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Keeping Warm this Winter – Tips from our Energy Advice Service

Half of our annual energy consumption is used in November, December, January and February. However, there are ways of reducing costs and getting help.

Switch to the cheapest electricity tariff available.

You'll always get a better deal if you pay by direct debit, but, even if you don't, you can usually make savings. If you've got storage heating on the **Total Heat Total Control** tariff, you won't easily be able to switch away from the Hydro (SSE), but you can at least make sure you are on their cheapest tariff, which is the **One Year Fixed Rate v2**. If you have an **Economy 10** meter then you will already have had a letter from us strongly advising that you consider switching to a standard rate meter, and buy electricity from the cheapest supplier – some tenants who have already changed stand to save many hundreds of pounds over the coming year.

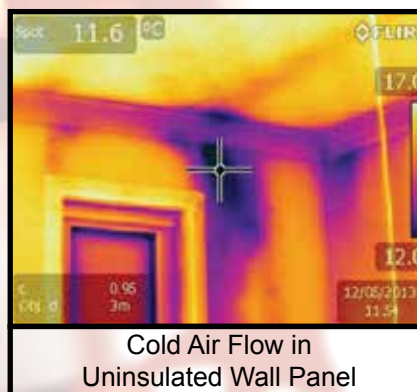
If you're an SSE customer and have accumulated energy debt, you can apply to their **Priority Assistance Scheme** for help. The first step is to contact the **Energy Advice Service**.

If you are potentially vulnerable if the power goes off – if you are elderly, have disabilities or have medical needs - then you can apply to be put on SSE's **Priority Customer** list. Phone them on **0800 300 111**.

If you are receiving guaranteed pension credit you should already be receiving the Government's **Warm Homes Discount** of up to £140 per year, but many other households on specified benefits are also eligible for this support. The guidelines for eligibility are very precise, so either call us at

the **Energy Advice Service** or phone up **SSE** for an application form, or check out the information on their website: <https://www.hydro.co.uk/HelpAndAdvice/ExtraHelp/PriorityPlan/>. If you are not an SSE customer, many other utility companies also deliver the scheme.

The **Energy Advice Service** can give you guidance on any of the above and point you in the direction of further help. The advisors can also give you advice about using your heating system, identify draughts or cold spots in your house, carry out cold



Cold Air Flow in Uninsulated Wall Panel

weather thermal imaging of your property or monitor your energy use and temperature levels.

To arrange an appointment, telephone 01478 612035.

Management Committee Members

The Association is delighted to welcome **Mr John Ellis, Mr Neil Campbell** and **Mr Jon Hanley** onto the **Management Committee**.

If you have an interest in **housing** and the **welfare of tenants**, we would like to invite you to consider becoming a Management Committee member. An Application Pack can be obtained by telephoning **01478 612035** or e-mailing info@LSHA.co.uk.

Rent Setting Policy Consultation 2016/2017

The Association is required to regularly review its rents and service charges. This is your opportunity to **comment on our proposals for the charges that will apply from 1st April 2016.**

What does your rent pay for?

All rental income received by the Association is set aside to pay for the cost of the services we provide to tenants.

Included within these costs are:-

- The management of our housing stock, including items like staff costs, insurance premiums and office expenses.
- Day-to-day repairs, e.g. faulty heating systems, electrical problems, burst pipes, etc.
- Cyclical Maintenance which includes our external painting and ground maintenance programmes.
- Planned Maintenance involving installing replacement kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows and heating systems.
- Loan charges on the money we borrow to construct our properties.

How do our rents compare to other similar landlords?

As part of our Policy, we need to ensure that our rents are comparable to the rents charged by similar social landlords in Scotland and we have consistently managed to achieve this. A comparison of our rents and those of the other main housing providers in the Highlands and Islands area is shown below.

Weekly Rents	2 Apt	3 Apt	4 Apt	5 Apt
Scottish Average	£68.54	£69.60	£75.69	£84.04
Albyn Housing Society	£67.39	£76.44	£83.74	£94.19
Hjaltland Housing Association	£73.99	£81.27	£85.20	£97.76
Lochaber Housing Association	£75.01	£76.11	£82.73	£94.80
Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	£64.67	£70.29	£77.55	£82.32
Orkney Housing Association	£68.32	£75.06	£80.19	£83.42
Pentland Housing Association	£53.29	£61.87	£77.16	£87.82
The Moray Housing Partnership	£65.53	£79.55	£86.18	£96.90
West Highland Housing Association	£70.86	£82.78	£92.03	£109.52

The information in the above table is based on data supplied by each RSL as at **31 March 2015**

What is the proposed rent increase in 2016/2017?

The Association is proposing to increase rents from 1st April 2016 by the **Consumer Price Index** figure in October 2015 plus 1% subject to a minimum increase of 1%. This is the increase we calculate that we need in order to continue to provide the level of services that tenants require.

2 Apt	3 Apt	4 Apt	5 Apt
£65.32	£70.99	£78.33	£83.14

Projected weekly costs from **1 April 2016**

Why the increase?

The Association's costs are subject to inflationary pressures and many of our costs are increasing by more than the rate of inflation.

Will Service Charges increase?

Yes. It is proposed that these increase in line with the change to rents.

What happens next?

We are inviting all our tenants to respond to this consultation by **31st January, 2016**. All comments and submissions will be considered by our Management Committee who will take the final decision on rent levels for 2016/2017. We will then advise tenants of their new rent figure **no later than the end of February 2016**.

Please let us have your views no later than 31st JANUARY 2016

New Developments for The Highland Council

The Association is project managing the construction of **8 new properties** on behalf of **The Highland Council** at the former dairy site at **Balmacara**. This development is due for completion in **February 2016**.

The Association has been appointed by **The Highland Council** as Development Agents for an 8 flat affordable housing development at **Dunvegan Road, Portree** which is due to commence soon.

At **Harrapool, Broadford**, the Association is providing Clerk of Works services to **The Highland Council** for their 12 unit affordable housing project. This development is scheduled for completion in **May 2016**.



Our New Website

The Association has updated its website and we would appreciate feedback from our tenants on the new design and how easy tenants are able to find the information they need on the website.

The address is www.LSHA.co.uk.

There is an online Contact Form that you can fill in to send us your opinions and any suggestions or comments that you would like to make.



Alterations and Additions to Properties by Tenants

If tenants are considering making **any** changes or additions to their home, they are required to get permission from us. Permission is **always** required for:

- altering the kitchen
- removing or replacing a door
- changing facings and skirtings
- moving a heater
- fitting a satellite dish
- erecting a garden shed/fence
- altering the garden layout
- fitting laminate flooring
- laying floor tiles
- fitting a shower
- hanging wallpaper
- fitting dimmer switches
- changing light fittings

All requests for alterations or improvements need to be in writing giving details of the proposed changes and, where necessary, the letter should be accompanied by a sketch or plan.

If your request is acceptable, we will send you a form which confirms the conditions you need to follow. The signed form should be returned to us. Permission will not be withheld unreasonably but it is important to note that no works should be undertaken until permission is received. No consent will be given for having **any gas appliances** within the property.

If Planning Consent and Building Warrant are required, it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that these are obtained prior to any work commencing. Copies of these documents and approved plans need to be submitted to the Association by the tenant.

If you are unsure if permission is required for any changes or additions, please telephone **01478 612035** and ask to speak to a member of staff in **Property Services**.



Winter Grit Bins

The Association has purchased 13 additional grit bins from **The Highland Council** which will be located throughout our housing estates in Skye and Lochalsh.

The Highland Council has agreed to refill the grit bins on a regular basis, but please phone **01478 612727** if a top-up is required between regular refills.

The Highland Council provide the following information regarding their Winter Road Maintenance Service:-

Primary Routes - strategic, regional, sub-regional and link roads which serve the larger communities and permit the majority of road users to travel across the region.

Covered from 6 am to 9 pm Monday to Saturday, 7 am to 9 pm on Sundays and public holidays.

Secondary Routes - roads connecting smaller communities to the primary network; link and service roads within the larger urban settlements; service and school bus routes

not covered by the primary network (on bus routes, gritting will not necessarily be completed before buses start their journey).

Treated between 6 am and 6 pm Monday to Saturday.

Other Routes - minor rural and local access roads and residential roads in urban settlements. **These roads will be treated as resources permit.**



Building Insurance Claims

Our insurance claim excess has been increased from **£50 to £250** for claims for accidental damage to our properties. If tenants are responsible for this damage, for example, to a broken toilet pan, wash hand basin or broken window, they will be responsible for paying any excess that the Association is charged.

Please note that our building insurance cover does not include contents cover and tenants should make their own arrangements for insurance of their contents.



Lochalsh
& Skye
Housing
Association

For ALL repairs
01478 612035

Christmas and New Year Holiday Dates

The Association will be closed on
Thursday 24th & Friday 25th December 2015
and

Wednesday 30th & Thursday 31st December 2015,
Friday 1st & Monday 4th January 2016

The Contact phone number for
Out of Hours Emergency Repairs is 01478 612035

We would like to wish all our tenants
A Merry Christmas
and a **Happy New Year**



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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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