

# Development Matters

Issue 9 September 2008

A regular update produced by the Housing Development team of The Highland Council, designed to promote awareness by providing information about recent Housing Development activity in the Highlands.

## Can't Move? Improve!

The Highland Council is able to assist with improvements to privately owned houses by award of improvement grants through the Care and Repair scheme. This approach enables us to assist in the improvement of around 850 houses each year.

An example of recent improvement works achieved with such a grant, together with other funding, is a small cottage in Portmahomack where Mr William Doull and Mrs Eileen Doull have lived for 36 years. The house had badly deteriorated and required total modernisation.



***Mr and Mrs Doull at their Portmahomack house which has been modernised using a Care & Repair grant and other funding (more photos are on pages 2 and 3)***

Originally from the Orkney Island of Hoy, Mr Doull worked at the fabrication plant in Nigg whilst Mrs Doull, who latterly worked as a home help, hails from Northampton. Having lived in Portmahomack for such a long time, Mr and Mrs Doull wished to remain in the area, but there were no suitable alternative housing options in the village. Mr & Mrs Doull first contacted Care and Repair in 2005 to help them apply to the Highland Council for a grant to re-wire the house. However, the house needed to be completely modernised and needed a new roof, a new front door, a new kitchen, a specially adapted bathroom and redecoration.

Care and Repair helped the Doulls find somewhere else to live during the renovation – which lasted 4 months.

***(Continued on page 2)***

## **Can't Move? Improve!      (continued)**

The £20,000 maximum grant from the Highland Council was not enough to cover the cost of the work to Mr and Mrs Doull's home so the Council funded Albyn Housing Society enabling them to take a share in the equity of the house to provide the remaining balance.

Through the hard work and the goodwill of the people involved, Mr and Mrs Doull now live in comfort in the home in which they raised their two daughters and became very much part of the community.



***'Before and after' photos of the back of Mr and Mrs Doull's house in Portmahomack which has been modernised using a Care & Repair grant and other funding.***

## **Grants to improve Highland Homes**

### **Who can we help?**

Residents in the Highlands may be eligible for a council grant to help towards making improvements to their home, so homeowners, tenants, crofters and landlords are being advised to check to see if they qualify for help.

### **Homeowners**

Grants are available to homeowners who have lived in their property for at least 2 years and who use the property as their main residence. Disabled homeowners are automatically entitled for help with certain improvement work provided that the Council is satisfied that the works are necessary.

### **Crofters**

Crofters are treated as homeowners and additional help may be available to them through the Crofter's Commission Croft House Grant Scheme

### **Landlords**

Landlords may get a grant if they let their property to people who are not members of their family. If they let their property to disabled tenants, they are obliged to carry out certain work.

### **Tenants**

Tenants can apply to get a grant for any work that is their responsibility under their lease, but they will be required to seek the permission of their landlord.

**All grants are awarded at the discretion of The Highland Council but there are works that automatically qualify for grant such as installing a bath or shower specifically for the use of a disabled person. Eligible works are listed on the next page.**

## Grants to improve Highland Homes (continued)

### Eligible Works

Works eligible for grant fall into the following categories:

**Repairs** - this includes re-roofing, re-roughcasting, structural repairs, replacement of lead pipes, replacement or repairs to defective windows and doors.

**Improvements** - such as the provision of baths and showers and hot and cold water.

**Adaptations** - to meet the needs of disabled occupiers.

Council Grant Officers are happy to give general advice on repair and improvements and are able to give sound advice on what assistance the Council may be able to offer.

Anyone wishing to find out more should contact their local Grants Officer for further details:-

Inverness	01463 703946
Ross & Cromarty	01349 868498 or 868651
Nairn	01540 664508
Lochaber	01397 707006
Badenoch & Strathspey	01540 664508
Skye & Lochalsh	01478 612727
Sutherland & Caithness	01408 635325

*Mr and Mrs Doull are pictured here with Martin MacLeod, Manager with ILM Highland (providers of the Care and Repair service in Ross-shire and Sutherland).*

*You too could be eligible for a grant to improve your home. Find out more by contacting the Council's Grants Officers or the Care & Repair agents.*



If you or a member of your family is over 60 years old or has a disability then you may be able to ask the local **Care & Repair** service to help you apply for a grant and arrange for contractors to provide quotes for the work to be carried out. **Care & Repair** is a confidential service that provides free information & advice to homeowners and tenants. Contact details for Care & Repair agents are as follows:-

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey	Cairn Housing Association	01463 229151
Ross & Cromarty	ILM Highland	01349 884565
Sutherland	ILM Highland	01549 402679
Skye & Lochalsh	Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	01478 612035
Lochaber	Lochaber Care & Repair	01397 706333
Caithness	Pentland Housing Association	01847 807107

## More Housing Development News from around the Highlands

### Anderson Street, Inverness

Cairn Housing Association will complete the construction of an eye catching development in Merkinch at the end of September. The land was formerly occupied by a block of 2 bed and 3 bed maisonettes built by the Highland Council in 1970.



Due to the high cost of improving these properties and concerns regarding the appropriateness of the accommodation they were demolished and the land was transferred to Cairn Housing Association in return for 100% nomination rights. The scheme will be a mixed tenure development comprising 16 x 2 bed flats and can be seen prominently from the Kessock Bridge. 8 of the flats will be available for affordable rent and 8 for low cost home ownership under the LIFT shared equity initiative (please follow this link for more information about LIFT: [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/lift](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/lift) )

For more information about the Anderson Street development please telephone Cairn Housing Association on 01463 220666 or email [enquiries@cairnha.com](mailto:enquiries@cairnha.com)

### Auldearn – affordable self-build plots available soon!

Through the Council's affordable housing planning policy, the Inverness-based developer Mackintosh Highland has sold land south of George Wilson Road to Albyn Housing Society on which they have built 21 affordable homes for rent and for low cost home ownership through the shared equity initiative. In addition, the developer was required as part of the planning permission to transfer to the Council 4 self-build plots with services adjacent.

The self build plots will be marketed to local first time buyers at a fixed purchase price for each plot, which has been made possible by the Council discounting the sale price to make the plots affordable. In order to protect this investment, prospective purchasers will be required to accept conditions within the titles which include a requirement that if the house is sold, the seller will repay the Council the percentage discount on the plot based on the valuation at the time of sale.

The plots will be targeted to the following groups of **first time buyers** (in order of priority):

- Council and/or housing association tenants who live in Auldearn; **then**
- Other first time buyer households who live in Auldearn; **then**
- Council and/or housing association tenants who live elsewhere in Nairnshire; **then**
- Other first time buyer households who live in Nairnshire.

The discounted price is currently being determined (in view of the present market conditions) and it is hoped that the plots will be marketed later this year. For more information please phone Heather Bebbington or Paul Brown in the Housing Development Team at Highland Council on 01463 702831 or 01463 702878 or email: [heather.bebbington@highland.gov.uk](mailto:heather.bebbington@highland.gov.uk) or [Paul.Brown2@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.Brown2@highland.gov.uk)

## Elizabeth Crescent, Dornoch



*Two GRO Grant houses in Elizabeth Crescent, Dornoch developed by the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT)*

The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust has developed a site at Elizabeth Crescent for 2 low cost home ownership houses. The homes have been grant assisted through the Grant for Owner Occupation (GRO Grant) and have been sold to first time buyers.

## Morrison Court, Dornoch

An adjoining site to the HSCHT scheme referred to above has been transferred by Highland Council to Albyn Housing Society and development is nearly complete. This scheme will provide 10 houses for affordable rent with the houses being highly insulated, incorporating solar collectors for hot water. A further 2 houses for low cost home ownership through the LIFT shared equity scheme will be built by Albyn on this site and these should be completed by March 2009.

For more information about this development please telephone Albyn Housing Society on 01349 852978 or email [office@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:office@albynhousing.org.uk)

## High Cost Developments

The Highland Housing Strategy has identified many rural settlements as high priority for housing. Working with our housing association partners, Highland Council has been successful in delivering affordable housing schemes in these areas. However, the cost of developing in such locations has risen dramatically in recent years, making development more challenging within the current cost limits which are set by the Scottish Government.

In accordance with the Council's affordable housing policy Albyn Housing Society has developed proposals for additional affordable housing in Kinlochlewe, Kishorn, Shieldaig, Torridon and Glenmore. These proposals will provide 19 houses at the following locations:-

<b>Kinlochlewe</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Kishorn</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Shieldaig</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Torridon</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Glenmore</b>	<b>2</b>		

The Council is considering part funding of further high cost schemes in the Highlands to increase affordable housing provision and more details will be included in future news reports.

## Home Farm, Portree - Royal Visit!

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association was delighted to welcome Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal who visited the Home Farm, Portree development on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2008 as part of the celebrations of the housing association's Silver Jubilee year.



*The Princess Royal took the opportunity to meet with many of the individuals who have been involved in the planning, design and construction of the Home Farm project. To mark the occasion, a commemorative key was presented to Mrs Nicola Rust, who is the new tenant of the 500<sup>th</sup> house to be completed by the Association.*

As reported in our previous editions of Development Matters, Home Farm in Portree is a large mixed tenure development of over 200 new homes which Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association is developing. Portree has been identified as one of the most housing stressed areas in the Highlands and this development will meet the affordable housing requirements in Portree over the next 4 years. This scheme will provide a total of 169 new affordable homes

The next handover of homes for Phase 2 of this development takes place during August to October 2008 and will consist of 21 units for affordable rent and 12 for low cost home ownership under the shared equity initiative. The shared equity houses are available as part of the range of assistance from the Scottish Government under its Low-cost Initiative for First-Time Buyers (LIFT).

***These properties will be heated by the District Heating System, initially by a temporary oil boiler.***

***Once the 55<sup>th</sup> home on the system is completed, the homes will be heated via the Biomass woodchip boiler.***



The house kits for the six new houses in Phase 3 have been erected and it is anticipated that the flats in this phase will start on site in Spring 2009.

For more information about the Home Farm development please contact James Stephenson, (Project Officer, Development) at Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association on 01478 612035 or email [james@LSHA.co.uk](mailto:james@LSHA.co.uk)

## King's Way, Mallaig

Lochaber Housing Association's development at King's Way, Mallaig was officially opened at the end of August by Minister for Communities and Sport, Stewart Maxwell MSP. The long-awaited 16-home development was completed earlier this year.



*Affordable housing development at King's Way, Mallaig which was formally opened in August 2008.*

The affordable housing development consists of six two-bedroom houses, seven three-bedroom houses, and three specially adapted homes for tenants with special needs. Funding for the King's Way project was provided through grants from the Scottish Government and Highland Council, in addition to private finance

The official opening day was marred by wind and rain; however the minister was undeterred by the weather and praised the quality of the new development and the hard work undertaken to provide "these marvellous new homes" for the area.

For more information about the King's Way development please contact Lochaber Housing Association on 01397 702530 or email [info@lochaberhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@lochaberhousing.org.uk)

## Updated 'Housing Options in the Highlands' leaflet

The Highland Council's Housing Development team has updated the [Housing Options in the Highlands leaflet](#) which provides information about the range of housing choices that are available throughout the Highlands, including rented housing and low cost home ownership.

An online version of the leaflet can be found on the [Affordable Housing Development](#) page of the Highland Council's website [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) (in the Current Documents section).

The leaflet is also available at all Council Service Points and has been provided to Community Councils. Alternatively, please contact the Housing Development team if you would like a copy to be posted to you (please see contact details at the end of this newsletter).



# LAND WANTED !

**Do you own land that is zoned for housing, or that you think will be suitable for housing? (Minimum 4 houses).**

**If so, please contact:-**

**Allan Maguire, Head of Housing Development & Estates  
Housing and Property Services  
The Highland Council  
Glenurquhart Road  
Inverness IV3 5NX**

**Tel: 01463 702528**

**Email: [allan.maguire@highland.gov.uk](mailto:allan.maguire@highland.gov.uk)**

**Alternatively, contact:-**

**Susan Torrance, Chief Executive  
Highland Housing Alliance  
Fairways Business Centre  
Castle Heather  
Inverness IV2 6AA**

**Tel: 01463 251131**

**Email: [susan.torrance@highlandhousingalliance.com](mailto:susan.torrance@highlandhousingalliance.com)**

***For further information about the Highland Housing Alliance, please see their website [www.highlandhousingalliance.com](http://www.highlandhousingalliance.com) The Alliance has also been featured in previous issues of Development Matters.***

***Have you any comments or questions to be covered in future issues or at the Area Housing Development Forums?***

***If so, please write to the Housing Development team, Housing and Property Services, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX or send an email to Heather Bebbington at [heather.bebbington@highland.gov.uk](mailto:heather.bebbington@highland.gov.uk) (Tel: 01463 702831)***