

Saltire Design Award



Ayrshire Housing received the award for its Corton Howe, Doonholm, Ayr development at a ceremony in Glasgow's Lighthouse Architectural Centre.

Pearl Boyd, Ayrshire Housing's vice-chair, was delighted to be handed the specially forged plaque by Stewart Maxwell, Scotland's Minister for Communities and Sport. Pearl said "as a tenant member of Ayrshire Housing, I am delighted with this recognition

of the quality of our housing".



The development is of 20 semi-detached houses which are linked by high walls to give a sense of enclosure to a suburban cul-de-sac.

It was designed by Dr Roan Rutherford of Austin-Smith:Lord and built by Ashleigh (Scotland) Ltd. This is the second development by Ayrshire Housing to win a Saltire award. In 2003, the society gave a plaque to a development also by Roan Rutherford at Earl Rise, Dundonald. We have also since then received two commendations and two special mentions for other projects.

Lochside



Stewart Maxwell, Minister for Communities and Sport, officially launched Ayrshire Housing's 100 house regeneration

project in Lochside, Ayr.

This is the key element of a joint project with South Ayrshire Council to replace 131 unpopular houses and to provide the catalyst for extensive modernisation works across Lochside. 25 of the new houses will be for sale on a shared equity basis.

Each of the returning tenants has been given a real say in the design of their houses through one to one consultations with the architect, Gordon Fleming of ARP Lorimer and Associates.



Work is expected to be complete by the beginning of 2010 on what is Ayrshire Housing's largest development to date.

Home Contents Insurance

Unfortunately bad weather brings more than just the cold to our homes. Burst pipes, frost damage or fires all cause loss or damage to tenants' belongings. At this time of year loss through theft from housebreaking is also more common.

The association's insurance does not cover any loss to your personal belongings or damage to your décor. Many tenants believe that we insure their furniture and belongings against fire, theft or water damage. We have to remind tenants each year that this is not the case.

We strongly recommend that tenants take out home contents insurance with a reputable insurer.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations provides competitively priced insurance cover through the SFHA Diamond Insurance scheme. This scheme provides the opportunity for tenants to pay the cost by instalments.

**The Hotline number for this scheme is
0845 601 6006.**

Rent Setting Consultation 2009-2010

The decision to set the rents for next year has to be taken by the Board at their meeting in February 2009. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 we have a duty to consult tenants on the proposed changes to rents and service charges. This article will provide some of the information that is taken into account when changes to rents are being considered.

Ayrshire Housing is a “not for profit” organisation. This means that the rent you pay is used to meet the costs of the management and maintenance of your home and any services that are provided.

From the rent we receive we also make payments on loans which were part of the funding package when your property was acquired or developed.

Your rent pays for the staff costs involved in running the association and also for other direct costs such as office accommodation, computers and stationery. Repairs to the properties are also paid for from the rent income.

Affordability

We are also bound to consider whether our rents are affordable. The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations provides guidance to associations on how to measure affordability. Based on this guidance in the past our rents were considered to be affordable.

Longer term planning

We also have to ensure that the income we receive is available for the future management and maintenance of our properties rather than just the next couple of years. For example, at some point in the future your kitchen or bathroom or central heating may need to be replaced. Other components such as windows and gutters also need regular painting or maintenance. Between November and January each year the association's senior management work on financial projections to ensure that income we receive from rents is sufficient to cover all projected costs. We have to adopt a sensible and prudent approach to financial planning. While we don't want to increase rents more than is necessary we have to be sure that funds are sufficient to secure the future of the association and its properties for the benefit of current and future tenants.

Comparisons with other landlords

We also compare our rents with those of other housing associations and the local council. Inflation levels, interest rates and costs in the construction industry are also analysed as these all affect our financial projections.

Proposed increase

Taking account of the various elements we have to consider it is proposed that we will be able to restrict any increase to no more than 1% above December 2008's inflation rate. We think that this will allow us to continue to prudently manage and maintain the association's properties.

Expressing your views

We are inviting you to give us your views on this proposal for next year's rent increase. In particular we would like you to tell us if you think our proposals are fair and also do you think that the basis for setting rents is fair.

You can let us know your views in several ways:

- By writing to us at our office
- By telling your housing officer who will pass on your views to senior management
- By e-mailing your views direct to the association at info@ayrshirehousing.org.uk
- Post your comments on our blog at website at www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk

All views expressed will be considered by the Board when making their final decision.

End Violence Against Women & Children

The United Nations General Assembly has designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon said "Violence against women continues to persist as one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world. It is a threat to all women, and an obstacle to all our efforts for development, peace and gender equality in all societies."

Locally the Multi-Agency Partnership to tackle Violence Against Women & Children launched a new website to coincide with this date. The website will offer information and advice to people who have or are experiencing gender-based violence, such as domestic abuse or sexual assault. There are separate sections specifically for women, for children and young people and for workers.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a form of gender-based violence please visit the website to learn where you can find support. www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk

GOING AWAY.....



If you are going to be away overnight leave your heating ticking over at a background heat setting. If you are going away on holiday turn off the water at the main stopcock. Make sure you have sufficient credit in your meter if you have a power card or gas card meter. If you are going away for any long period please contact **John** or **Murray**, our maintenance officers on **01292 880120** who can advise of any other precautions that should be taken.

Councillor Nan McFarlane, Chair of South Ayrshire Council's Regulatory Panel was delighted on Friday 30 November 2007 to present Mr George and Mrs Georgina Watson with the keys to their new home in Knockbreck Road, Straiton.

The 12 house was designed by ARP Lorimer and Associates and built by Moulds of Kilmarnock.



GAS LEAKS

If you smell gas:

- Turn off all gas appliances
- Switch off the gas supply at the mains
- Put out any cigarettes and do not light any matches
- Do not use any electric switches
- Open doors and windows to get rid of gas

In an emergency

Call TRANSCO 0800 111 999

Rent Arrears We know that Christmas is a time when we all face extra pressure on our finances. Additional burdens and demands can lead to many debt related problems. It is important to remember, however, that rent payments due to the association are maintained throughout the festive season. While it may be tempting to miss a payment in order to meet some of the costs of Christmas the consequences of doing so may be serious.

The association cannot make allowances for payments missed at this time of year. If a tenant's account goes into arrears we will pursue the recovery of the rent due in line with our arrears policy and procedures irrespective of the time of year.

It is important that you contact us immediately if you are having difficulty meeting your rent commitments.

We can supply this document in a print size to suit. It is also available in Braille, audio and other formats, and in other languages. Our website also has several accessibility features which you may find useful.

STAFF NEWS

We have recently been joined on a temporary basis by Housing Officer **John Robertson**, who previously worked with Cube Housing Association in Glasgow. John will be covering Isobel Moore's areas, as she is currently unable to work due to ill-health. Tenants will join us at Ayrshire Housing in welcoming John, and in wishing Isobel a speedy recovery.

Elizabeth (Liz) Cairns will join the Corporate Services Team on a job-share basis. (photo front left). Liz will be based on reception and will be on hand to deal with your enquiries. **Michelle Reid** who you all know, will job-share with Liz on reception and **Carol Craig** in Housing Management (photo back right).



The Staff of Ayrshire Housing wish you Season's Greetings

MERRY CHRISTMAS

WINTER WEATHER ADVICE

As we approach another winter there is always a greater risk of damage to your home due to frost or flooding from burst pipes. But there are ways in which you can prevent damage to your home and your belongings.

To avoid burst pipes try to keep your home reasonably warm during the day and night. Make sure you know where the main stopcock is for your cold water supply and make sure it works. This can prevent substantial damage to your home if you have a burst pipe.

If you do have a burst or notice any signs of leaks or flooding:



- Turn off the water supply at the stop cock
- Fully turn on all taps as quickly as possible to drain the system
- If you find where the leak is bind it tightly with a towel and place a bowl or other container to catch any drips
- If the water is likely to come into contact with electrical fittings switch off the electricity supply.
- Warn neighbours who might be affected



CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS, OFFICE CLOSURE AND EMERGENCY REPAIRS



Our offices will be closed from lunchtime on Wednesday 24th December 2008 and will re-open on Tuesday 6th January 2009 at 9.00 a.m.

Please note that if you need to report an emergency repair when our office is closed you should telephone the following number:-

0845 719 0019

This is the only number you should use for emergency repairs when our office is closed.

This emergency response centre will arrange for an appropriate tradesman to respond if the request is an emergency. It is important that this service is only used for genuine emergencies. Examples of these include:

Burst pipes, No heating, No water, No electricity or gas, Dangerous electric fitting such as switches or sockets, No hot water, Insecure doors / windows at ground floor level, Toilet not flushing (if there is no other toilet that you can use in the house), Blocked sink, bath or drain.

 **Ayrshirehousing**