

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to outline works undertaken using Private Sector Housing Grant in 2020/21. The Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) supports adaptations to allow people to stay in their own homes and also supports common repair works to properties in Argyll and Bute. The budget for 2020/21 was £1.033m.
- 1.2** The PSHG contribution to common repair works enables a significant level of investment into housing projects including CARS and THI projects in Argyll and Bute. Covid lockdown slowed the progress of some PSHG works in 2020/21 but despite the complexities, a substantial amount of work was still undertaken. Case studies are provided in the report, showing projects across Argyll and Bute.
- 1.3** Members are asked to note the statutory nature of the work carried out by the PSHG budget and also consider the importance of the role of PSHG in addressing common repairs which enables significant additional funding from other sources to maintain and improve existing housing stock in the local authority area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** Members note the statutory nature of the work carried out by the PSHG budget.
- 2.2** Members consider the role of PSHG in addressing common repairs which enables significant additional funding from other external sources to help maintain and improve existing housing stock in the local authority area.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT UPDATE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) is a Capital budget of £1.033m which is managed by Housing Services. In 2008/09 the total budget for PSHG was £3.9m which illustrates the reduction in this budget over the years. The PSHG enables the Council to deliver statutory disabled adaptations to private owners and also enables the Council to fulfill other statutory functions in relation to common repairs.

3.2 The operation of the PSHG grant not only fulfils statutory functions, but provides significant value to Argyll and Bute through:

- Enabling more elderly and disabled people to remain within their own homes and with a greater degree of independence than they otherwise would. This not only provides benefit to those individuals, but helps create a more flexible and adaptable housing stock, and reduces resource demands elsewhere within the public sector; and
- Facilitating and funding improvements and maintenance to the fabric of the existing private housing stock, which otherwise may not happen. This preserves and improves the condition of the housing stock and has very significant impact in terms of improving the urban realm and place making.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Members note the statutory nature of the work carried out by the PSHG budget.

4.2 Members consider the role of PSHG in addressing common repairs which enables significant additional funding from other external sources to help maintain and improve existing housing stock in the local authority area.

5.0 DETAIL

5.1 Section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 requires the local authority to prepare and make publicly available a Scheme of Assistance for private sector housing. The Scheme of Assistance is the Council's plan on how to improve the quality and suitability of private sector housing across Argyll and Bute. The PSHG budget enables the Council to carry out the statutory functions contained within the Scheme of Assistance.

5.2 The guiding principles of the Scheme of Assistance are as follows:-

- Grant assistance should be primarily directed at needs assessed adaptations to enable disabled persons to remain in their own homes;
- Owners of private dwelling houses are responsible for the maintenance and repair of their own properties;
- Information, advice and practical assistance should be the first step in an authority's strategy and used to reach people with whom the authority would not in the past have had contact;
- The use of grant for the general subsidisation of repair and improvement works by owners is generally discouraged;

5.3 The use of the PSHG is detailed in the Table One:-

Table One

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Advice and Prevention Cases Recorded	254	259	214	189	166
No of Grants Approved	243	181	219	232	138
Grant Approvals (£)k	£1.192m	£0.862m	£1.048m	£1.002m	£687k
New Applications Registered	239	189	240	234	131
Value of Payments (£)k	£1.454m	£1.054m	£0.980m	£1.152m	£0.421m
Disabled Spend	£849k	£640k	£701k	£764k	£332k
Common Repairs Spend	£605k	£414k	£279k	£388k	£89k
TOTAL	£1.454m	£1.054m	£0.980m	£1.152m	£0.421m

5.4 On average 18 grants had been approved each month over the 4 years prior to the Covid pandemic. This reduced to 11 per month during 2020/21. The majority of the PSHG expenditure 70% on average over the last 5 years relates to statutory disabled adaptation work to privately owned properties (owner occupied and private rented).

The need for disabled adaptation work is only set to increase with the fact that there is an ageing population in Argyll and Bute and that the vast majority of people want to live independently in their own homes. This investment enables people to remain in their homes and reduces demand elsewhere within the public sector.

5.5 Disabled Adaptation Grants

All disabled adaptation grants awarded under PSHG are works approved by the Occupation Therapy (OT) service to enable homes to meet the needs of their occupants. Adaptation grants are awarded at 100% of the cost to individuals who are in receipt of income support, income based JSA, Universal Credit, Pension Guarantee Credit or income based ESA. The Scottish Government is monitoring the impact of adding Universal Credit to the list of benefits attracting 100% grant assistance. Individuals not in receipt of any of these benefits are entitled to 80% grant assistance for OT approved adaptations. Housing Services' staff manage the grant process. The individual households can be assisted through the process by the Care and Repair Service. This element of the PSHG plays a key role in Long Term Outcome 5 of the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan – **'people live active, healthier and independent lives'**

5.6 Tenement Feasibility Studies

Housing Services' staff engage with homeowners who approach or are referred to the Council for advice and assistance. Staff encourage owners to discuss potential repairs with

their neighbours who have an obligation in terms of common repairs. Staff assist with negotiation and mediation between neighbours. Once an owners association has been established the Council can award a tenement feasibility study grant (up to £250 per property) which enables the owners to appoint a surveyor to prepare a report on the property and recommend what work should be carried out. At this stage owners may be able to carry out the required repairs and would not require any further assistance from the Council. This can play an important but cost effective role in facilitating improvements and maintenance to the built fabric of the local housing stock and often within the public realm.

5.7 Amenity Grants

Amenity grants are intended to encourage owners to take responsibility for their properties and address any potential repair issues at an early stage. The grants are awarded for activity in any clearly defined area (tenement, street, estate) or where a community led initiative will lead to improved amenity to streetscape, open spaces or built environment. The grant is awarded for 30% of the value of work up to a maximum of £1000 per household. Again this can play an important but cost effective role in facilitating improvements and maintenance to the built fabric of the local housing stock and often within the public realm.

5.8 Common Repair Grants

In some cases owners do not approach the Council for assistance for repairs until the repairs required are at a stage where the costs can be significant. If owners are all in agreement as to the common repairs required to their property they can be provided with grant assistance of 40% of their share up to a maximum grant of £10 000 if they are an owner occupiers. Private landlords and business premises can be provided with grant assistance of 30% of their share of costs up to a maximum grant of £7500.

5.9 In some cases the PSHG can pay the owner's entire share of common repair cost to enable work to be carried out. This share will be recorded against the Title of the property. A repayment agreement will be made with the owner and Housing Services' staff will monitor the agreement. If the property is sold before the end of the agreement the outstanding amount will be recovered at the point of sale. Again, this can play an important but cost effective role in facilitating improvements and maintenance to the built fabric of the local housing stock and often within the public realm.

5.10 The PSHG contribution to common repair works enables a significant level of investment into housing projects including CARS and THI projects in Argyll and Bute.

5.11 Housing Services staff work hard to ensure that the PSHG contribution enables capital contributions from owners. Staff also assist owners to access other funding streams such as Home Energy Efficiency Programme grants and Energy Efficiency Equity Loans to add value to the projects. All PSHG enabled projects result in significant work for the construction industry in the local authority area. Examples of work can be found at Appendix 1.

5.12 The common repair element of the PSHG plays a key role in long term outcome 2 of the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan – **'we have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth'**.

5.13 Contribution to TH and CARS

PSHG plays a key role in the delivery of the TH and CARS projects in Argyll and Bute.

Relief Land in Inveraray is a good example of PSHG being key to the delivery of a high profile project. The building consists of 10 private owners and 7 ACHA tenants. The overall cost of the project was £500 000. PSHG contributed £100,000 to the project. The Rothsay THl project delivered £2.6 million of repairs to properties with Housing Services' staff playing an active role. PSHG contributed £500 000 to enable successful completion of the project. The Campbeltown CARS resulted in substantial repair and regeneration work in the town. 70 PSHG grants were approved at a total value of £573 880. PSHG is currently being used to assist in the delivery of the Dunoon CARS.

5.14 A sum of £186,220 has been agreed to support the CARS project in Lochgilphead and a sum of £172,900 will support the Helensburgh CARS project which has recently been granted funding by Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 PSHG is key to delivering essential statutory housing functions required to be carried out by the local authority. It also provides significant value to Argyll and Bute through:

- Enabling more elderly and disabled people to remain within their own homes and with a greater degree of independence than they otherwise would. This not only provides benefit to those individuals, but helps create a more flexible and adaptable housing stock, and reduces resource demands elsewhere within the public sector; and
- Facilitating and funding improvements and maintenance to the fabric of the existing private housing stock, which otherwise may not happen. This preserves and improves the condition of the housing stock and has very significant impact in terms of improving the urban realm and place making.

6.2 Housing Services staff work effectively in partnership with owners, other council services and other external agencies as appropriate to ensure that the maximum added value is delivered in all common repairs carried out in Argyll and Bute.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Policy

Maintaining the PSHG budget ensures that the Council can deliver statutory housing obligations. It fulfills aims of the Single Outcome Agreement and the LHS.

7.2 Financial

Maintaining the PSHG budget ensures that the Council can deliver statutory housing obligations and also deliver priority policies such as CARS schemes.

7.3 Legal

None.

7.4 HR

None.

7.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

7.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics

Maintaining the PSHG budget will ensure that households with specific needs can continue to reside in their homes.

7.5.2 Socio-economic Duty

None.

7.5.3 Islands

None.

7.6. Risk

Reduction in the PSHG budget could result in intervention from the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator if the Council cannot deliver statutory obligations.

7.7 Customer Service

Maintaining the PSHG ensures effective customer service to households who require adaptation or common repair assistance.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 2020/21 PSHG CASE STUDIES

Appendix 1

2020/21 PSHG CASE STUDIES

Cowal

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant delays in terms of delivery particularly due to lockdown but a number of the projects are now been successfully completed.

One of the Priority Buildings in the Dunoon CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) Project was 65 - 67 Argyll Street / 1 Ferry Brae. This building comprises of a pharmacy with two residential properties above, in the main shopping street of Dunoon.

Repairs were carried out to the roof, rainwater goods, windows and stonework and the building is now wind and watertight.

Costs were as follows:

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	CARS / Historic Environment Scotland	Owner's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£25,000	£174,811	£49,954	£249,765



Before



During



After



Before



After

Bute

The only major repair works carried out in the last year, and funded by a Private Sector Housing Grant, have been in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Project. As with Cowal, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant delays but some of the projects have now been completed.

One of the Priority Buildings in Rothesay was 73 – 77 Victoria Street, that occupies a very prominent position on the seafront. This building comprises of two shops with two residential properties above.

Repairs were made to the roof and tenement close and the exterior of the building was repointed. The building is now wind and watertight.

Costs were as follows:

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	CARS / Heritage Lottery Fund	Owner's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£11,194	£330,761	£27,952	£369,908



Before



After

Oban

6-8 Alma Crescent, Oban

Works to improve the common garden area ground shared by 6 & 8 Alma Crescent. There are 12 flats: 10 ACHA and 2 private owners. The building is factored.

Works included clearing the site, refurbishing sheds including new doors and roof, replacing boundary fence and constructing a bin store with access ramp and gate, fitting new washing poles and re-laying paths and landscaping

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	Owner's Contribution	ACHA's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£2,000	£4,990	£34,951.68	£41,941.68

Before



After



13 Corran Brae, Oban

This tenement of 6 flats with 1 ACHA and 5 private owners was constructed in the 1950s, and the owners were having problems with water ingress. They formed an owners association and worked with ACHA to secure costs for the roof at the same time ACHA were working with Argyll and Bute Council's Energy Efficiency Department and SSE on providing EWI for the Housing Association and private properties.

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant (Predicted)	Owner's Contribution	ACHA's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS (Predicted)
£12,860.87	£22,862.90	£7144.93	£42,869.58

Before



After



Helensburgh and Lomond

Alma Buildings – 13 Charlotte Street – 24, 26 and 28 East King Street

This is a mixed tenure block close to the town centre of Helensburgh. Built in 1936 they are commonly known as the “Alma Buildings” broadly symmetrical 3 Storey Art Deco tenements blocks. It's a well-planned and detailed example of larger-scale inter-war municipal housing in Helensburgh. The building is B Listed and is not within the remit of the designated CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) and would not qualify for CARS funding.

There are 17 Private owners and ACHA own 4 properties, in total 21 units; 16 of the 17 private owners applied for and received grant funding. The absent owner's share was negotiated to be paid by ACHA allowing the works to commence with no further costs to the private owners. All materials/works (tiles, paint colours) are subject to planning regulations. Works commenced on 12th April 2021.

Alma Buildings

13 Charlotte Street - 24, 26 and 28 East King Street - Helensburgh

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	Owner's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£85,487.06	£169,229.05	£254,716.11

These works could not have progressed without the repair grants and will without a doubt contribute to improving Helensburgh whilst retaining its historical significance.





52 Sinclair Street – Helensburgh

Situated on the main street in Helensburgh this tenement was built circa 1878 and was originally a two storey property with the additions being introduced in 1906. This building has many of its original features such as the semi-circular arched pend entrance. This building has been in disrepair since 2012 and caused frequent and substantial water ingress to the top floor occupants. In terms of the common liability there are four residential flats and one commercial owner. Following extensive negotiations with the owners and the commercial business works commenced around February 2021. Two of the flats are owned by Argyll & Bute Council and therefore grant assistance was given to two private owners and one commercial property.

Funding Synopsis

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	Owner's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£27,030.68	£46,689.34	£73, 720.02

Before



After



Mid-Argyll, Kintyre & the Isles

A good example of work in partnership in 2020/21 is this tenement building in Campbeltown.

In 2017 Housing Services helped form an owners association for the first time with the owners of the 10 flats and 2 commercial units. The owners worked well together and fought hard to clean up the close and maintain and repair the building, despite the tenement needing extensive repairs, the owners did what they could to carry out urgent repairs and gutter cleaning to prevent further deterioration of the building.

The owners association saved monthly in their bank account with the hope of being able to tackle the extensive repairs required to the roof. In 2019/20 Argyll & Bute council's Campbeltown CARS had enough budget left near the end of their 5 year plan to fit this building in so a very quick plan was made to include these repairs. Along with Private Sector Housing Grant and owners' contribution we were able to get a significant amount of work done including lead works, re-slating, chimney repairs, stone repairs, replacement rainwater goods, rot repairs and internal timber repairs in some of the flats. Also the roof light in the common stairwell was repaired removing risk to public. The total project cost £318,000 with owners contributing £59,000.

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	CARS	Owner's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£96,780	£130,000	£59,000	£318,000

Before



After



40-48 Main Street

40 – 48 Main St is on the main shopping street in Campbeltown. The property consists of 4 flats and 3 shop/commercial units.

In 2015 we started by helping form an Owners Association. The building was being maintained by the owners but was suffering from age and needed roof renewing at some point. The owners were involved in repairing the decking area behind their properties which was common to several other closes in proximity. Following the

successful completion of that project they began working with Housing Services who approved a Condition Survey Grant to enable them to have an Architect come and do a complete survey of the condition of the building allowing the owners to have a better understanding of what needed done and the urgency of each item. This allowed them to plan a repair project to suit. The roof and rainwater goods were replaced

Private Sector Housing Grant was awarded towards this project and along with owner's contributions and CARS funding this project was completed for a total cost of £200k.

The repairs allowed the takeover of the existing derelict pub building that has now been redeveloped into a successful restaurant creating both much needed employment opportunities and an aesthetic improvement to the Main Street.

Argyll and Bute Council Housing Grant	CARS	Owner's Contribution	TOTAL WORKS
£57,080	£78,463.47	£35,000	£175,273.28

Before



After

