



# homeward

hebridean housing partnership newsletter



*We wish all our tenants and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year*



CRY, The Andrew MacLeod Memorial Fund



The Salvation Army

## Charitable Donations

Following a resolution at HHP's recent AGM, donations of £750 were presented to CRY (The Andrew MacLeod Memorial Fund), Crossroads, The Salvation Army, and Tagsa Uibhist to aid them with the worthwhile work they are carrying out in communities throughout the Western Isles.

Board Member, Norman MacLeod, presented cheques to:

**Murdo Macleod and George Moody on behalf of CRY (The Andrew MacLeod Memorial Fund).** CRY –Cardiac Risk in the Young – was set up to raise awareness of Sudden Adult Death Syndrome. CRY provides medical information, offers support to those who have suffered bereavement, and also provides a travelling screening service in local communities. Mr MacLeod said that each time the screening service has visited Lewis, it has referred young people for further screening.

**Donna MacLeod and Rhoda MacDonald on behalf of Crossroads Lewis,** which supports approximately

85 carers and service users on a weekly basis. They provide home support to carers regardless of age, disability or illness and to those living alone, struggling with ill-health or loneliness. They also provide a valued Palliative service at home. The service Crossroads offer is personalised and responds to individual circumstances.

**Captain James Sabiston and Major Bruce Smith on behalf of The Salvation Army.** The Salvation Army has had a presence in the Western Isles for several decades and extends a helping hand to those who are homeless, friendless and in need, providing hot meals and practical, social and spiritual support to many people within our community.

HHP's Chair, David Blaney, presented a cheque to **Kathryn Martin on behalf of Tagsa Uibhist,** a voluntary organisation which provides services throughout the Southern Isles. The organisation was formed in 1999 and has provided support for carers, people living with dementia, the elderly, and vulnerable people living in their own homes.



Crossroads Lewis



Tagsa Uibhist

## Rent First

Many people come under extreme financial pressure and are tempted to use 'the rent money' to help fund Christmas. John MacIver, Director of Operations urges our tenants not to fall into that trap. Make rent your top payment priority throughout the year, and especially at Christmas time, **do not put your home at risk.** Your tenancy gives you the highest level of security, and it is important to pay your rent to continue to enjoy that protection. Contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible if you encounter any payment difficulties. We are here to help.

WIN  
£100!

## CLEAR RENT ACCOUNT

The first tenant selected at random after the holiday break who has a clear rent account on 1st January 2015 will receive a £100 voucher for a local shop of their choice.

There will also be 2 runner-up prizes of £50!

# Staff News



Martin Flett joined HHP in November 2011 as a Housing Officer and has recently taken over as Area Manager. Prior to joining HHP Martin had extensive housing management experience with Basildon Council in Essex.



Susan Greig started working with HHP in September 2015 as an Administrative Assistant within the Customer Services Team. Prior to this, Susan was living in Inverness and worked in the Housing Benefit/Council Tax section of Highland Council.

Since moving to the Island Susan has settled in well to the Island way of life and met lots of new and interesting people.



Donalda MacKinnon started work with HHP in January 2014 as an Administrative Assistant and recently has taken over the position of Housing Officer. Donalda previously worked for FES FM and CNES.



Jenny MacKenzie started working with HHP in September 2014 as a Finance Officer with the Resources team. In the past she was employed by Hilton Hotels where she worked for 10 years on their websites, she gained a MSc IT at Glasgow University 2012-2013.

Jenny recently worked as a Project Manager at a large digital web agency before deciding to move back to Lewis



Allison Agnew recently moved to the Island after falling in love with the place when she would come to visit relatives in the school holidays when she was younger.

Allison started with HHP as a part time Administrative Assistant; recently Allison was successful in securing a full time post at HHP as the administrative assistant for the Housing Services Team.



Catherine Nicolson was working as a receptionist at the Cabarfeidh Hotel, Stornoway before starting work with HHP in September 2015.

Prior to this Catherine worked for Swir Pacific Offshore based in Aberdeen where she lived until she married and moved to Lewis.

## MacMillan Coffee Morning

On Friday 26th September HHP and Citizens Advice Direct staff worked together to raise £484.86 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Staff from both organisations slaved over hot ovens the night before to bring in a huge selection of baking to sell for the charity. HHP's Board room was turned into a special tea room for the morning and staff spent their breaks drinking tea, sampling the treats and guessing the coffee on the special Macmillan poster. Visitors from the Comhairle, Citizens Advice and FES added to the significant sum raised on the day.

Macmillan Cancer Support will use the money raised to help make sure no one has to face cancer alone, from the moment they're diagnosed, through treatment and beyond.



Wear it Pink Day – In October 2014 HHP staff participated in wear it pink to work and raised £110 for Breast Cancer Campaign

# TIME TO SWITCH?

With many of HHP tenants on Total Heating Total Control (THTC) or Economy 10 Tariffs now might be time to consider switching as many energy suppliers have begun to introduce standard tariffs as low as 12.2p per kw/hr.

Those with Economy 10 pay two different rates. One is for the 10 hours off peak rate and another is the peak rate. At the moment the off peak rate is 12.02p per kw/hr and the peak is 18.14p per kw/hr. Switching to a flat rate of 12.2p could create savings especially if you don't make much use of the off peak tariff. Here is how to find out if switching is for you.

On your bill there are two readings. Showing the units used at peak rate and at off peak rate. The cost for these rates will be shown on your bill.

To work out if you should switch, add the two rates together and multiply by 12.2p. If this is cheaper than the cost shown on your bill then you should consider switching and should seek further advice. See the example below.

Tariff type	Tariff rate	Weekly amount used	Cost
E10 Off Peak	12.02p	57	£6.85
E10 Standard	18.14p	74	£13.42
<b>Total for E10</b>		<b>131</b>	<b>£20.27</b>

**SSE Standard 12.3p 131 £16.11**

Weekly saving over E10 £4.16

Yearly saving over E10 £216.32

If you have a prepayment meter then you may need to change this to take advantage of the new tariff. Please contact The Energy Advice Service (TEAS) on 01851 706121 for further advice and to discuss these issues. They have a dedicated support team to help with switching.

## Fuel Poverty Update

This year saw the publication of the Comhairle's Fuel Poverty Report and whilst the findings were expected it was still disturbing to read that fuel poverty in the Islands seems to be getting worse. HHP are very concerned that our tenants are struggling to make ends meet and have been working on initiatives to help them.

Our heating, insulation and window replacement programme continued to make a difference on fuel bills as Energy efficient air source heat pumps are being installed throughout the islands. HHP can announce that additional money has been made available to add a further 30 houses to this years programme.

Along with our partners, HHP have lobbied Ofgem and SSE to ask for the removal of the additional 2p charge levied on homes for the supply of electricity to the islands. We have also actively pursued the introduction of an island tariff which may be a way forward in reducing electricity costs.

HHP also received funding from the SFHA to carry out research into heating systems and their running costs. This work is being carried out in conjunction with Community Energy Scotland and has already identified potential savings for tenants if they switch to another supplier.

HHP continue to look at our specifications to see if there are further ways to save money for our tenants and are currently looking at LED lighting and Infra Red heating technology to see what savings they can bring.

Along with our partners at TEAS we can also help tenants were they want to change their prepayment meters to a credit meter. This will then enable them to switch to other suppliers with cheaper tariffs. Contact TEAS for further information at 41A Point Street, Stornoway, Western Isles HS1 2XF or phone 01851 704300.

## Eilean Siar Foodbank

The Eilean Siar Foodbank (ESF) is now in its second year of operation. Working with the Trussell Trust, its primary aim is to address and combat food poverty in the Western isles, and to help restore dignity and hope to those experiencing crisis. If you find yourself in crisis and in need of help, you need to be referred by a professional agency. Current referring agencies include CAB, CNES Social Services and Homelessness Service, HHP and Action For Children. HHP regrets that it has been necessary to set up a foodbank in the Western Isles. It is aware that a number of its tenants have been in crisis and have needed to access the service, and is completely supportive of ESF.

## SAFETY ALERT

**Hotpoint Dishwashers – Models FDW20/FDW60/FDW65A**

**BOSCH Dishwashers – Models FD 7901 to FD 8504**

Please be aware of the following advert and check your dishwasher. Further detail is available on our website:

- Hotpoint are aware of a small number of cases of dishwashers where an electrical component has failed. This may lead to overheating and in rare cases a potential fire hazard. The dishwashers identified are: Hotpoint FDW20/FDW60/FDW65A dishwasher manufactured between June 2006 and May 2008. The affected serial numbers are 9 digits long. If the first 5 digits are between S/N 60601 and S/N 80531 your appliance is affected.
- Bosch Home Appliances has announced an in-home repair programmes of certain dishwashers manufactured between 1999 and early 2005 for models purchased and used in the United Kingdom only. The affected dishwashers are in the batch number range from FD 7901 to FD 8504.

### IMPLICATIONS

There is a risk of the equipment overheating and may go on fire.





**At the time of publication, we are expecting Universal Credit to be 'rolled out' in the Western Isles during 2015, possibly as early as April or May.**

Universal Credit has huge implications for HHP as a landlord, and for many of its tenants. At first, only a small number of claimants (probably single people and/or couples without children) are expected to be affected, but the UK government's intention is to have it fully operational by 2017. It will apply to all claimants of all state benefits who are under pensionable age.

HHP has concerns about Universal Credit. All applications MUST be made on line, and we are concerned that many of our tenants have no access to a computer and no knowledge of how to use one. HHP has made

computer terminals available in its reception area and staff will give tenants assistance. Claimants will receive Universal Credit payments monthly and all payments will be made electronically. This means that claimants must have accounts that accept electronic payments, and claimants who have been used to budgeting on a fortnightly basis will now have to learn to budget on a monthly basis.

Of particular concern to HHP is that Housing costs will be paid directly to tenants as part of the Universal Credit monthly payment, and tenants will then be expected to pay the full rent to their landlord. Virtually all our tenants currently opt to have their Housing Benefit paid directly to HHP. This guarantees that they do not run up rent arrears and safeguards them

against legal action and eviction.

A related concern is that we will no longer be able to work with benefit staff locally, but we will have to contact a DWP call centre on the mainland. Communication is likely to be more difficult.

If we are unable to collect all rent due, this will have an effect on the way HHP is able to fund the services, including its investment programme and day to day repairs service. Martin Flett, Area Manager said "It will also have a major impact on the lives of tenants who find themselves in serious rent arrears. We are committed to working with tenants to minimise the effects of Universal Credit on their housing situation". If you would like further information on Universal Credit, or have concerns about how it may affect you, please contact your Housing Officer to discuss your situation. **We will provide further information to tenants as more details emerge.**

# Scottish Social Housing Charter Results 2013/14

Following submission of our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) in May, results for 2013/14 were published by the Scottish Housing Regulator in August. Angela Smith, HHP's Governance Manager said "These results allowed us to publish a report for our tenants at the end of October, which gave an indication as to how well we have performed against the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. It also allowed us to compare our performance with other similar housing associations.

Within our peer group and on the whole, HHP performed fairly well – allocations, voids, tenancy sustainment, and non-emergency repairs were particularly favourable and exceeded the peer group average comfortably.

One aspect of the Charter process that we will be concentrating on this coming year is improving our tenant satisfaction scores. Although three quarters of our tenants stated that they were 'satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the service that we provided, there is still room for improvement. We have

put a number of measures in place since the tenant satisfaction survey scores became available, such as:

- Increased monitoring of repairs;
- Increased monitoring of customer satisfaction with reactive repairs;
- Improving communication with tenants receiving investment prior to work commencing, and after work is completed;
- Reviewed telephone system and answering system;
- Increased support and advice to new tenants when moving in;
- Improved information on how to best use heating systems;
- Increased use of texting and social media;
- Improved help and advice to tenants on dealing with condensation; and
- Automatic acknowledgement of all emails sent to Customer Services inbox.

In addition, we have taken tenants' satisfaction survey comments

on board, and we will shortly be introducing a new Tenant Participation Development Service in order to increase opportunities for tenants to participate in decision-making, and to improve communication.

A further point that we were happy to note was that 70.7% of our tenants felt their rent represented good value for money. This was, once again, higher than the peer group average, and we would hope to sustain this trend in the future.

**Full Charter results can be found on the Scottish Housing Regulator's site at:**

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/find-and-compare-landlords>

**HHP's Tenant Report 2013/14 can be found on our website at the link below:**

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<http://www.hebrideanhousing.co.uk/?p=1337>



Pictured left to right are: Kevin Paterson – HHP Board Member, Mairi Bremner – HHP Board Member, James Marrow – Plant Operator, Kenny Mackay – Painter, Murdo Macleod – CalMax Site Agent, Alasdair Morrison – Plumber, Scott Macdonald – Joiner, Paul Smith – Bricklayer, David Blaney – HHP Chair, Norman Macleod – HHP Development Spokesperson

## CalMax Construction Ltd establish five local apprenticeships

CalMax Construction Ltd have established 5 apprenticeships as part of the Community Benefit requirements in their new build contracts with HHP.

CalMax are currently delivering 55 properties for HHP across 5 sites, in Stornoway, Lochs, Uig and Balivanich.

Councillor David Blaney, Chair of HHP, said “we are delighted to be able to deliver much needed opportunities for young people in the islands through our investment in new homes. We are also grateful to CalMax for responding so positively and for their commitment to helping our young people”.

Councillor Norman Macleod, HHP’s Development spokesperson said “these are difficult times for young people, particularly in the islands and we at HHP are committed to doing all that we can to help”.

Overall HHP are aiming to deliver 61 homes across the Outer Hebrides by summer 2015. This programme is supported by £4m funding from the Scottish Government and further funding from the Comhairle.

Calum Mackay of CalMax said “CalMax are pleased to be able to offer apprenticeships to youngsters. This is a reflection of the contracts recently awarded to CalMax by HHP for the Housing Developments at Melbost Farm and Allt Na Broige. We have been able to provide apprenticeships for a Plumber, Painter, Bricklayer, Joiner and Plant Operator. CalMax look forward to assisting them through their training to become fully qualified tradesmen in their individual fields. CalMax are pleased to be working in partnership with HHP to deliver their Housing Programme and hope to be able to assist with their future projects.”

## Rechargeable repairs

When a tenant ends their tenancy the cost of works that are due to fair wear and tear are met by HHP. Where damage is due to neglect or willful damage then this will be recharged to the outgoing tenant.

The alternative would be for other tenants to meet the cost of damage or negligence through higher rents. The commonest reasons for recharges include cleaning and clearing properties (including loft spaces and gardens), repairing holes in doors and walls, and refixing skirting following the uplift of floor coverings. Recharges can often run to hundreds of pounds. In 80% of cases there is no recharge to the outgoing tenant, but one in five tenants faces recharges that could be avoided. Before you hand back your keys, please make sure that the property is clean, empty and any damage you are aware of had been repaired to an acceptable standard.

## Responding to complaints

Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) aims to provide a first class housing service to all customers. However, says Katrina Palmer, Service Development Manager, sometimes things will go wrong and customers will feel dissatisfied with the service they have received. We want to know when this happens so we can try to put things right and avoid getting things wrong again by dealing with complaints effectively and properly. We also aim to learn from complaints and improve our service for the benefit all of our customers.

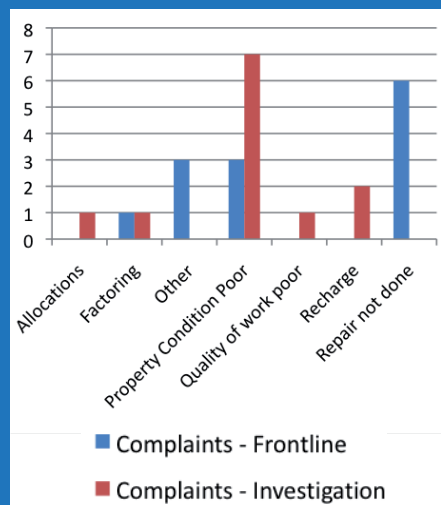
Our complaints procedure is designed to be sympathetic, welcoming and non-defensive and to resolve problems as soon as possible. We will also have regard to other people’s right to confidentiality when replying to certain kinds of complaints.

Complaints fall into two categories. Frontline complaints are those that we hope to respond to within 5 working days. Investigation complaints are those that are more complex and may require in

depth investigation. Investigation complaints are responded to within 20 working days.

The graphs below show the number of complaints by category and the average number of days taken to respond in each category for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014.

Table 1. Number of complaints by category



# Watch out

Although our houses have central heating, there is still the risk of frozen or burst pipes during periods of heavy frost. Following the few simple steps below should help you to avoid any damage to your home:

## Keep warm in your home

- Set your heating to 21°C (70°F) during the day if you can and 18°C (64°F) at night
- Eat at least one hot meal a day and take plenty of hot drinks
- Wear warm layers of clothing especially when you go out
- Keep active and wrap up warm if you go outside
- If it's really cold, set your heating to come on earlier and turn off later rather than turning up the thermostat. This saves you money and is better

for the environment

- Remember to keep your home ventilated when possible.
- If you are going to be away from home then, if possible, leave your heating to come on at least once a day for a couple of hours
- Draw your curtains at dusk
- If you have an Air Source Heat Pump leave the heating at 15°C while you are away
- Close doors to block out draughts
- Prevent frozen pipes
- Find out where your main stopcock or tap is
- Report any dripping taps or running overflows to HHP so that they can be fixed
- Try to keep your home heated to at

least 15°C if you can and allow heat to circulate all rooms

- If you have health conditions such as heart or lung disease further information can be found at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- If you are going away from home for any length of time during winter ask HHP to drain down your water supply. We will do this at no charge.

## If your Pipes Freeze

- Turn off the water at the stop cock or tap or switch off your SureStop switch if you have one
- Switch off your immersion heater or boiler
- Turn on taps at sink, bath, etc.
- Call HHP on 0300 123 0773 to report the problem

# for Winter

## **If you have a Burst Pipe**

- Turn off the water at the stop cock or tap or switch off your SureStop switch if you have one
- Switch off your immersion heater or boiler
- Turn on all taps to empty your tanks
- If water comes into contact with electrical fittings, switch off the electricity at the mains
- Call HHP on 0300 123 0773 to report the problem

## **Insurance**

- Remember burst pipes can cause a lot of damage. HHP will repair your house but we are not responsible for damage to decoration or to your furniture, carpets or other belongings. We therefore strongly advise tenants to

make sure they have home contents insurance. Check your policy to make sure decoration is included.

## **Heating broken down**

- Telephone HHP and report the problem as soon as possible

## **Gas Safety**

- It is our legal responsibility to carry out a gas safety check in your house every year. If we contact you to arrange a gas service make sure you let us in as this will allow us to ensure your heating is working safely and effectively.

## **Stay healthy**

- If you are over 65, or have a long term health condition, you can get a free flu jab from your GP to protect against seasonal flu strains

## **Watch out for neighbours**

- Check on older neighbours or relatives to make sure they're safe and well. Make sure they're warm enough, especially at night, and have stocks of food and medicines so they don't need to go out during very cold weather.
- If they do have to go out check that the paths and pavements are not icy
- If you're worried about a relative or an elderly neighbour, contact your local council or ring the Age UK helpline on 0800 00 99 66.
- **Read more tips on how to cope in very cold weather at <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/pages/keepwarmkeepwell.aspx>**

# Meet the Board..

*Mairi Bremner*



I write this from the coldest and windiest place in Scotland in my view! i.e. Peterhead. Even my beloved dog is looking at me as much as to say to do something about the wind! No one needs to tell me again that the weather in the Western Isles is severe.

However, my topic for this article was not to be the weather but my interest in housing issues. Prior to joining HHP in 2009 I was with WIIC for almost 25 years and during that time I was very much aware of the importance of housing in people's lives. If a person has a roof over his/her head it opens many doors for them to enhance their lives and nowhere is more so than in the Western Isles. When I think back to when I first became involved in public life there were caravans in almost every township in these islands. Caravans were the only means of having some form of accommodation for many people. I used to dread a storm because you could always guarantee someone would be without a home or some damage was always done to a caravan. Being aware of these problems made me realise the importance of the provision of housing in our villages, throughout our islands.

WIIC did well with the provision of housing in our islands and HHP continues with the building programme, indeed, at the risk of sounding biased HHP has surpassed the Council's efforts and continues to improve both the conditions of housing in these islands and the provision of new houses. I have seen at first hand the difference a roof over one's head can make to

a person's quality of life through the acquisition of a house many people, especially single people, have acquired dignity, independence, hope and a better future.

Another feature of housing nowadays is that many of our schemes are improving by the day with tree planting areas and indeed many tenants take greater pride in their gardens which is a delight to see and enhancing one's surroundings is therapeutic and gives pleasure, not only to the person whose garden looks nice, but encourages other to try.

One of the most harrowing issues of being a Board member is the constant problem of fuel poverty in these islands. Fuel poverty in the Western Isles has been in the news of late and hopefully some benefit will come of the discussions that took place in Aviemore earlier this month.

It would only be fair to pay tribute to officers of HHP who have worked long and hard to bring this issue to the attention of the 'Powers-that-be'. Much has been done with insulation, etc, but we must never give up the fight for a fairer deal to mitigate the effects of Fuel Poverty, not only for our own tenants but indeed for all of the people in the Western Isles who suffer because of high fuel costs.

I have seen many improvements in housing since I first became involved in public life some 36 years ago. I will continue to strive for more improvements and indeed the provision of more houses throughout these islands. Future housing must pay particular attention to new and innovative ways of building so we can make our homes as fuel economic as possible.

Being part of HHP is a pleasure for me and to work with other Board members who care deeply for the welfare of the people we represent. Also, it is a pleasure to work with a team of officers and staff of HHP who are dedicated, hardworking, helpful to myself and who listen and try to facilitate what is required. I look forward to the future, the provision of many more homes in our islands and new and innovative initiatives to improve the quality of our houses.

## Right to Buy will end on 1 August 2016

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 will end the Right to Buy in Scotland. The first commencement order makes 1 August 2016 the date on which the Act's provisions ending the right to buy will come into effect.

### What does this mean for you?

The Act does not make any changes to the RTB rules. If you currently have the RTB (preserved or modernised) you will keep this right until the RTB is abolished on 1 August 2016.

The Scottish Government has now published a guide for tenants on what this means for you. It gives general information about your options during the notice period before right to buy ends. The guide is available at this link: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/reform/housing-bill](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/reform/housing-bill)

Please contact HHP on 0300 123 0773 if you have any questions.



## Benefit assistance

HHP is committed to working in partnership with the Western Isles Citizens Advice Service to assist tenants who may be encountering financial problems. WICAS provides a wide range of services including Benefit Checks and Debt Advice & Management. It can also assist you to make applications for benefits and help with appeals. Too many people wait too long before they ask for help, either because they don't expect the problem to get worse, or because they're too proud to ask for help. Everyone needs help from time to time and you should not hesitate to contact your local Bureau. Alternatively, contact your Housing Officer if you have payment difficulties or benefit issues and you can be referred to your nearest WICAS for free, confidential, impartial and independent advice on any issue.

### GARAGE SITES

HHP has a limited number of garage sites available for rent at Leverhulme Drive and Perceval Road. If you are interested in renting a garage site, please contact Area Housing Officer Donald MacKinnon to register your interest.





## HHP's Student Placements

HHP made two placements available to students over the summer as part of our commitment to creating opportunities for young people. The successful applicants were Finlay Maclver, who was placed with the Operations Team, and Eilidh Nicolson who was placed with the Resources Team. We very much enjoyed having them in the office. Here's what they had to say:

### Finlay Maclver

This summer I undertook a student placement for the Operations department. I spent most of my time working with the Customer Services team, dealing with tenant queries and requests. Working with HHP has given me a good insight into a working environment and I will take this experience with me in addition to many transferable skills to future endeavours.

### Eilidh Nicolson

This summer I was the Resources Team's student and I thoroughly enjoyed my placement. I was involved in preparation for the AGM and Board Meetings. I also got to undertake projects, such as taking pictures of HHP housing schemes and road signs to research where their names originated from. My placement has provided me with valuable experience and I hope to return next year.

## FESTIVE OPENING HOURS

Offices close

23rd December 2014 @ 5pm

Offices Re-open

5th January 2015 @ 9am

Emergency Contact Number:

**0300 123 0773**

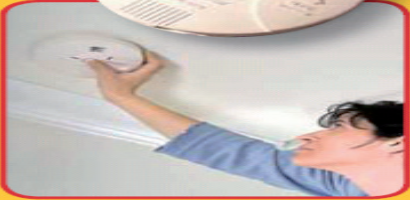
### Check your smoke alarm's use by date

All smoke alarms have a use by date (usually 10 years from date of manufacture.)

Check the use by date of your smoke alarm and replace it on or before that date.

### Testing

- Test your smoke alarm every month
- Check your smoke alarm by pressing the test button. Use a broom handle if you cannot reach
- Hold down the button until you hear the loud alert tone, then release. You may need to press the button again to turn off the alarm.



### Maintenance

The key smoke alarm maintenance routines are:

- Check your smoke alarm for a build up of dust and cobwebs and clean with a vacuum cleaner at least every six (6) months
- Vacuum with a soft brush attachment around the smoke alarm vents
- Use a surface insect spray around the smoke alarm to prevent insects nesting inside it
- Never paint over or cover your smoke alarms.



## Looking after your smoke alarm

Smoke alarms need very little maintenance. However some basic things can be hugely important. A few minutes of your time during the year will ensure that your alarm is working and could help save your life and the lives of your family.

It is important to note the following:

- Generally, smoke alarms will sound a regular warning 'beep' if the battery needs replacing.
- Smoke alarms should never be painted.
- Smoke alarm maintenance may

require you to use a ladder. Please take care or seek help

- A licensed electrical contractor is required to disconnect or install mains powered smoke alarms. All other smoke alarm maintenance does not require a licensed electrical contractor

HHP are currently replacing smoke detectors in a phased programme over the next 3 years said Angus MacNeil, HHP's Contracts and Assets Manager. You will be advised in advance of work being carried out in your home.

## Investment Update

HHP continue to carry out major investment in tenant's homes and 2014 has been a busy year as can be seen from the number of replacements in the table below:

Works	Number of Houses	Completed to Date	Average Tenant Satisfaction Level
Windows and Doors	153	65	9/10
Heating systems	72	7	10/10
Kitchens	88	88	9/10
Bathrooms	71	71	9/10
Roofs and Roughcast	17	17	7/10

Peter O'Donnell, Investment Manager said "Our framework contractors are to be commended on having completed all the kitchens, bathrooms, roofing and roughcast well before December. The heating programme was delayed as we were waiting announcements on Government Grant assistance through the new Renewable Heat Incentive which has allowed HHP to continue installing air source heat pumps but the contractor is now working through the programme.

Our tenants have been very impressed with the overall works and this has been reflected in the satisfaction score our contractors have received from them. This year 53% of our tenants have scored performance. HHP would like to thank all those tenants who gave their feedback. It was much appreciated".



## AGM 2014

HHP's eighth Annual General Meeting took place on 10 September 2014. The Chair, David Blaney, welcomed a strong crowd to the County Hotel in Stornoway, and reported on HHP's operation over the past year.

The Director of Resources, Dena MacLeod, gave a presentation on the financial statements for the year and introduced Ross McLauchlan of Wylie & Bissett, who gave the Partnership a clean audit report for the eighth year running.

The collected Membership then approved a resolution to donate £750 each to local branches of the following organisations:

- Crossroads;
- CRY (The Andrew MacLeod Memorial Fund);
- Salvation Army; and
- Tagsa Uibhist.

Following the close of formal business, John Norgrove, of the Linda Norgrove Foundation, gave an inspiring and informative talk on the work of the Foundation. Mr Norgrove advised that the Foundation has a particular interest in supporting women and children

affected by the war in Afghanistan, and he outlined the main areas in which this support is developed. These are Education, Support for Women, Environment and Community Development, and Health.

Some projects that the Foundation has been involved in recently include:

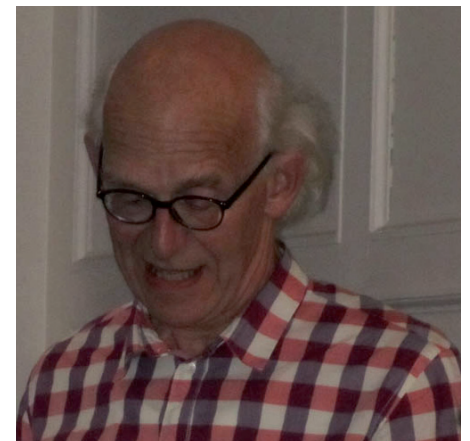
- the purchase of mattresses, blankets, winter clothing, and toys for a disabled children's home in Kabul;
- the support of literacy classes for rural women and girls who have missed out on schooling and the funding of boxed libraries for the development of acquired literacy skills;
- the funding of university education for girls at Gawharshad Institute of Higher Learning in Kabul;
- the building of special water tanks for two villages and the training of 12 local men to excavate the reservoirs; and
- the funding of life altering surgery for children born with conditions such as club feet and cleft palates.

Mr Norgrove outlined the ethical code under which the Foundation operates – how important it is that as much of the money raised as possible is spent on aid projects, and how equally

important it is to know where and how funding is spent.

Finally, Mr Norgrove spoke about the fundraising process, and emphasised that despite the difficulties faced, relatively small amounts of money can make life changing differences in Afghanistan.

One of The Linda Norgrove Foundation's main fundraising events took place on Saturday, 4 October 2014 – The Valtos 10K walk/run. Further details may be found on the Foundation's website: [www.lindanorgrovefoundation.org](http://www.lindanorgrovefoundation.org)



Mr Norgrove

## FES Apprenticeships

FES FM Ltd have recruited a further 2 apprentices to assist in delivering HHP's Repair & Maintenance contract.

This brings the number of apprenticeships created to 5. David Blaney, Chair of HHP said "This demonstrates the commitment that ourselves and FES have to use our partnership to create apprenticeships for our young people. We are very pleased to be able to help our young people in this way".

The apprentices receive their training on site in the islands and through block release arrangements at Forth Valley College.



Pictured from left to right: Angus Lamont Chief Executive HHP, Innes Mackenzie FES FM, Lyle Matheson FES FM, and David Blaney Chairman HHP



## Uist Tenants Conference 2014

The fifth Annual Uist Tenants Conference was held in Balivanich on Thursday, 4 September 2014. The venue was the Balivanich Community Hall which again proved to be an excellent facility for the event.

There was a good turnout for the conference, which was hosted jointly by HHP and the Western Isles Forum of Tenant & Residents Associations (WIFTRA).

In response to tenant feedback from previous events, John A MacQuarrie, Area Manager said that the main emphasis was on creating an informal setting in which tenants could engage

with HHP.

On that basis, an invitation was extended to all tenants to participate in a buffet lunch. A wide range of stalls were set up to provide information on the services being provided by our partner agencies.

Displays were also provided by contractors who are currently working on site, delivering HHP's Investment programme. These included an air source heat pump display and a kitchen display.

Prior to the arrival of lunch, tenants took time to browse around the stalls and also to enter into informal discussions

with members of HHP's staff who were in attendance.

A number of raffle prizes were donated by contractors and we acknowledge these with gratitude. Raffle prizes were presented by the Chair of HHP's Board, Cllr David Blaney.

Feedback from tenants was very positive, both in relation to the conference format and more importantly, to the service being provided by HHP as landlord.

The conference format worked very well and HHP would like to thank all who contributed to the success of the day.



## Local contractors appointed for 2015-19 investment work

The HHP Board have appointed 9 contractors to a framework agreement to deliver the next phase of investment in tenants' homes during 2015-19. This programme will see a further £14m invested including heating replacement, kitchen and bathroom replacements, further insulation works, roofing and roughcasting and window replacements.

The contractors who have been appointed are all locally based.

HHP Chair, Councillor David Blaney said "This further investment demonstrates our ongoing commitment to delivering high quality homes and services for our tenants. We are also very pleased that local contractors have been successful in being appointed after a Europe wide tendering process. This investment will therefore also support many local jobs over the next few years".

The contractors appointed are:

D MacDonald & Co.  
 FES FM Ltd  
 O'Mac Construction Ltd  
 Neil Mackay Co Ltd  
 Alex Murray (Construction) Ltd  
 Nessglaze Ltd  
 Lewis Builders Ltd  
 Calmax Construction Ltd  
 A Campbell Electrical Services Ltd



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## Rent Consultation 2015/16

Following previous consultation the HHP Board approved a rent guarantee that rents would not increase by more than RPI+1% (inflation +1%) for the following years:

- a) 2015/16
- b) 2016/17

The Board use the RPI figure at the end of November for setting the rent. The final November RPI will not be available until early January 2015 but current estimates are that RPI for November will be around 2.3% which would result in a rent increase of 3.3%.

The Board would like your views on the proposed rent increase and on the areas it plans to spend money over the next three years. A consultation document will be available on HHP's web page from 16th January 2015 to 31 January 2015 for your comment.

The Board would also be happy to meet with groups of tenants if there is sufficient interest. If you are interested in attending a consultation meeting please phone 0300 123 0773 and ask for Iona France and she will take your details. We will get back in touch with you to let you know the date and time of the meeting. The details will also be available on our webpage



## Washing Machines to Moldova

HHP donated 2 washing machines to the Moldova appeal. These machines had been used in temporary accommodation and were no longer required. Councillor Charlie Nicolson said "We are very grateful to HHP for this donation and these machines will make life a little easier for some families". Councillor Norman Macleod, HHP development spokesperson said "We are very pleased to be able to assist people in Moldova who have very little and who need our help.

Pictured left to Right: Cllr Charlie Nicolson, Norman MacLeod HHP Board Member, John McCarthy & John MacKenzie FES FM & Angus MacNeil HHP

## WAYS TO PAY YOUR RENT



### DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN NOW PAY YOUR RENT ONLINE?

To access this method of rent payment go to:-

<http://tinyurl.com/hhppayments>

This takes you to the Comhairle's 24 hour secure Internet payments service. Select HHP Housing Rents and you can make your rent payment using this secure site with most major credit or debit cards.

You can also pay your rent by the following options:

- By rent payment card at any Post Office or Paypoint/Payzone
- At your local HHP office;
- By Direct Debit mandate on a weekly or monthly basis;
- By Bank Standing Order;
- By telephone using your debit or credit card – phone 01851 709296;
- At your local Comhairle office.

