

# Housing minister visits pioneering Lockerbie housing development

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Jamie Carruthers (left) and Kevin Stewart MSP

A Lockerbie estate that has pioneered affordable, energy efficient housing has been visited by Scotland's housing minister.

**Kevin Stewart MSP** joined **South of Scotland MSP Joan McAlpine** to visit Dormont Estate and were given a tour of the development by **owner Jamie Carruthers**, who was keen to highlight the opportunities that new Passivhaus energy efficient housing developments could provide in both rural and urban areas.

Among the 20 homes that are rented to local families at Dormont Estate eight are semi-detached houses built and certified to the ultra-low energy Passivhaus standard. The properties were opened in 2011, partly financed through a **Scottish Government** grant scheme, and are offered on long term tenancies at affordable rent.

Passivhaus homes are colloquially known as 'homes that heat themselves', with very little additional heating required such is the standard of energy performance. The Dormont development has won a series of industry awards including '*Rural Development of the Year*' at the **Scottish Home Awards**.

Mr Carruthers told the minister and Ms McAlpine about the positive effect that energy efficient housing can have for tenants. A two-year study found that the heating, lighting and hot water for a three bedroom (six person) house costs as little as £100 a year – about a tenth of the average heating cost alone for a similar home in the UK – and that total energy costs were only around £500 a year.



(from left) Estate owner Jamie Carruthers, Kevin Stewart MSP, Joan McAlpine MSP and Katy Dickson senior policy officer at Scottish Land & Estates According to Mr Carruthers, this clearly has a major impact on household disposable income and critically, in a rural area where car dependency is high, making travel more affordable.

He said: “We were extremely pleased to welcome the Minister and Ms McAlpine to the estate today to demonstrate first-hand what can be achieved with a combination of vision and investment.

“The Passivhaus development has had a terrific effect on the lives of families, and the energy efficiency of the properties has kept fuel bills low and allowed residents to utilise their money for far better purposes such as family holidays.

“Building houses of these standards may be more costly at the outset but the long-term dividends are significant. As we have demonstrated, I firmly believe that Passivhaus developments can play a significant role in reducing fuel poverty – and poverty more generally – in both rural and urban locations. It would be to everyone’s benefit to see more of these energy efficient homes being built across Scotland and I thank Mr Stewart for the time he has taken to view what can be achieved.”

Kevin Stewart said: “I was delighted to receive a tour of the award-winning Passivhaus development and see first-hand how the Rural Homes For Rent grant scheme has helped to provide energy efficient homes here in Dumfries and Galloway. Quality and affordable housing is something that everyone deserves to have access to and it pleased me to see how much these energy efficient homes could benefit the average family. I welcome the Passivhaus approach to helping remove the threat of fuel poverty and I hope to see more of it in the future.”

South of Scotland MSP Joan McAlpine is a strong supporter of the development and believes that it points to a future where fuel poverty can be eradicated.

Ms McAlpine said: “Estate owner Jamie Carruthers has done a fantastic job at Dormont, and I’m glad the Minister could visit to see for himself.

“The development has been built to pioneering PassivHaus standards, and their levels of energy efficiency save the tenants hundreds of pounds each year on their fuel bills.

“Dormont will play a big role in reducing fuel poverty, as well as the negative impacts of climate change – it is fantastic to see a new affordable housing development delivered by a private sector landlord.”