

WINTER 2018

west  
highland housing news

Providing affordable homes and services to  
the people of Oban, Lorn and the Isles

**CHRISTMAS  
OFFICE CLOSURE**

Our office closes at 3pm  
on 24th December  
reopening on Friday 4th  
January.

If you require emergency  
assistance, please call

**01631 566451 or 0300  
323 1170 (freephone)**

## WELCOME



There is lots happening in Oban and the surrounding areas. Work is nearing completion at Albany Street where we will be making offers for one-bedroom flats in a great town centre location. The development in

Lochdon will complete in early summer next year and this will bring a mix of affordable rented and houses to buy to Mull. We already have interest in the properties for purchase. We were delighted the local primary school and Mull and Iona Community Trust visited the development in November this year. Our site in Barcaldine has just started and next year we hope to start work in Islay, Jura and Colonsay. The Link project at Dunbeg has just started and over the next three years we will see more than 300 properties delivered for the area.

Earlier in the year we consulted with you about our upcoming maintenance programme for the next 3 years and a big thank you to all the people who responded. We have an extensive investment programme ahead of us and it really helps when you give us feedback. The good news is we will be investing around £1m a year in our homes, not only to do kitchens, bathrooms and heating, but we will be beginning work on window replacements. The Scottish Government has consulted on new legislation around fire and energy and this means we will require additional funds to do work in these areas. The early figures suggest that it will be around £8m over a period of years.

All of us at West Highland are looking forward to 2019 and we want to take this opportunity to wish all our tenants and customers a very peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

**Douglas Mackie, West Highland Chair**

## TPAS Scotland National Good Practice Awards 2018

We are delighted to have been awarded the Best Practice in Developing Communities through the Tenant Participation Advisory Services (TPAS). The Award was "The West Highland Way to Improve Lives & Communities". It reflected our partnership working and support with Healthy Options and Glenshellach Growers.



### COFFEE & MINCE PIES

Come along to our office at Crannog Lane, Oban on Tuesday 18th December 2018 from 2pm to 4pm for coffee and mince pies. Everyone is welcome!



### Emergency repairs

In the event of an emergency, please call 01631 566451 or freephone 0300 323 1170.

#### What is an emergency repair?

An emergency repair is something that could cause danger to health, a risk to your safety or serious damage to the property.

### Out-of-hours service

We recently experienced problems with our emergency out-of-hours service where we were unable to transfer phone calls to the out-of-hours centre.

If you have an emergency and are unable to get through to our out-of-hours service, please call **0345 600 9033**. This will connect you directly to the call centre.

We apologise if you have been affected by this.

# CHARITY OF THE YEAR

Every year, we support a local charity. We are currently supporting

## New Start Oban.

New Start Oban is a small local charity that is committed to helping people who are homeless to set up new homes by providing basic items that most of us would take for granted. These starter packs contain a range of household items from duvets and pillows to cleaning products and toiletries.

New Start Oban supports around 60 local households each year!

As a housing provider, we feel this charity contributes towards helping tenants at the beginning of their tenancies by ensuring no homeless person moves into a tenancy without access to basic, good quality household items.

We continue to support New Start Oban with publicity, redesign of branding, gathering donations and with funding applications.



For off, High

# 2018 DONATIONS

During 2018 we supported a diverse range of projects within the community. Atlantis Leisure was awarded £250 to host a fundraiser for its facilities. Glenshellach Growers, another active group, was awarded £750 to enable it to expand its project. New Start Oban was awarded £2,500. It helps single people and families who are homeless to set up new homes by providing them with essentials such as crockery and bedding.

Both the Soroba Young Family Group and the Ardentinnny Hardship Fund were awarded £1,000 each. Soroba Young Family Group supports 93 young children and relies on grant funding and donations. The Ardentinnny Hardship fund was set up by Rockfield Primary School to allow all P7 pupils the opportunity to attend a week-long residential outdoor course which will help develop teamwork and confidence. The discretionary fund will support children who may have otherwise missed out.

It has been fantastic to be able to support projects that contribute to the health, wellbeing and education of our community. If you would like to find out more, please write to us explaining your project.

**How can you help?**

- Donate new or good quality items
- Make a financial donation to pay for new items
- Help with the cost of our storage rental costs
- Volunteer to make up starter packs
- Join the committee

**What do we need?**

<p><b>Bedding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single &amp; double duvet covers</li> <li>Single &amp; double sheets</li> <li>NEW single &amp; double duvets</li> <li>Pillow cases</li> <li>Blankets</li> <li>NEW pillows</li> </ul>	<p><b>Bathroom</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toothbrush &amp; toothpaste</li> <li>Soap &amp; deodorant</li> <li>Bathroom cleaner</li> <li>Toilet rolls</li> <li>Shampoo</li> <li>Towels</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kitchen</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Glasses, mugs, crockery</li> <li>Kettle &amp; toaster</li> <li>Pots &amp; pans</li> <li>Cutlery</li> <li>Washing up liquid &amp; basin</li> <li>Kitchen utensils</li> <li>Kitchen cleaners</li> <li>Tea towels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Utilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brush &amp; dustpan</li> <li>Bucket &amp; detergent</li> <li>Duster &amp; cloth</li> <li>Broom &amp; mop</li> <li>Eco light bulbs</li> <li>Alarm Clock</li> </ul>

# OurPower

**About Our Power**

Our Power is a not-for-profit energy supplier. We are owned by social housing providers, community organisations and local authorities. Our Power's aim is to make energy fairer for all members of society.

Our Power works closely with all our members, including West Highland, to help make this happen.

**Switching**

It's easy to switch... all you need to do is visit our website, our general enq. or give our switch team a call on 0800 188 3383 to make this process free stress free for you.

**Tariffs**

Our Power have a range of competitive tariffs currently on the market. Our Tariffs include:

- Take Control**
  - The first alternative for customers with a restricted meter
  - Customers in North Scotland are saving £250 on average by switching
- Our Fairer Energy**
  - Our Power's low cost tariff
  - We are the same supplier you choose Direct Debit or Pay As You Go
- Made in Scotland**
  - Uses 100% green renewable energy
  - The hydro and wind energy we provide is sourced directly from Scotland and supports the local communities

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# Planned Maintenance Update

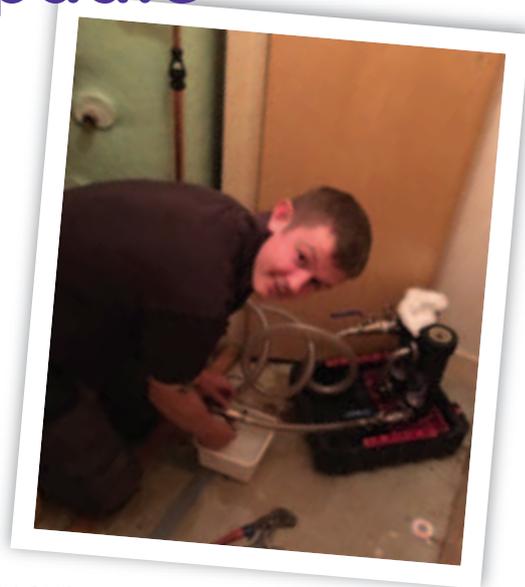
## CYLINDER & SOLAR SERVICING

Paul, our in-house servicing engineer is working through his schedule of testing and servicing our unvented hot water cylinders, solar thermal panels and thermostatic mixer valves. Additionally, Paul undertakes a programme of planned work, including power flushing wet heating systems to improve their performance and replacing the fluid in the solar thermal panels.

Each year we will undertake:

- 555 unvented cylinder services
- 153 solar thermal panel checks
- 250 thermostatic mixer valve services
- 80 power flushes to wet heating systems

Where possible, Paul will carry out small minor repairs or arrange for our maintenance contractor to complete the work on our behalf.



## MAINTENANCE PAINTING

Trident Maintenance Services has commenced their five year term contract for external maintenance painting. Where possible, we paint timber elements on a five year cycle and painted roughcast on a 10 year cycle. This work not only helps preserve our property but improves the aesthetics of the local area. Trident will contact households prior to starting works to discuss access requirements. This year we painted 66 houses in Taynuilt, Islay and Jura.



## ELECTRICAL TESTING

We will commence a programme of electrical testing across our properties in January 2019. Around 230 will be tested before April by electrical contractor OES.

Every time one of our homes becomes vacant, we undertake an electrical test to ensure it is safe for new tenants.

Where the property has been occupied for 10 or more years by the same household we will request access to complete the inspection works and arrange for a new electrical certificate to be issued.

We also plan to upgrade smoke detectors to meet new fire safety requirements. We would expect this work to take no longer than one day per house.

## INVESTMENT WORKS

Following our Investment Consultation early in 2018 we have completed a public procurement exercise and are currently assessing tender returns for our five year investment programme. We hope to appoint the successful contractor before Christmas.

This will see an investment of around £4.2 million in our properties in elements like kitchens, bathrooms heating and other associated works in our developments. Properties in the year one programme will be contacted early in 2019 ahead of prestart surveys.

# My Home



A new online tenants service called My Home will be introduced in 2019.

My Home is a safe and secure service that has been designed to make your life easier by offering:

- A one stop online service
- Available 24/7
- Lets you contact us when it's convenient for you, from the comfort of your own home
- Easy to use

## What can you do with My Home?

- Manage your tenancy
- View and update your household details
- Request changes to your tenancy
- Check your rent account
- Make rent payments
- Send letters, photos
- Provide feedback
- Report non-emergency repairs
- View your repairs history
- Access your tenancy documents
- Check your calendar for bin days, stair cleaning, repairs appointments

## And much more..

There will also be an option to go paperless, helping us be greener and more cost effective. My Home – putting you in control of your tenancy.

Are you interested in being an early adopter – contact us now  
**mail@westhighlandha.co.uk**

Watch this space...

# COMMUNICATION

We recently wrote to all tenants asking how you would like us to communicate with you. We would like to thank you for all your feedback.

The majority of the feedback is the preferred choice of communication with you is by mail but you have also said that you are happy with us phoning and texting you. We are looking at more digital ways of communication and the feedback you have provided will help us improve our communication methods.

## NATIONAL PANEL OF TENANTS AND SERVICE USERS

The Scottish Housing Regulator is asking for your help in promoting its National Panel of Tenants and Service Users. It will shortly launch a programme to refresh panel membership and wants to promote the opportunity as widely as possible.

The panel has been a very successful initiative over the last five years. It's given the regulator rich feedback about tenants' and service users' views and has informed the focus of their work. To date, it has attracted a high level of engagement, with around 415 members. It has a broad membership, and almost three quarters of panel members are not members of Registered Tenant Organisations.

It is keen to build on this base. More information can be found on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website at

**[www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)**

## SUPPORTING TEARFUND

We held a coffee morning in support of the Tearfund which helps communities overcome the impacts of poverty and disasters.

**The event was a great success.  
We raised a total of £75.00.**

## SNOW AND ICE IN COMMUNAL AREAS

Please help and support each other by keeping all communal areas free from snow and ice.

Please use your nearest grit bin to grit steps, entranceways and common footpaths. If your neighbour has difficulty getting in and out of their home, please offer to clear snow and ice.

Please check on any elderly or disabled neighbours to make sure they are okay in the cold weather and if you have any concerns contact relatives or friends or, if necessary, the police.



## Staff changes

A fond farewell to Susan MacAskill our Finance Officer who left in September after 18 years of service. We wish Susan all the best in the future.



Hello to Liam Orr who took up the role of Assistant Finance & Corporate Services Officer in August 2018.

## COMING SOON

Link has obtained planning permission to build 300 new homes at Dunbeg. The ground is being prepared for building and the first 90 homes are scheduled to complete early in 2020. These homes are mainly two and three-bedroom properties.

The architect has designed the new settlement in a way that it will blend with the outstanding landscape and will have a village feel.

The proposals include 13 x one bed and 16 x two-bedroom wheelchair accessible homes. If you are interested in renting one of the new properties please register at [www.homeargyll.co.uk](http://www.homeargyll.co.uk).

There will also be open spaces and play areas. We will manage the properties and are looking for volunteers to be involved in discussions about the detailed design of the play areas. If you are interested please contact [moira@westhighlandha.co.uk](mailto:moira@westhighlandha.co.uk).

## 14 NEW HOMES AT LOCHDON ISLE OF MULL

The development at Lochdon is progressing well and is scheduled to complete in summer 2019. Eight properties are for sale on a shared equity basis and six are for social rent and low cost home ownership. The properties will be ready for the new owners moving in shortly.



*WHA Staff, TSL, Mull & Iona Community Trust and Lochdon Primary School on-site. Lochdon Primary School pupils are suggesting names for the new development.*

# Keep your home warm

During cold spells please leave your heating on to ensure the temperature is high enough to prevent the possibility of water pipes freezing. Please bear in mind any damage to your belongings, furniture or floor coverings from a burst pipe or flood is not covered in our Buildings Insurance and we advise tenants to ensure they have suitable contents insurance in place.

### What to do if a pipe bursts

- Turn off the water supply. The stopcock is usually situated in your kitchen near the sink or in a hall cupboard near the front door.
- Switch off the electricity at the mains
- Switch off the central heating system
- Use a bucket or basin to catch any water leaking from the burst
- Open all taps to all sinks and your bath. If possible, collect the water in the bath for flushing the toilet and washing
- Call us on **01631 566451** or **0300 323 1170**. In the event of an emergency your call will be diverted to our out-of-hours service.

### THINGS TO DO IF YOU'RE GOING AWAY OVER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

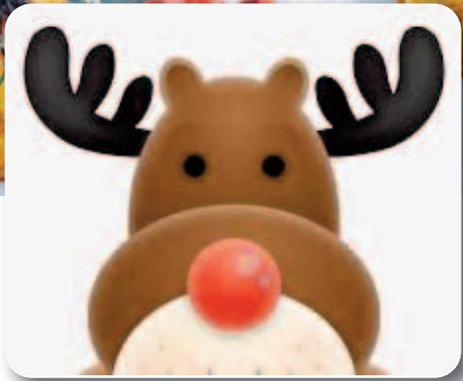
- Please don't switch your heating off when you go away. Instead leave it on at a low setting or set the timer so it comes on at least once a day. If you have a thermostat set your heating to come on if the temperature drops below a certain level. If you have a prepayment meter you should ensure it has enough funds until you return.
- Ask a neighbour or friend to check on your home in particularly cold spells. If this isn't possible, leave contact details with our office in case of emergencies.

## ARE YOU READY FOR WINTER? ARE YOU INSURED?

Having Home Contents Insurance gives you peace of mind as your belongings will be covered in the event of a fire, flood or theft. One of the biggest dangers to your home in winter is water damage caused by burst pipes.

Thistle Insurance helps tenants insure their belongings. For example, for £11.53 per year you can insure £4,000 worth of home contents. You can pick up a leaflet at our office or contact us and we can arrange to post you an application.





# CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH JUST FOR FUN

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

- Q:** What's the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?  
**A:** The Christmas alphabet has Noel!
- Q:** What do you call an obnoxious reindeer?  
**A:** RUDEolph!
- Q:** What do reindeer hang on their Christmas trees?  
**A:** Horn-aments!
- Q:** What athlete is warmest in winter?  
**A:** A long jumper!

**Wishing you a happy festive holiday from West Highland Housing!**

Can you find these words?

- carol
- Christmas
- holly
- merry
- presents
- pudding
- reindeer
- Santa
- sleigh
- star
- tree
- wreath



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