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Pentland Press

Pentland Housing
Association Ltd

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Thurso

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A registered Scottish
Charity SCO 0037286

Chief Executive's Letter

Welcome to our Spring 2018 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 enclosed a feedback form for your comments/suggestions. We have also enclosed a leaflet for your Housing Officer's contacts information.



Richard Armitage
Chief Executive

BT will be working on our phone systems on Wednesday 28th March, so if there are any teething problems, please bear with us.

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Tenant's Suggestions



Pentland Housing Group are dedicated to improving their services. We care about your opinions and welcome your feedback and suggestions.

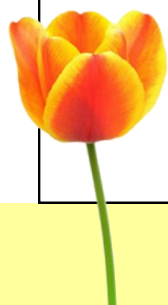
There is a suggestion box located at the front desk and we would appreciate it if you could inform us of any suggestions which you think would help enable us to improve our services to you.



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PHA Board Members

Andi Wakeman
 Bob Bell
 Colin Earnshaw
 Jim Hair
 Jenny Lawless
 Colin MacDonald
 Ian McElroy
 Gavin Powell
 John Perry
 Ellaine Forbes

Audit Committee

Jim Hair
 Elaine Forbes
 Jenny Lawless
 John Perry
 Neil Robertson

Staffing Committee

Jenny Lawless
 Bob Bell
 Colin MacDonald
 Ian McElroy

Health & Safety Committee

Jim Hair
 Colin Earnshaw
 Colin MacDonald

PCE Board Members

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

Pentland Housing Needs Tenant Board Members



The Board of Directors are made up of volunteers of which there should be tenant representation. As at December 2017, Pentland Housing Association (PHA) have only **1 tenant** on the board, therefore we need **YOU** and your views.

There are currently 3 co-opted vacancies and 1 casual vacancy on the Board.

If you are over 18 and rent your home from Pentland Housing, then you would make a suitable tenant board member. Alternatively if you are aged 16 – 18 years of age then you have the option of becoming a young observer.

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

Rachel Harness

Corporate Officer

rachel@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Policy Updates

The opposite policy was review by the Board, at their meeting held in February 2018. For further details please see page 5 of the newsletter.



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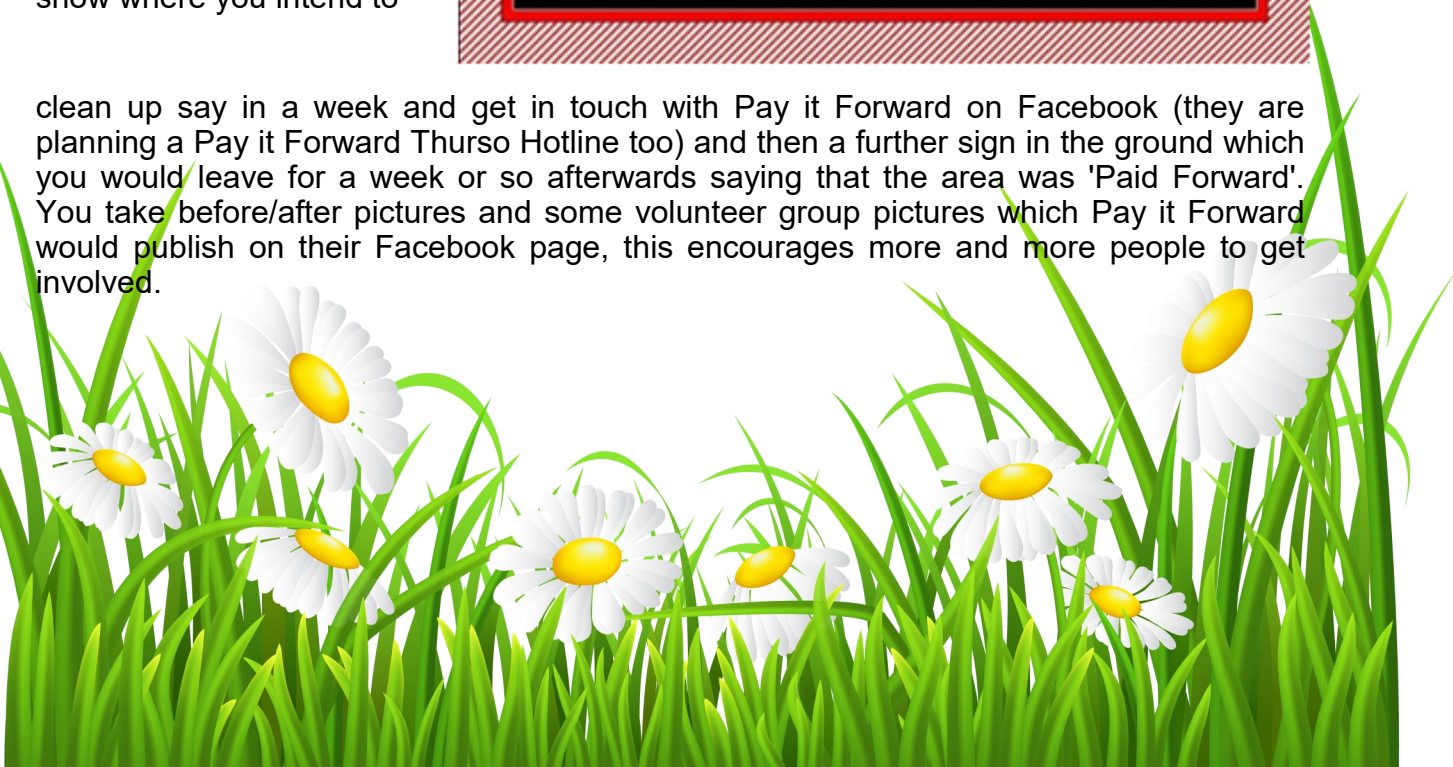
The below article has been published on behalf of the "Pay it Forward Thurso" Scheme.

Pay it Forward Thurso advise that this scheme is about ALL of us! So let's go for it, let's get squads out everywhere, beach cleans, weeding, cleaning up our own areas.

To become a Teanabowlie, tell Pay it Forward when and where, they will create an event on their Facebook page and encourage folks to come along. Your commitment is to turn up and lead the clean-up. Pay it Forward will get bags for you and they have a small number of tools they can lend. Your main commitment is to make cake or bring biscuits along, as they think the social side is important and a bit of cake thanks people for their time too. For neighbourhood clean ups you would have a sign to show where you intend to



clean up say in a week and get in touch with Pay it Forward on Facebook (they are planning a Pay it Forward Thurso Hotline too) and then a further sign in the ground which you would leave for a week or so afterwards saying that the area was 'Paid Forward'. You take before/after pictures and some volunteer group pictures which Pay it Forward would publish on their Facebook page, this encourages more and more people to get involved.



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Rents Review

Our rent consultation meetings were held in the first week of February, to which all occupants and tenants were cordially invited. Feedback from these consultations forms part of the decision making process which allowed the Board to formulate their decision regarding rent levels for 2018/19.

Comments raised regarding our proposals for 2018/19 were presented to the board at their February meeting and following consideration, the Board have given their approval to a rent increase of **4.2 + 1%**, (October RPIX +1%). This is in accordance with our current rent policy and will allow the Association to continue to invest in our existing housing stock through our planned maintenance programme, and maintain our current services.

Letters have been sent to all Scottish Secure Tenants individually to advise of this years rent increase which will be applied from 1 April 2018.



If you are currently receiving housing benefit, we confirm the Highland Council have been advised of the impending increases.

However, if this year's rent increase has added further pressure to your financial position, you may be entitled to benefits.

The Highland Council offers benefits which are designed to assist individuals or households who are least able to pay for services. Application forms are available at the Pentland Housing Office, please liaise with your area officer who will assist you to complete the necessary documentation.

Recent Announcement on Universal Credit

Universal Credit replaces legacy payments with a single monthly payment – merging six benefits into one.

The Department of Work and Pensions advise that the vast majority of claimants now receive their first payment on time.

The uptake of advances have increased.

Of the total number of households that will eventually move onto Universal Credit, 9% are currently receiving it and this will increase to 12% by February 2018.

The DWP advise that the recent announcements offer a balanced package of improvements which puts more money into claimants' hands earlier and addresses all of the issues claimants face at the beginning of their claim.

The improvements are;

Abolishing waiting days

Increasing advances

Support with housing costs

Alternative Payment Arrangements for Landlords

Temporary accommodation housing support

Providing budgeting help

Helping claimants progress in work

Universal Credit Re-profile

Comprehensive Support

There is now a new Freephone Telephone Number: 0800 328 5644

Please contact your Housing Officer should you have any queries about Universal Credit and we will be happy to help you.



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Working With The Tenants

We continuously carry out surveys when new tenants move into one of our properties and on any work that is carried out on your home, we would encourage you to complete these questions as they do help us to identify any problems we need to rectify.

Rent consultation clinics were held in Thurso and

Wick in February 2018 to gather your concerns and comments on the rent increase proposals. These were fed to the board of directors to assist with the decision making process.

The tenant review group met in February 2018

with our new Estates and Ancillary Services Manager and Chief Executive to discuss the

maintenance programme scheduled for 2018/19.

If you have any suggestions for subjects that you think would be interesting to our tenants please contact your housing officer to discuss these fur-

ther.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in any aspect of tenant participation or would just like some further information please contact Carol Treasurer on 01847 807113, carol@pentlandhousing.co.uk or please contact your area housing officer.



Debt

Do you need ANY of the following debt and finance advice?

- One to one support on finance
- One to one support on access to services
- Liaison with debtors
- Setting up arrangements with debtors
- Developing a financial plan
- Attend a Count your Cash day
- Managing rent payments and avoiding falling into arrears
- Managing personal debt

Please contact your housing officer, and they can organise a referral for you.



Your Housing Officers



L-R: Fiona, Lisa, Yvonne, Carol

Carol Treasurer

01847 807 113

carol@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Fiona Jack

01847 807 109

fiona@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Yvonne Gunn

01847 807 111

yvonne@pentlandhousing.co.uk

Lisa Cormack

01847 807 101

lisa@pentlandhousing.co.uk



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Parking Solutions Available Now

Are you interested in getting your vehicle off the road and ensuring you are guaranteed a parking space?

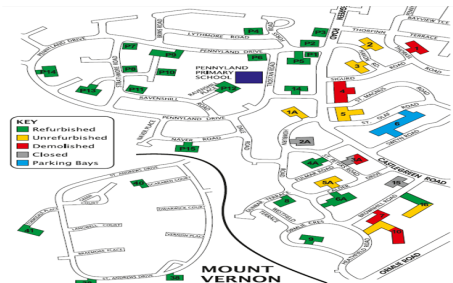


Garages

A selection of garages are available throughout Thurso. For further information call 01847 892507.

Parking Bays

We are continuing to develop parking bays throughout the garage sites. If you would like a secure, off road parking bay near you please get in touch. If a garage site can accommodate a parking bay we will be happy to discuss this with you. Some parking areas have ample area space to store boats, caravans, trailers etc.




Pentland Energy Advice

Our two energy projects, Money Matters and Draft Busting Caithness, both carry out home visits with the aim to help reduce energy consumption in properties. They offer one to one support, evaluations of energy usage, capacity building in cutting down on energy use, and finding a cheaper method of accessing the energy required.

The Draft Busting Caithness project is available to any property in Caithness, while the Money Matters project is aimed at tenants of social housing throughout the Highlands.

For further information on these projects, please contact:

<p>Money Matters</p> <p>Charlotte Mackay</p> <p>Energy Advisor</p> <p>01847 807104</p> <p>charlotte.mackay@pentlandenergy.co.uk</p>	
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<p>Draft Busting Caithness</p> <p>Paul Bremner</p> <p>Energy Advisor</p> <p>01847 807116</p> <p>paul.bremner@pentlandenergy.co.uk</p>	
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Tenants Responsibilities

Listed below are the items in your home which you are responsible for the maintenance / repair of



ITEM	PHA	TENANT	EXCEPTIONS
Exterior Blocked Drains & Pipes	✓		if caused by misuse
Carbon Monoxide Detectors	✓		tenants own
Central Heating System Controls	✓		tenants own
Chimney Sweeping		✓	
Clotheslines		✓	communal flats
Cupboards		✓	
Decoration (internal)		✓	
Door Bell		✓	owned by PHA
Door locks	✓		keys lost by tenant
Electric Plugs		✓	
Fire - electric/gas/solid fuel	✓		tenants own
Floor Coverings		✓	
Fuses to plugs		✓	
Gardens		✓	
Glass to internal screen doors		✓	
Greenhouses		✓	
Kitchen Fittings/Units	✓		tenants own
Light Bulbs		✓	
Outside Lights		✓	owned by PHA
Paths & steps (cleaning)		✓	
Plaster/plaster board	✓		if caused by misuse
Radiators	✓		tenants own
Satellite Dishes		✓	
Showers		✓	owned by PHA
Smoke detectors	✓		tenants own
Tap washers		✓	elderly or infirm
TV Aerials		✓	owned by PHA
Waste plugs/chains		✓	
Water heating	✓		tenants own
WC Seats		✓	
Windows (lubrication & cleaning)		✓	
White appliances		✓	owned by PHA
Wilful/accidental neglect/damage		✓	



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Planned Replacement Programmes 2018/19

We have a continuing programme of major replacements which are selected through a process of assessment — allowing for age and condition of the kitchens, roofs, boilers, and external doors.

Kitchens— There are 32 kitchens scheduled to be replaced in 2018/19, these are currently being identified and notification of those being replaced will follow. This programme will run for approximately 30 weeks.

Roofs— There are 12 roofs scheduled to be replaced at various properties, these will be assessed on a priority basis. This programme is expected to run for approximately 20 weeks.

External Doors— An inspection of failing external doors will be carried out and replacements made on a priority basis across the estate, a budget for 30 to be replaced has been set.

Boilers— There is an on going programme for the replacement of any boilers that fail. Our annual servicing programme will commence in April 2018, you will be contacted by phone or letter requesting you to make contact with the service engineer to allow access into your property to carry out the

service. Please arrange this at your earliest convenience, if you need assistance please call our maintenance team.

Electrical Testing— The programme for electrical safety inspections commenced on the 14th August 2017 and is on going. All properties scheduled for an inspection have been notified and the electrical contractor will make contact with you to arrange access to carry out these inspections.

External Painting— A timber painting programme has been scheduled over the next 3 years, the programme will be carried out on a priority basis.

Cyclical Maintenance— Gas/oil boiler servicing, electrical testing, and ground maintenance, ongoing programmes in place.

Reactive Maintenance— Day to day reactive repairs and void repairs.



Please note that if your property is to be included in the planned replacement programme you will receive correspondence and visits from us to keep you informed of the process.

Estates Maintenance

It may be winter but our grounds and estates maintenance carries on. Donald Macdonald landscapes are using this time to inspect trees and undertake repairs and pruning. The recent high winds did cause some damage to our trees and this is being attended to.

Come April the contractors will get back to cutting the grass and beds across the estate. Your garden will also need maintenance; they should be free from litter, household rubbish and not overgrown.

Hedges need regular trimming and shouldn't grow over neighbouring gardens or public paths and grass should be cut regularly.



Pentland Housing Association does carry out routine garden inspections which identify any garden areas that aren't maintained to an acceptable standard. Should tenants gardens fall below these standards they will be contacted to discuss and rectify this matter, in line with the tenancy agreement.

If you have any particular concerns around the estates or neighbours gardens feel free to contact us or you are welcome to join Kevin Tait, Maintenance Officer on his walk round.

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What is Condensation?

It is quite likely you already know what condensation is. Getting up in the morning you may have seen the water droplets covering the inside of your windows. Although windows may seem like the culprit, they are actually not the cause of condensation. **Houses do not create moisture, human activity does.**

Condensation is due to you and your family's activity within your home. Given the right conditions condensation will form on any surface, but it is often more









visible on windows.

The air inside your home contains moisture. When the indoor temperature cools down the air cannot hold as much water vapour. The result is that the water vapour condenses as a liquid becoming visible particularly on cold non absorbent surfaces such as windows. Unseen moisture penetrates your carpets, fabrics and any other

absorbent surface often making them feel cold.

So where does the moisture come from? **US!!** - Our every breath when sleeping or awake, puts moisture into the air. On a cold morning, you can actually see the moisture appear right in front of you, when you breathe. Water vapour also comes from using water, such as when cooking, showering and growing indoor plants.

A quick guide to demonstrate how much moisture can be created across the course of a day (based on an average house)

HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITY	AVERAGE MOISTURE CONTENT (1 jug represents 1 litre of water)
Sleeping (1 person)	
Showers or baths	
Washing clothes	
Drying clothes (unvented)	
Cooking	
Washing dishes	
Gas heaters (unflued)	
Fish tanks (230 litre)	

To avoid condensation and mould please ensure you are adequately ventilating your property by opening windows regularly and shutting internal doors. If you do not ventilate properly you will experience condensation which may then result in the growth of mould.

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Emergency Numbers

Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau -

Thurso 01847 894243

Wick 01955 605989

Caithness & Sutherland Womens Aid - 0345 408 0151 (24 hours)

Crimestoppers - 0800 555 111

Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0800 027 1234

Emergency Services - 999 OR 112 (24 hours)

Free Money Advice - 0808 800 0118

Highland Council Service Point - 01349 886 606

Housing Benefit Enquiries - 0800 393 811

Money Advice Service - 0808 800 0118

National Gas Helpline - 0800 111 999 (24 hours)

National Power Cut Helpline - 105 (24 hours)

NHS 24 - 111 (24 hours)

Northern Constabulary - 0845 603 3388

Pentland Housing Emergency Repairs - 07802 930 685

Police Scotland - 101 (24 hours)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - 01382 835 804

Scottish Water - 0800 0778 778 (24 hours)

SEPA Floodline - 0345 988 1188 (24 hours)

Transco Gas - 0800 111 999

Universal Credit Helpline - 345 600 0723

Staff Fundraising

PHG Staff have continued to raise funds for good causes during the year. We try to cover local events as well as joining in with the national fundraisers too. This year so far we have raised £2239 but since we started, we have raised a total of £9072 in money and donations of items.



We are looking for suggestions for our next event. Let us know if you have something you would like us to raise funds for or if we can help to raise awareness of an issue you care about.

Important information

EASTER HOLIDAYS

The office will be closed on Friday 30th March at 5pm to Tuesday 3rd April 9am.

ITEMS FOR SALE

6 PC monitors (including cables) are surplus to our requirements and on sale at a price of £10 each.

Please contact the office on 01847 892057.

Hey guys! I've lost all my friends.. Can you help me find them? 8 of my ladybug buddies are hidden throughout this newsletter, how many of them can you find?



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Total number of ladybirds: 7

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