
Argyll Community Housing Association – Annual Update

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Mid Argyll, Kintyre & Islay Area Community Planning Group 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 and to attend the local CPG meetings on an annual basis.

4. Detail

Stock

4.1 ACHA have a total of 5150 properties. For MAKI this is broken down as follows:

- Mid Argyll – 597
- Kintyre – 844
- Islay – 355

We also have 8 allotments in Campbeltown and a total of 72 garage sites available for let (48 in Kintyre and 24 in Mid Argyll).

ACHA also have a Travelling Persons Site at Duncholgan, Lochgilphead which has 14 pitches available to let to the Gypsy Traveller Community.

Ending of the Right to Buy

4.2 Tenants right to buy their council or housing association house comes to an end on 31 July 2016. ACHA have produced a “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet and an Information leaflet for our tenants on the ending of the Right to Buy.

Regeneration Programme

4.3 To date, ACHA have built 280 homes throughout the Argyll & Bute area. Within the Mid Argyll, Kintyre & Islay Area ACHA have built 157 homes:

- New Parliament Place – 52 properties
- Park Terrace Area – 32 properties
- MacMillan Court, Lochgiphead – 18 properties
- Oakhill, Tarbert – 8 properties
- Tower View, Inveraray – 12 properties
- Heatherbank, Cairnbaan – 2 properties
- Tayvallich – 2 properties
- Highfield, Bowmore, Islay – 3 properties
- Church Way, Port Ellen, Islay – 8 properties
- Sealladh Na Mara, Bowmore – 20 properties

4.4 ACHA have also re-modelled existing stock to tackle low demand and meet the housing need within the area. The following properties have been re-modelled:

- Millknowe Terrace, Campbeltown
- Dalaruan Street, Campbeltown
- Relief Land, Inveraray

4.5 Future Interests: We are building a further 10 units on Islay, due to be completed in November 2016 – Phase 2 Sealladh Na Mara, Bowmore. A further 20 units are also planned at Bowmore in the near future. The ACHA Office on Islay will also be relocating to Flora Street within the next 12 months. In terms of Mid Argyll, we are considering a Phase 2 at Tower View, Inveraray.

Investment Programme

4.6 The key elements that we are installing in our homes throughout the Argyll & Bute area are shown in the table below up to the end of March 2016.

Element	Argyll
Windows & Doors	5825
Kitchen & Bathrooms	9278
Heating & Rewire	6485
Roof & Roughcast	2021
Total Elements	23,609
Stock Numbers	5150
Total Expenditure (ex VAT)	£110,009,601

4.7 We are almost complete in terms of our upgrades to kitchens and bathrooms, with only a few left to install.

We have ongoing works in terms of windows and doors and heating and rewiring.

The heating and rewire programme is more difficult as the work is more disruptive and tenants are not as keen to have this type of work carried out.

In terms of the roof and roughcast programme this is certainly very challenging for us. A lot of our flatted and tenemental blocks are in shared ownership and we must have the consent of the owners before we can proceed with this type of work.

ACHA have invested over 110 million in our homes.

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) – Inveraray

4.8 The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) provides financial help for conservation area based regeneration and conservation initiatives. The Inveraray project is funded by CARS Grant (47%-68% depending on the building), Argyll & Bute Council (15-25%), ACHA (11-22%) and private owner funding (6-10%). The CARS funding has a number of limitations with regard to how the projects can be run and what works are included. The funding from Argyll & Bute Council includes Private Sector Housing Grant, which brings with it its own set of conditions and limits.

4.9 Works are being carried out to buildings that include ACHA stock:

- Arkland
- Relief Land
- Chamberlains
- Temperance

ACHA own minority stakes in the above priority buildings which are typically around one-third ACHA owned flats and two-thirds privately-owned flats.

The works include the renewal of rainwater goods, roughcast repairs and renewal of chimneys where required.

4.10 The majority of private owners in each building decided that the project should be jointly managed by the respective owners' associations and ACHA. This is not a situation that ACHA have been in before, with our preferred method being for ACHA to manage projects on behalf of the owners. To enable this arrangement to work required significant compromises as to how the project was run, and also significant staff time to set up processes for project management and to resolve unforeseen issues.

4.11 All four projects have been on site for three months. Two are being run by Laing Traditional Masonry (LTM), and two by John Brown (Strone). The John Brown contract covers Chamberlains House and the Former Temperance Hotel, which are due to complete by the end of August. The LTM contract for Relief Land and Arkland is due to complete by the end of December, however the contractor's current programme shows the project running until the end of February.

Allocations & Reletting of Properties

4.12 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 3,000 applicants on our house waiting lists.

4.13 ACHA continue to work on our low demand strategy for Kintyre, where we have a number of properties that cannot be relet due to lack of demand. In-depth analysis is ongoing which will inform the way forward for these properties.

Rent Harmonisation

4.14 We introduced a new rent structure from 1st April 2016 for all new tenants of the association. It was necessary to carry out a harmonisation exercise as ACHA had inherited a range of different rent levels. This allowed us to ensure that our tenants were paying the same amount, based on the size and type of property that they lived in. All ACHA tenants were consulted on the proposed rent re-structure during August last year.

Welfare Reform

4.15 ACHA welcomed a grant approval by the Scottish Government of £170,000 to support its Welfare Rights Information Service through the People and Communities Fund. The Association has, over the past 6 years, supported a small team of staff to work with tenants on low incomes and who have been vulnerable to welfare reform changes.

4.16 The primary objective of the project has been to assist vulnerable tenants in terms of maximising and stabilising income, and to assist them in maintaining their tenancies. Over the years the project has survived on a variety of grants, assistance from the Scottish Government, Argyll & Bute Council and ACHA. The financial support will allow us to do further outreach work in communities throughout Argyll and Bute to reach those who need help the most.

Examples of Community Support

4.17 **Your Voice** is a group of tenants who scrutinise the performance of ACHA and make recommendations based on their findings about how services to customers might be improved.

4.18 The group recently looked at the Associations Void and re-let standards and procedures. Supported by impartial external advisers, the group produced a report which made 12 recommendations for improvements to service standards and procedures. The Board of Management considered the report and agreed to implement all of the recommendations.

4.19 Best Garden: ACHA continue to run the best garden competition for our tenants in each area, along with the largest sunflower competition for all pre-five nurseries in the Mid Argyll & Kintyre areas.

4.20 Community Action Fund: ACHA's Area Committees each have a budget of £2,500 that they can award funds of up to £500 to local charities based in their areas.

4.21 Tenants & Residents Associations (TRA) – ACHA actively promote tenant participation through a wide range of methods. We have one registered tenant & residents association in Campbeltown – Dalintober & Millkknowe TRA, , but promote Tenant Participation through our Area Committee's, Board of management, regular consultation and the Your Voice Group.

Tenant Satisfaction

4.22 We carried out a Satisfaction Survey on our tenants during October 2015. The survey questions that we used were based on the Indicators required for the Annual Return of the Charter (ARC) for the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). We are pleased to report that there has been an overall improvement on satisfaction levels across all of the ARC indicators that were subject of the survey. A further survey will be undertaken during October this year.

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

Name of Lead Officer

Yvonne Angus, Regional Manager, Argyll Community Housing Association

For further information please contact:

Yvonne Angus, Regional Manager, Argyll Community Housing Association
Tel 01546605810

Supplementary Papers

- none