
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 (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 5175 properties. For the Mid Argyll, Kintyre & Islay (MAKI) Area this is broken down as follows:

- Mid Argyll – 623
- Kintyre – 800
- Islay – 380

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 7 pitches available to let to the Gypsy Traveller Community.

4.2 Regeneration Programme

4.2.1 Low demand strategy – Dalintober

There was a feasibility study undertaken a number of years ago to investigate the future of the Dalintober. 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 investigate the possibility of being able to demolish these properties. As these properties are "Listed" ACHA have been actively engaging with Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and Argyll & Bute Council to allow this to be taken forward.

This matter was then ultimately referred to the Scottish Government to make the decision on whether the Association could demolish these properties.

In December 2023 we received confirmation from the Scottish Government granting us permission to demolish the buildings at Dalintober. The demolition will not take place until a new build contract has been let but we can now move forward with this after a significant period of time.

There are 46 properties affected in this area, and all residents have moved to alternative homes so the properties are all empty.

ACHA now plan to build new properties on the site that meet the needs of the applicants on the HOME Argyll waiting list.

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 Mid Argyll & Kintyre areas.

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 MAKI this year we have carried out the following improvements
Windows and Doors – 60
Kitchens and Bathrooms- 11
Heating and Rewire – 3
Roof and roughcase – 0
Refurbishment – 0

4.4 Warm Homes Fund

4.4.1 Our warm homes fund project is continuing to replace inefficient electric heating with Air Source Heat Pump systems. At the end of

October 2023 we have installed 894 new systems to homes including 491 in Mid Argyll and Kintyre and 231 on Islay and Jura.

4.4.2 We have recently completed a project at our Sheltered Housing Scheme at McCracken Court in Lochgilphead, where we have installed External Wall Insulation, Solar PV, Air Source Heat Pumps and new doors and windows.

4.5 Business Energy Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Whole House Retrofit Programme

4.5.1 ACHA have won funding through a central government scheme to retrofit energy efficiency measures including external wall insulation, internal wall insulation, under floor insulation, windows, doors and renewable heating systems. There were 67 Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay properties that benefitted from this project. These improvements could see tenants benefitting from up to a 60% reduction in energy costs.

4.6 Replacement of Wet Electric Heating Systems

4.6.1 This project involves removing inefficient heating systems and replacing with Air Source Heat Pump systems. Our contractor Pro-cast carried out pre-install surveys and then began installing systems in early July. To date they have completed 47 installations, nine of these have been in Mid Argyll and Kintyre and a further 6 are in Islay.

4.7 Duncholgan Travelling Persons Site

4.7.1 During 2022 ACHA carried out improvement works to our travelling persons site at Duncholgan, which included improving the lighting, landscaping and increasing the size of the pitches. As a result of these works the pitches at Duncholgan have doubled in size. This work has reduced the number of pitches at Duncholgan from 14 down to 7. The site is currently fully let.

4.7.2 ACHA recognise that further significant works are required to our travelling persons sites and so have been conducting a full consultation exercise with our tenants and the wider gypsy/traveller community during 2023, in order to prepare a bid for funding from the Scottish Government. We have appointed an Architect, who have just provided us with their phase 2 report with costings for the improvements identified from our consultation exercise. When funds become available we will be in a strong position to submit a successful bid.

4.8 Sheltered Housing

4.8.1 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 schemes at Chalmers Court, Inveraray, Lochgair Place, Tarbert and McCracken Court, Lochgilphead have been included in Phase 1 of the review.

4.8.2 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.

4.9 Allocations & Reletting of Properties

4.9.1 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.

4.10 Exemplar Estates

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

- McCracken Court
- Broomhill, Bowmore
- Church Way, Port Ellen

4.11 Estate Walkabouts

4.11.1 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.

4.12 Customer Involvement Strategy

4.12.1 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.

4.13 Welfare Rights

4.13.1 – ACHA's welfare rights service for Mid Argyll and Kintyre has brought in a total of £540,661.87 income for 228 clients since 1st April 2023 and for Islay a total of £111,220.24 income for 55 clients. All ACHA tenants are offered an appointment with our Welfare Rights Officer.

4.14 Adaptations

4.14.1 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 Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay we have recently completed 70 adaptations with a further 38 planned this year.

4.15 Scotland Housing Awards 27th October 2023

4.15.1 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.

4.15.2 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.

4.16 Scottish Energy Efficiency Awards June 2023

4.16.1 ACHA were nominated for 2 awards at this years 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.

4.17 – 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.

4.18 ACHA's 10 10 10 Initiative

4.18.1 11 Schools in Argyll and Bute received an award in 2023 including Arinagour Primary, Drumlemble Primary, Port Ellen Primary and Tarbert Academy.

4.19 ACHA's Community Action Fund

4.19.1 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 Lochgilphead Phoenix Project, Campbeltown Brass, Community Cycling, Ardrishaig, Tarbert Soup Group, Tarbert Youth Group, Sidekick and Islay and Jura Community Enterprises Ltd.

4.20 Customer Satisfaction

4.20.1 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 customers views on preferences to accessing services now and in the future.

4.20.2 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 .

4.20.3 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.

4.20.4 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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