



hebridean housing partnership newsletter

homeward

ANGUS LAMONT RETIRES



At HHP's Board meeting in November, Angus Lamont informed the Board of his intention to retire in July 2016 as Chief Executive of the Partnership.

The Chairman, George Lonie said "It is with mixed feelings that I announce the retirement of Angus Lamont our Chief Executive. Professionally Angus will be a huge loss to the housing service in Scotland which he has served for over 34 years. He joined the Comhairle as Allocations officer and became the main contact with the Cearns Tenants Association and subsequently was involved with the other tenants groups, e.g. Manor and Newton. He played a major part in developing the excellent Tenant Participation we have on the islands. Angus went on to become Director of Housing and steered us through a difficult transition to form HHP. He has managed the dedicated and talented team at HHP to the success they have achieved to date in investing over £30 million in existing homes and building

nearly 350 new homes for the families in the islands. On a personal level I've known Angus for most of his 30 years in the Western Isles and it is hard to imagine HHP without him at the helm. Angus' commitment and dedication to provide a decent standard of homes in the Western Isles is a tribute to the person he is. He is sincere in his aims relating to affordable housing in the islands and is honest and pleasant in the way he deals with staff and tenants. He will be missed by staff at HHP and missed by colleagues who have had any contact with Angus.

I have enjoyed immensely working with Angus over the years as a colleague and a friend; it has been an absolute honour and a pleasure and on behalf of the HHP Board I wish him a long and happy retirement"

Angus Lamont said "It's been a real privilege to have worked in the housing service both at the Comhairle and HHP for so many years."

HHP
invite all
tenants to our
**ENERGY
EFFICIENCY
LIGHT LUNCH**
Stornoway Town Hall
Friday 27th May 2016
from 12- 2pm

Lewis Tenant Event

HHP will be hosting the annual Lewis Tenant Event at Stornoway town Hall on Friday 27th May 2016. The popular event will once more reflect the ongoing issues around fuel poverty and energy efficiency so come along and meet our staff to discuss what HHP can do to help you. See inside for more details.

This year HHP will be delivering a £4.1m investment programme to tenants homes, we have already received tenders for gas central heating, kitchens, bathrooms, fencing, roofing and roughcast works so we are ready to start work in over 300 HHP homes in April. If you are expecting any of these works in your home this year then why not come along and talk to our team.

The tenant event is open to all our tenants and you can come and go as you please. Wheelchair access is provided and the event is open between 12 and 2pm. A buffet lunch will be provided.

Don't forget to enter our free raffle where prizes have been kindly donated by our partners. The prizes will be awarded at the end of the event.

So come along and help HHP celebrate our 10th anniversary



TENANT SURVEY RESULTS 2015

In July and August a small team of students on summer placement carried out a tenant satisfaction survey for HHP. The main aim of the survey was to measure tenant satisfaction with their homes; environment and services provided by HHP. Data collected was used in HHP's second Annual Report on the new Scottish Social Housing Charter.

HHP values the opinions of our tenants and would like to thank the 713 tenants who gave their time to participate in the survey.

The survey results show that 83% of our tenants are satisfied with the overall service that HHP provides. This is an increase of 10% from the 2013 survey which is very encouraging..

HHP will continue to work hard to identify the things we need to do better and we will use the survey to help us with that.

QUESTION	Satisfied & Very Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord (% satisfied)	83%	9%
Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions (% good)	81%	8%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes (% satisfied)	71%	19%
Percentage of tenants who moved into their property in the past 12 months satisfied with the standard of the home when they moved in (% satisfied, for those who moved into their property in the past 12 months)	62%	12%
Percentage of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home (% satisfied)	87%	7%
Percentage of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in the last 12 months satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (% satisfied, for those who say they had a repair carried out in last 12 months)	83%	5%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in (% satisfied)	85%	9%
Percentage of tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money (% good)	66%	20%

TENANT SURVEY PRIZEWINNERS

£50 WINNERS: Miss Catriona Macdonald, Mr & Mrs Macaskill, Miss Sharon Macauley, Mr & Mrs Russell

£25 WINNERS: Mr Peter Fraser, Miss Lynn Marie Maciver, Mrs Christina Smith, Miss Michelle Shirkie



Peter Fraser from Newmarket won a £25 Co-op voucher



Michelle Shirkie from Stornoway won a £25 Tesco voucher

RIGHT TO BUY

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 will end the Right to Buy in Scotland (RTB) from 1st August 2016.

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.



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, 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.



INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

HHP have completed our Investment Works for 2015/16 and would like to thank tenants for their patience and all our contractors for their excellent workmanship. HHP worked in nearly 400 homes replacing windows, doors, heating systems, kitchens, bathrooms, roofing and roughcast.

This year we received our highest ever tenant satisfaction scores and would like to thank tenants for being so generous in their praise for the way the works were carried out. It is only through your feedback that we can improve the way we work in your homes.

We are already underway with surveys

for our 2016/17 programme which will enable HHP to start work in your homes as soon as possible. This year HHP will be working on 800 houses which emphasises our commitment to tenants to deliver on our promise to improve your home.

Switch and save

Have you considered changing your electricity supplier? If not you could be missing out on potential savings so to help get a better deal on your electric bills, why not look at tariff switching websites such as uswitch.com.

HHP are working hard to get better deals for our tenants and are

currently looking at collaborating with a switching service provider. They would help tenants switch and continue to review their tariffs every six months thereby ensuring that HHP tenants are always on the best tariffs available. We believe this can provide substantial savings for our tenants and will actively pursue this on your behalf.

HHP are also working with the Comhairle as they progress setting up a company that could result in cheaper tariffs being offered to island households. HHP will keep tenants informed as this situation develops.

Staff raise funds for local charities



The Staff Events Committee held various fundraising activities throughout the year. These included monthly dress down days, monthly raffles, bacon roll days and book and DVD sales.

Staff were invited to nominate charities to donate the money that had been raised from these events. Out of these nominations, two charities were selected to receive a donation.

The Salvation Army Christmas Toy Appeal, and Crossroads Harris were our nominated charities this year and each received a donation of £500.

Follow HHP
on Twitter



[@HebrideanHousing@HebHousing](https://twitter.com/HebrideanHousing)

Trading Standards Warning for Consumers

Trading Standards at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are warning residents after complaints about scammers calling claiming to be working for Hebridean Housing Partnership and offering refunds on rent, should the consumer provide their bank details.

A spokesperson for Trading Standards said: "Consumers are reminded that Hebridean Housing Partnership will never contact you for private details in this manner."

The police are also aware of the situation.

Please report any similar activity to Police Scotland on 101 or Trading Standards at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on 01851 822 694.



Clear Rent Account prize winner Emma Munro Macaulay being presented with her voucher by her Housing Officer Angela McGeoghegan

Maximise the benefits of Telecare by using it early

Faire

Western Isles Community
Alarm Service

Occupational Therapy is driving a campaign to raise awareness of Telecare monitoring systems and to encourage people to consider bringing these alarms and sensors into play sooner, rather than later.

Equipment ranges from the basic personal button alarm to the more advanced equipment such as property exit sensors. This technology can make a big difference to whole families by enabling vulnerable people to live more independently in their homes and by giving their loved ones some

peace of mind.

Occupational Therapist Kirsty Paterson said: "We're trying to increase Telecare referrals and trying to raise people's awareness. The earlier these devices go in, the better they support long-term needs."

Murdo Macleod, Telecare Technician, added: "It means that people become familiar with it and become reassured by having it there, so that when their health does deteriorate – due to dementia or whatever – they are more informed of what Telecare can do."

With more and more people living with dementia in the community nowadays, compared to 10 years ago, Telecare offers greater independence and helps to reduce stress on family and carers, said Murdo.

If you or a family member feels the service would be of benefit, please contact the Faire service on 01851 701702 or faire@cne-siar.gov.uk. Information is also available by following web link www.cne-siar.gov.uk/socialwork/faire/telecare.asp

Uist & Barra Events

UIST ANNUAL TENANT EVENT

On Wednesday 26 November 2015, HHP & WIRF jointly hosted the 2015 annual Tenants Event for Uists and Benbecula at Balivanich Community Hall.

This year's event was informal where tenants were invited to "drop in" to discuss any issues. Some of these included HHP's investment works and officers were able to inform them of heating upgrades due and provide advice on new heating systems. Contractors were on hand with displays of air source heating units and controllers and information of infra red heating. An example of kitchen units and worktops installed in tenants homes was displayed.

Other agencies who work in partnership with HHP, including TPAS, FES, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Drug and Alcohol Partnership, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tighean Innse Gall, The energy efficiency Advice Service, Cothrom attended the event and/or left information leaflets for tenants.

Tenants enjoyed the event which was held this year in the evening to give

tenants that are unable to attend the event in the day time an opportunity to attend. There was a good turnout despite the weather. Raffle Prizes were generously donated by Local contractors and agencies as well as WIFTRA and TPAS. A buffet was provided by MacLean's bakery.

The event was kicked off with a welcome from John MacIver, Director of Operations, Followed by an energy saving Talk from Sue Wilson from Hebridean Connections.

BARRA ANNUAL TENANT EVENT

HHP & WIRA jointly hosted the 2015 annual Tenants Event for Barra at Castlebay Hotel on Thursday 26 November 2015. The event was jointly organised by HHP staff and Jane Ballantyne, Tenant Participation Officer.

This conference was an informal event where tenants were invited to "drop in" to discuss any issues. Some of these included HHP's investment works and officers were able to inform tenants of upgrades due and provide advice. FES were on hand along with HHP staff to answer queries regarding repairs. There was also information available on the work of HHP's partner agencies.

The event was held at lunchtime with a buffet and refreshments available. The tenants that attended enjoyed the event and provided positive feedback. Raffle Prizes were generously donated by FES, other contractors and agencies as well as WIFTRA and TPAS. HHP appreciated that tenants made the effort to attend despite the poor weather on the day.



Uist Annual Tenants Event

LIFTING CARPETS

When tenants leave their home, we ask that they remove carpets, linoleum and laminate flooring. We do this for a number of reasons. Firstly, we need to fully inspect the property before it is reallocated, and floor coverings can hide serious damage, particularly wood rot from leaks and spills.

Secondly, the incoming tenant may have a different flooring preference, and they would otherwise be faced with the problem of uplift and disposal. Thirdly, carpets can harbour fleas, pet hair and a multitude of germs which can seriously impact on the new tenant, especially if there are young children or people with allergies in the household.

STAFF CHANGES



Dez Cross – Admin Assistant (Housing Services)



In January HHP appointed an additional 2 Area Housing Officers. Alli Agnew is working from the Stornoway office and Craig Pert will be working in Balivanich.



Two new Customer Services Assistants were recently appointed, Cari-Anne joined the Balivanich office and Sammi Allan joined the Stornoway office.



Rona Morrison – Resources Assistant



Following her student placement in the summer, Sabrina Morice-Broom joined HHP as Customer Services Assistant.

Area Manager Martin Flett (below) is retiring after 4 years with HHP.



30 YEARS SERVICE AWARDS



Celebrating 30 years with both the CNES and HHP are Angus Lamont and Jackie Macleod (pictured above) and also Magnus Johnson (below) with Martin Flett Area Manager.



HEBRIDEAN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



Mackenzie Lane, Sandwick

Mackenzie Lane, Sandwick

Hebridean Housing Partnership have appointed Calmax Construction Limited to deliver a further 24 new homes for rent and for sale under the Shared Equity Scheme on the Melbost Farm site. Mackenzie Lane will provide 8 houses for the affordable home owners scheme and 16 for rent through HHP. Of these 16 units we will provide 5 specially adapted homes. Work on site is progressing well and the development is due to complete by June 2017.

Slighe Nan Caimbeil, Habost, Ness

Construction of 4 homes for rent by HHP is underway at Habost in Ness. The contractor is Calmax Construction and the work is on programme and due to complete by the end of May 2016

Cearnag Na Sgoile, Barvas

This 6 house scheme is being constructed on the old School Site in Barvas. All homes will be for rent through HHP. The homes will be very economical to run with high levels of insulation and air source heat pumps. The old school has now been demolished and the development is on target to complete by March 2017.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

HHP in partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have appointed Tighean Innse Gall to carry out feasibility studies throughout the islands.

Feasibility studies have been carried out on 4 sites in Tarbert and it is hoped that at least 1 of these sites will be suitable for development for much needed houses in the Tarbert area.



Slighe Nan Caimbeil, Habost, Ness



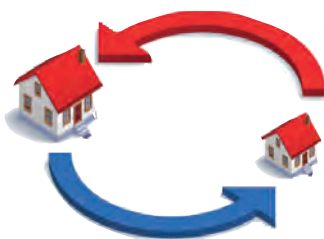
Cearnag Na Sgoile, Barvas

An open event for the Community was held in Barra to try and identify sites for housing in conjunction with CNES. As a result of this, various sites were identified for housing. HHP have commissioned feasibility work to go ahead in an effort to provide housing in an area which has seen a low turnover of housing in recent years.

Shared Equity Scheme

The Shared Equity Scheme is aimed at building affordable homes for first time buyers either on HHP's waiting list or in HHP housing. This is a fantastic opportunity to become a home owner and anyone interested or requiring further information should contact Tighean Innse Gall, Donna Smith at donna@tighean.co.uk who will be able to answer all of your questions and give you any information you require.

TRANSFERS AND MUTUAL EXCHANGES



Some tenants request a **housing transfer**, usually because the property is either too big or too small for their needs or because they wish to move to another area. Before we approve a request for transfer, the tenant's existing home must be in an acceptable condition. Housing Officers visit homes after a transfer application

is made to provide advice and guidance on what must be done before an offer of tenancy can be made.

Occasionally, we find that works are needed to the property AFTER the tenant has moved out. This is usually because the property is not clean enough, has not been fully cleared of contents, because defects were concealed by furniture and hanging clothes, or because damage occurred after the Housing Officer visit. Any works that are not due to fair wear and tear are recharged to the outgoing tenant.

We encourage all tenants to maintain their homes in a clean, tidy and undamaged

condition at all times, but it is especially important to do so if you want to transfer to another home.

A **mutual exchange** is a request for permission by two (and occasionally more) tenants to swap homes. We will not unreasonably refuse these requests, but we need to ensure that the exchange will not result in under or over occupation, and that the properties are in good condition. There may be some negotiation between the 2 parties with regards to furnishings and the contents. Each party must satisfy themselves as to the condition of the house they are moving to.

REFUSE DISPOSAL – SPECIAL UPLIFTS

Tenants are reminded that it is their responsibility to dispose of all items of refuse from their properties and to keep their gardens tidy. Disposal of large household items, furniture, white goods etc. can be arranged by contacting CNES on 0845 600 2772 for a special uplift by the Comhairle's Cleansing Section. This service costs £24.00 and up to 5 items are included per uplift. Alternatively refuse can be taken to the Civic Amenity Site at Creed Park on the Lochs Road free of charge between the hours of 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Tuesday to Friday or 9.00 am to 4.00 pm on Saturdays.

Tenant Participation News

REPAIRS – TAKING A CLOSER LOOK



Please get in touch with Jane if you would like to be involved in looking at how the repairs service could be improved. We are going to form a group working together with HHP, contractors and tenants. The group will get together in the spring to discuss this work in more detail.

TENANT & RESIDENT GROUPS

If you would like to come along and meet other tenants there are a number of groups which meet.

Western Isles Residents Forum – This is the umbrella group for all tenants and tenants/residents groups.

Cearns Community Association – This group has been active for 32 years, working and supporting tenants and residents living in the Cearn.

Shawbost HHP Tenants – This is a new group and generally meets at the primary school in Shawbost.

Other groups include HHP Residents Group Barra & Vatersay, HHP Residents Group Lochboisdale, Balivanich Tenants & Residents Association, Parkend, Holm & Mackenzie Park Residents Association, Ness, Sandwick and Newton.

There are also several local contacts, sometimes referred to as village voices, in Ford View, Tong, Church Road, Berneray and Uraghag, Garenin. If you would like more information about these groups, or are interested in setting up a local group please get in touch with Jane. Most of the groups have Facebook sites which give information about the group.

The Western Isles Residents Forum met in January at the Bridge Centre. The forum talked about their work programme for the year and agreed to work with HHP to take a closer look at repairs and arrears.

Scottish Social Housing Charter – Customer/Landlord Relationship

The Charter took effect from 1st April 2012 and a new charter is set to be in place by April 2017. The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for

monitoring HHP's progress towards meeting the Charter. HHP has to produce an annual return on the charter and a tenants report.



The current charter is being reviewed and updated in 2016 with the aim of a new Charter being approved in 2017. The Scottish Government Tenant Participation team will be holding a session in Inverness on the 7th July and we are hoping they will also visit the Western Isles. More information is available from Jane and the <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/housing>

ON THE ROAD



Jane is out on the road meeting tenants and residents and is planning to make regular visits to your area. In November 2015 she met with tenants in Balivanich, Berneray & Barra and in February spent the day with tenants in Lochboisdale. If you would like Jane to come along to one of your community/residents/tenants meeting or meet for a cuppa and a chat, please get in touch with Jane to arrange.

Jane will post dates on our website.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

HHP is committed to developing successful tenant participation. We will work with tenants, provide good quality information and listen to tenants views. HHP value the role tenants can play and will continue to work in partnership to improve homes and services.

HHP wants tenants to be able to get involved in ways that suit them. Please contact Jane to discuss how you could get involved.

MOVING INTO A NEW HOME

HHP is reviewing the Letting Standard. This sets out what tenants can expect when they move into an HHP property. These standards include what you can expect in terms of fittings, repairs and cleanliness.



For more information about getting involved in how your housing services are planned and delivered contact Jane

Email jane.ballantyne@tpasscotland.org.uk

Telephone 01851 700811

Mobile 07487 891 242

Jane generally works Monday – Thursday 8am – 12.30pm. She is also available to meet with people in the evening or on a Saturday.

HHP want your views about this. More information will be available in the next few months on the HHP website. If you would like a copy of the current standards and/or have comments, please contact Jane.



NEWS, INFORMATION, EVENTS AND CONSULTATIONS

We will use this space to let you know about forthcoming events.

SPRING 2016

We will start to plan and organise the local tenant event for Lewis.

We will consult on the new Tenant Participation Strategy.

HHP Board meeting on the 25th May 2016 @ 5.30pm

Birthday Celebrations – It's HHPs tenth birthday in September.



hebridean housing partnership newsletter

homeward



**Scottish Housing
Regulator**

National Panel of Tenants and Service Users

Help us to improve social landlords' services...

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

The National Panel is an important way for us to hear about your priorities and the services you receive.

What's involved

You can join if you use social landlord services. As a Panel member we will send surveys asking for your views. Surveys are quick and easy to complete – we are running a survey at the moment that is open to new members. Every member completing the survey has the chance of one of 4 x £20 prizes.

To see our current survey (and join)

Sign up online at bit.ly/natpan3

Scan the code with a
smartphone



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



Eilean Siar Foodbank recently entered its third year of operation. The primary aim of the foodbank is to address and combat food poverty in the Western Isles by providing emergency food, and to help restore dignity and hope to those experiencing crisis.

All food is donated by the public, sorted by volunteers and distributed on the basis of referrals made by agencies such as CAB, Social Work, Action For Children and HHP. The referring agencies issue a voucher which can be redeemed at the foodbank on Point Street in Stornoway.

Food is given out discreetly in standard supermarket bags and will include cereals, milk, fruit juice, soup, pasta, meat, fish and vegetables, providing balanced and nutritional meals for 3 days.

If you, or someone you know, is struggling to put food on the table, please do not hesitate to contact your housing officer on 0300 123 0773 for advice.

Eilean Siar Foodbank would like to thank all who have helped to make the last year a successful one and they look forward to working with the community going forward. Together we can help ensure that nobody needs to go hungry in the Western Isles.

**Eilean Siar Foodbank, 37-39 Point
Street, Stornoway T: 01851 70 6650
info@eileansiar.foodbank.org.uk
www.eileansiar.foodbank.org.uk**

Housing Benefit Changes April 2016

BACKDATING – In April 2016, the amount of time a Housing Benefit claim can be backdated for someone of working age will be restricted to 4 weeks from the date of claim. Previously claims could be backdated up to 6 months. All backdating will be based on whether good cause for not applying earlier can be shown.

BENEFIT CAP – There is a limit on the amount of income from certain benefits (see list of benefits included) a household can receive which is currently set at £500 per week for a couple or lone parent and £350 per week for a single person. From April 2016 these limits will be lowered to £384.62 per week for a couple or lone parent and £257.69 per week for a single person. If you receive more than the cap allows then your Housing Benefit will be reduced until you are brought under the limit. Some households are excluded from the cap.

Family premium reduction - The family premium is an amount of £17.45 included in your Housing Benefit calculation when you have at least one dependant child. From May 2016 this will be removed and as a result more of your income will be taken into account when calculating Housing Benefit lowering the amount you will be entitled to. If you are already claiming benefit and have a child you will keep the family premium. However, you will be affected if you need to make a new claim in the future.

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.

