture of the organisation. The Your Voice Group are a group of

tenants from across Argyll and Bute who take an in depth look at ACHA's housing services, identifying areas where they think things might be improved or changed.

4.12.2 ACHA's Warm Home Team won the **Net Zero in Housing Award** for their whole house retrofit project at the Chartered Institute of Housings Scotland Housing Awards 2023. The new zero housing award recognises partnership work with the contractor Procast to deliver whole house retrofit upgrades to properties across various locations in Argyll including Islay and Tiree. The project forms part of ACHA's long term journey to net zero and climate change with the residents being at the forefront.

4.13 Scottish Energy Efficiency Awards June 2023

4.13.1 ACHA were nominated for 2 awards at this year's Scottish Energy Efficiency awards and were successful in winning the **Regional Large Project of the Year** category, along with receiving highly commended in the **Regional Landlord/Housing Association of the Year** category.

4.14 – Tenant Advisory Service (TIS) National Excellence Awards 2023

The Your Voice Group also won the Excellence in Scrutiny Danny Mullen award at the recent TIS National Excellence Awards at the end of 2023. This award recognised how the Group had influenced ACHA's decisions on housing policies, services and standards.

4.15 ACHA's 10 10 10 Initiative

4.15.1 11 Schools in Argyll and Bute received an award in 2023 including the area of Cowal and Bute Dunoon Grammar School, Kirn Primary School and North Bute Primary School.

4.16 ACHA's Community Action Fund

4.16.1 We continue to welcome applications for funding from the Community Action Fund. 13 registered charities have received an award from the fund of up to £500 so far this year 2023/2024, including Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust and Bute Community Media t/a Bute Island Radio.

4.17 Customer Satisfaction

4.17.1 In July 2023 ACHA commissioned Research Resource to carry out a satisfaction survey across all ACHA customers. The survey was developed to capture feedback from customers to help inform the transformation of the organisation, seeking customer's views on preferences to accessing services now and in the future.

4.17.2 A total of 1004 interviews were carried out with ACHA tenants including sheltered housing tenants. Interviews were undertaken using a combination of door to door and telephone interviews. This represents at 20% response rate from our tenants.

4.17.3 The satisfaction survey shows that ACHA is performing well with over 9 in 10 tenants being satisfied with all but 2 service aspects. All but one indicator has seen significant improvements in the satisfaction compared to the last survey in 2021. ACHA is performing well compared to the Scottish average with satisfaction levels in general being higher than the Scottish average.

4.17.4 From the survey ACHA have produced an action plan to take account of what our tenants have told us through the survey and to improve areas of lower satisfaction.

5. Conclusions

5.1 ACHA is continuing to meet its targets and priorities within local Strategies.

6. SOA Outcomes

6.1 Reference to Outcomes 5 – People Live Active, Healthier and Independent Lives

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