



Annual General Meeting

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# Help with Cost of living



Cost of living increases are affecting everyone. We have included within this newsletter a 4 page pull-out providing details of help that's available along with budgeting tips and ways to manage energy use over the winter.

If you are finding it hard to meet your rent or other living costs please contact us to discuss any help that's available.  
North: 0300 323 0990 South: 0300 323 0991



# Autumn Newsletter Welcome!



Welcome to our Autumn 2022 newsletter.

This year, and next, we face some real challenges ahead with the Cost of Living crisis facing the country. We are fully aware of the impact this has on each and every one of our customers and are committed to supporting you as much as we can through this difficult period.

In this newsletter you will see a pull out section on the help and support we can provide, but also that from the Scottish Government, the Council and other local community support. I hope you find this section useful. As always, we are here to help in any way we can so please do not hesitate to get in touch with your housing officer.

You may also be aware of the passing of the recent Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) Scotland Act in the Scottish Parliament on 6 October 2022. This sets out

a range of restrictions on rent increases for the social and private rented sectors until 31 March 2022. As you will be aware we do not increase our rents until 1 April 2023.

We are working closely with the sector and internally to model the impacts that this will have on Albyn. You'll hear lots more from us in the near future on this.

Our goal throughout this period is to consult with you, hear from you and listen to your views on this important issue.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting and that it provides a good overview of all the work we are undertaking at Albyn. I'd particularly like to draw your attention to our section on "Remembering Isabell McLaughlan". Isabell was a very active member of our Board, committed to representing our customers. She sadly passed away in March 2022 and we miss her input and her spirit dearly.

Best Wishes

*Kirsty*

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# Spotlight on some of the new faces at Albyn

## Audrey Murphy: Director of Governance and Business Improvement (Interim)

"I joined Albyn in February 2022 after working in various Housing Associations across Glasgow for the last 20 years, delivering front-line services through leading both operationally and strategically in a Senior Management role. "My role will involve leading on several change management projects to help reap the benefits of positive progression, I also provide a focus on our governance and compliance within the organisation; supporting the Society's delivery of regulatory compliance".

## Caroline Madden: Repairs and Maintenance Manager

"I joined Albyn in March 2022, having worked in Social Housing for 11 years. My family lived in a poorly maintained council house when I was growing up, so I am passionate about the need to provide affordable good quality, well maintained homes.

"My role involves the planning, procurement, and delivery of the Society's major investment (windows, roofs, kitchens, bathrooms and heating etc) and cyclical programmes of work which include painting, electrical testing, gas servicing, asbestos etc. When carrying out these programmes, value for money is important, as well as ensuring all regulatory and statutory requirements are met as we aim for Net Zero".

## Sharon Wooller: Health and Safety Manager

"I'm a chartered safety professional who joined Albyn in December 2021. My role is to develop and implement strategies and measures to support tenant and employee safety and to promote a positive culture of health and safety across the business".

## Brian Anderson: Stock Condition Surveyor

"I rejoined Albyn in April 2022, having worked here for 11 years previously.

"My role is to obtain current information on our existing properties in order that major components within the property and the external fabric, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards. I also produce Energy Performance Certificates. Both the SHQS and EPC are required to keep our records up to date."



Audrey Murphy



Caroline Madden



Sharon Wooller



Brian Anderson

We look forward to introducing more of our new staff to you in the Spring Edition of NewsView.



## Covid 19 Update: Hub, Home And Roam Trial Update

Since 2020, when our offices closed due to the pandemic, Albyn amended working practices to ensure the business continues to operate in a sustainable way. Once we were able to have some flexibility around where we work, we began operating a trial that we are calling 'Hub, Home and Roam'. This looks different for every department but essentially means that Albyn staff will balance a number of days in the office, working from home, and most importantly have the flexibility to be out in the community; spending time with our tenants, visiting our homes, and meeting with our partners. We need to make sure we're getting the balance right for you – our customers – so we have decided to extend the trial – to make sure we hear how you think this new way of working impacts you! Have you found any noticeable change in our service delivery? Are you pleased to see us out and about more?

**Speak to your housing officer or email [office@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:office@albynhousing.org.uk)**



# Annual General Meeting 2022



We held our AGM at the Highland Rugby Club on Monday 12 September 2022. We were delighted to welcome back Society members and stakeholders to the meeting in person, as well as those who attended the meeting remotely.

Our Chair of Board, Lesley McInnes, gave her report on progress during the year, highlighting what had been a rewarding yet challenging year for Albyn. This was followed by a report from our new CEO, Kirsty Morrison.

At the AGM, elections to the Board were made and we were pleased to welcome Nicola Underdown as a new Member. Nicola is a practicing solicitor and brings a wealth of experience within the third sector.

Our Board Membership is now as follows: Lesley McInnes (Chair), Carl Patching (Vice Chair), Ian Fosbrooke (Secretary), Jim Convery, Fiona Mustarde, Clea Warner, Nile Istephan, Angela Currie, and Nicola Underdown.

The Board also welcomed tenant, Scott Macleod, to the Audit & Risk Management Committee as a Co-optee.

We provided attendees with a key overview of what was important to Albyn in 2021/22.

This includes:

- Working closely with the Regulator
- Strengthening communities.
- Empowering customers.
- Supporting customers to reduce rent arrears.
- Provision of a "TRUST" fund
- Recovering repairs and maintenance services post COVID
- Delivery of affordable housing development programme.
- Hub, Home and Roam hybrid working pilot

You can visit our website to download our full annual report, slides from this event and 2021/22 financial statements.

Our subsidiary Highland Residential also held their AGM on the 22nd September. This saw them appoint three board members, David Cargill (Chair), Craig Russell and Carl Patching. In 2021/22 Highland Residential made a small profit and acquired 33 new Mid market rental properties.



## BECOME A SOCIETY MEMBER



# Performance Management

In the previous edition of the newsletter we gave you details about a pilot project which we were planning and asked for volunteer tenants to work with us on performance management. This project – the Albyn Housing Society version of a 'Scrutiny panel' - will enable us to deliver the best possible customer service, to make sure we review our current work practice and identify where we can improve our service delivery to you.

We are very grateful to the 7 Tenants who have given

their free time to work with Tony Kelly from the Tenant Participation Advisory Services (TPAS) Scotland and staff on this pilot. The group chose to look at 'New Builds' to start with, and we are delighted at the progress we have made to date. We should have the final step in the pilot completed by the end of October, and in the next edition of the newsletter we will feedback the findings and changes that are proposed.

In the meantime, if you would like to get involved in the next Performance Monitoring project then please get in touch with Anne Mackay by calling 07894 568185 or emailing [anne.mackay@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:anne.mackay@albynhousing.org.uk)



## Look out for the Tenant Charter Report

published on 31st October 2022,  
you can find it on our website  
[www.albynhousing.org.uk](http://www.albynhousing.org.uk)



## WE WANT YOU!

You can be involved with Albyn as much or a little as you like.

Our aim is to make sure that anyone from our communities who would like to have a say about **what** we do and **how** we do it can do so **when** they want to.

To learn how you can influence changes and improvements, visit our community involvement page at [albynhousing.org.uk/get-involved](http://albynhousing.org.uk/get-involved) or contact us.

Community Involvement Team  
01349 855972 or 01349 855976.

## Remembering Isabell McLaughlan

A stalwart of the Albyn Housing Society board of directors, Isabell sadly passed away in March following a short illness.



Originally joining Albyn's board in September 1996, Isabell made a tremendous impact to the organisation with her passion for ensuring customers were at the heart of Scottish social housing.

Albyn's board and staff will miss Isabell dearly, not only for her support of the organisation and her unstinting commitment, but also her great sense of humour and huge personality. She will be remembered with a plaque in our board room in Invergordon as we change the name to the Isabell McLaughlan Room.

# Thinking of making changes to your home?

By: Sharon Wooller, Health and Safety Manager

We appreciate that you want to make your home your own and your tenancy agreement allows for alterations - new fixtures and fittings, garden sheds, garages etc. so long as our consent is in place.

If you wish to make alterations or improvements to your home during your tenancy, our written consent is required before any works are undertaken.

Please be assured we will not refuse permission unreasonably. We may grant permission with conditions (for example, the standard of the work we require). We have to ensure that all requests comply with all relevant safety legislation.

At the end of your tenancy, you may be entitled to compensation for alterations/improvements that you have made. The rules on calculating this compensation payment are set by the Housing Scotland Act.

We may, prior to your tenancy's end, ask for any alterations/improvements which have been undertaken without permission to be removed and the property reinstated to its original condition. Where this does not occur, we may seek to recharge any reinstatement works back to you.

If you are planning any alteration/improvement to your home, please contact our Customer Service team to discuss your plans and get further detail on the process of obtaining permission.

**Consent from us does not remove the need for all Planning and Building Warrant approvals to be in place. You are fully responsible for obtaining these and where necessary we will require to see copies of the permissions before our consent can be issued.**

## EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS NUMBERS

**If you have an emergency, please call our one of the following emergency numbers**

**North customers: 0300 323 0990**

**South customers: 0300 323 0991**

## Cold weather precautions

### Keep warm

In order to avoid burst pipes try to keep your house warm day and night. For houses with no heating upstairs, leave room doors open to allow heat to circulate. Burst pipes can be avoided by keeping your radiators at the frost setting, so please consider this if you will be away during cold spells.

Check on attic spaces, especially if water and storage tanks are there. Make sure insulation which should cover pipes and tanks has not been accidentally moved.

You should never ignore a minor water leak. A small leak may be okay overnight, but if left for several days, it could cause major damage within your home. If a leak happens, these are the steps you should take:

1. Turn off the water supply. The stop valve is usually under the sink.
2. Switch off the electricity at the mains.
3. Call your local Customer Services team at Albyn to report the emergency.
4. Switch off central heating systems. if you have a solid fuel fire, close down the damper and let the fire die out. Do not attempt to drain down the boiler unless the fire has gone out.
5. Use a bucket or basin to catch any water leaking from the burst.
6. Open all taps to sinks and bath (if possible, collect water in the bath for flushing the WC and washing).



If you go away in the winter, please be advised that you should take care to drain your pipes or leave your radiators on the frost setting to prevent damage to your property. If you go away for more than 2 weeks' time, you should let the Society know you will be away and where a key can be obtained in case of emergencies.

The society is not responsible for any damage caused to your personal belongings by frost damage or burst pipe or tank.

Have you insured your household contents? You must make your own insurance arrangements. Some tenants still have no household insurance. Fire, floods and accidents can mean financial disaster.



## Where we grit and clear snow

Wherever possible, we have had our roads adopted by the Highland Council so they provide gritting service for you. Of those estates which have un-adopted roads, we try to prioritise those which have a majority of elderly or disabled people for gritting and snow clearing, otherwise we provide grit bins and grit for our tenant's use. The level of service provided will be reflected in the service charge that you pay.

If you are uncertain whether your street is adopted, or if we clear it for you, you will find helpful information in your tenants' handbook or tenancy agreement. Further information is available from your local Customer Services team.

### How to clear snow and grit paths safely

Don't be put off clearing snow or gritting paths. If you clear snow and grit pathways effectively you will be doing a service to your community.

- Clear snow and ice early in the day. Less compact snow is easier to move
- Use salt – not water. Pathways become dangerous if they are allowed to refreeze

- Use sand or ash to provide grip
- Remember to use extra on steps or where it is steep
- Avoid piling snow over drains to prevent flooding when it melts
- Pile snow away from driveways and turning points to allow free access for vehicles

Let us know if grit bins are empty or damaged.

Remember to check on less able and vulnerable neighbours as they may need assistance to clear their paths and driveways.



## Be Vigilant Against Fly-Tipping

By: Laura Bradley, Highland Residential Manager

No one likes to see the beauty of autumn taken away by litter everywhere, or the toll it takes on our environment. Highland Residential work to maintain the environment where you live. We appreciate your help to keep these areas looking their best.

Remember to reduce, reuse, and recycle in the appropriate manner.



### Disposing of waste appropriately

Highland Council will accept most household waste through bulky uplift and recycling centres.

Unwanted large items (sofa, mattress etc) can be collected from the kerb for a charge. £25 for up to 3 items, or £50 for up to 6 items.

With some restrictions on the vehicle you use, the above items can also be dropped at some recycling centres free of charge. A wide range of other waste items are also permitted at recycling centres including garden waste, general household waste, electrical items, soil and rubble, textiles and wood.

For the full list of permitted items, and restrictions and to request bulky uplift visit the link below.

[www.highland.gov.uk/info/1063/rubbish - household waste](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1063/rubbish_-_household_waste)

As a reminder, Highland Residential does not oversee rubbish removal for individual tenants. There has been a significant increase in the requests for us to arrange rubbish removal that is not occupier's waste.

### Reporting Littering and Fly-tipping

The Highland Council can issue fines for littering and fly-tipping. From £80 for littering, and up to £20,000 and prison time for the illegal dumping of waste.

If you see either of these happening in your community, please report it using the link below.

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1054/rubbish\\_and\\_recycling/89/litter\\_and\\_fly-tipping](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1054/rubbish_and_recycling/89/litter_and_fly-tipping)

# Maintenance and investment



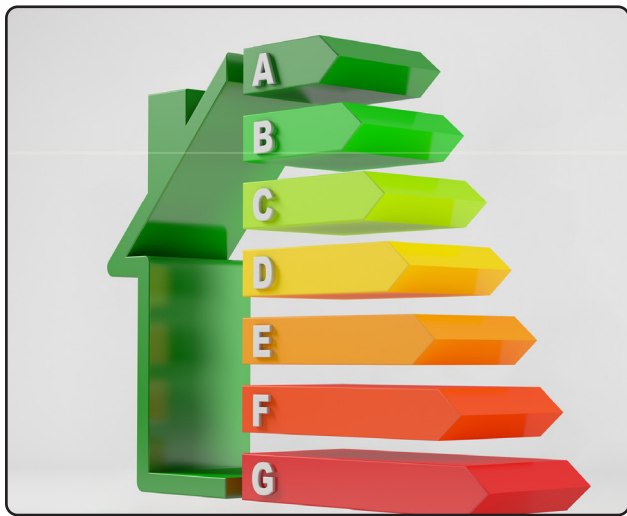
By: Caroline Madden, Head of Assets (Interim)

Albyn currently has an annual programme of capital investment works to maintain our homes and to improve their facilities. This is in addition to the day-to-day repairs services provided when you report a repair requirement to us.

These investment works are required to ensure that our homes are safe and comfortable for our customers. Works are carried out in line with standards set by the government for landlords. Every Registered Social Landlord in Scotland must report on how well they meet the standards in their Annual Return on Charter.

The primary standard to meet is called the **Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)**: it measures the quality of over 50 elements in each home.

There is a second key standard that RSLs must meet: it is called the **EESHS – Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing**. The EESHS standard aims to ensure homes are energy efficient, fuel poverty can be reduced, and that carbon emissions from home heating are reduced.



The government recently introduced an update to EESHS, called EESHS2, which requires landlords to improve energy efficiency further, aiming to have all homes attain an EPC B rating by 2032. It was part of a wide range of ideas for housing which the government presented in its recent report: Housing to 2040.

Over the next few years, a key aim of Albyn's investment programme will be in meeting the EESHS2 standards in each home, reducing fuel poverty further and contributing to Scotland's target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045.

Our ability to carry out these programmes will be dependent on the result of Scottish Government's legislation to freeze and cap rent income.

## What to do if we contact you

If you are contacted regarding major repair or cyclical works, please reply promptly. We will supply you with a self-addressed, postage paid envelope in order for you to do so. On some occasions the funding for these works are dependent on the level of uptake and therefore it is very important that we hear from all our tenants in the area where the work is to be carried out.

If we don't get a reply from you, a member of our team and/or our contractor will visit your property to discuss the works with you. You can also request a visit if you would like more information or if you are unable to attend public meetings due to ill health or disability.

## Before the works start

Before the works start we would ask that you follow the instructions that are given to you by either a member of the Albyn team or by the contractors. This may include clearing your loft or emptying your kitchen, if you are having difficulty with this please contact your local Albyn Customer Services team as there may be something we can do to assist.

North: 0300 323 0990

South: 0300 323 0991



## After the work is completed

The funding for major repairs is often provided by outside funding bodies and naturally these bodies will wish to assess that the works have been carried out to the standards expected. When a major repair is completed the funders may wish to gain access to a percentage of the properties where the work has been done. In this event a member of the Albyn team will contact a number of houses requesting access. Our funders will never visit your property unannounced and will always provide identification which you can verify by calling your local Albyn Customer Services team, contact information as above.

Cyclical works will be inspected by a member of the Albyn team. They may wish to speak to you regarding the standard of the work done in order to ensure that the work is satisfactory.



# New developments



From April 2021 to March 2022 we delivered 174 new homes.



129 Homes for Social Rent



33 Homes for Mid-Market Rent



17 Homes for sale through LIFT scheme



## End of defects

If you have moved into a new build home and your property is under 12 months old, then you may be due an "end of defects" (EOD) inspection. EOD inspections are usually carried out when your property is between 10 and 12 months old. The inspection is carried out by our Clerk of Works, the project Architect or Employers Agent, and a representative of the Contractor.

The purpose of the EOD inspection is to identify any items which the Contractor who built your home is responsible to repair under the terms of contract. It is important that your property is inspected, so that any defects are identified, and it provides an opportunity for you to highlight any issues that you are aware of.

Please note that Albyn's Clerk of Work is there to assist you and they can explain the process and advise you on any issues it is therefore important that you provide access as otherwise the property may be signed off

without the EOD being completed and that you could face being held liable for any outstanding works.

The Society will write to you giving a date for the inspection. If the date of the inspection is unsuitable, then please contact The Society on the telephone number in the letter and we will rearrange a mutually convenient date. Inspections generally take around 30 minutes. They will be carried out in accordance with our current COVID protocols, details of which will be included in your letter. You can help to prepare for the inspection by ensuring that the inspection team have clear access to all areas, including the loft if your property has one. You can also prepare your own list in advance. Please note that the Contractor's liability does not include wear and tear, accidental, or intentional damage caused by anyone. Thank you advance for your co-operation in working with us to provide you with a great service.

# Compliments and Complaints

The table below shows our response to complaints during the first quarter of this year, compared with the the data for the averages from last year. The average time to respond to Stage 1 complaints has slightly increased, but the average time to respond to stage 2 complaints is 25% lower than 2021/22.

Period	Percentage of complaints responded in full at stage 1	Avg time to respond (days)	Percentage of complaints responded in full at stage 2	Avg time to respond (days)
2021/22	97.18%	4.57	95.65%	19.36
Q1 2022/23	95.65%	5.1	71.43%	15.5

**We welcome complaints, comments and compliments in order to ensure you receive a best-in-class service.** Below we've included some of the compliments our teams have received recently.

I would just like to say how delighted I am with the plumber John Menzies and what a great job he did! I feel it's necessary to applaud good service not just report the bad.

You are so kind to me and please know all that you do is much appreciated.

Thank you for your remarkable care and attention during our removal and arrival, a wonderful example for Housing Associations

Me and my wee family would just like to thank you and Heatcare from the bottom of our hearts.

I also want to emphasise how important the role of housing officers are to vulnerable tenants with health issues living in rurally isolated locations such as myself. She has assisted me in a wide spectrum of issues She is the best housing officer I have had and has made a genuine difference in my life.

## Do you wish to make a complaint or provide a compliment?

Get in touch in a way that is convenient for you:

- Talk to your housing officer
- Call us on 0300 323 0990 (North) or 0300 323 0990 (South)
- Report your complaint via our website, [www.albynhousing.org.uk](http://www.albynhousing.org.uk)
- Email us at [housing.north@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:housing.north@albynhousing.org.uk) (North) or [housing.south@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:housing.south@albynhousing.org.uk) (South)





## Our great customers

We love to see tenants who work together to make their community space somewhere enjoyable. Frances, a tenant at our FIT Homes village in Dalmore, Alness has taken the time to plant some beautiful plants in the bench planters in the community courtyard.

After moving into the property in Autumn 2020, Frances felt that the space could use more colour. She started by adding some phormium to the centre and then added some colourful plants and greenery, including complementary plants in the diagonal corners.

In the summer months, a tenant from the other end of the street, Kim, brought a table and chairs into the courtyard so that residents who struggle to sit on the backless benches could enjoy the outdoor space in comfort. Looking ahead to the winter, as these plants start to deteriorate and will need cutting back, Frances is considering whether to replace the current plants with some perennials. Thank you to Frances for giving her time to maintain this beautiful area.



## Responsible pet owners

We have had an increasing number of complaints regarding pets. Please be a responsible owner, keep your pets on a lead and pick up after them! Excessive barking can cause distress to your neighbours, so please do what you can to keep your pets calm.





Did you know?  
The October holidays  
started almost a  
hundred years ago, when  
kids would be taken out  
of school to help with  
the potato harvest.

# Kids Competition

Please draw us a  
picture showing us what  
you did in your October  
holidays.

We love to cover our  
office walls with the bright,  
cheerful images that you send.  
We will pick two drawings to  
win a £25 gift card each,  
make sure you  
include your name and  
address to enter the  
draw.

Please send submissions by 15th  
December to Lana MacGregor, Albyn  
Housing Society, 98-104 High Street,  
Invergordon Ross-shire, IV18 0DL  
Good luck!