

HHP logo launch



HHP's new logo, that will feature in the upcoming housing transfer campaign, has been officially launched.

The logo features a map of the Western Isles and the letters 'hhp' embossed on a pebble, and was chosen over several other strong designs. The single pebble was chosen to represent the strength and stability of HHP as well as reflecting the coastline and beaches of the Western Isles.

George Lonie, HHP Chairman, speaking at the launch commented, "This design received very strong support from HHP's shadow board and I am delighted that we now have a positive identity for the organisation. Rather than focusing on the houses themselves we wanted an identity that showed that the organisation is about far more than just bricks and mortar. HHP is just as much about people and services

as it is about the physical houses and will serve tenants across the Western Isles."

Following a 'yes' vote in the tenants' ballot, existing Comhairle staff will transfer to HHP and continue to run the housing service and provide advice to tenants, meaning continuity of service by trusted contacts.

Welcoming HHP's new identity, the Comhairle's housing spokesperson Councillor Norman MacLeod, said, "It's very important that HHP should have a powerful identity to represent the strength of local communities. We are confident that, should transfer take place, we will be handing over to a strong organisation that will look after the needs of tenants throughout the Isles.

The road ahead

To give you an idea of how events will progress included below is an outline timetable:

Early 2005 – Stage 1 period of formal consultation begins.

All Comhairle households will receive a copy of the Stage 1 Notice, which will be a document detailing what tenants can expect from HHP if transfer goes ahead. There will also be a video explaining HHP's proposals in detail. Every tenant will have the opportunity to respond to the transfer proposals during Stage 1.

During this period there will also be door-to-door visits giving you the opportunity to speak to Comhairle and HHP staff about the proposals. Additionally you will be given the opportunity to see examples of the types of kitchens, bathrooms and double glazing available to tenants if transfer goes ahead.

Following Stage 1, Stage 2 of formal consultation begins.

During this second stage of formal consultation you will receive further information from the Comhairle answering any questions and issues raised during Stage 1 regarding HHP's plans.

Mid 2005 – ballot. An independent ballot of all Comhairle tenants on the proposed transfer of all Comhairle housing to HHP. Only in the event of the majority of tenants voting in favour will transfer then take place. The ballot will be a secret postal ballot conducted by the Electoral Reform Society.

In the event of a 'yes' vote, transfer itself would take place in early 2006.

Get in touch

For further information or advice regarding the proposed housing transfer, you can call the following numbers:

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on **01851 709338**

Hebridean Housing Partnership on **01851 706368**

Independent Tenant Adviser, TPAS on freephone **0800 269645**

Alternatively visit the website:

www.cne-siar.gov.uk/hebrideanhousingpartnership

If you wish a member of staff to call at your home to answer any queries you may have about the transfer, please contact the Comhairle on the above number.

If you have any comments or queries on this information bulletin please contact:

Ken Newton or Dan Hughes, TNC, tel 01698 420420, fax 01698 424000 or email team@tnc.uk.com

Special communications needs

If you, a relative or neighbour needs assistance with understanding this newsletter because of visual impairment, learning difficulty or language reasons please tell the Comhairle and we will arrange for help.



New year promises to be 'crucial and exciting period'

Welcome to this, the third Homeward newsletter, and I'd like to begin by wishing you all a happy new year. 2005 promises to be a very exciting year, with the transfer process due to reach its conclusion, giving all tenants the opportunity to have their say.

Through the hard work of Comhairle officials and Councillors, HHP officers and HHP Board members we made real progress taking the transfer process forward in 2004, resulting in the recent announcement of a

£50million funding package, available from the Scottish Executive in the event of transfer. With funding now secured, the coming months will be a crucial and exciting period leading up to a ballot of all Comhairle tenants towards the middle of this year.

The publication of HHP's Business Plan will be the next major milestone and this will put the flesh on the bones of transfer. We will then be able to announce details of what exactly you can expect from Hebridean Housing Partnership in terms of improvements to your home and a better all round housing service.

In the meantime in this issue of Homeward you'll find information about the opportunities available for you to get involved in deciding priorities for housing, details of what the HHP Standard will deliver for you as well as further information on how we propose to invest the new funding in services and on your homes. You'll also notice that HHP now has a distinct and strong identity with the launch of the new logo. You can expect to see much more of it in the coming months.

George Lonie, HHP Chairman

£50million funding to deliver 21st century housing

More than 270 new affordable houses will be built across the Western Isles should housing transfer from the Comhairle to HHP, the new not-for-profit landlord. That's the message from HHP following the announcement of a £50million Scottish Executive regeneration package that marks a 'huge step' towards delivering housing fit for the 21st century.

The package, which was announced by Communities Minister Malcolm Chisholm on a visit to Stornoway in December, is conditional on tenants voting for transfer to HHP in a secret ballot mid-2005.

George Lonie, Chairman of HHP, said, "We welcome the news of this funding and the opportunity it now gives us. It will go a long way towards allowing us to meet the promises we will be making shortly in our Business Plan, and allow us to deliver housing up to the HHP

Standard, a quality standard that we will be introducing post-transfer. We are now looking forward to going out and telling tenants about the benefits of transfer."

Calum MacKay, speaking on behalf of the Western Isles Residents Forum, also welcomed the announcement saying, "The Forum has been working closely with both the Comhairle and HHP over a number of years to develop the transfer proposals and we are pleased that this announcement, which is a huge step towards transfer, has been made. We are also looking forward to telling tenants about the benefits of transfer as we feel the proposals will make a big difference to tenants across the Western Isles."

The funding, £12.5million of which would go directly towards the building of 150 affordable houses for rent in the first five years after

transfer, would play an important part in allowing HHP to meet the housing needs of Western Isles tenants. Over the next ten years, this would deliver the 270 new houses promised by HHP in its Business Plan, further details of which will be unveiled shortly.

Inside this Issue...

	page
Raising the Standard	2
HHP's promises	3
Logo launch	4
The road ahead	4

Raising the Standard

As part of its promise to tenants, HHP has devised an excellence standard that guarantees to provide all tenants with quality housing.

The Western Isles Quality Standard is a promise to deliver high quality homes within as quick and realistic a timescale as possible.

Developed in consultation with tenants and the Comhairle, the Western Isles Quality Standard sets out what tenants can expect for their homes within the first 10 years of transfer.

The Western Isles Quality Standard will aim to better the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), which is the standard all social housing has to be raised to by 2015. This is a requirement set by the Scottish Executive, aimed at improving the quality of social housing throughout Scotland. If transfer does not take place, the Comhairle would find it very difficult to meet this new standard. HHP, however, will have the necessary resources and will be working to make sure that all of its houses meet this new national standard within ten years.



The Western Isles Quality Standard will deliver:

- Full double glazing and central heating
- A modern kitchen, comprising quality units and worktops, vinyl flooring or equivalent, ceramic (or equivalent) wall tiles, sockets to suit layout and fluorescent light, decoration and where required, mechanical ventilation.
- A modern bathroom, comprising a bath, hand basin, WC, vinyl flooring, ceramic wall tiles and where required, mechanical ventilation.
- A safe wiring system
- Mains powered smoke detector
- Insulated double glazed external doors fitted with security locking
- External security lighting
- No rising or penetrating dampness
- Annual maintenance checks on gas heating appliances
- Annual maintenance checks on smoke detectors
- Cavity wall insulation
- Solid fuel heating replaced in all sheltered housing units
- Drying facilities
- Energy efficiency measures to meet required standard.

As part of the HHP Standard all tenants will also be offered choice from a specified range when it comes to:

- The layout of kitchens e.g. to accommodate appliances
- The style and colour of kitchen units
- The style and colour of worktops
- The style and colour of flooring in both the bathroom and kitchen
- The style and colour of decoration
- Heating systems

HHP promises to deliver



The Stage One document will set out in detail the services and improvements that HHP will deliver. This will include:

Affordable rents

HHP's guarantee is to keep annual rent increases at affordable levels. This means that in the first 5 years after transfer rent increases are guaranteed to be no more than inflation plus 1%. After that they will be kept at affordable levels, set by the HHP management board which will have a strong tenant presence.

All tenants will receive a copy of the Comhairle's Stage 1 Notice. This is the formal document outlining HHP's proposals for housing if transfer goes ahead. As the date of the ballot approaches this document will give you a better idea of how you want to vote.

Improved renovation and reinvestment

HHP will use rent money to run its services and improve your homes. With the removal of the Comhairle's Housing Capital Debt of £39million, which currently costs 75p in every £1 of income raised, transfer will allow the majority of rent money to be invested back into improving homes and the housing service.

The removal of the housing debt will also see new building work carried out, allowing HHP the opportunity to build new houses and tackle the problem of the growing housing waiting list.

HHP will also operate a response repairs service that will react to tenants needs as quickly as possible.

Protected tenant rights

With HHP your rights will be no less than they currently are. This means your right to buy will be unaffected, as will your secure tenancy agreement. Your rights will be guaranteed by the Government and by law.

A high level of tenant representation

Tenants, who will make up a minimum of a third of the HHP board, will be at the centre of HHP's decision-making. The board – made up of local tenant, community and elected council representatives – are all volunteers.

In addition, for the first time ever, you will have the opportunity to be directly involved in the setting of priorities for future housing investment and service improvements, through four area committees.

Community involvement at a local level

Tenants in the Western Isles will have a greater opportunity than ever before to be directly involved in the setting of priorities for future housing investment and service improvements, following the announcement that tenants will have the opportunity to sit on a series of HHP area committees.

The new structure will allow tenants and members of the community to be involved with local decision-making on housing. Recognising not just the importance of your involvement but also the different communities across the Western Isles, the four planned area committees will serve

Lewis, Harris, Uist, and Barra.

The voices of tenants will carry further weight, as each of the four proposed area committees will have a representative on the main HHP Board.



In the event of transfer, housing staff will also transfer to HHP

As part of its proposals to the Comhairle, HHP has committed to the continuation of local housing offices in Stornoway and Balivanich. HHP will also have a presence in the one stop shops being developed by the Comhairle for Stornoway and will deliver services from area offices in Tarbert and Castlebay. You will be able to arrange to meet with the Area Housing Officer or appropriate member of staff at these offices and also be able to access a full range of services at HHP's area offices – cash desk, allocations, repairs, benefits, homelessness and housing advice.

The Comhairle and HHP understand that there might be some uncertainty over moving to a new housing organisation. However there needn't be. If transfer goes ahead the existing housing staff will transfer with the houses to HHP. You will continue to deal with the same staff that you have come to know and trust over the years and they will deliver even higher standards of service in your local area housing offices.

In addition HHP will offer regular surgeries at locations considered convenient to tenants on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Tenants will also be able to arrange home visits.