

Housing Matters

Taigheadas na Gàidhealtachd

Spring 2026

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Get Involved! Help Shape Your Housing Services

Your Voice Matters Here's How to Get Involved

You know your home and community better than anyone. Your lived experience makes you the real expert and we want to hear from you.

Whether you have lots of time or just a little, there are plenty of flexible ways to get involved. By sharing your views, you directly influence how we improve our services.

Upcoming Opportunities

We're considering setting up short term working groups to look at:

- How we handle rent arrears – policies, procedures and how we can do better
- A possible Tenant Support Fund – we're exploring ideas and would love your input

Your experience can help shape real, meaningful change.

Join Our Tenant Forum

Our online Tenant Forum meets every second month, and it's open to ALL tenants. We discuss:

- Changes to housing law and what they mean in real life
- How we set rent and how tenants can influence decisions
- Updates to housing policies
- Any ideas or concerns you want to raise

Everyone is welcome- your voice helps guide what we focus on.

Interested? Want to find out more?

Email us at tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk or chat to your tenant participation officer. We'd love to hear from you!

How Satisfied Are You with Your Housing Services?

Every three years we ask a carefully selected group of tenants to complete our Tenant Satisfaction Survey. This helps us understand:

- How well we communicate
- The quality of your home
- How effective our repairs service is
- What we're getting right- and what needs improvement

These results are shared with the Scottish Housing Regulator, who uses your feedback to check that we're doing our job properly. Your views really do make a difference.

If you're invited to take part this year, we'd be very grateful for your time- your voice helps shape the future of housing services.

Tenant Participation Team Update

There's been some exciting changes over the past few months within the TP team.

Catriona Sutherland, TP Officer for Skye and Lochalsh, welcomed baby girl, Fern, in December and is currently on maternity leave. In the interim, Adam Gordon, who resides on Skye, has been recruited to cover and is looking forward to meeting with tenants across Skye and Lochalsh.

We would like to give a warm welcome and introduce our newest team member – Adam Gordon.

Adam has worked in journalism and communications for the past 12 years across the West Highlands and Islands.

His experience includes roles as a journalist for the West Highland Free Press, Am Pàipear, and latterly with Radio Skye, where he led the station's first-ever dedicated news service for Skye and Lochalsh. Alongside his role for the council, Adam continues to work as journalist in a part-time capacity.



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 app, scan the QR codes below:



Available on the
App Store

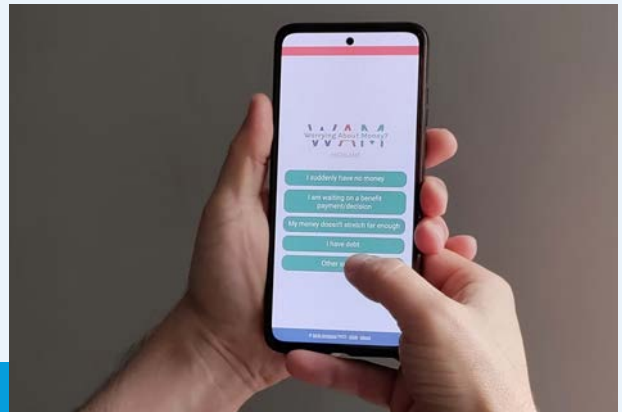


GET IT ON
Google Play

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

Download the free app

Worrying About Money? - Highland





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

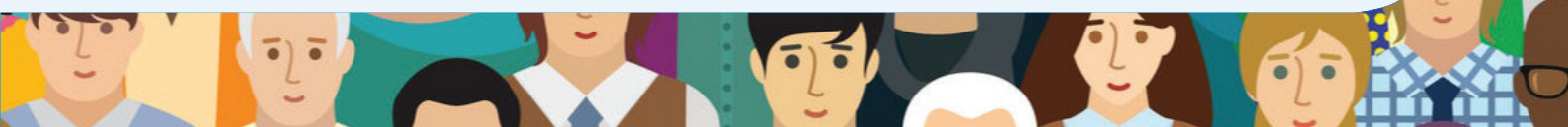


You can get support from THC's Welfare Team on many money matters. For example: checking if you are due money; applying for benefits and preventing or sorting out debt (no matter how much).

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

-  Call them today on: **0800 090 1004**
-  You can also email them on: **welfare.support@highland.gov.uk**
-  https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/335/community_advice/405/welfare_support

Alternatively, scan QR code



Damp and Mould in Your Home - What You Need to Know

It's more than just an eyesore. It can seriously affect your health. We take any report of damp or mould in your home very seriously.

Mould produces spores, when inhaled, can trigger or worsen respiratory conditions. It can be particularly harmful to young children, older people, and those with an existing health condition. The sooner any problem is reported, the sooner we can help.

What Causes Damp and Mould?

There are three main types of damp that can affect your home:

Condensation: The most common cause of mould in homes, occurring when warm, moist air meets a cold surface, such as a window or external wall. Cooking, bathing, and even breathing add moisture to the air. Condensation is likely to appear in corners of rooms, on north-facing walls, around window frames, and areas with poor ventilation e.g. bathrooms and kitchens.

Rising damp: occurs when moisture from the ground travels upward through walls and floors. It is less common but can be identified by a tide mark or waterlogged plaster near the base of a wall.

Penetrating damp: is caused by water getting in from outside - through a damaged roof, blocked gutters, cracked rendering, or defective windows. It tends to appear as spreading wet patches that worsen during or after rainfall.

What Can You Do to Help?

Highland Council has clear responsibilities to maintain your home. Steps you can take to reduce condensation and prevent mould:

- **Ventilate your home - open windows when cooking or showering and use extractor fans where fitted. Try to keep a small window ajar in each room where possible.**
- **Heat your home consistently - where possible try to keep a low, steady temperature throughout rather than letting rooms go cold for long periods.**
- **Dry clothes outdoors where possible, or in a well-ventilated room. Avoid drying laundry on radiators as this increases moisture in the air.**
- **Move furniture slightly away from walls to allow air to circulate, particularly against external walls.**
- **Wipe down condensation on windows and windowsills to prevent moisture building up.**

If mould does appear, you can treat small patches using a mould-removing spray. However, please still report it to us so we can check for any underlying cause that needs to be addressed.

Your New Legal Protections - Awaab's Law comes to Scotland

You now have stronger legal rights when it comes to damp and mould in your home.

The Scottish Government has confirmed it will introduce **Awaab's Law in Scotland** through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025, broadening ministers' powers to impose timeframes on social landlords to investigate disrepair.

The Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026 have been laid before the Scottish Parliament and, if approved, will come into force around October 2026. These regulations will introduce clear legal duties on landlords to investigate reports of damp and mould and begin any repairs within set timescales.

The law is named in memory of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who died in 2020 from a respiratory condition caused by prolonged damp and mould exposure in his home. His story led to a change in the law that will protect tenants across Scotland.

Once the regulations are in force, here is what it will mean for you:

Once a landlord becomes aware of a damp or mould issue, they must complete a full investigation within 10 working days. Following the investigation, your landlord must provide you with a written summary of their findings within 3 working days. If a significant hazard is identified, they must then take steps to make your home safe within 5 working days.

These are legal requirements shifting the responsibility firmly onto landlords to respond promptly to tenants' concerns and to be proactive in resolving issues and carrying out repairs.

Report It - Don't Delay

Tell us as soon as you notice a problem. **Damp and mould can spread quickly**, and an issue that is caught early is far easier and less disruptive to fix.

Do not wait to see if a problem clears up on its own. Leaving damp or mould untreated can put your health at risk and lead to greater damage to your home over time.

To report damp or mould in your property, call the Service Centre on 01349 886602 or in person at your nearest service point.

A note on access: Your co-operation in allowing access is appreciated and, under the new regulations, providing access is a requirement of your tenancy agreement.

How to Prevent Blocked Drains in Your Home

Blocked drains aren't just inconvenient - they can cause flooding, damage to homes, and pollution in our local rivers, burns and coastal areas. Across Scotland, more than 36,000 blocked drains and sewers are reported every year, and around 80% are caused by items that should never have been flushed or poured away.

The good news? A few simple habits at home can make a big difference.

Why Drains Get Blocked

Drains and household sewer pipes are surprisingly small - usually only about 10cm wide, less than the size of a DVD. They are only designed to carry:

- Wastewater from sinks, baths and showers
- The 3 Ps: pee, poo and toilet paper

Everything else, even if it seems to flush or wash away, can cause blockages further down the system.

In the Kitchen:

Keep Fats, Oil and Grease Out of the Sink



Fats, oils and grease (often called FOG) might look harmless when warm, but once in the pipes they cool and harden. When these fats mix with other materials, they create stubborn blockages known as fatbergs.

What NOT to pour down your sink

- Fat, oil, lard and grease
- Sauces, gravies, soups and stocks
- Milk and dairy products
- Leftover food or peelings

Even hot water won't dissolve fats - they will still re-solidify in the pipes.

Kitchen tips to prevent blockages

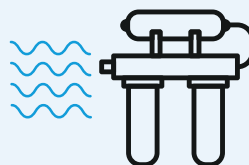
- Let fats and oils cool, then scrape them into a container and recycle or bin them.
- Wipe or scrape greasy dishes, pans and utensils before washing.
- Use a sink strainer to catch food scraps.
- Dispose of food peelings and leftovers in your household rubbish or food waste bin (if provided).

Why It Matters

Blocked drains can lead to:

- Flooding in your home or garden
- Backups that affect neighbours
- Pollution in local waters and harm to wildlife
- Expensive repairs and disruption

By changing a few small habits, you help keep our shared drainage systems running smoothly - and contribute to a cleaner, healthier environment for everyone.



In the Bathroom:

Flush Only the 3 Ps



A huge amount of bathroom waste contains plastic and doesn't break down in water. Even wipes labelled "flushable" can clog pipes.

Do NOT flush:

- Any type of wipes - baby, facial, cleaning or "flushable"
- Sanitary products (pads, tampons, applicators, liners)
- Cotton wool, cotton buds and make up pads
- Disposable nappies and nappy liners
- Condoms and incontinence products
- Colostomy bags, used bandages, contact lenses

Keep a small bin in the bathroom so these items can be disposed of quickly and hygienically.

Other items to dispose of safely

- Razor blades - put in a solid container before binning
- Needles/syringes - use a sharps box or take to a Needle Bank
- Unused or unwanted medicines - return them to a pharmacy

Electrical Inspections – Important Information for All Tenants



Highland Council will begin carrying out five-year electrical safety inspections across all Highland properties this year. This follows confirmation from the Scottish Housing Regulator that all social landlords in Scotland are legally required to complete these inspections to ensure tenants' homes are safe.

During the pandemic, like many landlords, Highland Council focused on completing checks when properties became void or when major works were underway. We are now resuming full cyclical inspections, and around one quarter of all Council homes will be inspected over the next 12 months as part of this programme.

Work orders will be issued throughout the year to our own electricians and approved contractors. When they attend, the electrician will carry out a full test and inspection of the fixed electrical installation within your home.

This includes:

- Wiring
- Plug sockets and switches
- Light fittings
- Fuse boxes/consumer units
- Electric showers
- Extractor fans



If any immediate hazards are identified, the electrician will make them safe before leaving your home. A further appointment may be required if additional improvement work is needed (for example, replacing a fuse box).

Please note:

- A typical inspection takes around 2 hours.
- Your electricity supply will need to be switched off during the inspection.

Access Requirements

Electrical inspections are a statutory health and safety requirement, and it is essential that tenants provide access when appointments are arranged. Allowing access ensures we can meet our legal duty to keep your home safe and maintain compliance with national regulations.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Help Prevent Gulls and Other Pests

Gulls, pigeons, rats and mice become a problem when food is easy to find. By making a few small changes, we can all help keep our homes and shared areas clean and safe.

Don't Feed Gulls

Feeding gulls - even accidentally encourages them to return, behave aggressively, and attract other vermin.

- **Don't feed birds or leave food outside.**
- **Keep bin lids closed and never leave loose rubbish bags out.**
- **If feeding garden birds, only put out small amounts and clean up spills.**

Store Waste Properly

Good waste storage stops birds and rodents from gathering.

- **Put all rubbish inside your wheelie bin with the lid closed.**
- **Don't leave bags beside bins or put rubbish out early.**
- **Clean up any spills around bin stores.**

Keep Pests Out

Most pest issues start when they find easy access.

- **Report any holes, damaged vents, or gaps around your home.**
- **Keep areas clear of food waste, clutter or old furniture.**
- **Never disturb active bird nests — many are legally protected.**
- **Contact your Housing Officer if pests are getting in.**



What Not to Do

- **Don't use traps or poisons unless professionally approved.**
- **Don't remove gull nests yourself — they are protected.**
- **If pest control is needed, your Housing Team can help arrange it.**

Working Together

By avoiding feeding gulls, storing waste correctly and reporting issues early, we can reduce nuisance birds and vermin and keep our neighbourhood safe.



What is Antisocial Behaviour?

Antisocial behaviour is when someone acts in a way that causes alarm or distress to others who are not part of their household and can include

- **abuse**
- **drug dealing**
- **vandalism and graffiti**
- **noise disturbances**
(loud music, noisy parties or shouting)
- **threatening or violent behaviour**

Antisocial behaviour does not

include reasonable, everyday noises or lifestyle differences that do not deliberately cause harassment, alarm, or distress.

Some examples of what is not considered ASB include

- **children playing**
- **ordinary household noise**
(footsteps, DIY, vacuuming)
- **legal parking**
- **minor, one-off neighbour disputes that are generally characterized by a lack of malicious intent or sustained nuisance.**



POLICE
SCOTLAND
Keeping people safe
POILEAS ALBA



Police Scotland will lead any investigation into incidents of alleged drug or other criminal activity so you must call

Police Scotland on 101
or **Crimestoppers on**
0800 555 111.

If someone's life or health is in danger call 999.

Busting Allocation Myths

All social housing is allocated through the Highland Housing Register. We all know that demand for our houses outstrips supply, and so we are currently reviewing the allocations policy with partner landlords. We are keen to hear your views on what you think works well and what doesn't. Below are some allocation myths and you may find this helpful.

"People just arrive in the Highlands from other places and get houses but local people are forgotten"

"This is not true. We assess people's need for housing within Highland on an individual basis and against the HHR Allocations policy. People who have a need to be in Highland are awarded 'Need to Reside' points on their application and have to meet specific criteria to be awarded these points. Most applicants who receive an offer of housing have 'Need to Reside' points on their application."

"I have been told it's unlikely I will get an offer of rehousing even though I need one. Why?"

"Your application has been assessed against the HHR Allocations Policy. If the level of points you have been awarded is low, we may advise you that an allocation of rehousing is unlikely and offer advice on alternative housing options. It is important that we are frank and honest when giving housing options advice so that applicants clearly understand their prospects of being housed."

"I've been waiting for ages, why haven't I been offered anything yet?"

"Length of time does not give you any points or increase your housing need. We are also only able to consider applicants for an offer when the right property type becomes available in the areas they have chosen. This is why sometimes housing staff will encourage you to consider as many areas as possible to maximise your opportunities."

"Do I move up the list the longer I wait?"

"No. There is no queue that you work your way up. Applications are assessed on housing need and priority using the Highland Housing Register, HHR Allocations Policy and not on waiting time. Your position will change as other applicants apply with a higher assessed need or other applicant's circumstances change. Everyone has access to the Highland Housing Register however that does not guarantee or mean you will receive an offer of rehousing. In short, the amount of time you spend on the list is not a factor which is considered."

"My friend and I have the exact same circumstances, they have been given an offer and I have not - why?"

"Even if two people think their situations are identical, small differences in housing need mean one person receives an offer sooner. No two applications are the same and you will likely be unaware why a household's circumstances are different to your own "

"Does applying to lots of landlords improve my chances?"

"No, there is one shared housing register. Your application is shared with Highland Council, Cairn Housing Association, Albyn Housing Society, Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association and Caledonia Housing Association. A single application covers all of them."

"Someone I know applied after me and got a house - why?"

"It is likely that they had a higher housing need (for example: homelessness, overcrowding, health needs, unsuitable accommodation). Applications are assessed based on need, not date of application"

"I thought only homeless people get housing."

"No, anyone aged 16+ can apply, and many applicants are not homeless. However, homeless applicants may get higher priority because of urgent need."

"I have not heard anything, does this mean I am no longer on the register?"

Your application is live unless you tell us that you wish to withdraw your application. We will only contact you if we need further evidence to support your application, to give you an offer, or for your annual reregistration. If you fail to respond to these letters, this may result in your application being removed from the register"

"Do I need to re-apply each year?"

"You must reply to your annual reregistration letter to remain on the HHR. Failing to do so your application will be removed from the register, and you will need to re-apply. It is your responsibility to let us know if your circumstances change so we can re-assess your housing need. You miss out on offers of rehousing or get offers which do not meet your needs."

"I have sent in lots of supporting letters about my application and yet I still haven't received an offer for a new house"

We acknowledge and recognise supporting letters from people who may be involved in your life however these letters do not mean you will be awarded more points or that you will be prioritised. If these letters contain information which we think will change your points then we will contact you"

SCAN TO FIND
OUT MORE



Area Updates...

Caithness & Sutherland Update

Tenant Event in Thurso a Great Success



Spring was in the air at the start of March as tenants from **Thurso, Halkirk and Castletown** came together for a well-attended meeting at the Park Hotel.

We were delighted to welcome **Councillor Willie Mackay**, along with members of the Housing and Maintenance team, **AlIenergy, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and Alzheimer's Scotland**. Each organisation was available to speak with tenants, provide information, and answer questions about the services and support available in the local area.

The event had a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, with Councillor Willie Mackay entertaining everyone with a lively 'tune on the spoons', which brought plenty of smiles and laughter from those attending.

Events like this provide a great opportunity for tenants to meet local representatives and organisations, raise any concerns, and learn more about the support and services available to them. Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the event such a success.



Golspie Drop in Event

Wednesday 8th April • 10.30am – 12.30pm
Golspie Service Point, Main Street,

Pop in and have a chat with **Leona Geddes,**
Tenant Participation Officer.

This is a great opportunity to ask questions, share your views, and find out more about tenant participation. Everyone is welcome - feel free to drop in during the session!

Wick Interested Tenants
COFFEE MORNING
Tuesday 14th April
10.30am – 12noon
Pulteneytown Community Centre, Huddart Street, Wick

Pop in and have a chat with **Leona Geddes,**
Tenant Participation Officer.

This is a great opportunity to ask questions, share your views, and find out more about tenant participation. Everyone is welcome - feel free to drop in during the session!

COFFEE AND A CHAT

Stepping Stones Drop in Event, Thurso

Wednesday 15th April • 12.30pm – 2.00pm
Riverside Road, Thurso

Pop in and have a chat with **Leona Geddes,**
Tenant Participation Officer.

This is a great opportunity to ask questions, share your views, and find out more about tenant participation. Everyone is welcome - feel free to drop in during the session!



The Haven Drop in Event, Wick

Tuesday 7th April • 12.30pm – 2.00pm
Bankhead Road, Wick

Pop in and have a chat with **Leona Geddes,**
Tenant Participation Officer.

This is a great opportunity to ask questions, share your views, and find out more about tenant participation. Everyone is welcome - feel free to drop in during the session!



Inverness Update



Raigmore Estate

With Spring around the corner Raigmore Community Residents Association (RCRA) has burst into action with preparations for the coming year. The group had a planting day where over 100 fruit and nut trees were planted in the food forest. The group are working on their own newsletter for Raigmore and have designed an events magazine letting Raigmore residents know of up coming RCRA days.

Raigmore had its first litter pick of the year which was a great success with many folk turning out to help.

The Housing Team have continued their housing drop ins where Raigmore residents can meet with their Housing Officer and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to discuss issues in person and the team will be hosting community events where there will be multi agencies attending such as the Police, Fire brigade and many more. All these drop ins are held at the community centre and no need to book a space, turn up and have a chat.

Aviemore interested tenants

The group continue to meet up every month and thoroughly enjoyed their group day out. They went to Inverness and spent the day together at Simpsons garden centre where they indulged in an afternoon tea, then got down to business with picking plants and flowers for the communal green space. After a winter full of bugs and bad weather it was lovely for everyone to get a day out together. it was lovely to see everyone in great form. Next project on everyone's radar the communal green space, **better dig out our gardening gloves!**

Lochiel Interested Tenants

Lochiel club are still having their Bingo and Bacon roll Saturdays, Fish and chip Fridays and meet with their TPO once a month. The group are going to plant up the club garden for everyone to enjoy as a memorial to one of the members who recently passed, the supplies are on order so now all they need is a dry day to get the garden in full bloom. The group had a lovely afternoon out together for Easter Lunch at The Anchor café.



Dalneigh

Hawthorn allotments got the go ahead to extend the amount of allotment space they have. This has dramatically increased the amount of allotments they will have and reduce the waiting list substantially a big Win Win. The work has already began and locals are delighted to see this project grow.

Hilton

Police Scotland, Highland Council and other agencies are coming together to do drop in events and they have to date held 4 of these events at Hilton community centre. They are typically held on a Wednesday when Inverness Foodstuff are running their free lunch at the Hilton Community centre café and all are welcome to both events. Dates to be confirmed for the next one but keep an eye out on the community centre's noticeboard. These are a great opportunity to meet services in person such as Highland council housing team for your area, no need to book just pop along on the day and get a chat.

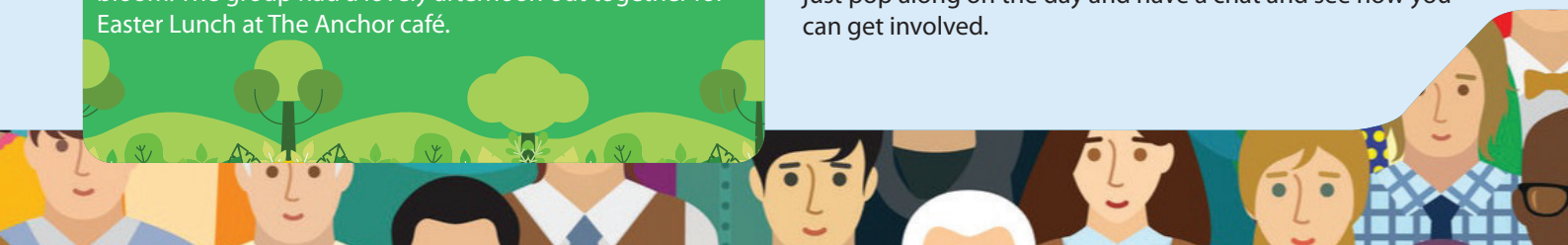


Sheltered Housing

We are hosting an information event for our interested tenants who live in sheltered housing to cover topics such as scam calls and what to do, safety in the home and other topics that our tenants suggested/have an interest in. This event is in May and we are looking forward to it, so keep an eye out in the next newsletter to see how it went.

Granttown

Tenant Participation had a tenant drop in session in March and will be hosting another in May. The TPO will be posting invites for the drop in so keep any eye out, you will not need to book just pop along on the day and have a chat and see how you can get involved.



Lochaber Update

Caol Resident Group

Caol Resident Group had a successful Christmas Event, starting off with the groups Santa, his elves & snowman bringing festive cheer around the Caol and Lochside. Entertainment was provided by Nevis Radio, Zuza Lewczuk and Siena Hatch, pupils from Lochaber High School and special guest Caolie the Highland Cow aka Jayden, one of the groups youth representatives who loves to volunteer as Caolie! Well done to all involved, the Lochaber TPO Karin McKay for co-ordinating all the events and organising the trees for all the areas.



Big thank you to all the sponsors of the Christmas trees. Almost £2k was raised from the Bingo event which helps pay for the Caol Xmas lights to go up.

The Caol Group next event was Saturday 28th March for Easter Fun. The group has also received funding for some new benches to put outside the Youth Centre and Kilmallie Neighbours square to enable the groups to use outdoor space in good weather.

Monday's Bite & Blether 1pm to 3pm at the Caol Youth Centre continues, for folk to come along and get a light lunch, cuppa and cake. Please contact Karin McKay for more information on this.

Upper Achintore Regeneration Group

The group has supported the Highland Council consultation on the Lochaber Road Playpark, as a small amount of funding has been allocated to revamp the park. The consultation showed differing perspectives; 63% of children expressed they wanted a new park, adult responses with 45% supporting the relocation. The consultation explained that upgrading the existing playpark would require substantial community fund raising to repair the surface before new equipment could be installed, given the scale of funding required there is a real risk that the necessary funds won't be raised potentially leaving children without a quality play area.

The group meet online on Microsoft Teams every third Wednesday of the month and are always looking for new members to join.

Details can be found on their Facebookpage



Plantation Community Association

The PCA are looking to have their AGM on the 13th May at 6.30pm in the PCA Hub and are desperately looking for more members, the group are hoping to get help to remove the gym area at Pine Grove and replace with a seating area or planters. The group are holding an Easter drop in event in Partnership with the Plantation Larder on **Wednesday the 15th April** 12 to 2.30pm please get in touch with the Plantation Group on their Facebookpage or Karin McKay if you would like any info on becoming a member.

Inverloch Community Association

The group has been running for almost a year now. During this time, they have focused on developing good communication for all, initially through social media and posters. For those who have no access to social media we plan to make better use of community notice boards.

Last year they held 3 events; a ceilidh to fundraise for both the Pensioners & main Christmas lunch which were great successes. Thirdly, the 'Switching on' of the Christmas lights with a visit from Santa and the Elves, attended by 50 children and their families.

The group are liaising with the Highland Council after funding became available for play parks, they have been working to plan, design and to further fund raise for a new and improved play park. All designs and funding applications have been submitted to Highland Council and we await their response.



Follow Inverloch on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Inverloch/>

Claggan Resident Association

The biggest achievement for the group was the reopening of the steps at Tom na Faidhir in Claggan last summer, after years being fenced off and unusable. The group along with Sarah Fanet met with the Highland Council maintenance team after a community estate walk about last April to see what could be done to bring them back to use.



The Christmas light switch was held with a visit from Santa and his elves and big thank you to Sarah McKeown from Claggan for turning the lights on the beautiful tree that the Tenant Participation Officer arranged, Angus Maclennan and Douglas Barr who decorated and made the tree secure.



Lochaber Housing Team

Our Housing Management Officers are here to help and are going to be contacting all tenants to carry out a tenancy visit during the next year or so. These visits help us ensure that your tenancy is running smoothly. We would also like to take this opportunity to update your household, next of kin and contact details and to give you the chance to discuss any housing related matters or support needs you may have. Your Housing Management Officer will be in touch to arrange a convenient time in due course.

There is also a monthly drop in at Charles Kennedy Building on the last Thursday of every month from 2pm to 6pm

- One-to-one chats with Housing Management Officers and Housing Options Officers
- Help with applications, repairs, rent and arrears, tenancy issues
- Signposting and Advice on benefits and financial support
- Energy Advice and warm packs
- Tea and Coffee – we look forward to seeing you.

*Please note between 2-4.30pm a member of the service point team will be available should you require any of the usual functions.



Mid Ross and Nairn Update

Cromarty

Tenant Participation team in collaboration with the Youth Development Officers organised the drop in information event in the Cromarty Youth Café in November. The members of the public had an opportunity to speak to the officers from housing and welfare support team who provided guidance and practical support tailored to individual needs.

Nairn

Nairn Older People's Get-together event was held in September in partnership with the Age Scotland and Tenant Participation. Representatives from The Highland Cycle Ability Centre, The University of the Third Age (U3A), Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Renew 32, Starlight Centre of Excellence, Citizens Advice Bureau and residents of Nairn discussed activities currently available for older people in Nairn. The event was warmly received and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, fostering a positive atmosphere of engagement, shared learning and community spirit.

Skye and Lochalsh Update



Walkabout success

The amenities team have been hard at work clearing a very overgrown disused drying area that was identified as needing attention on an estate walkabout, attended by Councillors, staff and tenants, held at Heathmount Road and Nicholson Court last year. The team also scraped weeds and moss from the pavements and paths around the estate and removed several areas of overgrown shrubs and bracken. This greatly improves the appearance of the area and will hopefully encourage tenants to take pride in their own garden areas too.

Garden Competition Winner

Following our Garden Competition last summer we had some really great entries and a tough time to pick a winner. Pictured is one of last year's winners from Broadford on Skye, their garden had lots of colour and variety of plants and stood out for the judges.



Garden Competition 2026

Following last years success and to give more tenants the opportunity to take part we are running the competition again this year! So we'll be on the lookout for the best Highland Council Tenant's Garden for 2026. 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 **14th August 2026** and the winning garden will be picked by Chief Officer of Housing and Communities, Alison Clark.



Domestic Abuse - Our Commitment

At Highland Council, we want everyone to feel safe in their home. This includes people who are experiencing domestic abuse, people at risk, and their families.

Our new Domestic Abuse Housing Policy sets out how we will support you and what you can expect from us.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is when a partner or ex partner hurts, scares or controls someone.

It can include:

- physical or sexual abuse - or violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- emotional or mental abuse, such as threats, shouting, controlling money, or stopping someone seeing friends or family

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. It is never the victim's fault.

What we promise

We will:

- Take all reports of domestic abuse seriously
- Listen and respond sensitively and without judgement
- Put your safety and choices first
- Help you understand your housing options
- Help and support you whether you choose to stay in your home or move somewhere else
- Work with specialist support services to get you the help and support you need

Domestic abuse affects the whole family and has a serious impact on children. We will always think about children's safety, wellbeing and needs.

How we can help with your housing

Everyone's situation is different. We will work with you to find the safest and best option. This could include:

- Emergency accommodation if you need to leave quickly
- Making your home safer, by improving its security (e.g. lock changes etc)
- Helping you stay in the home and supporting action to remove the person carrying out the abuse
- Supporting you to move – without the need to be homeless
- Helping you apply for benefits, get financial advice or deal with money issues

Helping you access specialist and legal advice (e.g. to put legal orders in place to prevent abuse; to understand all your options etc.)

If you decide to leave your home, we will help you plan your next steps and keep safe.

Working With Other Services

You are not alone. We work closely with the Police; Women's Aid; and other advice and support services. Our staff know how to help you access these services safely. We will always handle your situation with care and confidentiality. Your safety is our priority.

Keeping You Safe

Our staff are trained to:

- Listen and believe you
- Understand risks and help you make a safety plan
- Support you through the housing process
- Work with other agencies to protect you

We know it can be dangerous to leave an abusive partner. We will always respect your choices and help you plan what feels safest for you.

We Are Here for You

Domestic abuse is not acceptable, and no one should face it alone.

If you are worried about yourself or someone else, please reach out. We are here to help, whenever you are ready.

On our website at www.highland.gov.uk/domesticabuse you can find:

- How to contact services who can help and advise you
- more details on how we can help you (our policy)

Law change giving us power to end a domestic abuser's tenancy

All social landlords, including us, have new legal powers to protect victim -survivors of domestic abuse and hold perpetrators to account.

This means we can transfer a tenancy from an abusive tenant to their victim - survivor. We can do this by acting on behalf of the victim - survivor and applying for a court order to end the abuser's tenancy. This new approach can be used from 1st August 2026.

Brian Cameron, Strategic Lead - Housing and Customer Services

said: "We are serious about taking a zero tolerance approach to this type of unacceptable behaviour. This new power brings many benefits. It removes the need for victims to take legal action themselves, which can be dangerous, costly and time-consuming. It allows us get their abuser to leave if they are refusing to do so. And importantly, it allows survivors and their children to stay in their home and community."

Scottish Women's Aid have stated that: "Housing is one of the main challenges women face when ending a relationship with an abusive partner and keeping a roof over the heads of their family and avoiding homelessness are critical pressures.

"This change should enable women and their children to stay in their home, their schools and the area where they often have a support network and moves the consequences of abuse where they belong - the abuser."

Weed Control on Our Housing Estates – Caring for Our Shared Community Spaces

Housing is working with Amenity Services to keep our estates tidy, safe, and pleasant. A new weed control programme has been introduced across all Highland Council Housing areas to make the service more efficient and consistent.

Here's a quick guide to what you can expect this year:

When weed control will happen

Weed treatment will take place twice a year, during:

- Spring: February – March
- Late Summer: August – September

These routine visits help keep paths and communal areas clear and safe.

Additional spot treatments may be arranged if growth becomes difficult in between.

Where we focus first

Because resources need to be prioritised fairly, the programme focuses on:

1. Sheltered Housing complexes (highest priority)
2. Estates with a high number of council properties
3. All other areas, where staff and equipment are available

What areas are included?

Weed control covers:

- Communal footpaths
- Shared drying areas
- Shared access routes in Housing estates

The aim is to keep these areas safe, accessible, and well maintained.

How the work is carried out?

Amenity Services use trained operators and specialist equipment, including weed control machines and approved methods such as:

- Manual and mechanical removal
- Approved herbicide treatments

All work is done following strict safety and environmental guidance.

Reporting issues

If you notice:

- Overgrown weeds blocking paths
- Slippery, unsafe surfaces
- Access problems for mobility aids or prams

Please contact the Service Centre on

01349 886602, and we will raise this with Amenity staff. This helps us respond quickly, especially where safety is concerned.

Our aim

We want to ensure all our estates feel clean, safe, and cared for. This new programme approach helps make weed control more reliable, more efficient, and fairer across the Highlands.

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, ask for a works order number to track your report.

To report a repair phone the service centre on 01349 886602 or in person at your nearest service point



Spring Jobs Without the Scams

Spring is when many people begin looking at outdoor jobs such as driveway cleaning, fencing, gardening, or small household tasks. Unfortunately, this is also when rogue traders and doorstep callers become more active across the Highlands, offering unexpected home repairs or services.

Cold calls and unannounced doorstep visits can catch you off guard, and pushy behaviour can feel intimidating. If you're uncertain about who you're speaking to, it's safest not to let them in, not to agree to anything, and not to share personal information.

If you need to get work done at home, always contact the Council in the first instance. They will confirm whether the repair is their responsibility and arrange for approved contractors if required. This helps ensure work is carried out safely and prevents tenants from being misled by rogue callers.

If you think you've been approached by a rogue trader, or witness suspicious activity, rogue traders can be reported to **Trading Standards** through **Advice Direct Scotland** on **0808 164 6000** or to Police Scotland on 101. For advice on your consumer rights - including situations involving pressure selling, unclear pricing, or poor v quality workmanship - Advice Direct Scotland also offers free, impartial guidance.



Report Repairs to Highland Council

Monday – Friday

01349 886602

Out of hours emergencies

01349 886691

For smaller personal jobs that aren't the Council's responsibility - such as gardening, decorating, or minor DIY - always use reputable traders rather than doorstep callers. Highland Council Trading Standards advises residents to:







- Avoid buying from unexpected callers
- Never feel pressured into agreeing to work on the spot
- Get three quotes and check reviews
- Avoid paying in full upfront (especially in cash)
- Ensure all work and costs are confirmed in writing
- Use businesses vetted by Highland Trusted Trader to reduce the risk of poor quality or overpriced work



Spring Jobs Without the Scams

Rogue traders often appear in spring offering unexpected home repairs, gardening, or driveway work

STAY SAFE:

-  Don't buy from unexpected callers
-  Never agree to work on the spot
-  Get 3 quotes & check reviews
-  Don't pay in full upfront
-  Get all work and costs in writing
-  Use reputable, vetted traders


REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY:

 Trading Standards via Advice Direct Scotland:
0808 164 6000

 Police Scotland: 101

Find vetted local traders:

 www.trustedtrader.scot/Highland

 **0333 444 7016**

Scan the QR code to access the website



KEY BENEFITS

-  Free to use for all Highland residents
-  Vetted by Trading Standards
-  Real customer reviews
-  Protection from rogue traders
-  Phone support available
-  Supports fair, local business practices



Highland
Trusted Trader



Supported by

POLICE
SCOTLAND
Keeping people safe
POILEAS ALBA



Green Bin

plastic containers, metal containers & cartons



plastic bottles ✓



plastic pots, tubs & trays ✓



plastic & metal lids/tops ✓



tins & cans ✓



clean aluminium foil/trays ✓



empty aerosols ✓



metal tins & plastic tubs ✓



food and drink cartons ✓

Blue Bin

paper, card & cardboard



newspaper & magazines ✓



envelopes & junk mail ✓



shredded paper ✓



paperback books ✓



egg boxes, toilet roll tubes ✓



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 M - F	0800 328 5644 (phone)
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	101 (Non Emergency)
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	Adam Gordon	adam.gordon1@highland.gov.uk	07557566235
Lochaber	Karin McKay	karin.mckay@highland.gov.uk	07785 477696
Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey	Kerri Macdonald	kerri.macdonald@highland.gov.uk	07774 337689