



Luchd-màil na Gàidhealtachd

FIOSRACHADH

Highland Tenant UPDATE

*WELCOME
FAILTE*



Welcome to the latest edition of Highland Tenant Update. We hope you like our new format. This edition's photographic banner is courtesy of Plantation Community Association. Front page good news is the return of council house building to Highland after a generation. Inside, you can read about the plan to review how rents are set, about how well we are performing with our key landlord services, about the intention to make a renewed application to Scottish Government for Highland's council housing to have 'Pressured Area Status', and much more besides. We also report on interesting community projects with a sustainability theme, as well as some wider initiatives aimed at promoting recycling and saving energy and money. I hope that you enjoy this Update.



Margaret Davidson

Councillor Margaret Davidson
Chairman of Housing and Social Work Committee

COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING - GOOD NEWS!

TOGAIL THAIGHEAN COMHAIRLE ÙR - DEAGH SGEUL!

The Scottish Government recently announced that it planned to invest £25million to encourage new council house building and Highland Council successfully submitted a bid for funding of £1¼m to support the construction of 51 houses. As part of the bid £1m will be provided from the Council's landbank fund and £1m from the Council's Housing Revenue Account as the Council's contribution as well as additional prudential borrowing of around £2½m.

The following sites were identified on which a total of 51 units could be provided. These are either Council owned sites or Highland Housing Alliance sites:

Location	Units
Caol	8
Dingwall North	10
Invergordon, old golf course	12
Nairn, Corsee	9
Scotsburn Road, Tain	12

All of the houses will be comparable to the new energy efficient homes recently developed by the Highland Housing Alliance at Golspie, Drumbuie (pictured right).

In February 2010 the Scottish Government announced a further round of council house building funds with a further £25million to be made available nationally under the initiative, with the maximum level of subsidy per house increased from £25,000 to £30,000.

Following this announcement the Highland Council submitted a bid for funding of £1.65m to support the construction of a further 55 houses. As part of the bid an estimated £1million will be provided from the Council's landbank fund in 2011/12 and £1million from the Council's

Housing Revenue Account as the Council's contribution, as well as additional prudential borrowing of around £3¼m.

The outcome of this second bid for funding is awaited, with a decision expected in June 2010. The following sites were identified on which a total of 55 units could be provided. Again, these are either Council owned sites or Highland Housing Alliance sites:

Location	Units
Assynt Road, Inverness	12
Joss Street, Invergordon	12
Rowan House, Fort William	5
Nairn Road, Ardersier	8
Strathpeffer	8
Portree	6
Kingussie	4

An update on the Highland Council's second bid for funding will be available when the outcome is announced.



*Remember to Recycle!
Cuimhnich Ath-chuartachadh*

Remember to recycle! We need everybody in Highland to remember to recycle more items, more often.

Kerbside recycling - most households now have recycling collected from their house so please use these facilities – if you don't have a recycling box or bin please contact us on 01349 868439.

Recycling Points – use these to recycle all your glass bottles and jars and please don't forget those pasta sauce jars! Many Recycling Points also have banks that accept clothes, blankets, towels, sheets and shoes.

Recycling Centres – take large household items to your local Recycling Centre. Any unwanted electrical appliance such as irons, hairdryers, TV's or washing machines can all be taken along to your local Recycling Centre for recycling so don't bin them - bring them!

Want to save £430 a year? The average Scottish household throws away £430 of food waste every year. That's about a third of all the waste that is in householders bins. You can save loads of money by following these handy tips:

- Pay more attention to the dates on food in supermarkets.
- Check your fridge for anything that needs to be used up.
- Freeze food that you aren't going to use straight away.
- Save time and money by planning meals and make a shopping list.

Got your eye on a new one? There are furniture reuse projects across Highland that need your unwanted furniture and household items. These items will be passed onto those in need or used to raise money for charity.

For more information please contact your local furniture reuse project:

Newstart: 01463 715615
 Blythswood: 01349 830777
 Homeaid Caithness & Sutherland: 01847 891300
 Am Fasgadh: 01478 613533
 Archaracle Community Company: 01967 431798



For more information about recycling and waste minimisation:
 Call: 01349 868439
 email: recycle@highland.gov.uk
 or visit: www.highland.gov.uk/recycle

*Are You Affected by Antisocial Behaviour?
A bheil Giùlan Mì-shòisealta a' toirt buaidh ort?*

Following consultation on the Antisocial Behaviour Policy some minor amendments were made to the wording of the document and the Policy is now available on the Highland Council's website: www.highland.gov.uk/anti-socialbehaviour

If you are affected by antisocial behaviour you should report incidents to your local Housing & Property Office and any criminal activity should be reported to the Police.

If you have suffered as a result of criminal behaviour, Victim Support Scotland provides a free confidential service to help you cope with the aftermath of this experience: www.victimsupporthighland.com/



If you have been affected by a Hate incident, which you believe to be motivated by your age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or social background you can report this through this website: www.hatefreehighland.org/

Contact Details



The Highland Council, 9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday (excluding office holidays)
 Tel: 01349 886606



Northern Constabulary 24 hour
 Tel: 0845 6005703



*Housing Highland's Communities
Taighean do Choimhearsnachdan
na Gàidhealtachd*

A plan for dealing with Highland's housing issues over the next 5 years has been set in place by The Highland Council. Highland's Housing Strategy 2010 - 2015 sets out how we, with our partners, will tackle challenges such as the lack of affordable housing.

It describes what we want to see achieved for people, whether they are renting from the Council or a housing association; renting privately; home owners or don't have a home of their own. It shows what we will do to make these changes happen including how we will use our resources.

Highland's Housing Strategy is available from The Highland Council's web-site at: www.highland.gov.uk or by contacting the Council.

You can also get a short leaflet version which summarises the main issues and commitments.

*Repairs & Maintenance Focus Group
Buidheann Amais Chàraidhean
& Ghleidhidhean*

Delegates of the Tenant Conference in November 2009 were invited to take part in the Tenant Repairs Focus Group. This met in March and April 2010 to look at how tenant opinion and ideas can improve the housing repairs service.

One of the 7 tenant members is Nigel Slater from Halkirk, Caithness. 'Repairs and Maintenance has always been one of the most important issues for Highland tenants. The Tenant Repairs Focus Group gives me the opportunity to put across my views and represent tenants on how the housing response repairs service can improve.'



Housing & Property Service Plan

Plana na Seirbheis Taigheadais & Seilbh

Each year the Housing and Property Service produces a Service Plan. This is a document which outlines how we will contribute to the delivery of the commitments of the Programme of the Highland Council for which the Housing and Property Service has either a lead or supporting role. The plan details what we will do to improve the quality of the service we deliver, while at the same time ensuring we meet our statutory requirements. The plan is approved by the Housing and Social Work Committee in May each year and is monitored regularly to ensure progress is made against the actions.

The plan can be seen on-line at:
www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourservices/housingandpropertyservices/

or by contacting:
 Caroline Campbell, Business Support Manager
 Tel: 01463 702610
 email: caroline.campbell@highland.gov.uk

EASING THE SHORTAGE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING A' TOIRT FAOCHADH DON GHAINNEAD THAIGHEAN AIG PRÌS RUIG SINNEACH

The shortage of affordable housing continues to affect many of Highland's communities. Although many new housing association houses have been built recently it has not been enough to replace the housing that has been sold through the 'Right to Buy' (RTB). Communities consistently tell us that tackling this shortage should be one of the Council's highest priorities. We are doing a number of things to ease Highland's housing problems including building new Council housing and continuing to help housing associations to provide more houses too. Over the last 6 years 2,000 new affordable houses have been built in communities across Highland – nearly 1,400 of them for housing association rent and nearly 700 for low cost homeownership, mainly for 1st time buyers.

To prevent the situation getting worse, the Right to Buy (RTB) has been suspended in many areas of the Highlands. This means that tenants who moved into their homes on or after 30 September 2002 in communities designated as "Pressured Areas" are unable to buy their house. These are all tenants who have the Modernised 'Right to Buy'. This includes tenants who moved through a housing transfer, mutual exchange and children who have succeeded to their tenancy.

Several other Scottish Councils have also suspended the Right to Buy (RTB) in their areas. A Bill is currently going through Parliament which aims to end the RTB for all new tenants.



Extending Highland's Pressured Area Status Designation

Because Highland's housing shortages are continuing, we are proposing to continue to suspend the Right to Buy for another 5 years. We are also proposing to extend the RTB suspension to other communities where there are affordable housing shortages which will be made worse if more houses are sold through the Right to Buy. This includes the whole of the Inverness area, East Ross, Lochaber and Sutherland. It also includes some Caithness communities.

Tenants whose tenancy in their current home started before 30 September 2002 and those who don't live in designated "Pressured Areas" will still have an active RTB.

When we consulted people as part of developing Highland's Housing Strategy, there was widespread agreement for this approach.

We will be applying to the Scottish Government with our proposals in the summer. Watch out for more information about this on the Council's website, in local newspapers and in the next Tenant Newsletter.

We recognise that many tenants want to own their own home in the future and we are happy to support them to do this. There are a number of ways that we can help you, as a Council tenant, to buy a house at an affordable price. Highland's tenants have priority to buy low cost ownership housing through the LIFT initiative. These houses are available to buy right across Highland at discounted prices from housing associations such as Albyn Housing Society. Speak to your local housing office or housing association, if you want to find out more. The article on page 8 tells you more including where these houses are being built.

Give Us Your Views

We want to consult with you more on these proposals.

If you have any questions on our forthcoming "Pressured Area" application or would like to give us your views, please:

email: housing&property@highland.gov.uk

contact your local housing office,

or write to: **The Highland Council Housing and Property Service**
Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

More information on Pressured Area Status is on the Council's web-site:
www.highland.gov.uk



Make Your Voice Heard in Highland Council Rents Review Faigh Èisteachd ann an Ath- bhreithneachadh Màil Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

We are about to look at our rents and the way in which the rent level for each different property type and size is calculated. The rents we currently charge vary a lot across the Council area and do not always reflect the property size or condition. This means that tenants in similar properties are not always paying similar rents.

We want to develop a new system which is fair, consistent across all of Highland, understandable to everyone, and takes into account the property type and size. We need to make sure that rents remain affordable for tenants, but because housing services are funded from rental income we also need to ensure that rents charged bring in enough income to pay for service costs - for instance the cost of day to day repairs and maintenance on your homes.

We want to ensure that you are fully informed about this important review and have a chance to comment on it. Over the coming months we will be consulting all tenants and tenants groups through a variety of methods. We want to consult with people in ways that suit them. So at this stage we would like you to indicate whether you would like to be involved in more detailed discussion / consultation on proposals. This will allow us to involve tenants who have an interest. We will keep all tenants informed through further newsletters / general communication.

If you are interested in taking part in more detailed consultation on the rent structure, or simply want more information about this issue, please contact:

Shirley Mackenzie

Tel: 01463 702865

e-mail: shirley.mackenzie@highland.gov.uk

HHR Allocations Policy Poileasaidh Shònrachaidhean HHR

How we responded to your comments on changes to the Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy.

The Housing & Social Work Committee agreed some proposed changes to how houses are allocated through the Highland Housing Register at a meeting in November 2009. Since then there has been an extensive consultation on these changes.

Information on the responses to the consultation and how these were taken account of in the policy development process, see the Highland Council's Web-site: www.highland.gov.uk/????????????????

The Housing & Social Work Committee agreed the final policy at its meeting on 19 May 2010. You can view papers to any strategic council committee, including Housing & Social Work Committee at 'Minutes and Agendas' on the homepage of the council's web-site: www.highland.gov.uk. The partner organisations in Highland Housing Register are progressing approval to the changes through their own Boards of Management and it is expected that changes will be implemented later on this year.

For Further information or enquiries Tel: 01463 702863 or email us by using our contact form available at: www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/contact?id=housingandproperty



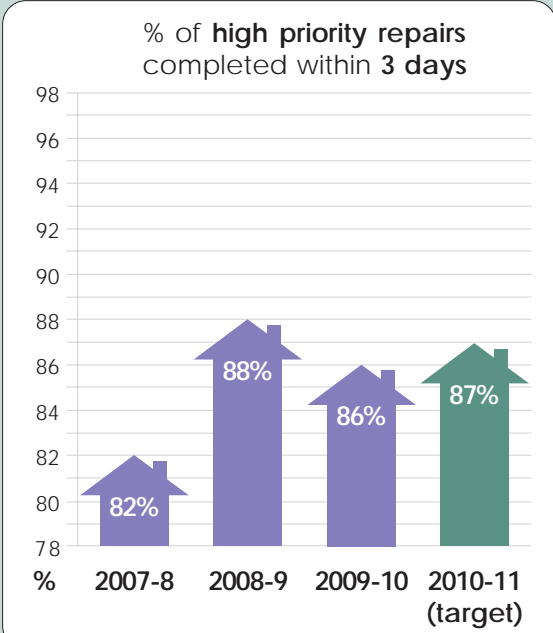
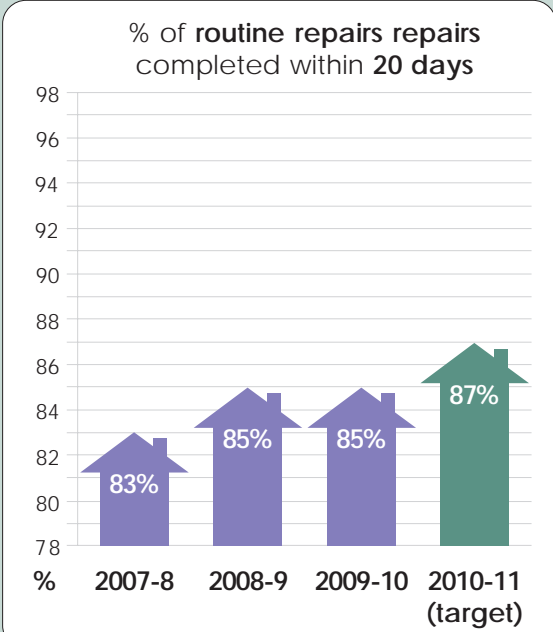
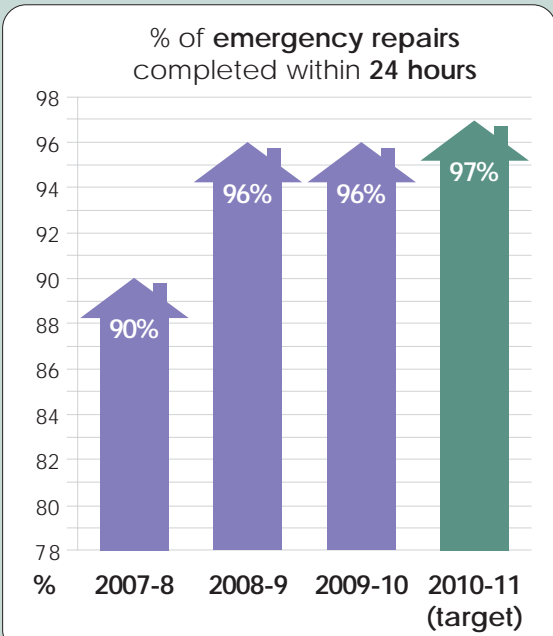
Annual Performance Report

Aithisg Coileanaidh Bliadhnail

Each year the Council returns information on its performance to Audit Scotland. This performance information is collected and reported for all councils in Scotland. The following tables show how we have performed over the last 3 years, and our performance compared to the national average for 2008/2009. (We cannot report the national averages for 2009/2010 yet, because the figures for all councils are not published until later in the year).

Repairs To Council Houses

The Council has 3 main categories for repairs. We carried out around 55,000 individual repairs last year. The percentage of day to day repairs carried out on time against each category is shown here.



These tables show that we are continuing to provide a high proportion of our repairs on time, with a continuing improvement in our performance on emergency repairs. For emergency repairs the national average in 2008-09 was 91%.

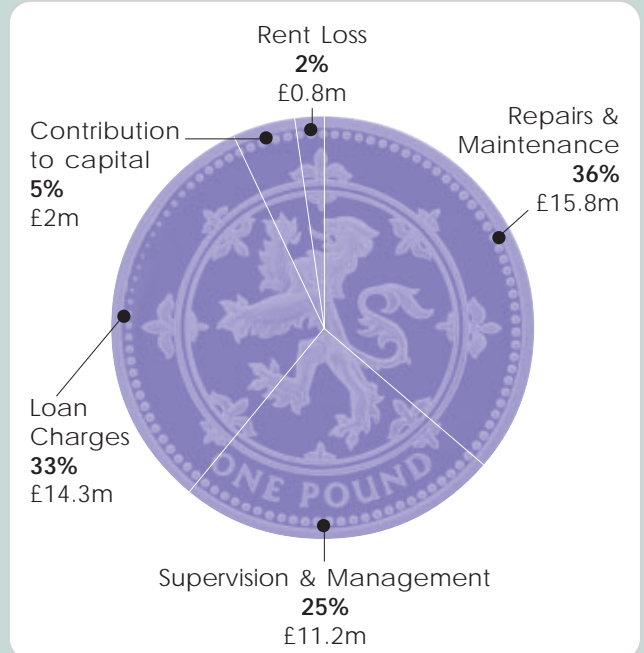
How Your Rent Is Spent

The rents you pay cover the costs of providing housing services to Council tenants. This year we expect that 36% of rental income will be used to fund day to day repairs to council housing, and 25% to cover the management costs of the service, including staff and other service costs.

Loan charges, or the amount the Council pays in relation to its housing debt, will be around 33% of rental income.

We are expecting to use around 5% of rent income to fund the council's housing improvement programme, which aims to bring all our housing up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

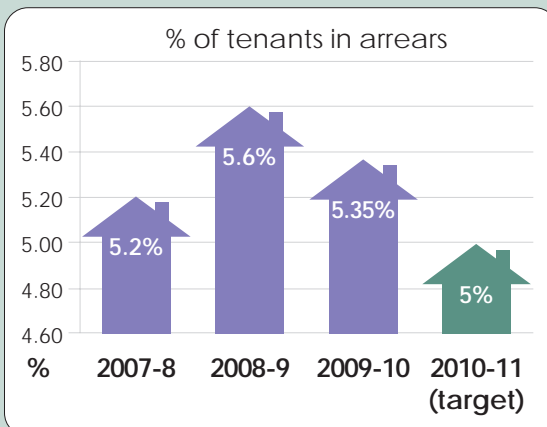
Around 2% of rent income is required to cover rent loss due to empty homes.



Managing Rent Arrears

The following table gives information on our performance in managing rent arrears.

The table shows that over the last 3 years the percentage of tenants with arrears over £250 or over 13 weeks rent has remained around the same level (around 5%) but the arrears as a percentage of the total rent due has been reducing.

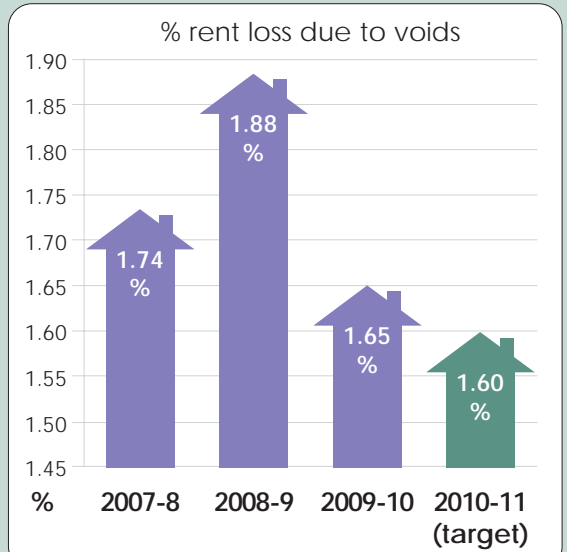


Nationally 4.4% of tenants had arrears of over £250 and arrears accounted for 6% of net rent due in 2008/9.

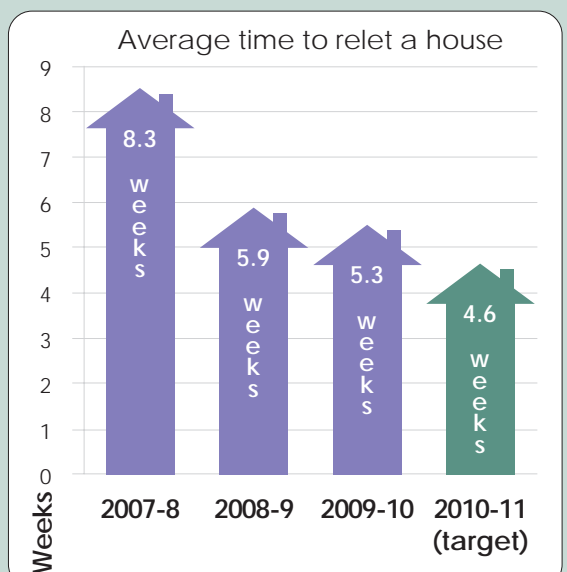


Reletting Empty Houses

We have a high demand for most of our houses and want to relet any empty houses as quickly as possible. We have been making real efforts in the last 2 years to improve our performance on reletting empty homes. Table 4 shows that we have reduced the average time we take to relet houses over the last 3 years.



The following table shows the percentage of houses relet within specific time periods. Again this illustrates the improvements we have made to reletting times.



Our current performance is still below the national average for performance on empty homes, and so we will be continuing to aim for further improvements this year.

Volunteers Needed for Highland Tenant Voice *Feum air Saor-thoilich 'son Guth Luchd-màil na Gàidhealtachd*

A Tenant led initiative, the new Highland Tenants' web site, www.highlandtenantvoice.org.uk gives tenants the opportunity to have their say, take part in discussions with other tenants and find out what Tenant Groups in your own and other areas are doing, and what they have achieved for their communities.

The site also provides useful, up to date information on what is happening regarding housing in Highland, links to Highland Council strategies/policies and information about how you can make a difference in your area.

The Highland Council Tenant Participation Officers will have an ongoing blog which will update each of the Highland Council Housing areas with information which is relevant to them.

There will be an opportunity to take part in online consultations and quick polls on items of interest. The online Forums cover a variety of subjects and you can discuss issues with other tenants or just have a good blether!

This web site is there to:

- enable you to get involved (from the comfort of your armchair!) in what is happening in your community and in the wider Highland community
- provide you with relevant, quality information
- empower you to make a difference where you live!

If you are interested in becoming more involved with the web site, we are always interested in hearing from volunteer editors, or you can submit news items, photos or articles.

Please contact webmaster@highlandtenantvoice.org.uk for more details.



Council Recognises Tenant Participation Achievements of 2009 *A' Chomhairle Ag Aithneachadh Choileanaidhean Com-pàirteachas Luchd-màil an 2009*

Members of the council's Housing & Social Work Committee were updated about the progress with a number of priorities identified by the Tenant Consultative Group for 2009/2010.

One priority was for Tenant Area Panels in each of the council's 3 administrative areas to support the Tenant Consultative Group decentralise to service delivery areas. Members noted the enthusiasm of tenants for this approach following an initial round of meetings as well as feedback that it will take time to develop and implement formal structures of tenant collective representation at area level.

A second priority was the development and launch of a tenant web-site, which you can read about elsewhere in this newsletter. Congratulations are extended to all who took part in the innovative 'Highland Tenant Voice' project. Another priority was to host a tenant conference to recognise the work of active tenants in Highland, and to support and promote the benefits of being a tenant volunteer. The first conference was held in November 2009 at the council chambers in Inverness and will continue as an annual event with the next conference proposed for November 2010. Look out for further information in future editions.

The conference included a session on Tenant Led Inspections. This is a process in which tenants are specifically trained to independently inspect housing services for the purpose of monitoring customer services. This is an area of service monitoring that the Tenant Consultative Group has an interest in exploring further.

Tenants were also keen to see the formation of a Repairs & Maintenance Focus Group to work alongside policy and development work on this important area of service delivery. Your tenant representatives on this group are pictured in this newsletter, and you can contact them through your Tenant Participation Officer – contact details on the back page. You can read the full report at: www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/committees/strategiccommittees/housingandsocialwork/2010-03-10-hsw-ag.htm



Junk2Funk

Recycling is the buzz word of the moment and a group in Ormlie, aptly named "Junk2Funk" have been meeting every Thursday creating useful items for their homes using old furniture sourced from charity shops and using materials such as broken crockery to create mosaic work. The group is led by artist Bettine Bain and is funded by Highland Council ECS Service. It is a mixed group of older and younger tenants and for some it is the highlight of the week! An exhibition of their work will be staged in Caithness Horizons starting on the 24th of May and running for a fortnight. The group are very excited about this opportunity, so make a space in your diary to attend this truly inspirational event!

For more details contact **Ormlie Community Association**, 108 Marr Terrace, Thurso, KW14 7SW.
Tel: 01847 891789 e-mail: ormlie@tiscali.co.uk



Plantation Playpark Project Receives Welcome Support Pròiseact Pàirc-cluich a' Phlanntachaidh a' Faighinn Taic Dhi-beathte

Well done to Plantation Community Association in Fort William! They have been successful in securing funding to engage Roddy MacPhee of Lochaber Business Development Services to help them take forward their new Playpark project. Grateful thanks to the funders, Lochaber Housing Association, Cllr Murphy's discretionary budget and The Highland Council, Tenant Participation. Roddy will support and advise the group and assist them to raise the necessary funding to complete the project. A consultation with local kids is planned where the children will design their "ideal" playpark and this will feed in to the final design.

The Plantation Kidsclub has been allocated an allotment by the S.L.U.G. Committee. They had their first day at the allotment on Saturday 18th April – lots of hard work but lots of fun too! The club will be growing organic veggies and the kids have great plans to make a feature of the "Big Rock"! Many thanks to the S.L.U.G. committee for their generosity in making the allotment available to the Kidsclub. The kids club is held on Wednesdays from 4pm till 5.30pm (for ages 5-9) and from 5.30pm till 7pm (for ages 9-13). All welcome.



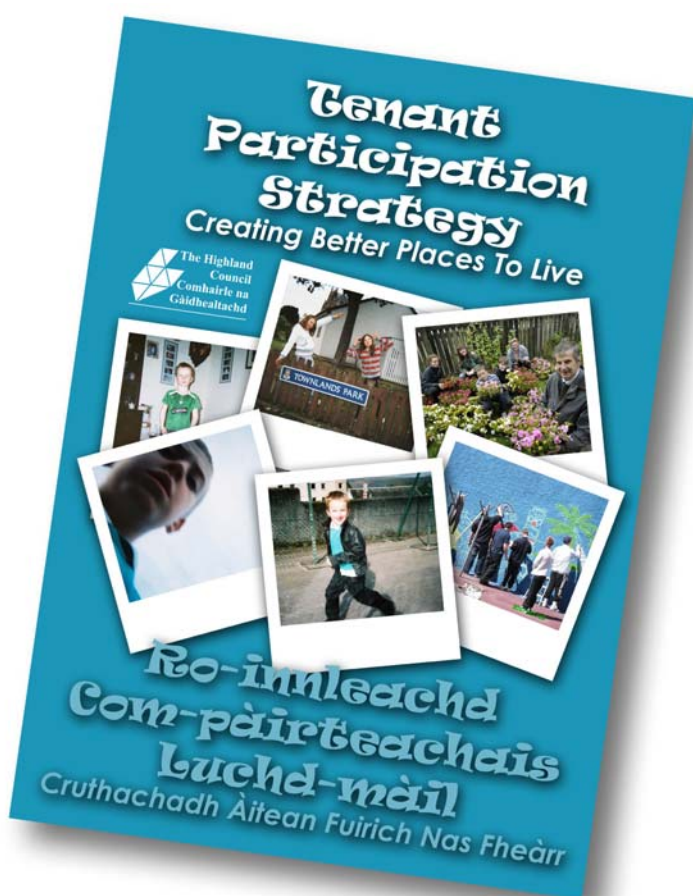
Also coming up is the Green Fingers Day in May (date to be set). Following on from last years event residents can come along and refill their hanging baskets for only £3 or make a new one for just £5. Homemade soup, home baking and refreshments will be available on the day with proceeds going towards the PCA and Kidsclub events.

Older residents enjoyed their trip to the theatre in The Nevis Centre on 26th March. The play was called The Bakers Wife and this was performed by the local thespians, Lochaber Showstoppers. Everyone is looking forward to their next trip!

Tenant Participation Strategy Ro-innleachd Com-pàirteachas Luchd-màil

The Council's Tenant Participation Strategy was launched in May 2009 and sets out how the Housing & Property Service is seeking to promote and develop involvement with tenants in the design and delivery of landlord services in the period to 2011. The published summary of the strategy shown below also includes many of the super photos submitted for last year's photo competition.

If you would like a copy of the publication or would like to talk about how you can be more involved, please contact the Tenant Participation Officer for your area - contact details on 7.



Would you like to join our 'Register of Interested Tenants'? Am bu toil leat tighinn an lùib ar 'Clàr de Luchd-màil le Ùidh'?

What is this?

It's a list of tenants who have said they are interested in receiving more detailed information about Housing & Property service plans or improvements.

Why would this be of interest to me?

It may not be. You might be satisfied with the information in the newsletter. However you may have opinions or ideas about aspects of the council's landlord service. Being on the register would give you the opportunity to be consulted on different aspects of the landlord service that are being reviewed.

Would I have to join a group?

No. You can share your opinions or ideas by returning consultation questionnaires or completing polls- you don't have to leave your house! However, there may be opportunities for time limited focus groups or consultation groups to give you the chance to meet with other tenants with similar interests who also want to take part in helping to improve services. However, there is no obligation to take part in a group.

What are some of the benefits of taking part in this way?

Active tenants tell us that there are a whole range of personal benefits to taking a more active part, including confidence building and socialising. They also tell us it has been important for them to:

- Share views or experiences of landlord services in order to help make a difference to future services.
- Meet and network with other people in Highland and nationally, who also wish to make a positive contribution.
- Not to have to take part in an organised group in order to take part in community life.
- Encourage other tenants to become more involved in services that affect them – by showing there is scope to be involved.

How can I find out more about being an 'Interested Tenant'?

You can contact your Tenant Participation Officer. There is an officer for every area in Highland – their contact telephone numbers are in this newsletter.

Or you can use our on-line contact form at:

www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/contact?id=housingandproperty

Powerdown – what's it all about?
Powerdown – cò mu dheidhinn a tha e?
 A new service in Alness is helping local people save money on their fuel bills. Home Energy Advisors based in the West End Community Centre are available to visit homes to give free and impartial energy efficiency advice. They can provide you with help on using central heating systems efficiently, monitoring energy use and paying less for fuel. Each visit will be followed up with a report containing practical ways to save energy.

The project is being organised by Alness Transition Town Group, which was formed by locals interested in reducing the community's impact on the environment. Alness Transition Town Group is part of Community Powerdown – a network of towns, villages and islands across Scotland that are reducing their carbon footprints thanks to help from the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund. Their Community Powerdown Officer, Peter Elbourne, is also one of the three Home Energy Advisors and he's looking forward to making a real difference in Alness:

"After such a cold winter, we're expecting the energy suppliers to send out big bills which could be based on estimated meter readings, so get in touch with us if you've had a high electricity or gas bill recently. We are helping households in Alness save hundreds of pounds on their energy costs by paying less for their fuel and being as energy efficient as possible."

Over the coming months, Alness Transition Town Group will also be putting on community workshops to give local people more detailed information on how to reduce their energy bills. These workshops will include DIY draught-proofing, help with insulation and reducing energy use. For more information on the project or to make an appointment for a home visit, get in touch with the Home Energy Advisors using the contact details below (01349 884896; 07920 437526; energy@transitiontownalness.org.uk).

We also have some energy tips that you may want to include...

Five no-cost energy saving tips from the Home Energy Advisors:

- 1) Only boil the amount of water in a kettle you're going to use.
- 2) Switch off everything at the plug that is not being used.
- 3) Draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.
- 4) Turn your hot water cylinder thermostat down to 60-65°C.
- 5) Remember to switch off lights in empty rooms.



Make Your Home and Car a Smoke Free Zone

Dèan do Dhachaigh is Do Chàr nan Àrainnean gun Cheò

A campaign has recently been launched that aims to improve the health of Highlands' population by discouraging people from smoking in their home and family car. *The Smoke-Free Home and Smoke-Free Car Project* is run by NHS Highland and involves smokers and non-smokers promising to make part or their entire home smoke-free for themselves, their family and friends. One of the best things a parent can do for their children's health is make their home and family car smoke-free. Second-hand smoke is the smoke breathed in from other people smoking. Babies and children are particularly affected by this as they breathe deeper and faster and therefore take in more smoke.

For advice or a FREE Smoke-Free Homes pack contact the Smoke-Free Homes line on: **LO-CALL 0845 7573077**

For help or more information to give up smoking, you can contact Highland Smoking Cessation Service:

Tel: **0800 84 84 84**

or visit www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk



Sheltered Housing Event *Tachartas Thaighean Seasgair*

In late November last year around eighty sheltered housing tenants from Inverness, Nairn Badenoch and Strathspey got together in the Thistle Hotel Inverness for a soup and sandwich lunch.

The aim of the day was to provide information about various changes proposed for the council's warden service. The event also used the opportunity to highlight some particularly aged related and relevant seasonal information such as energy efficiency, home & personal security as well as fire awareness.

Transport was arranged from the various locations and all delegates arrived full of enthusiasm to a room full of exhibitors which included Consumer Advice, Shop –Mobility Telecare System, Police, Fire Service and Highland Council's Income Maximisation Team to name but a few.

All the residents were able to ask questions and get their queries answered. The "Twenty Questions" Quiz on benefit maximisation and entitlement was particularly well received. This led to an awareness initiative in the Council's sheltered housing complexes earlier this year.

Delegates also had the opportunity to visit Holm Mills for some last minute Christmas shopping before returning to the hotel for afternoon tea. Thanks to all who joined in the day and who promised to bring their friends next year! Special thanks to the Community Wardens who provided escort services on the day.

New Tenant Participation Officers *Appointed for the Highlands*

Oifigearan Ùr Com-pàirteachas Luchd-màil an Dreuchd 'son na Gàidhealtachd

Housing & Property Service and the Tenant Consultative Group are delighted to welcome new employees Lorna Simpson and Mandy Macleman who have been recruited as Tenant Participation Officers. Lorna will be covering Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross and joins the service with lots of community involvement experience from her time as manager at The Ormlie Project in Thurso. Mandy will be covering Ross, Skye and Lochaber and previously worked with some of Highland's registered tenant groups while commissioned to design and develop the tenant web-site on behalf of the Inverness Tenant Forum.

Lorna (left) and Mandy(right) are pictured with Phill McCormack, Tenant Participation Officer covering Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey. If you are interested in learning more about tenant participation and the different ways in which you can take part as an individual in Housing & Property service, or how to start a group in your community – please give Phill, Lorna or Mandy a ring.

Phill McCormack

Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey
 Tel: **01463 724516**

Lorna Simpson

Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross
 Tel: **01955 607744**

Mandy Macleman

Ross, Skye and Lochaber
 Tel: **01349 868471**



Help is available to buy your own home
at an affordable price

Tha cuideachadh ri fhaotainn gus do thaigh
fhèin a cheannach aig prìs ruigsinneach

For households for whom buying your own home is just out of reach, affordable solutions are available. LIFT 'New Supply', gives people the opportunity to move into a brand new home.

Hundreds of people have already benefited from LIFT New Supply across Scotland. Through this 'shared equity' low cost home ownership scheme, Highland's housing association use grants from the Scottish Government to build or buy new homes.

People can then buy and own between 60 & 80% of the property. Council tenants may be able to buy as little as 51%. These 'shared equity' properties are available throughout communities in Highland including in:

Alness	Armadale, Isle of Skye	Aviemore	Beaulieu
Broadford	Carrbridge	Dornoch	Fort Augustus
Fortrose	Fort William	Gairloch	Golspie
Inverness	Kildary, Easter Ross	Muir of Ord	Nairn
Nethybridge	North Kessock	Plockton	Portree

If you are interested in finding out more contact the local housing association:

ALBYN ENTERPRISES

Tel: 01463 259895 or Email: info@albyn-enterprises.co.uk

LOCHALSH & SKYE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tel: 01478 612035 or Email: info@lsha.co.uk

LOCHABER HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tel: 01397 702530 or Email: info@lochaberhousing.co.uk

You can also find out more on their websites.

Putting More Money in Your Pocket
A' Cur Tuilleadh Airgid Nad Phòcaid

The Highland Council's Customer Income Maximisation Team and Money Advice Service provide a free, impartial and confidential service to anyone in the Highland Area who requires advice and/or assistance with benefits, money advice, energy efficiency or information on other entitlements.

Our aim is to put more money in people's pockets so that they can pay bills, heat their home and have a better quality of life. We do this by ensuring that individuals who are eligible for benefits and other entitlements receive the advice and assistance required to help them to access their full entitlement.

The Money Advice service can provide advice and assistance to help people deal with all types of debts – including rent and Council Tax arrears, no matter what stage they're at.

For further advice or information can be obtained through our free 'Essential Guide to Benefits, Money Advice, Energy Efficiency and other Entitlements' or please contact us on:

Telephone: 0800 090 1004

E-mail us at:

Income.maximisation@highland.gov.uk

or

Money.advice@highland.gov.uk

Visit: www.highland.gov.uk

Or write to us at: PO Box 5650, Inverness, IV3 5YX

Everybody Online - Caithness Gaelic

Everybody Online - Caithness aims to allow locals who have never had the chance to use the internet the opportunity to discover what it can do.

Funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), with the support of BT Scotland, Everybody Online - Caithness is run by a national charity 'Citizens Online' and aims to use technology to help communities counter social disadvantage.

The project is open to anyone interested in learning more about IT and internet, there are various sessions being delivered across the county and the project is very flexible to peoples needs.

Shona Munro, Project Officer based at the Community Learning Offices in Thurso, commented:

"The Everybody Online Caithness project started in May 2009 and to date it has been going really well. I have had the opportunity to work with numerous local organisations and the project has been very well received. I am looking forward to developing the project further and working in partnership with many more agencies to increase the awareness of the benefits of IT and the internet"

If anybody would like more information about the project and how they can get involved they can contact Shona on 01847 892956 or shona@citizensonline.org.uk

HOW TO CONTACT US

MAR A CHUIREAS TU FIOS THUGAINN

You can get information on housing through the Service Centre (tel: 01349 886606), any Highland Council Service Point or by contacting the Housing & Property Offices for your area. Details are available through the call centre or on line at: www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/findinghousing/areahousingoffices/

Remember
to recycle.



Find out what and where to recycle at

sort-it.org.uk



For more information contact
01349 868439,
www.highland.gov.uk/recycle
or recycle@highland.gov.uk



To request this information in an alternative format e.g., large print, computer disk, audio tape, or suitable language, please contact:
01463 702863