

**Don't want a paper copy
of this Newsletter?**

Send your Housing
Officer (page 11) your
email address for your
electronic version.

**Tenants can Win
Up to £100**

Return Your Survey

OFFICES CLOSED

**Friday, 23 December 2016
from 12:30pm to
Tuesday, 3 January 2017**

**The offices will be open on
Wednesday, 4 January 2017**

Pentland Press Winter 2016

Pentland Press

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

Tel: 01847 892507

Email: pha@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Web: www.pentlandhousing.co.uk

A registered Scottish Charity SCO 0037286

This Newsletter is available in a variety of different formats, contact the office, for further details.

Chief Executive's Letter

Welcome to our Winter 2016 Edition of Pentland Press. The newsletter is prepared for our tenants, customers, members and stakeholders. I hope you find it interesting and informative. Please let us know if there is anything you would like included in future editions.

We have already had a good response to our Global Survey and I would request that everyone completes it so we can get your thoughts on our

performance. We are now planning our walk -about in the Spring 2017. We had to delay our initial timescale but, are keen to visit as many homes as possible involving staff from throughout the organisation and are

looking forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts.

In the meantime, I hope you have an enjoyable festive period and happy New Year.



Richard Armitage
Chief Executive

Winter 2016



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www.pentlandhousing.co.uk

Board Members at December 2016

PHA Board Members

Andi Wakeman
 Bob Bell
 Colin Earnshaw
 Elaine Forbes
 Jim Hair
 Jenny Lawless
 Colin MacDonald
 Ian McElroy
 Bob McGechan
 John Perry

Audit Committee

Jim Hair
 Elaine Forbes
 Jenny Lawless
 John Perry
 Neil Robertson

Staffing Committee

Jenny Lawless
 Bob Bell
 Colin MacDonald
 Bob McGechan

Health & Safety Committee

Jim Hair
 Colin Earnshaw
 Colin MacDonald
 Bob McGechan

PCE Board Members

Neil Robertson
 Jim Kelly
 Bob Bell
 Jim Hair
 Colin MacDonald
 John Perry

Pentland Housing Need Tenant Board Members...

Please read below for more details...



Andi Wakeman, Chair

The Board of Directors are made up of volunteers, of which there should be tenant representation. As at December 2016, Pentland Housing Association (PHA) have **no tenants** on the board, therefore we need

YOU.

There are currently 3 co-opted vacancies and 2 casual vacancies on the Board.

If you are over 18 and rent your home from Pentland Housing, then you would make a suitable board member.

All we would ask from you is:-

- To act in the best interest of the Association at all times
- To act in the best interest of all PHA tenants and service users
- Don't place any personal or other interest ahead of your primary duty to the Association.

For further information please contact one of the following:

Andi Wakeman
Chair
 silverbird165@gmail.com

Richard Armitage
Chief Executive
 richard@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Caroline Paul
Corporate Officer
 caroline@pentlandhousing.co.uk





Modern Apprentice Success Story



L-R: Chelsey Trueman, Modern Apprentice; Julie Cassidy, PPP; and Richard Armitage, CEO

Chelsey joined Pentland Housing as a Corporate Assistant, Modern Apprentice in March 2016.

Chelsey has been successfully working in the Corporate team over the last 9 months and many of you may have seen her in the reception area, or chatted to

her over the phone.

Chelsey has completed her SVQ training programme through Pulteneytown People's Project (PPP) well within the year and has also secured permanent employment with an external employer, taking up post on 9 January 2017.

Charity Update



We are continuing our fun events this year to raise more funds for deserving causes and we have had a couple of dress down days, one in support of

someone you might recognise...

Sophie McIvor

Sophie was one of the Youth Forum team



L-R: Sophie McIvor and Chelsey Trueman

featured in our recent newsletters. We were very happy to donate **£110.30** towards her travel costs to train for the Scottish Under 16 Netball team.

Good Luck Sophie!

the Christmas Jumper day raising **£80.00** towards the Thurso Christmas Lights.

Total Raised so far in 2016 is...

£791.29

We also took part in



L-R: Kevin Tait, Alan Paul, Audrey Budge, Caroline Paul, Richard Armitage, Chelsey Trueman, Corrine Mackay and Carol Treasurer

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Be a Good “Festive Neighbour”

As the weather turns colder, Pentland Housing are urging tenants to be good ‘winter neighbours’.

Check on your friends and neighbours – especially if they are older, have health problems or a young family.

It is also a good idea to find out if your neighbours have enough food and medication to prevent them from having to go out in very cold or icy weather.

It’s the season of festivity and goodwill. If you’re thinking of throwing your own Christmas or New Year house party, avoid causing

Be a good neighbour and help others in need this winter



any tensions by holding the event at a time and place that’s not likely to cause too much of a disturbance. For example, hold the festivities indoors (not much of a problem at this time of the year of course) and try to keep the noise levels down as the night progresses. Don’t be over adventurous on the number of guests – too many people in a small home can cause nuisance and they may spill out into the garden and create more noise.

Give the neighbours some advance notice that you’re having a party, and maybe you could even consider inviting them along? Even if they decline, the very fact that you’ve warned them and involved them in the party by inviting them encourages good relations. Remember though, continual house parties are not acceptable!

There are some situations that can be tricky. If you’re on the receiving end of rowdy parties, you have every right to complain; but think about the context first. If it’s a one-off and it is not a regular occurrence, it could be in everyone’s best interests to let it pass!

Some other things to consider in the winter:

remember to ensure it is kept tidy and anything that may cause damage (including wheelie bins) in stormy weather is secured.

Dogs - remember in the colder weather that your dog still needs exercised and you must ensure that any fouling is collected and disposed of correctly.

Parking - we all want to be parked as near to our homes as possible, but remember, sometimes this is not possible; so please be considerate. Drop your passengers off, then park the car in a suitable parking space.

We all wish to live in a friendly and safe environment and we can only do this if everyone works together.



Your garden -

Emergency Out of Hours Service

Phone 07802 930 685

www.pentlandhousing.co.uk

READY FOR WINTER



The festive season brings additional dangers due to an increase in the number of electrical appliances being used. Here are some examples:

- Check Christmas lights conform to British Safety Standards. Remember fairy lights heat up and should be kept away from anything that will burn. Lights intended for internal use should not be used outside.
- Don't overload electrical sockets and be especially careful with Christmas lights.
- Never leave burning candles unattended or better still avoid using them.
- Avoid putting on washing machines, tumble driers or dishwashers when you leave the house or go to bed. Be especially careful with chargers for mobile phones or laptops.
- Ensure cigarettes are extinguished properly and empty ashtrays into a metal bin outside. Keep matches and lighters out of reach of

children.

- Most fires start in the kitchen – never leave a

- Test your smoke alarm and ensure it is working properly. Use the test facility to check it regularly.
- Make sure you and your family know what to do in an emergency – prepare a fire escape plan.
- Finally, celebrate Christmas and New Year safely. The risk of accidents, especially in the kitchen is increased when alcohol is consumed.

Some tenants are caught out by cold weather and suffer damage, distress and inconvenience from burst pipes. Even with minimal damage, you could be faced with disruption whilst repairs are completed. If you intend to go away overnight or for a longer period leave the heating on to maintain a reasonable background temperature and ask someone to visit the property regularly. Alternatively, drain down the system, turn

off the supply at the stop valve and open all taps and leave open. Ensure plugs are removed from sinks and wash basins and flush the toilet to empty the cistern.

IF YOU DISCOVER FROZEN PIPES:

- Turn off the supply at the stop valve and switch off gas and electric water heaters.
- Gently heat the frozen section of pipe using a fan heater, hairdryer, hot water bottle or heated cloths wrapped around the pipe. Thaw from the tap side and work towards the frozen section of pipe.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PIPES BURST:

- Turn off the supply at the stop valve and



switch off the electrical supply at the mains.

- Do not operate affected appliance.
- Contact Pentland Housing or if the office is closed, contact the out of hours emergency number

07802 930 685

- Open all taps to drain

the system and switch off central heating systems or water heaters.

- Warn neighbours if they are likely to be affected.

DRYING OUT:

- Leave windows, doors including internal and cupboard doors open to ventilate the affected area.
- Keep affected rooms heated but do not over-heat as this could lead to further damage.
- Store damaged contents in a dry place – your insurer may wish to inspect them.

TENANT LIABILITY:

If you fail to take reasonable precautions to prevent burst pipes, you may be held responsible for the damage caused to the property. Your neighbours might also have a claim against you for any damage to their property and contents. Burst pipes can cause considerable damage to your home. Pentland Housing's insurance provides cover for the structure and fittings owned by us. This does not cover your contents.

Source: Abertay Housing Association

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www.pentlandhousing.co.uk



FREE Home Fire Safety Visit and FREE Smoke Alarms

Fire can happen to anyone.

But it is our job to help make sure your home is as safe from fire as it can be. This is why we provide free Home Fire Safety Visits. Our staff can help you spot a possible fire hazard, offer advice and guidance and fit smoke alarms free of charge if your home requires them.

A Home Fire Safety Visit only takes around 20 minutes. And that 20 minutes might just save your life.

Visits are easy to arrange.

A Home Fire Safety Visit can be organised at a time that suits you, day or night. The Service would also like community members to think about anyone they know who could be at risk from fire. It could be a friend, relative, or neighbour.

To book a free Home Fire Safety Visit for you, or for someone you know:

CALL 0800 0731 999
TEXT 'FIRE' TO 80800
 or visit www.firescotland.gov.uk

Always ask for official identification - all employees of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will be happy to produce this on request.



Fact. Every hour of every day there's a house fire in Scotland.



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

Emergency Out of Hours Service
Phone 07802 930 685
www.pentlandhousing.co.uk

CONTENTS INSURANCE

Over the past few months, it has come to our attention that there has been an increase in the number of tenants who have no home contents insurance in place.

Unfortunately bad weather brings more than just the cold to our homes. Burst pipes, frost damage or a fire

could all cause loss or damage to your belongings.

Pentland Housing Association insurance does not cover any loss to your personal belongings or damage to your decoration.

We strongly recommend that tenants obtain home contents insurance

through a reputable insurer.

The choice of insurer is down to you however the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) provides competitively priced insurance cover through the SFHA Diamond Insurance Scheme.

Alternatively, tenants can obtain

cover through the Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH) scheme called 'This' insurance.

Both schemes provide the 'new for old' cover and offer the opportunity for tenants to pay the cost by instalments.

Tenants can pick up leaflets on both schemes from our office.



PLANNED REPLACEMENTS

Pentland Housing is continuing with the programme of renewing the older gas back boilers with new energy efficient wall hung condensing boilers. We had a target of just fewer than 40 to renew this year and have around 10 left to complete.

There will then be a break in this programme for a few years, unless there are failures to renew.

Before April 2017 we intend to renew kitchens to 15 properties but next year this programme will be increased to 50 new

kitchens. We are installing kitchens from local

manufacturer Ashley Ann and will be following set criteria for storage standards in compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).

Over the summer we carried out a comprehensive programme of cyclical painting & repairs to over 66 houses along Pennyland Drive and surrounding areas.



Next year in addition to the kitchen replacements we will be returning to undertake some roof renewals, as well as continuing with the programme of painting and repairs to more houses.



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Tenant Participation

Get involved, have your say...

Pentland Housing Association (PHA) values the views of our tenants and we can offer various opportunities to contribute to and influence decisions allowing you to become involved as much or as little as you would like.

If you don't like the idea of having to come along to meetings but would like to put your views forward on policy, procedures or other housing related services you can add your name to the **interested tenants** list giving details of any particular areas of interest and we would contact you on a one to one basis.

Alternatively we have the **Pentland Tenants Review Group** (PTRG), a group of our tenants whose purpose is to help PHA, provide the tenants with a landlord who gives you the best service it can. To do this the group look at individual processes and procedures that we employ and see if there are ways in which they can be

improved for the benefit for our tenants. Since its inception the group has been involved in the publication of the annual Tenants Charter report and reviews of PHA's letting standard and our contractor tendering process. Changes made as a result of these reviews have, we believe, led to improvements which are already benefitting all PHA tenants.

The other way to become involved is to become a **member of the board of directors** this is the Governing Body that leads and directs PHA to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.

For further information on any of the above please contact the Tenant Participation Officer, Carol Treasurer on carol@pentlandhousing or phone 01847 807113



Welfare Reform—Benefit Cap



The Welfare Reform Act 2012 has already brought many changes like universal credit and the bedroom tax on which we have given information in previous newsletters. The latest change introduced in November 2016 is the second stage of the benefit cap.

From 7 November the benefit cap will be lowered to:

£257 per week (£13,400 per year) for single adult with no children

£385 per week (£20,000 per year) for a couple or lone parent.

There are a number of exemptions to the new benefit cap and further information on this can be obtained from the Scottish Government website www.gov.scot or contact your Housing Officer who

will be able to advise. The intention will be that if a tenants weekly benefit income is above this level and they do not fit into one of the exemption criteria their benefit will be reduced. The first benefit that will be reduced is their housing benefit and it will be the responsibility of the tenant to make up this shortfall.

The Government has written to all claimants they believe might be affected and will advise them that they can make an application for a Discretionary Housing Payment to help to cover this shortfall.

For further information on any of the above please contact your Housing Officer at Pentland Housing Association. See page 11 for full details.

Emergency Out of Hours Service

Phone 07802 930 685

www.pentlandhousing.co.uk

Useful Telephone Contact Numbers



Emergency Repairs
07802 930 685

**Fire and Rescue
Brigade**
01463 240 999
(24 hours)

SEPA
Floodline
0845 988 11 88

NHS 24
(Out of hours medical
advice/GP Service)
08454 242424

**Scottish and
Southern Electric**
Freephone
0800 300 999

**Northern
Constabulary**
0845 603 33 88

Transco Gas
Freephone
0800 111 999

Scottish Water
0845 601 88 55
(24 hours)

Citizens Advice
Thurso 01847 894243
Wick 01955 605989

Winter Finances & Debt



Winter can cause debts to increase

vastly. Heating, food and Christmas are some of the things that can put an additional strain on our finances at this time of year.

Anyone can get themselves into debt, but it is so important to remember that you are not alone and it is **never** too early or too late to seek help.

The best way to start regaining financial control and getting back to a debt free life is to gather all the information you have on your income and expenditure and bills you have to pay. There is an online budget planner on the Citizens Advice Scotland website which may help.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/budgeting

It is very important that you open all those bills and prioritise them.

You will need to write a "holding" letter to all the people that you owe money to explaining that you are seeking advice, once you show you are taking positive steps most companies will be very reasonable and work with you to arrange an affordable repayment plan.

If you feel that you cannot deal with the debts yourself then you will need to contact a debt advisor. Do not pay for a debt management company as there are free services available. We would

recommend you contact Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or we can refer you to the local Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) advisor, Jennifer Harvey, who is based at Pulteneytown Peoples Project, Wick. Both will provide you with all the support you need.

There may be other issues you could discuss with your debt advisor i.e. Are you sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to?

We are also here to help you, take that first step and we will guide you.

Contact your housing officer now.

Source: Age UK Scotland and CAB

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tenants of social housing throughout the Highland wide area. In the last few months we have had 2 members of staff leave the team and one new member join. Andrew & Gill made the decision to leave the company to spend more time on other pursuits and Paul Bremner has recently joined as an Energy Adviser for the CCF project. We have recently recruited a new member of staff to replace Gill and hope to have the new start in

place at the beginning of 2017.

Factoring
We factor for approximately 100 properties throughout Caithness and hope to increase it due to the enquiries that we are receiving.

Pentland garage sites is on facebook!!!
Please look, like and share our facebook page. All our exciting developments that are on-going will be updated on a weekly basis. We not only

provide garages for cars but we are providing parking bays for caravans, boats, trailers and commercial parking requirements.

Pentland365
As you will know, it was recently decided to bring this service to an end. However if you are looking for a trades person of any kind, we can provide a list of local contractors.

For more details on any of the above information please contact any of the staff below:

Energy Advice
Our 2 energy advice projects are on-going. Both concentrate on home visits to try to help reduce energy consumption in properties. Our Climate Challenge project is delivered to any property in the Caithness area and the Money Matters project

is for



Paul Bremner
Energy Adviser
01847 807116



Sharon Lennie
Energy Adviser
01847 807104



Angela Rigg
Projects Officer
01847 807118



Heidi Warner
Senior Admin Assistant
01847 807110

Your Housing Officer

Carol Treasurer
01847 807 113
carol@pentland housing.co.uk



Fiona Jack
01847 807 109
fiona@pentland housing.co.uk



Yvonne Gunn
01847 807 111
yvonne@pentland housing.co.uk



Lisa Cormack
01847 807 101
lisa@pentland housing.co.uk



Emergency Out of Hours Service
Phone 07802 930 685
www.pentlandhousing.co.uk



Pentland
community enterprises



**Garage/
Storage
Facilities
Pennyland
and Mount
Vernon
Estates**

For more details call
Heidi Warner
01847 807 110
Or email
heidi@pentlandce.co.uk



Telephone 01847 896524 or 01847 895580
Email: info@pentlandenergy.co.uk

Pentland Energy Advice is offering **Free Draught proofing measures** and energy advice for all Caithness householders. We can fit immersion tank jackets, LED bulbs, window/door draught proofing and loan an energy cost monitor to help you see where your energy is being used. We are funded by The Climate Challenge Fund so the above services are completely free.



For further information please contact
Paul Bremner
01847 807116
Email paul.bremner@pentlandenergy.co.uk

Draught Busters II
Climate Challenge Fund



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PARKING SOLUTIONS AVAILABLE NOW

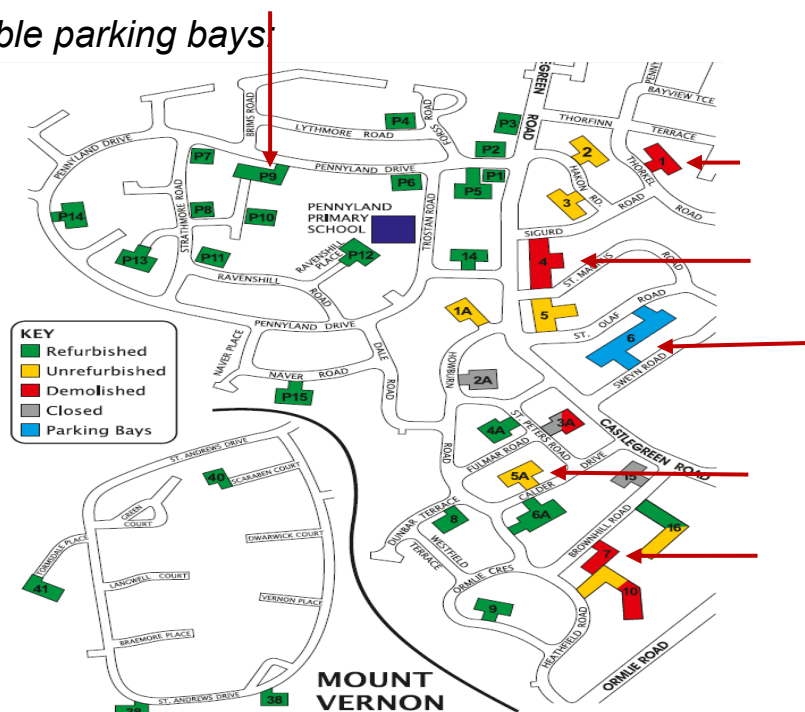
Available to rent:

- **Garages**
- **Parking bays (secure off road parking)**
- **Plots**
- **Caravan storage**
- **Boat storage**

If you are interested in getting your vehicle off the road for less than 66p a day you can:

- **Get a guaranteed space**
- **Secure parking**
- **Off road parking**

See map for available parking bays:



Heidi: 01847 807110

Heidi@pentlandce.co.uk

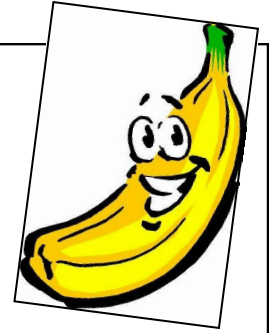


Pentland Garage Sites

Emergency Out of Hours Service
 Phone 07802 930 685
www.pentlandhousing.co.uk



KIDS QUIZ



Just for Fun

A breed of dog with spots

D_____

The 31st of October

H_____

A famous green ogre

S_____

A famous games console

X_____

A yellow fruit

B_____

A sea creature with 8 legs

O_____

A shape with 3 sides

T_____

A place to see lots of animals

Z__

A person who rides horses

J_____

A citrus fruit

O_____

Cars, buses, trucks, vans etc

V_____

A document needed to travel abroad

P_____

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