

**HOUSING SERVICES ACTIVITY UPDATE 2019/20 - STRATEGIC HOUSING
INVESTMENT PLAN (SHIP) – ANNUAL UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main purpose of this report is to update Members of Housing Services activity within the Bute and Cowal area.

This report will detail the following housing activity:-

- Housing Need and Demand
- Homelessness
- Affordable Housing Supply - Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP)
- Empty Homes
- Private Sector Housing Grant Adaptations
- Private Sector Housing Grant Repairs and Improvements
- Energy Efficiency - Home Energy Efficiency Programme: Area Based Scheme(HEEP:ABS)
- Local Housing Strategy

Members are asked to consider the content of the report.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

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3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the content of this report.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Argyll and Bute Council retains the role of strategic housing authority and therefore has a series of important statutory housing functions to fulfil. A Housing Needs and Demand Assessment is carried out every 5 years which enables Scottish Government funding to be brought into Argyll and Bute primarily to deliver affordable housing. The Council also produces a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) every 5 years. The current LHS runs from 2016-2021 and have a vision for housing in Argyll and Bute which is 'a housing system that makes a strong contribution to thriving and sustainable communities and

supports economic growth'. This report will detail the housing activity taking place in Bute and Cowal

4.2 Housing Need & Demand in Bute & Cowal

HOMEArgyll WAITING LIST April 2020 – Active Applicants					
	Minimum Bedroom Size Required				TOTAL
	0/1beds	2beds	3beds	4+beds	
Bute	79	42	20	7	148
Cowal	213	115	54	18	400
Bute & Cowal	292	157	74	25	548

For Bute & Cowal as a whole, the majority of applicants (53%) require one bedroom and 28% require 2 bedrooms. 14% require 3 bedrooms and only 5% need 4 or more.

However, to establish actual need, the available supply must be factored into this, based on the available lets within the RSL stock during a year.

	HOMEArgyll Applicants	RSL Lets 2019/20 (HOMEArgyll only)	Pressure Ratio
Bute	148	172	1:1
Cowal	400	156	3:1
Bute & Cowal	548	303	2:1

This suggests the area is reasonably balanced, with an oversupply on Bute and only minimal pressure in Cowal.

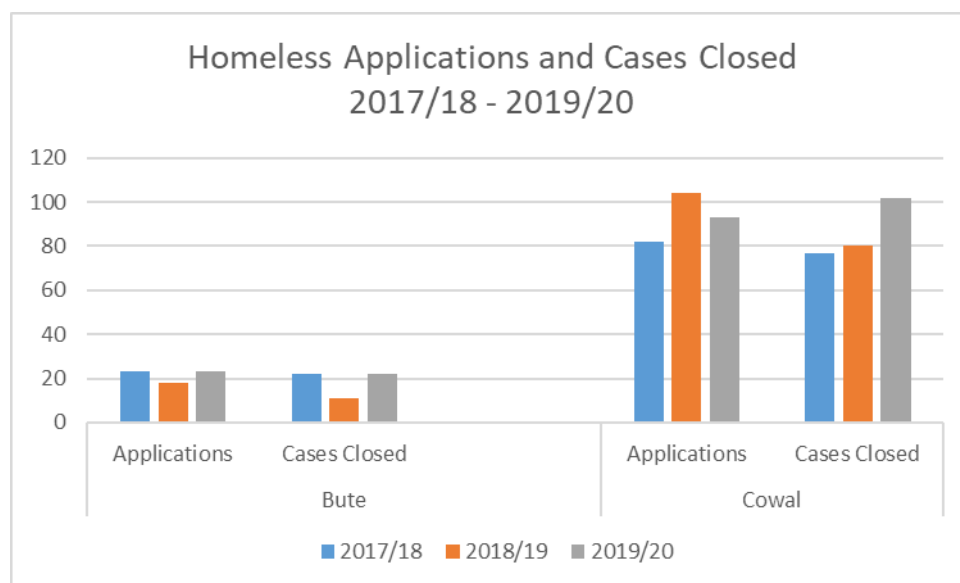
While the pressure ratios are only one factor in determining need and demand, they are useful indicators of areas where further research and analysis may be required.

4.3 Homelessness

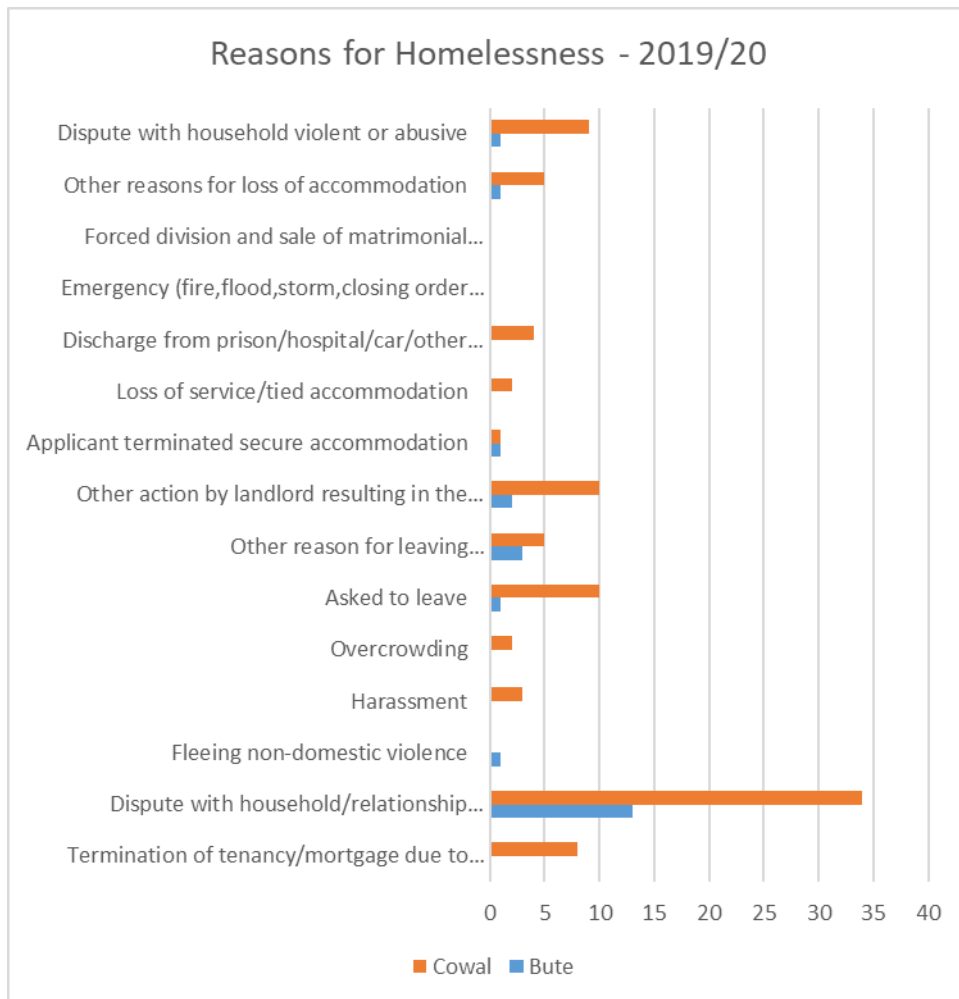
During 2019/20, there were 22 homeless cases closed on Bute; and 102 in Cowal.

The incidence of homelessness has remained fairly static on Bute over the last 3 years and during 2019/20 was at the same level as in 2017/18 with 23 applications during each of these years. There has been an increase of 13% (82 up to 93) in homeless presentation in Cowal during the 3 year period 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The figures below illustrate the number of homeless applications and cases closed for the period from 2017/18 to 2019/20.



The main reasons for presenting as Homeless last year were “disputes with family/relationship breakdown”, “other action by landlord resulting in termination of tenancy”; and “being asked to leave”. Cowal saw a number of cases due to persons being “discharged from institutions” (such as prison, hospital or care for instance); a number of cases involving “violent or abusive disputes”; and also “termination of tenancy/mortgage due to arrears”.



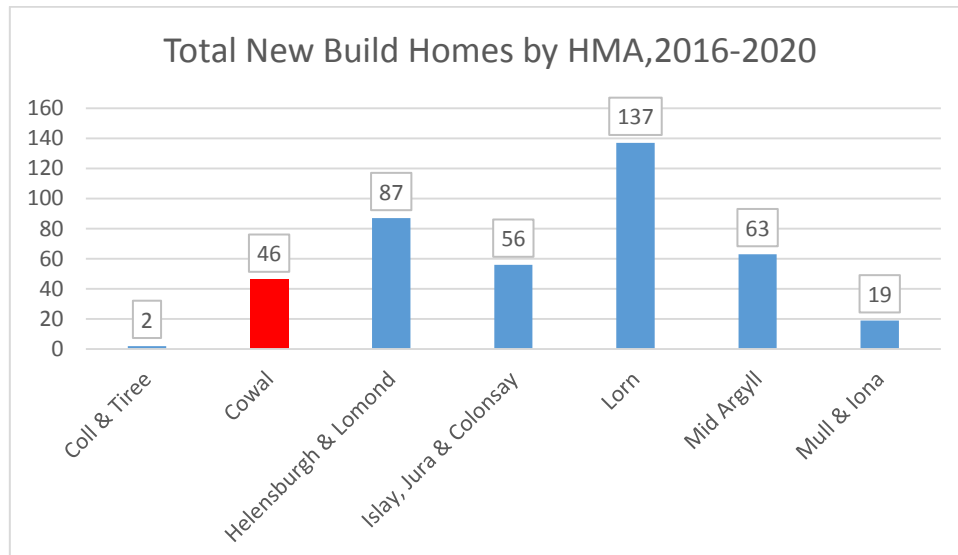
Rough Sleeping

Bute and Cowal experienced a reduction in the incidence of rough sleeping over the same period last year, with 7 cases (-7) in total across the area reporting that they slept rough the night preceding their presentation and 22 (-2) reporting that they had slept rough in the 3 months preceding their homeless application. These were disaggregated as follows:-

AREA	Number of Rough Sleepers in 2019/20	
	Night Before Application	3 Months Prior to Application
Bute	5	6
Cowal	2	16
B&C Total	7	22
Argyll & Bute	24	50

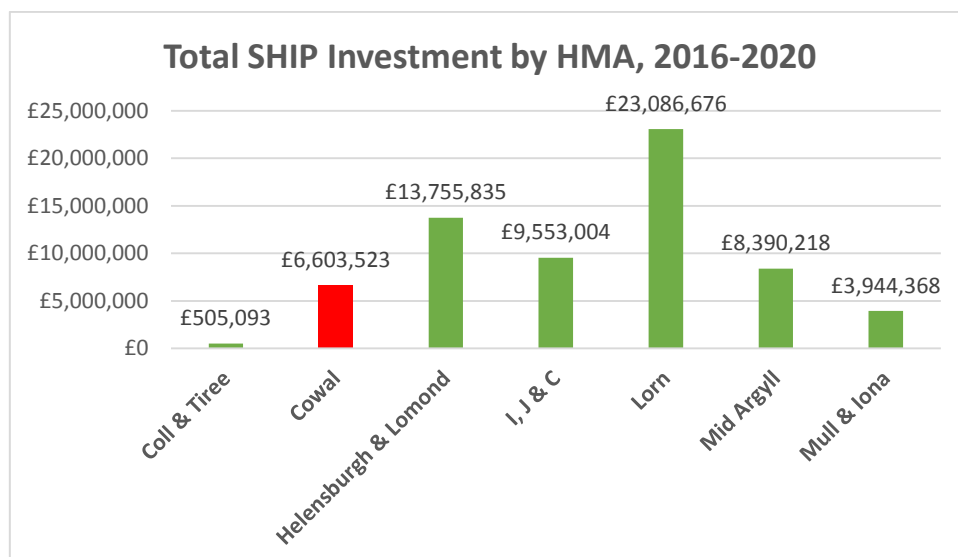
4.4 Affordable Housing Supply

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) delivered no new affordable homes in Bute and Cowal in 2019/20. Cumulatively over the last 4 years of the current LHS, there have been 46 new affordable homes built in Cowal via the SHIP; amounting to 11% of the four-year total for Argyll and Bute.



(NB. There was also 1 additional acquisition in Kintyre in 2019/20)

Over the last 4 years, SHIP investment has amounted to £6.6m in Cowal; around 7% of the total four-year investment in Argyll and Bute.



SHIP Projects onsite at start of 2019/20.

Site/Development	RSL	Total Units	Expected Date of Completion
Dixon, Dunoon*	ACHA	1	September 2020
Tighnabruaich	Fyne Homes	20	January 2021
Cairndow	Fyne Homes	6	March 2021
Eton Avenue, Dunoon	ACHA	4	January 2022

*now complete

In addition, further sites/projects in the Cowal area which are in early stages of development and may be programmed in the SHIP include:

ACHA	Dunoon (4 units)
Fyne Homes	Tighnabruaich - scope for additional units subject to demand.

4.5 Empty Homes

In 2019/20 there were 11 private empty homes brought back into use in Bute & Cowal, amounting to over a third of empty homes brought back into use across Argyll and Bute last year with assistance of Empty Homes Officer.

Council Tax Information on Empty Homes

The following table breaks down the numbers of empty homes including those subject to premium Council Tax charge across the Bute & Cowal area. The table does not include properties which are empty and exempt from Council Tax. The numbers of recorded empty homes can vary from day to day due to natural changes and reported numbers are snapshot from October reports.

BUTE & COWAL Council tax data as at 01.12.20	Number of properties on Council Tax register	Empty Homes	Properties subject to 200% council tax levy	Total EMPTY
Isle Of Bute	4325	142	87	229
Cowal	8773	149	76	225
TOTAL	13,098	291	163	454

Council Tax Exemptions

There are also a number of empty properties which are on the Council Tax register which are exempt from paying council tax. In Bute & Cowal there are around **417** properties which are empty and exempt from Council Tax. The most common categories for empty properties include:

- Class 2A = Unoccupied dwelling – under renovation (**2**)
- Class 4A = Properties recently occupied but now empty and unfurnished (**200**)

- Class 5A = Living or Detained elsewhere – e.g. care home, hospital or prison (**17**)
- Class 7A = Dwellings Empty Under Statute – Closing or Demolition Order (**53**)
- Class 6A = Deceased owners – where estate has not been settled (**107**)
- Class 8A = Held for demolition – Registered Social Landlord flats (**35**)

Other empty categories include: Repossessed dwellings (**3**), New Dwellings (**0**)

Second Homes

As at 1st October 2020 there were 447 registered Second Homes on Bute and 595 registered Second Homes in Cowal. The figure for Bute and Cowal (1042) represents 36% of the total number of Second Homes in Argyll and Bute.

4.6 Private Sector Housing Grant - Adaptations

In 2019/20, there were 44 private sector properties adapted with Private Sector Housing Grant in Bute & Cowal and a total of 47 individual adaptations installed.

PSHG ADAPTATION COMPLETIONS 2019 -2020							
HMA	Grant Value	Works Value	ADAPTATION INSTALLED				
			Ramp	Stairlift	Access	bathroom Adaptation	Adaptions for Autism
Bute	£95,104	£117,455	0	7	3	11	0
Cowal	£134,246	£162,360	1	5	3	16	1
TOTALS	£229,350	£ 279,815	1	12	6	27	1

4.7 Private Sector Housing Grant – Repairs & Improvements

In 2019/20, there were 7 PSHG repair and improvement grants completed in Bute & Cowal: all seven were on Bute (across Argyll and Bute, the total was 38). Total cost of the works was £43,010, of which PSHG covered £19,168. This was just under 8% of the total repair grant awarded for Argyll & Bute last year.

HMA	Grants	Cost of Works	Total Grant Award
Bute	7	£43,010	£19,168
Cowal	0	£0	£0

Bute & Cowal	7	£43,010	£19,168
Argyll & Bute	38	£564,209	£161,870

4.8 Energy Efficiency (Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland: Area Based Scheme – HEEPS:ABS)

There were 295 energy efficiency measures installed across Argyll and Bute in 2019/20 via the HEEPS:ABS programme; and 20% of these measures (59) were installed in Bute and Cowal.

In total, 46 properties were improved across the Bute and Cowal area, at a total cost of £276,257. Grant aid in support of this work amounted to £269,862.

Current estimates of Fuel Poverty are based on Home Analytics data:-

Area	Likelihood of Households in Fuel Poverty
Bute	39%
Cowal	31%
Argyll and Bute	27%
Scotland	25% (Scottish House Condition Survey figure)

Home Analytics data also indicates that around 18% of Bute & 36% of Cowal are off the gas grid.

4.9 Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2021-2026

As the strategic housing authority for Argyll and Bute, the Council has a statutory duty to develop, implement and monitor a Local Housing Strategy over a five-year planning cycle, based on a robust and credible Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) for the area. The current LHS for Argyll and Bute (2016-2021) is nearing completion and requires to be revised and submitted to Scottish Government Ministers in 2021. The planning process must be based on a robust process of consultation and stakeholder engagement.

The Council has carried out extensive engagement to inform both the revised HNDA and LHS, including a detailed HNDA Household Survey in 2019; an early engagement LHS survey in 2020; a virtual LHS Stakeholder Conference in November 2020; and other exercises for specific client groups. In addition, the outcomes of the CPP and LDP community engagement processes in recent years, focused on the Place Standard Toolkit sessions held for individual communities and

settlements, have also helped to inform the development of the next LHS, with Housing issues prominent in the feedback.

The level of response and input from individual Cowal & Bute residents and community representatives has been encouraging. Key priorities and issues have been identified at the local level and along with national and statutory requirements, these will establish the core vision, outcomes and objectives for the new LHS. An Option Appraisal exercise will follow in early 2021, to identify the actions and targets required to deliver the strategy over the next five years, and a consultative draft LHS will then be published for comment and feedback. Local area committees and community planning groups will be key stakeholders in that final phase of the strategy process.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report provides the detail of the Council Housing Services team activity in the Bute and Cowal area. There are a variety of housing issues within the area which are being tackled by Housing Services and partner agencies with the aim of delivering a functioning housing systems which meets the needs of the communities we serve.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy - none
- 6.2 Financial - none
- 6.3 Legal - we must continue to deliver statutory housing functions
- 6.4 HR - none
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: positive in terms of delivering affordable housing
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - none
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – positive in terms of delivering affordable housing
 - 6.5.3 Islands – housing services are delivered on Bute
- 6.6 Risk - none
- 6.7 Customer Service - none

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11th January 2021

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Extract from LHS 2016 - 2021 (data as of 2016) Cowal
Appendix 2 – Extract from LHS 2016 - 2021 (data as of 2016) Bute

Appendix 1 - Extract from LHS 2016 -2021 (data as of 2016) Cowal

COWAL	
Population	14,650
Households	7,139
Dwellings	8,284
Ineffective stock	1145
RSL Stock	1,436
Waiting List	292
Annual Lets	162
Pressure Ratio	2:1
Average House	
Price	£122,957
Average Income	£29,004
Affordability	4.2




Cowal is projected to see the highest rate of population and household decline of any HMA in Argyll and Bute if current trends continue. It is the mainland housing market most influenced by house purchasers from out with Argyll and Bute – only 50% of sales in the area are to local residents. Average house prices have actually been lower than most other HMAs in Argyll and Bute in recent years, while household incomes are roughly average for the authority, making this the second most affordable housing market area within the authority. Between 2003 and 2013 the total dwelling stock increased by over 5%, and currently Cowal accounts for around 18% of the authority's housing. At the time of the last census almost 14% of the dwelling stock was deemed ineffective to meet local needs, i.e. second/holiday homes and long-term vacant properties. Over the last decade 135 new RSL homes were completed in the area, bringing the total social rented stock in 2015 to 1,436 which is 17% of the Argyll and Bute total. There are approximately 2 waiting list applicants for every available let, and over 17% of all homeless cases are located here; therefore it is evident that despite recent development activity and ongoing population decline, a degree of unmet need remains.

Key issues for Cowal HMA:

Although the rate of population decline would suggest that a surplus supply might be generated from within existing housing stock and therefore the need for new build would be minimal; nevertheless there are ongoing levels of unmet need in terms of long waiting lists and relatively high homelessness, and a judicious, strategically planned programme of new build could in fact help to support economic growth and reverse the population decline.

The delivery of effective, targeted Housing Options services and Tenancy Support will also be priorities.

Appendix 2 - Extract from LHS 2016 -2021 (data as of 2016) Bute

	BUTE	
	Population	6,410
	Households	3,387
	Dwellings	4,200
	Ineffective stock	813
	RSL Stock	1,099
	Waiting List	127
	Annual Lets	126
	Pressure Ratio	1:1
	Average House	
	Price	£98,591
	Average Income	£26,694
	Affordability	3.7

Bute HMA is one of the least contained housing markets in Argyll and Bute, with only 46% of house sales going to local residents. Almost 34% of purchasers originate elsewhere in Scotland. Nevertheless, despite the lowest average household income in Argyll & Bute, it is by some way the most affordable area in the authority with a local average price to income ratio of 3.7. Due to a demolition/reconfiguration programme, it is the only area to have seen an actual decline in total dwellings – down by over 2% between 2003 and 2013, despite over 100 new build RSL homes completed since 2004/5. Over 19% of the general stock is unavailable to meet local need i.e. second/holiday homes or long-term vacant. In 2015, there were 1,099 RSL homes, which is over 13% of the total social rented sector in Argyll & Bute; and there are indications of potential over-supply in this sector, with relatively high annual turnover, areas of low demand, and the main landlords sustaining a number of voids within their stock.

Key issues for Bute HMA:

The main focus for Bute will be on maintaining, repairing, improving and managing the existing stock, across all tenures.

There is currently no evidence of need for additional, subsidised affordable housing for social rent and any new build should be concentrated in the private sector.

Tackling fuel poverty, improving energy efficiency and targeting Housing Options advice and assistance remain priorities; as does supporting those with particular needs to remain independent in their home or within the community as far as possible.