



**PENTLAND**  
**HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

# **Board Members**

## **Candidate Information Pack**



## **Appointment of Board Members**

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Further information to be provided by email from Pentland Housing Association

- Application form
- Annual Report

## **A letter to potential applicants from the Chair of Pentland Housing Association**

Thank you very much for your interest in the board member positions at Pentland Housing Association.

I am pleased to enclose a recruitment pack which provides some background information about Pentland and its current situation, including a description of the role and responsibilities of a voluntary Board member. Information about the attributes that we are seeking from potential new board members, including a profile of the full range of specific skills and knowledge that Pentland needs from its full range of board members, is also included. We are asking you to self-assess the level of any knowledge and experience you have in each area as part of this process. No individual member will have the full range of skills, knowledge and experience described, but it is helpful to understand how you may be able to add to those already present round the (now “virtual”) board table!

Because we are no longer meeting as board members in our Traill Street offices in Thurso, but via video-conference using Microsoft Teams, we can hopefully attract the interest of people from a much wider geographic location (potentially the whole of Scotland!) who may be motivated to contribute to improving the lives of our tenants and the local community. We already have one board member who joins us in this way from Shetland. We will continue to meet “virtually” for at least the next year.

Having selected Cairn Housing Association as our prospective partner, with whom we are proposing to conduct a transfer of engagements, we are working our way through the due diligence process, and the preparation of a business case that will satisfy both ourselves, our tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator that this is the best way forward for the Association. This process has been interrupted by the coronavirus epidemic, but will shortly reconvene.

This is a crucial time for the association and its governance. Board numbers have fallen to a low level following a recent resignation, and another that will happen following the forthcoming AGM. We urgently need “re-enforcements” from people who can support us and offer commitment for a one-year period by which time, if the process is successful, the formation of the partnership should be completed.

I very much hope that, having looked at the recruitment pack, you will decide to apply. It contains an application form, and all the necessary paperwork to enable you to progress an application to join Pentland’s board. As Pentland is both a Scottish Charity and a Registered Social Landlord, it is important that you complete the declarations about your eligibility to become a Board member.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your interest in Pentland’s work. If you have any further queries you can contact our Corporate Officer, Rachel MacGregor on [Rachel@pentlandhousing.co.uk](mailto:Rachel@pentlandhousing.co.uk) or telephone 01847 807112 or myself [Chair@pentlandhousing.co.uk](mailto:Chair@pentlandhousing.co.uk)

Yours sincerely

Jim Hair

Chair

## **Pentland Housing Association**

### **Background Information**

This pack contains important information to consider before submitting an application to become a Board Member.

Pentland Housing Association (PHA) is a successful and highly valued local housing association operating exclusively within the county of Caithness. PHA was formed in 1993 by a steering group of tenants and other residents of the Pennyland and Mount Vernon estates in Thurso, which were built in the 1950s to provide housing for workers at the Dounreay nuclear power station, located nearby. The estate owners, the UK Atomic Energy Authority, decided to put the estates up for sale on the open market, and the newly formed housing association successfully bid for and took ownership of some 350 homes in 1994.

Since then some 190 homes have been developed for rent (allowing for some sales, rented homes in management now stand at around 500 homes), and 35 for shared equity. Further sites are in PHA's ownership which could produce around 120 new homes. Turnover is currently around £2M p.a.

PHA's housing stock is primarily located in Thurso and Wick. The Caithness economy has depended heavily on the nuclear power station at Dounreay, which is undergoing decommissioning, due to be completed around 2025. Given significant potential job loss there is a strong local emphasis on the need to create, support and sustain industries and new enterprise to retain current population and attract a new working population to the area. PHA sees it as part of its mission to contribute where it can to such regeneration and re-skilling initiatives and programmes, both directly and through its subsidiary, Pentland Community Enterprises (PCE), within prudent financial parameters.

Alongside its housing activities, PHA has developed a range of additional services, in some cases through subsidiary organisations to benefit its tenants and other local communities. It has established a long running Care & Repair service, and a Handyperson service to provide a small repair service to disabled and elderly residents. More recently an equipment store and adaptations service was added, which primarily benefits the NHS, by providing both minor works and equipment on loan to enable hospital patients to be able to return home and free up beds. These services achieve excellent results and enjoy very positive customer feedback.

In 2006 PHA became a registered charity, and set up PCE as its trading subsidiary, initially to manage its portfolio of 450 or so garages. However, it has a wider remit to develop, support and encourage sustainable business ventures that compliment the aims of PHA and contribute to the wider economy of the North Highlands. Today, it provides management services to a range of housing tenures, including mid-market renting; IT training and skills development, in partnership with other agencies.

In 2011 Pentland Energy Advice (PEA), formerly Caithness Energy Advice, became PHA's second subsidiary organisation. It provides essential energy saving information, material and advice to our tenants, other landlords and

homeowners and, is an accredited Green Deal assessor. In 3 years it has successfully transformed itself from a grant-funded organisation to one primarily self-funded from its range of fee earning services.

In 2015, PCE and PEA consolidated and PEA have become part of PCE, with one board supporting all activities.

PHA is highly regarded in the county for the quality of its homes, for the excellence of its customer service – its latest tenant survey confirms that tenants have very high levels of satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of our services – and for what it has already achieved in terms of investment in local communities. It is valued as the only local housing organisation completely focused on the needs of the county.

### **The current situation**

Following the departure of our Chief Executive, Pentland's board conducted a strategic options review, and concluded that it was in the best interests of its tenants and the association to seek a formal partnership with another housing association.

Following tenant, stakeholder and staff consultation, a partnership selection process was undertaken, resulting in Cairn Housing Association being selected as preferred partner for a transfer of engagements, in August 2019.

Due diligence was undertaken, raising some risk issues that needed addressing, and work commenced to develop the partnership proposal into a strong business case. More comprehensive tenant consultation was about to commence, when the process had to be "paused" due to the coronavirus epidemic, in March 2020. The two associations are currently reviewing the position reached, and board representatives are due to meet again in October.

A provisional timetable shows that if all proceeds successfully, the key processes of business case finalisation, formal tenant consultation and ballot, and achievement of a range of necessary consents, can be completed by September / October 2021. Once transfer is complete, only one or two board members will remain as part of the Cairn governance structure.

This is the limited time period for which Pentland is seeking to recruit three new board members. Board numbers now stand at 8, out of a maximum possible 15 members. The board is confident that it can manage the partnership implementation process with less than the maximum number of board members.

The board meets 8 times a year, on a 6-weekly cycle. The board also has two sub-committees – the Audit & Compliance Committee, and the Staffing Committee. Sub-Committees tend to meet on a quarterly basis, and new members would be welcome to join one or other of them.

The key skills and experience which would be particularly beneficial to Pentland at this time are experience of governance in a partnership setting, perhaps gained through involvement at governing body or senior management level in the formation of a constitutional partnership or the effecting of a transfer of

engagements, or by involvement in an ongoing partnership or group structure set-up.

Recent skills reviews have also identified particular gaps in the following areas:

- Knowledge of the needs of local Caithness communities
- Financial management
- Business development
- Maintenance and property services, including asset management
- Human resources
- Housing management services

However, we would not want anyone who is keen to offer support and commitment to Pentland at this crucial stage in their history to be put off from applying because they do not feel that they have the specific knowledge and skills to match these particular requirements. We are sure that any applicant will identify some areas that match our needs, and we have scope to make more than three appointments, if we choose to.

## **Recruitment Process**

Before completing an application form it is important that you carefully review the following documents:

- The background information, including sections on skills and experience
- The Role Description for Board Members
- The Board Member Profile
- The Eligibility Declaration

You should then complete the application form, the Board Member Profile document and the Eligibility Declaration. Please make sure that you give a full response to the questions about why you want to join the board, and how your experience would help us. If you have a CV available, then please include it, although this is not essential.

Application forms can either be posted to:

Pentland Housing Association Ltd  
37-39 Traill Street  
THURSO  
Caithness  
KW14 8EG

Or emailed to [rachel@pentlandhousing.co.uk](mailto:rachel@pentlandhousing.co.uk).

The deadline for receipt of applications is **Friday 18 September 2020**. However, once you have decided that you wish to apply, the sooner you submit your application the better, from our point of view.

On receipt of a completed application, the Acting Chief Executive will review it with a view to confirming eligibility in terms of Pentland Housing Association's (PHA's) Rules and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) requirements.

Eligible applicants will then be invited to attend a video-conference meeting with the Chair of PHA, Jim Hair and another board member. These meetings are likely to take place in the **week commencing 27 September 2020**, in the late afternoon or early evening. Please let us know if you anticipate any difficulties participating in such a "meeting" during that week.

This will be an informal meeting which aims to:

- Establish that you understand the role of board members, and particularly the likely time commitment involved.
- Establish the potential contribution you might make to PHA, in light of the skills, knowledge and experience we are looking for.
- Explain the potential benefits of having an experienced board member provide support and mentoring to any successful applicant.
- Confirm your eligibility to act as a member of the board.
- Answer any questions you may have.

We will let you know the result of this "interview" as quickly as possible, normally within 48 hours.

If you are successful, you will be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board as an observer, before your appointment is confirmed. This is likely to take place during October.



Applicants appointed to the board will be appointed either to fill a **casual vacancy**, or as **co-optees**. In either case, the appointees will need to stand down from the board at the next AGM in September 2021. This will provide an opportunity to review the position with partnership progress, and whether it is set for imminent completion.

Although the normal term of office is three years, as explained previously we are looking for a commitment of 12 to 15 months only, by which time the transfer process, if successful, should be formally completed, and the majority of board members will then step down.

# Pentland Housing Association Ltd

## Role Description for Board Members

### 1. Introduction

“The Governing Body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users” Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management Standard 1

- 1.1 This role description has been prepared to set out the responsibilities that are associated with being a Board member of Pentland Housing Association (PHA). It should be read in conjunction with the PHA’s Rules and Standing Orders.
- 1.2 PHA is a Registered Social Landlord and a Scottish Charity. The role description reflects the principles of good governance and takes account of (and is compliant with) the expectations of the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management for Scottish RSLs and relevant guidance produced by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).
- 1.3 PHA encourages people who are interested in the Association’s work to consider seeking election as a Board member and is committed to ensuring broad representation from the communities that it serves. Board members do not require ‘qualifications’ but, from time to time, we will seek to recruit people with specific skills and experience to add to or expand the range of skills and experience available to ensure that the Board is able to fulfil its purpose. We carry out an annual review of the skills that we have and those that we need to inform our recruitment activities.
- 1.4 This role description applies to all members of the Board, whether elected or co-opted, new or experienced. It is subject to periodic review.

### 2. Primary Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Board Member’s primary responsibilities are, with the other members of the Board, to
  - Lead and direct PHA’s work
  - Promote and uphold PHA’s values
  - Set and monitor standards for service delivery and performance
  - Control PHA’s affairs and ensure compliance
  - Ensure PHA’s financial viability
- 2.2 Responsibility for the operational implementation of PHA’s strategies and policies is delegated to the Chief Executive.

### **3. Key Expectations**

- 3.1 PHA has agreed a Code of Conduct for Board Members which every member is required to sign on an annual basis.
- 3.2 Each member must accept and share collective responsibility for the decisions properly taken by the Board. Each Board member is expected to contribute actively and constructively to the work of PHA. All members are equally responsible in law for the decisions made.
- 3.3 Each member must always act only in the best interests of PHA and its customers, and not on behalf of any interest group, constituency or other organisation. Board members cannot act in a personal capacity to benefit themselves or someone they know.

### **4. Main Tasks**

- To contribute to formulating and regularly reviewing PHA's values, strategic aims and performance standards
- To monitor PHA's performance
- To ensure that PHA operates within and is compliant with the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks
- To ensure that risks are realistically assessed and appropriately monitored and managed
- To ensure that PHA is adequately resourced to achieve its objectives and meet its obligations
- To ensure that PHA is effectively governed

### **5. Duties**

- Act at all times in the best interests of PHA
- Accept collective responsibility for decisions, policies and strategies
- Attend and be well prepared for meetings of the Board and sub-committees
- Contribute effectively to discussions and decision making
- Take part in training and other learning opportunities
- Take part in an annual review of the effectiveness of PHA's governance and of the member's individual contribution to PHA's governance
- Maintain and develop personal knowledge of relevant issues and the wider housing sector
- Represent PHA positively and effectively in local communities and when attending meetings and other events
- Respect and maintain confidentiality of information
- Treat colleagues with respect and foster effective working relationships within the Board and between the Board and staff
- Attend and participate in reviews of the Board's performance, individual and collective
- Be aware of and comply with the restrictions on payments and benefits
- Register any relevant interests as soon as they arise and comply with PHA's policy on managing conflicts of interest

## 6. Commitment

6.1 An estimate of the annual time commitment that is expected from Board members is

Activity	Time
Attendance at up to 8 regular meetings of the Board	16 hours
Reading and preparation for Board meetings	16 hours
Attendance at up to 4 sub-committee meetings	6 hours
Reading and preparation for subsidiary or sub-committee meetings	8 hours
Attendance at annual planning and review/appraisal events (including individual review meeting)	8 hours, plus travel
Attendance at openings and site visits, AGM, etc	4 hours, plus travel
Attendance at internal briefing and training events	12 hours
External Training and conference attendance (may include overnight stay or weekend)	14 hour (1-2 days), plus travel
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 hours plus travel</b>

## 7. What Pentland Offers Board Members

7.1 All members of the Board are volunteers and receive no payment for their contribution. PHA has policies which prevent Board members or their relatives benefiting personally from their involvement with PHA, although they also seek to ensure that Board members are not unfairly disadvantaged by their involvement with PHA. All out of pocket expenses associated with the role of a Board member are fully met and promptly reimbursed.

7.2 In return for the commitment offered by Board members, PHA offers:

- A welcome and introduction when a member first joins the Board;
- A mentor from the Board for the first six months, with ongoing support
- Clear guidance, information and advice on Board members' responsibilities and on PHA's work
- Formal induction training to assist settling in
- Papers which are clearly written and presented, and circulated in advance of meetings
- The opportunity to put members' experience, skills and knowledge to constructive use
- The opportunity to develop members' own knowledge, experience and personal skills
- The chance to network with others with shared commitment and ideals

## Pentland Housing Association - Board Member Profile

Please tick the box that you feel best describes your current level of knowledge. Remember that not all Board members can know about everything – that is why PHA actively tries to recruit Board members from a variety of backgrounds and who have different areas of knowledge, skills and expertise. There is no expectation that you will have or want to gain knowledge in all the areas listed here: PHA would rather have Board members who, as individuals, bring their unique skills and knowledge in specific areas to help the organisation and contribute these skills and knowledge to the Board to ensure that, collectively, all the necessary experience is available. Please remember to add your name before handing the form in.

Name .....

<b>Knowledge and Experience</b>	<b>Professional Knowledge / Experience</b>	<b>Work or Life Experience</b>	<b>Some Knowledge</b>	<b>Would like to develop knowledge</b>
Scottish Housing and Housing Associations				
Scottish Charities				
Community Development				
Housing Management				
Scottish Housing Policy and Strategy				
Governance / Role of Scottish Housing Regulator / Regulatory requirements				
Tenant Participation and Related Issues				
Regeneration, Community Planning and Wider Role				
Forming / managing partnerships with other organisations				
Housing Design and/or Development				
Community Care and Supporting People				
Financial Management				
Relevant Law				
Customer Care				

<b>Knowledge and Experience</b>	<b>Professional Knowledge</b>	<b>Work or Life Experience</b>	<b>Some Knowledge</b>	<b>Would like to develop knowledge</b>
Property maintenance / asset management				
Local knowledge of housing / community needs				
Marketing/Media/Promotions				
Health and Safety				
Care and Repair				
Human Resources				
Equal Opportunities/Human Rights				

## Pentland Housing Association

### Board Member Recruitment - Eligibility Declaration

Please confirm your eligibility to be considered as a prospective member of Pentland's Board (please tick the yes box; if you are unable to confirm any of the statements, please provide details):

	Yes	Comments/Details
You are not an undischarged bankrupt		
You have not entered into an arrangement with your creditors		
You have not been convicted of a crime of dishonesty for which the statutory rehabilitation period has not expired		
You have not been convicted of an offence under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005		
You are not party to any legal proceedings in any Court of Law by or against Pentland Housing Association		
You have not been removed from the governing body of another RSL within the last five years		
You have not been removed or suspended from a position of management or control of a charity under the provisions of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005		
You have not been removed from the office of Charity Trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commissioners in England or Wales or by the High Court of Justice		
You are not the subject of a Disqualification Order or have had a disqualification undertaking made against you		

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....