



## Lochside in Ayr Building Successful Communities Award - 2011 Highly Commended



### Project overview



In partnership with South Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire Housing's latest development is acting as the catalyst for the regeneration of one of Ayr's poorest neighbourhoods. It is unique in South Ayrshire in its ambition and scale.

100 new houses have been created. They replace 132 unpopular dwellings which were demolished in streets named after the Burgh Councillors who proudly commissioned them in the 1930s.



Each of the new houses has its own private garden. They are arranged in home zones to provide a pedestrian friendly environment. The houses are designed with flexibility in mind to suit changing tenant needs. Each incorporates energy efficiency measures including a whole house and continuously operating positive input ventilation system.



Alongside Ayrshire Housing's new build, South Ayrshire Council has embarked on a major programme of improvement works in the surrounding streets. This is being done using the same consultants and contractor to ensure design integration and local economic spin-offs.

The Council has piloted an approach to remodelling an unpopular block type which is also found beyond the core demolition area.



The project is about more than just housing. It aims to ensure that the impact of an initial £18 million investment in the new build and refurbishment extends to the wider Lochside community. The People and Place initiative managed by local social enterprise Aspire2gether (formerly Ayrshire Initiatives) has developed an exciting series of projects to give the community a real say not just in Ayrshire Housing's plans but also the Council's investment in the surrounding streets.

It is hoped that this will be the springboard to sustained community influence on the quality of their neighbourhood. Community projects include:

- **the common spaces project:** a series of placemaking sessions have mapped out a strategy for public spaces in Lochside.
- **community arts:** an early action was a community produced film in which local residents – young and old – spoke of their aspirations for Lochside.
- **changing Lochside:** Local residents have been making their own record of the changes being wrought by the redevelopment using digital cameras and other media. A series of local exhibitions has highlighted their work.
- **representative residents' groups:** All the activities of the Initiative focus on the active involvement of local people of all ages. We are supporting the newly established New Lochside Tenants and Residents Association to develop community capacity and take forward a programme of activities including the redevelopment of open spaces and organising community events such as summer fun days.
- **youth projects:** this is a partnership with the Lochside Learning Centre. This project is multi-media focused and runs workshops for young people with the aim of developing and maintaining a youth website, devising and producing film and recording young people's experiences of living in the area. It is learning focused mixed with fun. It aims to encourage positive attitudes to learning. It also works closely with the local primary school to organise activities connected with the regeneration process for P7 pupils.



- **Access Construction:** Additional Wider Role funding extended the longstanding housing association sponsored Access Construction Ayrshire training project to Lochside. This resulted in the recruitment of 5 local young adults into long term traineeships.

## Improved quality and mix of homes



Despite being in one of the 5% most deprived areas in Scotland, Lochside has generally low levels of empty or difficult to let properties, and surprisingly high levels of owner-occupation due to the long-term effect of the right to buy. Indeed, the Council is now a minority landlord in north Ayr as a result of this process. This context has conditioned the physical regeneration objectives within two inter-related components:

Firstly, the demolition of 132 unpopular houses and their replacement with 100 new houses for rent within three streets which had become extremely unpopular due to outmoded house-types and a poor environment. There was a particular concentration of crime coupled with low levels of community engagement. A range of management initiatives such as a local lettings scheme and community clean-ups had failed to overcome the underlying problems.

In November 2005, the Council agreed to consult on the demolition and replacement of the houses in these streets. There was widespread local support for the proposals and following analysis of the feedback, it was agreed to pursue the demolition of 132 houses rather than the 60 originally envisaged. This allowed for a more coherent strategy with regard to tackling the least popular house types.



£8.5 millions.

In less than five years, the area has been transformed into a series of home zones. Each of the 100 new houses has its own private garden and car parking. A wide range of housing needs is accommodated including through several dedicated wheelchair houses.

The new build component cost £13 millions including demolition costs. It has been supported by Scottish Government grants of

As originally approved for funding, 25 of the houses were earmarked for sale. These were all converted to affordable renting prior to their completion due to the general collapse in house sales. It should be noted that “tenure diversification” was not a key objective of the project but had rather been introduced as pragmatic response to Government funding priorities. As noted above, there is already a well established owner-occupier sector which operates at entry levels at or below the prices of shared equity new build. Lochside also benefits from the high levels of demand for rental accommodation in the wider Ayr and Prestwick catchment areas.



The second physical element has been a £5 million programme of refurbishment and environmental improvements in the surrounding streets by South Ayrshire Council and individual owner-occupiers. This has included testing the effectiveness of radically remodelling an 8 in a block type which is peculiar to this part of Ayr.

To ensure as much integration of the two elements as possible the same design and contractor team has been used by Ayrshire Housing and South Ayrshire Council. The team has been led by Gordon Fleming of Ayr based architects ARP. Gordon was selected on the basis of his extensive experience of community focused design following his winning of an international competition for a major project in Ballymun, Dublin.

## Developing a sense of place

The project was the subject of extensive individual and community consultation to ensure



the finalised housing and layouts met their aspirations. Individual sessions with residents were held at a dedicated project base about their housing options. In addition, they have been given a real say in the design of their new or refurbished home. Tenants returning to a new build house each had an individual consultation with architect Gordon Fleming. They could choose between different layout options for their new home and pick its location in the new layout.

With its dedicated community workers, the Lochside People and Place Initiative has taken a proactive and intensive approach to engaging with local residents, supporting them to play an increased role in their neighbourhood and the wider north Ayr area. The initiative aims to build a stronger more involved community which will promote the ongoing development of the neighbourhood beyond the immediate areas of physical renewal.

The initiative through public meetings and newsletters has supported the creation of the New Lochside Tenants and Residents Association. This is constituted “to organise and act to improve the living conditions, community facilities and services for the tenants and residents of Lochside”. The initiative has provided ongoing support including capacity building training for its members. It has organised a number of gala and fun days as well as underpinning the following project areas:

Open spaces: Greenspace Scotland led on workshops to evaluate the potential of local



open spaces. These helped to set community led briefs for two open spaces in the new development and for one site identified in the established residential area. This led to detailed designs being drawn up for the three areas. In one, local primary school pupils helped to design the railings and in another specially commissioned chainsaw sculptures were inspired by a youth group.

Community arts: An initial statement of local opinion and demands was contained in a short film, “Lochside People and Place” made with the assistance of local teenagers by Fablevision. Its premier in June 2007 was an early milestone in the regeneration process. Their enthusiasm has been maintained since then in a series of multi-media workshops.



Recording Project: Local residents have been able to borrow digital cameras to record everyday life during the demolition and rebuilding. It is hoped that it will not only foster



individual initiative but also encourage a critical view of their immediate environment. A professional photo-journalist has helped residents to develop their photographic and presentation skills. A well attended photographic exhibition was held in February 2008 at the end of the demolition phase. This has been followed up with a major retrospective exhibition in the local community centre in November 2010. The recording project has also been showcased with enthusiastic resident involvement at the CIH's 2009 and 2010 Scottish conferences.

## Contribution to broader local regeneration



A key goal of the project has been for it to be stimulus to positive physical and social benefits in the rest of the Lochside neighbourhood. This why the community engagement aspects described above have always had a much wider geographic focus than the streets subject to physical renewal.



The success of the Council's initial upgrading and remodelling schemes have created demands for similar projects in the vicinity. As a result, a £4 million major remodelling of maisonette blocks in nearby streets is now well underway.

With regard to generating local opportunities for jobs, training and education many of the community engagement activities have been intended to increase personal confidence and capacity. An example

here is the ongoing skills training for participants in the residents' association.

The work with young people has a significant educational component. This has included:



- Supported the delivery of a multi-media youth club targeted at 11 to 16 year olds one evening a week.
- Supported a summer holiday club focusing on multi-media activities.
- Trips to other multi-media projects to encourage peer learning.
- Work with the local school and the building contractor to plan and deliver a competition for P7 pupils on the theme of site safety.

More directly in terms of creating local job opportunities, Ayrshire Housing has with Wider Role funding been able to lever in 5 long-term training posts into the building contracts Ashleigh (Scotland) Ltd secured from the association and the Council. This is as part of the successful Access Construction Ayrshire project that Aspire2gether delivers for a consortium of Ayrshire housing associations led by Ayrshire Housing.

## Evidence of partnership working



Partnership working has underpinned the initiative from the very beginning with the community very much at the centre. The project was kicked off as a result of informal discussions between local tenant activists and Councillors, and key officials from South Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire Housing regarding the future of the three streets. Immediately, following the first meeting, Ayrshire Housing commissioned Gordon Fleming at ARPL to produce some concept

sketches. These had the effect of showing the potential of new build allowing the Council to crystallise its approach to regeneration in a matter of months. The project was then developed by a partnership board consisting of all the local councillors, community representatives as well as officials from the Council, Ayrshire Housing and Aspire2gether.



As the project progressed, the partnership approach was extended to Communities Scotland (the Scottish Government's then regeneration arm) with regard to both capital funding through Housing Estates Regeneration Fund (HERF) and Housing Association Grant, and revenue support through the Wider Role fund.



In the field, maximising the involvement of the local community has been critical. A new residents' and tenants' association has been supported, and links forged with local schools, churches, and youth initiatives.



As the new houses have been let and others upgraded, the focus for partnership has moved to securing a sense of community control over their environment. Both the Council and Ayrshire Housing are, for example, supporting resident centred initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch and local clean up campaigns at the present time. The local primary school pupils will continue to be involved in the upkeep of the open spaces which they helped to design.

We are all mindful that the success or otherwise of the investment to date will depend on both community confidence and a pro-active response by all the agencies concerned for the wellbeing of Lochside's residents









