

Barrhead MATTERS

Barrhead Housing Association



Barrhead Housing Association Limited



SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC 036265

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS...HO...HO...HO...HO!

WINTER 2010

Provost Visits Barrhead

The Association is pleased to announce that a mini tour of new build properties took place within Barrhead on Thursday 7th October 2010. East Renfrewshire's Lord Provost Mackie and Council leader Jim Fletcher joined Association Committee members and Scottish Government officials for a tour of the completed projects at Auchenback and St Mary's.

For the Association this tour was arranged to celebrate the completion of 89 new homes but also to raise the difficulties with lack of funding for future development activities for local housing associations. Given the Scottish Government's impending cutbacks and commitments, it remains unclear what the future delivery of affordable housing will look like and whether the Association, which is a locally based and community controlled housing association, will receive funds for new developments in the future.

The bus tour started at Newton Avenue with a visit to a 3 bedroomed townhouse, then onto the bungalows for elderly residents at Braeside Drive and finishing off at Lowndes Court, St Mary's, again to an elderly block of flats with lift provision. The developments also boosted the construction industry with Auchenback being built by Cruden Buildings and Renewals and St Mary's by Persimmon.

Investment from the Scottish Government for the 89 houses totals £7.6m with private loans of £3.8m from the Royal Bank of Scotland and Santander. The properties were let 50/50 to applicants on the Association's and the Council's housing list. Of the properties seen, Provost Mackie said: "It has been a great pleasure to visit the new housing developments in Barrhead that have been delivered thanks to the hard work of all the individuals who contribute to



Above: Provost Mackie and Council leader Jim Fletcher visit St Mary's. Below: visit to Braeside Crescent.

Barrhead Housing Association. The dedication and vision of local tenants, residents and our housing professionals will continue to have a direct and positive impact on the day-to-day lives of local people in and around Barrhead, and makes in an invaluable contribution to the ongoing regeneration of the town."

Tenant of Lowndes Court, Mrs. McGrath said of her new home: "We are very happy in our house. The neighbours are wonderful and it has made such a difference to us not having the stairs."



Emergency Telephone Number during the festive period

In case of emergency, as outlined below, you should contact the Call Centre on: **0800 652 0633**

An Emergency is one of the following:

- A burst pipe or tank which is causing flooding
- A flat entrance door which has been broken-in
- A tenant locked out of property (repair cost would be charged to tenant)
- A broken window that requires to be boarded-up
- A choked toilet which is un-useable
- Total loss of power in property

The Scottish Government has a number of websites that have comprehensive information available for citizens at: **www.ReadyScotland.org**

Festive Holidays

During this cold spell, protect your home from burst pipes and broken down heating. Keep your heating switched on at all times – turn the dial on your boiler down to a low setting. Know where your stopcock is so that if you do get a burst pipe you can stop the water. If you are going away, please ask us to drain down your house.

The Office will be open/closed on the following dates:

Friday	24th December closes at 2.30 pm
Monday	27th December closed
Tuesday	28th December closed
Wednesday	29th December closed
Thursday	30th December open
Friday	31st December closes at 2.30 pm
Monday	3rd January closed
Tuesday	4th January closed
Wednesday	5th January closed
Thursday	6th January re-opens 9.00 am

IN THIS ISSUE NEW GAS HEATING AND KITCHENS • DIGITAL SWITCHOVER • CHILDREN'S GARDEN • COMMUNITY NEWS • CHARITY ROUND-UP...

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? • CONTACT US AT: Tel: 0141 881 0638 • Web: www.barrheadha.org • Email enquiries@barrheadha.org • or follow us on



New gas heating and kitchens for George and Henry Streets

As part of the Association's commitment to upgrading and improving its homes, we have recently completed the conversion of the heating at George Street and Henry Street. These properties had the old style electric storage heating systems that were expensive to run and not controllable. The works were very disruptive as we had to install new gas mains and remove kitchen units prior to the heating being installed. All the residents are very happy with their new heating systems

as well as the new kitchen units that were

put in after the heating was installed.

These works will ensure that tenants have warmer homes and that their bills should be significantly reduced.

The residents within these properties were able to choose their own style of kitchen from a range of kitchens and worktops. You can see photos of the completed houses below.

The Association is continuing with its planned works programme. If your property is to be included, we will let you know. If any resident requires any information regarding our planned works programme please contact our Maintenance Officers **Lynn Kerrigan** or **Janice Peters** on **0141 881 0638**.

New gas heating and kitchens at George and Henry Streets.



Factoring

There have been a number of changes to the factoring service over the summer. The most obvious is the new factoring computer system that was installed, and owners may have noticed that the style of bills you receive has changed. All staff now have access to your records so you won't have to wait till the part-time factoring officer is at work if you have a query. Bill Bewick is still the best person to speak to though and he works mornings only.

Remembering to make factoring payments can sometimes be difficult and we would encourage all owners to pay by direct debit. We would also encourage owners to pay a bit extra as this will build up a fund to help pay for unexpected works in the future. Please contact Bill to set this up.

For owners at Gladstone Avenue, we are expecting the tenders in for the communal stonework replacement in mid-December 2010. We will be in contact with owners regarding the costs as soon as we can prior to the works commencing.

Having your say is important and we value all comments we receive from owners and residents. We are planning to re-start the factoring forum giving all our owners an opportunity to come along to discuss the services you receive. The next meeting is on the 11th January 2011 at 6pm at the office.

Digital switchover for televisions

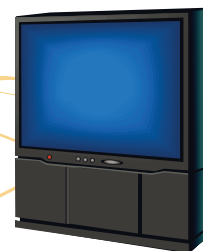
The way we receive our TV pictures will change in June next year. From this date you will need to use a set top box or a TV that has digital built-in to receive a TV picture.

You will receive various letters and guidance from the TV companies over the next few months leading up to the changeover. In some cases you will not notice any difference but some people may have to re-tune their equipment to allow them to receive TV pictures.

There is a wide range of information available to help and guide you through the process. We have listed these below should you require any assistance.

The best source of advice is Digital UK who are responsible for the changeover. They can be contacted on **08456 50 50 50** or from their informative website. **www.digitaluk.co.uk**

If you live in a flat you should have received letters from the Association and our digital TV ariel installer Campbell & Kennedy. The contractor is working with us to ensure that you can receive the new digital TV signal.



Service charges at Dunterlie

As part of our estate management policy and inspection activities we have identified that many of the tenants living within the Dunterlie area are not able or in some case willing to maintain their gardens to a standard that is acceptable. This is causing a number of problems:

- a general deterioration of the visual environment with driveways and paths covered in weeds, overgrown hedges and dumped rubbish.
- Increased void loss - the poor appearance is putting people off taking void properties and extending

our void periods.

- Increased turnover of properties.

We are planning a number of improvements to the area. This year we completed a number of planned improvements including painting of all houses and railings, environmental improvements at cull- de-sacs and increased housing management estate inspections.

We are now proposing to consult with residents to put in place a garden maintenance service to the whole area from April 2011. This would include 14 grass cuts per year and weeding twice a year to the paths and drives. This type of service is

already in place for other properties that the Association manages and works well.

The consultation will discuss the service charges proposed and the charge being implemented with the rent charge, which will be reviewed for 1st April 2011. Currently residents pay a service charge for the maintenance of the common areas. Where residents are taking good care of their gardens they would be allowed to remove themselves from the scheme, however, they would be required to sign an agreement on the standards we would expect to be maintained. This would also state that if the standards were not achieved, the Association would reserve

the right to re-introduce the scheme following further consultation with the individual tenant.

The costs of the service will be from £10.52 to £15.38 per month dependant on the size of the garden.

We are very keen to hear what residents think of this proposal and would invite all residents to come along to an open day/evening in the Dunterlie Resource Centre to discuss this and other plans for the area. We are very interested in helping residents set up a residents group to ensure you get your say in how our Dunterlie properties are managed. Further information will be available in the New Year.



Community News

Art Workshops

Workshops are being delivered from the Dunterlie Resource Centre from 10am to 12 noon every Thursday until mid-December 2010. The workshops will resume in the New Year also. We welcome any tenant or resident to the workshops but particularly would target young people or young families to take part. We can arrange a crèche and transport if required. Please contact the office for further details.



Cashback for Communities

The Association was pleased to receive further funding totally £6,500 from this fund and we will work with the young people in Dunterlie and Auchinback to deliver activities.



Dunterlie family mentoring project

Work is progressing to select mentors to work with families, both adults and children within Dunterlie. A joint project between Barrhead HA and East Renfrewshire Council will see between 8 - 10 families receive help, support and advice on a range of issues and we will work to encourage the involvement of children from each family too.

Adult Learning 2010 award winners.



Community Learning Award

This project has now been recognized by a national Good Practice in Adult Learning 2010 award from Scotland's Learning Partnership. Rhonda Leith attended the event along with our partners from East Renfrewshire Council and representatives of the group.

The group are now holding a planning session with invites being issued to all East Renfrewshire groups who may wish to take part in research in their own communities. Hopefully this will lead to expansion and to further training and research taking place.

Neilston Development Trust

The Association is hopeful of receiving a final commitment from the Scottish Government for £75,000 to help refurbish the Neilston Bank building. Work is due to commence really soon and the Bank will be transformed into a really good local warm community facility providing a wide range of services.



Chairperson, Claire Boyd oversees the bulb planting.

Children's garden in McCulloch Way, Neilston

The Association was delighted to donate a Christmas tree and spring bulbs to the children of McCulloch Way, Neilston. Over the summer months the children have been cultivating a small area of common land with plants and flower pots. During the judging of our annual garden competition the judges were delighted not only to see the work done by the children but wanted to encourage and reward the children for their efforts. As part of a training initiative funded by the Scottish Governments wider role and future jobs fund, the Wise Group trainees were able to landscape the area and plant the tree. To encourage the children further, the Association held a bulb planting event during the October school break.

The photograph shows our chairperson, Claire Boyd, planting the bulbs with the children during the October school holiday week. Claire Boyd said: "It was really good to see the children taking an interest in the area where they live". Now the children are waiting for Santa to appear on his sledge!

Dog Fouling!

Bag and bin it! Dog fouling is an offence, if you see anyone not lifting their dog mess please call the **Dog Warden Service**, on **0141 577 3001**.



Charity Round-up...

Jeans for Genes!

Staff took part in Jeans for Genes day on Friday 1st October. We wore our denim and raised £22 for Jeans for Genes, which is a charity that provides funding for the care and support of children with genetic disorders.

Wear it Pink!

The office was awash with pink on Friday 29th October! Staff got dressed up in their pink best and raised £40. This money will go to funding research to find a cure for breast cancer.

Staff in the pink!





East Renfrewshire Housing Register (ERHR) one year on!

The East Renfrewshire Housing Register was launched on the 6th November 2009 by Barrhead Housing Association, Arklet Housing Association and East Renfrewshire Council and celebrated its first anniversary in November of this year.

The main aim of the Register is to make it easier for anyone to apply for housing with any or all of the partners by only completing 1 application form.

To obtain valuable feedback and make improvements going forward, a survey was conducted by all partners with forms being issued to 682 applicants on the waiting lists.

Of the 682 forms sent out 189 were returned (28%). Here is a record of the main findings:

- 50% of respondents found that the introduction of the Register made it easier to apply for housing in East Renfrewshire. Only 13% said it was more difficult.
- 83% of respondents found the form easy to read, with only 4% finding it difficult to read.
- 73% of respondents found the form easy to complete. Only 6% saying that they found it difficult to complete.
- 77% of respondents found staff were either fair, good or excellent in their knowledge of the ERHR process. Only 5% felt that staff were poor in their knowledge.

We also asked respondents for their opinions on how the ERHR process can be improved. Here are some of the suggestions:

- On-line updates – it would be easier if you could log into a secure website to check on progress with the application.
- Whenever a form is sent into the Housing department they should acknowledge they have received the application from by sending an email or making a telephone call to inform you.
- Regular updating of position in the queue
- Less repetition of questions
- Clarification of the points system

The next stage for all 3 partners is to develop an action plan that will address the areas of concern as well as the suggestions for improvement made by those who responded. This action plan will be developed and implemented next year.

As an incentive for applicants to complete the survey we offered a raffle prize of £30 vouchers for Tesco. For Barrhead Housing Association Mrs Grant won the vouchers, so thanks and congratulations! Thanks also to everyone who took part in the survey and who helped contribute to a successful implementation of the local Register.

ERHR: Re-Registration 2011

We now need to review all applications on the list. You will receive a form asking you to check that certain circumstances are correct and your areas of choice are still the same. You should complete the form, and post back in the pre-paid envelope. Failure to do so may result in your application being cancelled.

2011/12 Rent Increase Consultation

The Association has once again started to look at our budget for next year and what we need to undertake during the year. This means review our rent levels also and consulting with tenants before the rent review takes place on 1st April 2011.

We are committed to providing the best value for money for rental and service charges and during the current financial climate you can be assured that we are making every effort to keep the rent increase as low as possible. However, we need to cover our costs including our financial loans and our planned maintenance programme. Committee will therefore be presented with a draft budget in December 2010 which is based on an estimated rent increase between 4.5-5.5% which is the current retail price index figure, RPI + 1. Included within this budget is a commitment to spend over £ 1,130,000 on repairing and investing in our properties.

We will therefore be consulting with local Tenant Groups in the New Year on this figure subject to the draft budget being acceptable and to discuss the increase. Please be aware of any information you receive from your local group about the consultation and feel free to attend. Alternatively you can contact the Association if you wish to discuss this consultation directly with a member of staff. Consultation will be completed by Friday 4th February 2011.

Information will also be available on our website (www.barrheadha.org) and our Barrhead TV screens located in and around the Barrhead area.

Our service charges will also be subject to review based on the cost of delivering the service to our local residents. Further information will be made available in the New Year and a final decision will be made by Committee in late February 2011 and confirmed in your rent review letter due out thereafter.

Housing (Scotland) Bill 2010

Tenants and residents will be aware of the recent publicity around the Scottish Government's passing of the above Bill which is due to be implemented as the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 from 1st April 2011. The Bill will be proposing a number of changes and these can be summarised as follows:

Right to Buy reform – ending the Right to Buy for new tenants (likely to be a date in December 2010 when the Bill receives Royal Assent) and for new supply (newly built) social housing from 25th June 2008. There will be exemptions to some of these categories so further details are still awaited. For those tenants with the modernised Right to Buy (introduced in the 2001 Housing Act) and affecting Barrhead Housing Association tenants, the Association may choose to apply for an exemption under the Act but this also will be subject to further guidance.

Pressure Area Status reforms – this currently applies to the Eastwood side of the authority area, so affects our tenants in Thornliebank, Woodfarm and Newton Mearns. The council will have the authority to decide on whether this should continue and whether particular house types and geographical areas should apply. The exemptions would apply for 10 years instead of 5 years currently.

An independent Scottish Housing Regulator with increased powers to intervene. The Regulator's key duties will be to promote the interests of people who are or may become homeless, tenants of housing associations or in receipt of services from housing associations.

Social housing charter – a key element of the Bill will be the creation of a Social Charter from 1st April 2012. This charter is to be developed through consultation with tenants and residents and will set national standards and local standards for which housing associations must comply. The charter will set performance targets to measure housing associations like Barrhead and these targets will be monitored by the Regulator and set improved targets where necessary. Tenants are likely to have a significant role in this area so we will provide further details as we all go forward with the development of the Charter.

This is a short summary but further details are available from the Association.

If you have any comments or complaints to make about any of our services, please contact the office:

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