

# Housing Matters

Taigheadas na Gàidhealtachd

Autumn 2019

*Competition –  
Find the Objects!*

*Inside:* Pg 3 Get involved! Make a difference! | Pg 8 Tenants Chat | Pg 10 Customer Report  
Pg 17 Au Revoir Jennifer

## Useful Contacts

Housing Enquiries  
& Repairs

**01349 886602**

Waste Enquiries &  
Special Uplifts

**01349 886603**

Council Tax enquiries

**0800 393811**

Welfare Team

**0800 090 1004**

CAB

**0808 800 9060**

Trading Standards

(CAB consumer advice)

**0345 404 0506**

Environmental Health

**01349 886606**

Scottish Water

**0845 600 8855**

Scottish Power

**0845 272 7999**

GAS (Emergency)

**0800 111 999**

NHS 24

**111** (Out of Hours Health Advice)

Police

**101** (Non Emergency)

Samaritans

**116 123**

Social Work-out of hours

**08457 697284**

## Trade Services Review

Carron McDiarmid - Interim Chief Officer Community Services

I've been really glad to work with housing and building maintenance staff and others in the Council on the review of trades services. This is a project that will mean more repairs and maintenance of the Council's housing and other properties will be undertaken by Council trades people. Across Highland just over 40% of Council housing repairs (and nearly all other property repairs in our schools, offices and buildings) are undertaken by private contractors. Over time we expect this to reduce.

We carry out around 40,000 day to day repairs to Council housing each year and we know how important this service is to tenants. We have improved our response times to repairs in the last year and satisfaction ratings with the service are high, but we are always committed to making further improvements



Left to right - Sylvia Beswick (project manager), Carron McDiarmid (project sponsor), Lachie MacDonald (repairs manager south) and Kateryna Zoryk (HR business partner) at Diriebught Depot

Tenant feedback tells us satisfaction is higher when work is done by Council joiners, plumbers, electricians and painters. We know improvements can always be made and we hope the new processes we put in place will mean an even better service for tenants and better value for the rent paid.

To make sure we can do this well we are starting to gear up to do more repairs in-house in Lochaber and a part of Inverness (the catchment area for Inverness Royal Academy).

We are currently advertising for new trades posts in these areas. Staff have identified where we can make improvements to the whole repairs process, taking into account what tenants have told us. This includes knowing where things have gone wrong so we can learn from that.

Once the new arrangements are working well in the pilot areas we will roll it out to other areas and we have been asked to focus on Skye and Sutherland next. In these areas it is hard to get contractors.

We've spoken to contractors too so they know about the changes planned. If they are still interested in doing work for the Council they will be submitting tenders over the next month.

Our Building Maintenance team are looking forward to this expansion in their work and workforce. Trade Unions are fully supportive too. Trades people interested in working for the Council can find out about the jobs here: [https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/councils/highland-council/jobs?parent\\_cat=2084](https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/councils/highland-council/jobs?parent_cat=2084)



Did you know you can now keep updated on Tenant Participation by following us on Facebook?

Just 'like' our page and you will be notified when we post updates.

Find us on Facebook - **Highland Tenants Together**

You can also call us on **01463 702683** or email: [tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk)

# Getting Involved...

## The Tenant Participation team



Highland tenants  
together



**Lorna Simpson,**

Tenant Participation Officer for  
Caithness, Sutherland and East  
Ross



**Catriona Leyland,**

Tenant Participation Officer for  
Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey  
and Rural Inverness



**Karin McKay,**

Tenant Participation Officer for  
central Inverness and Lochaber,  
Karin is also currently covering  
Mid & West Ross and Skye

We have all been busy over the summer getting out and about and meeting lots of tenants at Rate your Estate walkabouts; Safe, Well and Connected events; Sheltered Housing events; Tenant Forums and lots of tenant group meetings! Hopefully we'll be out to meet you soon!

We are also delighted to announce that we have two new tenant representatives who have been nominated by other tenants to represent them at the Care, Learning and Housing Committee. They are Margaret MacKay, a tenant from Melvich and Dawn Budge, a tenant from Wick. If you want to contact your tenant rep you can do so by emailing [tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk) or calling 01463 702683

### Rent Consultation

It is almost time for us to start our rent consultation for 2020/2021. Last year we held drop in sessions around Highland and invited you to come along and talk to us about your rents and how your rent money was spent – some of you said these drop ins were difficult to get to or at the wrong times, so this year we are going to come to you! We are going to travel around Highland and try to visit every community and every housing estate! We will be in a Camper van so we will be able to offer you a cup of tea or coffee and a comfy seat while we have a chat!

The consultation papers will be coming through your door late October / early November – there will also be a schedule of when we'll be in your area!

### Getting Involved

There are many opportunities for tenants to get involved. If you would like to know what is available in your area please get in touch. It is really important to us that we hear what you think. In these challenging times we want to give you the very best housing services that we can and we need to know what your priorities are!

If you think that you would like to get involved and make a difference to housing services in your area call us on **01463 702683** or email [tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk)



## Drug dealing in Council houses

Illegal drug activity is a criminal offence and often results in behaviour which causes significant harm, alarm and distress to people living in affected communities.

The Highland Council and Police Scotland has a shared protocol to deal with reported drug activity in Highland Council properties.

The Highland Council will seek to evict any household where an occupant has been convicted of dealing drugs from the property.

It does not need to be the tenant that is convicted. If the offence occurs within the property, we will also seek to evict if the conviction is against another family member in the household, a lodger or another person visiting the house.

The eviction process for this type of conviction has recently been simplified following the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. This simplified

eviction process does not only apply to convictions for drug dealing, but also for convictions for offences that are punishable by imprisonment carried out in, or in the locality of, the house.



**If you suspect someone of drug dealing please report it to Police Scotland by calling 101, or you can report it to Crime Stoppers anonymously by calling 0800 555 111.**



## Some Facts About Scams

Here at Highland Council Trading Standards we are always urging people to be on guard against the scammers. Scammers are criminals and they use a variety of tactics in order to scam money out of unsuspecting householders.

Scams make people part with their money and personal details by intimidating them or promising cash, prizes, services and fictitious high returns on investment. Their aim is to get you to reveal your personal details, steal your information or even making people willingly make a payment or hand over cash. It is important to remember that 'scam' is simply another word for 'fraud'.

Scammers can contact you in various ways, they may call you, get the postman to deliver to you, or email you. Whichever way the intention is the same, to take your money and never be caught.

**Here are some Scam Facts to help you understand the extent and scale of the problem across the UK.**

- Scams cost the UK economy £5-10 billion a year (yes, that's BILLION)
- 53% of people aged 65 or over have been targeted by a scam
- 37% of people have been targeted by a scam five times or more
- 5% of scam victims have reported the matter to law enforcement
- 65% of people have taken no action to help protect friends or family

**Scams are BIG business, far bigger than rogue traders calling on your doorstep, and far harder to catch.**

How do I spot a Scam?

- The person contacting you is asking you for money to access your winnings
- There is pressure to respond quickly- "limited offer respond now, don't delay"
- You are encouraged to click on links or open attachments in emails

- You get phone calls that come from unknown or foreign phone numbers
- You are encouraged to keep communication secret from family or friends

**How can you protect yourself from a scam?**

- Don't disclose personal information to people or companies you do not know
- Always go to a bank's official website to get information, don't follow links in emails or texts
- If you get a lot of mail ask a trusted friend or family member to help sort through it
- Never send money to a company in order to claim a prize or winnings
- Be cautious about online relationships where you have never met the person face to face.
- Offers that seem too good to be true often are
- Talk to friends and family about scams so that they can be scam aware
- Take 5 - Don't feel pressurised into making a decision over the phone
- Consider installing a call blocker to block scam and nuisance calls

Please don't let the scammers get your money. Householders can receive free and confidential advice if they feel that they have become a victim of a scam by contacting Consumeradvice.scot on 0808 164 6000 or alternatively by email at [advice@consumeradvice.scot](mailto:advice@consumeradvice.scot). Highland Council Trading Standards can be contacted directly by calling **01463 644578**.

# Tackling Loneliness



Everyone needs other people, but not everyone has someone. Isolation and loneliness can affect anyone – at all ages and stages of life. It has a big impact on people's health. It's said to be as bad as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Community organisations are providing routes out of isolation. Local and Highland-wide befriending projects offer supportive, reliable relationships, through volunteers, to people who would otherwise be isolated. For example through regular phone-calls. Befriending often provides a new direction in life and improves confidence and self-esteem. If you want to know more, or want to be a befriender, we can help – please speak to your housing officer or warden.

## Want to speak to someone today?

The Age Scotland helpline is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families. They provide information, friendship and advice. Their helpline is free to call and available Monday - Friday 9-5pm. Call on **0800 12 44 222**.



## Connecting Carers - A better life for unpaid carers in Highland

**Do you look after a relative, friend or neighbour who couldn't manage without your support?**

Caring for someone can happen suddenly through illness, stress or accident – or it can happen progressively with age or disability. However, when a person becomes a carer, Connecting Carers make sure that they are not caring alone. They make sure they are supported and have access to the information they need. They offer a range of practical, financial and emotional support.

Call 01463 723575 on weekdays between 10.00 am - 4.00 pm where someone is always on hand with free help and advice. They also have a drop-in centre in Dingwall. Alternatively if you, or someone you know, could benefit then make a referral through their website [www.connectingcarers.org.uk](http://www.connectingcarers.org.uk) or email: [carers@connectingcarers.org.uk](mailto:carers@connectingcarers.org.uk)

## Helping You and Your Neighbours to Stay Safe and Independent at home

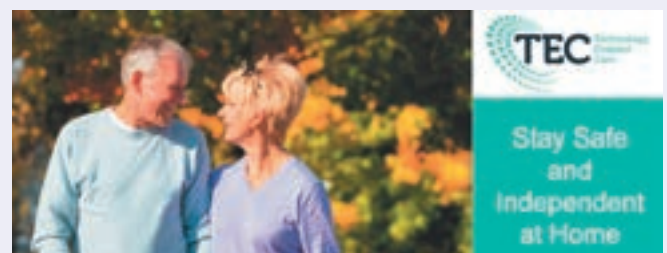
**Telecare gives peace of mind and confidence to people who want to live independently and safely in their own home - whatever their situation. They can be safe in the knowledge that they can easily call for help if they ever need it.**

Please remember, everyone with telecare requires 2 volunteer responders (ideally 3). This applies whether, or not, you are now signed up for NHS Highland's new personal telecare service. Volunteer responders are your 'eyes and ears' – for example, waiting with you for emergency services to arrive - or checking with you if your alarm goes off accidentally.

Volunteer responders come in all shapes and sizes - friends, family, neighbours, acquaintances, and community volunteers (from local befriending groups or church communities).

Sheltered Housing Wardens can't be volunteer responders – but perhaps a neighbour, or one of their responders, can be. We know that it might feel awkward to ask someone to be your contact. Tenants have shared stories with each other and us. They tell us that people are happy and feel privileged to be asked.

Most tenants have their own contacts. If you are struggling with this, you can ask your housing officer or warden to help you think of someone who might be able to help.



# Capital Budget spend

The table below shows the breakdown of our Capital budget spend across Highland for this financial year and next. The Mainstream Investment covers capital projects such as new roofs, windows and doors; new heating systems; new kitchens and new bathrooms. It also shows the breakdown by area of the Aids and Adaptations budget.

Area	Mainstream Investment	Aids & Adaptations	Total	% of budget	Percentage of Housing Stock
Caithness	£2,050,982	£150,000	£2,200,982	15.47%	15.50%
Sutherland	£979,133	£67,000	£1,046,133	7.35%	7.40%
Ross & Cromarty	£3,387,433	£260,000	£3,647,433	25.63%	25.60%
Skye	£463,054	£36,000	£499,054	3.51%	3.50%
Inverness	£3,903,512	£300,000	£4,203,512	29.54%	29.50%
Nairn	£621,920	£50,000	£671,920	4.72%	4.70%
Lochaber	£1,323,221	£97,000	£1,420,221	9.98%	10%
Badenoch & Strathspey	£502,744	£40,000	£542,744	3.81%	3.80%
Total	£13,232,000	£1,000,000	£14,231,999	100.00%	100.00%

## The Highland Council's Welfare Support Team – Support to maximise and manage your income

**Are you claiming your benefits and entitlements and managing your money? You are better off finding out where you can get free, confidential and impartial help.**

Our welfare specialists undertake benefit checks to ensure you are not missing out on any benefits and complete benefit forms on your behalf. The Council's specialists will even challenge and appeal decisions about your claims and help you to budget and to deal with other money matters.

The Highland Council's specialist advisers are available to provide intensive support and advice for tenants who are in arrears with their rent.

These officers support tenants to enable them to manage their rent payments and to regain control of their budget.

**If you are unable to meet with us at our offices, our welfare specialists are available to visit you in your home.**

This includes:

- encouraging client engagement;
- dedicating time to intensively support tenants;
- supporting tenants at pre-court and pre-eviction interviews with their landlord;
- providing budgeting support to better enable tenants to manage their budget and to agree a payment plan for any debts they may have;
- agreeing an affordable payment plan with the tenant and their creditors;
- if a household is at a risk of becoming homeless, our officers will discuss finances to help identify and decide what housing is affordable

The Highland Council's Intensive Support Officers overarching aim is to support council tenants who have rent arrears. Tenants benefiting from early intervention, support to maximise their income and financial education have the highest success of stabilising their income and managing their financial commitments, including managing their rent arrears.

### Don't miss out, find out

Getting in touch with our welfare specialists is the first step to maximising your potential income and managing your money well. For professional support phone 0800 090 1004 or complete the secure online request form for advice at: [www.highland.gov.uk/welfareadvice](http://www.highland.gov.uk/welfareadvice)

# Housing Team walk the Great Glen!

In May 2019 some of the Caithness housing staff took up the challenge of walking the Great Glen Way to raise funds and awareness of Lewy Body Dementia. A total of £5008.50p was raised which was beyond their wildest expectations. It was a hard slog especially the final two days but the core group of six were joined at different legs of the journey by family, friends and other housing staff. The photo shows the girls when they reached Fort Augustus dripping wet with heavy rain but spirits were high! On the final leg of the journey they were joined by our very own Chief Executive Donna Manson. Well done to everybody who was involved in this monumental adventure!



Photo: From left to right back row: Kirsty Mackinnon, Margaret Taylor, Yvonne Gunn (Pentland Housing), Margaret Ross, Jo Lee Front row: Dawn Sinclair and Lorna Simpson

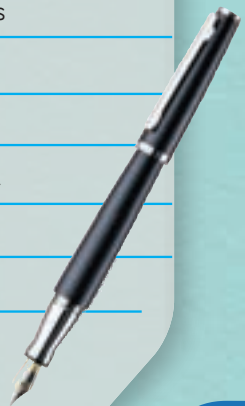
## Dates for your *Diary*

When	What	Where
1st November 2019- 12pm	Wick Interested Tenants Group	Wick Town Hall
4th November, 2019 – 7pm	Upper Achintore Action Group	Upper Achintore School, Fort William
4th November, 2019 – 7pm	Claggan Residents Association	TBC
6th November, 2019 – 7pm	Manse Road Tenants Group	Kinlochbervie Church Hall
8th November, 2019 – 12pm	Lochaber Tenants Group	Charles Kennedy Building, Fort William
14th November 2019 – 11am	Rate your Estate walkabout	Scout Hut, Balintore
20th November, 2019 – 5:30pm	Inverness Tenants Forum	Artysans Café, Inverness
21st November 2019 – 16:30	Balintore & District Residents Group	Scout Hut Balintore
3rd December 2019 – 5:30pm	Claggan Christmas Light Switch on	Claggan, Fort William
5th December, 2019 – 1pm	Mid Ross & Beaully SH meeting	Baptist Church, Dingwall
11th December, 2019 – 11am	Lochiel Road SH meeting	Lochiel Road, Inverness
13th December, 2019 – 12pm	Wick Interested Tenants Group meeting	Wick Youth Club

For further information on the above or any other events please call

**01463 702683** or email

**[tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk)**



## Letter from Sheltered Housing Tenant

I live in sheltered housing, and have various health issues, one being chronic mobility problems. This had got to the stage when walking was not only painful, but often impossible. At this point consideration had to be made, as to how I could keep myself mobile, and independent. With this in mind I decided I needed a mobility scooter. This was not an easy decision, but I took the view that it would enable me to go forward positively. After a great deal of research, I found one that would fit my needs, and purchased it. However due to the floor plan of my home, I cannot take my mobility scooter inside to recharge the battery. Also I do not have an electric socket near an outside door, so to charge it, I have to trail an extension lead to the nearest socket, through my home, which causes a health and safety issue. I explained these difficulties to the Highland Council, and asked if they would install an outside socket to charge my mobility scooter. I was informed that, because I purchased the scooter myself, they cannot do this. I was given permission to have an outside socket installed but I will have to pay for it myself. I was advised that, if I had gone through an Occupational Therapist, the NHS would have provided both the scooter and the charging point if I met the required criteria. When I moved into my sheltered house, I was not informed about the criteria for aids and adaptations, and how to access them. I think this process could be improved on.

Sheltered Housing tenant

## Response from Highland Council Policy Officer Hilary Parkey

### Getting Your Home Adapted – Helping You with Your Mobility Needs

Dear Tenant,

For people with mobility issues or a disability, getting changes made to their home (adaptations or equipment) can improve their quality of life. We appreciate that it can be difficult to know who to ask about this. As with any issue related to your housing, we recommend that you first check the Highland Council's website or speak to your Housing Officer. This includes speaking to us before purchasing very large equipment like mobility scooters. Your Housing Officer can advise or refer you onto someone who will assess your needs. Alternatively, to refer yourself to get assessed for adaptations, call your local social care team. For adults, call your local NHS Highland Single Point of Contact. For children, call the Highland Council on 01349 886602. This information is on our website. We will add this information to the Sheltered Housing Tenants' Handbook – and make sure that we tell tenants when they sign-up to move in.

If you do not meet the NHS criteria for equipment or adaptations organisations like Housing Options Scotland (0131 247 1400) can assist with finding solutions e.g. sourcing charitable funding. Some benefits (e.g. Personal Independence Payments) aim to help people with the extra costs of living with a long term health condition or disability. We can help with advice about benefits. We will give permission for work arranged by the tenant to go ahead unless there is a good reason why it can't.

# Welcome to



## Interview by

Interested Tenant from Rural

**Geraldine** – How long have

**Lana** – I've only been a tenant

**Geraldine** – When did you beco

**Lana** – I became an Interested Tenant 2 years ago

**Geraldine** – What interests you in Tenant Particip

**Lana** – I'm interested in how Highland Council H repairs and all aspects of housing. I have lots of

**Geraldine** – Have you found enough to keep yo

**Lana** – There is plenty to keep me interested. W It gives us a better understanding of general pr of view. We also learn about the Benefits syste

**Geraldine** – What do you personally gain?

**Lana** – I've made a lot of friends and it helps Communication and Scrutiny Panels. I enjoy people's problems and issues.

**Geraldine** – Are you happy to continue getting

**Lana** – I'm more than happy to continue wh people in joining the groups. I'm sure that th



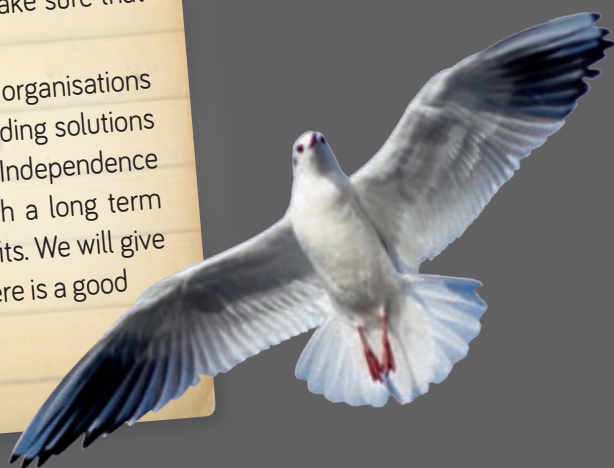
## Adapting

tell us about

The Highland Tenant Scrutiny Panel are cur

Did you know that your rent pays for adapta funding for this. So our tenants have a keen wisely.

The Scrutiny Panel, which is made up of tenants get adaptations carried out. They a This will help them to identify what could b with the Highland Council and NHS Highla actions which should make a difference to



# Tenants' Chat

## Geraldine McCarthy

Wick with Lana Green, Interested Tenant, Thurso

Have you been a Highland Council Tenant?

Yes, for just over 2 years

How did you become an Interested Tenant?

My

participation?

Housing Services works - lots of things about house letting,

and time on my hands!

Are you interested?

I've learned about housing and all aspects relating to housing.

Problems both from the tenants and Housing Service point

of view and how it works.

What do you do to keep the 'little grey cells' working. I'm part of the

Area Forms meetings, hearing about the diversity of

things involved in tenant participation?

At least I am still fit but we do need to interest more young

people, they would get a lot of satisfaction as I do!

## your Home -

### Share your experiences



Are you currently looking at Aids and Adaptations.

What questions? The Council does not get any additional

interest in making sure that their money is spent

What do tenant representatives, is looking into the way that

they are contacting selected households to speak to them.

It will be better. Their recommendations will be discussed

and - this is so that agreement can be reached on

behalf of everyone.

## Mr Gull - By Neil Power

Let sea horses rear up and gallop in the sea,

Watching you scavenge

What is offered by Neptune's bounty.

Worm-headed and eyes like mermaid pearls,

Your call is heard everywhere,

And all know you well

Black-backed, kittiwakes, common and great

To name but a few.

You've adapted to the land dwellers

But the land dwellers haven't adapted to you.

## Recipe

### Easy Fruit Cheesecake

You will need:

1 Large Deep Flan Dish Lined with tinfoil

1pkt Digestive Biscuits

2 heaped dessertspoons Butter/Marg

1 Large Tub Natural Quark

1pkt Jelly

½ pt Boiling Water

1 mug Frozen or Fresh Fruit similar to the jelly

flavour

(Tip: don't use fresh pineapple, or the jelly won't set)

Method...

Melt the Jelly into the Boiling Water and leave to cool. (not set)

Crush the Digestive Biscuits

Part melt the Butter/Marg and pour into the Digestive Biscuits.

Mix these together.

Put the Mixture into the base of the flan dish and press flat over the whole surface.

Put the cooled Jelly, Quark and all fruit except for some needed for decoration into a large bowl and mix thoroughly.

Pour the mixture carefully into the Flan Dish and smooth.

Place the Flan Dish in the fridge until the Fruit Mixture is set.

Decorate with the remaining fruit

Cut and serve.



Easy Fruit Cheesecake

# SNAP SHOT OF OUR ANNUAL CUSTOMER REPORT 2018-19

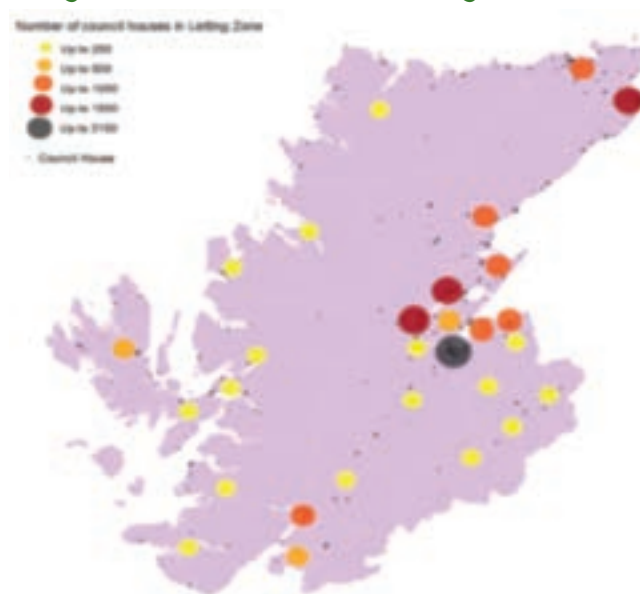
As at 31 March 2019, the Council owned and managed 14,072 council houses in 223 communities in city, town, rural, remote and island locations.






During 2018/2019, we let 1138 properties to homeless households and people on the councils' waiting lists. It took us 36.8 days to re-let our empty properties compared to the Scottish Housing Network Benchmark Group average of 39.6 days.



Average re-let times have stayed fairly stable over the past year but remain below our Highland target. This can be attributed to low demand for some areas of Caithness and Sutherland which has a disproportionate impact on overall performance on re-letting empty homes.

## Highland Council housing locations:



HIGHLAND COUNCIL HOUSING BY PROPERTY SIZE		NUMBER OF PROPERTIES	WEEKLY RENTAL CHARGE 2017/18	SCOTTISH AVERAGE 2018/19
	bedsit	245	£61.55	£70.22
	1 bed	3616	£67.66	£76.10
	2 bed	5,750	£73.98	£77.70
	3 bed	4,075	£82.60	£84.44
	4 bed +	386	£110.18	£93.49
Total number of properties:		14,072		

Full and detailed performance information will be available in our Annual Customer Report 2018/19, to be published in October 2019.

If you would like to order a copy telephone: **01463 702683**  
or email: **mandy.macleman@highland.gov.uk**

The services we provide to you as your landlord are funded by the rent you pay. We must ensure that we spend this money wisely and fairly.

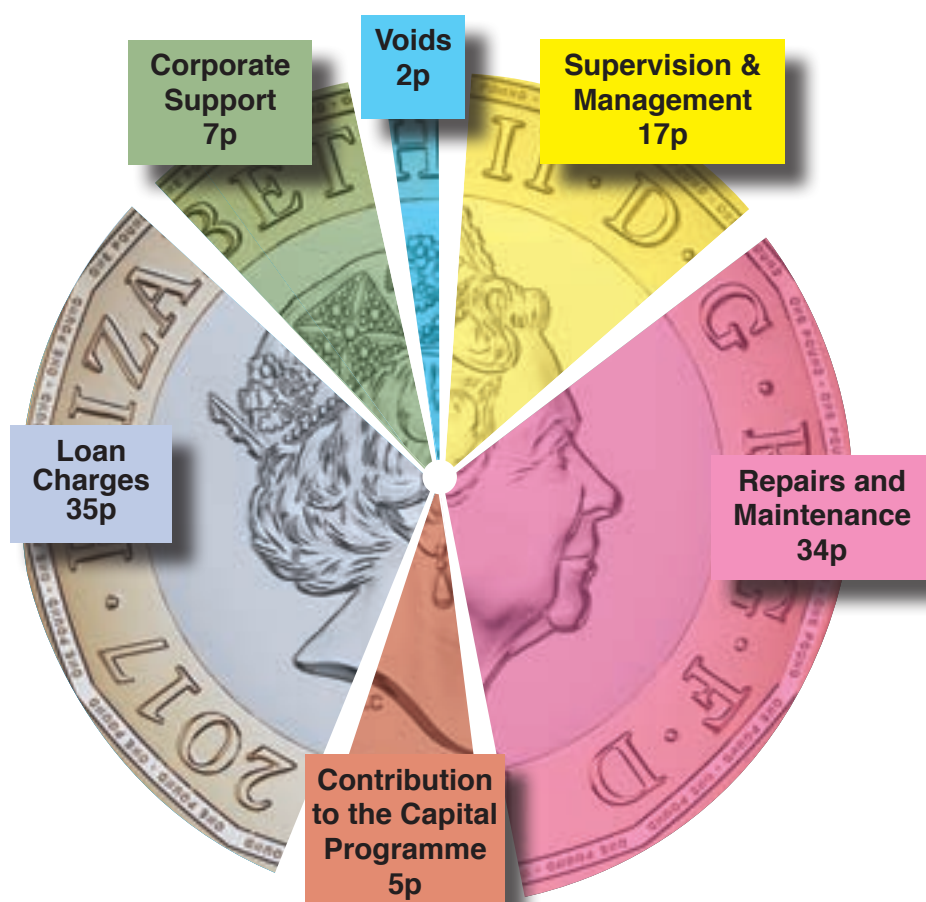
We recognise that tenants want to live in warm, comfortable and well maintained homes in a nice area. For this reason we install new heating systems, kitchens and bathrooms. We also carry out estate improvements which arise from our Rate your Estate inspections. We try to do all the things that we know our customers want from us.

Understandably this comes at a cost.

We strive to keep our costs as low as possible. In order to provide the best service it is vital that we collect all rent money.

Without your rent money Housing Services cannot look after your estate or undertake repairs or improvements.

Each £1 of your rent is spent in the following way:



## VOIDS & EMPTY HOMES RENT LOSS

	Highland 2017-18	Highland 2018-19
% rent loss through properties becoming void	1.03% £503,405	0.79% £382,732
Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year	36.6 days	36.8 days

## RENT ARREARS AND COLLECTION

	2017-18	2018-19
Rent collected as a % of total rent due in the year	98.11% £47,263,400	98.98% £47,953,318
Gross rent arrears as at 31 March each year as a % of rent due in the reporting year	5.03% £2,458,71	4.86% £2,377,996

Full and detailed performance information will be available in our Annual Customer Report 2018/19, to be published in October 2019.

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or email: **mandy.macleman@highland.gov.uk**

## PERCENTAGE OF HOMES MEETING THE EESSH

2017-18 

67.0% (9,519 properties)

2018-19 

71.8% (10,102 properties)



The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) has been replaced with the “Energy Efficiency for Scottish Social Housing” (ESSH). The ESSH sets out the minimum energy efficiency standard for social housing. It has been developed by the Scottish Government following consultation with social landlords and tenants and will contribute towards the carbon emission reduction targets set by the Climate Change

(Scotland) Act 2009. Landlords must make sure that all social housing meets the new standard by December 2020.

We have been speaking to tenants to find out the areas of the repairs service they are unhappy with. Overall satisfaction has increased significantly but is still an area we wish to improve on.

## VOIDS & EMPTY HOME REPAIR COSTS

Highland  
2017-18Highland  
2018-19

Voids &amp; Empty Home Repair Costs – average cost (per property)

£ 3162.48

£2664.13

## REPAIRS PERFORMANCE

Highland  
2017-18Highland  
2018-19

Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs

6.4 hours

5.8 hours

Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (working days)

7.4 days

7.2 days

% of repairs carried out in the last year right first time

94.3%  
(20,292 repairs)93.9%  
(22,571 repairs)

% of repair appointments kept by trades

90.5%  
(14,140 appointments)93.4%  
(12,467 appointments)

## PERCENTAGE OF TENANTS SATISFIED WITH THE REPAIRS SERVICE

2017-18

2018-19

94.38%

90.25%

Whilst our performance has dropped slightly in 2018/19, we still perform well against more measures when compared with other landlords.

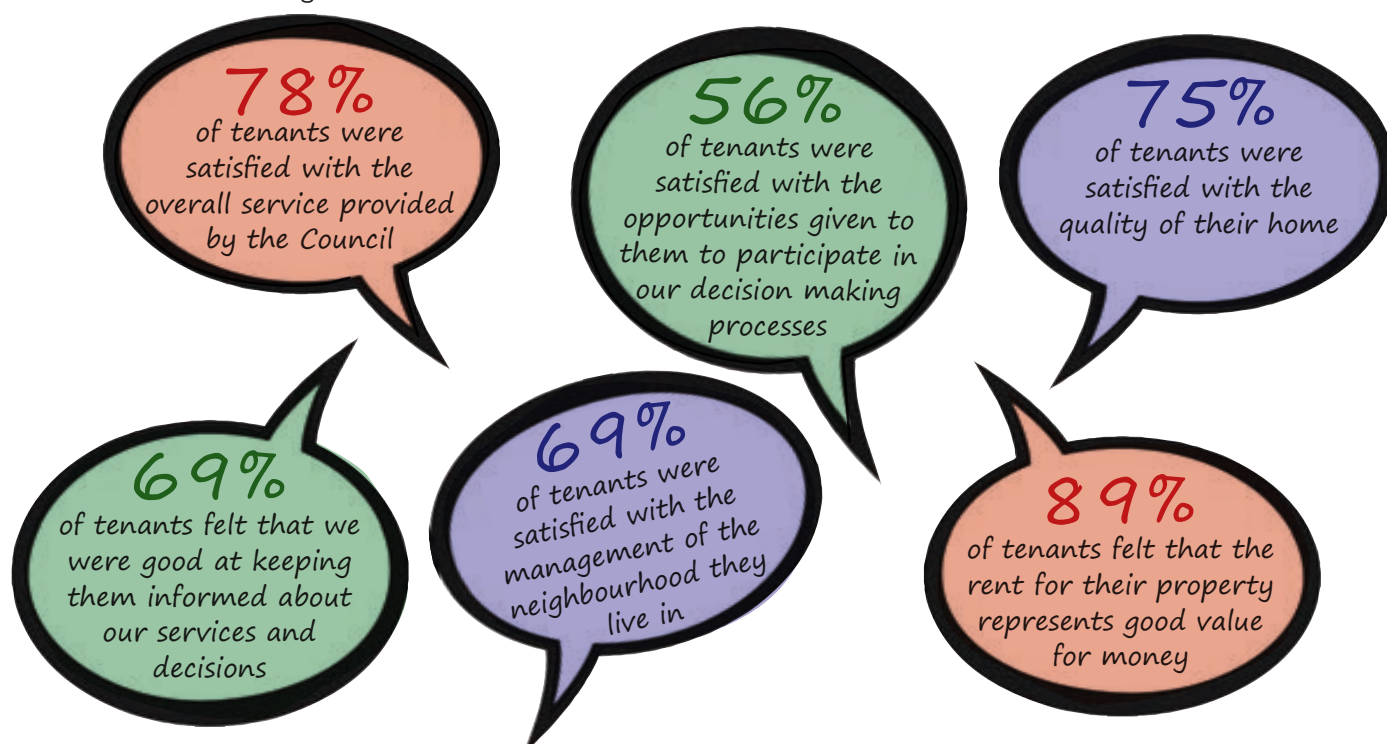
Throughout 2019 the Council has been carrying out a Trades Services Review. Results from this review show that customer satisfaction is higher when work is carried out by council tradesmen. We are currently recruiting more trades to reduce our reliance on sub-contractors.

Full and detailed performance information will be available in our Annual Customer Report 2018/19, to be published in October 2019.

If you would like to order a copy telephone: **01463 702683**  
or email: **mandy.macleman@highland.gov.uk**

## LANDLORD SATISFACTION

Every three years, we survey our tenants to gather views on the key areas of our service. Most social landlords survey a sample of their tenants but we feel it is important to give all our tenants the opportunity to have their say and to gather data that is as accurate as possible. In **October 2018** surveys were sent to all **13,404** tenants and **18% (2,412)** surveys were returned. The main findings are shown below:



We really appreciate when you take time to share your opinions as we use this to improve our services.

## DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

All tenants have the right to complain if they are not satisfied with the level of service that we provide. We take complaints very seriously and have a comprehensive complaints handling policy that is in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) complaints handling procedure.

Complaints give us valuable information that we use to improve customer satisfaction and make changes to our services. All complaints are recorded through our corporate complaints system. To monitor complaints we divide them into:

- Stage 1 complaints which are straight forward and need little or no investigation
- Stage 2 complaints which are complex or more serious and need further investigation

	No. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED		No. OF COMPLAINTS UPHELD		% RESPONDED TO WITHIN SPSO TIMESCALES	
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019
Stage 1	319	252	87 (27.27%)	100 (39.68%)	162 (51.27%)	97 (39.49%)
Stage 2	28	20	27 (96.42%)	6 (31.58%)	22 (78.57%)	14 (73.68%)

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## Fort William Community Action Group...

has been set up by the Lochaber Community Partnership to look at ways of improving the lives of those living in the Plantation, Upper Achintore and Fort William town centre area. The Partnership wants to reduce inequality making sure everyone has access to services they need.

The group consulted throughout the area using a mixture of face to face interviews, on-line surveys and group and school consultations. Questions were asked about the

quality of the environment, access to services and the well-being of community residents in general.

Over 450 members of the community including those operating businesses, took the opportunity to complete the survey or feedback their views in other ways. The survey was completed by people from all ages and areas within the communities identified above.

### What you told us



-  Town Team doing great work
-  The Town Centre is more vibrant
-  Buses have improved
-  Lovely walks and beautiful landscape
-  The Parade area is attractive
-  New cinema will be a bonus
-  Lots of sporting opportunities
-  The area generally feels safe
-  Good to see more housing being built
-  The planned STEM Centre will offer new opportunities for skills and business development.
-  The new hospital will be a welcomed addition.
-  The GFG (Liberty Aluminium Plant) ambitions will bring welcomed jobs.



-  No community meeting/ recreation space and shop in Upper Fort William.
-  Some residents feel isolated
-  Poor Sunday bus timetable and local services don't connect to national services. Lack of real time information
-  No seats in hilly areas and around bus shelters.
-  Insufficient parking in residential areas
-  Not enough free parking in town
-  Traffic congestion in summer
-  Empty shops and back of Middle Street looks terrible
-  Not enough play and green space recreational areas
-  Some Plantation homes have unsightly staining on insulation cladding
-  Lack of a covered/shelter area in the High Street
-  Lack of colour – area looks a bit 'dull' (particularly in winter months)
-  Lack of things to do and places to go for young people particularly at weekends
-  Not enough job opportunities or apprenticeships for younger people
-  Not enough job opportunities for those that may require extra support
-  Hard to know or find out about what's going on and available in terms of activities and services
-  Seasonal nature of work and often part time/ zero hours
-  Rents and rates are expensive for those trying to operate businesses
-  Lack of housing - homes also unaffordable to buy or rent reasonably
-  Lack of lighting, overgrown and neglected pathways and access routes
-  Some anti-social behaviour 'hot spots'
-  Lack of recycling points
-  Hard to take part in community discussion

**The Fort William Community Action Group listened to the feedback and have now made plans to improve areas such as housing, the economy and access to employment.**



This is planning for the long term and the Partnership has agreed to work on the following issues first -

## First Steps

The Community Partnership will work on the following first;

**Explore options** for a new community space including a shop/café in Upper Achintore.

**Look into** developing new and improve existing; indoor social spaces for young people.

**Develop** a 'what's on' for the area available in paper and electronic format. Encourage the use of local noticeboards to let people know what's going on.

**Explore options** to improve paths/cycle ways,

recycling facilities and more seating around hilly path ways.

**Further develop** residents' associations.

**Support** the Community Council to improve communications with the community it serves and encourage greater participation.

**Know** what is happening already and plan together to improve outcomes in the short, medium and longer term.

Working groups are being set up to progress these areas of work. If you have an interest in being involved the Partnership would love to hear from you.

You can email the Fort William Community Action Group Chair, Dot Ferguson (Highland Council Ward Manager) at [dot.ferguson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:dot.ferguson@highland.gov.uk) or phone: **01397 707253**

The Partnership will keep the community updated with progress via its members, use of local newsletters such as this and through social media channels. We will continue to ask for your views as things progress.

## Make a Stand

Highland Council is pleased to announce they have signed up to the Make a Stand pledge, committing to take action to support people experiencing domestic abuse. More information will follow on in later Newsletters as the HHR partners develop a Policy around Domestic Abuse in Housing Allocations which will look at assisting victims and families and holding perpetrators to account for their actions.



We've signed the **Make a Stand** pledge to support people experiencing domestic abuse, have you?

women's aid  
and women's centres



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing



#makeastand  
[cih.org/makeastand](http://cih.org/makeastand)



## House Exchange Web Site

The Highland Housing Register (HHR) Partners have decided to terminate membership of the House exchange website after many years of being a paid member. Unfortunately the fees payable are no longer good value for money for tenants and membership will cease in February 2020. Applicants will still be able to advertise for an exchange but will have to meet the costs themselves. Stay tuned for more on this from the HHR partners, who are working to create a Social Media page which will be free for all and advertise properties for exchange. If you have any ideas or suggestions on this please email [lyndsey.mateer@highland.gov.uk](mailto:lyndsey.mateer@highland.gov.uk)



## New Far North Tenants Group

Tenant Participation within the Highlands can come in many different guises from meeting tenants on a 1 – 1 basis, to attending tenants' meetings, completing questionnaires, being a community activist, taking part in walkabouts through the Rate Your Estate initiative and other housing events.

It is always very encouraging when tenants decide that they want to form a tenants group to look at issues specific to their area. The latest group to come together is the Far North Interested Tenants Group which is open to tenants from Melvich, Strathy and Bettyhill. Most of the tenants attended a Rate Your Estate walkabout last year and decided that it would be good to meet with the Tenant Participation Officer on a regular basis. The last meeting was held in the Halladale Inn, Melvich and over a dozen tenants braved the atrocious weather to come along to hear what is happening in the world of housing. In fact two tenants from Durness also attended as there are currently no groups in their area and they are keen to get involved. If you would like more information about the Far North Interested Tenants Group or would like to start a tenants group in your area please contact Tenant Participation Officer, Lorna Simpson on **07774337689**



Far North Interested Tenants Group



Newly formed Kilmallie Neighbours Group in Lochaber



1st prize – Kim Kennedy, Claggan, Fort William

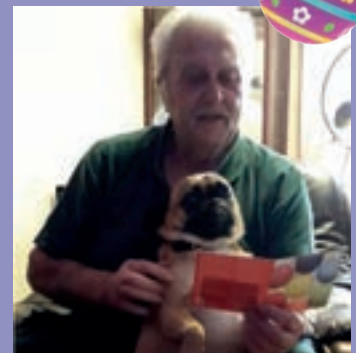


Runners up –  
Kilmallie Neighbours  
group, Caol, Fort  
William and Mark  
Mackay, Inverness

### Winners of Simpsons Garden Competition



### Easter Egg Hunt Competition



Congratulations to Mr Tough from Ardersier on being the winner of our Easter Egg Hunt competition!



## Goodbye Jennifer! (or rather Au Revoir!)

The 10th of June was an important day at the West End Community Centre, Alness as Jennifer Macleod, who has managed the Centre on a voluntary basis for over 20 years, officially retired. Many friends and residents gathered at the Hall to wish Jennifer a happy and long retirement and felt that it was the end of an era for the West End of Alness.

Jennifer has been a stalwart of Tenant Participation for over 30 years in a wide number of roles. She was Chairperson of the West Alness Residents Association and Firhill Residents Association and worked tirelessly to develop the Community Centre into a purpose build facility for all sectors of the community. Jennifer was a long standing member of the Area Forums,

frequently adding major issues to the agendas. She also provided support and mentoring to local groups throughout Highland, giving freely of her time and experience to help them to achieve their aims.

On a National level, Jennifer has worked closely with the Scottish Government on the Social Housing Charter and fed into consultations on the work of the Scottish Housing Regulator. Jennifer was the Chair of the Regional Networks (Highland, Argyll & Bute) and consulted with Scottish Government Ministers on issues relating to social housing.

Jennifer has devoted her volunteering life to the benefit of the community and she will be sorely missed but has promised to keep in touch with folk and will do the odd turn at the weekly prize bingo in the Centre. Enjoy your retirement Jennifer! It is very well deserved!

## EU citizens living in Scotland after Brexit



The UK may be leaving the European Union on 31 October.

Brexit may have an effect on the way you live in Scotland.

This may include changes to EU citizens' rights.

For more information on how it may affect you go to <https://www.mygov.scot/eu-exit-citizens/>

(Brexit has not happened, and many of the details are not yet known or are regularly changing.

This web page gives the most up-to-date information, but it will be added to and changed over time, so please keep checking back for updates.)

## Mid Ross Big Lunch!

Mid Ross Senior Tenants & Sheltered Housing Gathering was held on the 19th June in the Dingwall Baptist Church, over 25 tenants attended this Housing & Community Event which Councillor Margaret Patterson opened, James Turner from HTSI spoke about his part in bringing communities together and was keen to hear all the issues our tenants faced in their communities.

Marion Macdonald from the Eden Project gave the group a lot of information on what they do and the benefits of communities getting together. She spoke about the Big Lunch that's held all over the UK in June and she was delighted with how many had turned up for the lunch held today.

Lynn from the MOO Project spoke about their work within the community of Muir of Ord and their successful food fridge and grow food boxes, the tenants then enjoyed a lovely 2 course lunch from Pamela at Batty Baps and were entertained with some music from pupils from Dingwall Academy



## The Caol Community Engagement Event



The Caol Community Engagement Event was held in partnership with Highland Third Sector Interface, Police Scotland and the Caol Lunch Club on Thursday the 4th July. This engagement event was for the community to get together jointly with partners and to come up with ways to improve their community and the services delivered in that area.

Residents of Caol were invited to give their views on what they would like to

see improved in their community and were asked to participate in answering 4 questions about the area they live in. The information gained from this event will feed into the Caol Locality plan.

A variety of voluntary organisations attended with lots of useful information from the Police and Fire Services, the residents were given updates from various groups and had a lovely lunch followed by tea and cakes, Linda Campbell was delighted with the turnout that the lunch club catered for and she had organised some ceilidh music from Larry Byrne and Joe Gillies to finish the day off. Councillor Denis Rixson thanked all for taking part and praised all the voluntary services that attended the event



## Fantastic job done!

Corpach residents would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to the boys and girls from the Community Payback scheme for the fantastic job they did clearing the overgrown trees and ivy from the Old Kilmallie Cemetery. It looks so much better now!



Pictured: P.C. Keri Jones, Preventions and Interventions Badenoch and Strathspey with Sheltered Housing Tenant Caroline Ferguson

## Afternoon Tea at the Glen Centre in Aviemore

Aviemore sheltered housing tenants and Glen Centre users came together on 12th July to share ideas for improving and maintaining the communal gardens in the area and to discuss some recent anti-social behaviour issues with people using the area as a shortcut. P.C. Keri Jones, Preventions and Interventions Badenoch and Strathspey, spoke to the group about how to stay safe and report any issues using the appropriate number :101 for non-emergencies or 999 for emergencies requiring immediate attention.

Since the meeting P.C. Jones has carried out a crime prevention survey of the area and submitted recommendations to both The Highland Council and The Glen Centre for reducing incidents of antisocial behaviour from people using the neighbourhood as a shortcut. There are future plans for the tenants to work with school pupils to help maintain the communal gardens so that everyone can take pride in the area.

# Rent Consultation 2020 – 2021

We shall shortly be starting our Rent Consultation for Council house rents for 2019 – 2020.

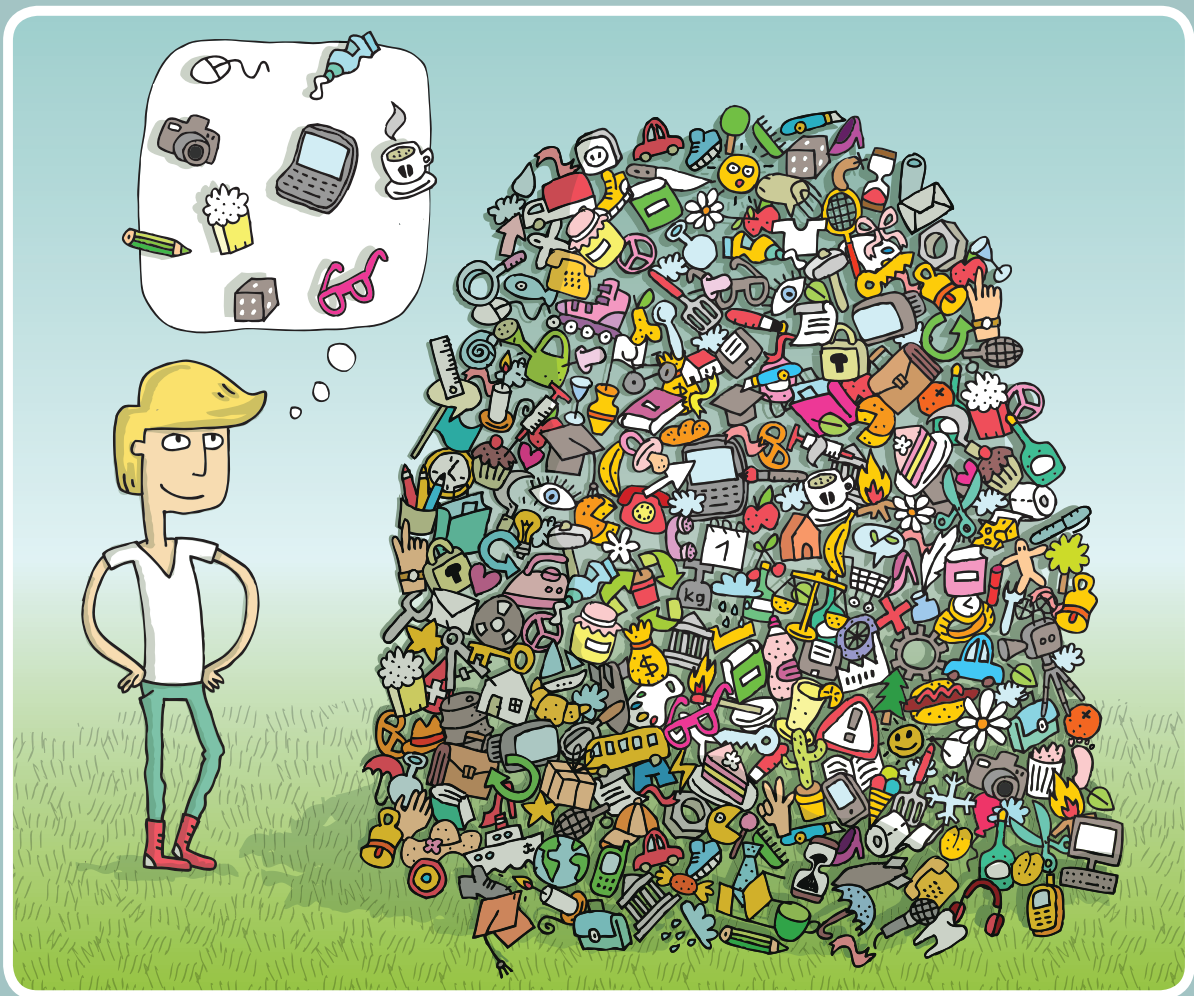
A paper consultation is enclosed with this newsletter which can be returned to us to the Freepost address on the form. You can also view the full consultation on our website at

[www.highland.gov.uk/rentconsultation](http://www.highland.gov.uk/rentconsultation) or complete the rent survey online via:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/rentc>

We will also be coming out to see as many tenants as possible, in the areas where they live, over the next month – please keep an eye out and come and talk to us! The timetable below shows where we will be on which days. More precise times will be available locally closer to the time.



TIMETABLE FOR RENT CONSULTATION VISITS				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>28th October</b> Lochcarron Balmacara Dornie Kyle	<b>29th October</b> Portree Dunvegan Broadford Kyleakin	<b>30th October</b> Strathpeffer Gairloch Ullapool	<b>31st October</b> Muir of Ord Conon Bridge Maryburgh Dingwall	<b>1st November</b> Cromarty Rosemarkie Fortrose Avoch Munlochy North Kessock
<b>4th November</b> Inverlochy Claggan Plantation Upper Achintore	<b>5th November</b> Mallaig Arisaig Caol Corpach Lochyside	<b>6th November</b> Ballachulish Kinlochleven Glencoe Fort William	<b>7th November</b> Merkinch South Kessock	<b>8th November</b> Lochaber Tenants Group  Spean Bridge
<b>11th November</b> Kingussie Newtonmore Nethy Bridge Aviemore	<b>12th November</b> Auldearn Boathpark Nairn Central Queenspark Tradespark	<b>13th November</b> Forth Augustus Drumnadrochit	<b>14th November</b> Ardersier Croy Culloden Smithton	<b>15th November</b> Ballifeary Dalneigh
<b>18th November</b> Diriebught Raigmore Inshes Wood Milton of Leys	<b>19th November</b> Dornoch Embo Rogart Golspie	<b>20th November</b> Beauly Kiltarlity Kinmylies Inverness Tenants Forum	<b>21st November</b> Tain Fearn Balintore Invergordon	<b>22nd November</b> Alness Evanton
<b>25th November</b> Haugh Inverness Town Centre Hilton	<b>26th November</b> Brora Helmsdale Lybster Thrumster	<b>27th November</b> North Wick Wick Pulteney Keiss	<b>28th November</b> Watten Castletown Thurso Halkirk	<b>29th November</b> Lairg Bonar Bridge Ardgay



## Home Contents Insurance Scheme

# WIN £25 Shopping Voucher!

(Sponsored by Thistle Insurance Services Limited)

For your chance to win **£25 Shopping Vouchers** help find all the missing items in the puzzle above.

It's important to think about the replacement cost of all your belongings and personal possessions if the worst was to happen. When faced with the questions **'how much would it cost to replace all your belongings in your home?'** many people focus on the big things such as home entertainment equipment, laptops and furniture, but the small things can also add up to thousands of pounds to replace. Items that are commonly overlooked are clothing, shoes, handbags, jewellery and items left in the loft, garage or outbuildings.

The Highland Council offers tenants a chance to insure the contents of their homes where premiums can be paid weekly alongside your rent.

### CAN YOU FIND ALL THE MISSING ITEMS?

For your chance to win £25 high street shopping vouchers, simply help George locate all the items he is looking for by circling the lost items. Once all the items have been found and circled complete your details below and return to Community Services Housing Team, Freepost RTSB-EBHT-JZTJ, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS, IV3 5NX

The competition is only available to tenants of The Highland Council. Closing date for entries will be Friday 15th November 2019. Entrants must be 16 years or over. The Highland Council's competition rules apply for more information, including terms and conditions or to request a home contents insurance application pack contact the Council on 01463 702417 or visit [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk). The winner will be the first correct entry drawn, the draw will take place week commencing 18th November 2019 and the winner will be notified by telephone or post no later than 30 days after the draw.

Name:

Address:

Telephone number:

