

Development Matters

Issue 7

September 2007

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.

★ ★ Northern Highlights ★ ★

In this issue of Development Matters we are highlighting some exciting developments in the North which will result in a range of houses to meet local needs.

Photos below show the new housing at the Springpark development in Thurso which has been delivered through the Council's affordable housing policy and has brought thirteen new affordable homes to the area, comprising 9 houses (5 x three bedroom, 3 x two bedroom, 1 x one bedroom) and 4 two bedroom flats. Pentland Housing Association has recently completed this project, helping to address the demand for reasonably priced places to live. Seven houses and two flats are for affordable rent with two houses and two flats available through Homestake, the shared equity scheme for low cost home ownership.



New housing at Leitch Court, Laurie Terrace, Thurso

The site is a mix of refurbished existing farm steadings and new build properties, with the architects having achieved a design that retains the building's traditional features using modern materials and sustainable features. Timber cladding painted in natural colours was used to enhance the use of random stone work and vernacular dormer windows.

A number of other projects in the North are also being progressed which will provide a range of housing opportunities for affordable rent and sale as well as houses for open market sale. Details of these can be found on the following pages.

[Janet Street, Thurso](#)

Following the successful completion last year of 4 flats and 2 houses in Janet Street, Thurso, Pentland Housing Association has now built a further 4 two bedroom flats for affordable rent at the upper end of Janet Street next to the original development. A local contractor was employed on a Design and Build contract and the upper flats have the benefit of solar panels to reduce hot water heating costs.



[Meadow Court, Manson's Lane, Thurso](#)

Photos below show a new development nearing completion by Pentland Housing Association at Manson's Lane, Thurso which is a welcome addition to housing in the area. As well as providing much-needed affordable housing the scheme has also improved the appearance of a site that had long been derelict and has greatly enhanced the environment for all members of the community. This project was enabled through funding from Communities Scotland under a Design and Build contract with local builders.



This development is conveniently located next to the Co-op in the centre of Thurso and provides 22 two bedroom flats and 2 flats with three bedrooms. 16 of the flats will be available for affordable rent and the remaining 8 will be for sale through Homestake (the shared equity scheme), which aims to get those on a low income onto the property ladder.

[Ormlie Allotment Ground, Thurso](#)

As reported in our last newsletter discussion at the Caithness Area Housing Development Forum identified this area of Council owned land as having potential for housing development. The Council was able to identify alternative allotments for the tenants who were using the site, releasing the land which is being developed by Pentland Housing Association through funding made available by Communities Scotland.

The development will provide a total of 22 new affordable homes, comprising 2 two bedroom wheelchair accessible bungalows, 8 two bedroom houses, 6 three bedroom houses and 6 houses with four bedrooms. Six of the completed properties will be available for low cost home ownership under the Homestake initiative with the remaining sixteen being for affordable rent. Work on this development is now underway with completion scheduled for December 2008.

Pulteneytown Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

The historic area of Lower Pulteneytown on Wick's scenic harbour front is currently the focus of a major conservation project. Following the Council's application for Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme funding, Wick Pulteneytown was awarded £1.5million over a five year period, which was by far the largest award in Scotland. The Conservation Area includes Lower Pulteneytown, extending up to Argyle Square.

Originally designed by Thomas Telford, Lower Pulteneytown is the most complete example of his planning genius and the design was inspired by the architectural themes of Bath. Telford's final plan dated 1811 is still held by Wick Museum and he designed Lower Pulteneytown as a self-contained fishing community, with houses and accommodation for the huge migrant population following the herring fleets. By 1830, the population numbered 2,100 and there were 240 houses and by the mid-19th century, it was the herring capital of Europe.

Telford Street, Wick

A regeneration project in 2004 transformed derelict herring gutting and curing houses on Telford Street into 6 flats and 10 houses for affordable rent.

Pentland Housing Association undertook this scheme with funding from Highland Council, Communities Scotland, the Lower Pultneytown Townscape Heritage Initiative and the local enterprise company.



The development used materials specified by Telford for the town's construction, including Caithness stone and slate. A community arts project involved local young people in researching Caithness dialect and selecting phrases and words which were sandblasted onto the flagstone walls. Tin templates were also made for decorative copper cladding, inspired by the town's fish trade.

Saltoun and Miller Street, Wick (part funded by CARS)

Pentland Housing Association is continuing their commitment to the regeneration of the Lower Pulteneytown area of Wick, and they are now converting some derelict properties on the corner site of Saltoun and Miller Street into three flats (1 x 1 bedroom, 1 x 2 bedrooms and 1 x 3 bedrooms). Two of the flats will be available for low cost home ownership through the Homestake scheme and one flat will be for affordable rent. The rest of the ground floor will be converted into office space for rent.

The refurbishment will be to modern standards with the existing period details such as the stone façade, windows, slate roof and dormer windows being retained. This project has been enabled through funding from Communities Scotland, Highland Council, Pulteneytown Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and HIE Caithness & Sutherland.

For more information on the above developments and those detailed on previous pages please telephone Pentland Housing Association on 01847 892507 or email pha@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Further information on [Homestake](#) is available from the Communities Scotland website www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

Silver Darlings Close, Wick (part funded by CARS)

Through funding made available by the Highland Council, Communities Scotland and Pulteneytown Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme the Highland Housing Alliance is developing its scheme at Silver Darlings Close to provide five town houses in an attractive courtyard development. The houses were advertised for sale on the open market at fixed prices and comprise 3 three bedroom houses, 1 with two bedrooms and 1 with one bedroom. All have been reserved and building is scheduled for completion in December 2007.



***Architects impression of Silver Darlings Close, Lower Pulteneytown in Wick
(courtesy of Pentarq)***

Silver Darlings Close was originally a fish-curing yard and is part of an on-going project to create modern living and working spaces in the old buildings, warehouses and curing yards. The development has an enclosed rear courtyard, offering privacy within a town centre location and the courtyard was previously the 'herring yard' where curers plied their trade and prepared their fish for transport. This project provides much needed new housing in the area and gives homebuyers an opportunity to acquire property in a unique setting.

The Highland Housing Alliance is also looking at a number of significant buildings in this area (further information about the Alliance can be found on page 11 of this report).

Other funding available in the CARS area

In addition to the Pulteneytown Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme fund referred to on the previous page, the Highland Council is encouraging individuals to improve property in the CARS area with funding available through the Council, HIE Caithness & Sutherland and Historic Scotland. For further information please contact Mick Broad, Wick THI Project Officer at Highland Council's Planning and Development Service, Area Office, Market Square, Wick KW1 4AB. Mick's phone number is 01955 605858 and his email address is mick.broad@highland.gov.uk

Pennyland, Thurso

A further increase in affordable housing for Thurso has been enabled by the Council selling an area of land on part of what was Pennyland Farm, to Pentland Housing Association.

The land, which will be developed as part of a larger privately owned area of up to 450 houses, will provide approximately 80 homes for rent, low cost home ownership and open market sale. There may also be an opportunity for individuals to build on serviced plots. The housing association hope to start on site with a first phase of 18 houses for rent and low cost home ownership in 2008.

South Head, Wick

Another opportunity to provide low cost housing has arisen in Wick. In the past the Council developed housing at Battery Road on part of land known locally as South Head and the remainder of this elevated site on the outskirts of Wick was sold to Pentland Housing Association in March of this year.

The housing association has submitted a planning application seeking consent for up to 86 houses. The development, which will be carried out over a number of years, will include homes for rent and low cost home ownership as well as some for open market sale and plots for individual self build. Improvement works will be carried out to Battery Road as part of the development. Pentland hope to be on site with a first phase of 20 units in 2008.

For more information on the above developments please telephone Pentland Housing Association on 01847 892507 or email pha@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Castletown – A Royal Enquiry!

Castletown was under the Royal spotlight in July. As part of Prince Charles' North Highland Initiative, the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment and the Prince's Regeneration Trust undertook a 3-day 'Enquiry by Design' exercise, inviting members of the Castletown community, Councillors, local landowners, businesses, and representatives from Highland Council, to help develop a plan to regenerate the Castletown and Castlehill areas.

The 'enquiry' process was very hands-on where delegates were encouraged to contribute their thoughts on boosting the area's housing, heritage, transport, economy and environment to help re-connect the housing with people's places of work, education and health services.

Following the event, a report from the Prince's Regeneration Trust will be produced which will include proposals for taking the plan forward.

Brora

Tulloch Homes have purchased the site of the former mill in the centre of Brora for development of up to 43 houses. As part of the development Albyn Housing Society will provide 8 flats for rent and a further 3 plots for self build. The self build plots will be grant aided by the Council in order that they can be targeted to an agreed client group for low cost home ownership. Albyn will attach conditions to the titles of the plots which will ensure that any onward sale recognises and protects the grant input by the Council.

Sutherland Road, Dornoch

Tulloch Homes will shortly commence work on a development of 33 houses, 12 of which will be affordable for rent and low cost home ownership under the Homestake scheme. The Council sold the land to Tullochs to enable the development to proceed

For more information about the above developments please telephone Albyn Housing Society on 01349 852978 or email office@albynhousing.org.uk

Elizabeth Crescent, Dornoch

Local contractor J&J Nicol, working in partnership with The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, has commenced phase 1 of a development which will provide 4 houses for low cost home ownership, all of which have been allocated to local first time buyers.

The houses have been grant assisted by the Council, through nil value transfer of the site, and by Communities Scotland through the Grant for Owner Occupation (GRO Grant) mechanism. There was a good response to the adverts in February inviting interest from those eligible to apply and the purchasers are now eagerly anticipating being able to move into their new homes, with two of the houses due to be completed before Christmas and the other two early next year.



***'GRO Grant' houses
under construction at
Elizabeth Crescent, Dornoch***

A second phase of 2 houses will commence in January and this phase will be grant aided using monies secured for affordable housing through development of Dornoch Square. Onward sale of the completed properties will be restricted by use of burdens within the titles ensuring targeted sales at affordable prices. Advertisements inviting eligible applicants to register their interest will appear in the local press and in the Highland Council's Service Point in Dornoch in Spring 2008.

In addition to the above scheme, Albyn Housing Society are about to commence on site at Elizabeth Crescent with a development of 12 houses for rent on a site transferred by the Council at nil value. The houses should be completed by July 2008.

[More News from around the Highlands](#)

[Home Farm, Portree](#)

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 5 years.

This scheme will provide a total of 169 new affordable homes and the photos below show an aerial view of the site and the Phase One houses which are nearing completion.



Phase One provides 31 high quality new homes for rent and 10 for Homestake (a shared equity form of Low Cost Home Ownership) and it is anticipated that the first new homes will be ready for occupation by the end of September 2007. The Phase Two project is underway and will provide 21 homes for rent and 12 Homestake units.

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

[Logan Way, Muir of Ord](#)

The Council agreed to sell land at Logan Way, Muir of Ord to Albyn Housing Society and the site (along with an adjoining area) has been developed to provide a total of 34 houses and flats, including a three bedroom bungalow suitable for wheelchair access.

20 of these homes are for affordable rent, including 4 to be made available to the Council for use as homeless accommodation, improving on the accommodation offered by chalets which previously occupied the site. The remaining 14 houses are for low cost home ownership through the Homestake initiative.



For more information about this development please telephone Albyn Housing Society on 01349 852978 or email office@albynhousing.org.uk Enquiries about buying one of these homes through the [Homestake](#) scheme should be directed to Kim MacGregor at Homestake Highland on 01349 855991 or by email to: enquiries@homestakehighland.com

Market Street, Ullapool

The Council has assembled a site in Market Street, Ullapool through previous purchase of the disused medical centre and identification of other buildings in the Council's ownership. Detailed design works have produced a proposal that the site be used to accommodate 10 flats, whilst retaining a building for community use. The community building relates well to the existing village hall and swimming pool and the proposals are currently subject of a planning application. The flats will be developed and owned by Cairn Housing Association.



Architects impression of Market Street, Ullapool
(courtesy of Matheson Mackenzie Ross)

For more information about this development, please phone Cairn Housing Association on 01463 220666 or email enquiries@cair nha.com

Coteachan Hill, Mallaig

There is good news to report for the Mallaig area. Lochaber Housing Association has started work on site at Coteachan Hill to provide 16 houses, comprising 8 two bedroom houses (including 2 single storey houses suitable for wheelchair access), 7 three bedroom houses and 1 five bedroom house. These homes will be available for affordable rent and it is anticipated that the development will be completed in early 2008.



The photo here shows the stunning view from the development site.

This scheme has been made possible through land made available by the Highland Council and funding from Communities Scotland.

For more information about the Coteachan Hill development (including the Homestake units) please contact Lochaber Housing Association on 01397 702530 or email info@lochaberhousing.org.uk

[Royal Court, Kingussie](#)

Kingussie has received a housing boost with Albyn Housing Society having recently completed their development of 22 flats at the former Royal Hotel, providing more affordable housing in the Badenoch and Strathspey area. This scheme provides 14 flats for affordable rent (10 x two bedrooms and 4 x one bedroom) and 8 two bedroom flats for purchase through the Homestake form of low cost home ownership.



[Aviemore](#)



As previously reported, the Highland Council has been working with its partners to provide further affordable homes in Aviemore and the first phase provided 200 new homes, of which 100 were affordable housing units.

The second phase of this exciting mixed tenure partnership development is now on site with Albyn Housing Society having completed 7 homes for rent and 6 for purchase through Homestake. A further

20 affordable homes will be completed in the next two months (12 for affordable rent and 8 Homestake units). All of the affordable housing units benefit from a bio mass (wood chip) district heating system which will provide low cost heating from a renewable fuel source. The site was purchased by the Highland Council and transferred over to Albyn Housing Society, who have been working in partnership with Robertson Homes on this development.

[Jenkins Park, Fort Augustus](#)

Eight affordable homes are being built at Jenkins Park in Fort Augustus, comprising 6 houses for rent (3 x 4 person, 2 x 5 person and 1 x 6 person) and 2 houses (2 x 4 persons) which will be sold through Homestake, the shared equity scheme. The photo here shows the houses under construction.



This development was enabled by land being transferred to Albyn Housing Society from Forestry Commission Scotland under the Sponsorship Scheme, the predecessor of the National Forest Land Scheme. Part of the scheme allows housing associations, supported by Communities Scotland, to buy land from Forestry Commission Scotland at reduced prices. Completion of this development is expected by the end of the year.

For more information about the developments on this page please telephone Albyn Housing Society on 01349 852978 or email office@albynhousing.org.uk

Enquiries about buying one of these homes through the [Homestake](#) scheme should be directed to Kim MacGregor at Homestake Highland on 01349 855991 or by email to: enquiries@homestakehighland.com

Former Dalneigh Hostel, Inverness

Dalneigh Hostel was built 40 years ago to house Inverness College students but it had been lying empty for some time and became a frequent target for vandals. William Gray Construction purchased the site in 2005 and entered into contract with Cairn Housing Association to build 33 flats for rent and 10 flats for purchase through Homestake (the shared equity scheme for low cost home ownership). This striking development was completed in May 2007.



Affordable housing on the site of the former Dalneigh Hostel, Inverness
(photographs courtesy of John Paul Photography)

Woodlands Walk, Westhill, Inverness

As part of a larger site being built by Barratt Construction at Westhill, Inverness, Cairn Housing Association will be offering 20 two and three bedroom houses for rent and 10 for low cost home ownership through the Homestake scheme, delivered through the Council's affordable housing planning policy.

Some units have already been completed with the rest due to be finished later this year.



For more information about the above developments please phone Cairn Housing Association on 01463 220666 or email enquiries@cairnha.com

Enquiries about buying one of these homes through the Homestake scheme should be directed to Kim MacGregor at Homestake Highland on 01349 855991 or by email to: enquiries@homestakehighland.com

Update from the Highland Housing Alliance



The Highland Housing Alliance is a pioneering new development company working with the Highland Council, housing associations, landowners and private developers to ensure that as many housing sites as possible are used for affordable and other much needed new homes in the Highlands.

Since 2005 the Alliance has bought 11 sites for development with the capacity for 834 houses, of which 342 will be for affordable rent and low cost home ownership. The other 492 homes will be a mixture of houses for sale and plots for self builders in many areas which are suffering economic constraints through the lack of new homes.

Examples of Alliance projects are:-

- 14 plots for sale to self builders in Tain at market values, which in itself sparked more mainstream house building to meet demand in Easter Ross.
- 8 Eco Homes being developed for sale at Woodside of Culloden, with the objective of combining modern design with a home that will require virtually no heating.
- A joint venture in Fort William to help open up a significant site zoned for new homes, of which 50% will be affordable housing in conjunction with Lochaber Housing Association
- Silver Darlings Close in Wick (featured on page 4 of this news report)

The Alliance has also pioneered new thinking in design and the way we build houses. In particular it has been involved in two major ground breaking projects – The Highland Housing Fair and the Timber Modular Construction Procurement Contract.

The Highland Housing Fair is a concept from Finland whereby architects have openly competed to build new houses which demonstrate the best of innovation and design. The Fair Event in 2009 will be ground breaking within the UK and allow people access to these spectacular homes which are then for sale, with 22 out of the 54 homes being available for affordable rent and low cost home ownership.

The Timber Modular Housing project gathers together the joint aims of the Alliance, the Council and the housing associations to change the way houses are built and speed up the process. A further ambition is to promote the use of Scottish Timber and encourage housebuilders to work towards carbon neutral homes within national targets. A 200 plus house contract for modular homes is to be placed with a new consortium which will also bring continental technology into Scotland for volume house building for the first time.

For further information about any of the above developments or others in the pipeline please register via the website www.highlandhousingalliance.com or contact Nancy Forsyth, Admin Support Officer, Highland Housing Alliance, C/O The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX, tel: 01463 702896 (email address: info@highlandhousingalliance.com)

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

Alternatively, contact:-

**Susan Torrance, Chief Executive
Highland Housing Alliance
C/O The Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness IV3 5NX.**

Tel: 01463 702894

Email: susan.torrance@highland.gov.uk

For further information about the Highland Housing Alliance, please see their website 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 (Tel: 01463 702831)