

February 2009

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## Development News

### Burnside, Plockton

We have received Tender Approval for 15 properties for affordable rent and 9 for shared equity at Burnside, Plockton.

Les Taylor Construction has been appointed as the main contractor and is due to start on site in February 2009 and complete in March 2010.

### Home Farm, Portree

All the houses in Phases II and III(A) of this development are now complete. These properties are heated by the District Heating System which is fuelled by woodchips.

The Association has now received full planning permission for the 12 shared equity flats in Phase III (B) of the development, which we hope will start in Spring 2009.

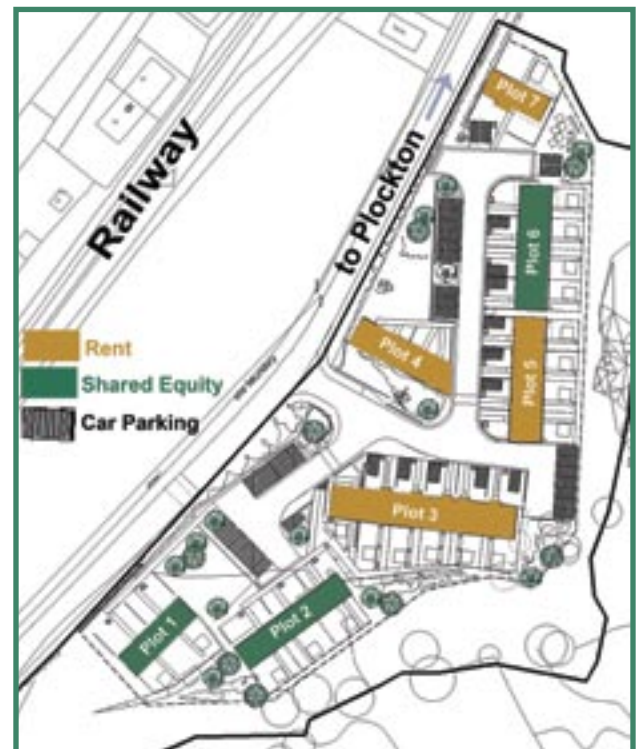
Rok Building Limited commenced work on the 77 houses and flats - 47 rented and 30 shared equity - in Phase IV and Phase V of the development. Works started on 3rd November 2008 and are scheduled for overall completion in June 2010. The first shared equity and rented houses will become available in June/July 2009.

### Dornie

The Association proposal to build the first 8 Special Rented houses and a Day Care Centre on its site at Carr Brae, Dornie has been issued to the Scottish Government for tender approval. We hope to be able to start the first phase of the development together with the site infrastructure works in Spring 2009.

### Raasay

The Association has submitted a Cost Plan Application to The Scottish Government for our proposed development at Phase 3, Pairce na Sgoile. We hope that the application will be approved and we will be able to proceed to the Tender Application stage in the near future.



Site Plan, Burnside, Plockton

## Housing Benefit

If you are liable to pay rent and are on a low income, you may be entitled to Housing Benefit. Forms can be obtained from any Highland Council Service Point or as part of your claim for Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance and Pension Credit.

The amount of housing benefit you receive is based on:-

- **Who lives with you**
- **How much money you have coming in**
- **What savings you have**

It is very important to let The Highland Council know **as and when** your circumstances change as this will affect the amount of Benefit the Council can award you. Examples of such changes include:-

- **If you change address**
- **If your income/your partner's income goes up or down**
- **If your/your partner's savings go up or down**
- **If you/your partner start work or change jobs**
- **If your/your partner's Income Support/ Job Seeker's Allowance stops**
- **If your/your partner's Social Security benefits change**
- **If anyone joins or leaves your household**
- **If a non-dependant's income changes – non-dependants are usually adult sons, daughters, other relatives or friends who live in the claimant's household on a non-commercial basis. Deductions are taken once that person is aged 18 or over**
- **If a child leaves school or child benefit stops**
- **If you/your partner go into hospital or a nursing home**

**You should be aware that if you receive housing benefit to which you are not entitled, you MUST repay the sum** either to The Highland Council directly or weekly amounts will be taken from your on-going housing benefit being paid to the Housing Association. You will then require to pay your landlord a sum of rent each week/month.

If you want to claim for back-dated Housing Benefit, you must apply in writing to The Highland Council, stating clearly why you think you are entitled to a back-date. The Highland Council will likely only be able to back-date Benefit for a period of up to three months for pensioners and up to six months for working age claimants.



**Child Benefit** has always been treated as income and included in the assessment of Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit but from October 2009, the full amount of Child Benefit will be included in the calculation but **will not** be counted as income.

There are also changes if you are claiming **Employment Support Allowance** or if one of you receives the **Support** component and the other the **Work Related** component of Employment Support Allowance – you should contact **The Highland Council Service Point** at once as you may be losing out on Benefit entitlement.

If you are in receipt of benefits for more than 26 weeks which stop because you return to work or you work more hours or earn more money, an extra four weeks of Council Tax Benefit can normally be paid at the same amount you received before your benefit stopped. You should apply for this at the time that your circumstances change.

**Remember, any help you are entitled to will only start from the Monday after you submit your Housing Benefit application to The Highland Council. Please do not lose out on your entitlement due to a delay in getting your application form to The Highland Council – the information that they need to process your claim can be given to them at the earliest possible date after your form is handed in.**

The Highland Council are able to make visits to people who may need help in making an application for Housing Benefit. You can call the freephone number **0800 393811** if you would like to make an appointment for a visit to be made to your home.

If you wish to discuss any matters regarding payment of rent and/or service charges to the Housing Association, please contact our **Finance Services Officer, Isabel MacLeod**, on **01478 612035** during office hours.

A booklet published by The Highland Council called **An Essential Guide to Benefits and Money Advice** is enclosed with the newsletter and can also be seen on-line on our website at **www.LSHA.co.uk**. This provides people with information about a wide range of benefits, and we hope you will find it useful.

### Use of Attic Spaces

During the Association's programme to install additional insulation in the attics of all of our properties, we noticed that many attics were being used extensively for storing a wide variety of unsuitable items.

Tenants should be aware that cardboard boxes and clothing, etc offer great foraging for rodents and also create a potential fire risk. In addition, many of our properties are not designed to have heavy loads placed on the attic trusses. Blocking up or obstructing air vents can also lead to dampness and condensation problems.

We would encourage tenants to minimise the items that they store in the attic space to ensure that the property is not adversely affected and that no health and safety issues arise.

### Garden Competition

The Association is holding a **Garden Competition** which is open to all tenants and sharing owners. A **£50 Garden Centre voucher** will be given for the best garden, with a runner-up prize of a **£25 voucher**.

Another **£25 Garden Centre voucher** will be given as a special award for work that has been done to benefit the community rather than individuals, such as keeping an area of communal ground neat and tidy, creating a wildlife garden, etc.

Please write to us or call if you would like to enter your garden or your neighbour's garden in the competition. **Entries should be made by 12<sup>th</sup> June 2009**, and judging will take place in **July**.

## New Committee Members Required

The Association is governed by a voluntary Management Committee which is responsible for agreeing our policies and plans and which oversees the day to day work of the staff.

The Committee meets once a month (in Portree and Broadford alternately) and meetings generally last no more than two hours. Whilst we cannot pay Committee members, they can claim all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for attending meetings, including travel expenses, childcare costs, etc.

Committee members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and, whilst they do not need to have any particular qualifications, an interest in housing and a desire to make a difference to people's lives are essential.

If you would like to have an informal chat about what Committee membership involves, please contact **Lachie MacDonald** on **01478 612035**, or alternatively, just ask for a **Committee Membership Information Pack** to be sent to you.

## Introduction of Household Waste Charges

From **1 April 2009**, the Council is charging for **bulky uplifts of household waste**.

A single charge of **£15** will be applied for the collection of up to three items during a single visit (eg sofa and two chairs) and a **£30** charge will be applied for the collection of between four and six items. Phone the Council on **01478 612728** to arrange for items to be uplifted.



We are pleased to announce that **Baker Tilly** have been appointed as the Association's external auditors.

It is important for us to know if there have been any changes to your household composition, for example:-

**Have you had a baby?**  
**Has a partner moved in with you or moved out?**  
**Has one of your children moved away?**

Changes to your household should be notified to **Housing Services** on **01478 612035**.



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If you would like to receive this document in another format or language, please contact us on 01478 612035 or e-mail: [info@LSHA.co.uk](mailto:info@LSHA.co.uk) and we will forward a copy to you.

**Lochalsh  
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Housing  
Association**

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