

We have enclosed information about the proposed rent increase for 2020/21 and a consultation sheet for you to return

WINTER EDITION / DECEMBER 2019

News for our tenants, members and the local communities



CEO Update



Hello and welcome to our Winter edition of Rural Matters. This edition is packed full of information which I hope will be of interest to you, there has certainly been a lot going on!

Our summer Board recruitment campaign was very successful and we have appointed two new Board members. Board members are volunteers who make the strategic, policy and major financial decisions for our organisation. As the Association's senior officer, it is my role to support and advise the Board and provide leadership and direction to the staff team and other agents we appoint to carry out the day to day business activities.

The August Board meeting focused on the annual Board Appraisals to make sure our Board are effective and have the skills they need to carry out their demanding role. The Board meeting also focused on Quarterly Performance results and our Annual Financial Statements. Continues inside.....

Development Update

- **Lampson Road, Killearn:** The Design Team has been appointed for Lampson Road and a feasibility study for the development is underway. Early engagement with the Community Council resulted in a Community Panel being established with 3 local representatives who will help inform the proposals for the site.
- **Woodyard Court, Doune (Phase 5):** We celebrated the completion of our latest newbuild housing development in Doune at Woodyard Court in November 2019. The six properties: four cottage flats and two semi-detached houses, are built where Hugh Campbell and Sons timber sawmill stood from the 1900s.

The project was developed in partnership with Stirling Council and NHS Scotland who created the Doune Health Centre adjacent to the new homes.

Councillor Evelyn Tweed, Housing Portfolio Holder at Stirling Council, performed the opening ceremony along with RSHA Chair Mark Griffiths.

The total cost of the development was just short of a million pounds at £994,198. This consisted of a Scottish Government grant of £663,000 and £288,000 in borrowing by RSHA. There was a further contribution from NHS Scotland of £43,198 for road infrastructure which is shared with the health centre.



The Project Team consisted of Hadden Group, Glenn Murray & Associates, Clyde Design Partnership, and Pottie Wilson. Gregor Cameron Contracts provided development agency services to the Association.

- **Balmaha:** This project is currently out to tender, with returns expected late November. We hope to be in a position to award the contract to the preferred contractor early in the New Year with a site start commencing shortly after. The development offers 22 new homes including 10 homes for rent, 6 for Shared Equity, 4 key worker homes and 2 self-build plots with completion in Spring 2021. Marketing of the shared equity homes and plots will commence late Spring 2020.
- **Claish Farm, Callander:** The planning consent for 50 new affordable homes was granted in August 2019. All statutory consents are in place and we have received our funding approval for the project from the Scottish Government. A site start date will be announced shortly.
- **Gartness Road, Drymen:** MacTaggart and Mickel continue to progress the development and we are hopeful for a site start in 2021.

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AGM

We held another very successful AGM in September. Our long serving Chair announced that she would be stepping down from her position as Chair but would continue to serve on our Board.

I owe a lot to Margaret Vass who has been a huge source of support to me in my first few years as CEO. At the AGM members also heard from the Chief Housing Officer at Stirling Council about the Council's approach to Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and homelessness.

At the October meeting our Board elected new office Bearers and membership of Committees. I am delighted to announce that Mark Griffiths has been appointed as Chair and Margaret Vass and Fiona Boath will job share the role of Vice Chair. Fiona Boath was also elected Chair of Audit & Risk Committee.



Working Group Progress

Governance Working Group

The Governance Working Group has been taking forward the development of our new Strategic Plan. A Group Strategy Day held in August kick started this process and the key outcomes from the Strategy Day were also presented to the October Board. **We hope to have our new plan in draft and ready for consultation with you early in the new year.**

Customer Engagement, Participation & Scrutiny



We are looking at new ways to ensure everything we do is shaped and influenced by our tenants. Our Customer Engagement, Scrutiny and Participation Working Group, are working with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) to help us with this. Workshops took place for staff, Board members and tenants in October. The workshops have been very productive, thank you to all who attended. We will hold another workshop for tenants to provide feedback on the outcome of the workshops and discuss ideas for a new framework for customer engagement. Further details about this to follow soon.

Annual Assurance Statement



All housing associations and cooperatives in Scotland are now required to produce an Annual Assurance Statement and submit this to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) by the end of October. Our first Annual Assurance Statement was approved by our Board in October and has been submitted to the regulator. The SHR will use the Annual Assurance Statement as part of their Risk Assessment process and advise us of the level of Engagement they will have with us early next year.

This can be found on our About Us page on our website.



If you would like to find out more about Annual Assurance and why this is important or the information that we use to provide this to the Scottish Housing Regulator please contact our CEO at donna@rsha.org.uk

Asset Management Update



Over the last few months we have tendered a number of works packages for planned and cyclical contracts. Over the course of the next 4 months we hope to undertake the following:

External Painter Work

The external painter work contract for the next 3 +1 years was tendered recently, and we are pleased to confirm that Mitie was deemed to be the most economically advantageous tenderer and has been awarded the contract. We will be sitting down with Mitie over the course of the next few weeks to discuss the programme of works for the years ahead.

RSHA Framework Agreement for Day-to-Day and Void Repairs

In keeping with the terms of the current 3 year Framework we have utilised our option to extend the appointments of the framework contractors for a 4th year. We will be undertaking a review of how we procure, and manage the Repairs Service in Spring 2020 with a view to having arrangements in place when the current framework expires on the 2nd October 2020.

Electrical Inspections and Fire Safety Upgrades

We recently tendered for a Contractor to carry out our annual electrical inspections and fire safety upgrades up to 2021/22 and will confirm the most economically advantageous tenderer in the next edition.

Independent Gas Quality Audits

The Scottish Procurement Alliance are currently piloting the procurement of this contract on behalf of Rural Stirling Housing Association. Tenders for the mini competition are due to be returned late November with the preferred contractor being notified thereafter through Public Contracts Scotland.

Kitchen Renewals

The procurement of a Contractor to carry out the Kitchen renewal contract has slipped slightly. We anticipate that tenders will be released over the next month with a contract award being made early in the New Year and works commencing shortly thereafter. Letters will be issued to the tenants involved when the contractor is known and further details regarding the Contractors works programme are available.

Electric Heating Renewals

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

We are currently investigating options as to the type of replacement heating best suited to these properties and once this has been concluded, we will tender the works and then write to all tenants involved to advise regarding timescales and the nature of the works.

Gas Servicing & Maintenance Contract

Saltire Facilities Management continue to carry out the Gas Servicing and Maintenance Contracts throughout our stock. Thank you to all residents who respond promptly when asked for access. We take our responsibilities as a landlord extremely seriously and this is one area of health and safety that we can't compromise on.

Please remember, that if you fail to provide access, we will have no alternative but to cap your gas supply as we cannot legally go beyond the anniversary of the previous gas service without having checked and serviced the appliances in your home.

If you have failed to give us access despite numerous requests, you may also be charged for any additional costs incurred by the Association through un-capping the gas supply and completing the service.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey – 2019

Every three years we undertake a general tenant satisfaction survey. The objective of the survey is to give us an accurate picture of your views and needs relating to the services and homes provided.



It also enables us to see if we are accomplishing the standards and outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

In June this year, Research Resource visited 234 tenants (39% of tenants) to complete the survey. Those interviewed were selected in proportion to the tenant population in each area and property type. Thank you to all those involved for taking the time to give us feedback.

The tables below provide details of the feedback received and compares the 2019 survey results to those of our last survey in 2016. It also compares our results to those of neighbouring social housing providers and the average for all Scottish registered social landlords and local authorities.



Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs service

Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	83% (2016 94%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	86%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	94%
Scottish Local Authority Average	87%

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of their neighbourhood

Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	91% (2016 99%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	89%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	88%
Scottish Local Authority Average	84%

Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed

Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	94% (2016 99%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	95%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	93%
Scottish Local Authority Average	81%

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord

Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	90% (2016 97%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	91%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	91%
Scottish Local Authority Average	90%

Percentage of tenants satisfied with opportunities given to them to participate in decision making

Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	91% (2016 100%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	90%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	88%
Scottish Local Authority Average	77%

Percentage of tenants satisfied with quality of home

Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	91% (2016 98%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	89%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	89%
Scottish Local Authority Average	85%

Percentage of tenants who feel the rent for their property represents good value for money

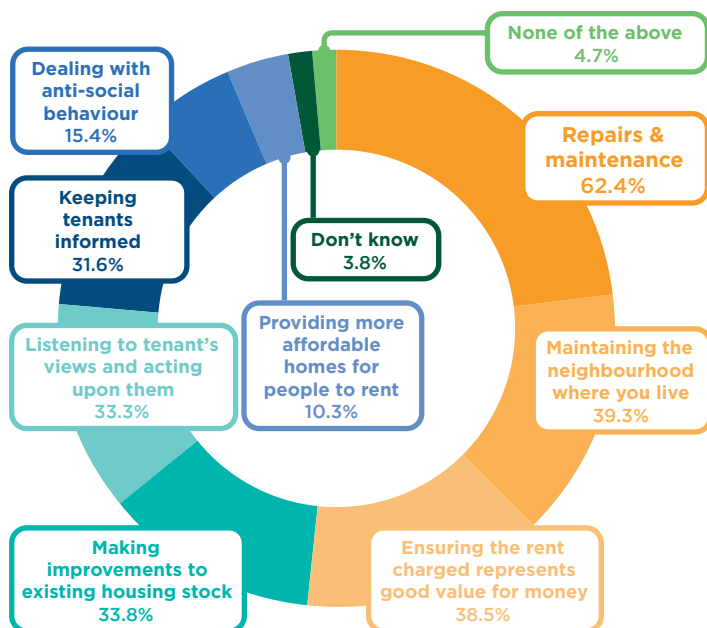
Rural Stirling Housing Association 2019	76% (2016 100%)
Average -Stirling & Clacks Council/ Forth HA	82%
Scottish Registered Social Landlord Average	83%
Scottish Local Authority Average	82%

Whilst we compare favourably, in most areas, with other landlords there has been a decline in satisfaction levels since 2016.

This is disappointing and we are determined to act on the feedback you have provided to improve our services. We will be agreeing how we will do this with the Board in November and we will keep you updated with our progress. As part of this process we will be taking account of your priorities.

Tenant Priorities 2019

When asked for your top 3 priorities you told us that we should give the most priority to repairs and maintenance, maintaining the neighbourhoods where you live and ensuring the rent you pay represents good value for money (shown in the diagram below). This is consistent with the 2016 survey findings.



DIGITAL

PARTICIPATION

SIGNATORY

Your Digital Champions

We can help you to go Digital. Don't worry if you have never touched a keyboard or think a mouse is something that the cat chases! Going digital is about making your life easier, keeping in touch with family, friends and your local community and probably saving some money on goods and services.

All Housing Officers and our Income Maximisation Officer, Kevin McGhee have received training from the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and are now officially your Digital Champions. When they are out and about they will be asking you if you need any help with your digital skills. **Alternatively, contact the office on 01786 841101 & book an appointment for someone to come out to visit you.**

Allocations Review (2019)

WHAT YOU SAID



Earlier this year we reviewed our Allocations Policy and asked you what you thought about the changes we were proposing to make. The consultation exercise consisted of:

- Letters (or emails for those with email addresses) containing an information sheet and either a paper copy of the survey or a link to the survey online.
- A presentation was given to the Tenant's Forum and feedback invited to the proposed changes.
- An article in the Spring/Summer Rural Matters, detailed the proposed changes and how to complete the survey.
- Housing Officers attended local Community Council meetings and presented information about the proposed policy changes and invited feedback.

We also asked you how you would like to receive feedback on the results of the consultation exercise. Of those who responded:

- 40% said they would prefer to see the results of the consultation exercise on the web site.
- 40% preferred to receive an email link to the report
- The remaining 20% either wanted a paper copy posted to them or an article in Rural Matters.

We also asked how you would prefer the results of the consultation to be reported. Of those who responded:

- 70% preferred bullet points with more text.
- 30% preferred charts with minimal text.

Taking account of the above feedback, a report is now available on the front page of our website www.rsha.org.uk.

An email will also be sent out to all tenants for whom we have an email address with a link to the report.

The report is in the form of bullet points and text.





Winter Weather



Winter weather of all kinds can disrupt our lives and cause real problems. Whether it is the cold, the wind or flooding, it is important for us to be ready and prepared. The Scottish Government and Stirling Council provide useful information – updated ‘real time’ to help people cope with a range of emergencies:

• www.readyscotland.org

• www.stirling.gov.uk

Stirling Council's call centre is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week – when our office is closed contact them on 01786 404040 if you have any concerns about your safety or that of a neighbour.

Preparing for snow and frost



Be aware of the weather forecast

- Have access to a shovel and grit to clear snow and ice from your path or drive.
- Look out for neighbours who are less able.
- Prepare a home emergency pack: emergency numbers, a fully charged mobile phone, battery operated torch and radio, essential medication, bottled water and ready to eat food.
- Know how to deal with damage to your home (see ‘Emergency Repairs’ on the back page).
- Know how to switch off your electricity, gas and water supplies.
- Use a spray oil to lubricate your main door lock to avoid freezing or stiffness.



Prevent your pipes freezing or bursting

- Keep your home warm by leaving your heating on at the lowest setting at all times.
- If your pipes freeze...thaw them by wrapping heated cloths around them. NEVER use a naked flame.
- If your pipes burst, shut off the water supply at the stop valve then run all the cold-water taps in the house until the water stops.
- If there is a risk of water coming into contact with electrical wiring or fittings turn off the electricity at the mains.
- Contact the Association or if the office is closed, contact the emergency numbers on the back page.



Weather Watchers!

We ask all our Weather Watchers to keep an eye on things for us and to let us know if you require snow shovels or grit to help prepare for bad weather. Looking out for vulnerable neighbours unable to get out and about, lending a hand to help clear paths and roads are all things our weather watchers help out with. Help us keep all our tenants safe this winter. If you are interesting in becoming a Weather Watcher for your area please contact the office.

Winter Chills

As the winter weather starts to bite, so do the heating bills. The Association wants to ensure all our tenants can heat their homes adequately. If you are worried about your heating bills, please contact your Housing Officer who can provide you with some energy savings advice. Alternatively, they can refer you to Energy Action Scotland who will visit you and carry out a home energy assessment. This assessment will give you full recommendations about how you can reduce the energy you use (whilst keeping your home warm).

If you are concerned about your heating bills Citrus Energy (a social enterprise) can give you free and impartial advice about the most competitive energy provider for you and if you decide to switch supplier, do all the hard work for you. Citrus Energy can be contacted on freephone number 0800 221 8089.



Good Neighbour Award

Winners of the award are all nominated by grateful neighbours who have been helped in one way or another.

Seven nominees were received for the Award this year.

The overall winner was Mrs McNeil of Callander, nominated by multiple neighbours for her true community spirit "Jenny would do anything for anyone". Runners up were Mr Ryan, Strathblane recommended by a neighbour for setting an example



of what a "close, friendly community is like" and Mr McManus from Kippen for his selfless efforts to help out neighbours whenever he can. Mr Scott, Doune; Mr Lygate and Mr Kilgour from Balfron and Mrs Govan from Callander also received commendations from neighbours for their support.



Well done to all.

If you want to nominate a neighbour for next year's award scheme contact the office for further details.

Staff Changes



Hello

Fiona Maguire Asset and Development Manager
Rebekah Hawkins Housing Officer



Goodbye

Malcolm Lee, Rachel Forsyth and Kelly Cadden.

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



Peter Davies (temp)

Tel: 01786 843031
Mob: 07464 543154
Email: peter@rsha.org.uk



Rebekah Hawkins

Rebekah works part-time, from 1pm on Wednesdays, all day Thursday and Friday.

Tel: 01786 843034
Mob: 07464 543158
Email: rebekah@rsha.org.uk



Andrew Robinson

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

Aberfoyle, Kinlochard, Stronachlachar, Buchlyvie and Gartmore
Estate visits will take place on the 2nd Thurs (pm) of each month

Gargunnock, Balfron, Drymen, Strathblane and Killearn.
Estate visits will take place on the 3rd Tues (pm) of each month

Kippen
Estate visits will take place on the 2nd Tues (pm) of each month
Callander
Estate visits will take place on the 1st Tues (pm) of each month

Deanston, Doune, Lochearnhead, Killin, Tyndrum and Strathyre.
Estate visits will take place as follows;
Doune & Deanston - 1st Thursday of every month (am), Strathyre & Lochearnhead - 1st Thursday of every month (pm). Killin - 3rd Thurs of each month (am), Tyndrum (pm).

Home insurance

And finally...don't forget your house contents insurance!

If the worst happens and your home is affected by burst pipes, flood or fire the Association would carry out the necessary repairs to make your home fit to live in again. This would be covered by the Association's buildings insurance. But this insurance does NOT cover your belongings, your furniture, your carpets or redecoration.

We strongly recommend you take out home contents insurance - this costs less than you might think. You can get cover of £10,000 for less than £30 a year. You can choose any provider, but we have details of two good value schemes designed especially for housing association tenants. Contact our office or check out our website for details www.rsha.org.uk.

Tenant Forum meeting

All Welcome -
Refreshments provided

When: Saturday 25th January
10am to 12pm

Where: Rural Stirling Housing
Association's office

What's on the Agenda:

What's on the Agenda: the proposed rent increase and consultation feedback and the Repairs Framework. All Senior Managers will be attending.



Return to Doune, Office Opening and Scottish Housing Day Fundraiser!

In the midst of everything else that was going on over the summer we also returned to our fantastic newly refurbished office in Doune! As if packing and unpacking wasn't enough the staff team also managed to organise a fundraiser to mark Scottish

Housing Day on the 18th September. We opened our doors, with the help of the Provost Christine Simpson, who stayed to enjoy coffee and the delightful home baking courtesy of our incredible staff.



£250

**We raised for
Start Up Stirling.**

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.

Kevin can be contacted direct at the office
on either **01786 842121** or **841101**.

email: **kevin@rsha.org.uk** mobile: **07464 543155**

Please note Kevin does not work on Mondays.

Case Study - Tenant A was claiming Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) and was asked by the DWP to complete a capability questionnaire and attend a medical assessment. Despite having a serious medical condition, tenant A was assessed as being fit to work. Our Income Maximisation Officer, Kevin McGhee, helped tenant A appeal against the DWP's decision at a tribunal hearing and the decision was overturned. Kevin helped tenant A claim UC and as a result of the successful appeal was awarded the support element at an extra £37.85 per week. Kevin was also able to help tenant A claim the disability benefit, Personal Independence Payment. This resulted in £183 per week additional income for tenant A.

UC Universal
Credit

Update

If you claim any of the benefits listed below, you will be invited to claim Universal Credit (UC) from August 2020.

- Income Support
- Employment & Support Allowance (income related)
- Job Seekers Allowance (income related)
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credits
- Child Tax Credits

When you are invited to claim UC, you will have a limited time to make the claim. If you fail to make the claim in time your benefits will be stopped. If you have any questions about how this will affect you, please contact our Income Maximisation Officer Kevin McGhee who will be happy to help.



RSHA's offices will close for Christmas / New Year on Friday, 20th December at 4pm reopening on Monday, 6th January 2020. During the closure of our offices please use the following numbers should you have an emergency repair. Normal repairs can be reported once the office reopens.

RSHA Garden Competition



Thanks to all our 2019 Garden Competition entrants, winners and sponsors (28 entries in total).

Winners were as follows:



Individual Garden



First Ms F. Elston, Killin



Second (joint)
Mrs I. MacLeod, Callander &
Ms Isabel Mitchell, Balfron



Third Mrs Rae, Callander



Communal / Shared Garden:



First Mrs M. Mackay, Kippen



Second Mr S. Wyllie, Killin



Third Mrs Smith, Drymen



Vegetable Garden:



First Mr A. Jude, Callander



Second Mr A. McLaren, Kippen

Thanks once again to our competition sponsors, Neil Hart (Electrical) Ltd; Saltire and Robert Wilson Decorators Ltd. All winners received prizes of national garden vouchers.

Emergency Repairs

Tenants who have an emergency repair – for example no heating and hot water or a burst pipe – should call the McDougall Group who operate an emergency service on our behalf on 0800 975 1234 and for gas repairs you should call Saltire on 0845 606 1555.

For those of you in our new homes please phone the following numbers:

Aitken Street and Wilson Crescent, Killearn
McDougall Group 03331 231 011

Station Road, Callander
Marshall Construction 01259 219 500

Woodyard Court, Doune
Hadden Group 07885 442848

Freedom of Information (FOI) and our Guide to Information

From 11th November 2019, Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation was extended to all Registered social Landlords.

We have prepared a **Guide to Information** which explains what information we publish and how to access it. We were required to notify the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) of adoption of a Model Publication Scheme/Guide to Information by the beginning of November.

The Guide to Information is now available on our website About Us Page/Access to Information. Please do visit the above area of our website and have a look. We would very much welcome your feedback on the information and documentation we have published. If you have any comments, these can also be made on the comments area of our website.

You will find lots of important information about your housing association using the Guide to Information, including the SHR Landlord Report for Rural Stirling Housing Association and our Annual Assurance Statement.

On behalf of everyone at Rural Stirling Housing Association have a wonderful and restful time over the festive season, stay safe and warm and please look out for neighbours that might need a wee helping hand. ★ ★ ★

Contact Details

Stirling Road, Doune, FK16 6AA

Tel: 01786 841101 www.rsha.org.uk Email: enquiries@rsha.org.uk

(Normal working hours are 9am – 5pm Mon to Thur and 9am – 4pm Fri)

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
Letting Agent Registration No's LARN 1907004 & LARN 1904083



Rural Stirling
Housing Association