

homefront

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DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Home Farm, Portree

Our largest development at Home Farm, Portree, is proceeding on programme with a further 23 houses and flats for rent handed over already this year and another 23 properties due to be handed over before the end of 2009. The remaining 31 units are due to be completed by the Summer of 2010.



Rathad na h'Airigh, Portree

Included within these new phases of development are a range of semi-detached 2 and 3 bedroom **shared equity properties** for sale. Interest in shared equity properties has increased in recent months and these new properties represent an excellent opportunity for those who wish to move into home ownership at an affordable price.



Burnside, Plockton

Plockton

Good progress is also being made by Global Construction on the construction of 24 new houses at Burnside, Plockton. On completion in June 2010, there will be fifteen 2 and 3 bedroom properties for rent and 9 for shared equity sales. Copies of the plans are available on our website.

Dornie

Global Construction are also working on 8 special needs houses and a Day Care Centre (on behalf of The Highland Council) at Carr Brae, Dornie, and it is hoped that this phase of development will be ready for occupation in May 2010.

In future phases of this development, a range of 2 and 3 bedroom bungalows and villas will be constructed, comprising a further 29 properties.

Armadale

In August 2009, UBC commenced work on 11 units at Pier Road, Armadale, which are due to be completed in the Summer of 2010. Five of these properties are for rent and the remaining six will be sold on a shared equity basis.



Sketch, Pier Road, Armadale

Each phase of shared equity properties will be advertised in the local press as well as on our website. If you would like any more information on any of these developments, please contact our **Development Officer, John Lamont**, at our office on **01478 612035**.

The Importance of Paying Your Rent

The rental income that we receive from tenants is used to pay for the services we provide, including [repairs to our properties](#) and [investing in improvements](#).

When you become a tenant or sharing owner of the Association, you enter into a [Tenancy or Occupancy Agreement](#) and you are responsible for paying rent (and service charges, if applicable). [Rent is due on the 1st of each month](#), in advance, and you will be given at least one calendar month's notice, in writing, of the review of rent which takes place at 1st April each year.

The vast majority of our tenants pay their rent when it is due but a small minority don't and we want to make sure that those who are [experiencing financial difficulty](#) are helped by us and work with us to avoid matters escalating out of control.

If you are [unable to make a payment](#) of rent, you should [contact our office as soon](#)

[as possible](#) so that the situation can be discussed and a solution agreed. This is really important because, if you do not contact us, we will be unaware of the difficulty you are experiencing and we will continue to follow our procedures to recover the payment which may lead to legal action being taken against you. Ultimately you could be taken to Court and may find yourself liable for legal and other fees. This is the last thing that we would want to happen.

Our staff are available to help you at all times and you can also contact the [Skye & Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau](#) for free and confidential advice on all money matters and the range of benefits that you may be entitled to.

They have offices in both [Portree](#) and [Kyle of Lochalsh](#) - Kyle has a surgery every Wednesday, and for an appointment you can telephone the Portree office on [01478 612032](#).

New Management Committee Members

Since our last edition of Homefront, two new members have joined the Management Committee, bringing the total membership of the Committee up to 12 members.

Dick Johnston is a Community Services Supervisor with The Highland Council and formerly worked off-shore in various posts relating to Health & Safety. He stays in Portree.

Sam Crowe joined the Committee in September 2009 and brings with her valuable experience of working as a Housing Officer and Area Services Manager in local government. She is also a Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing.

There are still vacancies on the Management Committee and we are looking for individuals with a range of skills that can contribute towards meeting the aims of the Association. The Committee meetings are held monthly in Portree and Broadford, alternately, and normally last no more than 2 hours. Management Committee members are not paid but can claim all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses including travel costs, child care, etc.

Application forms for membership and further information can be obtained from Morrison House.

Annual Garden Competition

The Association awarded first prize of £50 garden centre vouchers to Mr Philip Wilson of Pairc Uilleim, Carbost, who was delighted with his prize. Mr Wilson's garden is a blaze of colour that brightens up the whole street.

Second prize of £25 garden centre vouchers was awarded to Mr William Robinson, also of Pairc Uilleim.

Electricity Meter Readings

We often receive requests for advice from our tenants regarding bills received from their electricity supplier which tenants consider to be inaccurate. It is important that tenants know whether their electricity bill is too much or too little, particularly as energy costs can be expensive.

One of the commonest issues we come across is the use of estimated bills, which may not truly reflect the electricity used. To assist our tenants, we have included with this edition of Homefront a copy of a useful guide about estimated bills and what to do if you receive one. We hope you find this helpful, but if you have any further questions regarding your bill, please contact your energy supplier.

Consultation on our New Customer Services Charter

The Association's **Customer Services Charter** sets out the standards that we aim to meet in our dealings with our customers.

The Charter includes details on:-

- our service level commitments, including response timescales
- how we will deal with visitors to our office
- the arrangements we will make to visit you in your home
- how we will deal with telephone callers
- the ways in which we will respond to correspondence
- the information we will provide on our website
- how we will pay our bills
- how you can make a complaint or a suggestion for improving services

We have now published a draft of a new Customer Services Charter and **we are inviting feedback** from all our customers on the contents. You can access the document on our website in the section on "**News Stories**" or, if you wish, you can request a paper copy from our office and we will send this to you.

Please take part in this consultation – we want to provide our customers with the best level of service we can and your views are very important to us.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is Friday, 6 November 2009.

Planned Maintenance - Consultation

Many of our tenants will have had staff from the Association visiting their homes to carry out surveys on the condition of the properties. We aim to have surveyed all our properties by the end of the year.

The information we are gathering is being used to help us plan works of repair and maintenance that will ensure that by 2015, all of our properties fully meet the **Scottish**

Housing Quality Standard.

To meet the standard, all our houses should be:-

- Free from serious disrepair
- Energy efficient
- Provided with modern facilities and services
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Compliant with the tolerable standard

We have now drawn up a plan which sets out how we propose

to achieve the above and we would welcome feedback from our tenants on our proposals. You can access the plan on our website in the section on "**News Stories**" or, if you wish, you can request a paper copy from our office and we will send this to you.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is Friday, 6 November 2009.

Pat Gordon Good Neighbour Award



Pat Gordon was a founder Member of Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association and served on the Association's Management Committee for many years. Pat also served on various other Committees

throughout Skye and Lochalsh on a voluntary basis and generally did a lot of good in the community.

We are looking for tenants who make a valuable contribution to their community; who drive their neighbours to the doctor or hospital; who offer a helping hand after someone has been unwell; who help out with household chores or shopping.

The **Pat Gordon Good Neighbour Award** is an opportunity to recognise and reward all the good work by tenants which goes unnoticed. Through this award, we will publicly acknowledge those tenants who make a real difference to the lives of others.

A panel of Management Committee Members and Staff will award three prizes (First Prize of £150 and two additional prizes of £50 of shopping vouchers). All tenants will be sent an application form to nominate a neighbour to the Scheme. Anonymous nominations will not be accepted.

Please return nominations by 6 November 2009. The winner of the Good Neighbour Award will be announced by 20 November 2009.



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