

Housing Matters

Taigheadas na Gàidhealtachd

Autumn 2024

INTRODUCTION

Alison Clark – Chief Officer for Housing and Communities

Welcome to the Autumn Edition of the Tenant's Newsletter.

My name is Alison Clark and I have recently been appointed to the role of Chief Officer for Housing and Communities.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to provide the introduction to the latest newsletter. From the Highlands, I've worked for the Council for over 20 years in a variety of roles and have recently been responsible for customer services, for engagement and involvement, for poverty and partnership working. In this new role I continue to be responsible for these areas of work along with housing.

I am very much looking forward to this new role, working with the existing housing team. With an engagement and consultation background, I'm very aware of the important role tenants play in shaping housing policy and services. Working with our tenants is a key aspect of the role of all housing staff, whether they work in tenant participation, repairs or tenancy management roles.

I was pleased to be able to attend the latest tenant forum in September. Trialling a new hybrid model, this linked up tenants meeting in Caithness, Lochaber and Inverness. Despite some technical gremlins, it was a good chance to bring people together, getting views from different parts

of Highland and of course reducing the need to travel. The team will continue to look at how to improve the opportunities for tenants to meet virtually alongside the in person sessions.



This is a good opportunity to highlight the annual rent consultation will begin in early November. Increasing rents is always considered carefully. We need to balance the importance of improving energy efficiency in existing homes (and of course mitigating the increase in household energy bills), maintaining the local housing estate environment – where there have been concerns raised this year – alongside the need to invest in new housing for families in local communities. It's therefore vital that we hear from tenants during the rent consultation process, and I would encourage you to contribute.

I look forward to meeting with a number of you in future tenant forums in different parts of Highland.

TPAS Awards

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland (TPAS) hosted their Annual Awards in 2024 celebrating the magnificent achievements of tenants, community members, landlords, contractors, and other organisations in improving communities and services, spotlight and share best practice, and applaud all the tireless efforts that are making life better.

We were delighted that the Raigmore Community Residents Association scooped the award for Good Practice for Engaging Tenants in Environmental Initiatives. It's a really positive example of how a group of dedicated tenants and residents have transformed the green spaces around Raigmore Estate, with a thriving food forest, small orchard and other growing spaces.



Additionally, at the same ceremony we had one of our young volunteers, Josh McCook involved in the Caol Residents Group, get a special recognition for the involvement he has with his local community, helping with events, entertaining the community and helping to get the voice of the youth heard.

Well done to all of our hard-working tenant groups and volunteers, it's great to see your enthusiasm and commitment being recognised.



Hybrid Tenant Forum

This year, to mark Scottish Housing Day themed around Homes for Life, the TP team arranged a fully hybrid tenant forum, across three in person venues with some joining in from home. Being the first time this had been attempted, there were a few technical issues which we hope to iron out for the next attempt.

Topics included how Highland Council are using innovative design features built into new homes to help future proof them for the changing needs of tenants, and changes to how points are allocated for applicants around care & support as well as discussion around anti-social behaviour.

It was great to get tenants together in local venues to get some more of the informal conversations that get lost when meeting online. We have taken away lots of helpful and constructive feedback which we will take on board when arranging our next meeting.

Thanks to everyone that did join us for your time and patience.

Rent Consultation 2025-2026

Throughout November we will be seeking your views on proposed rent increase for 2025-26 and we will be asking you to tell us what is important to you. We will contact you by email, text, or letter and you will be invited to complete a short survey. We will also be hosting a number of drop in sessions where you can come and speak with one of the team and we can record your feedback.

Pressures on household budgets are still being felt, so it remains important that we hear from as many tenants as possible. We thank all of the tenants that took part in the consultation last year and ask that you try to encourage at least one neighbour, friend or family member, that you know to be a Highland Council tenant, to complete the consultation. Your views do matter to us and it is your right to have your views considered.

The rent setting consultation will include information on how your rent money is spent, what the costs of delivering housing services are, and the impact of rising costs and inflation. If you would like to discuss this with us in person, by telephone or in a virtual meeting then please email us on tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk.

DROP-IN DATES*

Lochaber	Monday 18th November
Caol Community Centre	12-3pm
Lochaber	Wednesday 20th November
The Plantation Hub Hall	12-2pm
Caithness	Tuesday 19th November
Wick Service Point	10am-12pm
Skye & Lochalsh	Thursday 21st November
Kyle Service Centre	10am-12pm
Skye & Lochalsh	Wednesday 27th November
Portree Co-op Food Woodpark Road	12-2pm
Skye & Lochalsh	Wednesday 4th December
Broadford Library	12.30-2pm
Ross-shire	Tuesday 26th November
Dingwall Service Point	10am -12pm
Ross-shire	Wednesday 27th November
Invergordon Library & Thursday	2-3.30pm
Ross-shire	Thursday 28th November
Dingwall Service Point	11-12.30pm
Inverness	Tuesday 19th November
No11 Lochiel Road	12-2pm
Inverness	Wednesday 20th November
Hilton Community Centre	5-7pm
Inverness	Friday 22nd November
Café 1668	12-2pm

**More dates to follow – keep an eye out for details*



Where to go when you need a helping hand...

The **Highland Mental Wellbeing** website is a list of services, information and training around the subject of mental health and wellbeing. It can be confusing to know where to start with online information, so it aims to help by highlighting some of the best websites and sources of help.

It also provides information about training and resources for community/service volunteers or paid staff, in a 'helping' or supporting role.



<https://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk/>

Digital Inclusion is about ensuring the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available to everyone. People who are digitally excluded may lack the skills, confidence and motivation to get online even if they can source equipment and connection. Having access to the internet can enhance people's lives in many ways such as applying for jobs, budgeting, accessing benefits, social interactions, translation software, and online shopping.

Below are some useful websites for learning how to get online that you can share with people you know who may currently be digitally excluded:

<https://connecting.scot/for-you/learner>

<https://www.standardlife.co.uk/help/digital-skills-hub>

If you are worried about internet safety, you can find useful advice for staying safe online at the following websites:

www.getsafeonline.org

<https://learn.sssc.uk.com/cyber/index.html>



Red Chair Highland is a social enterprise based in Inverness who tackle digital exclusion by providing a digital hub where they run group workshops and offer 1-1 support. They also operate digital outreach services, providing digital inclusion services across the Highlands to digitally excluded, isolated and vulnerable individuals including older adults, care experienced people, those on benefits, recently released from prison, affected by alcohol or substance use, refugees and those affected by homelessness. To find out more you can visit their website or call on 01463 417240.

<https://www.redchairhighland.scot/>

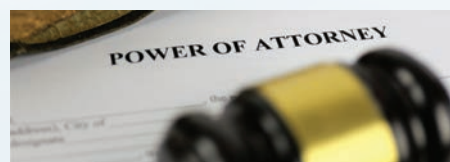
Have you considered power of attorney?

A power of attorney is a way of giving someone you trust the legal authority to make decisions on your behalf if you're no longer able to make them yourself.

There may come a time when you're no longer able to make or communicate your own decisions. Having a power of attorney already in place can make things much easier if that time comes.

There are a number of reasons why you may need someone to make decisions on your behalf. It may be a temporary measure, if you're going into hospital and need help with everyday financial tasks like paying your bills. Or it may be part of long-term planning – if, for example, you've been diagnosed with dementia.

To find out more you can visit the **AgeScotland** website and read their Power of Attorney Guide: <https://www.agescotland.org.uk/information-advice/information-guides/legal-and-family/111-power-of-attorney>



App available for both Android & iPhone

GET IT ON Google Play

Download on the App Store

Tenant Participation

If you would like to get involved with **Tenant Participation** online, including attending online webinars and meetings, the Tenant Participation Team can help you. To get in touch you can email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk or call **07557 744413**.

You can also sign up the Highland Tenant Network where you can chat with fellow tenants about housing issues you may be experiencing and have your say on changes to legislation and policy. You will also find lots of useful information about housing and communities as well as receive invites to Tenant Participation events and meetings.

To request an invite, please speak to your tenant participation officer or email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk.



Highland Tenants Network

What is it and why should I use it?

The HTN was set up with the aim of being a place to share information, conversation and to connect tenants and staff. This site has lots of information on everything you might need to know about housing.

The network is open to all Highland Council tenants and can be accessed from any device with an internet connection such as smartphone, tablet or laptop.

To join, just request an invite from tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk or speak to your local Tenant Participation Officer.



Parcel delivery scams

The scam

Trading Standards are warning tenants to be alert to parcel delivery scam texts and emails circulating, as criminals attempt to steal personal and payment details.

The fake messages may say that your parcel is delayed due to an incomplete address, or it needs a small payment to be delivered.

The messages contain links which lead to malicious websites or apps containing spyware, designed to steal your personal and payment details.

Several of these scam messages claim to be from reputable delivery companies but are sent from random (likely spoofed) mobile numbers.

There can sometimes be another step to the scam. You may be contacted after the initial fraud has taken place to encourage you to move money into a scammer's account for 'safety'.

How to avoid a parcel delivery scam

Legitimate parcel delivery services will never contact you unexpectedly to ask for personal or payment details.

If you receive an unexpected text or email about a parcel delivery, don't click on any links or follow any instructions to download an app to your phone.

If you are expecting a parcel, track the delivery on the company's official website or app rather than using links or contact details provided in an unexpected message.

How to report a parcel delivery scam

Tenants are encouraged to report scams to Trading Standards on **01463 644570** or **trading.standards@highland.gov.uk** or to **Police Scotland** on **101**.

Scam texts can also be forwarded for free, to **7726**. If the scam has arrived in your inbox, you can report it by emailing a screenshot to **report@phishing.gov.uk**.

If you have been the victim of a scam, you should contact your bank immediately and report the incident to Police. If a scam causes you to feel threatened or unsafe, contact Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.

Free and confidential advice can also be obtained from Advice Direct Scotland on **0808 164 6000**.

Area Updates...

Skye and Lochalsh

Over the summer, TP officer Catriona Sutherland moved from covering Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey to becoming the TPO for Skye and Lochalsh. Since then, Catriona has met with tenants in Broadford who have come together to form a registered tenant organisation, The Liveras Park Residents Group. The group's objectives are to liaise with the Council for better accessibility and to develop the communal grassed areas around Liveras Park and improve the lives of those residing in the area. The group meet at An Arcasaid on the first Wednesday of each month at 11am.

Catriona has also met with tenants in Kyle of Lochalsh and plans to hold regular drop-in events at the local community café- watch this space!

If you reside in the Skye and Lochalsh area and would like to speak your Tenant Participation Officer, email Catriona.Sutherland1@highland.gov.uk or call 07867269265 and leave a message.



Caithness

Ormlie Community Association recently arranged a community clean-up as the High Ormlie area was in need of some extra attention. The clean-up took place on the 18th of September and involved weeding, litter picking and identifying areas that require reporting/repairs.

Staff from the Ormlie Community Association took part in the clean up along with, staff from Albyn Housing, TPO Leona Geddes, Jill Smith, Housing Options Officer, volunteers and tenants that live on the estate.

It was a successful day and amazing to see what can be done when we all work together.

Ross-shire

Windsor Place Resident's Group held a very successful spring clean day on the 27th of April. During the morning, residents of Windsor Place joined forces and within an hour they made a visible difference to their neighbourhood. After a tremendous effort everyone was welcomed to join for refreshments and a chat at the Hub.

The planter makeover event took place in June with a few residents attending and working hard to create weed free colourful planters.

If you reside in Windsor Place, Conon Bridge and you would like to become a member of the Windsor Place Resident's Group please contact windsorresidentsa@outlook.com.



Badenoch and Strathspey

The Aviemore Sheltered Housing Group have continued with their housing meetings held monthly in Glen Centre but have also enjoyed meetings further afield at The Highland Folk Museum where tenants noted some of the exhibits were very familiar! and a lovely lunch at the Loch Insh Boathouse with amazing views whilst discussing changes to the recycling service and garden aid. This was TPO Catriona's last trip with the group but Kerri has taken over and has been continuing with the meetings as well as arranging more trips out. They had their summer trip planned for the Cairngorm Mountain cafe however, the weather put a dampener on the original plans and the group went to the Speyside Centre for the day where they sat down to lunch together and did a bit of shopping- a lovely day out and everyone was in great form even though it was a bit dreich.



Nairn and Nairnshire

Queenspark Residents' Group have been regularly hosting monthly meetings with residents including their AGM on 12th August where the group celebrated their second anniversary of running the group successfully and making a huge difference to the Queenspark community!

The group held two extremely well attended fundraising car boot sales in Sainsbury's car park, one on the 26th May and the other on the 15th September. Thank you to Sainsbury's for their continued support!

On 26th of July the group launched their **Highland Community Lottery** page and since then they have had 4 delighted prize winners - 50p from every ticket sale goes directly to Queenspark Residents' Group so it's a great way to help the group raise funds along with giving players the chance to win £25,000 each week with the bonus of regular super draws too! **From more information, please contact qprgnairn@gmail.com.**

Residents of Queenspark dates for your diary:

- **Halloween Costume Drop and Swap planned till 14th October - making Halloween sustainable and cost effective for families.**
- **Wicked Halloween Fright Night 31st October from 6pm.**



Inverness

Back in July, Police Scotland hosted a multi-agency open day for the public with a variety of services attending. This first event since the pandemic, was held at **Merkinch Community Centre** and had good turnout with over 20 different services attending including Housing and Tenant Participation. Given this, Police Scotland decided to host a second event held in August in the Hilton Community Centre. Both events provided a great opportunity for our tenants to meet staff and chat about current issues. There are plans for a third event in December and it will be hosted in Raigmore Community centre, dates to be confirmed.

Back in May the **South Kessock Residents Association (SKRA)** saw the construction of the new park come to fruition and it was completed in June. The group celebrated with a park open day where they had a ribbon cutting from local councillors Bet MacAllister and Kate Maclean to officially open the park to the public and the celebrations continued with a BBQ, pipe band, bouncy castles and raffle stalls. The days leading up to the opening saw the group doing a huge amount of preparation from grass cutting, setting up stalls, inviting special guests and making goody bags for all the kids attending. The group's hard work paid off as it was a fantastic event and there was a video of the opening event produced which you can find on YouTube.



Raigmore Community Residents Association (RCRA)

continue to develop the food forest and now have signage with QR codes to give people visiting the garden more in-depth information on the project and what is growing, as well as a picnic bench for the community to enjoy. The group have also developed King Duncan enclosed gardens by clearing trees and bushes to make the space accessible with plans to section the garden into different functioning areas for growing, outdoor education and wildlife. Back in May the group were nominated for a TPAS Scotland award and were entered into the category engaging tenants in environmental initiatives and at the annual conference in June at Glasgow it was announced they had won the category. This is a testament to the group and the huge amount of progress and work they have achieved in such a short space of time. The group put on an awards event of their own in August to celebrate with their community as they felt they could not have achieved what they have without the support of Raigmore estate. The award will be on display in the Raigmore community centre and the group aim to add more awards in the future to the display cabinet.

Lochaber updates...



On the 18th August, the **Plantation Community Association** held the Grand Opening of their Community Larder at the Plantation Hub. The event was a fun success with demonstrations of what can be made from the donated food to save money and save food being wasted.

On 31st October there will be a **Halloween drop-in at 6pm so call in for a spooky treat!**

The PCA's **first Bite and Blether** will be held on **Wednesday 19th November, 12 to 2pm**. Come along and meet your TPO and hear about the upcoming Rent Consultation, meet some of our clients that use the hub and enjoy a wee bite to eat and a blether!

The **Big Bite and Blether** in Partnership with HSCN will be held on **Monday the 18th November** at Caol Community Centre from 12 to 3pm with lots of information from organisations such as NHS Highland Technology Enabled Care and NHS Near Me and information about the upcoming Rent Consultation. **Contact jo-hscn@outlook.com or Karin.mckay@highland.gov.uk** for more information.

The CRG also plan to hold their **Big Christmas Event on Sunday the 1st December 4pm to 8.30pm** in partnership with Tenant Participation and Highlife Highland. Santa and his elves will be out switching on the tree lights from 4pm then arriving at Caol Community Centre where we will have Santas Grotto, market stalls and lot of entertainment with Nevis Radio, dancers and singers!



Caol Resident Group held a Clean-up Day on the 17th August and although the weather was against them, the event was a great success with lots of fun had in the hall with stalls and hot food to warm up after a soggy litter pick and a chance to meet Caol's new mascot Caolie! Under Caolie's horns is youth tenant Josh McCook who was recognised at this year's TPAS awards held in June where he received an award for his outstanding contribution to his community. Well done Josh!

The group held a Prize Bingo on Friday the 13th Sept and it was a full house raising almost £3000! Our very own tenant Brian Stewart received the Davy McCook Citizens Award for his volunteering efforts in the community, and TPO Karin Mckay received a gift and recognition for all she does above and beyond her job role, helping and supporting the group in her own time and keeping them motivated to do more and more exciting events.

There Caol Residents Group's next event is the **Halloween Party on Thursday the 31st October** in Caol Community Centre 6pm to 7.30pm and Tenant Participation will be sponsoring the prizes for 3 winners of best costume!



The **Plantation Christmas light switch on** will be held on **Tuesday the 3rd December 6pm** at the Hub Hall along with some fun Christmas activities.

The **Upper Achintore Regeneration Group** will be holding their Christmas light switch-on on **Saturday 30th November 6pm**. Come along for some festive fun!

The **Claggan Residents Association** Christmas Light switch-on will be held on **Thursday the 5th December at 6pm**.





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SSAFA & MULTI-AGENCY VETERANS DROP-IN CLINIC 2024

INVERNESS LIBRARY

Farraline Park, Inverness IV1 1NH

Monday 2nd September, Monday 7th October, 4th November, 2nd December

10am -1pm

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk/inverness-shire-western-isles>

We can help with a whole range of things, including:

- Social Isolation
- Housing
- Financial Hardship
- Benefits
- Relationship Breakdowns
- Addiction
- Mental Wellbeing
- Self-Care
- Loneliness
- Employment Transition

Annual Assurance Statement

Tenants were invited to give their feedback & comment on the draft Housing Annual Assurance Statement for 2024. This statement focuses on the key themes of statutory requirements, legislation, charter performance, customer satisfaction and engagement.

The Statement is a regulatory requirement monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator which oversees how social housing providers are regulated and their reporting requirements.

Highland's 2024 Statement confirms Highland Council has achieved compliance with gas servicing and plans for meeting compliance with the electrical inspection programme. It also emphasises the importance the Council places on tenant engagement and adopting a human rights based approach to delivering its housing services.

It will be presented to the Housing & Property Committee for approval in November and will then be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The full Annual Assurance Statement can be viewed on the Highland Council web site at https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council_housing/263/tenant_participation/8



Customer Report

The Summary of our Annual Customer Report from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 can be viewed on the Highland Council website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/336/tenant_participation_documents



If you would like to view a printed copy of the report, please email tenant_participation@highland.gov.uk or call 07557 744413.

DAMP AND MOULD

The Highland Council is committed to working with tenants to resolve any concerns of suspected damp, mould, and condensation within their home.

Damp and mould can cause serious health issues if left untreated and if you see or smell any evidence of this; tenants should ensure they report this to the Council.

To make a report, call the Service Centre on **01349 886602**

The Highland Council is committed to providing an inspection and investigation of your home to help determine the cause and will work with tenants in ensuring repairs are managed quickly.

To make a report, call the Service Centre on
01349 886602

DAMP

- Leaking pipes, water ingress and condensation can lead to excess moisture in a property, which can lead to damp.
- Damp can be a serious problem and it can cause damage to a building's infrastructure.
- Incidences of identified damp are relatively rare. If it is identified, it is important to first establish the cause of the dampness and then remove the source of moisture to prevent the damp from reoccurring.
- Whilst relatively rare, you may notice signs of rising damp in your property from wallpaper or peeling paint on walls.
- Penetrating damp can be caused by water getting into the building, as it needs repair for example in the walls, roofs, gutters, missing tiles or overflow dripping.

PREVENTION

- Report any concerns of damp, mould and condensation quickly to the service centre.
- Wipe away any excess moisture that forms on surfaces, regularly and quickly.
- Open the windows and trickle vents in your property.
- Control the temperature in your home. Heating the property on a low heat consistently can provide better outcomes than short periods of high heat within your property.
- Ensure kitchen and bathroom doors are closed when in use to stop moisture escaping into other rooms that could cause condensation.
- Reduce humidity by using extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom.

CONDENSATION

- Condensation happens when there is too much moisture in the air within the property.
- This is worse when there is little or no air circulation.
- If condensation starts to build up and the water droplets cannot dry off due to insufficient air flow, this can cause mould spores to grow on areas such as furniture, walls, and windowsills.
- In more serious cases condensation can cause black or green mould to form on walls or other surfaces and can damage clothing or furniture.

HELPFUL WEBSITES



HOMEENERGYSCOTLAND.ORG
0808 808 2282
FUNDED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



WWW.EAS.ORG.UK
0141 226 3064



SCARF.ORG.UK
0808 129 0888




ALIENERGY

Argyll, Lomond & the Islands Energy Agency

is here to help this winter

Fuel poverty is affecting a large number of tenants, particularly in remote rural areas of the Highland region, and many tenants are finding it a struggle to afford to adequately heat their homes.

Although the control of energy prices is outwith the control of the Council, we want to help our tenants mitigate the worse impacts of the cost of living crisis. Allenergy's Affordable Warmth Advice Team can access various fuel poverty crisis intervention grants and schemes, alongside support to improve resilience to fuel poverty going forward and assist tenants who are at high risk.



The technology behind the radio-teleswitch (RTS), which controls storage heater charge times for many households, is coming to the end of its operational life and is expected to be switched off in June 2025. This means all meters reliant on the technology will need to be replaced. If you have electric storage heating and are on the Total Heat Total Control tariff, it's likely that your meter will need to be replaced to ensure you still have heating and hot water after the switch off. Allenergy is encouraging anyone who thinks they may have a meter reliant on RTS to contact their supplier to request a meter change. Suppliers may not be able to offer the replacement meter immediately but it's important that your request has been noted.

Allenergy's Affordable Warmth Service can help by

- Assessing the need for immediate crisis intervention:
- Accessing free top-up vouchers for electricity and gas pre-payment meters.
- Accessing funds for bulk heating fuel deliveries-coal, LPG, Oil, bottled gas, wood, etc.
- Advice on using appliances and heating in the home more efficiently to save money.
- Helping to understand energy bills to make sure the charge is accurate.
- Accessing schemes to receive a new energy efficient fridge freezer, cooker or washing machine.
- Showing someone how to read their meter and what the information on there means to them.
- Accessing energy supplier's Warm Home Discount-a £150 credit to their electricity account.
- Help people set up online energy accounts to get better deals with their supplier, submit meter readings online, check and pay energy bills online.
- Help to identify dampness and condensation causes and reduce the effect.
- Support householders to switch tariffs and meters to better suit their property and circumstances.
- Help to identify behaviour change in the home to save energy and money.
- Liaising with suppliers about complaints, fuel debt and payments.
- Raising complaints with the Energy Ombudsman.
- Providing Cosy Kits with hot water bottles, blankets, thermal socks, and power cut information.
- Referrals to specialist financial / debt advice (Citizens Advice Bureau) etc.

You can get help and advice from Allenergy by contacting your housing officer and asking to be referred to Allenergy or you can contact Allenergy directly on **01631 565 183** or email **enquiries@alienergy.org.uk**



Making changes to your property

If you want to alter, improve your home or fittings or fixtures within your property, you must first seek written permission.

The Council will not refuse permission unreasonably and may grant permission with additional conditions.

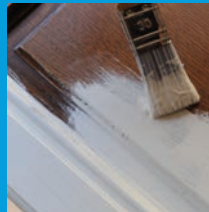
If we refuse a request from you to alter your property, we will tell you the reason why and provide you with a written explanation.

Common alterations below, although not an exhaustive list will require written permission before any alterations can be made.

- Kitchen or bathroom installations
- Double glazing
- Changes to your heating system
- Painting kitchen cupboards

If tenants fail to seek permission for any alterations to their property, the Council have the right to restore the property back to its original state during or at the end of your tenancy, and the Council will charge tenants for this work.

Tenants can visit The Highland Council website and complete a permission to alter form – Your tenancy | Request permission to alter your property (highland.gov.uk)



Repairs



The Council are working to improve the customer experience when contacting the housing repair service.

A recent evaluation of our housing repair calls revealed that a large proportion of the high quantity of calls received were from tenants seeking updates.

A review then took place which resulted in changes being made which placed the customer at the forefront of the service.

Tenants that report emergency and routine repairs, alongside repairs that are carried out by the Council's own in-house trade operatives, will now receive a text or email confirmation of the repair and further updates, including an appointment reminder and when a trades operative is on the way.

These implemented changes brought about better communication with tenants on the progress of works at their homes and significantly reduced the number of missed appointments by 52 % per month.

Tenants are reminded to keep all relevant information up to date to ensure that the Council can contact you.



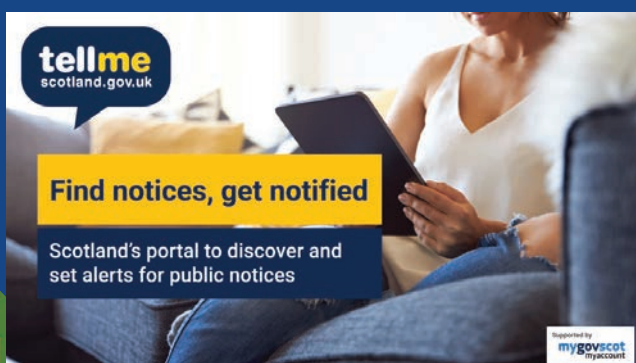
KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE

There's new advice about fireworks on the Council's website at www.highland.gov.uk. It includes advice on new legal powers and help for communities who are having ongoing problems with firework misuse.



Tellmesotland

Tellmesotland is Scotland's national public notice portal, helping councils to publish all their public information notices (PINs) in one location online.



Developed by the Improvement Service, tellmesotland is currently used by Highland Council to publish information on planning applications. Users in the area can sign up to receive text or email notifications when new notices are published, meaning that the user does not need to search the council website for such information.

Tellmesotland makes it easier for the public to access information about their local area and also saves councils money which they would otherwise have to spend on advertising.

You can find out more and sign up for notifications at tellmesotland.gov.uk

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Employability Team Sgioba So-fhastachd



Supporting people:

- Into work
- To develop their skills
- To re-train

Supporting Employers:

- To give someone an opportunity



Please get in touch for an informal chat
Email: Employ.Ability@highland.gov.uk
Call for free on: 0300 303 1570
www.highland.gov.uk/employability

 @HighlandCouncilEmployabilityService  @THC_Employ_Serv

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

The Highland Council Employability Team offers two strands of support for parents:

1. Support for working parents on Universal Credit to access opportunities such as training or qualifications that will potentially lead to career progression or even a career change.
2. Support for parents looking to start work for the first time or return after a career break to help them into employment.

Examples of parents we have helped include:

Parent A

A father with a young family, on Universal Credit and working as a delivery driver with a zero-hours contract received support from the Employability Team to gain a bus driver licence. He now has a full-time contract driving buses locally, resulting in greater job security and an increase in his household income.

Parent B

A single parent was keen to return to work but was struggling to secure childcare for her children. After discussing various options with her Employability Team keyworker, funding was provided for her to complete a nail technician course. Following on from that, business support advice helped to set up her own business working from home, giving her the flexibility to work when she could and still look after her young family.

To find out more about how we can potentially help you, please email us on employability@highland.gov.uk or call us for free on 0300 303 1570

MUTUAL EXCHANGE

Mutual Exchanges can allow people to swap their current home for another social rented tenancy which better suits their needs or is in a preferred area. This can result in a quicker resolution and alternative for people who may need to move to a different area, have outgrown their current home or simply are seeking a change. Given the demands on social housing stock, and to encourage rightsizing and mutual exchanges to take place, we now have an officer in post who will focus on this to make best use of our social housing stock. In certain circumstances we may be able to offer assistance with associated costs.

Christine is an experienced Housing Options Officer, and she will be identifying tenants who may be suitable for a mutual exchange* We hope to be able to achieve some positive outcomes for our tenants through Christine's work. If this is something that is of interest to you, you can contact Christine directly by emailing MEXOfficer@highland.gov.uk.

**if you are looking for a mutual exchange and you have concerns over rent arrears or the condition of your property, please contact Christine.*

THE DIGITAL PHONE SWITCHOVER

What you need to know

What is the digital phone switchover?

The UK's telephone network is changing.

Between now and January 2027 most telephone providers will be moving their customers from old analogue landlines over to new upgraded landline services using digital technology. This means services that rely on the old landline system such as home phones, telecare and health devices will need to be compatible.

If you have any concerns or questions or if your relative uses Telecare, please contact your provider directly.

Further information available from:



<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/consumer-issues/changes-to-landline-telephones/>

<https://www.bt.com/about/all-ip>

Changes to Waste and Recycling Collections

We are introducing changes to your waste and recycling collections by area.

What's changing?

- Your existing 240L green bin* will be used to recycle plastic containers, metal containers and cartons (*some residents may have a grey bin). This will be collected every 4 weeks.
- Your existing 240L blue bin will only be used to recycle paper, card and cardboard. This will be collected every 4 weeks.
- We will be providing you with a new 140L grey bin if you have a food waste collection.

We will be providing you with a new 180L grey bin if you do not have a food waste collection. This will be collected every 2 weeks

- Food waste caddies: where there is a new food waste collection we will be providing you with new food waste caddies. This will be collected weekly.



You will receive a letter ahead of the changes and then an information booklet and your new calendar with the delivery of your new non-recyclable waste bin. Please note flats will be dealt with separately at a later date.

Continue to use your bins as normal until you receive your new bin and instructions.

- Ross and Cromarty has been completed.
- Rural Nairnshire and Nairn has been completed.
- The Inverness area has been completed.
- Badenoch and Strathspey has been completed.

We are currently delivering bins in the Sutherland area. Residents in the above areas can use the new recycling guide contained within this newsletter.

Future phases:

- Caithness: October and November 2024
- Skye and Lochalsh: March 2025
- Lochaber: June 2025

Contact us: For further information please visit www.highland.gov.uk/recycle or email recycle@highland.gov.uk

Bin collection calendars can be accessed online at www.highland.gov.uk/bincalendars



UK Government

Over State Pension age?

You could be entitled to **Pension Credit** and get the **Winter Fuel Payment**.

Check your eligibility for Pension Credit online.

Are you a pensioner on a low income and struggling to pay for your heating or other bills?

Pensioners who currently receive benefits, such as **Pension Credit**, get help towards their heating costs from the **Winter Fuel Payment**.

If you think you may struggle without this Payment and you are not on benefits, contact The Council's Welfare Support Team. They can check and can give you confidential advice about any money matter. People claiming pension credit can claim free TV licence and council tax exemption.

Contact them by emailing: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

Or call **0800 090 1004**.

Are you a Carer?

On November 4th, Carer Support Payment replaces Carer's Allowance. Carer Support Payment is money to help you if you're a carer. You may get paid over £80 a week if you're eligible. Find out more on this web-page at: www.mygov.scot/carers-support-payment



Are you struggling with money issues?



Our last newsletter gave lots of advice about money matters. You can find it on our website at: <https://tinyurl.com/HCtenantnewsletter>

Blue Bin
paper, card & cardboard

Green Bin
plastic containers, metal containers & cartons



plastic bottles



plastic pots, tubs & trays



plastic & metal lids/tops



newspaper & magazines



envelopes & junk mail



shredded paper



tins & cans



clean aluminium foil/trays



paperback books



egg boxes, toilet roll tubes



empty aerosols



metal tins & plastic tubs



food and drink cartons



cards and wrapping paper



cereal boxes & food sleeves



cardboard boxes

Please do **NOT** put these in the green bin

- X paper, card & cardboard
- X takeaway cups
- X plastic film/bags
- X nappies
- X scrap metal
- X sandwich packaging
- X paper towels/blue roll
- X polystyrene
- X unclean or wet items
- X food waste
- X oil or paint cans
- X *glass

Please do **NOT** put these in the blue bin

- X plastics, metals & cartons
- X takeaway cups
- X food waste
- X nappies
- X sandwich packaging
- X tissues/napkins
- X plastic film/bags
- X polystyrene
- X pizza boxes
- X paper towels/blue roll
- X unclean or wet items
- X *glass

*Please take glass to your local mixed glass recycling point.

Useful Phone Numbers

Housing Enquiries / Homeless Service	01349 886602
Out of hours Housing emergency repair / homeless service	01349 886691
Welfare Support Team	0800 090 1004
Universal Credit – open from 8am until 6pm Monday - Friday	0800 328 5644 (phone) 0800 328 1344 (text)
Operations Team (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reductions and other Council Benefits)	0800 393811
Age Scotland	0800 12 44 222
NHS 24 (only to be called if local GP practice is closed)	111
Waste enquiries	01349 886603
Scottish Power	0345 270 0700
GAS (Emergency)	0800 111 999
Home Energy Scotland	0808 808 2282
Police	(Non Emergency) 101
Samaritans	116 123
Social Work - Out of hours	0808 175 3646
Funeral Support Payment (Social Security Scotland)	0800 182 2222
CAB	0800 028 1456

Useful Websites

Health and Care Advice	https://www.nhsinform.scot/
Scottish Gov Cost of Living Support	http://gov.scot/costoflivingsupport
Highland Council Welfare Team – Worrying about Money leaflet	https://bit.ly/3JnUBNp
Citizen Advice Scotland	https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/
Dept of Work and Pensions department-for-work-pensions	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions
Mental Health and Wellbeing	https://breathingspace.scot/how-we-can-help/what-we-do/#
Advice for Refugees and Asylum Seekers	https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/healthcare-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers
Highland Council - Help with Cost of Living	https://www.highland.gov.uk/costofliving
Universal Credit Advice Line	https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk
Money Advice	https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en