

Spotlight

Housing Scotland turns the spotlight on Ayrshire Housing.

Issue No 42

Committed to Ayrshire



Young residents open the windows at Ayrshire Housing's latest development in Kirkmichael.

A leading provider of high quality rented housing details inside....

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We are delighted to have been appointed by Ayrshire Housing to their consultant framework agreement and to be working to develop sustainable communities in well insulated and healthy homes.

We wish Ayrshire Housing every success in the future.

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Committed to Ayrshire

Ayrshire Housing was established in April 2003 through the merger of Carrick Housing Association and South Ayrshire Homes. Since then it has grown rapidly to become one of the county's leading providers of high quality rented housing.

Ayrshire Housing has won a string of awards for the quality of its new housing developments. Director Jim Whiston comments "Our take on sustainability is as much about doing our best to guarantee the long-term social worth of what we do. For example, our new houses reflect "life-time home" principles. This means that our housing management staff can engage sensitively and flexibly with a wide range of client and carer demands. In addition, with a commitment to placemaking and design quality, the goal for each project is that it becomes over the years an established and well cared for addition to Ayrshire's built environment."



▲ Photo: New rented housing in a suburban mixed tenure development at Doonholm, Ayr.

Ayrshire Housing is a company limited by guarantee and a Scottish charity. Each of its 1,200 tenants is a member of the company. The governance structure is a partnership of every tenant, South Ayrshire Council and the wider community. Each is guaranteed 5 places on the Board. The strength of Ayrshire Housing's engagement with its tenants and the wider public is reflected in the regular postal ballot contests for membership of the Board.

A recent survey confirmed that the majority of tenants consider being with Ayrshire Housing a positive choice providing value for money. This lays down a challenge to the association's Board in terms of setting service standards and minimising rent increases. Over the past four years, for example, it has ensured that rents have risen by no more than 0.5% above inflation – consistently lower than all other social landlords in Ayrshire. This achievement is now unfortunately under pressure from the Scottish Government's efficiency drive.

▼ Photo: A spacious new house in Dalrymple.



Photo: A+DS's Sebastian Tombs (on left) welcoming Mr and Mrs Cassidy to their new home in Girvan. He said "Ayrshire Housing is a good example of the way in which a client can make a very significant difference to the quality of an area – and its string of awards is testament to its ambition."



Beyond Just Housing

Ayrshire Housing is firmly committed to extending the reach of its work, and its engagement with individuals and other agencies.

Its partner in the Ayrshire Housing group, Ayrshire Initiatives is a locally based social enterprise. Its Director Louise Christie says

"We deliver regeneration projects and individual support to benefit residents across Ayrshire. Our services and specially tailored projects complement the work of Ayrshire Housing and now several other social landlords as housing providers."

Although part of the Ayrshire group, Ayrshire Initiative's governance structure was recently changed to support direct community membership and a growing stakeholder base.

Current projects include:

- The Lochside People and Place Initiative.
- Delivery of a housing support service to tenants of South Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire Housing.
- The Tenant Welcome Programme which provides intensive support to vulnerable and new tenants of housing associations across Ayrshire.
- Home Learn Link which provides one-to-one literacy and numeracy support to individuals in their own home and assist them to move into mainstream services.
- Access Construction Ayrshire which provides apprenticeship and other employment training opportunities with housing association development, and repairs and maintenance contractors across Ayrshire.

▼ Photo: Pearl Boyd (left), tenant and Ayrshire Housing's longest serving Board member welcomes a new tenant.



▲ Photo: Adam Ingram Minister for Children and Early Years congratulates participants in the Tenant Welcome Programme. He said that "This initiative chimes clearly with what we are trying to achieve by early intervention in support of families."



▲ Photo: A small infill development within one of Ayr's traditional villa districts.

Transforming Lochside

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

This summer sees Ayrshire contractor Asheigh start work on 100 new houses – 75 for rent and 25 for shared equity purchase. These will replace 130 unpopular dwellings which were demolished last year in streets named after the Burgh Councillors who proudly commissioned them in the 1930s. Each of the new houses will have its own private garden and they will be arranged in home zones to provide a pedestrian friendly environment. Each returning resident has been given a real say in the design of their new home through one to one consultations with the award winning architect, Gordon Fleming. The project also focuses on sustainable design and construction. Working with WRAP - material change for a better environment - the project team aims to maximise the use of materials with a high recycled content coupled with onsite waste reduction. Ayrshire Housing's Project Manager, Rose Estelles said "I've been leading a series of workshops involving the design team and the contractor to ensure that this goal is delivered in a measurable way against mutually agreed but challenging performance indicators".



▲ Photo: Ayrshire Housing's plans for 100 new houses in Lochside, Ayr.

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► Photo: The expectant audience for the Lochside People + Place film.

People + Place

Ayrshire Housing's Lochside project is about more than just housing. It wants to ensure that the impact of an initial £13 million investment extends into the wider community. Its wider action partner, 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 South Ayrshire Council's complementary investment in the surrounding streets. Bill Longdon, the project's Community Worker comments

"We want all this investment to be the springboard to sustained community influence on the quality of their neighbourhood over the long-term".



Key initiatives led by Bill's team include:

- ◆ The Common Spaces project: a series of placemaking sessions are mapping 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 – speak of their aspirations for Lochside. This work has continued in a multi-media project with local youth groups.
- ◆ Changing Lochside: Local residents are making their own record of the changes being wrought by the redevelopment using digital cameras and other media. A series of local exhibitions will highlight their work
- ◆ Representative residents' groups: All the activities of the Lochside People and Place Initiative focus on the active involvement of local people of all ages. We are supporting the recently 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 a summer fun day.

Meeting the Needs of Individuals

Ayrshire Housing has a long and successful track record in working with a range of partner organisations to find long term and sustainable solutions to the needs of its tenants. In one of its newest developments in Prestwick, Fairway View, its staff have worked closely with the architect, local authority social services, occupational therapists, carers and, most importantly of all, the prospective tenants, the Taylor family, to ensure that appropriate features were incorporated into their new home at the design stage.

Housing Manager, David McGivern said "This was to give Claire and Raymond Taylor access to accommodation which would be especially suitable for the needs of their 4 year old twins, Daniel and Callum. The boys suffer from cerebral palsy so the house incorporates features such as a specially designed bathroom and tracking hoists to aid the bathing of the twins as they grow".



▲ Photo: A new t

Independent Living

Through close collaborative working arrangements, Ayrshire Housing has been able to provide accommodation for a significant number of tenants who were previously accommodated within a residential setting at the Arrol Park Resource Centre in Ayr. This centre accommodated a number of individuals with learning disabilities who also had a range of complex housing and health needs. Ayrshire Housing has provided accommodation in many of its new build developments for these tenants, and their carers and support teams. It has ensured that appropriate aids and adaptations were provided to ensure that the accommodation offered was always tailored to their specific needs.

Through the contacts that were made with the learning disabilities team at Arrol Park, Ayrshire Housing has also provided accommodation for many of their clients who were previously living with and being cared for by their families. A flexible range of house types has allowed many of these individuals access to independent living for the first time. It has also provided their families the reassurance that their sons and daughters now have long term security and stability with the accommodation and care that has been provided within a community setting. Without the accommodation provided



▲ Photo: South Ayrshire Council's leader Hugh Hunter (centre right) welcomes Mrs Claire Taylor to her new home

by Ayrshire Housing many of these individuals would have been faced with the prospect of being hospitalised or having to move to inappropriate accommodation. Through the commitment of all parties, what started as a project to provide accommodation for 13 individuals has grown to provide for over 40 people and their carers to date.

tenant and his carer in blight modern wheelchair house.


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▼ Photo: New houses brighten a dreich day in Straiton. The coloured doors both follow tradition in this conservation village and integrate a dementia friendly feature into mainstream design.

Bringing New Life to Ayrshire's Villages

Sensitively planned village projects have been a major theme in Ayrshire Housing's development programme over the years. Indeed, the lack of rented housing in the villages was a key motivation for the community activists who formed one of its predecessors – Carrick Housing Association in 1991.

The recent 12 house scheme at Straiton, one of Ayrshire's prettiest villages, is a good example of what can be achieved with care, commitment and engagement with the local community. It reintroduces affordable rented housing to the village, all the Council houses having been sold under the right to buy. Since they may be the only ones built, Ayrshire Housing has taken great care to ensure that they are as flexible as possible. For example, all have at least one downstairs bedroom and the bathroom is also at ground level. The majority of the new tenants either come from the Straiton district or are renewing a connection with the village. A real challenge was the lack of mains sewerage locally. As a consequence, Ayrshire Housing worked closely with SEPA in the provision of a reed bed to handle septic tank discharges.

On Sunday 1 June, another 12 houses were completed in the nearby conservation village of Kirkmichael with an open invitation to everyone in the village to attend the formal opening ceremony. Since, like Straiton, there is no gas supply to the village, we have worked hard to ensure that the houses are highly insulated, benefit from passive solar gain and efficient controllable electric heating systems.





◀ Ayrshire Housing Board member Councillor John McDowall presents Linda McFarlane and her son, Gareth, with the keys to their new home in Kirkmichael. He said "I congratulate everyone at Ayrshire Housing on another excellent village development. I hope that our new tenants will enjoy their homes and perhaps consider supporting our work through seeking election to the Board."

Mixed Tenure Neighbourhoods

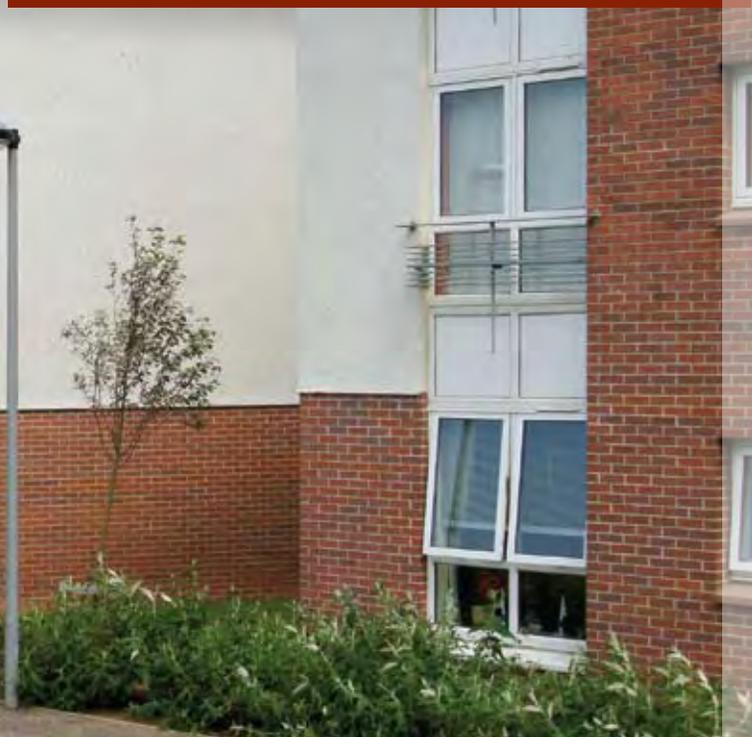
Housing associations are beginning to benefit from the commitment to affordable housing now enshrined in national planning policy. South Ayrshire Council is one of the leaders in this field, requiring 25% of most developments to be given over to affordable housing. Ayrshire Housing has already benefited from this policy with several recent developments. This new focus on creating and sustaining mixed communities brings both challenges and opportunities in terms of promoting a positive role for affordable rented housing. At the planning stage, Ayrshire Housing focuses on community consultation and confidence building with private housebuilders.

After completion, we work hard to foster community cohesion through, for example, support for inclusive residents associations and community events.

A now well established example of our approach is at the Citadel in Ayr where Ayrshire Housing built 78 flats and houses fully integrated with the masterplan for this harbour side regeneration area. Our commitment to wider public benefits can be seen in the large scale public art work – Constellation - by the acclaimed Glasgow artist Stephen Hurrell which encompasses the entire Ayrshire Housing development.



▼ Photo: An integrated new neighbourhood has been created at Ayr's Citadel. The coloured poles of the Constellation artwork complement the high quality landscaping.



Ayrshire Housing Online

Ayrshire Housing prides itself on its friendly face to face engagement with its tenants and housing applicants. Director, Jim Whiston says

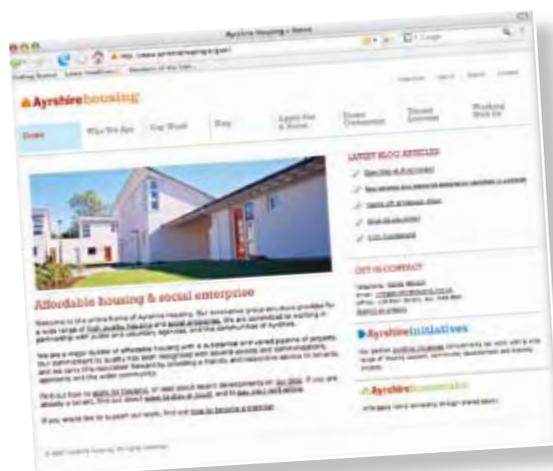
“We have always aimed to build in a bit of fun into the relationship with annual garden and pet competitions, and quirky Christmas cards. We have taken this approach online with our new website. Probably unique amongst Scottish Housing associations, it features a blog where anyone can post a comment about our work whether supportive or questioning!”

Another cutting edge feature is the fully online housing application form which has proved so popular that a third of all applications are now made this way.

Jim continues “We have tried to make the site as accessible and easy to use as possible with some of our tenants generously helping to test the new features before its launch. The Scottish accented text to speech facility is really easy to use, for example.”

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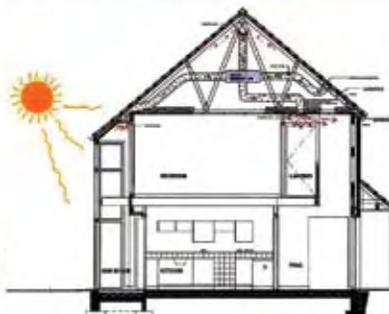
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