



hebridean housing
partnership

December 2010

homeward

Customer Services 0300 123 0773

Tarbert. Mairi P. Macleod, North Tolsta ©



Important Information New Low Cost Phone Number 0300 123 0773

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new customer services number which will make it cheaper for tenants to contact us. HHP have listened to feedback from tenants groups, and from tenants themselves through direct contact and from the tenant satisfaction survey. George Lonie Chair of HHP said ' This change reflects our commitment to deliver the best deal we can for tenants and shows that we are listening to what tenants tell us. This will save tenants money as HHP continue to strive to improve our services and to deliver value for money to tenants'.

In 2005, when HHP was set up around 90% of calls to Housing were from a landline. HHP introduced an 0845 contact number to reduce call charges to our tenants so that callers would pay no more than a local call rate from wherever in the country they were phoning. Since 2006 there have been major changes to the telecoms market.

Two of the most important have been:-

a) the increase in the use of mobile phones, and the increase in the use of contracts with inclusive minutes. In 2010, volumes of mobile calls are expected to be greater than landline calls for the first time;

b) the rise of 'inclusive' land line phone packages (often associated with Broadband access).

Calls to the new number qualify as inclusive on both landline and mobile network packages, this means that calls from tenants with these arrangements could be 'free'.

Calls from standard lines and mobiles are charged at the same price as geographic 01 and 02 landline numbers. This means (for example) that calling HHP from within the Western Isles, whether on a standard line or mobile, should cost no more than a normal landline local call (currently 3.948p per minute*).

* BT - Tariff Guide for Residential Customers, 1st November 2010.

RENT FIRST

Hebridean Housing Partnership understands that there are many reasons why some tenants have difficulty paying their rent especially with Christmas approaching. **Rent payments must be your first priority - do not put your family home at risk.** Please talk to us immediately if you think you have a problem. We will deal with your problems in an understanding, sympathetic and fair way. Rent arrears are a serious problem and can lead to you losing your home.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T PAY YOUR RENT?

Without income from rent payment we would not be able to repair and maintain your home or the homes of your neighbours.

We CANNOT allow any tenant to stop paying rent. If you do not pay we will take action against you which could lead to you being evicted.

This is a last resort and we do not want to evict any tenant. However if people do not work with us it is unavoidable. If you are having problems paying your rent you can get confidential advice from your Housing Officer.

Our staff will:

- agree reasonable repayments based on what you can afford;
- conduct all interviews in private;
- help you to ensure you are receiving all the income you are entitled to;
- arrange for you to receive more detailed help with debt.

**Your rent arrears
WON'T go away...
So address them
TODAY!**

**WIN £100 FOR
YOUR CLEAR
RENT ACCOUNT!**

The first tenant selected at random after the holiday break who had a clear rent account on 1st January 2011 will receive £100 voucher for a local shop of their choice. There will also be 2 runner up prizes of £50.



THE ENERGY ADVISORY SERVICE

WRAP UP YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

TEAS is the local energy efficiency advice office in the Western Isles and can provide information, leaflets and grant advice as well as assisting with fuel and tariff queries.

The offices are located on South Beach Street (next to MacKinnon's bakery shop) or we can be contacted on Telephone number: 01851 704300.

TEAS and staff in Taigh Blath are currently working alongside Hebridean Housing Partnership to install loft and cavity insulation in tenants' properties.

The two best ways to reduce the amount of energy a home uses are:

- Install cavity wall insulation;
- Increase the insulation in your loft.

Both types of insulation can have a dramatic effect. A correctly insulated home will reduce your yearly fuel bills (how much depends on the size of your house) and once it's in place it lasts a lifetime. Once installed you will feel the benefit of a warmer, cosier, more comfortable home that costs less to run and is kind to the environment.

Be Energy Efficient

With the nights closing in, now is the time to start thinking about ways to keep warm and healthy over winter. In the same way as we start to wear warmer clothes and layer up with scarves and gloves, there are things we can do to make our houses warmer and cheaper to run. Not only will it keep you warm and healthy but it can also save you money.

Simple tips you can try this winter:

- Close your curtains at night time to stop heat escaping
- Don't leave your electrical appliances such as TV on standby, they will use almost as much electric as if they were switched on. Turn them off at the wall.
- Use low energy lightbulbs as they can last up to 10 times longer and will use only a 1/5th of the electricity.

They can also save you £30-40 over the life time of the bulb.



Our Aim

HHP have teamed up with Taigh Blath to launch our insulation programme. Our aim is simple – reduce your heating bills, ensure your home is warmer and reduce the harmful CO2 emissions caused by your home's energy consumption.

The lofts in many homes are already insulated but don't assume you have enough.

The government recommends that all loft insulation should be 270mm thick for maximum energy savings, but recent

research shows that very few of us have this much so HHP will check all homes and top up where required.

If your house was built in the last 10 years it should be adequately insulated. Taigh Blath will also install cavity wall insulation in your home which is surprisingly simple since it is all done from the outside. Please be aware though that some older houses are not suitable for cavity insulation.

Investment Programme

As part of HHP's Investment works the insulation programme will run up to 2015.

We are working hard with Taigh Blath to attract additional funding to do as many houses as quickly as possible.

We have already completed works in the Dounes, Carnan Park, Airidhantuin, Heatherhill and the Cearns.



Your home

If you want to know when we will be in your area then please contact Customer Services on 0300 123 0773.

Some of the work may be delayed in your home if you are due window or heating replacements in the next few years as these works could affect the insulation being installed.

Our current programme include Macqueen St, Scott Road, Sunnyhill, Vatiskers Park, Morrison Terrace, Camach Park and Bennadrove Road.



hebridean housing
partnership



Working together to reduce your heating bills

NEW BUILD NEWS

PROGRAMME SUCCESS

HHP's initial new build programme of 275 houses in its first 10 years is well ahead of schedule and we will be completing our 250th new house within the next few months. This notable event will be marked by a presentation to the lucky new tenant and extensive media coverage.

Meanwhile here is an update on how things are going at a number of our new build sites.

Bridge Cottages, Newmarket, Isle of Lewis

Calmax Construction Ltd are building 18 new homes for HHP on this site. Work is progressing well on the £2.3m project and the houses are due for handover around February next year.

Bunnavoneadar, Isle of Harris

HHP are partnering with Uist Builders Construction Ltd to build 8 new houses at this site to be called Ceann an Ora. There will also be provision of 3 serviced plots on the site which will be marketed by North Harris Trust. The new homes are due for allocation around the turn of the year.

Gearraidh Ghuirm, Coll, Isle of Lewis

We are working with Alex Murray Construction Ltd to build 11 houses at this site. The contract is due for completion in March 2011.

Ardanmhor Court, Stornoway

This is the site of the former Smiths Shoe Shop in Kenneth Street. It has been named Ardanmhor to recollect the name of one of Stornoway's oldest houses.

HHP have contracted with Donald Macfarlane to build 12 flats on the site. 6 of these flats are for rent and 6 are for sale under a shared equity scheme. Interest in the flats for sale has been very high. 12 of the flats are due to be ready for occupation around March 2011.



Bunnavoneadar, Isle of Harris



Gearraidh Ghuirm, Coll, Isle of Lewis



Ardanmhor Court, Stornoway

Manor Drive, Stornoway

This is the site of the Old MacRae Hostel next to the big Co-op. We are working in partnership with Tulloch Homes Express to build 42 new homes of which 30 are for rent and 12 are for sale on a shared equity basis. The properties for sale have attracted a great deal of interest and it is very encouraging to see first time buyers getting a chance to own their own homes.

The first phase of £5m plus project is due for completion in February/March 2011.



Old Gibson Hostel Site, Ripley Place, Stornoway

HHP have recently put in a Planning Application for new homes to be built on this site.

The project features an adventurous design by local architects Anderson Associates which is specified to deliver highly energy efficient homes which will be much cheaper to heat.



Claddach Kirkibost, North Uist

We are currently collaborating with Uist Builders Construction Ltd to work up a project on a site they own for 6 new homes for rent.

The project is currently at an early stage and HHP and Uist Builders Construction Ltd held a meeting with neighbouring residents in October prior to a formal Planning Application being submitted.



New drive to winter-proof homes

Free 'energy saving' gadgets worth nearly £50 are being offered as part as a major new drive by the Scottish Government to help households lower their fuel bills during winter.

The devices will be on offer from the Scottish Government's new one stop shop on home energy - Home Energy Scotland. A digital electricity monitor and a stand-by plug will be sent out to all callers helping households to save, on average, £47 a year on fuel bills and CO2 that would fill 361 wheelie bins.

A Scotland-wide campaign is promoting the range of help being offered through the Home Energy Hotline including help to switch to cheaper tariffs and help to ensure people are claiming their full pension and benefit support.

Housing and Communities Minister Alex Neil said:

"Offering households help to cut fuel bills is vital, especially in the current climate.

"These free energy saving devices and the wide range of other help on offer will help households keep the heat in and keep more money in their pockets.

"If we have a winter like last winter this help will be more important than ever."

Douglas Sinclair, Chair of Consumer Focus Scotland, said:

"There is a huge variety of advice and support available to help people save money on their energy, but we know consumers can sometimes find it difficult to access the help that's right for them.

"This new one stop shop for home energy advice will make it easier and quicker to get the right information and support on potential energy savings.

"Every household should consider having a home energy check now to ensure they have done everything possible to be ready for winter and make savings on their fuel bills."

Home Energy Scotland is the one stop shop from the Scottish Government, offering information on all Scottish Government home energy initiatives and help and expert advice on how to save energy and money in the home. The Home Energy Hotline is 0800 512 012.

Wider Role – Tenant Early Intervention Project

HHP in partnership with the Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS) is providing a valuable, intensive benefit and money advice service to HHP tenants.

The project workers work with tenants and prospective tenants and provide assistance in completing Housing Benefit Claim Forms, assess eligibility for other benefits, offer income maximisation and budgeting advice and assist with a realistic debt repayment plan where appropriate. There is a clear focus on early intervention to reduce tenancy breakdown and subsequent homelessness. WICAS also offer non-Housing related advice from its own areas of expertise, including Employment, Income Tax, Education, Legal Advice and Health and Community Care.

Almost 3 out of every 4 tenants seen by the project have not been claiming or receiving all the help they are entitled to. To date, of the cases that have been seen, 70% were eligible to claim additional benefits.

A total of 166 additional benefits have been claimed and there is a potential of £86,590 annual income arising from these claims. The known annual income from the claims amounts to £42,163.

The project is showing positive benefits for HHP as the overall level of rent arrears comes down but equally importantly is increasing the amount of money coming into the community and local economy.

The project is part funded by the Scottish Government along with HHP and WICAS and is scheduled to run to March 2011.

NOTHING TO LOSE

All tenants are encouraged to take advantage of this project. There is nothing to lose by having a check carried out on whether you are receiving all the benefits or tax credits you are entitled to. Please contact your Housing Officer on 0300 123 0773 who will arrange for a referral to be made for you or alternatively contact WICAS directly on 01851 70 5727 or Uist 01870 603 928 to arrange for an appointment

HHP board names FES FM as new maintenance contractor

The housing maintenance contract for 2011-16 has been awarded to Stirling-based FES FM Ltd. This decision was taken by the board on 25 November 2010.

The five-year planned and responsive maintenance contract starts on April 1st 2011.

Until then the responsive repairs service will continue to be delivered by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's property maintenance delivery team as at present. The Comhairle maintenance workers whose jobs depend substantially on their work on HHP tenants' homes – an estimated 11 staff – will transfer to the new contractor under employment protection regulations.

Angus Lamont, chief executive said "The new contract will enhance maintenance services and preserve the skills and employment of the existing workers who tenants know and trust.

"We will work with FES FM to maximise local employment opportunities and apprenticeships throughout the contract period. Continuity of work is especially important in the current economic climate. We are grateful to the Comhairle for their service to our tenants over the past four years."

Work is now starting with FES to prepare for 1 April 2011 and more information will be provided to tenants over the next 4 months as plans develop.

Special Collections

If you have large items such as furniture, washing machines and refrigerators which will not be taken away along with your normal bin collection you can arrange to have these items uplifted by special collection from the council. Items for collection should be left outside your house but within your garden area e.g. back door, front door, driveway,

beside shed/garage.

You can usually book for this service in advance. There may be a charge for the collection.

For more information or to arrange this please telephone 01851 709746 / 709748 or by e-mail at recycling@cne-siar.gov.uk.





Uist & Barra Tenants Conference Report

HHP held its first Uist and Barra Tenants Conference on 4 September 2010. The venue was the Balivanich Community Hall which 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).

The day began with a presentation by Kevin Paterson, chair of WIFTRA, on the subject of 'Getting Involved' when he encouraged tenants to take an active role in the work of HHP and also in the wider issues affecting their communities. John MacIver, HHP's Operations Manager outlined progress since transfer in a session entitled 'Looking Back/Looking Forward' and also re-iterated HHP's commitment to collecting tenants' views on the services provided by their landlord.

Angus MacNeil, Property Services Manager, then introduced the proposed investment programme for 2011 to 2015 and emphasised the need to target expenditure on meeting the requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

During an extended break for a buffet lunch, tenants had an opportunity to visit a range of stalls which were set up by a variety of organisations which work closely with HHP. These provided advice and assistance on a wide range of topics including Money Matters, Energy Advice, Homelessness and Repairs and Maintenance.

Following lunch, there was a very lively Question and Answer session, chaired by Kevin Paterson (WIFTRA), when the audience had an opportunity to direct their questions at an HHP Panel comprising John MacIver, Operations Manager, Angus MacNeil, Property Maintenance Manager, and local Area Manager, John A Macquarrie.

The conference format worked very well and our thanks must go to all who participated including:

Tighean Innse Gall; Western Isles Credit Union; Comhairle nan Eilean

Siar, Homeless Service; Northern Constabulary; Taga Uibhist; WICAS, Tenants Project; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Property Maintenance Delivery; Western Isles Advocacy; Caraidean Uibhist; Fire Brigade and NHS Western Isles, Health Promotion

Thanks also to UBC Hebrides, D MacDonald & Co, CNES Property Maintenance Delivery and Torrance Associates who donated raffle prizes. A special thanks to Donald Graham, caretaker of Balivanich Community Hall for all his help and co-operation.

Housing Benefit Repairs Housing Choices

Access to Services Anti-social Behaviour

YOUNG TENANTS' FORUM

We want to talk to young tenants about how we can best deliver services to meet your needs. If you are interested in discussing this and are aged 16–25 please contact us to give your details.

This is your opportunity to get involved and to have your say in decisions being made. Tell us what's important to you and how we can improve housing for young tenants.

GET INVOLVED AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

If you are interested, contact the Customer Services Team:

customerservices@hebrideanhousing.co.uk
or call 0300 123 0773

TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2010

THE RESULTS

HHP wishes to thank everyone who completed the recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The survey was sent to all tenants in August 2010 and 651 replies were received which was over 31% and is an increase from 29% from the last survey in 2008. Neil Campbell, Chair of HHP Operations Committee said, "The results are, generally very positive with 4 out of 5 tenants saying they are satisfied or very satisfied with HHP overall. Regular tenant satisfaction surveys allow HHP to make sure that we are providing the services that tenants want and shows us where we need to improve."

PRIZE DRAW WINNERS

The first four surveys received and winning £50 were as follows; Lewis - K A Morrison Tong, Stornoway - Tenant wished to remain anonymous, Harris - R W Hutton Northton, Uist - A Maclean Lochmaddy and Barra - J Gillies, Castle bay.

The prize draws for all tenants who returned their survey form were won by N Macleod - Carloway and A Kuznacova - Balivanich.

TENANT PARTICIPATION

Tenants were asked how they would prefer to be contacted or involved in how HHP deliver services. The most popular method was by letter at 26%, followed by Homeward Magazine at 17% and leaflets at 10%.

YOUR HOME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

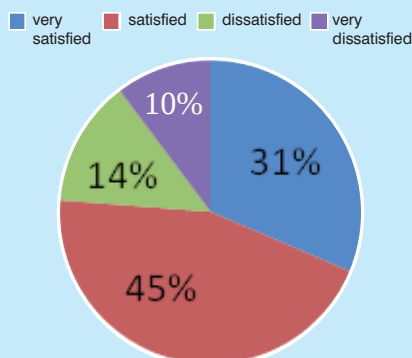
Neighbourhood satisfaction stayed the same as 2008 at 93%. Animal nuisance and noise levels were the largest factors affecting tenant's satisfaction with the area they lived in.

84% of tenants felt that their rent represented good value for money. This is up by 4% from the last survey in 2008.

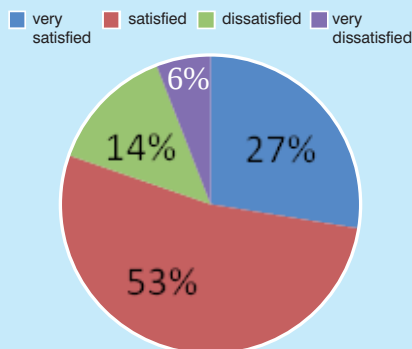
KEY FINDINGS

Over 80% of our tenants are happy with the service we provide which is an increase from the 2008 survey as detailed below.

2008



2010

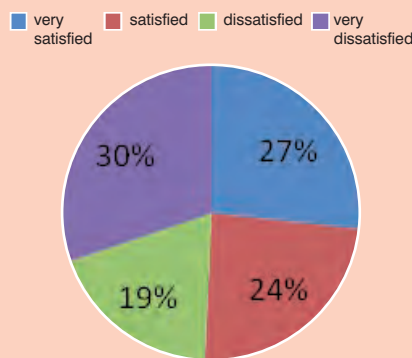


Over 90% of tenants felt that the staff at HHP were very helpful and 84% felt that information was readily available from HHP.

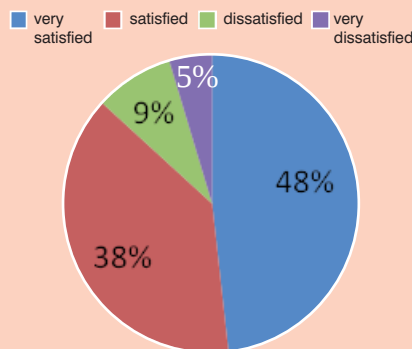
REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The area that improved the most was tenant's satisfaction with the investment programme as detailed below.

2008



2010

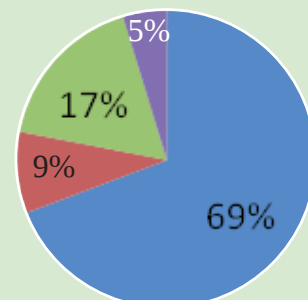


The overall satisfaction with the repairs service has also increased from 65% in 2008 to 74% in 2010. 93% of tenants feel it is easy to report repairs, 94% feel workpeople were tidy and polite and 79% of tenants feel that repairs completed are of a good quality.

HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Responses by Area

■ Lewis ■ Harris ■ Uist ■ Barra



55% of tenants live on their own.
56% of tenants are aged 26-59.
36% of tenants are employed,
4% are self-employed and
27% are retired.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

While the results were generally good and have improved since 2008 there are areas where further improvement is needed and we are working on addressing these.

For example tenants were unhappy with the way we deal with complaints with 50% of tenants feeling that HHP did not deal with their complaint quickly and fairly and 55% of tenants said that they were not aware of what improvements HHP were planning to carry out to their homes.

There were also complaints about the cost of mobile calls in particular to the 0845 number and as you can see from the front page we have changed the phone number to reflect this and to save tenants money.

Current Tenant Rent Arrears – HHP Target <2.5%

	Apr - Sept 2010	2009/10 April – Sept
Tenant Arrears	212,938	258,527
% Level of Arrears	3.28%	3.98%
Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Average of Housing Associations as at 31 March 2010		3.1%



Performance 2010 April 2010 – September 2010

Our performance is continuing to improve across most of the range of key areas such as arrears control, speed of letting empty houses and routine repairs. We have changed the way we measure repair completions to more accurately record performance and this is reflected in the figures.

Overall our performance is now close to the Scottish average for all Housing Associations.

Allocations

Completed within timescale	Apr - Sept 2010	2009/10 April – Sept
New applications added to housing list	278	224
Average number of days taken to add applicant to list	4	4
Number of lets	85	125
Average time taken to re-let	34 days	35 days
Average time taken to re-let less Difficult to let properties	19 days	Figure not available
Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Average time taken to re-let of Housing Associations as at 31 March 2010		18 days

Rent Loss Due to Voids – HHP Target 1%

	Apr - Sept 2010	April – Sept 2009/10
Rent Loss Due to Voids	17,419	27,888
% of monthly rent due that was lost to voids	0.61%	0.95%
Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Average of Housing Associations as at 31 March 2010		0.5%

Repairs Response Times – HHP Target 95%

Completed within timescale	April - Sept 2010	2009/10 April – Sept	Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Average of Housing Associations as at 31 March 2010
Emergency - 4 Hours	88.8%	96.0%	99.4%
Emergency - 24 Hours	93.5%		
Urgent	89.9%	95.0%	97.1%
Routine	96.0%	95.5%	96.5%
Total Number of Repairs Completed	1315	3059	



The boy ran outside and
covering his house

Keep Your Home Safe Th

DO THIS NOW

- Find out where your main cold water supply stopcock is situated, so that in an emergency you can stop further water entering the house.
- Keep windows of unheated rooms closed in cold weather.
- Make certain that all taps are properly turned off when not in use.
- During a spell of severe frost, you should open loft hatches and/or cupboards to allow warmer air to circulate around water tanks.



IF YOU INTEND TO LEAVE YOUR HOUSE UNOCCUPIED

- Turn off and drain down the plumbing system. The stopcock will usually be located in the kitchen or bathroom;
- Have any leaks at taps, stopcocks or ball valves repaired;

- Alternatively, leave your heating on to maintain an adequate temperature to prevent freezing;
- Leave a key with a neighbour or relative. Tell your neighbours how to contact this person in the event of an emergency.

ELDERLY OR DISABLED TENANTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY IN TURNING OFF THEIR WATER SUPPLY SHOULD CONTACT THEIR LOCAL HEBRIDEAN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP OFFICE FOR ASSISTANCE.



FROZEN PIPES

- **DO NOT WAIT** until the pipes thaw out as they may burst and flood the house;
- Turn off water at the stopcocks;
- Open the cold water taps and do not use your hot water supply;
- If you have a gas boiler, turn it off at the programmer;
- If you have a solid fuel boiler, let your fire go out;
- If you have an immersion heater, switch it off;
- **contact us on 0300 123 0773**

BURST PIPES

- Turn off water at the stopcocks;
- Open all taps to sinks and baths;
- If you have a gas boiler, turn it off at the programmer;
- If you have a solid fuel boiler, let your fire go out;
- If you have an immersion heater, switch it off;
- Warn any neighbours who could also suffer damage;
- **contact us on 0300 123 0773**

IF WATER COMES IN CONTACT WITH WIRING OR FITTINGS SWITCH OFF YOUR ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AT THE MAINS.



and saw a white figure
with frost and ice.

is Winter

IF YOU LIVE IN A FLAT

DO NOT turn off the water supply until you have notified Hebridean Housing Partnership as this may affect the water supply to other flats in your block.

HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE

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. 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.

Home contents insurance is a way of protecting your personal belonging, floor coverings, furniture and decoration against damage caused by events such as fire or water damage. It could also cover certain items stolen in a break-in and any accidental damage to your home which you will need to repair.

You can get cover from as little as 46p a week if you are over 60 or 60p a week for those under 60. If you would like more information on this insurance scheme, please telephone us on 0300 132 0773.

**INSURANCE IS GOOD VALUE
FOR MONEY - MAKE SURE
YOU ARE COVERED**

BLOCKED DRAINS

We often don't realise the harm we are doing by what we put down our kitchen sinks, bath and shower drains, and even what we flush down our toilets.

Nappies and wipes should NEVER be flushed down the toilet as these are not bio-degradable and can cause blockages in the drains making it impossible for waste to be flushed into the sewers.

While some products boast the added convenience of being flushable and safe for sewers and septic systems, the people who maintain and operate our local wastewater utilities completely disagree.

Be sure all members of the family know what not to flush down the toilet.

If you do have a blocked sink or toilet it's always worth to try unblocking it with an old-fashioned plunger - they very often do the trick.

If we have to send a plumber to unblock your drains and we find that the blockage is due to your negligence - we will charge you for this work.



DOG FOULING

In terms of your Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement you are allowed to keep one domestic pet and in certain circumstances permission may be given for you to keep additional pets.

You are responsible for the behaviour of your pets and you must take reasonable care to see that your pets do not foul or cause damage to your house or your neighbour's property.

Hebridean Housing Partnership is entitled to require removal of the pet if it is causing a nuisance or any damage.

You are responsible for cleaning up your dog faeces.

The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 makes it an offence not to clear up after your dog. This is also inconsiderate to others and can be a serious danger to children.

People who allow their dogs to foul in public places are in danger of receiving a fixed penalty of £40, rising to £60 if not paid within 28 days.

Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar will monitor dog fouling and if the matter goes to court, any person found guilty is liable on conviction to a fine of any amount up to £500.



Tenants Charter

The Scottish Government is developing a Scottish Social Housing Charter.

The Western Isles Forum of Tenants and Residents Associations (WIFTRA) are submitting a response on behalf of tenants in the Western Isles and are looking for you to help get it right.

Kevin Paterson Chair of WIFTRA says 'we want to know what you think makes a good housing service and what you think should be in the first Charter. The Scottish Government carried out research last year which identified some of the issues that are important to tenants. These include good quality accommodation, a good day to day repairs service, safety and security. Should these feature in the first Charter? What else would you want to see included?'

Why do we need a Charter?

The Scottish Parliament has recently passed a new Housing Bill. The Bill includes powers to modernise the regulation of social housing. It will create an independent Scottish Housing Regulator to look after the interests of tenants, homeless people

and others who use the services that social landlords provide. The Bill asks Ministers to establish a Charter which sets out what landlords such as HHP need to achieve for tenants. The Regulator will use the Charter as the starting point for assessing a landlord's performance. It will publish performance reports, and will be able to set performance improvement targets.

How can you help?

WIFTRA would like you to think about what a good housing service should look like. What are the main issues affecting individuals and communities that landlords have got to get right? What needs to be included in the Charter?

Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire included with this newsletter. This asks some questions about what you think is important. Please fill it in and return it as soon as possible in the freepost envelope provided. The responses will then be used by WIFTRA to tell the Government what matters to tenants in the Western Isles.



Community Safety and Crime Prevention Advice

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour can have lasting effects on communities if it is not addressed and dealt with effectively. In the fight against crime, Police and partner agencies rely heavily on support and information from the general public – without you giving your support and information, it is harder for us to piece together the bigger picture of what is going on within our communities.

If you are a law-abiding citizen, you will appreciate the benefits of helping us in this way and what it can bring to you and your family, friends and neighbours. If, however, you are one of that small majority who are actively involved in crime in our communities – beware.

Our towns and villages across the Western Isles remain safe places to live and work, and we continue to improve on our already successful crime detection rates.

However, in certain areas, a small number of individuals are intent on committing crimes such as drug dealing, vandalism and crimes of an anti-social nature, which can often occur when alcohol is involved. If we all work together, we can disrupt and deter those intent on such behaviour. SO...

“DO YOU WANT TO HELP TO MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER?”

If the answer to this question is “YES”, and you have any information on criminal activity within our communities, there are a number of ways you can let us know.

- Tell an officer patrolling your area or contact your local Police Station
- Or if you prefer, call Crimestoppers free

Western Isles Forum of Tenant and Residents' Associations Charter Questionnaire

The Housing (Scotland) Bill 2010 will introduce a Scottish Social Housing Charter. This Charter will set out how social landlords (Local Authorities, Housing Cooperatives and Housing Associations) will be expected to deliver services to tenants, prospective tenants, service users and homeless people. The Scottish Housing Regulator will evaluate how well social landlords are performing against the Charter. Please help us identify your priorities by filling in the following questionnaire.

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER WITH 1 BEING LEAST IMPORTANT AND 4 BEING VITAL

1. Landlords should provide fair and open access to their housing lists and allocate housing using a fair and transparent assessment process. Allocation policies should seek to encourage sustainable communities as well as the diverse housing needs of individuals and families.

Importance	1	2	3	4

2. Landlords should cooperate with local authorities in discharging their strategic housing duties. Landlords should also work in partnership and develop common approaches so as to enhance the housing options for existing tenants, prospective tenants and homeless people.

Importance	1	2	3	4

3. Landlords should, in consultation with tenants and service users, set affordable and fair rent and service charge strategies. Landlords should also publish transparent and detailed accounts that allow tenants and service users to easily understand and determine value for money.

Importance	1	2	3	4

4. Landlords should manage the delivery of housing services efficiently, making best use of scarce resources. They should publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management and provide services in a way that assist tenants to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions.

Importance	1	2	3	4

5. Landlords should have robust data collecting systems in place so that the effectiveness of service delivery can be properly measured. Information gathered should be published in clear and meaningful terms in order that tenants and service users can compare the performance of their landlord with other comparable landlords.

Importance	1	2	3	4

6. Landlords should have in place strong estates management policies and procedures to ensure the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of neighbourhoods and local environments.

Importance	1	2	3	4

7. Landlords should have in place strategies that effectively deal with instances of anti-social behaviour occurring in individual homes, neighbourhoods and/or environments surrounding the properties they own. They should work in partnership with local communities, police and other service providers. Landlords should develop appropriate responses to antisocial behaviour so that it is the perpetrators and not the victims who are penalised.

Importance	1	2	3	4

8. Landlords should provide tenants, homeless people and service users with a wide array of options and opportunities to become directly involved, either as individuals or collectively, in decision making related to their housing and related services.

Importance	1	2	3	4

9. Landlords should provide adequate funding and resources for Tenant Participation so that tenants gain sufficient capacity to positively engage and bear influence on the development of housing policies and practices and housing-related services.

Importance	1	2	3	4

NESTOPPERS

0 555 111

usly with information about crime

REMEMBER

**IF YOU SEE A CRIME BEING COMMITTED
PLEASE TELEPHONE 999 IMMEDIATELY AND
ASK FOR THE POLICE**

**PREVENT A CRIME OR HELP US
CATCH A CRIMINAL**

Do you know anyone who is involved in drug dealing or other criminal activity which is making life a misery for you or others? If the answer is yes, please phone or write and give us some details. The sort of things we are interested in are their names, ages, addresses, what they are doing and when, what cars they use, where they store the proceeds of crime and any information which would help us to catch them. Send the completed form to CSO, Police Station, Church Street, Stornoway, HS1 2JD.

We would prefer it if everyone within the community was willing to stand up and be counted but, if for any reason, you do not want to give your name, we will understand. You can still give information anonymously. We must work together if we want our towns and villages to remain one of the safest places to live and work in Scotland.

Rent Increase Consultation – 2010/2011

The current economic situation is providing a very challenging environment for all businesses including Housing Associations such as HHP.

We are continuing to work to reduce our costs and to make sure that we obtain competitive prices for contracts and services. However, tenants were promised that rents would not be increased by more than the rate of inflation +1% in any of the first five years after transfer and HHP are committed to this promise.

The inflation used in setting rents is the November figure in each year. This is estimated to be 4.5%. It is therefore HHP's intention to increase rents by 5.5%. This would be equivalent to approx £3.12p per week on the average rent. This meets the promise made at transfer.

We would like tenants' views on this proposal. If you wish to discuss this further then please phone Customer Services on 0300 123 0773 or write to us at Rent Consultation, HHP, Creed Park, Willowglen Road, Stornoway, HS1 2QP or e-mail us at hhpcs@cne-siar.gov.uk



Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is a serious issue in the Western Isles as in every other part of the country. HHP are members of the Western Isles Domestic Abuse Forum and are committed to raising awareness of the issue. As a tenant, it is your right to feel safe & secure in your own home. However, for many women and also for some men what should be a warm & loving stronghold has turned into a prison, because of domestic abuse.

Between one in three and one in five women experience some form of domestic abuse over a lifetime. 53% of women murdered in Scotland between 1997 & 2007 were killed by a partner.

These are shocking figures. What is disturbing too are the effects on the victims of domestic abuse. They are at greater risk of chronic health problems such as gynaecological problems, chronic pelvic pain & gastrointestinal symptoms. Women experiencing abuse are 15 times more likely to misuse alcohol and nine times more likely to use drugs than non-abused women. With regard to mental health, around 35-40% of women experiencing domestic abuse report symptoms of depression. The average rate of post-traumatic stress disorder among victimised women is 64%, and they are at high risk of suicide.

There are some telltale signs and symptoms of domestic and emotional abuse. If you see any of the following warning signs in a relative or friend or neighbour, take them very seriously.

- The person not being seen for a considerable period;

When you do see them, they

- avoid eye contact;
- are tearful or red-eyed;
- seem hesitant or evasive;
- have scratches/bruises on their face, that they put down to 'accidents';
- dress in clothing designed to hide

marks or scars on other parts of their body, such as long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors.

Also, as markers of changes in behaviour:-

- never going out in public without their partner;
- frequently miss social, work or school occasions without explanation.

If you suspect that something is wrong, speak up. Don't wait for him or her to come to you, judge or blame, pressure her or him, give advice or place conditions on your support. Do ask if something is wrong, express concern, listen and offer help and support for his or her decisions.

Lastly, here are useful local and national resources and contacts for you to turn to on behalf of your neighbour or yourself.

Western Isles Womens' Aid Womens' Resource Centre

53 Bayhead

Stornoway

Tel: 01851 70 4750. On call 7 nights a week, from 5pm-10am.

www.wiwasty.co.uk

Western Isles Rape Crisis

74 Kenneth Street

Stornoway.

Helpline 01851 709965. Mon, Tues & Wed 10am- 9pm, and Thursday & Friday 10am-4pm & then 6pm -9pm.

www.wircc.co.uk

Stornoway Police Station

Church Street

Stornoway

01851 70 2222. Remember that assault or affray is a crime.

Scottish Domestic Abuse

Helpline 0800 027 1234

24 hour domestic abuse helpline.

www.domesticabuse.co.uk

National Rape Crisis Helpline

08088 010302



hhp

hebridean housing
partnership

Customer Services 0300 123 0773

homeward



FESTIVE PERIOD SERVICES

Hebridean Housing Partnership's offices will be closed for the festive season from 5pm on 23rd December 2010 to 9am on Wednesday 5th January 2011. It is important that you make acceptable arrangements to pay your rent for that period. If you pay your rent by Direct Debit or Bank Standing Order, you must make sure that there are sufficient funds in your bank account to honour the rent payment. If you pay at the Comhairle's cash desk, or at Hebridean Housing Partnership offices, you should pay your rent in advance for the period the offices are closed.

To pay your rent on-line, 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.

REPAIR SERVICE – If you have an emergency repair during the holidays, phone us on **0300 123 0773**



Aline. Mairi P. Macleod, North Tolsta ©

*May we take this opportunity
to wish you all the best for
2011 from all at HHP*



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:

- At your local HHP office;
- At your local Comhairle 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

