



homeward

hebridean housing partnership newsletter



Alzheimer Scotland Benefits from HHP Investment Programmes

HHP were able to assist in providing much needed equipment to support music and singing sessions at the Solas day centre in Stornoway. £1,000 was donated by Lewis Builders as part of Community Benefit requirements in their contract for the recently completed Gibson Garden development.

David Blaney, Chair of HHP, said: "This is another excellent example of how HHP are delivering benefits to the wider community through our new build and investment programmes. We are grateful to Lewis Builders and our other contractors for the way they have responded to these aspirations."

Dena Macleod, HHP's Director of Resources, said: "We are delighted to be able to work with our contractors to support the excellent work carried out by Alzheimer Scotland."

Equipment purchased so far includes an electronic keyboard used at the monthly singing group, a karaoke machine (with Gaelic karaoke CD), a new record player/radio/CD and percussion instruments. Funds have also been used to upgrade the environment, and develop a 'quiet room' within the day centre, which provides a comfortable and private space for people with dementia and their carers to use.

Pictured are David Blaney, HHP Chairman and Dena Macleod, Director of Resources with partners from the Co-op, Lewis Builders and Young Musicians Hebrides that raised an amazing £2,000 for the Solas day centre and local Councillors Gordon Murray and Iain Mackenzie.

New Rent Arrears Policy

HHP updated its Rent Arrears Policy at February's Board Meeting. The revised policy recognises the vital role that prompt payment of rent plays in ensuring the financial wellbeing of HHP and protecting services to its tenants. The policy seeks to establish a culture of payment, and promotes early intervention so that issues can be dealt with before debt spirals out of control. Housing Services Area Manager Martin Flett said, "We recognise that in times of financial hardship many are struggling to make ends meet, but rent is a priority payment which secures your home and it should be the first thing you pay each week. Rent debt will not go away and may lead to you losing your home. If you are struggling with payments we can help. There may be benefits you are entitled to and we would urge anyone in these circumstances to also contact their local CAB for assistance."

Board member Mairi Bremner said, "We remain committed to assisting tenants experiencing payment difficulties. I would encourage tenants to contact their Area Housing Officer as soon as possible." Our staff can help with claiming benefits and completing forms and work with other agencies to provide help.

HHP Continue to Invest in Tenants' Homes

The 2015 to 2019 Investment Programme was approved at the HHP Board meeting in February this year. Over £14m worth of work on tenants' homes will be delivered in the next 4 years with a new framework contract already in place.

The programme was built on information from the recent stock condition survey along with honouring tenant promises made as part of the stock transfer process back in 2006. A large part of the works will be focused on fuel poverty and complying with new energy efficiency targets.

The works will be delivered by nine local contractors who successfully tendered for the contract.

HHP's Chair David Blaney said "I am delighted to be able to confirm this major investment and I am particularly pleased that this will be delivered by local contractors.

This not only benefits tenants but supports a large number of local jobs and greatly benefits the local economy and wider community."

The hugely popular 'Green Book' which details the Investment Programme will be updated and sent out to all tenants later in the year.



John Norgrove was the guest speaker at HHP's AGM in September 2014, and he spoke movingly about his daughter's life and the Foundation set up after her tragic death. His talk prompted HHP staff to organise a quiz to raise funds for the Linda Norgrove Foundation. Numbers were limited because of icy road conditions on the night, but the event proved very popular and still managed to raise £500, enough to fund two disadvantaged Afghan girls through college for a year. It is planned to make the quiz an annual event, in mid-January each year. Pictured is Quizmaster for the night Martin Flett handing over a cheque for £500 to John Norgrove and his wife Lorna Norgrove.



Staff Events Committee

A Staff Events Committee was set up in January 2015. The Committee will arrange events throughout the year to raise funds for local charities. In previous years HHP staff have raised funds for The Food Bank, Bethesda, Macmillan Nurses, Breast Cancer and the list goes on. Their work will be guided and informed by a belief and commitment to; 'Transparency, Fun, Integrity, Positivity and Participation'.

Events will now include bake sales, sponsored walks & cycles.

Laura-Jayne Davis said the Committee agreed on a mission statement 'To increase staff morale and to convey HHP in a positive light in the local community'. Both the Stornoway and Uist office will take part in the fundraising efforts and will work to raise funds for those less fortunate, within our local community.

Pictured above are HHP staff wearing yellow in aid of Marie Curie and £71 was raised.

Planned Maintenance Year 1

All our stock is split into a 5 year programme for planned maintenance with a fifth of houses being inspected every year. The first 5 year cycle has been completed and we are now back to year 1 of the programme.

The following schemes are on the programme for the current year. Priority is given to work to protect the houses such as gutter cleaning, roughcast and roof repairs. If resources permit lower priority works such as fence painting will also be carried out.

Angus MacNeil, HHP's Contracts & Asset Manager, said "all tenants in these streets will receive a leaflet and letter informing them of what works will be carried out along with the expected start/finish dates. Co-operation is required from tenants for access in particular to ease and lubricate windows and doors and for cleaning of chimneys (solid fuel properties)."

LEWIS Cearn Ronaidh Cearn Easaidh Cearn Bhororaidh Ardanmhor Lios Na Glib Ceann a Tuath Doune Place Doune Road Doune Terrace Doune Park Gead Gorm Pentland Drive Druim Nan Curracag Uraghag Leverhulme Drive Robertson Road Stirling Square Maryhill	Eitseal Way Westview Terrace Torquil Terrace Seaforth Rd/Seaview Terr	Ashdail Cottages Bruach Gorm Thorgaidh
	HARRIS Macqueen Street Parkview Terrace (Scalpay) Abhainn Ruadh Cnoc Na Leac Obbe Road Grian Airigh Doctors House, Northton	BENBECULA Columba Place Baile Na Cille Strome Cottages
		SOUTH UIST Ionad Cheillidh Sealladh Bharraidh Slighe Ruairaidh
	NORTH UIST, BENBECULA & BERNERAY Tigh a' Chidhe An Struthan Ruadh	BARRA & VATERSAY St Barrs Crescent St Brendans Road

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.

Right to Buy will end on 1 August 2016

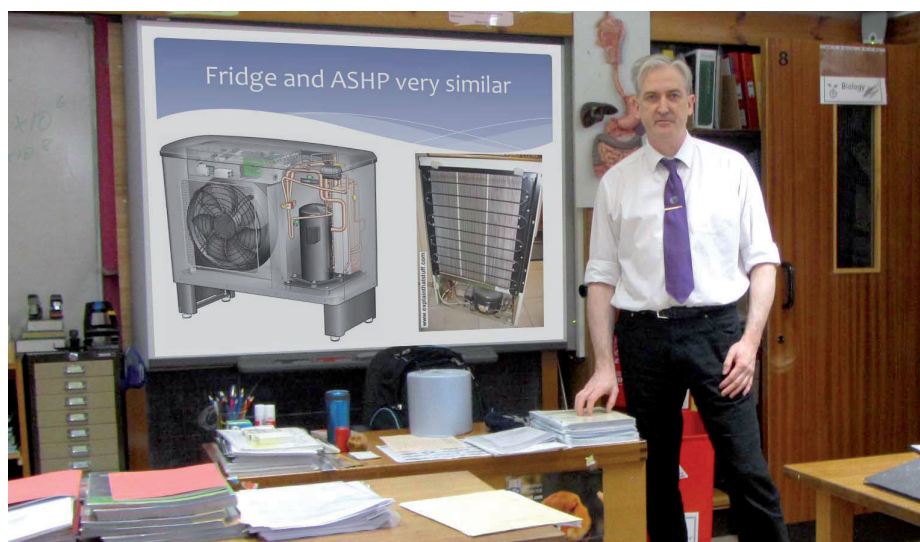
The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 will end the Right to Buy in Scotland. The first commencement order makes 1 August 2016 the date on which the Act's provisions ending the right to buy will come into effect.

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.

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



Back to school

It was back to school for HHP Investment Manager Peter O'Donnell when he was invited by Castlebay School Science teacher Paul Donnelly to give S4 pupils a talk on air source heat pumps.

"A few years ago I gave a similar presentation to Castlebay School teachers so it was good to deliver it to the pupils this time. The kids were really interested and hopefully they enjoyed listening to me as much as I did talking to them."

The presentation focused on how air source heat pumps worked but Peter also discussed the importance of understanding electricity tariffs. The presentation ended with a demonstration on thermal image cameras which proved very popular with the pupils.



Friday 9th January saw one of the worst storms the Western Isles had seen in many years. More than 700 HHP properties suffered damage. Most of these were relatively minor involving the loss of a small number of slates or tiles. However a small number were more serious and these were prioritised.

We had contingency plans in place and these were immediately implemented. All available resources from our contractor FES FM Ltd and their sub-contractors were mobilised and their operatives worked in sometimes

extremely difficult conditions to make properties wind and watertight until a permanent repair could be carried out. Continuing bad weather hampered our efforts over the next few days as work could only be carried out when it was safe to do so.

By the end of February we were in a position where almost all the work was complete.

Unfortunately for a small number of tenants the storm was a reminder of the importance of having good contents insurance. We therefore strongly

advise tenants to make sure they have home contents insurance.

HHP Chair David Blaney said "We are grateful to tenants for their understanding and patience as we worked to deal with the huge amount of damage caused by the storm amongst the most powerful ever experienced in the islands. We are also grateful for the huge efforts of our staff and contractors to repair tenants homes as quickly as possible."

During the storms HHP used Twitter as one method to keep tenants informed. Follow us at @HebHousing

Doorstep Crime

Doorstep Crime can affect anyone, but it is frequently older and vulnerable people, who are often living on their own, who are specifically targeted by rogue traders and bogus workmen.

The Western Isles are regularly visited by Doorstep sellers. It can be at any time of the year, and no longer just in the summer months. Recently Trading Standards were made aware of doorstep traders attempting to mislead consumers by claiming that they had been asked over to the Islands to help out with emergency repairs after the period of severe weather in January.

Common practices include high pressure and aggressive sales techniques and carrying out unnecessary work to a low standard at inflated costs. The most serious problems are usually associated with higher value home and garden repairs and maintenance, but can also include the sale of counterfeit goods or unsafe machinery and equipment.

Often the doorstep sellers will present a veneer of respectability by distributing

glossy business leaflets, advertising local telephone numbers and having professional looking websites. They may even dress smartly or have high visibility jackets to give the impression of being a legitimate business.

Trading Standards' advice is to never agree to work on the doorstep. Doorstep sellers are trained in pressure sales techniques and they can be very persuasive. Once they start a conversation with you it can be very difficult to get rid of them. Your best protection is to say: "No thank you" and close the door.

Doorstep sellers always prefer to be paid in cash and it can be very difficult to pursue the trader to remedy unsatisfactory work once you have paid. Locally Trading Standards have had experience of doorstep sellers taking their customers along to the Bank or the cash machine in order to withdraw money to pay them.

In the Islands Trading Standards and Police Scotland have a very small

window of opportunity to pursue the sellers and very often the perpetrators will have returned to the mainland before the victims even discover they have been taken advantage of. We encourage residents to contact Trading Standards as soon as possible to report doorstep sellers.

If you, or a neighbour or relative is approached by a doorstep seller and you are concerned, we advise you to contact Trading Standards on 01851 822694, the Faire out of hours service on 701702 or Police Scotland on 101. (In an emergency contact the Police on 999) Trading Standards also want to encourage local traders to report any suspicious business activity which is causing them concern.

Trading Standards may supply free 'No Uninvited Sales people' signage to display on your door and one is included with this newsletter.



Doorstoppers Western Isles

To report uninvited salespeople call:

- Trading Standards 01851 822694
- Faire (24 hours) 01851 701702
- In an emergency please dial 999



HHP is a Registered Factor

HHP is a registered property factor. It acts in two capacities. Firstly as a factor for new build LIFT properties. 'LIFT' stands for Low Income First Time buyers. HHP also acts as factor in respect of communal areas in flats and shared services. Under the 2012 Property Factors Act HHP is now obliged to act as factor in respect of properties sold under Right To Buy legislation. A core principle is that tenants should not meet the costs of services provided to private owners. So, for example, if there is a grassed area which benefits 8 properties, then the cost of maintaining that area is divided by 8 and each owner is invoiced for 1/8th of the cost. Tenants already pay their share of the cost through their rent. Owners are sent invoices for their share of the cost on a regular basis.

Household Insurance

Do you have household insurance?

Does your insurance cover the internal decoration of your home?

As your landlord, Hebridean Housing Partnership's insurance policy covers the structure of your home but it does not include any of your personal belongings, floor coverings, furniture or decoration against damage caused by events such as fire or water damage.

As a member of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, HHP promotes their low cost Diamond Home Contents Insurance Scheme for tenants and owner occupiers.

If you would like more information on this insurance scheme, please telephone us on 0300 123 0773 and your housing officer will be happy to provide you with this.



Garden Maintenance

Not everyone is able to maintain their own garden for one reason or another and this can be quite distressing for them especially during the growing season. Do you have a neighbour who is unable to maintain their garden due to age or ill health? Would you be willing to give up a little of your time to help them out? Your help would be gratefully received by them so go on – give your neighbour a helping hand this Summer.

Clear Rent Account Winners

The first prize winner of £100 was John Paul McClounnan from Balivanich pictured with Area Manager John MacQuarrie. Mr McClounnan chose a voucher for MacLennan's shop in Balivanich. He was delighted with his prize, it came in very useful as he had just been offered a transfer of house shortly afterwards.

The second prize of £50 was won by Sandra Monk from Torlum, Benbecula pictured with Katie Walker Area Housing Officer. Miss Monk also chose a voucher from MacLennan's shop. She was really happy as she said she had never won a prize in her life.

The third prize of £50 was awarded to Malcolm MacInnes from Tarbert, Isle of Harris – he chose a voucher for Tesco in Stornoway and was very pleased with his prize. He is pictured with Mrs Helen Maher from Tarbert CNES office handing over his prize on behalf of HHP.



Do you want to be a Board Member?

HHP's vision is to provide good quality, affordable homes, and to secure consistently excellent housing services throughout the Western Isles. If you'd like to help us achieve this, and serve our Tenants, then read on ...

HHP would like to encourage any Tenants who are interested in getting involved to consider putting themselves forward for Board Membership. You can do this by contacting our Governance Team.

In order to stand for Board Membership, you must be a Member of HHP. The cost of Membership is £1, and you must be over 16, a Tenant and have lived in the

Western Isles for three years, prior to submitting your application.

We are also looking for people from all walks of life to enhance our Board – in addition to our 12 Board Members we can co-opt up to 3 Board Members. We currently have space for a further 2 co-opted Board Members, so if you feel you have some skills to offer, please get in touch.

For further details on Board and HHP Membership please give our Governance Team, Angela or Iona a call on 0300 123 0773, or you can drop in to the office in Stornoway and we'd be happy to talk to you.

twitter

Follow HHP on Twitter -
Hebridean Housing @HebHousing



Free Internet Access

With Universal Credit in mind HHP have set up computers in our offices for public access. These computers are free to use and available to any tenants. Please ask our Customer Services staff for assistance. Although priority will be given to those making a claim for Universal Credit the computers are also available if you just want to check your email or bank account or even just surf the internet.

We are also working on gathering a list of public access computers and free WIFI throughout the Western Isles. Below are a few key access points but please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need more information about your own area.

Stornoway

HHP Offices

Library

Rural Lewis

Library at Shawbost school

Isle of Harris

3 public access computers based at Sir E Scott School in Tarbert

5 public access computers based at Lionacleite school Harris Voluntary Service

North Uist/Berneray

Claddach Kirkibost Centre

Berneray Nurses Cottage

Benbecula

Lionacleite School

Barra

Library

Learning Centre

South Uist

Daliburgh School

Daliburgh Library

Welfare Reform

The next stage of Welfare Reform reaches the Western Isles in May 2015. Following the introduction of 'Bedroom Tax' in 2013, Universal Credit will start in May 2015. The first phase is likely to affect only a handful of people, and is not expected to affect any HHP tenants. However, between May 2015 and the end of 2017 most HHP tenants under pension credit age who currently receive Housing Benefit will switch to Universal Credit.

Under Universal Credit claimants will make one claim for all benefits they are entitled to and will receive a monthly payment which incorporates all their benefits, including housing benefit.

Claimants will need a bank account to receive payments and all claims must be made online.

HHP recognises that these and other changes will cause problems for many of its tenants and it is committed to providing as much assistance as possible. As further details are made available, HHP will keep tenants up to date with the implementation of Universal Credit. It has already introduced computer terminals in its Stornoway and Balivanich offices for tenants who do not have internet access, and staff have received in depth training on the new rules and can offer tenants comprehensive advice.

Infra Red Heating Trialled at Scott Road

HHP has recently installed infra red heating at 4 flats in Scott Road, Tarbert. Air source heat pumps were not a good option for these types of properties. HHP Investment Manager Peter O'Donnell said "This type of heating is very different to traditional heating systems as the heat is radiated rather than convected. It may even have health benefits."

Peter visited tenants in Inverness and Dornoch and they were very pleased with the infra red heating. One tenant said:

"I would definitely recommend this to anyone who is thinking of having it installed.

Not only do you save financially, it does not dry the air as some systems do. I have also felt a great deal of benefit to my osteoarthritis; I move around more freely and am no longer in severe pain. It has made a made a huge difference to me physically."

Once the trial is over a report will go to the HHP Board on the results.

HEBRIDEAN HOUSING

Mackenzie Crescent, Sandwick, Isle of Lewis

In May 2015 HHP will complete 12 houses for sale under the Scottish Government's Shared Equity scheme and 4 houses for rent.

By December 2015 the remaining 16 houses, 6 of which are for Shared Equity and 10 for rent are due to be ready.

Mackenzie Lane, Sandwick, Isle of Lewis

Following on from Mackenzie Crescent a further stage of the Melbost Masterplan will start on site. A Design & Build Competition will take place to find a contractor for this work. There will be 24 houses altogether, a mix of both Shared Equity and rent.

Shared Equity

This scheme provides a fantastic opportunity to become a home owner. The Shared Equity Scheme offers homes to first time buyers although consideration will be given to owner occupiers in certain circumstances. You should be working and living in the Western Isles, on a moderate income which would make it difficult for you to purchase from the open market and should either be living in HHP rented housing or be on the waiting list for housing for a period of six months prior to application.

If you require further information regarding this scheme please contact our Development Agents Tighean Innse Gall:- Liz MacInnes at liz@tighean.co.uk or Donna Smith at donna@tighean.co.uk.

Memorial View, Marybank, Isle of Lewis

This 7 house development adjacent to Allt Na Broige in Marybank will be completed by HHP in April 2015. All of these houses have been sold under the Scottish Government's Shared Equity scheme.

These houses have been built to a very high standard, have high levels of insulation

and benefit from air source heat pumps.

Winfield Place, Balivanich

After a long search for a suitable site a scheme of 4 houses for rent in Balivanich is now well under way. The Contractor is Calmax Construction.

Following consultation with the local Community Council, the name of Winfield Place was decided upon. In the photograph are Donald MacKay, Calmax Construction, John Alex MacQuarrie, HHP and John Campbell, Torrance Partnership on site at Winfield Place, Balivanich.

These houses should be ready for handover in May 2015.

Leana Ruadh, Uig, Isle of Lewis

Construction of 4 houses for rent has begun in Crowlsta, Isle of Lewis and are due to be completed in June 2015. These are the first rented houses to be built in Uig for around 40 years.

Planned Future Developments

Habost, Ness, Isle of Lewis

This site was previously a business unit and was more recently used by Comunn Eachdraidh Nis. A decision to transfer this site from CnES was made in February 2014.

A Design & Build Competition will be carried out to find a Contractor to carry out demolition of the building in Habost and to construct a scheme of 4 houses on the site.

Barvas School

The former Barvas School has been unused since the new West Side School opened. A Comhairle decision to transfer this site to HHP was made in February 2014.

A Design & Build Competition will be carried out to find a Contractor.

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP ING DEVELOPMENT



Mackenzie Crescent, Sandwick, Isle of Lewis



Memorial View, Marybank, Isle of Lewis



Winfield Place, Balivanich



Crowlista, Uig, Isle of Lewis



Habost, Ness, Isle of Lewis



Barvas School and Schoolhouse



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hebridean housing partnership newsletter



Tenant Satisfaction Survey

HHP will be carrying out its annual satisfaction survey during the summer of 2015. Katrina Palmer, Service Development Manager, said, "We would ask all tenants to take a few minutes to help if asked. We will be employing a small team of students to carry out the survey on a face to face basis. This also provides much needed help to some of our young people. The survey is an important tool to get feedback from tenants on what we are doing right and what areas of service we can improve. So whether you are very happy with the service we provide or there are areas of dissatisfaction, please take the time to give us your feedback."

RENT PAYMENT CARDS

Rent Cards are available as a payment option and can be the most convenient way of paying your rent. Rent Cards can be used in any 'Pay Point' outlet including Post Offices and are growing in popularity because they can be used at evenings and weekends when cash desks are closed, and because there are Pay Point outlets in most communities. If you would like to order a rent card, please contact your Area Housing Officer.

Your Repair Service – Emergency Repairs

When you report a repair which is considered to be an emergency you will be advised whether this will be carried out within a 4 hour or 24 hour priority. This means that our contractor FES must attend within this period of time. It is therefore essential that someone is at home to allow them access. If you have to go out for any reason then you must tell our Customer Services Team.

ROUTINE REPAIRS

For routine repairs you will be advised of the target completion date which will be either 3, 7 or 20 days later. You will then be contacted by FES to arrange an appointment.

ACCESS

Our repairs contractor is reporting an increasing number of incidents where they have arrived at a property only to find there is no one home. This costs the contractor money and also time. Any time spent travelling to an abortive visit is time they could have spent fixing another repair elsewhere. HHP are therefore monitoring these cases very carefully and may in the future bill tenants for any visits where

no access has been granted despite an arrangement being made.

APPOINTMENTS

For routine repairs you will be advised of a completion date and later offered an appointment date & time by our contractor.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT REPAIR TYPES?

Emergency Repairs – 4 hours or 24 hours

This category will include any repair where there is a risk to health or safety or is required to avoid serious damage to property.

Urgent Repairs – 3 or 7 days

These are repairs which are covered by the Right to Repair scheme or which are essential work which is needed to prevent or remove serious inconvenience to tenants or which if not attended to quickly could result in damage to the property.

Routine Repairs

These are repairs that do not fall into the emergency or urgent categories and which can wait a short time before they are dealt with.

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.

