

Housing Matters

Taigheadas na Gàidhealtachd

Spring 2025



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Alison Clark – Chief Officer for Housing and Communities

Welcome to the Spring Edition of our Tenants Newsletter

I would like to start by thanking all who responded to our rent consultation back in November and December; those of you who responded through the survey and those who attended the local drop-in sessions held by our Tenant Participation Officers.

Hearing from tenants is vital, both to develop the proposals that come forward for rent setting and then to help elected Members decide by how much rent should increase by.

Over the last year you've told us how important it is that improvements are made to communal areas, that we should improve the energy efficiency of homes through new windows/doors/insulation and that we should improve cyclical maintenance in our estates such as guttering and fencing.

Whilst it is always a difficult decision to raise rents, we can only make the improvements you've requested by investing in the estate - and that is funded by increased rents.

Looking forward, our aim is to develop a longer-term rent strategy which will include what investment is needed to improve and sustain

existing properties and the levels of rent needed to achieve this.

An important strand of this work will be to hear from you on your priorities.

Over the next year we will also be looking at how we deliver repairs across Highland and it will be important to hear from tenants about your experiences of repairs. This will help design how we will deliver repairs services in the future.

The voices and views of tenants are critical in shaping how housing services operate. I would encourage you to get involved in both your local tenant forum and the pan-Highland tenant forum. These are an excellent way to get directly involved in some of policy and service design discussions at an early stage.

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of the newsletter. Please do contact the team if you have any specific requests for items for future editions.

**Alison Clark, Chief Officer
Housing and Communities**



Get involved and have your views heard

Do you have views on the housing service you receive? Would you like to contribute to help us make improvements? We have many ways that you can get involved and we would really like to hear from you. Our regular tenant forum meets every 2 months, the next meeting being on 30th April. The interested tenants discuss and decide the agenda and each meeting we aim to focus on one specific service area such as repairs, improvements, and tenant participation. If you are interested or would like to find out more, please contact the team on tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk or speak to your local officer.

We are always seeking your views! How do you prefer to share your opinions? Would you be interested in looking at engaging through an online platform? If you would like to find out more, **please contact the team on tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk.**

Rent Consultation and Increase

16% of tenants took the opportunity to provide their feedback on the rent consultation. **8% rent increase** was agreed for council homes this year to meet increasing costs and the need to provide future housing options while keeping rent affordable.

The increase will apply to all house rents from **1 April 2025**. Tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit payments will be automatically adjusted. However, if you are in receipt of Universal Credit, you will receive a '**Confirm your housing costs**' reminder. You will need to log on to your journal and add the rent increase details.



Are you worrying about money?

Getting a bit of extra help can take money worries away. Hundreds of people have downloaded the **Worrying About Money? Highland** app onto their phone or tablet. This easy-to-use app helps you find out where, in Highland, you can get help and support with your finances. It's for anyone to use. It's especially helpful if you are struggling to make ends meet.

It advises on different situations too. For example: if your income drops; if your benefits don't cover your living costs; if you want to challenge a decision.

To download the Worrying About Money app, scan the QR codes opposite:

Alternatively, the internet version is available by searching for www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/highland in your browser.



Don't miss out, find out - The Highland Council's Welfare Team

You can get support from THC's Welfare Team on many money matters. For example: checking if you are due money; applying for benefits and preventing or sorting out debt (no matter how much).

Their budgeting support is very popular. It gives you the help, tools, and skills to manage your day-to-day money better.



FREE
DOWNLOAD



THC'S WELFARE TEAM

 0800 090 1004

 welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

 https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/335/community_advice/405/welfare_support

Putting money in your pocket

Stories of tenants helped by our Welfare Support Team

Ina Rears

Poor mental health can make money issues worse. Ina owed us over £3,000. The Welfare Support Team took a long time to get her to speak to them. When they did, they discovered that she had very poor mental health. She had been avoiding letters and attempts at contact.

Her Welfare Adviser helped her to appeal her claim for Universal Credit and claim Discretionary Housing Payment. This paid off her debt. It also stopped our court action - and her court costs.

She gets an extra income of nearly £200 each week - her Adviser found that she was missing out on 5 other benefits. In total, she is now better off by over £11,000 each year.

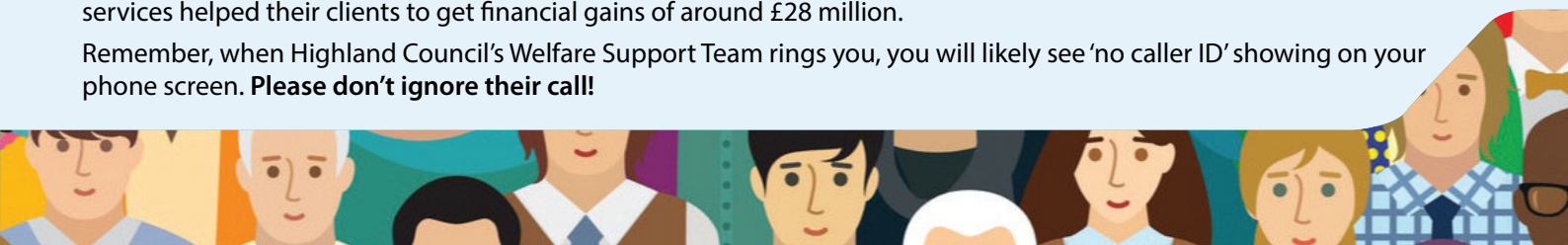
Mr & Ms T Enants

After being referred by their housing officer and speaking to the Welfare Support Adviser, they received a cooker, washing machine, fridge freezer and new sofa funded from the Scottish Welfare Fund.

The Welfare Support Adviser found Ms E had not claimed State Pension. She now gets over £100 each week. The Adviser is appealing to the Pension Service as she may be due 10 years back payment too. They are also being helped to apply for Pension Credit which could enable them to receive Winter Fuel Payment, Warm Home Discount and help with NHS dental treatment, glasses, and transport costs for hospital appointments. So far, they are receiving £5,000 more each year.

Last year over 26,000 people got help from Highland Council's Welfare Support Team and local Citizens Advice. These services helped their clients to get financial gains of around £28 million.

Remember, when Highland Council's Welfare Support Team rings you, you will likely see 'no caller ID' showing on your phone screen. **Please don't ignore their call!**



Are you struggling with a housing issue?

We want to help you to have a problem-free tenancy. Are you struggling with things which are (or may) cause you to have issues with your tenancy? We can help anyone who:

- is having problems managing (e.g. telling us about repairs; dealing with letters; sorting out aspects of their life)
- may struggle to cope when they first move in
- is at risk of losing their home

How to get support

Go to your local housing office or contact your Housing Officer. They can consider what you need and how best to help you. They can arrange for you to get 'Housing Support' for a time if that's what's needed. Just tell us what your issue is, and we will see what help we can give you.

If your Housing Officer thinks you're at high risk of losing your tenancy, they might ask one of our support organisations to reach out to you. They will offer you help and support. They've helped prevent many tenants from court costs, debt, eviction, homelessness – and other troubles and worries. They can help you get help from specialist services if that's what you need. If they contact you, we strongly advise having a conversation with them to find out more.

Want to get in touch with your Housing Office?

You can now email your local office, or get them at our website at www.highland.gov.uk/housingoffices

Remember – you still need to phone us about your repairs. Don't email them! This is to make sure we get the information we need to do your repair work. If you struggle to use a phone, speak to your local housing officer to agree another arrangement.

Email your local office direct!

Badenoch & Strathspey
housing.badenoch@highland.gov.uk

East Caithness (Thurso Office)
housing.thurso@highland.gov.uk

West Caithness (Wick Office)
housing.caithness@highland.gov.uk

Inverness
housing.inverness@highland.gov.uk

Lochaber
housing.lochaber@highland.gov.uk

Nairn
housing.nairn@highland.gov.uk

Ross & Cromarty
housing.ross@highland.gov.uk

Skye, Lochalsh, Wester Ross
housing.skye@highland.gov.uk

Sutherland
housing.sutherland@highland.gov.uk



Supporting people on their journey towards, into and in employment.



Work. Life. Highland aims to help you unlock your work potential.

- If you don't have a job but are keen to get one, their personal support can help you progress towards and into work.
- If you have a job and want to progress further or earn more, they can help you too.

Here's a couple of stories from people who Work. Life. Highland supported. If you know of others, or if you want to add your story, let us know.

Olha's story

After resettling from Ukraine, Olha faced challenges finding work. She received support from Highland Council Employability - attending language lessons, working on her CV, job applications, and interview skills. Her confidence and skills grew.

Olha started work as an Early Learning Support Worker and as a bank worker with NHS Highland. She's built a new career while balancing childcare responsibilities.

Jessica's story

Jessica wanted a career flexible enough to fit with her childcare – and to be financially independent. Getting a startup grant, through Highland's Launch Pad scheme, meant she could run her own nail business.

With funding from the Raised Up North scheme, Jessica trained as a qualified nail technician. Working with a local trainer, she developed her skills. She received expert support from Business Gateway and Highland Council Employability to refine her business plan and secure full funding.

The grant allowed her to invest in the things she needed to offer professional nail services from home – materials, furniture, and advertising. Now, Jessica is building a thriving business she loves.

To find out more, visit the website

www.worklifehighland.co.uk

and get in touch with the team

Advice also available for free by calling **0300 303 1570** or email to employ.ability@highland.gov.uk

Alternatively, ask your housing officer to help you find out more.

Improving Homes

Highland Council set a 5-year budget to invest in making improvement to your homes. The current period runs from 2022 to 2027 and covers things such as replacement windows, doors, kitchens as well as upgrading heating systems and improving the energy efficiency.

Since 2022 the following number of upgrades have been delivered:



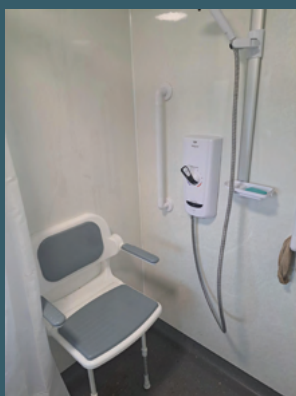
Recladding



Balintore retrofit

In order that we can continue with these works, we contact tenants to seek permission to carry out such improvements. If you receive a notice to opt in to any future improvement works, it is vital that you respond to let us know you agree to any works being carried out.

Additionally Highland Council are looking at other opportunities to maximise the budget available by actively seeking external funding. This has enabled delivery of 141 full house retrofits across the Highlands. By working alongside colleagues in the Climate Change and Energy team, they have been able to tap into ECO4 funding to further support energy efficiency measures to homes.



Sheltered Tenant Dave Paterson from Castletown recently had a new wet room fitted in his property. Dave attends support groups for Parkinson's and through this group he was able to have a chat with an Occupational Therapist about his bathroom not being suitable with his current medical condition.

An assessment was carried out at his home with repositioning and planning of a new wet room to make things much easier for Dave. Dave has said this has made a huge difference to him, giving him lots more room, he also feels much safer with the newly fitted handrails and anti-slip flooring.

Dave advised the standard of work was excellent with the job being completed within a week and is very grateful to the Highland Council and NHS for all the work involved in making this happen.

Electrical Inspections

In Scotland all social landlords are required to carry out electrical inspections every 5 years. We will be continuing to issue work orders to our own electricians and our contractors to complete these cyclical inspections.

The electrician will test and inspect the fixed electrical installations in the property. This will include wiring, plug sockets, light fittings, fuse boxes, electric showers and extractor fans. They can make any immediate hazards safe before they leave and will return if there are longer-term improvements identified (for example, replacing a fuse box).

The average inspection takes approximately 4 hours. During this time the electricity will need to be turned off. This will affect your access to the internet if you rely on a plugged in router.

This is a health and safety requirement and your cooperation is appreciated in providing access for this work.

Heat and Smoke Alarms

In February 2022, the SFRS introduced new standards for heat and smoke alarms in all homes. The Highland Council must be compliant and ensure that all (HC) properties have the following:-

- a smoke alarm in the living room and in circulation spaces such as hallways and landings
- a heat alarm in every kitchen
- all alarms ceiling mounted and interlinked
- a carbon monoxide alarm where there are appliances such as boilers and wood burners

These alarms will be replaced every ten years. If you come across a fault after carrying out your own tests, please report this via the service centre.

Reporting a Repair



Please report a repair as soon as you identify it. Not reporting a repair may result in issues that could have been prevented. We will assess the problem and tell you how long it will take to fix. We recommend you ask for a works number in order to track your report if follow up is necessary.

RESPONSE CATEGORIES



Emergency

We respond immediately and we aim to remove immediate danger to people, avoid serious damage to the property or make the property secure. It may be that initially only enough work is done to make the situation safe.



High priority

We complete the work within 3 working days. We aim to overcome serious inconvenience to the tenant or to prevent further damage or a potential health or security problem.



Routine

Where the fault does not cause serious danger or inconvenience to the occupants or the public, we aim to complete routine repairs within 20 working days. However, if an inspection of the fault is required, then we will aim to arrange an inspection and complete the repair in 30 working days.



Low priority

Some repairs may be allocated to a planned programme of work. You will be told when this happens.

**To report a repair phone the service centre
on 01349 886602**

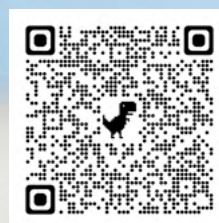
Contents Insurance

As a Highland Council tenant, **you are responsible for providing your own home contents insurance** to cover your personal possessions in case of fire, flood or accident.

There are many different comparison sites on-line to help you consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for in order to help you make an informed decision on the type of policy you need.

You can find out more about home contents insurance from Citizens Advice Scotland by following this link or scanning the QR code:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/consumer/insurance/types-of-insurance/household-contents-insurance/>



ALIENERGY

Argyll, Lomond & the Islands Energy Agency

Affordable Warmth Service

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, especially with energy prices rising yet again.

Although the control of energy prices is out with the control of the Council, we want to help our tenants mitigate the worse impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

ALIenergy's Affordable Warmth Advice Team can access various fuel poverty crisis intervention grants and schemes, alongside a range of advice and support to improve resilience to fuel poverty going forward.

Want to stay on our housing list?

You need to tell us within 7 days of getting your letter.

Have you applied to Highland Housing Register (HHR) for housing?

If so, we write to you once a year to ask you to re-register. When you get it, you need to tell us if you want to stay on our application list. You need to update your information.

We now ask you to let us know within a week of getting your letter. If you don't tell us in time, we will take you off our Highland Housing Register list. Your application will be cancelled. If it is, and you still want to be re-housed, you will need to fill in a new application form to re-apply.

It's quick and easy to tell us using our online re-registration form. It's cheaper than posting it back to us. You can also call your Housing Office.



If you are struggling to afford to heat your home, you are not alone. We may be able to help. Contact ALIenergy for an appointment for free and friendly advice on:

enquiries@alienergy.org.uk
01631 565183

Advice sessions will be by telephone in the first instance. Home visits may be possible.

Ask us about:

Bills—Energy Suppliers—Tariffs
Insulation—Appliances—Prepayment Meters
Smart Meters—Debt Relief—Fuel Vouchers

www.alienergy.org.uk

Scottish Charity Registration **SC0032495**

ALIENERGY



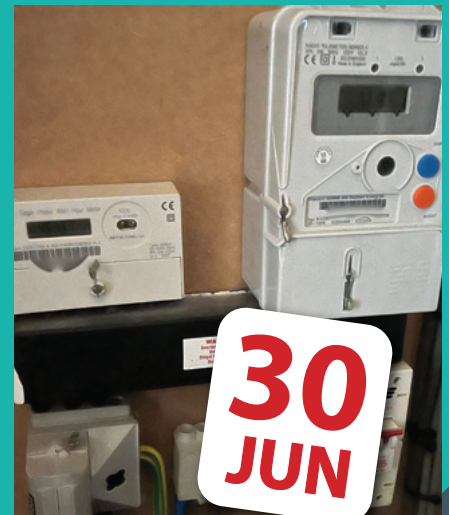
Affordable Warmth Service

Free, confidential and impartial home energy advice and support



A note on the Radio Teleswitch (RTS) switch off

The Radio Teleswitch (RTS) upgrade programme is being managed by all electricity suppliers ahead of the shutdown of the infrastructure which underpins it from 30 June 2025. RTS uses a radio signal to tell some older electricity meters when to switch between peak and off-peak rates. It was designed to support those consumers who use electricity for their heating and/or hot water. This may include those who use electric storage systems, panel heaters or immersion heaters in water tanks. RTS has been in operation for around 40 years and has now reached the end of its operational life. RTS meters should, where possible, now be replaced with smart meters, as they give consumers a wider variety of tariffs and greater control over their usage. All suppliers are contacting their impacted consumers to arrange to change their meter before the RTS shutdown starts on 30 June 2025. If you are unsure whether you have an RTS meter and will be affected, you should check with your supplier.



Area Updates...

Skye and Lochalsh

The Liveras Park Resident Group continues to meet monthly with Councillors and HC officers in attendance. The group have hosted ALIenergy providing information on how to effectively heat their home and the support available, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing home fire safety advice. Attendees had raised the issue of accessibility around the estate and the recent completion of path works and plans for the creation of a new path and further resurfacing, has highlighted to the group how working together as an RTO in collaboration with the Highland Council can achieve positive outcomes. A new grit bin was also secured by the request of the tenants and they have plans for revamping the communal grassed areas. Watch this space!

TPO Catriona spent time contacting tenants in Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin and hosted a drop-in at The Lighthouse Café in Kyle to meet tenants and explain how they can make a difference in their area. The Highland Council waste team were also on hand to answer any questions regarding the new bin regime being rolled out in the area soon.



Caithness and Sutherland

TPO Leona Geddes continues to hold regular drop in throughout Caithness and Sutherland so keep an eye out for them! Leona also helps to facilitate local clean ups and coffee mornings as a chance for tenants to come together and make a difference in their community.

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP CASTLETOWN

LITTER PICKING
WEEDING
IDENTIFYING AREAS THAT REQUIRE REPORTING/REPAIRS

9TH APRIL 2025
11:30AM - 2PM
MEETING OUTSIDE THE YOUTH CLUB

Refreshments provided
Everyone welcome
Together we can make a difference

TENANT PARTICIPATION OFFICER LEONA GEDDES WILL BE JOINING US ON THE DAY - AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO CHAT WITH HER ABOUT SUPPORT AVAILABLE AND HOW TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN MAKING A CHANGE AS A HIGHLAND COUNCIL TENANT

WICK INTERESTED TENANTS

Pop into the PPP, Huddart Street, Wick for a cuppa and a chat with Leona Geddes, Tenant Participation Officer

Tuesday 22nd of April
10:30am - 12pm
Everyone welcome!

COME ALONG FOR A CHAT

with
Leona Geddes
Tenant Participation Officer

On
Wednesday 7th May
10:30am - 12:30pm
In Golspie Service Point, Main Street, Golspie

Everybody is welcome!

For more information contact Leona on 07785 932517 or email Leona.geddes@highland.gov.uk

Halkirk Sheltered Tenant Mrs Barbara Van Rooyen was one of the winners of a £50 voucher following completion of the recent rent consultation survey. Barbara was presented with the voucher by Leona. Barbara was delighted to have won the voucher and it was a lovely surprise for her.

Lauren Taylor from Lochaber was another winner and presented with her voucher by TPO Karin McKay.

Balintore Housing Drop In

Come and speak to your Housing Officer or Tenant Participation Officer who will be available to discuss tenancy issues or listen to other concerns or comments about the local area.

First Thursday of the month between 11am-1pm at the Scout Hut.



Nairn

Queenspark Residents' Group organised a family day trip to Landmark Forest Adventure Park for residents on Saturday 15th of February. Everyone enjoyed exploring the thrilling attractions that the park offers and stopped for lunch in the Forester Cafe. Lots of lovely memories made and kids fast asleep on the bus on the way home!

On the 25th January, the group successfully held a well-attended Burns Night Coffee morning at the Nairn British Legion. The group would like to thank everyone who turned up on the day, even though it was wild and

very windy, and all those who donated in any way to the fantastic sum raised of **£737.20!** Many thanks.

Dates for your calendar:

- QPRG monthly car boot sale in Nairn Sainsburys car park begin on **Sunday 4th of April** and every first Sunday thereafter.
- QPRG's Easter Extravaganza event will be held on **Sunday 20th of April, 10am-12pm** at the John Street Car Park.

Inverness and surrounding areas

After receiving feedback from tenants and housing officers, Highland Council have started to erect bike pods at flats in the **Raigmore** area. The pods can hold up to six bikes and provide alternative secure storage for tenants' bikes allowing stairwells to be left clear and safe and encouraging active travel.



Raigmore Community Residents Association have been working over winter on the food forest building up beds and preparing the ground. They received 400 trees which they started planting around all the growing spaces. The growing project at King Duncan is coming together nicely with raised beds and a donation of water butts. The group will be holding a litter pick event on **Saturday 12th April** where Tenant Participation will attend and provide safety equipment and refreshments for volunteers.



In **Merkinch and Hilton** multi-agency events were run by the Police at the community centres. Highland Council attended with Trading Standards, the Welfare Team and the local housing teams, alongside other services from NHS, Police Scotland, charities, and the fire brigade. These events will be continuing into 2025 and going to other areas with Raigmore being next on the calendar.

Lochaber



Caol Resident Group held another very successful Christmas event. Becky McCook, Caol Residents Group Chairperson, wrote: "I would like to say thank you to everyone that came, the performers, the stall holders, volunteers, Maddie for entertaining the kids, Nevis radio for the music, Sandra for the use of the community centre, the fire brigade for leading Santa and all his elves around all the trees in Caol and Gary and Gerry for driving Santa and blasting out the music, You were all amazing! I would like to make a special thanks to all our young helpers - Josh, Lauren, Candice, Bailey, Lily, Dannie & Mili.

My final thank you goes to the Caol Residents Group and our TPO Karin McKay who organised the whole event. Well done and thank-you to each and every one of you for giving up so much of your time for our community."



The **Caol Resident Group** meet on the **second Tuesday of every month at 6.30pm**. The next meeting is their AGM on the 8th April. New members and volunteers are always welcome.



Plantation Community Association help to run the community larder helping those in need and combating food waste. The PCA have an Easter Event for **Easter Sunday 12.30pm to 2pm** at the Hall- pop in for a cuppa and a hot cross bun, an Easter egg and children's activities.



Upper Achintore Regeneration Group also held their fun-filled Christmas light switch on with carols, a visit from Santa and his Elves.



Three new benches have been installed in **Upper Actintore** for people to sit and enjoy the view or watch their children play on the Ross Place kick-about pitch. The benches have been provided by UARG and were installed for by the Highland Council amenities team. The UARG meet **every third Monday of the Month** online on Teams. If you would like to join, please get in touch via their Facebook page or email **UARG19@gmail.com**.

Tenant Drop-ins will be taking place in **Kinlochleven Leven Centre • 11am-2pm**
Wed 16th April & Wed 21st May
Come along and meet housing officers for a chat!



The **CRA** are taking measures to try and combat dog fouling: Lynda MacPhee writes: *"I'm sure some folk would have noticed the addition of poo bags on a lot of lampposts around Claggan and the CRA Notice boards, we are hoping this will help in the plight to get rid of dog poo around residential paths and public areas."*

We know dog fouling is an issue in many areas. You can find the **Clean Up Scotland** information leaflet, which may be useful in informing members of your community, by scanning the QR code: https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/6374/cleaning_up_after_your_dog.pdf?



Claggan Residents Association have an Easter event planned for **Easter Sunday Ardnevis Square** **Sunday 20th April - 2pm to 3pm** where kids can meet the Easter bunnies and receive an Easter egg with prizes for best Easter bonnet or outfit.

Plans are coming together for a **Lochaber Area Tenant Forum**, the first of which is planned to take place in April. If you would be interested in attending or finding out more, please contact TPO **Karin McKay** on **07785 477 696** or email **Karin.McKay@highland.gov.uk**.

You can catch Karin on Nevis radio's **Community Connections** with Jo from **Highland Senior Citizens Network** on the **first Friday of the month** airing from **11 to 1pm** - send in your requests for a cheery tune!



Help HSCN celebrate 30 Years as the Voice of Older People in Highland...



This year Highland Senior Citizens Network celebrates 30 years as an independent Highland-wide network of local voices representing the interests of more than 92,000 people in Highland aged 55+. Raising issues at local, regional, and national level that matter to older people. Enabling the voice of older people to be heard wherever decisions are being made that affect our lives. Supporting older people to be visible and valued in our communities. Celebrating the contribution of older people.

Highland Senior Citizens Network offers connections for older people via:

- regular news-sheets, sharing news, information, activities, and opportunities
- weekly virtual 'Brew and a Bletcher' chat on Thursday mornings 11am, hosted by a HSCN member (contact hscn@hotmail.co.uk for the Zoom link)
- monthly virtual Tea-break, with an invited guest, on Thursday morning at 11am (contact anne-hscn@outlook.com for the Zoom link)
- monthly radio show on Nevis Radio along with Highland Tenant Participation
- local area Get-togethers, hoping this year to include 30th Birthday celebrations, bringing together older people and organisations offering connections, services, and activities

Due to only being able to secure partial NHS Highland funding for the forthcoming financial year, and no further

funding beyond, the two co-ordinator posts will stop in the summer resulting in a change to HSCN activities.

HSCN will continue beyond their leaving, with the trustees seeking alternative funding to support a sustainable future for the organisation and continuing to represent older people across the Highlands in line with the resources available. However, the services they will be able to offer will be greatly modified.

It is more important than ever that if you would like to be involved in any activities, or to show your support to HSCN generally, you become a member. FREE membership of HSCN is open to individuals and groups supportive of our aims.

Contact HSCN: Whether you want to join us, or just to find out more, please do get in touch!

T: 07716 884989 | E: hscn@hotmail.co.uk

W: www.hscn.co.uk

Highland Senior Citizens Network

Box 301, 8 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EA

Anne McDonald:

Caithness, Sutherland, Ross-shire, Inverness

E: anne-hscn@outlook.com | M: 07933 653313

Jo Cowan:

Badenoch & Strathspey, Skye & Lochalsh, Lochaber, Inverness

E: jo-hscn@outlook.com | M: 07933 653585

Helping communities to grow stronger – sharing news

Want to find out what's going on? Sign up for Highland's Community Briefings!

It's easier to make a difference in your community when you know about local events and local opportunities. Highland's Community Briefings includes information on local events, news and opportunities for support or funding. It gets emailed to you every month once you sign up. Brought together by Highland's Community Planning Partnership, it's aimed at anyone involved with a community-based group.

You can use it to support your activities in your community. Or use it to help spread the word about what's happening. Over 400 people are already signed up.



If you represent a resident or community group, we highly recommend that you sign up to the briefing by scanning this QR code.



Alternatively follow this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/rSS3hXbGTa>

Want to find out more about Highland's Community Planning Partnership and what this looks like in your area? Find out more at www.highlandcpp.org.uk

The importance of keeping gardens tidy



Tenants must take reasonable care to ensure that their garden areas are kept tidy and maintained in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement. This is not only for appearance, but it also plays an important role in deterring pests such as rats, mice and gulls.

Overgrown areas, for example, at the foot of the garden or behind sheds, can provide cover attractive to vermin. If any food waste or empty food containers are left in the garden, they could attract mice and rats as well as flies. This would be the case even if the waste is bagged, therefore, all such material should be kept in the wheeled bin before collection.

Feeding the birds can also attract pests, however, it should not be an issue provided it is done in a responsible manner, aimed at small garden birds only and preferably using bird feeders to contain the food and prevent access by larger birds. Putting food out indiscriminately on the ground or other surfaces will likely attract unwanted birds such as seagulls and potentially rats and mice. Even bird tables can be an issue if they are big enough to allow large birds access to the food. If vermin has already been detected in your area, we may ask that you stop feeding the birds whilst the issue persists.

If you own a pet, any waste should be disposed of responsibly. If fouling is allowed to accumulate it could present a Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and would be in contravention of the Tenancy Agreement.

Maintaining a tidy garden can also boost mental health and contribute to happy neighbourhoods.

Health outcomes associated with exposure to greenspace include lower heart rate, increased physical activity, improved mental health and lower mortality rates.



Green Health Week is taking place **Saturday 3rd - Sunday 11th May 2025** under the theme of **"Nature is for Everyone"**. Look out for activities happening near you! To find out more about how nature and gardening can help promote your wellbeing, visit the **Think Health Think Nature** website <https://www.thinkhealththinknature.scot/>.



Financial Harm

The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland have put together a toolkit as a self-help guide to empower our communities to avoid scams and unwanted nuisance sales contact.



You can find the Financial Harm Toolkit at www.highland.gov.uk/scamprevention



scan me

TENANTS WARNED AGAINST COLD CALLERS OFFERING HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Tenants are being encouraged by Trading Standards to be cautious of unexpected phone calls and home visits by callers offering to do home improvements.

The warning follows a rise in reported complaints related to poor quality and overpriced roof repairs and calls claiming to be Highland Council's repairs team requesting to check utilities connections.

Unsolicited phone calls and knocks at your door can be annoying, but persistent or malicious calls and visits can be unpleasant and even intimidating.

If you are unsure about a caller or visitor, decline to let them in or provide personal information.

If you need to get work done at home, always contact the council in the first instance.

Rogue traders can be reported to Trading Standards through Advice Direct Scotland on 08081646000 or Police Scotland on 101.



Asbestos is a natural mineral which was used in building materials for many years. The Highland Council, in common with other local authorities owns houses which may contain these materials. Its widespread use in building materials stopped in the mid 1980's when research and information connected working with asbestos and exposure to asbestos dust with certain chest and lung diseases. Asbestos is only a health hazard if it is damaged or disturbed and the fibres are released into the air and inhaled.

If you live in a communal flatted block, the Council are commissioning visual surveys of communal areas to make sure the any asbestos present is in a safe condition. It is not anticipated that there are any issues but maintaining this survey information is a requirement for owners of flatted blocks.

Asbestos is most commonly found in:

- Boards lining heating cupboards and heating cupboard doors.
- In the insulation of older models of storage heaters and warm air units.
- Heating and ventilation flues.
- Protective pads around behind or beneath cookers, boilers, or electric consumer units.
- Boards forming enclosures to vertical pipe work.
- Textured coatings on ceilings – some types of Artex.
- Some types of older vinyl floor tiles.
- Externally in parts of screen panels, fascia boards, soffits and as some rainwater gutters and pipes.
- In the material used on the roof and walls of some stores, sheds and garages.

Most asbestos in the home poses no risk to the people who live there. Asbestos that is in good condition or painted, covered by other materials or enclosed in ducts, cupboards etc. poses no risk if it is left alone.



No asbestos should be found in buildings constructed after the year 2000.

The Highland Council are carrying out asbestos surveys:

- Before we do any major works in our houses e.g. installing new heating.
- If we suspect that there is asbestos which may be disturbed when we go to do repairs.
- In common areas of blocks of flats.

After receiving a survey result the Council will take one of these three actions depending on the result:

- If the type of asbestos, location or condition has a high risk, we will have it removed safely by contractors with a special licence.
- With some asbestos, sealing or bonding will reduce or stop the release of fibres. In this case we will seal the asbestos and make sure that it is regularly monitored.
- If the asbestos is in a good condition, is sealed and not likely to be disturbed we will take no action but make sure that it is regularly monitored.



If you are doing work in your home and you think there may be asbestos in the area you are working on, contact the Service Centre on 01349 886602.

Changes to Waste and Recycling Collections

We are continuing our programme of improvements to waste and recycling collections across Highland. The roll out of the new non-recyclable bins and recycling collections have been introduced in phases to communities. Ross and Cromarty, Nairn, Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey, Sutherland, and Caithness were successfully completed in 2024. The new service is now under way in some areas of Skye and Lochalsh, and Lochaber will follow in Summer 2025.

What's changing?

- Your existing 240L green bin* is now used to recycle plastic containers, metal containers and cartons (*some residents may have a grey bin). This is collected every 4 weeks.
- Your existing 240L blue bin is now used to recycle paper, card and cardboard. This is collected every 4 weeks.
- A new grey bin is being provided to all householders which is collected every 2 weeks.
- Food waste caddies: where there is a new food waste collection we are providing you with new food waste caddies. Food waste is collected weekly.

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

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



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.

Residents in all areas other than Lochaber can use the new recycling guide contained within this newsletter. Residents in Lochaber should continue to use the blue bin to recycle all clean paper & cardboard, plastic bottles, plastic food pots, tubs and trays, tins and cans, aerosols, clean aluminium foil and foil trays, and food and drink cartons.

What happens to the recycling?

Your recycling is collected and bulked up in separate bays at the nearest Waste Transfer Station.

The paper & card is then transported to Glasgow to Smurfit Westrock's recycling facility where it is graded and baled, before being sent onto a paper mill within the UK for processing into brown paper reels. This is then manufactured into new high quality consumer packaging products.

The mixed plastic and metal containers are transported to Wyllie's Recycling Ltd, Materials Recovery Facility in Perth which is specifically designed to sort and separate the mixed plastic and metal containers into various material streams. The separated materials such as Aluminium, steel and HDPE plastic and PET plastic are baled and then transported to UK manufacturers and made into new containers. The clear HDPE plastic is used to make new milk bottles and clear PET plastic is used to make new water bottles, all within the UK.

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

GARDEN COMPETITION



As housing officers have been out and about visiting tenants across the Highlands, they have come across some beautiful gardens! We are now on the lookout for the best Highland Council Tenant's Garden! There will be a **first prize of £50 worth of garden centre vouchers** for the best garden and a runner up prize of a useful gardening hamper. All you have to do is send in a clear photo of your garden, or it could be a neighbour's garden that you want to nominate (with their permission of course!). The garden can be a traditional or non-traditional garden or an edible garden or allotment - anything goes!

Send your photos via email to **tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk** or contact your local TPO if you would like them to take the picture for you.

The **closing date for this competition will be 18th August 2025** and the winning garden will be picked by Chief Officer of Housing and Communities, Alison Clark.



Kim Kennedy, the recipient of first prize last time the competition was run.



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	(phone) 0800 328 5644
NHS 24 (only to be called if local GP practice is closed)	111
Waste enquiries	01349 886603
Power Cut?	105
GAS (Emergency)	0800 111 999
Police	(Non Emergency) 101
Samaritans	116 123
Social Work-out of hours	0808 175 3646
Scottish Citizens Advice Helpline	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/
Dept of Work and Pensions	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions
Advice for Refugees and Asylum Seekers	https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/healthcare-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers
Universal Credit advice	https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk
Money Advice	https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en

Your Local Tenant Participation Officers

Area	TPO	Email address	Telephone no
Caithness & Sutherland	Leona Geddes	leona.geddes@highland.gov.uk	07785 932517
Easter Ross	Suzy Boardman	suzy.boardman@highland.gov.uk	07557 744413
Nairn, Mid & West Ross	Justyna Leslie	justyna.leslie@highland.gov.uk	07767 162258
Skye & Lochalsh	Catriona Sutherland	catriona.sutherland1@highland.gov.uk	07867 269265
Lochaber	Karin McKay	karin.mckay@highland.gov.uk	07785 477696
Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey	Kerri Macdonald	kerri.macdonald@highland.gov.uk	07774 337689