

Homeward



Making Our House Your Home

**WINTER
2022**

Warm Spaces Open Throughout the Isles

The Salvation Army in Bayhead, Stornoway are currently running a warm space where you can grab a free hot drink, soup and a sandwich between 10am and 2pm every Wednesday. The volunteers tell us: "We currently run our warm space on Wednesdays 10am - 2pm and offer a warm space with papers, magazines, games etc. some people bring their own knitting or craft to do when they are here. We provide free hot drinks and refreshments at the moment.

There are many warm spaces opening throughout the islands in community centres and churches in your local area. You will be greeted with a warm welcome – a great way to meet new people and stay warm



A warm welcome from Betty, Christopher, Faith and Lyndsay, await you every Wednesday in the Salvation Army.

Message from our Chief Executive

Some good news for a change...yesterday John Maciver (Director of Operations) told me that he had some great news for our tenants - our bid for £100K in the Scottish Government's Social Housing Fuel Support Fund was successful. So in the middle of what is a dark and challenging time for everyone, we are thrilled to have been successful because it means we are going to be able to provide direct help to some of those of you who are struggling.

As I write, the temperatures have plummeted to below zero making it even more difficult for everyone to keep warm. There are 'warm spaces' being set up in our communities all over the islands and not only will they provide a bit of warmth but an opportunity to have a chat and a cuppa with other folks. If you are visiting our offices you are also very welcome to stay and have a cuppa with us.

We are not quite out of the difficult times yet, but despite them, I hope you will be able to find some brightness over the Christmas holidays with your friends and families.



HHP Charitable Donations 2022

Hebridean Housing Partnership donated £1,000 to each of the following charities:

- Marie Curie Nursing Assistants
- Gàradh a' Bhagh a' Tuath
- Bethesda Hospice
- Action for Children
- Western Isles Community Care Forum

Gàradh a' Bhagh a' Tuath received their donation from our Assets & Contracts Manager, Angus MacNeil, at our Barra Tenant Event on 4 November 2022.

Gàradh a' Bhagh a' Tuath is a horticultural-based project offering a range of facilities to the community of Barra and neighbouring islands. They grow and sell local produce whilst helping people with special needs and reducing the carbon footprint of the local area. The donation will go towards having off-grid solar panels installed to help offset energy costs and contribute towards Barra becoming a carbon neutral island.



Our Assets & contracts Manager, Angus MacNeil (right) pictured with the staff and service users from Garadh a' Bhagh a' Tuath at our Barra Tenant Event on 4 November.



Pictured are Joanne Ferguson & Carol Somerville from Bethesda, John Masterton from Marie Curie, Peggy Mackay from Western Isles Community Care Forum and Lucie Stepankova and Rachael Martin from Action for Children.

The Scottish Housing Regulator is looking for new members

Are you a social housing tenant?

Have you used CNES homelessness service?

If so, you could become a member of The Scottish Housing Regulator Panel and help shape SHR's focus in its role as regulator of social landlords.

At present there are approximately 470 members' and they want to increase this number.

Since 2013 the Panel has looked at topics such as rent affordability, service quality, value for money, performance reporting, anti-social behaviour, homelessness, tenant safety, empowering tenants & factoring services.

As a member you may be asked to take part in short surveys asking for your views and to provide feedback in other ways too.

You can find out more about this valuable work by ringing Engage Scotland on 0800 433 7212 or by emailing nat.pan@engagescotland.co.uk

Thank you Dolly

In November we said goodbye and good luck to our TPAS colleague Dolina. You may have seen Dolly at our recent in-person tenant events or out on estate walkabouts with our Housing Officers. She will be missed by all but couldn't pass up a new opportunity and HHP wish her all the best in her new job.

Tenant Participation remains important to us and we are always keen to hear from tenants or tenant groups. If you have any queries, or wish to get involved in any way please do not hesitate to contact



Pictured above is (L-R) Dolly, Elaine and Donald MacLennan, Emma Morgan, Lesley Ann Wicks, Loriana Pauli and Linda Johnson (HHP Housing Officer). Our tenants met with each other and felt strongly about returning to a sense of community helping each other out and swapping ideas, gardening tips, plants etc. We look forward to hearing how they are getting on.

our Customer Services Team or your Housing Officer on 0300 123 0773.

More information on TPAS Scotland can be found at <https://tpasscotland.org.uk/> or follow them on social media @tpasscotland

REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR RENT

We know that Christmas can be a busy and expensive time of year, with the cost of celebrations adding up. To protect the roof over your head. You must keep paying your rent. Please contact your Housing Officer if you are struggling.

Tis the Season to be Jolly

Following a recent increase in abusive behaviour from a small number of tenants, we would remind tenants that abuse, threats, aggressive behaviour and violence in person, via telephone and online (including social media) will not be tolerated.

HHP's Unacceptable Actions by Complainants Policy, Managing Aggressive or Abusive Behaviours states:-

7.2 The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards our staff is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the complainant. Incidents may be reported to the Police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.

Cost effective ways to keep the heat in

With energy bills more expensive than ever before, we share some budget-friendly ways to stay safe and cosy this winter.

1. Layer up

Wearing lots of layers, rather than one thick piece of clothing, is a smart way to keep warm in winter. Base layers such as thermal vests or long sleeve tops are fairly inexpensive and can work well to trap heat. Keep a look out for clothing made from wool, cotton or fleecy fabric.



2. Keep draughts out and heat in



Try and block any areas in your home that are particularly draughty, including around window frames, keyholes and under

doors.

Keep your curtains open in the day to let light and warmth in, and draw them before it gets dark to avoid losing heat.

3. Be clever with heating

If you're worried about the cost of your bills, be selective about how you heat your home. Try and keep the room where you spend most of your time, such as your living room or bedroom, heated to at least 18°C if you can. Remember to turn off the radiators in hallways or rooms that aren't being used, and close doors to trap heat in certain areas.



Only heat areas of the house as you need them. For example, you might choose to turn the heating on in your bedroom just before bed. You can also use a hot water bottle or an electric blanket to keep you warm at night.

4. Make warming food and drinks

Eating a healthy balanced diet that includes at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day

can help your immune system to work well during winter. Have regular hot drinks and food such as porridge, soups and stews to keep yourself warm.

Remember that frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables (if there's no added salt or sugar) are just as healthy as fresh, and can be more affordable if they're out of season in winter.

If you're trying to keep your energy bill down, using a slow cooker, microwave, or air fryer could help you to reduce costs, compared to an oven-baked meal.

- Get more tips for eating well on a budget
- Read our healthy dinner ideas for cold nights
- Get some healthy hot drink ideas



5. Get moving

Keep as active as possible to boost your circulation. Move

around at least once an hour and avoid sitting still for long periods. Even light exercise will help keep you warm.

When you do sit down, put your feet up as it's coldest nearest the ground.

- Read about how to get active indoors
- Try our rainy-day desk yoga



6. Check what support you can get

You may be eligible for certain grants and benefits to help reduce the cost of your energy bill this winter.

- Visit Citizens Advice to find out more about available grants and benefits <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/>
- Learn more about Energy Bills Support Scheme in visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-the-energy-bills-support-scheme-discount>

Information from www.bhf.org.uk

Rent Consultation

We will be consulting on 2023/24 rents from 17 January 2023 until 04 February 2023. The Scottish Government have frozen all rents (for social housing tenants and for private tenants) until the end of March 2023. This doesn't affect your rent as social housing rents are only set once a year, every March/April.

Your rent pays for all the services you receive from HHP, including the 24 hour emergency repair Service, repairs appointments, investment in your home and tenancy support and advice.

You will be able to access the consultation on our website at www.hebrideanhousing.co.uk

Completed responses will be entered into a prize draw. There will be four prizes of £100 to be won which will be randomly drawn and allocated to the winner's rent account.

Slow cookers up for grabs

We have 6 slow cookers to give away to give away to some lucky tenants. Three winners will be drawn at random from those that enter the competition via email customerservices@hebrideanhousing.co.uk

or by giving us a call on 0300 123 0773.

Slow cookers operate at low temperatures with long cooking times – this tenderises less expensive cuts of meat, and brings out the flavour in foods.

A wide variety of foods can be cooked in a slow cooker,

including one pot meals, soups, stews and casseroles.

Best of all a slow cooker uses much less electricity than an oven. We will also be sharing some tasty, easy recipes on social media.

Ways to save on your Energy Bills

1. Showers/baths

Showers use significantly less hot water than baths do. Even spending one minute less in the shower will save you money.

2. Clever cooking

Cook with the lids on the pans, consider one pot dishes



3. Room thermostats

Should be set between 18c – 21c, slightly higher if there are elderly people or very young children turning your appliances off standby mode.



4. Close curtains in the evening

This helps keep the heat in and the cold out.

5. Arrange your furniture

Avoid having your furniture directly in front of radiators as this reduces the temperature in the room.

6. Switch off light

Turn off the lights in the rooms that are not in use.



7. Fill your washing machine

Wait until you have a full load before using your machine and try lowering the temperature to 30c for lightly soiled goods.



8. Switch of Standby

You can save around £65 per year by turning your appliances off standby mode.

Our Tenant Events are back

We held our first series of Tenant Events since the Covid outbreak and were delighted to engage in person with our customers again.

With the current Cost of Living Crisis at the forefront of everyone's mind, we invited partner agencies who were on hand to give advice about debt, benefits, energy costs and how to keep warm this winter. Representatives from TPAS, Social Security Scotland, FES, Advocacy Western Isles, CnES Employability, TIG, TAGSA, NHS, Citizens Advice Bureau, Health Promotions and Home Energy Scotland joined HHP staff in Stornoway Town Hall, Balivanich Community Hall and Craigard Hotel to advise and talk to people about their concerns.

Our Housing Officers and Managers were on hand to advise our tenants and discuss any issues of concern. It was a chance for tenants to tell us what is important to them.



(L-RR): Alastair, Chair of our Tenant forum, Tony and Dolly from TPAS.



Our Housing Officer, Kevin, presenting Mrs Christine Martin with the hamper she won at the Stornoway Tenant event.



(L-R) Francesca, Daniel who won the raffle in Uist and Aaron, our Housing Assistant



Barra raffle winner above were Craig (left) who won the FES voucher and Effie (right) who won a slow cooker, pictures here with Fiona, our Housing Officer.



Raffle winner at the Uist event was Emma (pictured right) with our Housing Officer, Linda (left).

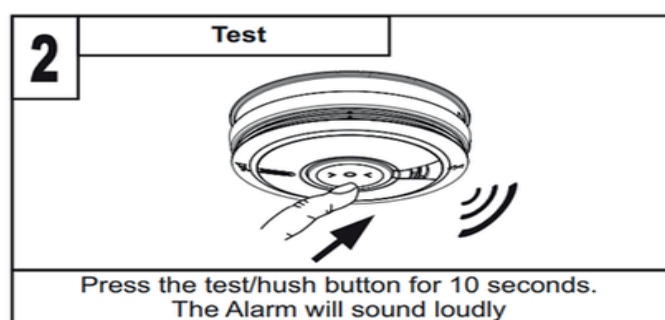
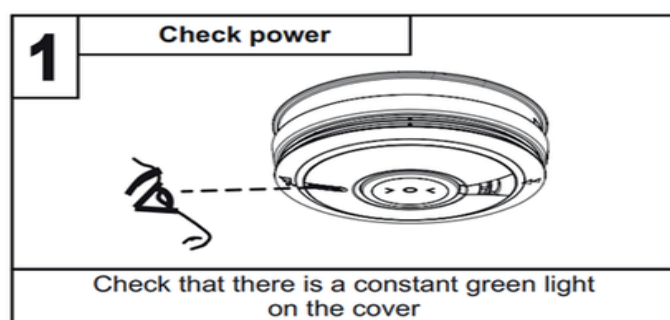


Our Housing Officer, Kevin, presenting Ann with a voucher she won.

Stay safe and check your smoke alarm

We are asking you to check your alarms every month to make sure they are functioning as they should.

Press the test button and all the alarms should sound. It may be a bit loud but that is to be expected as it simulates the sound you should hear if there was a fire or lots of smoke in your home. See diagram below.



Are you getting your Pension Credit?



Department for Work & Pensions

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) are aware that some people may not be getting Pension Credit when they might be eligible for it. DWP has created a toolkit to help councils and other organisations raise awareness of Pension Credit and dispel some common misconceptions that might deter people from claiming it by highlighting that:

People of State Pension age may be entitled to Pension Credit even though

they may have modest savings, a retirement income or own their own home.

An award of Pension Credit can provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and for those aged 75 or over or a free TV licence.

Pension Credit toolkit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pension-credit-toolkit> More information: <https://pensionawarenessday.com>.

Local contacts are Financial Inclusion Officers Margaret Graham - margaret.graham@cne-siar.gov.uk who covers Lewis and Harris and Angela MacDonald ammacdonald@cne-siar.gov.uk who is based in Balivanich and covers Uist and Barra.





KID'S CORNER



MERRY CHRISTMAS

K F A M I L Y T R N K B J L H
Y M U T J C O R B S X G O J H
Y U P L R C A R O L S I Y I F
Y C M R R E Q N W E E V E N N
L H F E E P E H D N D I J G O
S R B T D S C S S Y W N G L R
Y I Q M T Y E R C M C G S E T
U S T O C K I N G S J A E I H
U T L I G H T S T G S D N W P
L M F L I O V S M S N J S E O
K A V F X B I Z G I I G D T L
B S R E B Z S L E I G H X C E
F K Y O L Q H R N S N O W R U
X N L R J F Z C D N D E X X V
H S T A R W S A N T A T L V M

BOW	FAMILY	NORTH POLE	SNOW
CANDY CANE	GIVING	PRESENTS	STAR
CAROLS	JINGLE	REINDEER	STOCKINGS
CHRISTMAS	JOY	SANTA	TREES
ELF	LIGHTS	SLEIGH	

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