

# ARDGEAL

Near Kincaig, Highlands, Scotland, PH22 1NU



## Ardgeal

### Summary:

Set in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park on land previously owned by Forestry Commission Scotland, Ardgeal is now a thriving addition to the community of Kincaig. This community driven project was delivered over two phases. 10 sustainable timber homes were built by local contractors A W Laings, and designed by award winning architect, David Somerville. Local trainees were involved in the construction of 6 homes, with much of the felled timber being reused on the site. Local materials were used where possible to minimise impacts on this environmentally sensitive area. The tenure of the homes is low cost home ownership, with a Rural Housing Burden with a pre-emption right and an equity share (8 homes @ 65% and 2 homes @ 70%) protects the on-going affordability of the homes if they are sold in the future.

### Community involvement:

The Kincaig Community Council approached The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) in 2006 following concerns over the closure of the local primary school. This sparked a survey of local household need, to establish the most suitable house sizes and tenures, followed by a search for suitable development sites. Argdeal was identified by the community who were involved in all of the key stages of development, such as; the successful application to the National Forest Land Scheme; density of homes; selection of the architect; review of phase 1; design of phase 2 and the community provided strong support for planning applications.

When the first phase of 4 homes was developed, the community was involved in agreeing a suitable allocations policy with HSCHT, which was used for both phases. Households with a local connection are now living in all of the homes which has satisfied the brief of sustaining the primary school roll.

The community council chose the name “**Ardgeal**” by referring to old maps of the area. The name is Gaelic and “ard” means height or promontory, and “geal” means white.



### Location

#### Ardgeal, Kincaig

- ⇒ **Community driven project**
- ⇒ **10 sustainable homes for low cost home ownership**
- ⇒ **Land purchased through Forestry Commission Scotland’s National Forest Land Scheme for affordable housing**
- ⇒ **Primary school remains open**
- ⇒ **Timber provided for school project**
- ⇒ **Local timber and materials**
- ⇒ **39 Local companies used**
- ⇒ **Employment and Training opportunities**

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**The Highlands Small Communities  
Housing Trust**

**7 Ardross Terrace, Inverness, IV3 5NQ**

**01463 233 549**

**info@hscht.co.uk**

**hscht.co.uk**



*Access to regular support built strong relationships  
with the community*

## **39 local companies supported by Ardgeal project**

### *Ardgeal*

#### **Successes:**

The regular attendance at community council meetings was a key factor in effective community engagement. This route allowed the members of the community council and local people to discuss the elements of the project together with staff from HSCHT. This gave the community a voice and the end result is a more engaged and involved community and a good relationship with HSCHT into the future.

An option presented to the community as part of the joint working, was for them to own some homes to let out to local people as a community business, although they chose not to follow this route.

The community councillors acted as an intermediary for the residents who had questions throughout the process and they continue to be involved and engaged.

#### **Challenges:**

Time had to be built into the project to engage properly with the wider community throughout the project. This adds a layer of consultation to many processes and trying to reach consensus can slow things down. In the first phase, some changes to the layout and the specification of the homes was required to meet the financial budget set, and this had to be carefully explained and discussed with those concerned.

The main challenges were finding a suitable funding mechanism to deliver the first phase of the project, both in terms of development finance and finance for the individual purchasers. There were many economic changes at this time which impacted on its delivery.

The second phase was initially postponed due to changes in grant funding and available finance. Once complete the 10 households work together to manage common areas, such as the social space in the centre of the development.



#### **Opportunities:**

- ⇒ **A housing model which may be used in other communities**
- ⇒ **Additional land being considered for a forest croft**
- ⇒ **An exemplar rural housing project**
- ⇒ **Wide social, environmental and economic benefits to the area**
- ⇒ **Excellent community co-operation**
- ⇒ **Low carbon footprint**

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# GAIRLOCH

**Achtercairn, Gairloch, Highland, IV21 2BP**



## Gairloch

### Summary:

Situated in the Wester Ross village of, Gairloch sits the development of Achtercairn. This prominent brownfield site now houses twenty homes which have been delivered in two phases by, Albyn Housing Association (8 homes for rent and 4 low cost homes) and The Highland Council (8 homes for rent). A local business (the Farm & Garden Store), a social enterprise (Gairloch and Lochewe Action Forum or GALE) and a community organisation (the Air Training Corps.) have been incorporated into the development to achieve an attractive village focal point and a place to visit. To complete the final stage, HSCHT intends to build some homes in 2016 and the Air Training Corps will build a new training facility adjacent to the building which they previously leased.

### Community involvement:

The community has been the key driver in the process of developing and improving Achtercairn from the outset. The community themselves established the Achtercairn Development Group (ADG) early in the process, inviting members of the local business association, community groups, neighbouring landowners, the local authority, councilors and Albyn Housing Association, to be involved in regenerating this centrally located brownfield site. The ADG influenced the masterplan layout: instead of housing at the front of the development, this area now accommodates local businesses including a Tourist Information, which attracts around 40,000 visitors a year. Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action forum, or GALE, are a social enterprise who successfully opened their sustainable timber building in May 2012 after securing funding from the Big Lottery and other sources.

The ADG remains a working steering group and will provide input to the final stages of development until its completion in 2016.



### Location

#### Gairloch, Ross-shire

- ⇒ **20 affordable homes (16 social rent and 4 low-cost home ownership)**
- ⇒ **40,000 visitors per year at GALE Tourist Information Hub, University of the Highlands and Islands centre, shop and café**
- ⇒ **New Farm & Garden Store**
- ⇒ **New Air Training Corps. purpose built training facility**
- ⇒ **Local construction firms employed**

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The community were the main drivers of the redevelopment of this site through the Achtercairn Development Group



## **Around £7 million inward investment to Gairloch**

### Gairloch

#### **Successes:**

HSCHT worked closely with the ADG and the other partners for their guidance in the preferred direction of the project. This had many benefits; as the community themselves are not set up as a community company, HSCHT were the vehicle used to purchase several sections of land to amalgamate the site; the ADG sought the expertise of others to deliver housing; local businesses could attract funding to their own projects which otherwise may not have been possible if the funding requirements were presented as one package.

The community took ownership of many aspects of the development, such as providing street names which acknowledge one of the main local contributors.

#### **Challenges:**

New developments can divide opinions and existing businesses can feel threatened or displaced. While this was a factor in the early stages of the ADG this was carefully worked through with the community and the partners involved. The ADG steering group was a strength in negotiating through any difficulties which arose and giving everyone a platform to voice any concerns. As an objective contributor it was useful for HSCHT to be involved in helping to move forward with an agreed plan.

#### **Future:**

The Gairloch Heritage and Museum are hoping to relocate and regenerate a war time building next to Achtercairn, which is owned by the local authority and currently houses the roads depot. The success of the GALE project has inspired the museum and we hope that they will be able to transform this building into another showstopper for Gairloch. GALE are continuing to develop and expand their social enterprise, the Farm & Garden Store has started trading this year from their new facility and the Air Training Corp will relocate to their new building shortly. Two neighbouring landowners now have vehicle access to their land and the potential to develop their large sites by Achtercairn.



#### **Opportunities:**

- ⇒ **An excellent example of a multi-partner development to attract investment**
- ⇒ **Additional land being considered for up to 4 new homes**
- ⇒ **2 adjacent landowners have vehicle access to their land for future development**
- ⇒ **An exemplar rural re-development project**
- ⇒ **Wide social, environmental and economic benefits to the area**
- ⇒ **Excellent community focus and drive to complete the project**

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# Story of an Empty Home... ...from Angus

**Location: Glengate Hall, Kirriemuir**

**Empty for: 9 years**

Council officers initially contacted the owners of the hall, Redford Homes, in the summer of 2012 to discuss the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) which was underway in Kirriemuir. Having expressed an interest to bring the hall back into use, the owners were however concerned about raising the required finance to complete the project. Council officers then reassured the owners by recommending the Empty Homes Loan Fund as an alternative financial option.

Officers believed that the loan fund was a viable option as the hall had been empty for 9 years and required urgent works to ensure its preservation

and its town centre location offered suitability for use as affordable housing. Funding from both the CARS and Empty Homes Loan Funds were secured in late 2012.



**THESE INTERNAL PICTURES SHOW THE MAIN HALL**

Works began in April 2013 with roofing and stone work repairs. This included re-slating, the repair and

Glengate Hall is category C listed and was built in 1846 as a North Free Church. It was remodelled in the 1960s for use as a community hall – with kitchen, toilets and stage facilities added. Local activities in the hall ceased in 2004 and its vacant status soon led to its demise and poor condition, both internally and externally.



replacement of rainwater goods, and exterior wall re-pointing. There was extensive internal water damage and these measures helped prevent any further water ingress. Works then began on the internal aspects with the dismantling of the walls and flooring, and excavation to ensure the appropriate foundations were in place for internal structures.



Given that the building was listed and within a conservation area, careful thought had to be given to the choice of glazing to be installed – a product that would conform to its surroundings. The owners were in constant dialogue with the local planning and conservation departments to ensure a smooth development process. This also applied to some features of the building which were deemed must remain / be restored within the new structure. Two memorial tablets to previous ministers were to be housed on the walls within the stairwell, and the bellcote on the south gable end was to be cleared of vegetation and restored. So although the project would contain many features associated with modern living, there would also be characteristics from the original building which would ensure that a little piece of the buildings' history remained intact.

As well as the physical assembly of each dwelling, the works also included the construction of a stairwell and modifications to the existing window spaces to incorporate a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor which accommodates 4 of the new flats. Each flat offers double-glazing, is super-insulated and sound-proofed to ensure prospective tenants enjoy a comfortable living space which is







**THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR FLAT**

affordable to heat. The whole property includes 9 flats. The ground floor contains a 2 bedroom flat with varying needs access. The first floor contains two 2 bedroom and two 1 bedroom flats. The second floor also contains two 2 bedroom and two 1 bedroom flats.

Not only will these flats offer modern, energy efficient living in a historic building full of character, but the affordable rent levels (less than Local Housing Allowance rates) will remain the same for 10 years (until 2024) meaning a 1 bedroom flat will be £296.95 per month, and a 2 bedroom flat will be £405.01 per month.

Works were completed in August 2014 with the first tenants taking residence in September. All 9 flats have subsequently been let.







# HELMSDALE

Rockview Place, Helmsdale, Sutherland, KW8 6LF



## Helmsdale

### Summary:

Helmsdale is a small community located on the North East coast of Scotland in the sparsely populated county of Sutherland. Affordable housing was identified as a priority by the community as no new homes had been provided there for around 35 years and this was seen to be having a negative impact on the sustainability of the community. Plans were developed with the Helmsdale and District Development Trust who went on to complete 4 homes and 3 plots in 2015. The homes are owned by the community and rented to local people. Any surplus income the housing asset generates is restricted funds and sits within a sink fund towards capital replacement in future years. Housing management is carried out by Albyn Housing Society providing transparency between tenants and the community.

### Community involvement:

In Helmsdale, there was capacity, a strong local drive and commitment to achieve these new homes. The community were represented through the already established Helmsdale and District Development Group (now Trust) who were originally involved in managing their community hall. In the early stages, partners including the local authority, Albyn Housing Society and HSCHT were invited to meetings to discuss the options for providing more homes in Helmsdale.

Once HSCHT had assisted with establishing the principle of releasing the land from the local authority, the project was led by the Local Development Officer, whose post was funded by Highlands & Islands Enterprise's Growth at the Edge fund. The Development Officer secured the funding from various sources, following on from HSCHT's assistance in securing a grant from the Scottish Government's Innovation and Investment Fund. Albyn Housing Society provided project management during the building of the homes and now provide housing management services on behalf of the community. The end result is an empowered community who are extremely proud of achieving community owned homes.



### Location

#### Helmsdale, Sutherland

- ⇒ Community owned homes for rent
- ⇒ 4, 2 bedroom homes and 3 self build plots provided
- ⇒ Land transfer secured by HSCHT along with first grant to kick start the project
- ⇒ Fundraising by local development officer
- ⇒ Partnership project with Albyn Housing Association and the local authority
- ⇒ Housing management by 3rd party
- ⇒ Allocations policies agreed with local authority and The Scottish Government
- ⇒ Supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise

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*Community owned housing is a realistic way to provide rural homes*



## **18 different funders supported this project**

### *Helmsdale*

#### **Successes:**

The project attracted the Scottish Housing Minister, Margaret Burgess MSP to view the homes on a recent trip to the Highlands (pictured above). It has been hailed as a success as the community now owns assets, it has empowered the community and it helps to provide good quality homes for the people of Helmsdale.

The community raised the majority of the funding themselves from 18 different sources over a two year period. They have gone on to raise the profile of their community owned homes by sharing information at various conferences and events and by holding events such as a turf cutting ceremony and opening events. The Scottish Government is launching a new Rural Housing Fund in 2016 to assist others to achieve their ambitions of addressing their own needs. Other communities are more encouraged by the success and the timely delivery of this project, making them believe that they can do the same.

#### **Challenges:**

In many ways, this project was embarking on new territory in the Highlands, and possibly in Scotland, so in terms of challenges, there were many. The community did not own any land and they had no capital funding so they had to start the project completely from scratch. The largest obstacle was to attract the funding amidst obstructive high street lending criteria, budgetary increases from the original estimates and a volatile grant funding environment leaving less funding routes available to Helmsdale.

The fact that Helmsdale is recognised as a fragile remote and rural community was a strong reason for many funders to support the project and to acknowledge its merits. Despite these challenges, after a lot of hard work, the project reached fruition in December 2014.



(Housing Minister Margaret Burgess MSP visit 2015)

#### **Opportunities:**

- ⇒ **Adjacent land may be suitable for future development**
- ⇒ **Design and layout of homes considered future use of the adjacent land**
- ⇒ **New Scottish Government Rural Housing Fund to provide support for others**
- ⇒ **Raised profile of Helmsdale and Community Owned Housing**
- ⇒ **Reverse the trend of out-migration and provide suitable homes for younger people to remain in community**

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## **Kingsbarns - Rural Homes for Rent**

The Village Green development at Kingsbarns was constructed as part of the 'Rural Homes for Rent' pilot scheme that was run by the Scottish Government and Scottish Land & Estates in 2008.

Kingsbarns is 6 miles from St Andrews and suffers from a significant housing shortage. In Kingsbarns village, the post office, the village shop, and the pub had all closed. The school roll was at seventeen with one teacher.

Under Rural Homes for Rent, rural landowners across Scotland were able to apply for housing grants to help them build new affordable homes for rent on their land. The scheme allowed landowners to develop homes which will be privately rented at below market rate for at least 30 years.

The development at Kingsbarns was built by Cambo Estate and was completed in December 2014. 10 of the 22 houses are now available for rent at an affordable rate. 10 were sold on the open market and 2 were sold at an affordable price. The properties are let on the basis of a local lettings initiative that ensures local housing need is met. In addition, potential tenants are nominated by Fife Council for an allocation of housing.

The Kingsbarns development also included the creation of a new walled village green which adjoins the primary school, a community vegetable patch and an improved road junction. These elements tie the new homes into the existing village and ensure there are added benefits for the whole community.

The new Kingsbarns development will help the local community to thrive. Every rural community needs new families who are keen to come and play their part in local life and these homes provide an opportunity to help to achieve this.







*Steve Lloyd, managing director at Ogilvie Homes, Margaret Burgess MSP, Sir Peter Erskine, Cambo Estate, Sarah Jane Laing, Scottish Land & Estates*