



West Highland Housing Association

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE POLICY

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

This policy has been devised to establish the approach, parameters and resulting budget for the management and maintenance of all properties, ensuring clear standards are set based on legislative, regulatory and industry best practice.

1. PRINCIPLES

The following principles govern the design, procurement and delivery of West Highland's property management and maintenance services:

- West Highland properties will be well maintained, safe, energy efficient and affordable;
- West Highland properties will comply; where technically and financially possible; with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and Energy Efficiency Standard For Social Housing (EESH);
- Appropriate investment in maintenance will ensure protection of West Highland's assets;
- West Highland will comply with all relevant aspects of the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- All maintenance services must provide value for money;
- The views of tenants and/or owners will be sought in delivery of maintenance services;
- High levels of customer satisfaction should be achieved;

This policy is supported by the latest version of the following policies, strategies and published standards/programmes:

- Asset Management Strategy;
- Construction (Design and Management) 2015 Policy;
- Control of Variations to Costs in Development and Planned Maintenance Contract Policy;
- Gas Safety Policy;
- Management of Asbestos Policy;
- Neighbourhood Commitments;
- Planned Maintenance Programme;
- Procurement Strategy/Manual;
- Property Management (Factoring) Policy;
- Re-Let Standard;
- Response Times and Void Repairs Standards;
- Safe Use of Contractors Policy;
- Service Charge Policy;
- Standing Orders;
- Sustainability Policy;
- Technical Brief 2013; (Updated March 2015);
- Tenant Participation Strategy;
- Tenant Payments Policy;
- Tenant Responsible Repairs Policy;
- Water Management Policy;

2. OBJECTIVES

The policy will apply, without exception, to all buildings owned and individuals employed and/or engaged by West Highland. West Highland are part of the Link Group and seek to harmonise with those of the Group, while recognising different customer and business needs.

The objectives of this policy are to effectively plan, manage and maintain West Highland's properties using the activities below:

- Asset Management;
- Planned and Cyclical Maintenance;
- Servicing and Compliance Contracts;
- Hard/Soft Landscape Maintenance;
- Unplanned Major Repairs out with Planned Programme;
- Responsive Repairs
- Void property re-let Repairs;
- Adaptations to individual properties and common areas to meet tenants' needs
- Factoring service delivered by Commercial Services to mixed tenure blocks/schemes;

3. APPROACH AND METHOD

The West Highland Board in its formal approval of the policy acknowledges that it accepts full responsibility for its implementation. Day-to-day responsibility for the operation of this policy lies with the Asset Management Officer. All relevant employees have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied as instructed.

The policy will be implemented using the following approaches:

3.1 Asset Management

3.1.1 West Highland's Asset Management Strategy sets out the Group's approach for the effective and efficient management of domestic properties. In general, the strategy adopts a holistic approach to planning maintenance and property upgrade activities. This will involve an assessment process that incorporates a range of factors and measures designed to identify properties and their respective investment requirements.

These assessment factors will include non-compliance with standards (e.g. SHQS & EESSH), identifying properties no longer fit for purpose and/or no longer satisfying local housing demand requirements.

3.1.2 To identify condition, a rolling programme of regular, in-house stock condition surveys will be programmed and completed each year. The results of which will be recorded and used to update West Highland's computer based stock condition database. Cost and condition based life cycles will be applied to all building components requiring renewal and cyclical maintenance, allowing programmes of work to be created which reflects condition and aligns to budgetary requirements.

- 3.1.3 When creating programmes of planned maintenance work, consideration will be given to the most appropriate phasing of works and how they impact on tenants/owners, the most effective grouping of works to satisfy procurement objectives and consistency of work volumes, together with the priority of works based on compliance with standards such as SHQS and EESSH.
- 3.1.4 Properties which are found to be no longer fit for purpose or meeting the detailed requirements of local housing demand, will be further assessed under the Asset Management Strategy for major refurbishment, demolition, re-development or final disposal.
- 3.1.5 Wherever external funding is available, this will be sought for the benefit of residents and to maximise the effectiveness of West Highland's own budgets. Seeking out such external funding will be an ongoing objective, particularly in respect of energy efficiency measures and where appropriate major repairs.
- 3.1.6 West Highland will make available the planned replacement programme to all tenants, ensuring that they are informed of the planned investment. This will take the form of an annual programme, should any of the work be subject to agreement with owners, West Highland will make this clear from the outset, and West Highland will inform tenants of the outcome of the consultation.
- 3.1.7 It is accepted that due to changing circumstance, priorities and the influence of external factors, issued programmes are subject to amendment as part of West Highland's day to day business activities

3.2 Planned Replacement Programme

- 3.2.1 The planned replacement programme is the renewal of building components that have reached the end of their economic and serviceable lives. These programmes of works shall be driven from the stock condition database, and should be planned and delivered to ensure that an existing components life cycle has been maximised, without detriment to overall quality of the property.
- 3.2.2 The overarching aim of the planned replacement programme is to ensure an efficient balance is achieved between large scale investment at the appropriate time to minimise the requirement for increased expenditure on revenue budgets, for example increase reactive maintenance.
- 3.2.3 Contracts will be procured and delivered by an in-house team, tasked with the objective of ensuring control over specification, quality of work, contractor performance, budget and expenditure control and ensuring high levels of tenant satisfaction.
- 3.2.4 West Highland will communicate effectively with tenants to ensure that they are fully informed of the nature and timing of the works planned for their homes and the contractors who will be executing these works.
- 3.2.5 West Highland will reasonably assess individual tenant's needs and provide tenants with choices wherever this is feasible e.g. the colour of kitchen units and worktops.

3.3 Servicing and Compliance Contracts

3.3.1 Servicing and compliance contracts are a range of works required to maintain the standard of a building component/equipment, ensuring compliance with legislative requirements.

3.3.2 West Highland will employ suitably qualified contractors and consultants to undertake servicing and inspection on all required equipment and components. These contracts will clearly set out West Highland's requirements, ensuring that the stock is adequately maintained and complies with all relevant legislation.

3.3.3 This includes the following contracts/works:

- Gas Appliance Servicing and Compliance;
- Periodic Electrical Inspections;
- Water Quality/Control of Legionella;
- Lift Maintenance & Inspection;
- M&E Plant Servicing;
- Controlled Entry & other Security Systems;
- Communal TV Reception Systems;
- Lightning Protection;
- Fire Detection and Alarm Systems;
- Fire Suppression and Smoke Ventilation Systems;
- Renewable Technologies;

3.4 Hard and Soft Landscape Maintenance

3.4.1 West Highland owns and manages a wide and varied range of soft and hard landscaped areas, the majority of which is the West Highland's responsibility to maintain.

3.4.2 West Highland will employ suitably qualified contractors and consultants to undertake the required landscape maintenance, ensuring that these areas are maintained to a safe, clean and are in keeping with West Highland's standards.

3.4.3 The scope of landscape maintenance contracts will set to maximise the safety and quality of each environment, while ensuring value for money is achieved for both tenants and private home owners.

3.4.4 Landscape maintenance will cover the following works within common areas, subject to contract specifications and service requirements:

- Amenity and Rough Grass Mowing;
- Litter Collection;
- Hedge Maintenance;
- Shrub Bed Maintenance;
- Shrub Pruning;
- Tree Maintenance (specific items instructed by West Highland);
- Gravel Area Maintenance;
- Play Area Inspection;

- Play Area Litter Collection;
- Weed Control;

3.5 Unplanned Major Repairs (Outwith Planned Replacement Programme)

- 3.5.1 West Highland recognises that on occasion external events and unforeseen circumstances arise, where significant works are required that cannot be planned for in the manner detailed earlier.
- 3.5.2 Where unplanned major repairs are identified through our regular stock condition survey, and where no immediate risk exists, future budget provision shall be made to allow the required remedial works to be completed.
- 3.5.3 Where immediate action is required, for health and safety reasons, or to protect West Highland's properties then temporary or permanent remedial works should be commenced subject to budget capacity.
- 3.5.4 If required, where unplanned major repairs are a direct result of an incident that West Highland insures against, these works will be notified and progressed in conjunction with the Link Group's appointed insurers.
- 3.5.5 Where works cannot be contained within insurance policies or existing budgets, additional budget approval will be sought from the West Highland board.

3.6 Reactive Repairs

- 3.6.1 Reactive repairs are largely driven by requests from tenants and owners or by a member of the staff team after estate visits. This service also includes the work identified and completed to allow void properties to be re-let.
- 3.6.2 West Highland delivers this service through a three year term contract with a facilities company, and a range of other external sub-contractors as required.
- 3.6.3 Tenants will report repairs to West Highland by telephone, in writing, by e-mail, orally to individual officers or via West Highland's website.
- 3.6.4 Repairs will be logged, issued, controlled and monitored utilising West Highland's repairs software. At the time of logging, each repair will be subject to an agreed set of timescales; as set out within this policy and our tenant's handbook; these form the base measure for repairs Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- 3.6.5 Reactive repair KPIs will be reported to the West Highland board on a quarterly basis.
- 3.6.6 West Highland will operate an appointments system for urgent and routine repairs. By agreement we will also seek to accommodate tenant's availability and arrange access out with these response times.
- 3.6.7 Appointments will be offered on all qualifying repairs and where the nature of the repair work allows an appointment. Tenants will be provided with the following appointment choices:

- Morning Appointment: 08:00-12:00;
- Afternoon Appointment: 12:00 – 16:30;
- All Day Appointment: 08:00 – 16:30;

3.6.8 West Highland will adopt a management and reporting process to ensure the appointment system is efficient and successfully delivered to maximise the number of appointments offered and kept.

3.6.9 West Highland will operate its 'Right to Repair' scheme fully in accordance with the Scottish Secure Tenants (Right to Repair) Regulations. This will include advising tenants when they contact Link where it is a 'qualifying repair' and of the alternative contractor(s) available to them should West Highland fail to attend within the prescribed period as set down in the Regulations. The prescribed compensation will also be paid in the event of failure.

3.7 Gas Boiler Reactive Repairs

3.7.1 Gas appliance servicing and repairs are executed by an external contractor with West Highland administering the contract. In particular, exerting strict control over access for annual servicing/safety checks.

3.7.2 West Highland will not permit any service to be executed beyond its anniversary date and in accordance with agreed protocols, West Highland will force access to tenant's homes following the third failed access attempt, resulting in the service and safety check of the installation or the capping of the supply.

3.7.3 The same reactive repairs standards and timescales, as set out within this policy, shall also be used to monitor gas reactive repairs.

3.7.4 Full details of gas servicing are contained within the Gas Safety Policy.

3.8 Void Property Re-Let Repairs

3.8.1 West Highland will complete all necessary repairs to void properties as required under its agreed Re-let Standard, including electrical and gas installations safety checks prior to the new tenant taking residence.

3.8.2 West Highland aims to minimise rental loss during void periods, following assessment void repairs will be completed within the following timescales:

- **2 Day Void** - Gas and/or Electrical checks only;
- **5 Day Void** - Gas and/or Electrical checks plus repairs;
- **10 Day Void** - Gas and/or Electrical checks plus multiple repairs;

3.8.3 Where a void property is identified as requiring significant major works or planned maintenance works, it is accepted that these works should be completed at void stage, maximising work efficiency, minimising health and safety risks and minimising tenant disruption.

3.8.4 It is incumbent on the Housing Services department and/or their appointed contractors to complete these works in the shortest possible time to minimise void loss. Major void works will be categorised under the following headings,

- **Unsafe to Occupy** – Voids should be classified under this category, during the time that the property would not be safe for a tenant to occupy until such times as the major repair work has been completed. (i.e. scale of works required provides a health and safety, or where a basic facility is not available, for example no heating or hot water).
- **Major Repairs** – Where a void property either requires major repairs, or where a planned maintenance component requires replacement, this category should be used when the property is still in a habitable condition and the works are not deemed to make the property unsafe to occupy.

3.9 Property Adaptations

3.9.1 Requests for adaptations to tenant's homes will be prioritised according to individual tenant's needs following receipt of Occupational Therapists or General Practitioners recommendations.

3.9.2 West Highland will make application for government grant funding on an annual basis, estimating the requirement based on actual requests received and historical data indicating annual request volume.

3.9.3 West Highland will set aside annual budget provision to allow the early commencement of adaptations until the grant award level has been confirmed. Thereafter this budget allowance will be used to supplement the grant funding where it does not meet demand.

3.9.4 For properties subject to bathroom renewals, the most appropriate accessible option will be reviewed with each tenant in lieu of a 'standard' bathroom component renewal i.e. low level access shower.

3.10 Property Management (Factoring) service in mixed tenure schemes

3.10.1 The same principles, objectives, definitions and methods of delivery as contained within this policy will be applied in the provision of factoring services in mixed tenure schemes.

3.10.2 Any works identified in mixed tenure or wholly privately owned schemes which are factored, will follow the prescribed factoring protocols, factoring Written Statements and will be in accordance with the specific title deed requirements therein.

3.11 Procurement of Contractors and Professional Services/Consultants

3.11.1 Contracts will be procured in accordance within West Highland's Procurement Strategy, Procurement Manual and Standing Orders procedure.

3.11.2 Link does not operate an Approved List of Contractors and all planned and cyclical maintenance contracts will be advertised appropriate to the value/nature of the works in accordance with the above procedures.

3.11.3 Consultants will be procured and commissioned where required and where West Highland does not have the appropriate professional skills or available resources from its in-house staff.

4. MONITORING, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

The following areas will be subject to monitoring:

- Annual Return on the Charter Performance;
- Budgetary Requirements
- Contractor, Consultant and Supplier performance
- Compliance with Policy and procedural requirements;
- Compliance with relevant legislation and, regulations;
- Customer satisfaction;
- Effectiveness of communications about maintenance with tenants, colleagues, and any relevant external stakeholder/agencies;
- Key Performance Indicators;
- Provision of training and/or information to staff;
- Progress towards strategic targets
- Risk Management;

These will be monitored by appropriate staff members within West Highland, and reported to the Chief Executive Officer. If any significant issues or concern arise, these will be dealt with by the Chief Executive who will report such matters the West Highland Board.

Any matter which demonstrates a serious failure of internal controls should also be reported immediately to the Chief Executive.

4.1 General Service Objectives

The property maintenance policy will be delivered in accordance with the following general service objectives:

- 4.1.1 Quality of Service - West Highland aims to take account of individual tenant's needs and give the highest levels of customer satisfaction, particularly in relation to the clarity of communications, accessing tenants homes, the conduct of staff and agents and the quality of the finished works.
- 4.1.2 Customer Consultation and Involvement - West Highland will take every opportunity to involve tenants in monitoring, reviewing and improving the services provided. West Highland will utilise existing relationships such as the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, Tenant Led Inspections and events such as the Tenant's Forum to consult on changes or improvements to the service.
- 4.1.3 Access - In many situations West Highland's ability to deliver an effective service depends on its staff and contractors gaining prompt access to tenants' homes. There is a formal obligation for tenants set out in paragraph 5.12 of the Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement but West Highland will make every effort to arrange access by mutual

agreement and via appointments wherever appropriate or feasible.

If works are of an essential nature, West Highland will exercise its rights to force access to ensure the works are carried out appropriate to their impact on the tenant or adjoining properties.

- 4.1.4 Recovery of Costs - If West Highland is contacted to carry out a repair which is found to have been the tenant's responsibility it will seek to recover the cost from the tenant in accordance with the parameters set out within its Tenant Responsible Repairs Policy.
- 4.1.5 Insurance - West Highland will maintain insurance policies for its housing stock and office premises as required as a landlord and owner. In the case of the housing stock the policies will only cover the structure or 'buildings', not tenant's 'contents'.

Tenants will be clearly informed within tenancy agreements, tenant's handbooks and elsewhere that they are responsible for providing their own contents insurance cover. If a tenants fail to arrange their own contents cover, then this may result in losses to them as West Highland's insurers will not cover any resultant damage/loss to tenants' belongings or responsibilities under West Highland's buildings insurance policy.

West Highland will seek to arrange and make available to tenants, appropriate and affordable contents insurance policies via partners within the insurance industry e.g. 'Thistle' contents insurance policy for tenants.

- 4.1.6 Further detailed information on many of these issues is contained within the Tenant's Handbook.

4.2 Reactive Repairs Performance and Monitoring

- 4.2.1 West Highland will respond to tenant's requests for repairs under the following reactive categories:

- **Emergency: Within 4 hours:** Repairs necessary to prevent serious damage to the building, danger to health, risk to safety or risk of serious loss or damage to the occupier's property. This includes total loss of water or electricity, total loss of heating (in cold weather), serious roof leaks, breaches of security to outside doors and windows.
- **Urgent: Within 3 days:** Repairs that require attention to prevent further deterioration to the property or undue risk or inconvenience to the tenant including plumbing leaks, central heating faults, blocked drains, minor electrical faults.
- **Routine: Within 10 days:** Any other day-to-day repairs such as joinery repairs – kitchen fittings, internal doors etc, minor plumbing repairs.
- **User Defined: Within 20 days:** This category will be used for external works i.e. cleaning of gutters, fencing works and external paint work, it may also be used when specialist materials are required or need manufactured, i.e. windows or doors, or if materials require to be ordered from overseas.

- 4.2.2 Each of the 4 repair categories shall be used as the primary measure of repairs performance, this will be based on the time taken to complete the requisite repair within the time allocated.
- 4.2.3 Each category will be monitored and reported regularly to the West Highland Board, Link Property Board and finally as part of West Highland's Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).
- 4.2.4 West Highland will adopt a process to record the number of reactive repair jobs which are completed 'Right First Time' as specified within the Annual Return on the Charter definition.
- 4.2.5 West Highland will adopt a process to record the number of reactive repair jobs where it has kept appointments. This process will be used to report on Appointments Kept as specified within the Annual Return on the Charter definition.
- 4.2.6 West Highland will implement appropriate reporting procedures in accordance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's ARC definitions and guidance.

4.3 Repair Timescale Parameters

- 4.3.1 West Highlands repairs timescales shall be calculated on the following agreed principals:

Emergency Repairs – The 4 hour response time shall commence from the date and time the customer reports the repair job.

Urgent, Routine and User Defined Repairs – Repairs that fall within these categories shall have the day on which the repair is reported classed as day 0, this day will not count towards the specified performance parameter, day 1 of the repair shall commence on the next working day.

- 4.3.2 All repairs performance figures shall not include days which are deemed as non-working days.

4.4 Reactive Repairs Contract Management/Monitoring

- 4.4.1 In addition to the key performance indicators set out within the earlier section, West Highland will establish and maintain a process for the ongoing monitoring of repairs.

- 4.4.2 This will be achieved by monthly Operational Management Meetings between West Highland and the Facilities Contractor. This meeting will be used to review a number of performance reports including:

- KPI Report;
- Void Monitoring Report;
- Out with Target Completion Time Report;
- Budget Variance/Expenditure Report;
- Complaints and Compliments Report;
- Post Inspection and Recall Report;

4.4.3 West Highland’s Asset Management Officer will undertake a monitoring role for the works completed by the Facilities Contractor and West Highland internal management systems at quarterly meetings, which will be reported on performance against KPI targets, but also through a post inspection and recall process providing physical assurance of job completion and quality.

5. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

West Highland Group welcomes complaints and positive feedback, both of which provide information which helps us to improve our services. We use a complaints handling procedure (CHP) developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The CHP allows for most complaints to be resolved by front line staff within a five day limit (first stage), or if the complaint is complex, a detailed investigation will be made by a manager within a 20 day limit (second stage). At the end of the second stage our response will be made by a director. If the customer remains dissatisfied he/ she may then refer the matter to the SPSO.

The SPSO does not normally review complaints about our factoring service. If a factoring customer is dissatisfied after using the CHP, the complaint may be referred to the Homeowner Housing Panel.

Anyone receiving care or support service from us has the right to complain either direct to the Care Inspectorate or to us.

At each stage West Highland will advise the customer how the complaint should be taken forward, and advise which agency would be most appropriate to consider the case.

6. POLICY AVAILABILITY

This policy is available on request free of charge from West Highland. A summary of this policy can be made available in a number of other languages and other formats on request.

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

West Highland undertakes to review this policy regularly, at least every three years, with regard to:

- Applicable legislation, rules, regulations and guidance
- Changes in the organisation
- Continued best practice

Date policy approved	Review Due	Reviewed by	Approved by
December 2021	December 2024	Asset Management Officer	WHA Board