



HHP newbuild – for sale and rent

Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) are working with Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar to develop sites under the Scottish Government's New Supply Shared Equity Scheme (NSSE).

The scheme seeks to help people on low to moderate incomes to become home owners, where that is affordable to them.

Taking the first steps onto the property ladder can be hard for first-time buyers and where housing stock is limited – as found in the Western Isles – the idea of owning your own property seems a pipe-dream for many.

HHP are providing opportunities for young people to own their own property and enable them to stay on the Islands.

If you are interested please contact Liz MacInnes our agent at Tighean Innse Gall on 01851 706121.

There is a significant housing waiting list for Stornoway with approximately 500 applicants and a turnover of less than 100 houses per year. Schemes

like this are greatly needed here as demand for affordable housing exceeds supply.

The possible developments include :

- Melbost Farm site is in the ownership of HHP. It is planned to build 26 houses on this site over the next 2 years; 10 for rent and 16 for sale under this scheme.
- Allt Na Broige at Marybank. This site is owned by the Comhairle and has capacity for 7 houses
- Other sites in the town centre and on the edge of Stornoway are also being explored.

Completed Developments

Six homes for sale and 4 for rent were completed by HHP between December 2012 and April 2013 at Mackenzie Park, Sandwick. These homes all enjoy the benefits of air source heating, solar panels and high levels of insulation. There was a high demand for these houses and they were all successfully sold.

Current Developments

The Gibson Gardens development in Stornoway is progressing well and it is anticipated that these 24 homes will be completed next month. All of these properties are for rent. Six of the properties have been adapted for disabled tenants.

HHP are to develop 3 rural developments with a 4th rural development in the pipeline also. The sites are:-

- Leurbost Old School site
4 houses for rent
- Balivanich, adjacent to the school
4 houses for rent
- Craigston, Barra Old School site
6 houses for rent

The 4th site which is being proposed to develop is

- Crowlister – 4 houses for rent

These projects are all planned to be completed before March 2015. Further information will be contained in future newsletters.



Don't forget your annual gas service

HHP has a legal duty to check all the gas appliances we own every year to make sure they work safely.

HHP send out appointment letters to tenants to let them know when the Annual Gas Service is due. Our contractor FES will then send a GAS SAFE engineer to service your appliances on that day. The inspection normally takes less than an hour to complete and appointments are arranged for an AM or PM visit. HHP are only too happy to change appointment times to suit tenants. These should normally be within 7 days of the original appointment date.

Although most of our customers are happy to allow FES engineers to carry out the gas safety check, there is a small minority who refuse access to their home. This is a breach of their tenancy agreement as refusing a gas service is dangerous for both themselves and their surrounding neighbours.

As you might expect, HHP take this very seriously.

HHP tenants have 3 opportunities to arrange a suitable appointment. If any tenant still fails to give access HHP will then arrange to force access so that the service can take place. The costs of this will be recharged to the tenant.

So for your own safety and peace of mind, please make sure you keep your Annual Gas Service appointment.



Help us to improve social landlords' services...

Who we are

The Scottish Housing Regulator's role is to protect the interests of tenants, homeless people and others who use the housing services of councils, housing associations, co-ops and other social landlords.

The National Panel: what it's for and why it's important

We're setting up a National Panel as one important way for us to hear what people think. We want to understand your priorities, experiences and views of the services you receive, and we will use your feedback to help make sure we're focusing on the important things.

Who can join

You can join the Panel if you are a tenant of a social landlord, are homeless, a home owner who receives factoring or common repairs services from a social landlord, or a Gypsy/Traveller who uses a council or housing association site.

What's involved

As a Panel member we will send you occasional surveys asking for your views - no more than 2 or 3 a year. Surveys will be quick and easy to complete. We may also ask you to give us feedback in other ways.

Every new member will be entered into a draw to win one of 6 x £50 prizes.

To join or find out more...

Sign up online at bit.ly/nat-panel

Scan the code with a smartphone

Call Craigforth (who manage the Panel) on 0800 027 2245



Regulator publishes new guide for tenants and service users

The Scottish Housing Regulator recently published *How We Regulate: A guide for tenants and service users*. This handy new guide has been written to help you find out more about the work of the Regulator. The guide also explains what you can do if you want to find out more about your landlord, what you can expect from your landlord and how to raise concerns.

Iain Muirhead, Director of Strategy and

Communications, said: "We've written this new guide to help tenants and other service users find out more about who we are and what we do to protect their interests. We hope that people will find it useful."

How We Regulate: A guide for tenants and service users is available to download from the Regulator's website www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk.



Clear Rent Account Prize Winners

The winners of our annual prize draw for tenants who had clear rent accounts on 1st January 2013 were:

- 1st Miss Wendy Ellen Hutchinson, Rubha Chlachain, Eochar, Isle of South Uist, (pictured) £100 voucher;
- 2nd Mr Donald John Mowat, Springfield Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, £50 voucher; and
- 3rd Mr Kenneth Donald Macleod, Parkend, Sandwick, Isle of Lewis, £50 voucher.



Best Estate

HHP have set up a new initiative for tenants to enter their housing estate/street into a competition for the "Best Estate/Street Award".

Most of our housing schemes are multi tenure. This competition will be open to both tenants and residents/owners living in our housing schemes. There will be 3 awards for the best entries in each of the following areas:

1. Stornoway;
2. Lewis rural and Harris; and
3. Uist and Barra areas.

Entry to the competition will be free and tenants and residents are invited to enter their estate/street into the competition.

Entries to the competition must meet the following criteria:-

- Entrants must have submitted their entry form by 9th August 2013;
- Entrants must agree to their estate/scheme being used for publicity in HHP's newsletter, if they win an award;
- There must be HHP tenants in the street or scheme entered; and
- Entrants must not have had any external help in the preparation of their gardens.

Judging of the gardens/estates will take place in August/September and entrants will be notified in advance of the judging. The judging panel will consist of HHP's Area Housing Officer, Board Members and Councillors.

The winning estate/street in each area will be awarded a £200 gardening voucher to further enhance the estate.

To enter this competition please complete the application form enclosed with this newsletter or contact our Customer Services team for further information on telephone number 0300 123 0773.



HHP Welcomes New Staff

Debbie Joy Macritchie will be working as part of the Customer Services Team in the mornings and an Admin Assistant with the Property Services Team in the afternoons. Debbie previously worked as an Admin Assistant for the Education Department of Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar. We also welcome Iona France who has joined us as Governance Admin Officer. Iona had previously spent 15 years working as an administrator in the financial advice sector, locally.



Include-Us

young people mean business

iomairt nan òg

Include-Us: working to achieve a future of growth and prosperity for the young people of the Outer Hebrides.

Include-Us can help with:

- **Employment**
- **Education**
- **Self Employment**
- **Training**
- **Voluntary Work**

Are you aged 14 to 19 years and interested in improving your work skills?

or

Do you know of any young person who would benefit from training opportunities?

Lewis & Harris

tel: 01851 822742

Uist & Barra

tel: 01870 603570

e-mail: info@include-us.co.uk



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



hebridean housing
partnership
and

WIFTRA.ORG
(Western Isles Forum of Tenant and Residents Associations)

Invite **ALL** Tenants
to a light lunch

Bayhead Bridge Centre, Stornoway
Friday 31st May, 2013
11.30am – 2pm

We are preparing our investment plans for your homes for the next few years. This is your chance to have your say. We want to hear from you.

- Informal event – come and go as you please
- Refreshments and buffet lunch
- Kids Corner
- Information available from outside agencies
- HHP officers attending for advice and information (private facilities available if required)
- Kitchen, window and heating system displays
- Free to enter raffle with fantastic prizes



Friday 31st May 2013 saw this year's annual tenant event for Lewis and Harris tenants. This took the form of a Light Lunch hosted in partnership with WIFTRA (Western Isles Forum of Tenants and Residents Associations) at the Bridge Centre Stornoway. Following the positive feedback from last year's event we kept the informal format where tenants could "drop in" at any time throughout the event.

HHP officers were on hand to discuss issues ranging from Welfare Reform and the 'Bedroom Tax' to HHP's investment plans for tenants' homes for the next few years. Kitchen, window and heating system displays allowed tenants to see what they can expect when work is carried out in their homes.

Partner agencies also attended to provide information and assistance including: FES FM, HHP's reactive repairs partner, Third Sector Hebrides, NHS, Police Scotland and Western Isles Citizens Advice Service. Other agencies such as Western Isles Advocacy, Western Isles Foyer, Fire Safety and TPAS provided information leaflets that were available on the day.

A kids corner was set up to entertain the younger members of the households in attendance. For the adults of the household the raffle was very popular again with some excellent prizes donated by contractors. Thanks again to Alex Murray, Cal Max, Neil Mackay, O'Mac, TIG, TEAS, FES FM and WIFTRA for their donations, photos show some of the prize winners.

Feedback from the event was very



TENANT EVENT



positive with 96% of tenants who attended reporting that they found the event format and content good or very good. Some comments from the day were that it was "Well set out, informative, friendly atmosphere, superb buffet. 10 out of 10.", and "Very informative, liked new displays of kitchen, windows and heating systems. Staff friendly." 96% of tenants who completed a Tenant Survey Form reported that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of service they receive from HHP.



HARRIS TENANT EVENT

A similar event was held on the evening of 11th June 2013 at the Tarbert Community Centre. In response to feedback from previous conferences, the format was changed so 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 in Harris to participate in a buffet supper. A wide range of stalls were also set up to provide information on services being provided by partner agencies.

Displays for the event were provided by contractors who are currently working on site, delivering HHP's Investment programme. These included a display of kitchens, doors and windows.

Prior to the supper being served, tenants took time to browse around stalls and also to enter into informal discussions with the team of HHP staff that was present.

A number of raffle prizes were donated by contractors and again we acknowledge these with gratitude.

The conference format worked well and feedback received from tenants was very positive.

HHP would like to thank all who contributed to the success of the conference.



Are you affected by the Bedroom Tax?

Since 1st April 2013 if you are of working age, you under occupy your home and you are getting Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent you will have been affected by the Bedroom Tax deduction.

Your Housing Benefit will have been reduced by either:-

- 14% of your total weekly rent for an extra 1 bedroom; or
- 25% of your total weekly rent for having an extra 2 or more bedrooms.

This means that you have to pay the difference between your Housing Benefit award and your weekly rent.

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is additional Housing Benefit payments made by the Comhairle for people who are on Housing Benefit who are finding it difficult to pay the difference between their Housing

Benefit award and the weekly rent.

There is no automatic entitlement to getting a DHP and each application is awarded on its own merits.

To be considered for a DHP payment you must complete a DHP application form and provide evidence that you meet one of the following criteria:-

1. live in a property that is adapted for your or your family's needs/disability;
2. have a medical condition/disability which prevents you from moving to another property; or
3. be actively seeking alternative accommodation to move to a smaller property.

If you have not yet applied for DHP you should contact your Housing Officer who will advise you on your options and help you with transfer and DHP application forms if appropriate.

If you are awarded a DHP payment it will be limited to 13, 26 or 52

week periods depending on your circumstances.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

If you are getting a DHP payment, your award letter will tell you the date that your award will end from and you will have to re-apply for any further payments.

If you are not on Housing Benefit or you are over working age, the Bedroom Tax deduction does not affect you.

WHAT TO DO NOW

If you have to pay rent because of the bedroom tax deduction and you have not made any arrangements to pay you should contact your Housing Officer on 0300 123 0773 who will be able to give you advice and assistance on how to pay your rent and prevent rent arrears.

Performance

Rent Arrears – HHP Target <2.5%

	Apr 2012-Mar 2013 (full year)	Apr 2011-Mar 2012 (full year)
Total Current Tenant Arrears	£177,711	£161,624
% Level of Arrears	2.39%	2.31%

Arrears increased very slightly by 0.08% . Unfortunately we also had to evict 2 tenants during the year for not paying rent. We remind all tenants of the importance of paying their rent on time. The above figures are adjusted for Housing Benefit due but not received

Allocations

	Apr 2012-Mar 2013 (full year)	Apr 2011-Mar 2012 (full year)
New applications added to housing list	442	462
Average number of days taken to add applicant to list	2	2
Number of lets	211	265
Average time taken to re-let	19 days	33 days
Average time taken to re-let less difficult to let properties	14 days	19 days

We let 211 properties during the year and again significantly improved the speed at which we re-let houses.

Annual Rent Loss Due to Voids – HHP Target 1%

	Apr 2012-Mar 2013 (full year)	Apr 2011-Mar 2012 (full year)
Rent Loss Due to Voids	£42,937	£54,984
% of monthly rent due that was lost to voids	0.58%	0.78%

The amount of rent loss due to houses being empty was greatly reduced and was the best performance since HHP was set up.

Performance on repairs was again good and achieved the target.

Repairs Response Times – HHP Target 95%

Completed within timescale	Apr 2012-Mar 2013 (full year)	Apr 2011-Mar 2012 (full year)
Emergency – 4hrs	94%	95%
Response Time – 24hrs	95%	96%
Response Time – 3 days	97%	96%
Response Time – 7 days	96%	98%
Response Time – 20 days	100%	99%
Total Number of Repairs Completed	3918	4779

AGM

Hebridean Housing Partnership will be holding their 7th AGM at 7pm on
Thursday 12th September 2013
in the County Hotel, Stornoway.

All are welcome to attend.

Board Meetings take place on
4th September and 27th November 2013
in our boardroom.

**Again these are open to the public
and all are welcome to attend.**

Complaints

Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) aims to provide a first class housing service to all customers. However, 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 our customers.

The table below shows a summary of complaints raised from 1 October 2012 – 31 March 2013.

Tenants who have exhausted HHP's Complaint Handling Procedure may raise their complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). During the period 1 October 2012 – 31 March 2013 one complaint went to the SPSO. The SPSO did not uphold the complaint.

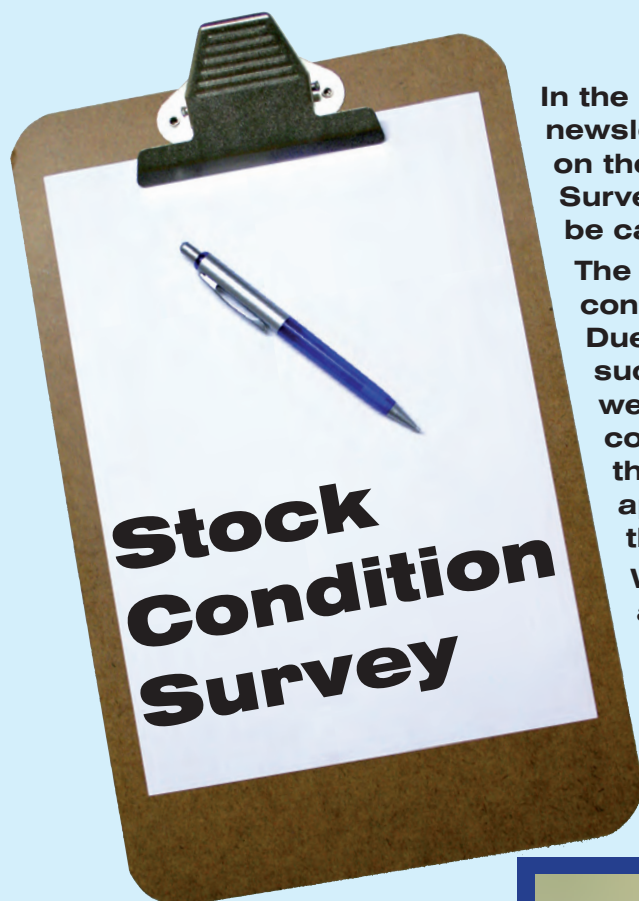
The complaints made to the SPSO were that HHP:

1. failed to offer a suitable resolution to the tenant's complaint about the condition of their garden; not upheld; and
2. failed to deal with the tenant's complaint appropriately; not upheld.

	Complaints - Frontline	Complaints - Investigation	Total
Number of Complaints	46	6	52
Average time taken to respond to Complaints (working Days)	4	19	5

Outcome of Complaints

	Complaints - Frontline	Complaints - Investigation	Total
Explanation and/or Apology	31		31
Compensation to Service User		1	1
Complaint not Upheld	15	5	20
Total	46	6	52



In the December newsletter we reported on the Stock Condition Survey that was about to be carried out.

The survey was concluded successfully. Due to the level of success with access, we achieved 580 completed surveys; this represents approximately 25% of the overall stock.

We have received a draft report but there is still a significant amount of data to be analysed

and assessed. This data provides a picture of the needs of the stock over the coming years and will be the basis on which the future investment programme is decided. This includes work such as window replacement, kitchen renewals and bathroom and heating refurbishments.

We would like to thank all who participated in the survey for their co-operation and patience. The surveyors found the experience very satisfying and commented on the warm welcome they received from tenants.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard

The housing stock was also assessed against the Scottish Housing Quality Standard that the Government expects all properties to achieve by 2015. Houses are expected to be:

- compliant with the current Tolerable Standard
- free from serious disrepair
- energy efficient
- fitted with modern facilities and services
- healthy, safe and secure.

The survey reported that 85% of the properties are compliant with the standard or are exempt for a variety of reasons. We will be working between now and 2015 to ensure the remaining houses achieve this standard.



Fuel Poverty

The opportunity was also taken to carry out a household survey on fuel poverty as we realise the importance of this issue and the difficulties people have in heating their homes. We wanted to get more detail on how this is affecting tenants.

92% of properties surveyed participated in the fuel poverty questionnaire and the initial data from the questionnaire has been useful but the scale of the problem is alarming.

House holds are regarded as being in fuel poverty if they spend over 10% of their income on domestic fuel; and as being in extreme fuel poverty if they spend over 20% of income on domestic fuel.

The findings showed that:

- 61% of tenants are in fuel poverty
- and 22% are in extreme fuel poverty

The HHP Board have considered these findings and were very concerned. They have agreed to write to OFGEM and to the local MP & MSP to highlight the plight of many tenants in trying to keep their homes warm.

David Blaney, Chair of HHP said, "Fuel poverty is an issue that blights the lives of many tenants and we are committed to doing all we can to help. We will also emphasise the extent of the challenge in the Outer Hebrides to those who are in a position to help."



Customer Services 0300 123 0773



RENT PAYMENT CARDS

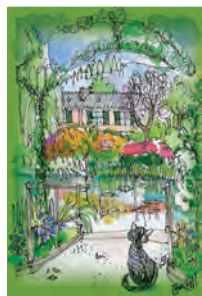
Rent Payment Cards were issued around 6 months ago to provide greater flexibility for tenants to pay their rent. There are 70 outlets spread across the Western Isles where you can make payments to HHP. You can also use outlets on the mainland if necessary. Outlets will all display either the Paypoint or Payzone logo. If you would like to start using a payment card please contact your housing officer on 0300 123 773. If you have already been issued with a payment card we would encourage you to use it.



HHP's Chief Executive Angus Lamont with his wife Katie and friends at the Fort William end of the 89 mile Great Glen walk.

They took five days to complete the walk which finished at Inverness Castle. They raised over £1600 for the British Heart Foundation and Prostrate Scotland.

Well done to Angus and the rest!



Best Estate Competition

HHP have set up a new initiative for tenants to enter their housing estate/street into a competition for the "Best Estate/Street Award".

See inside and Application Form for more information!



WAYS TO PAY YOUR RENT

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN NOW PAY YOUR RENT "ON-LINE"?

To access this method of rent payment go to:-

<https://www.e-paycapita.com/westernisles/index.jsp> 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.

