



CEO Update

Hello and welcome to our new look Spring Edition of Rural Matters. I hope you like what we have done. If you feel we can improve our newsletter or you have any suggestions for articles in future

editions please let us know. Since our last edition we have moved into our temporary office whilst our Doune office undergoes a bit of a make over. We have completed 2 new build developments in Callander

and Killearn and started on site in Doune. Our Board have also been extremely busy with the Agenda in March covering the Business Plan, Delivery Plan and Risk Register and Budget for 2019/20; the review of our Allocations Policy and other important Policy Reviews. The Board have also set up two new working Groups one of which is looking at how to strengthen our governance arrangements and the other looking at Customer Engagement and Participation. Would you be interested in joining our Board and getting involved in the work that they do? We currently have Board vacancies. If you are interested, please contact me at donna@rsha.org.uk

Further Development Updates

Station Road, Callander: This project completed in January providing 23 new affordable homes.

Aitken Street/Wilson Crescent, Killearn: This project also completed in January providing 12 new affordable homes. We are now in discussion with the same developer regarding **new affordable homes in Drymen** watch this space!

Callander - Station Road, Opening Ceremony

RSHA Chairperson Margaret Vass (centre left) is joined by new tenant Carol Cowan (centre) and Bruce Crawford MSP (centre right) along with representatives from Marshall Construction, Stirling Council, Callander Community Council, Gregor Cameron Consultants, WD Harley Architects, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, CMA Architects, Forth Housing Association and Pottie Wilson.

Killearn - Aitken Street/Wilson Crescent Opening Ceremony

Bruce Crawford MSP (centre left) is joined by Chloe MacNeill (centre) and RSHA Chairperson Margaret Vass (centre right) along with representatives from Mactaggart & Mickel, Stirling Council, Killearn Community Council and Gregor Cameron Consultants.

"The first RSHA properties in Killearn"



"The first new social housing for rent to be constructed in Callander for over ten years"

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At our Killearn Development

Retired founder member of RSHA David Frood welcomes tenants Chloe (centre) and Elizabeth MacNeill into their new home accompanied by Bruce Crawford MSP and RSHA Chairperson Margaret Vass.



At our Callander Development

Bruce Crawford MSP welcomes new tenant Carol Cowan (centre) into her new home along with RSHA Chairperson Margaret Vass.

Springbank Road, Doune

(Phase 5): Construction of 6 new homes commenced in January 2019 and is progressing well. Due for completion in October 2019.



Councillor Evelyn Tweed (centre) is joined by (immediate left) RSHA Chairperson Margaret Vass and Bruce Crawford MSP along with representatives from Hadden Group, NHS Forth Valley, Stirling Council, Kilmadock Community Council and Glenn Murray Associates as she breaks the ground at the Balkerach Street development in Doune.

Balmaha: This project will deliver 22 new homes including 10 homes for rent, 6 for Shared Equity, 4 key worker homes and 2 self build plots. The tree protection plan has been completed and the tree felling across the site completed in March. Now the site has been cleared the second stage site investigations will be concluded and the Building Warrant progressed. An application has been made to Scottish Water for Technical Approval of the drainage design. We hope to be in a position to issue tenders in the summer and start on site late summer/early Autumn.

Claish Farm, Callander: The planning application for 50 new affordable homes was submitted on 29th March.

Lampson Road, Killearn: We have recently acquired this site for much needed new affordable homes. The local community were very supportive of our first new build project in Killearn and we would like to build on this strong working partnership by involving the local Community in the development of our plans for this site.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) New Regulatory Framework

The SHR is the body that regulates Rural Stirling Housing Association and all other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) across Scotland to safeguard the interests of tenants, homeless people and other service users. This year the SHR has introduced a new Regulatory Framework. The new Regulatory Framework has brought about some important changes that we need to tell you about. This includes a new style of Engagement Plan which sets out how the Regulator will engage with each RSL including Rural Stirling Housing Association. You can find details of our Engagement Plan with the SHR on our website www.rsha.org.uk and also by visiting the website of the SHR www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/ The new framework also means that Rural Stirling Housing Association for the first time must submit an **Annual Assurance Statement** to the SHR by the end of October. We also need to make the Annual Assurance Statement available to our tenants. This statement gives you and the SHR reassurance that we are carrying out our business appropriately and meeting the standards of Governance and Financial Management that the Regulator expects. We will be developing our approach to the Annual Assurance Statement over the coming months and will keep you advised of our progress.

Your Stirling You Decide

Your Stirling: You Decide is Stirling's version of participatory budgeting, an initiative that gives local people a direct say in how a portion of budgets are spent. Between March 2019 and June 2019, citizens across Stirling's seven electoral wards will have the chance to influence how to spend £700,000 of public money (£100,000 in each of the seven ward areas). This year the money can be used for infrastructure and the environment. This could include for example - roads, pavements, parks, playgrounds or public spaces.

Anyone who lives or works in the area, including local groups can put forward an idea of what the money should be spent on. Ideas will be developed before being voted on by people living in the ward. Those receiving the most votes will be taken forward. The Project Team, who will turn the ideas into voting proposals, will include Budget Delegates. Budget Delegates are members of the public, of high school age and above, who live in the area and would like to represent the public on the Project Team. For more information on the process, how to submit an idea and how to be involved please visit www.stirling.gov.uk/youdecide or call the Community Engagement Team on 01786 233076

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK?

Review of Allocations Policy

Our Allocation Policy sets out the 'rules' to be applied when we let our properties. Our Allocation's Policy must comply with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, whilst also reflecting housing need across the rural Stirling area.

Why are we Reviewing our Allocations Policy Now?

- We are reviewing our Allocations Policy now because of changes to the law which set out how we must prioritise applicants. In addition, our allocations policy must take account of a new Scottish Government plan to tackle homelessness called Rapid Rehousing.
- We have also reviewed the remaining aspects of our policy to ensure we continue to reflect the housing need of our applicants and local communities.

How has the law changed?

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 has introduced changes to the following:

• **The housing circumstances for which we must give reasonable preference**

This now includes social housing tenants who are under occupying their home. We have to increase the level of priority for social housing tenants who are under occupying their home in order to meet the requirements of the law.

• **Taking property ownership into account**

We can now take account of property ownership when looking at the level of priority to be awarded.

• **Suspension of applicants from an offer of housing**

The new law allows social landlords to suspend applicants from an offer of housing at the point of application. This can be for the following circumstances:

- anti-social behaviour - committed in the locality of the home within the last 3 years
- previous convictions - committed in the locality of the home within the last 3 years
- have been evicted from a social housing tenancy within the last 3 years
- abandoning or neglecting a social housing tenancy within the last 3 years
- rent arrears or other housing related debt
- refusal of offers of housing

We think we should take all of the above circumstances into account when assessing new applicants and suspend applicants from an offer of housing for 1 to 2 years where appropriate.

What is Rapid Rehousing?

Rapid Rehousing is a policy direction adopted by the Scottish Government to tackle homelessness in Scotland. The aim of Rapid Rehousing is to:

- prevent homelessness wherever possible
- ensure people who are homeless have access to settled, mainstream housing as quickly as possible
- provide person centred support where required to help people sustain their tenancy.

All Scottish social landlords are required to make reference to Rapid Rehousing in their allocations policy and increase the number of lets to statutory homeless households in line with local authority Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTP's).

Stirling Council's RRTP requires social landlords in Stirling to allocate 55% of lets to statutory homeless people over the next five years.

To meet Government requirements, we need to increase the level of priority awarded to people who are homeless.

What else do we think needs to change?

• **Tied accommodation**

We think we need to increase the priority levels for applicants who live in tied accommodation and are required to leave within 6 months. This is because the priority currently awarded is low.

• **No Fixed Abode**

We think we need to remove the 'no fixed abode' category. This is because people with no fixed abode either stay with friends & family or live in a caravan or vehicle. We have other categories of housing need which capture these circumstances.

• **Staying with Friends & Family**

We propose to create one overall category for people staying with friends and family. Currently we have three. Current applicants would not lose any priority already awarded as a result of this.

We will be contacting all applicants and new tenants with further information about the proposed changes and a link to a questionnaire. If you have not been contacted and would like to give feedback on the proposed changes, please visit our website www.rsha.org.uk where you will find a link to further information and the questionnaire on the front page, by the 29th April 2019.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK?

Review of Anti-Social Behaviour & Neighbour Nuisance Policy

RSHA are reviewing their Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Nuisance Policy (the Policy) to ensure that it is up to date and reflects the changes in the new 2014 Act and best practice.

There are currently five categories of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the Policy which it is proposed are reduced to 3, as in common across social housing landlords in Scotland. The three categories would be:

Category	
Serious ASB	Immediate risk and criminal content - drug dealing, unprovoked assault, violence including domestic violence, harassment, hate crime
Urgent ASB	Urgent risk - threatening or abusive behaviour, frequent serious disturbance and noise, vandalism and damage to RSHA property, personal attacks on social media towards our tenants and staff
Neighbour Nuisance	Breach of tenancy conditions including occasional noise, family disputes affecting neighbours, dog/pet control, behaviour of visitors or children, infrequent disturbance. This category will also include complaints about stair bin cleaning, fly tipping, garden upkeep and litter.

It is proposed that the target response times and resolution times be changed to better reflect the urgency of the report received and to give a realistic timescale to tenants on when their case might be resolved. For example, the current resolution timescale of 10 days for all reports is not realistic for a serious case as this involves significant partnership working with other agencies including Police Scotland, intelligence gathering and applying for legal remedies through the courts which can take several months.

The new suggested customer service targets have been reviewed by the Customer Focus Group and the proposal for revised timescales is:

Type of anti-social behaviour	Initial Contact with Customer	Resolution Time for Casework
Serious ASB	1 day	2 months
Urgent ASB	3 days	1 month
Neighbour Nuisance	5 days	15 days

To ensure RSHA meets the target response times, the new policy will seek to improve customer service when tenants are reporting ASB or neighbour nuisance. A risk based approach will be taken at the point of reporting to assess the urgency and response timescale of the case. Questions asked will include

- Seriousness of the incident
- Frequency of incident(s)
- Impact on the person reporting (complainant)
- Vulnerability of the person reporting
- Perpetrator knowledge - known to complainant or previous history of ASB
- Any other agencies involved-for example, where Police Scotland called?



**Dog fouling
Clean it up**

This approach will ensure that your housing officer will be prioritising the reports which are 1) serious ASB, then 2) urgent ASB then 3) neighbour nuisance. This will make sure that your housing officer can contact customers immediately to offer assistance from RSHA for serious ASB reports.

The new policy is proposing to improve services to tenants by providing additional services in partnership with Stirling Council Community Safety Service including mediation services and out of hours intelligence gathering and professional witness services. These services will be recharged to RSHA and a new budget would have to be created for this. Another service improvement is introducing keeping in touch calls or KIT calls for customers who are experiencing serious or urgent ASB which is taking longer to resolve due to its complexity. RSHA staff will contact the tenant who has made the report regularly to track how things are going to ensure that the tenant is supported and knows RSHA are still investigating their case. The frequency of KIT calls will depend on the seriousness of the case and whether tenants want this service.

There has been a new Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced which gives additional legal powers to landlords to deal with those who undertake or have undertaken ASB or have criminal convictions. The new policy will reflect the new legal framework which is being implemented from 1st May 2019.



RSHA would like to hear from you if you wish to make comment on the proposed changes to the Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Nuisance Policy including the revised categories, timescales, new services or improved customer service approach. **If you wish to comment, please contact your housing officer by email or phone before Monday 22nd April.**

Your housing officer's email address & phone number are provided on page 06.



Planned Maintenance Update

We will soon be tendering for the planned renewal of components programmed for 2019-20 financial year. To remind you, here are the main renewal works involved:

Kitchen Renewals

Craigmore View - Aberfoyle

Donaldson Way - Balfron

Lochard Cottages - Kinlochard

Old Kirk Loan (All addresses) - Aberfoyle

Electric Heating Renewals

Montgomery Place (18 & 24 to 40; 29, 31, 41 & 43) - Buchlyvie

Once we have Contractors in place, we will write to the tenants concerned and explain all about the timing and nature of the works planned for your homes. In the meantime, if you have any questions, then please contact Malcolm Lee or Robert McGregor for more information.

We will also be carrying out fire safety upgrade works to a range of homes to ensure all our properties comply with the new fire safety standards that came about after the Grenfell Tower disaster. The legislation requires all homes to be brought up to the new standards by February 2021.

The improved standards will mean every home in the country must have a smoke alarm fitted in the living room or lounge and in circulation spaces such as hallways and landings. The changes also mean every kitchen must have a heat alarm and the alarms will have to be interlinked so they can be heard throughout the property. There must also be a carbon monoxide alarm where there are fixed combustion appliances such as gas boilers or log-burning stoves.

We will soon be in a position to tender for the necessary works and then contact all tenants involved regarding timing and content of the works in their homes. We will carry out the work over the next two financial years.

Office Improvements



As you will be aware, the contract to refurbish and extend our Doune office is currently underway. The works are going according to plan and if this continues, we hope to complete by late July 2019 and shortly thereafter we will make the move back from our temporary home at Castle Business Park, Stirling.

When the works are finished, we will have improved the reception/waiting area, the interview room and meeting space generally, together with more modern working space and facilities for the staff and Board. The intention is to improve the experience for all those who visit and work in the office.

Changing Your Energy Supplier



We are aware that the energy supplier, Our Power, has ceased to trade. Some tenants have been telling us that they have been transferred to another supplier and are seeing significantly more expensive bills from their new supplier. This supplier was nominated by OFGEM, the body which oversees the energy industry.

The Association's Board are very keen to make sure information is available to help people find the most competitive energy suppliers. In previous editions of Rural Matters we have encouraged you to contact Citrus Energy, a social enterprise subsidiary of Cunninghame Housing Association. Citrus will find you the best energy deals and help you change supplier. They can also give practical advice on how to manage your energy more effectively. Visit their website <http://citrusenergy.businesscatalyst.com/index.html> or give them a call on Freephone 0800 221 8089.

Landscape Reps! Your Association needs you!

We are relaunching our Landscape Representative scheme. This scheme offers additional monitoring of the landscaping service on each development by a volunteer tenant. It will help to ensure that work is carried out broadly in line with the specification and to achieve a good standard of grounds maintenance.

How it works: Once a month the Landscape Rep for the development would meet the landscape contractor's supervisor and complete a walkabout after the landscaping works have been completed. Quality of the works and any other comments would be noted on a form and then passed to the Association for assessing Contractor's overall performance and noting any suggested improvements.

If you are interested in becoming a Landscape Representative for your development please contact the office.



Community donations Fund

Rural Stirling has a fund of up to £3000 per year available to help support communities, and invites applications for projects aimed at benefitting:

- The Association's tenants or prospective tenants; or
- The wider development of services, facilities or provisions for the disadvantage in local communities.

For further details and an application pack, call the office or email susan@rsha.org.uk. Applications are being invited for 2019/20.

Tenants' Forum

It was great to see a good turn-out at our Tenant's Forum event last month. We received some great feedback on our proposed new Allocations Policy and Anti Social Behaviour Policy. Thank you to all those who attended.

If you would like to come along to future Tenant Forum events, please let us know or simply turn up on the day. We will always text all tenants and put details on the web site with information about what we would like to chat about and when the event will be held.

If your mobile telephone number has recently changed, please let us know to ensure you are receiving all our text messages.

If you have any suggestions about topics for discussion or how you think the Forum could be improved, please let me know.

Jackie Leeds Housing Services Manager



Tenant's Forum event in March 2019.

TELL US HOW WE CAN HELP YOU



Gillian Lynas

Gillian works part time, all day Monday & Tuesday and till 1.00pm on Wednesday.

Tel: 01786 843034
Mob: 07341 730601
Email: gillian@rsha.org.uk



Angela Cameron

Angela works part time, from 1.00pm on Wednesday and all day Thursday & Friday

Tel: 01786 843034
Mob: 07464 543154
Email: angela@rsha.org.uk

Your Housing Officers

Angela Cameron will be leaving the Association on the 18th April. We will let you know who will be covering her area soon.



Kelly Cadden

Tel: 01786 843031
Mob: 07464 543158
Email: kelly@rsha.org.uk



Andrew Robinson

Tel: 01786 843035
Mob: 07464 543157
Email: andrew@rsha.org.uk

Buchlyvie, Aberfoyle,
Kinlochard, Stronachlachar
and Gartmore

Deanston, Doune,
Lochearnhead, Killin,
Tyndrum and Strathyre.

Gargunnoch, Balfron,
Drymen, Strathblane
and Killearn.

Callander & Kippen

When good neighbours become good friends

We are pleased to announce that nominations are invited for our Good Neighbour Award scheme.

We know that there are many people living in the rural Stirling area who deserve to be recognised for their thoughtfulness and consideration to their neighbours. We would like to give you the chance to pay tribute to someone special, either adult or young person, whose kindness has made a real difference to your lives or that of another neighbour.

A good neighbour could be someone who:

- Looks after your home or pet when you are on holiday
- Puts out and brings your bin in
- Helps out with gardening and shopping
- Has been there when you needed someone to talk to
- Or someone who is simply a good neighbour all the time

Terms and conditions:

- Either you and/or your “good neighbour” must be a Rural Stirling Tenant.
- Sorry, but we can't accept nominations from a family member or someone living in the same property as you.
- We will write to you to let you know if your entry has been successful and we will also write to the “Good Neighbour” to let them know that they have been nominated.
- Rural Stirling will seek agreement from all parties before we use any details for publicity.

Nomination forms are available from the office or downloadable from our website:

www.rsha.org.uk

The closing date for entries is Friday, 23rd August 2019.

All nominees will receive a certificate and will be invited to attend our Annual General Meeting in September to receive their certificates. A prize will be awarded to an overall good neighbour winner at the AGM and all nominees will be acknowledged in our Rural Matters Newsletter.

Mr Bell, Balfron and Mr Anderson, Doune a couple of winners from last year's Good Neighbour Award.



Annual Garden Competition 2019 - Every birdie welcome!



The competition aims to encourage local residents to get involved in gardening. Gardening is a healthy, fun activity that enhances and enriches not just your own property but the wider Rural Stirling community.

Remember that not only can tenants nominate their own garden, but they can also nominate a neighbour's garden or a shared or communal garden that you think deserves recognition.

The closing date for nominations will be 26th July. To enter call the office on 01786 841101 or email enquiries@rsha.org.uk or speak to any member of staff. Please let us know which category you wish to be entered for. Judging will take place towards the end of July/early August.

Winners will be invited to attend our Annual General Meeting in September to receive their prizes.

Nominations are invited for:

- best individual garden
- best shared/communal garden
- best veg garden

Let's make our neighbourhoods the brightest yet!



RSHA Tenant Satisfaction Survey with



During May and Early June, some of our customers may be visited or contacted by agents from Research Resource, who we have been appointed to carry out Tenant Satisfaction Surveys on behalf of the Association. The agents will bear identification and a letter of authority from the Association.

However, if you are uncertain at any time about people at your door, you should not let them in and contact the office straight away on 01786 841 101.

All information given during the interviews will be completely anonymous and details of individual conversations are not shared with the Association.

These surveys will take place in customers properties and should take about 10 to 15 minutes. Customers will be asked a series of questions around: your views on the Association; your priorities on how the Association should use its resources; about the affordability of our properties; and what role you feel the Association should take in the wider community. Not everybody will be interviewed, approximately 40% tenants will be approached.

It is important to us that we understand the needs of our customers and this survey is a key part of how we do this. We are also required to gather this information independently every 3 years as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator. We would be very grateful if you could please take the time to complete the survey if approached.

How our Income Maximisation Officer can help you

Our Income Maximisation Officer, Kevin McGhee, wants to make sure you're getting the financial support you are entitled to.

Here's how some of our tenants have been helped by Kevin.

My Personal Independence payment was reduced. Kevin helped me by getting this decision reversed and telling me about additional benefits I was entitled to. This has given me an additional income of £9400 per year.

I am a pensioner. My circumstances changed and Kevin helped me. I now get Pension Credits and Attendance Allowance totalling £175 per week.

We had not claimed benefits before. Kevin helped us and we now receive £1080 Universal Credit and £82 Child Benefit per month.

If you claim Universal Credit, please remember to notify the DWP about your new monthly rent charge straight away. Please do this by sending them a message on your on line journal.



Citizens Advice Scotland – New Help to Claim Service



Citizens Advice Scotland has launched a new service to support people during their initial application for Universal Credit.

The **"Help to Claim"** service, offers support tailored to the individual claimant either face-to-face, over the phone or online through webchat. It will include assistance with the online application form and help with providing evidence such as childcare costs.

The new service is free to anyone who needs it, and is delivered by the CAB network across Scotland.

Ways to access the Help to Claim service in Scotland

Phone

0800 023 2581 (Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm)

Webchat

www.cas.org.uk/helptoclaim (Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm)

Face-to-face

Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau

Contact Details

Lomond Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TU.

Our offices in Doune are undergoing a refurbishment and we expect to return to Doune during August 2019.

Tel: 01786 841101 www.rsha.org.uk

Registered as a Scottish Charity No. SC037849.
Rural Stirling Housing Association is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 No. 2376 (s)
Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator No. HAL232
Property Factor No. PF000330



Rural Stirling
Housing Association