

homefront



Grass Cutting

We would encourage all occupants of our properties with gardens to provide a good standard of garden maintenance during the growing season. Our Property **Services Officers** will be carrying out regular estate inspections throughout the summer.

If you wish any further information regarding the standard of garden maintenance that is required, please do not hesitate to contact us. In addition, if you have



any comments that you wish to make about the Association's standard of grass cutting in communal landscaped areas, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Phone us on 01478 612035 or email info@LSHA.co.uk.

You are invited to join us at our Annual General Meeting Monday 30th June 2014 7.00 pm Morrison House, **Bayfield, Portree** A light buffet and refreshments will be available at the end of the meeting

New Committee Members Required

The Association is governed by a voluntary Management Committee which is responsible for agreeing our policies and plans and overseeing the day to day work of the staff.

The Committee meets once a month (in Portree and Broadford alternately) and meetings generally last no more than two hours. Whilst we cannot pay Committee members, they can claim all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for attending meetings, including travel expenses, childcare costs, etc.

Committee members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and, whilst they do not need to have any particular qualifications, an interest in housing and a desire to make a difference to people's lives are essential.

If you would like to have an informal chat about what Committee membership involves, contact Lachie MacDonald on 01478 612035, or ask for a Committee Membership Information Pack to be sent to you.



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If you would like to receive this document in another format or language, please contact us on 01478 612035 or e-mail: info@LSHA.co.uk and we will forward a copy to you.

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Registered with The Scottish Housing Regulator No. 324
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Home Farm, Portree Phase 6



The **15 houses and flats** at Phase 6(a), Home Farm, Portree, are due for completion in early July 2014. Four flats for rent in the development are being built for The Highland Council. The remaining 11 properties will be rented out by the Association and the allocation process is currently underway.

The development of a further 17 houses and **flats for rent** at Phase 6(b) has now been approved and is scheduled to start in July 2014. This phase will include some special needs accommodation, which we are providing and managing in partnership with NHS Highland.

It is anticipated that the construction of a new 8 bed roomed hostel for Police Scotland will also commence on site during the construction of Phase 6(b).



Paying by Credit or Debit Card in our office or by telephone

The Association can now accept payment of rent or invoices by debit or credit card. Payments by card can be made in person at our office, or by phoning us on 01478 612035 with your card details. A receipt will be issued for any payment made.

Alternatively, payment can be made by Standing Order, internet or phone banking, bank giro credit slip (at banks or mobile bank vans), by post with a cheque or postal order or by claiming Housing Benefit. If you would like further information, please call us on 01478 612035.

Rent consultation

In the previous edition of Homefront, we invited all our tenants to comment on our proposals for rent and service charge levels for 2014/2015. Following the conclusion of the consultation exercise, our Management Committee agreed that the proposed 3% increase should be applied from 1 April 2014.

Please remember that if you are on a low income, your income drops (perhaps because of seasonal work) or a member of your household leaves, you may be eligible to claim housing benefit to pay all or part of your rent. If you think that you may be eligible to claim **housing benefit, don't delay** – it's as simple as filling in an application form.

For further information, please contact Janet Masson, Linda Shaw or Fiona McAdam on 01478 612035.

Discretionary Housing Payments

The Highland Council has a cash-limited fund that can help meet some housing costs. The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme allows Councils the discretion to help people on a low income with their housing costs where **Housing Benefit (HB)** alone does not meet all of their needs. Housing costs may include:

- rental liability, including "Bedroom Tax"
- rent in advance, as required by a private landlord
- deposits, as required by a private landlord
- other lump sum costs associated with a housing need such as removal costs

A Discretionary Housing Payment is not a payment of Housing Benefit.

A Discretionary Housing Payment can only be awarded where a person is in receipt of **Housing Benefit** but requires more financial assistance.

To apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment:-

Please call Fiona McAdam, Tenant Adviser on 01478 612035; or

Contact The Highland Council's Service Centre: Telephone: 01349 886606; or

Visit your nearest [Service Point](#); or

Download an application form: www.highland.gov.uk/housingbenefits

Property Surveys

We are in the process of carrying out a survey of all our tenanted properties and these are progressing well, with approximately half – 300 surveys – completed to date.



If you have not already had a survey carried out, a member of staff from our office will be in contact with you to arrange a suitable time and date for your survey to take place. We hope to complete the entire survey by October 2014.

We would like to thank all of our tenants for their co-operation and assistance during these surveys.

If you have any queries regarding these surveys, please do not hesitate to contact our Property Services staff on 01478 612035.

Tenant Engagement

We have been reviewing the ways that we can involve our tenants in the key decisions that we have to take regarding the services we provide to tenants and others.

Our Management Committee have now approved a draft of a new Tenant Participation Policy and we would be pleased if you could take the time to have a look at the draft policy and let us know what you think.

The draft policy includes details about:-

- how we will give tenants information
- how tenants can get involved with us
- the range of issues tenants can get involved in, and how we will take their views into account
- how resources will be assessed and committed – including any funding and staff time
- our public register of Registered Tenants Organisations
- information on how groups can become registered

An important aspect of the proposed new arrangements is the setting up of a new tenant scrutiny panel, who will assist us in reviewing the services we provide and help to monitor our performance against the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

You can access the new document on our website at www.LSHA.co.uk, or contact us if you would like us to send you a paper copy. Phone 01478 612035 and ask for Fiona McAdam, Tenant Adviser. Closing date for responses is 31st July 2014.

Insulation Upgrades

Following the ongoing property surveys we are carrying out, we are now about to start a further upgrade of attic insulation to those properties that need some attention. In advance of this work, we would request that you take the opportunity to clear any goods from your attic area.

Storage of goods within the attic can have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the insulation, resulting in higher heating costs for the occupant. We would therefore request that you do not use the attic as a storage area.

If you have any queries regarding this programme of works, please do not hesitate to contact our Property Services staff on 01478 612035.