

## Albyn Housing Society Tenant Newsletter | June 2023



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Phototakenacrossthe waterfromGairloch



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# Summer Newsletter welcome!



Welcome to our summer newsletter! I hope everyone has been enjoying the fantastic weather we have been experiencing recently and growing their beautiful sunflowers to turn our communities golden.

As we turn 50, we have lots of fun activities planned throughout the year. This year our AGM will be slightly different and will be an exciting event with our Board, staff, stakeholders and most importantly you, our customers. We will be celebrating the impact Albyn has had on our many and ever-growing communities since 1973, as well as our achievements.

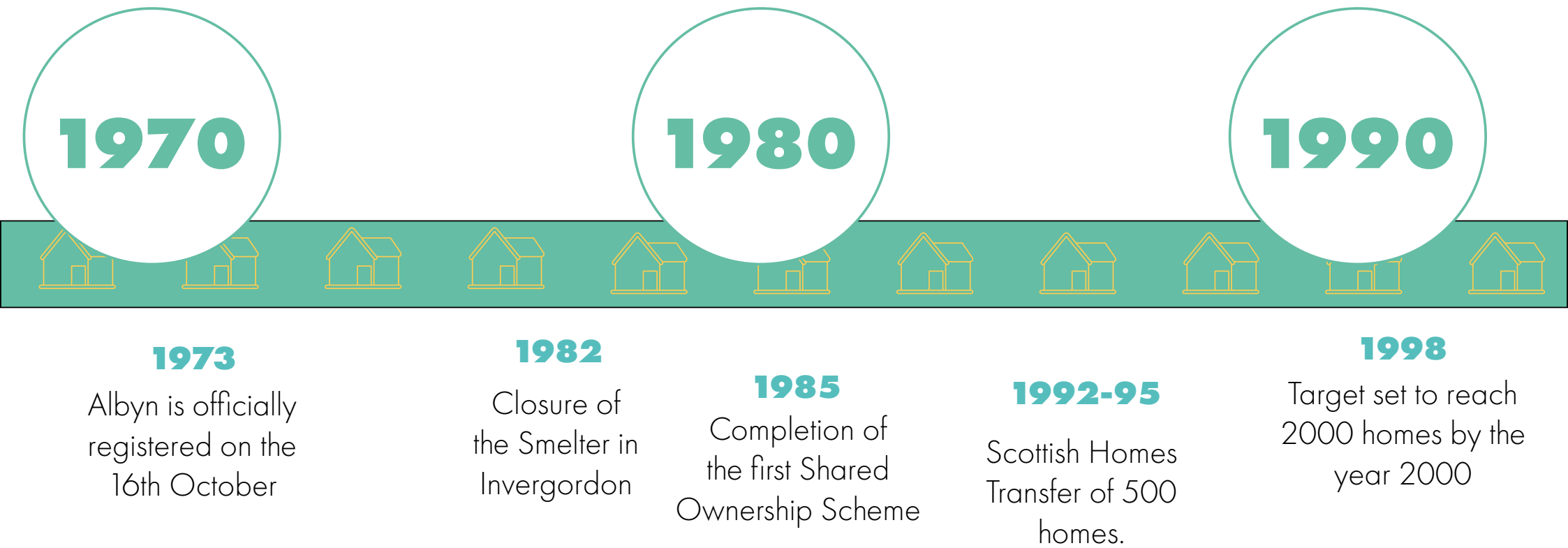
Hot off the press is our customer and staff success at the annual TPAS Awards held in June 2023. Albyn won not one, but two awards. Best Practice in Digital Involvement for our fantastic customer performance review group, and secondly for Champion of the Year – Individual Staff for Anne Mackay, our wonderful Communities Assistant. Anne has committed her career to going over and above in all our customer involvement and engagement activities, showing a real passion and dedication to ensuring our customers’ voice is heard loud and clear. The same is to be said for the hard work and commitment of our Customer Involvement Strategy Monitoring Group. Huge thanks to them for the win but also helping Albyn deliver excellent customer service.

*Kirsty*

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## An overview of Albyn through the years



# 50th anniversary update

We are all abuzz at the Albyn offices while we organise the celebrations for our 50th Anniversary. This is an opportunity to take stock of our journey, and celebrate this incredible achievement. It's also an opportunity to look ahead to the next 50 years and ensure we are able to adapt to the changing environment.

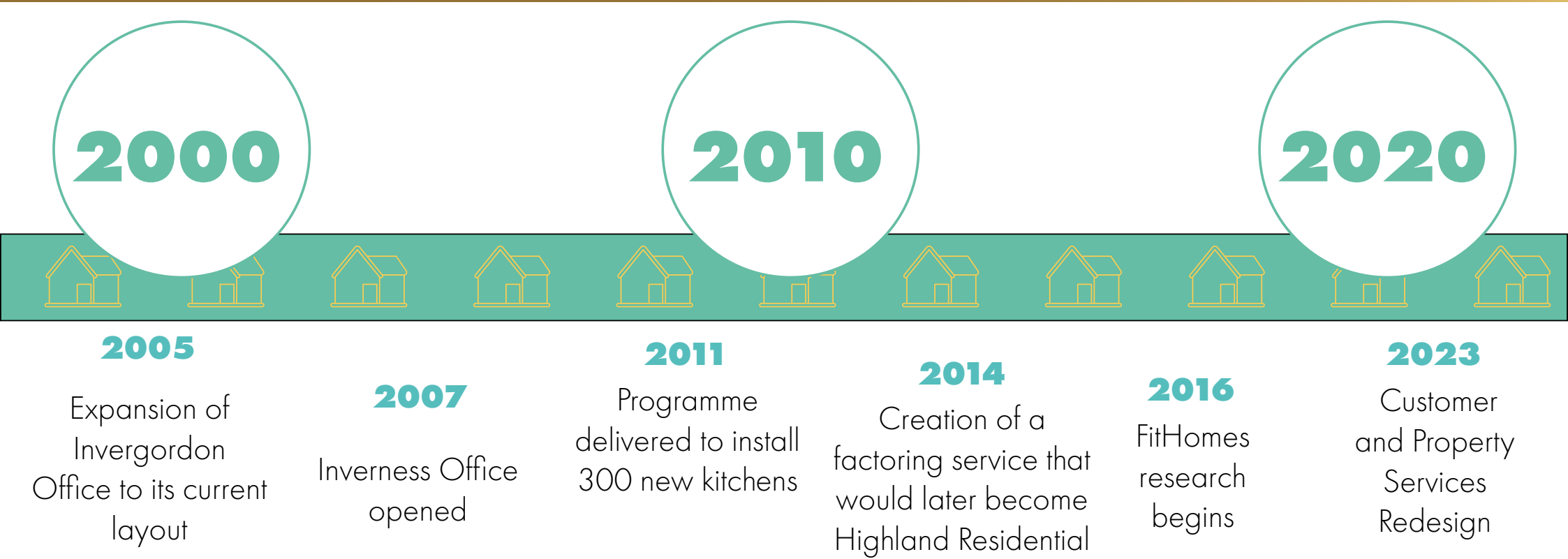
The team got together for an All Staff Engagement session in June to discuss the celebrations. We also took the opportunity to review some of our performance statistics from 2022/23 and collaborated to identify steps we can take to embed our culture and values so that we can continue to improve and deliver the very best in all areas of the business for our tenants.

We hope you enjoyed the sunflower seeds found in the Spring Newsletter, we'd love to see pictures of your blooms. Across the bottom of this spread, you can find some of the key milestones that have made Albyn the organisation that it is today, in the next issue of the newsletter we will be sharing a spread of photos of our communities through the years. If you have any photos of your current or previous Albyn homes, please send them to us - you can email them to [lanea.macgregor@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:lanea.macgregor@albynhousing.org.uk) or you can DM us on Facebook or Twitter.

Our community involvement team will be liaising with schools in our communities to fill a time capsule to mark the anniversary year and we will let you know more about this in the coming months.

Our AGM which will be held on the 20th September, at the Kingsmills Hotel. Our AGM is an opportunity to review our annual report for 2022/23 and to elect new members to our board of directors. For this special year, we will be making the most of having our stakeholders, society members, staff and board together to hear from some additional speakers and celebrate. We are pleased to invite you as an Albyn tenant to attend. A light buffet and refreshments will be provided, in order for us to have accurate numbers, please let us know if you would like to attend by contacting Laura Morgan on [laura.morgan@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:laura.morgan@albynhousing.org.uk) or call us on 0300 323 0990.

Have you been living in an Albyn home for a number of years and you'd be happy to speak to us about your experience? We are putting together a short video with stories of Albyn across its 50 years. We would love to hear from you. To learn more about this process you can email [lanea.macgregor@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:lanea.macgregor@albynhousing.org.uk) or call 07422 076610.



# Affordable Warmth Highland

Our new Tenancy Sustainment Team has successfully applied for further funding to support tenants to avoid fuel poverty.

A two-year collaboration between Albyn Housing Society (Lead Partner), Cairn Housing Association, Changeworks and Home Energy Scotland to empower tenants to affordably meet their energy needs.

In addition to the support that has been provided to tenants in the form of cash payments, energy saving products and home furnishings, this latest funding will allow Albyn to take that support a step further with preventative advice and education on how to make the most of their heating and the fuel type that they use.

The funding will employ 2.3 full time equivalent energy advisors dedicated to Albyn and Cairn tenants with 3 areas of focus.

1. 1:1 energy advice and advocacy to tenants in or at risk of fuel poverty.
2. Support tenants with operating Air Source Heat Pumps.
3. Provide new tenants with preventative support to avoid fuel poverty.

Tenants will be referred by housing officers, but they can access the advice without going through their landlord. Support will be provided over the phone or by home visit if necessary.

We will provide more information to tenants on how to access this service over the coming months but as always, our Tenancy Sustainment team are on hand to listen, offer support, advice and signposting for any challenges you are currently, or likely to face that would impact your ability to sustain your tenancy.

You can contact us using the details found at the bottom of the page.

## Albyn Funds

Albyn have renewed our Tenancy Sustainment support for 2023/24 by allocating £140,000 dedicated to our tenant support funds.

They are there to be used so if you are facing financial hardship either due to rising costs, or a change in circumstances, please contact our tenancy sustainment team by calling our main number to ask for more information.

### The Albyn TRUST Fund

This fund provides discretionary support to tenants who find themselves in exceptional need. It can be used to support tenants during particularly challenging times. The Trust Fund can be used in different ways depending on what would most help - examples so far include provision of a microwave, school uniforms and mobile phone tops ups. 270 applications to the Trust Fund were approved in 2022/23.

### The Albyn Energy Fund

This fund was introduced in 2022 in response to rising energy costs. Tenants can apply in person, by phone or by email for a £100 voucher to help meet energy costs. Over 1,300 vouchers were approved in 2022/23

## Useful numbers

**Tenancy Sustainment Team**  
**0300 323 0990**

**Highland Council Welfare Support**  
**0800 090 1004**

**Citizens Advice Bureau**  
**0800 028 1456**

**National Debtline**  
**0808 808 4000**

**Social Security Council**  
**0800 182 2222**

**Money Advice Scotland**  
**0800 731 4722**

**Step Change Debt Advice Line**  
**0800 138 1111**

**The Money Advice Service**  
**0800 138 7777**

**National Debtline**  
**0808 808 4000**

**Christians Against Poverty**  
**0800 328 0006**



# Annual Assurance Process.

Like all other social landlords, we will be submitting our Annual Assurance Statement to the regulator by end of October. Over the summer months, our board, staff and our customer involvement group will be giving their feedback on our self-assessment process against our Regulatory Standards.

If you are interested in giving a couple of hours of your time to input in to this process, please email [governance@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:governance@albynhousing.org.uk) giving your name and contact details. Thank you.

## The Northern Tenants Partnership

The Northern Tenants Partnership is a partnership of Landlords and Tenants from the North of Scotland who are committed to working together to grow tenant participation, promote best practice and improve services to tenants. If you would like to share thoughts, ideas, and opinions with other tenants in the area then this might be something that you would enjoy. Any tenant living in the Highlands and Islands can attend the virtual meeting. For more info please get in touch with Anne at [anne.mackay@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:anne.mackay@albynhousing.org.uk)

The Regional Networks were set up to enable tenants, residents and the Scottish Government to work collaboratively on issues of national policy.

Their objective is to improve the housing and well-being of tenants and residents in Scotland by promoting tenants' and residents' interests in housing, planning, community regeneration, the environment and community safety.

We will keep you up to date with feedback from the North of Scotland Group in future newsletters.

More info can be found at [www.regionalnetworks.org.uk](http://www.regionalnetworks.org.uk)

## Dispose of large household items

### Bulky Uplift Service

The Highland Council can collect unwanted household items from your kerb.

Check the link found at the bottom of the article to make sure the items you wish to dispose of can be collected.

You must order at least 2 working days before you need a collection.

There are set collection days across the Highland region.

### Charges

£25.75 for up to 3 items (for example; sofa and two chairs)

A bed counts as 2 items: bed base with headboard, and mattress

£51.50 for up to 6 items



[highland.gov.uk/info/1063/rubbish - household waste/132/dispose of large household items/2](http://highland.gov.uk/info/1063/rubbish-household-waste/132/dispose-of-large-household-items/2)

## Albyn for all - Equalities and human rights

In the last newsletter, we told you about our plan to implement Albyn for all, our revised equalities and human right policy. The implementation of Albyn for all is designed to ensure that there are no barriers to service delivery experienced by anyone, particularly those who may be part of a minority. This means we ask about age; disability; gender identity; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex, and sexual orientation.

This is just a reminder that we will soon be asking all of our tenants and staff to complete an anonymous return so that we can understand who our services need to support and design solutions with our tenants in mind. The return will have more information about why we are collecting this data and what we intend to do with it. Please be assured that Albyn will protect this information and will not be able to identify you or your address from the data collected.

# Albyn Housing Society Launches a Community Partnership Housing Project in Lairg.

A New Housing Development to Address the Need for Individual Support and Social Housing in the Highlands.

Albyn Housing Society, in partnership with the Lairg and District Community Initiatives group has announced the details of their latest rural housing development in Lairg, Sutherland. The development was funded through collaboration with local Development Initiative group, The Inverness and Highland City Region Deal, the Highland Council Infrastructure Fund and the Scottish Government More Homes Division.

The project was launched with a site visit and a community drop in event at the community centre where the public had the opportunity to talk to the developers, architects and housing staff, and where questions could be answered on the new FitHome technology.

The development consists of 4 one bedroom bungalows and 4 FitHomes and aims to address the need for social housing and support in rural areas. The Fit Homes, are technology enabled homes designed to enable people to live independently for as long as possible. They do this through a system of sensors that monitor the daily habits of the person inside the home, enabling family, friends and carers to keep a remote check to ensure the person is going about their daily activities as normal eg getting out of bed, going to the fridge, etc. The estimated completion date for the development is May 2024 with a total project cost of £2.3 million.

Kirsty Morrison, CEO of Albyn Group, said:- "Albyn is committed to supporting our more remote and rural communities in Highland. The cost of building across Scotland, but especially in these areas, is increasing significantly making developments such as these progressively harder to deliver. We are very grateful for the Lairg and District Community Initiatives group for partnering with us and helping to make the project financially viable. "Rural areas like Lairg need more social housing and also need the extra support FitHomes can provide within communities. Technology can be an enabler if developed with the people that it is designed to serve and we in Albyn have been working for some time to develop a system of sensors that works effortlessly for our tenants while providing the support and assurance needed to enable people to remain at home in their community, pushing back the timeline where out of area care homes becomes the only solution."

Chair of The Development Trust, Kaye Hurrion, said: "This amazing project has been made possible by the LDCI working with Albyn housing, the Scottish Government and the Highland Council. It is going to be truly transformational for our community."

Albyn Housing Society will continue to work closely with the community throughout the development and a second community meeting took place in June to discuss allocations.



L-R: Rosie Reid, Kaye Hurrion, Kirsty Morrison, Alison Magee, Robert Johnstone, Kirstin Langlois and Annette Parrott





Artists impression of the homes in Lairg.

## Further FitHomes being built in Nairn

In addition to these vital rural homes in Lairg, we are currently onsite in Nairn to deliver a further 10 FitHomes. These are a mixture of bungalows, as well as ground and first floor flats. They are estimated to complete in September 2023.



Artists impression of the homes in Nairn.

## In loving memory of Dylan Bogue



In 2018 the first tenants moved into the FIT homes in Dalmore, and it was there, as he turned his first house into a home, that we had the pleasure of getting to know Dylan Bogue. Many of you will remember seeing interviews with Dylan on the TV and in local papers, talking about his opportunity to live independently, with the support of the family and friends.

Dylan welcomed Albyn staff to share in his life, and for the past 5 years we have had the privilege of getting to know him and many of his family. We were delighted to be able to offer him work experience as part of his college course, and over that time, we were truly inspired by his determination to live his life to the full.

Dylan sadly passed away earlier this year and his family have donated and installed this beautiful bench in his memory in the communal gardens at Dalmore.

# Thermostatic Mixing Valve

Our Tenants sometimes report that the hot water in their new build property is not hot enough for them, particularly at the bath. This may be the result of a fault with the either the gas boiler or the hot water cylinder not heating the water correctly, but when the report relates solely to the bath and relates to a home built after 2006 it is more likely to be the result of the Thermostatic Mixing Valve (TMV) doing its job. As the TMV is a safety feature the set temperature it cannot be overridden to provide you with water at a higher temperature. You will need to adjust the amount of cold water you add accordingly to reach your desired temperature.

The following is an extract from the "Industry Guide to Thermostatic Mixing Valves Issue 4/11 – Copyright 2015 Bathroom Manufacturers Association" which explains a little more about this safety feature and how it protects you from harm.

## What is a Thermostatic Mixing Valve?

Quite simply a thermostatic mixing valve is a device that mixes hot and cold water before discharging it at a stable temperature.

## Where are TMVs used?

Domestically TMVs are most commonly used as showers. However, TMVs can be found in a number of other applications around the home ranging from controls on solar thermal hot water systems to taps and bidet controls. Outside of domestic installations TMVs are often used for safety reasons in Hospitals and care homes, showering controls in sports centres and even process controls in factories. This is because warm water encourages bacteria to grow and hot water kills it but can cause scalds.

## TMVs and the law

As of the 1st of May 2006 the Scottish Building Standards Agency introduced mandatory requirements for all new build and major refurbishment work (i.e. when Building Regulation approval is required) to prevent scalding by controlling the maximum temperature of water discharged from, or to, any bath or bidet (domestic situations) to a maximum of 48°C. As of the 6th April 2010, similar requirements were incorporated into The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document G for Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency.

As such all Albyn homes which applied for regulation after 2006 will have this as a feature of their homes, though they may never notice it.

## Why are TMVs mandatory to fit?

Hot bath water is responsible for the highest number of fatal and severe scald injuries in the home. Young and old are most at risk because their skin is thinner and less tolerant to high water temperatures.

According to the National Network for Burn Care: Acute injury admissions to specialised burns services in England and Wales number approximately 300 people each year suffering with scalds associated with tap water and bathing immersion, most of these incidents occur in their own home."

TMVs can be used to control water at a safe preselected temperature thus minimising the possibility of anyone sustaining a serious scald injury".

The full guide can be downloaded for free from [www.bathroom-academy.co.uk](http://www.bathroom-academy.co.uk)





# Mould and damp - addressing the problem

Albyn receives reports of damp and mould in tenants' homes every year. Dealing with damp and mould is important because of the risks posed to health and we take this extremely seriously.

In some cases, identifying the cause of the issue is complex: mould can result from a range of factors, from building issues to how the home is heated and ventilated. The majority of damp and mould cases are not solely down to how the property is used, so it is important that we work closely with our customers to understand the causes and agree what we can do to resolve any issues together.

We have put in place the following to address damp and mould cases effectively, efficiently and collaboratively.

- » **TRAINING** - Our repairs and maintenance call handlers and technical officers have all completed training on Damp and Mould. Our call handlers will gather as much information as they can, in some cases advice and guidance will resolve the issue in a very short period of time.
- » **INFORMATION** - We can provide you with our Damp and Mould leaflet or direct you to our website, if required we can send out digital monitors that show you when moisture levels are high in your home. The monitors are very easy to read and can be a helpful tool, particularly in winter months.
- » **INSPECTION** - We can also arrange for an inspector to visit and survey your home, at the end of the survey we will agree what repair and maintenance works need to be undertaken and discuss any practical steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of damp and mould (if required).

- » **TECHNOLOGY** - We have specialist monitors that we can place in your home for a set period of time, the monitors capture temperature and humidity (levels are typically measured every hour). The data allows us to see when moisture levels are highest to try and understand possible causes, it also allows us to check that the heating system is working as it should.
- » **EQUIPMENT** - We have purchased two thermal imaging cameras; the cameras allow us to see into the structure and identify any missing insulation which can result in cold spots and mould growth. The cameras can also help us trace water leaks etc.

Additionally, we will monitor and improve performance on Damp and Mould Cases;

- Identify number of damp and mould cases reported annually and the number of these that typically make a second report (suggesting the initial response was unsuccessful);
- Understand trends in certain property types and geographical areas and identify remedial works;
- Continue to invest in training and technology
- Work with our Tenancy Sustainment function to provide access to energy advisors
- Continue to seek additional funds to support our tenants during the on-going energy crisis

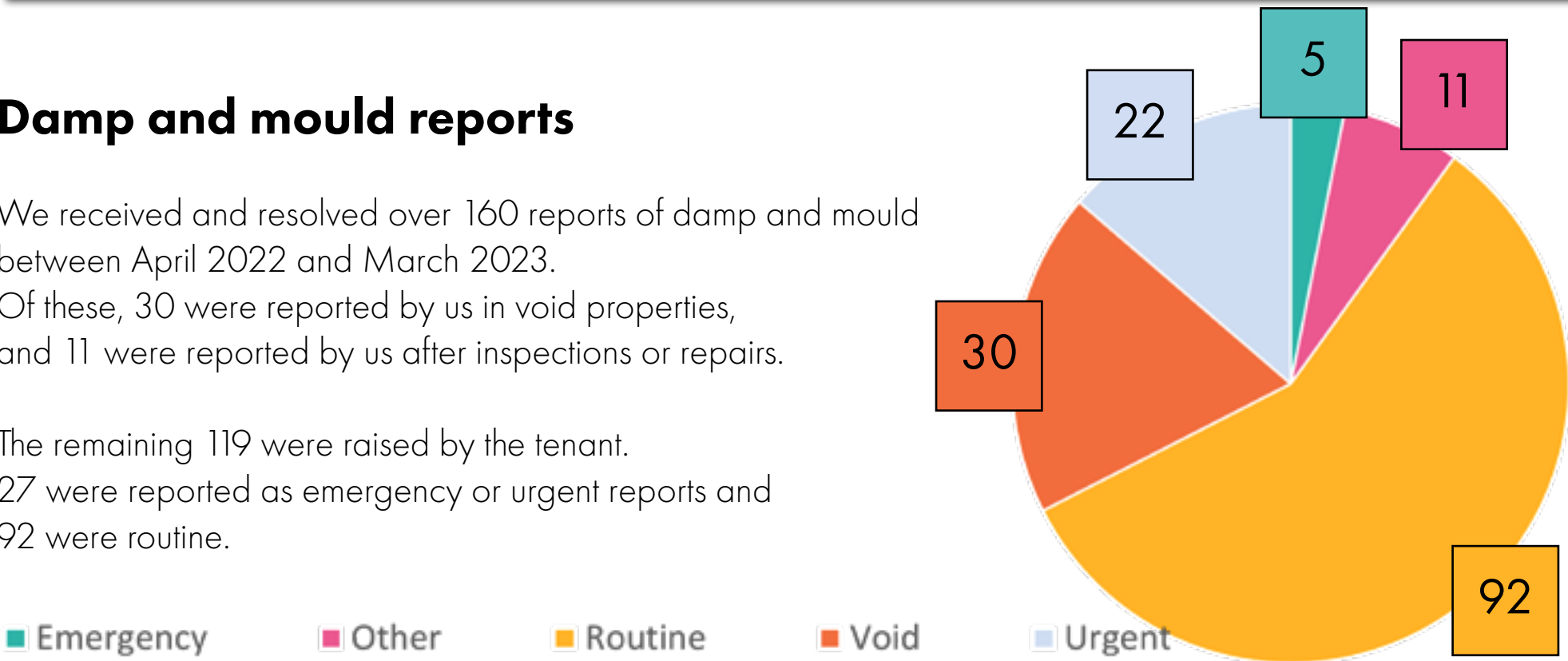
If you do have any concerns regarding Damp and Mould please contact us, we may ask you to send pictures of the affected areas to support our investigation.

To speak to our repairs and maintenance team call **0300 323 0990** and select option 1.

## Damp and mould reports

We received and resolved over 160 reports of damp and mould between April 2022 and March 2023. Of these, 30 were reported by us in void properties, and 11 were reported by us after inspections or repairs.

The remaining 119 were raised by the tenant. 27 were reported as emergency or urgent reports and 92 were routine.



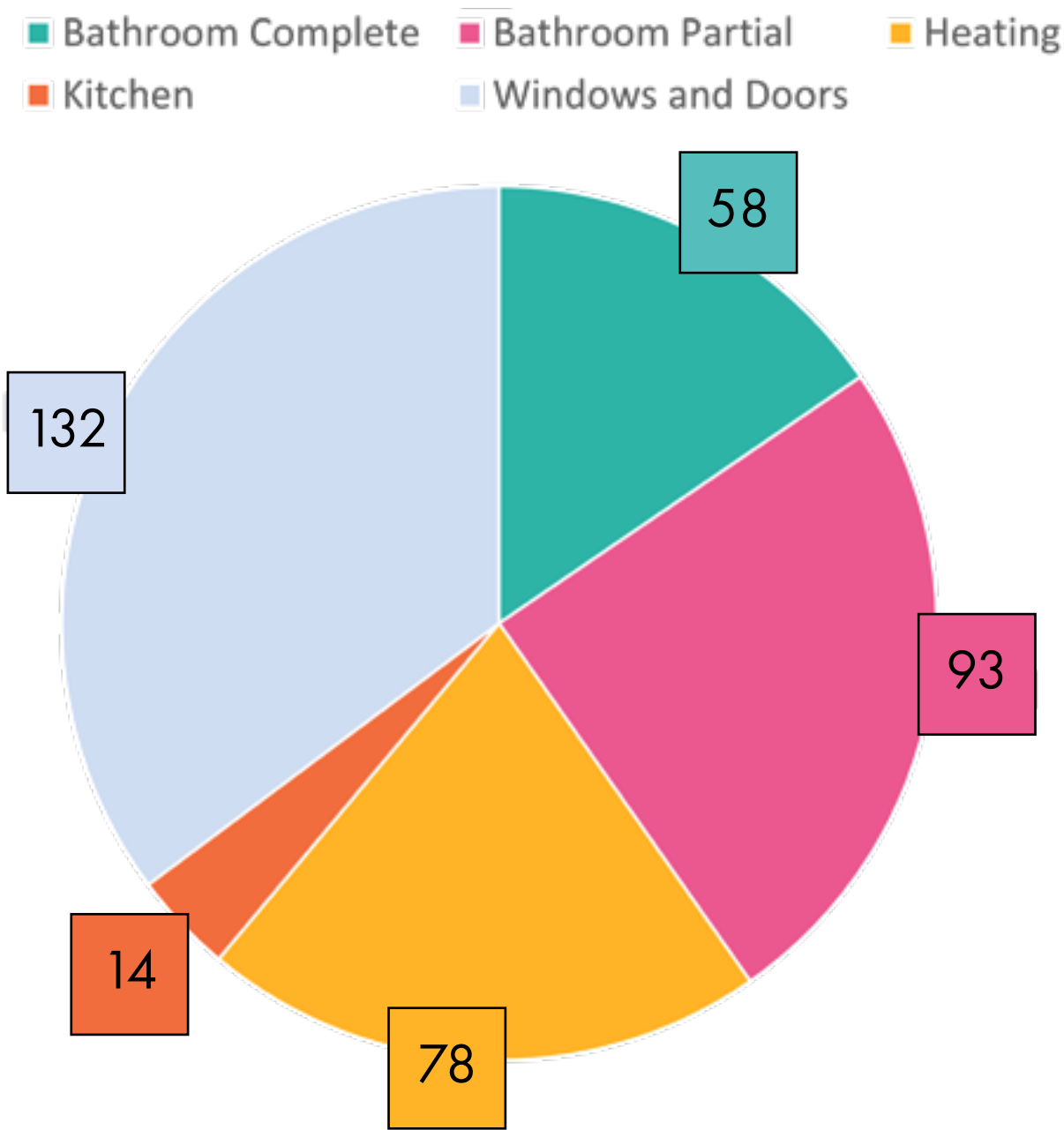
# Major works

Albyn works all year round to keep your homes safe, warm, and to the standard required of Albyn as a Registered Social Landlord. In the previous financial year, we spent £3,097,000 on upgrading your homes to meet these standards.

In addition to 58 complete bathroom replacements, we completed 93 partial upgrades, 78 heating upgrades, 14 full kitchen replacements and replaced window and doors on 132 homes.

As with all aspects of work that require an Albyn contractor or tradesperson to visit your home, we would ask that you offer as much flexibility as you can to work within the programme that is proposed. Your support and cooperation here would be greatly appreciated.

If any cyclical works are planned for your home, you will receive a letter from our team with details in due course as we develop the programmes.



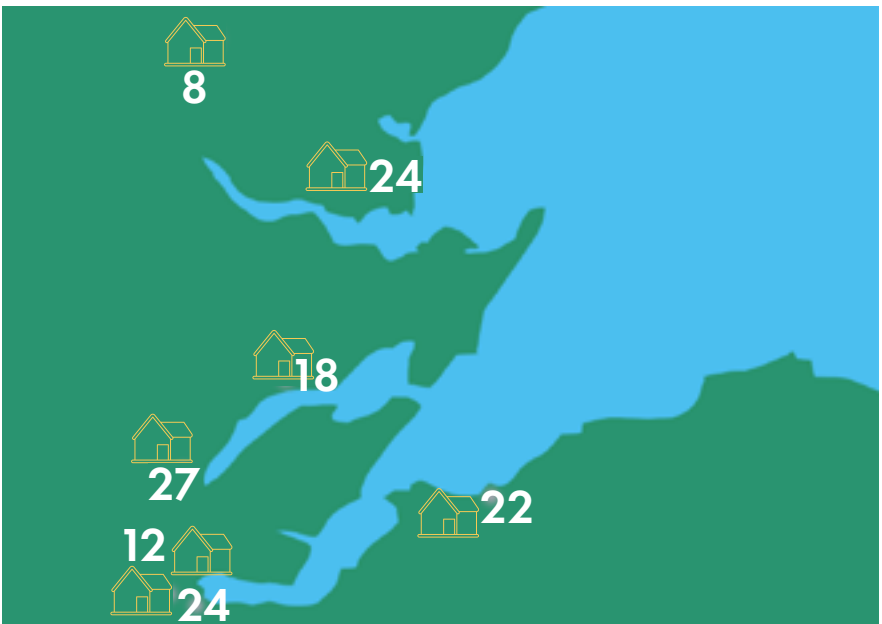
## 135 new homes

Albyn have planned for 135 new homes to increase availability of affordable homes by the end of 2024.

Our upcoming programme of developments is spread across the Highlands with rural developments in Lairg, Dornoch, Beaulay and Kirkhill. Some houses are closer to large centres such as Dingwall, Nairn and Alness.

These modern energy-efficient living spaces are designed to thoughtfully integrate into existing communities and provide much needed safe, comfortable and high-quality housing options.

As part of our planned programme we will have 14 FitHomes, which are designed to be adaptable to changing needs of vulnerable tenants and allow them to remain at home through the use of technology-enabled systems.





# Your services, your say

We welcome complaints, comments and compliments in order to ensure that you have the opportunity to shape the service we provide. Contact us in the usual way - either by emailing [office@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:office@albynhousing.org.uk) or calling 0300 323 0990.

We also feel it's important that we report to you how we are performing so we have included an overview of our complaints received in the previous quarter of the financial year, alongside the figures for the year to date. All complaints are acknowledged at the point of receipt, however due to the complexity of some complaints, resolution may involve multi-agency approaches and may remain open at the end of the period outlined below.

Period	Resolved at Stage 1 (%)	Average time to respond (days)	Resolved at Stage 2 (%)	Average time to respond (days)
Q4 2023 (Jan-Mar)	95.45%	3.91	70%	17.85
Full Year (Apr 22 - Mar 23)	96.53%	4.27	77.86%	15.86

Below we've included some of the compliments our teams have received recently.

" Emily has been amazing, she has been approachable, efficient, and easily contactable and has such a lovely manner. A big thank you all round. "

*Praise for our Tenancy Sustainment Team.*

" Thank you for all the support you have provided thus far. I know this has had a huge positive impact. "

*Praise for our Innovation Team.*

" Problems relating to the controlled access door now seem to be resolved and working well for the residents so I am grateful to you and the Clerk of Works for your persistence in the matter, which I know was not entirely straightforward. "

*Praise for our Repairs and Maintenance Team.*

" We had a young man who had no support in place. Partnership working is golden and without the support from you all we wouldn't be where we are now but more importantly, together we have made a difference. "

*Praise for our Innovation Team*

" Thank you to the two guys who visited yesterday for such a willing and high standard of work. So very much appreciated. "

*Praise for our Repairs and Maintenance Team*

" Thank you very much for ... these have been helpful indeed for making life easier throughout these dreadful times of hardship and I cannot thank you and your staff enough in supporting me through difficult times. "

*Praise for our Tenancy Sustainment Team*

# KIDS PAGE

Summer Activity Bingo - colour the activity in when you do it.

Read a book	Take a nap	Litter pick	Take a walk	Plant a seed
Write a poem		Do a puzzle		Colour or draw
Find an insect	Watch a film		Find a shell	Play a sport

Why not draw us a picture of you doing these activities and send it to our offices!



Invergordon | 98 - 104 High Street | Invergordon, Ross-shire | IV18 0DL  
Inverness | 68 MacLennan Crescent | Inverness | IV3 8DN

Call us on 0300 323 0990. Select 1 for repairs, 2 to pay your rent, and Option 3 for everything else.

JOIN THE  
CONVERSATION

