



Balmaha gets the green light!



We are delighted to report that our Balmaha project has now received Planning Consent from Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority. Consent was granted at a public hearing at the end of March and we are now working with designers to take the project forward to tender and construction stage and hope to be on site in the Spring of next year. The project will deliver 10 units for rent, six units for Shared Equity (low cost home ownership) and four homes for key workers

being delivered in partnership with East Loch Lomond Community Trust. We will also be developing two self build plots for sale as part of the project. We are considering the marketing arrangements for the Shared Equity units and the self build plots and will be issuing more information on how to apply in the near future. In the meantime if you would like more information on the development or want to express an interest in the new homes please get in touch enquiries@rsha.org.uk

Hello from your new CEO at RSHA!



My name is Donna Birrell and I have been in post now for just over four months. RSHA is a very busy little office and my first few months have gone by so quickly. I have been impressed by the professionalism of the team and the dedicated volunteer members who sit on our Board. RSHA would not be the successful organisation that it is without them. I have also been impressed by the resilience of our communities especially during the really awful weather that almost closed down Scotland! We have paid a special tribute to our Weather Watchers in this edition of *Rural Matters* and I would personally like to thank all of them for their efforts. The response from our Weather Watchers has inspired us to launch a new Good Neighbour award which there is also more of in this edition. I look forward to meeting with you in your local community over the coming months. Please also feel free to contact me directly if you would like to discuss something.

Best wishes, **Donna Birrell**
Tel: 01786 841 101
Email: donna@rsha.org.uk

Venachar Market Research Survey

New Private Letting Regulations

The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 came into force in December 2017. Do you rent residential properties in the rural Stirling area? Have you been affected by the new legislation? Our subsidiary



organisation Venachar Ltd are currently carrying out a survey for market research purposes. Please help by answering a few simple questions which should take no more than five minutes to complete. The survey is available on our website <https://www.rsha.org.uk>

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Development Update

More new homes for Callander and Killearn

Our new build projects at Station Road, Callander and Blaressan, Killearn are both under construction and progressing well. The Station Road development will provide 23 new homes with a further 12 at Killearn. We are developing Local Lettings Initiatives for both projects in partnership with Stirling Council and local Community Councils to ensure that local people in housing need have an opportunity for a new home.



Work gets underway at Killearn.

Claish Farm

We have plans to build another 50 new homes at Claish Farm in Callander. We have held two very positive Community Consultation events and included the feedback that we received in design and layout proposals including an increased number of larger family homes in response to demand. We are now working towards submission of a Planning Application later this month and hope that construction on the new homes will begin before the end of the year.

The proposed plan at Claish Farm, Callander.



Universal Credit Update

Universal Credit (UC) was rolled out in the Stirling area in June 2017. This is the single largest change to the benefit system in many years, UC replaces the six income related benefits: Job Seekers Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; tax credits and Employment Support Allowance.



If you are claiming UC:

- Have you notified the DWP about your rent increase? If not, please do so straight away by sending a message to the DWP on your online journal with your new monthly rent charge.
- Make sure that you regularly log into your account for any to do's that the DWP require you to complete on your Journal.
- If you are having difficulties using your online journal, we have digital inclusion workers who will help with your online account. They can also show you other ways to use the internet that can help you save money and stay in touch with friends and family.
- Let us know. Our Income Maximisation Officer, Kevin McGhee, will be happy to provide advice and assistance with your UC claim.
- If your UC is sanctioned, please contact Kevin who will be able to offer support and advice.

Kevin McGhee can be contacted by calling **01786 842121** or email **kevin@rsha.org.uk**

Year of the Young Person 2018

2018 is the Year of the Young Person and you can find out more at <http://yoyp2018.scot/>. Young people are our future movers and shakers and at RSHA we plan to mark this event by helping a young person into employment. Later this year we hope to offer a Modern Apprenticeship scheme to a young person. More details will follow, watch this space...

When good neighbours become good friends

This year we are launching a Good Neighbour Award. 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, 24th August 2018**. 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.

about YOU

improving services

Last year we told you we aim to achieve excellence in the services we provide.

We launched **about YOU** which involved changes to everything from the staff structure to renewing procedures.

Our Housing Officers started **about YOU** visits to ensure that we are doing all we can to help you enjoy living in your home. Good progress has been made and some of you will already have been visited by your Housing Officer. **about YOU** visits have resulted in people getting repairs arranged, claiming benefits or money advice and using the internet.

For those who haven't been visited yet, please take the opportunity to arrange a meeting with your Housing Officer when they get in touch.



Changes to Housing Officers Patches

As of the 1st May 2018, the following Housing Officers will be responsible for areas noted below:



Kelly Cadden

Kelly covers:
Callander, Aberfoyle,
Kinlochard, Stronachlachar
and Gartmore.
Tel: 01786 843031
Mob: 07464 543158
Email: kelly@rsha.org.uk



Gillian Lynas

Gillian covers:
Gargunnoch, Balfron,
Drymen and Strathblane.
Gillian works part time, her
days are Monday to
1.00pm Wednesday.
Tel: 01786 843034
Mob: 07341 730601
Email: gillian@rsha.org.uk



Angela Cameron

Angela covers:
Buchlyvie and Kippen.
Angela works part time,
her days are 1.00pm
Wednesday to Friday.
Tel: 01786 843034
Mob: 07464 543154
Email: angela@rsha.org.uk



Andrew Robinson

Andrew covers:
Deanston, Doune,
Lochearnhead, Killin,
Tyndrum and Strathyre.
Tel: 01786 843035
Mob: 07464 543157
Email: andrew@rsha.org.uk

Our main office number is **01786 841101** where you will be greeted by Liz Drummond* and Rachel Forsyth our Advisers, however you can contact your Housing Officer directly on the information noted above.

Our Housing Officers are looking forward to meeting you.

**please note that Liz Drummond is covering for Angela on a temporary basis until Angela returns to work.*

Community Donations

Rural Stirling Housing Association have donated £1,500 from their Community Fund to the Stirling branch of the Scottish Charity, Food Train to help purchase a new van.

Fran Thow, Food Train Regional Manager, was delighted with the donation which will boost their fundraising efforts and help secure the new van.

Fran is pictured below with (left to right) Tommy Buick (Volunteer and Rural Stirling Housing Association tenant) Fran Thow, Pat McPake (Volunteer) and Mark Griffiths (Vice Chair of the Housing Association).



Fran said “The van will help us to sustain our essential service and continue to reach as many vulnerable older people as possible throughout Stirlingshire. Fran added *“If you are struggling to access food or would enjoy some friendship and a home cooked meal, please contact your local Food Train on **01786 450536** or email stirling@thefoodtrain.co.uk. If you are interested in volunteering with Food Train please visit www.thefoodtrain.co.uk or call us for more information.”*

Each year Rural Stirling Housing Association makes funding available to community groups and organisations from a Community Fund. Mark Griffiths, Vice Chair of Rural Stirling Housing Association said *“We are delighted to be able to support this much needed service that reaches out to the most vulnerable in our communities. We hope that our donation will make a difference and help sustain this service”.*

Food Train is a Scottish Charity supporting older people to eat well and age well at home. The service offers vital access to food through a weekly grocery shopping and delivery service and also gives access to a neighbourhood meal sharing project called Meal Makers. Food Train services are provided by local volunteers.

Since going to print the new Food Train Regional Manager Stirling is Stuart Miller.

Killin Bench

The RSHA Board also agreed to a community donation to the Killin and Ardeonaig Community Development Trust of £150 towards the cost of a bench to be located on the land near Fingal’s stone at the lower end of Fingal Road near the park gate. The bench will offer a welcome place to rest with a lovely view over the mountains.

If you are interested in applying for a community donation please contact **Susan Mackay** susan@rsha.org.uk

Planned Maintenance Update



During 2017-18, tenants at Lomond Court, Aberfoyle, Ballechroisk Court, Killin, Mansfield (Phase 2), Tyndrum and Old Station Court, Strathyre have all had their old storage heating replaced with new ‘Quantum’ storage heating. Quantums are the new generation of more efficient and controllable electric storage heaters and the initial feedback is that tenants have been very pleased with the warmth provided and the running costs of their new heating. The tenants were also pleased with how the works were carried out in their homes by contractor, TK Murray Electrical Ltd.

The windows at Stuart Drive, Drymen have been renewed following a successful contract carried out very effectively by Sidey Solutions.

The renewal of rear doors to six properties at Ballechroisk Court, Killin has been held up due to manufacturing delays, however, these will be fitted very shortly.

The installation of new gas central heating has now been completed at Buchanan Street, Balfron, Stuart Drive, Drymen and Campbell Court, Stirling Road and Ritchie Place, Callander. This involved a lot of disruption for tenants but we are confident that the benefits will prove worthwhile in the long run. City Technical Services (UK) Ltd were the contractors who completed all the works within programme.

We will shortly be issuing satisfaction questionnaires to all tenants who have had these renewal works completed in their homes and we are very keen to use their feedback to improve the way we deliver such contracts in the future.

For 2018-19 we have programmed the following renewal works:

Renewal of Electric Storage Heating: Charles Street, Gargunnoch and Jellicoe Avenue, Gartmore.

Renewal of Gas Boilers and Controls: Donaldson Way, Balfron.

Letters will be issued to the tenants of the above developments to explain the timing of the works and how it will affect them and we would welcome any questions or thoughts you may have regarding these works.

Landscape Maintenance

As you may have noticed, Mitie Landscapes have just started the grass cutting etc for the new season. Mitie will be carrying out the works for a period of approximately four months to allow tendering of the new contract which will cover the next three to four years. Once the exercise has been completed we will advise you who the successful contractor is.

New Estate Management Policy: tell us what you think



Estate Management is a term used to include tenancy and environmental management and refers to the management of properties and the surrounding areas. A new draft Estate Management Policy has been produced in consultation with the Tenants Forum and the tenant consultation database.

The policy sets out the responsibilities and obligations of tenants and the Association for

estate management (in accordance with your Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement) and how we will go about ensuring they are met.

Some of the conditions and responsibilities set out in the policy include:

- Keeping pets
- Gardens (private and communal)
- Household refuse disposal
- Keeping closes clean and tidy
- Parking

- Dealing with vermin
- Vehicle repairs

We would like your feedback on the policy which you will find on the Association's web site

www.rsha.org.uk or by contacting the office and a copy will be sent to you. Please email us at **enquiries@rsha.org.uk** or write to us at: Rural Stirling Housing Association, Stirling Road, Doune FK16 6AA with your feedback.

Can you afford not to insure your home contents?

If your home was affected by a fire, flooding or burgled, would you be able to afford to replace your personal belongings including electrical equipment, jewellery, furniture, clothes and floor coverings, etc?

Although the Association insures all of its properties it is your responsibility to insure your personal belongings, including electrical equipment, jewellery, furniture and floor coverings, clothes etc.

If you do not have contents insurance, please think very seriously about this. We can provide you with contents insurance application packs for two Insurance companies who specialize in affordable, discounted rates for social housing tenants.

Please contact us if you would like further details about these.

Your Tenants Forum Needs You!



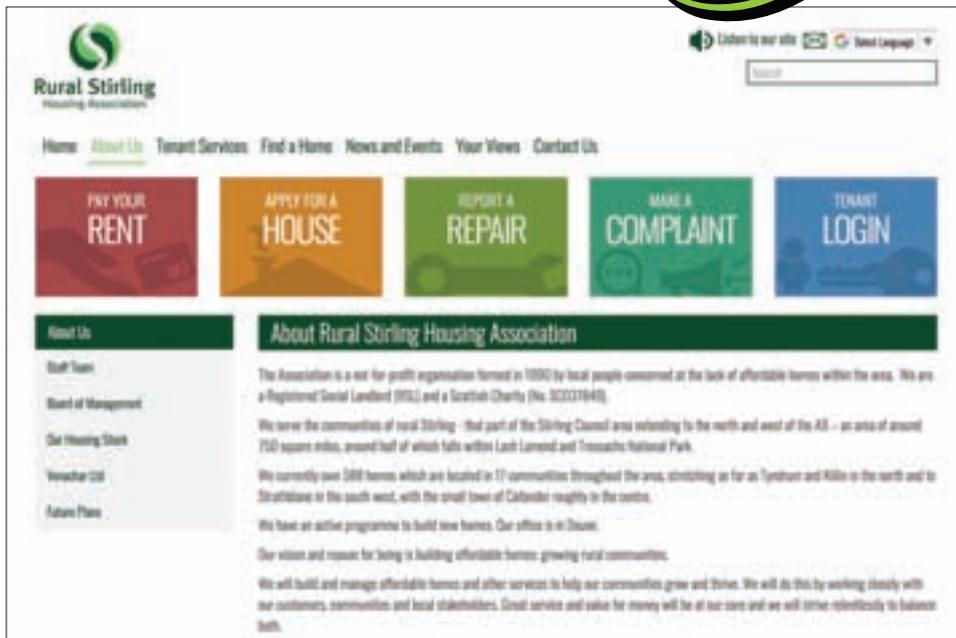
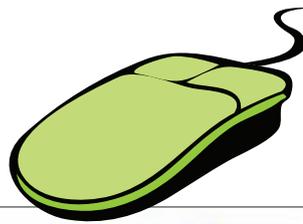
We welcome feedback from our tenants to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the services we provide. It is, after all, only our tenants that can tell us if we are providing a good service and if there are other things we could be doing to help people enjoy living in their homes.

The Tenants Forum gives feedback about our services, scrutinises policies, performance and rent increases. Most recently we have publicised scheduled estate management visits (you will see scheduled visit dates/times on our website **www.rsha.org.uk**). This was a result of feedback from the Tenants Forum who wanted to have the opportunity to meet up with Housing Officers when they were out and about.

The Tenants Forum meets three times a year at the Association's office in Doune. The next meeting will be on **Saturday 2nd June at 10am to 12pm** when we will be looking at the performance of the Association in 2017/18, improving the tenant's handbook and agreeing topics for discussion at forthcoming meetings.

If you would like to come along, please phone the office on **01786 841101** to let us know. Tea/coffee and refreshments will be provided – we hope to see you there!

New website... www.rsha.org.uk



We have recently changed the design of our website and are in the process of improving it. We aim to ensure it has quality content; is easy to use; offers quick useful downloads; and is updated.

Your feedback will help us to maintain our website aims. We welcome your views on its content, look and accessibility – please send your feedback to enquiries@rsha.org.uk...logon today!

Annual Garden Competition 2018 – 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 25th July. To enter call the office on **01786 841101** or email enquiries@rsha.org.uk or speak to any member of staff. Judging will take place towards the end of July.

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 vegetable garden

Let's make our neighbourhoods the brightest yet!



Maggie's Centres Fundraising Event

RSHA staff raised £105 for Maggie's Centre Forth Valley which supports people affected by cancer at a lunch event on 25th April with raffle prizes and homebaking.

Every year 300,000 people in the UK are diagnosed with cancer, facing tough questions, exhausting treatment and difficult emotions. These challenges affect not only the person with cancer, but their family and friends too.

New Phone number?

If your phone number changes remember to update us.

Having the correct contact details helps us to get repairs carried out without delays and enables our staff to contact you about matters that concern you.



Thank you Weather Watchers



The winter weather – particularly the Beast from the East – posed real challenges for all of us this year. Our Weather Watchers did a fantastic job working hard to keep roads passable and vulnerable or elderly tenants safe. Thank you.

Having someone “on the ground” to keep us informed helps us identify any impact of bad weather. Weather watchers allow us to communicate and provide support to our tenants. If you are interested in becoming a Weather Watcher for your area please contact the office.

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Rural Stirling
Housing Association

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