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Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2024

Between 26th March and 18th April, you may be called or visited by a research assistant from Research Resource. Taking part is voluntary, but your feedback is important to us and will truly make a difference.

SPRING NEWSLETTER WELCOME!



Kirsty Morrison, Group CEO

Welcome to our jam-packed spring newsletter for 2024. Its so exciting to see the lighter mornings and nights coming in and we can all look forward to getting outdoors a lot more and hopefully enjoying some lovey weather!

All housing associations are required to carry out a tenant satisfaction survey every 3 years. This survey is vital to us at Albyn as we measure how satisfied, or not, you are with how we provide our services. Our survey launches on the 26 March 2024, and this is your opportunity to let us know your views, from overall satisfaction, neighborhood satisfaction, with the value for money of your rent, and for the opportunities we provide for you to influence decision making, and in getting involved with Albyn (more on that in the newsletter too). Your feedback is critical to us as we shape our services and improvements based on this.

I couldn't be more pleased with how Albyn has responded to customer feedback in the last few years, from redesigning our customer and property services teams so that contact and communication is easier and quicker for you, to reviewing and changing our letting process for new build homes, and developing the cost

of living support funds to meet your needs. I hope if you are contacted that you will let us know your views and satisfaction levels. We will of course let you know the results and how we will use your feedback going forward in a future edition.

The first few months of every year are the busiest for us as we prepare our annual budget and review the progress of our Business Plan for approval at our March Board meeting. We must prepare a 5-year business plan that sets out our vision and values, our goals and our intentions for investing in our current homes, and for building new homes. It has never been more challenging for housing associations to manage the required investments as we all face ever increasing and well publicised increases in inflation and in interest rates. To build new homes, we must raise private finance through borrowing, much like a mortgage, so any increase in interest rate, as we have seen for the last 18 months, impacts on our borrowing costs and our interest payments to our lenders.

I am delighted, however, that despite these challenges, we have increased our Energy and Trust Fund provisions to a record £150, 000 per annum in this year's budget, supported by our Board, You will see later on in the newsletter how we have helped customers through the current cost of living crisis and we are absolutely committed to continuing this.

Despite how challenging all of this is, we are here to make sure you have a warm and safe, well maintained home that you enjoy living in. This is the biggest measure of success for us, and again one which our Board and all staff are committed to ensuring.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Kirsty

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YOUR HOME, YOUR VOICE

We offer a range of ways for you to get involved in making Albyn the best organisation that it can be. Nobody knows your tenant experience better than you, and you have a voice that can shape our processes. The work that goes on behind the scenes to manage tenants' homes is done with a lot of support from tenants. We will empower tenants from all backgrounds to get involved and provide extra support where it's needed.

“ The tenant groups not only allow us to meet and make a real difference to tenants in important areas but also allows us to chat, laugh and have discussions in a relaxed, but friendly environment ”

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Register of Interest: Be alerted to participation opportunities.

Surveys/Questionnaires: Share your opinions and vote.

Tenants' or Residents' Groups: Collaborate with fellow community members to improve your community.

Registered Tenant Organisations: Be part of a recognised group with extra consultation power.

Join a Working Group: Contribute to specific projects, e.g., Tenant Charter Report group.

Become a Member of the Society: Vote at our AGM.

Join Our Board: Take on a leadership role, setting strategic direction for the organisation.

Meetings and Local Pop-up Surgeries: Engage in face-to-face discussions, seek out support and meet others.

National Tenant Forum: Contribute to decisions at a broader level.

SUPPORT TO GET INVOLVED

While the role of an involved tenant is voluntary and unpaid, we are committed to providing financial resources by covering meeting costs, consultation expenses and where required offering IT resources.

Our focus on training and awareness ensures that our customers, committee members and staff possess the essential knowledge and skills for meaningful involvement.

To achieve truly representative tenant engagement, we emphasize equality and diversity. We actively encourage under-represented groups to participate and promptly address any instances of discrimination.

BENEFITS OF GETTING INVOLVED

Community Impact: Engaging in projects and initiatives allows tenants to see tangible improvements in their living environment, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Learn New Skills: Participation in different groups and projects provides opportunities for tenants to develop and apply a variety of skills, contributing to personal and professional growth.

Unexpected Opportunities: Tenant engagement can open doors to unexpected opportunities, such as leadership roles or involvement in decision-making processes.

Building Strong Communities: Active involvement creates a sense of belonging and establishes meaningful connections, turning neighbours into a supportive community.

“ You can make a difference, it's not just a tick box exercise. It opens up the doors to other opportunities and you learn more about yourself. You learn that you can put skills that you thought were related to one thing and use it in another way. ”



RENT INCREASE CONSULTATION

You should now have received your letters confirming the rent increase for 2024/25 - we wanted to provide you with the details of the consultation we ran late last year. The consultation period for Albyn's Rent Increase Consultation Survey for 2024/25 ran from 13th December 2023 to 12th January 2024.

A total of 3,315 customers were contacted. 3,088 were contacted by email or sms text, and 227 received their invitation by post. Those contacted digitally received a reminder on the 4th January 2024.

To encourage responses, all respondents will be entered into a prize draw. 2 winners were drawn to win a £50 Amazon Voucher. We received 482 responses, 17 of these responded by post.

Customers were sent an overview of our rent setting process, as well as how Albyn rents compare to the RSL average, where each pound of rent goes, and further helpful information to inform their selection. In addition, the digital invitations included a video explainer of the same content. At the end of the explanation, customers were asked 2 questions.

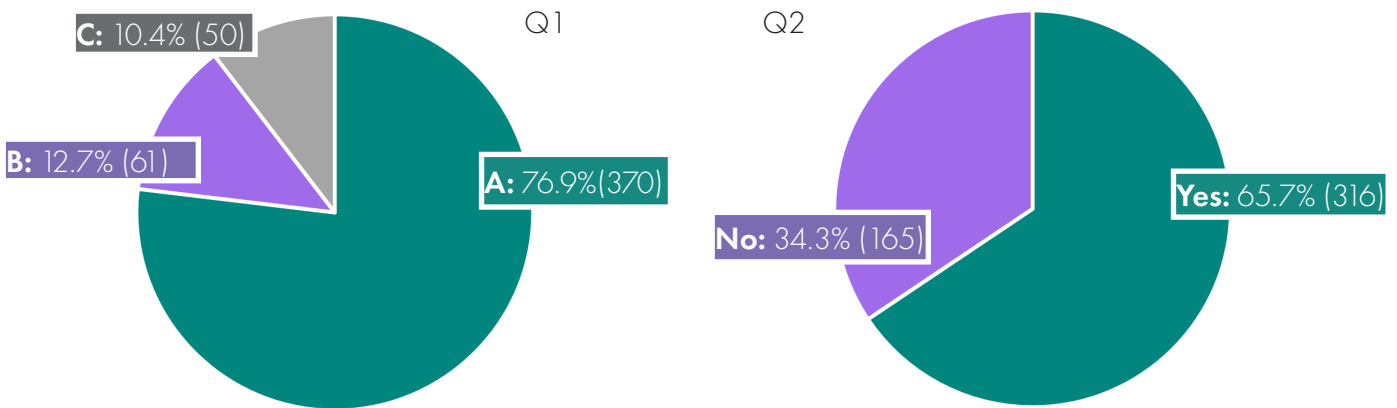
Question 1. Please select which rent increase option you prefer:

- Option A: 7.7% increase
- Option B: 8.2% increase
- Option C: 8.7% increase

Question 2. Do you support the addition of a rent premium of 10% applied to all brand new homes tenanted from 01 April 2024 with the proceeds reinvested in energy efficiency and quality improvements to existing tenanted properties?:

- Yes
- No

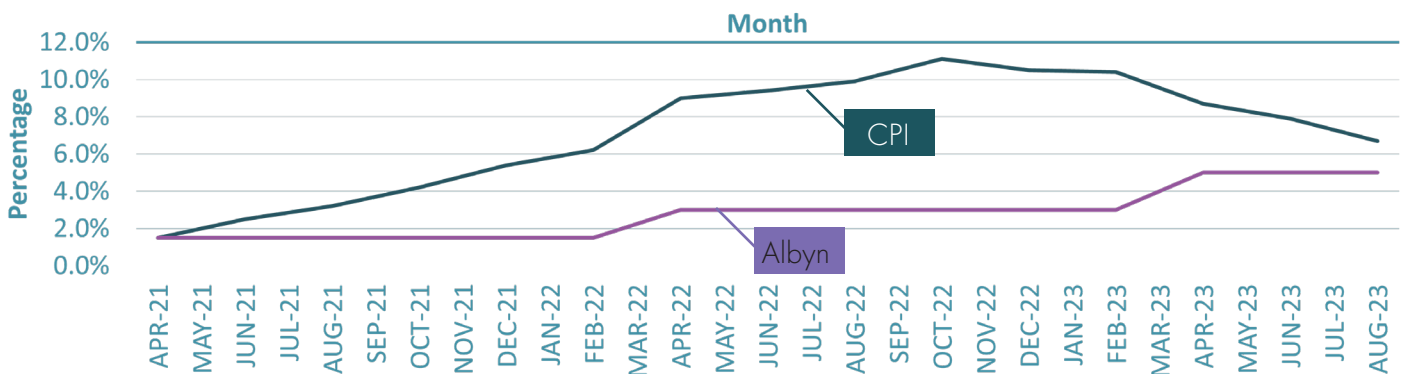
Results of the consultation



Rent Comparison

We've worked hard to protect tenants from economic pressures and rising inflation while striving to maintain our levels of service. Average annual rents are £613 lower than if we had increased rent in line with inflation. They also have remained in line with or lower than the national average for RSLs.

CPI Inflation VS Annual Rent Increases 2021-2023

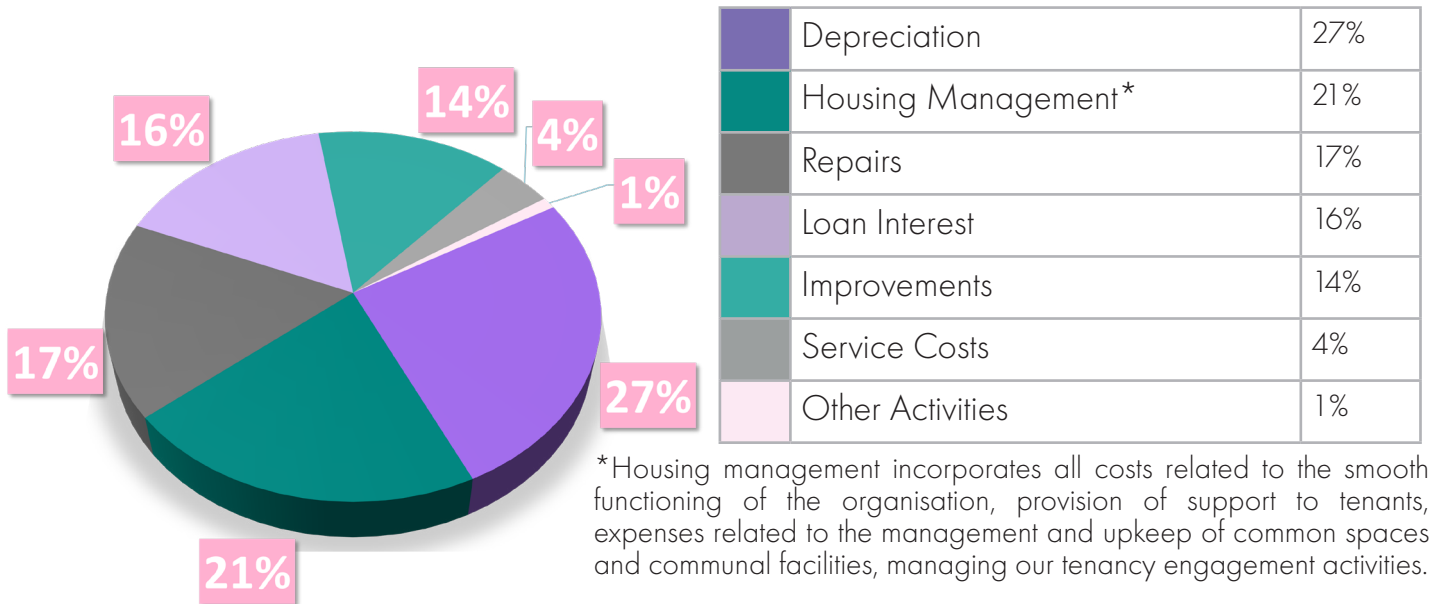


HOW WE DEMONSTRATE VALUE

At Albyn, we take pride in being stewards of your rents, ensuring that every penny is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing your homes. Our commitment goes beyond meeting national averages – it's about delivering quality and energy-efficient housing that surpasses expectations.

The money you pay in rent is put towards the cost of providing the services you receive as an Albyn tenant. With increasing cost pressures on the society each £1 of your rent has to be carefully managed in order to ensure we can deliver the same service.

Based on the average weekly rent, this is how we spent each £1



Maintaining Good Quality Homes

In 2022/23 we spent over £36.9m on new homes, repairs and maintenance, and improvements. This included:

- 179 Heating Systems or Boilers
- 13 Kitchens
- 152 Bathrooms
- 11 property's Windows and Doors

88% of our homes meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, exceeding the national average of 87%



Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH):

We are continually investing in home improvements that will allow us to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) and aiming to implement zero-carbon heating systems across our housing stock. Our homes boast an EESH compliance rate of 92%, surpassing the national average of 89%.

Compare Albyn to other local landlords including The Highland Council

While we work hard to improve our processes every day, we are confident that our performance routinely beats the national average, compare for yourself by visiting the regulators website to compare activities such as Homes and Rents, Tenant Satisfaction, Quality and Maintenance, Neighbourhoods and Value for Money.

Visit: www.housingregulator.gov.scot/comparison-tool/?landlord=2865



ELECTRICAL SAFETY FIRST

Lithium-ion batteries

Safety tips

- Lithium-ion batteries have become widely used in a range of items including mobile phones and tools through to larger items such as electric bikes, e-scooters and electric vehicles.
- Lithium-ion batteries have the ability to store an enormous amount of energy in a very small space; this guide concentrates on portable lithium-ion batteries such as those that you can charge in your home.
- The ability to store an enormous amount of energy in a very small space is also one of the main disadvantages of lithium-ion batteries which can lead to risks of fire and explosion if they are not stored and charged safely. When used properly, lithium-ion batteries are convenient and safe to use but batteries can present a fire risk when over-charged, short-circuited, or if they are damaged.
- Charging them safely is really important.



How to keep your home safe when charging your e-bike or e-scooter

Lithium batteries are used safely by millions of people every day, and when used properly they are not dangerous, but it's important to be aware of the fire safety advice particularly when charging your battery.

- Don't charge e-bikes and e-scooters in bedrooms or where escape routes can be blocked
- Don't leave your battery charging unattended especially when you are out or asleep.
- Don't cover chargers or battery packs when charging
- Don't overload sockets or use inappropriate extension leads
- Don't charge or store batteries in direct sunlight or hot locations (above 45°C)
- Don't charge batteries close to combustible materials or hazardous substances.
- Always unplug your charger when you have finished charging
- If your battery can be removed from your e-bike or e-scooter and charged separately, it should be charged in area with good ventilation and on a hard flat surface where heat can disperse.

Tain & District Face to Face Services

Portmahomack - 1st Tuesday of month

Carnegie Cafe

Well Street

Portmahomack

Tain – 2nd & 4th Tuesday of month

Tain and District Development Trust

8 Tower Street

Tain

Balintore – 3rd Tuesday of month

Seaboard Centre

East Street

Balintore

All 4.30pm to 8.30pm

more details & booking at

<https://www.mikeysline.co.uk/> or

enquiries@mikeysline.co.uk



YOUR NEW BUILD HOME

If you have recently moved into one of our “new build” properties, congratulations on your new home. Whether or not you have been an Albyn tenant before, you may have some questions about how things work. There is a lot to take in on sign-up day. Following on from our work with the Customer Involvement Strategy Monitoring Group (CISMG) we have improved the information provided in each property to make your life easier.

What information we provide

Each property has its own Tenant Property Manual and Quick Guide. There you will find lots of information about your property including about how to operate the systems in your home, such as heating, hot water, smoke detection and ventilation. What to do in an emergency, including where to find the stop cock. You will also find some information on cleaning, TV arrangements and taking care of your garden. Where available we will also include links to instructional video clips. If you are still unsure about how to operate your heating system, want help changing your tariff or for energy advice, then please feel free to contact our Tenancy Operations Team and ask for a referral to Changeworks. As an Albyn tenant you are free to change your supplier and tariff, and it is recommended you seek advice prior to doing so to get the best deal to suit your circumstances.



Defects

The first 12 months after your property has been handed over is known as the “defects liability period”. During this period, our original build contractor is responsible for attending to any build-related problems. You still report problems with your property during this period to Albyn on 0300 323 0990 as per your Tenant Property Manual, and our team will determine whether the issue is a defect or a normal repair and assign it accordingly. When you report a problem with your property, please be sure to leave a telephone number as it is likely one of our team will need to call you back. We may need to arrange an inspection to gather further details and will also need to pass your number on to our contractor who will make access arrangements with you directly.

Decorating

Please be aware that you are not to decorate your property during the defect liability period. It is normal during this period that small cracks may appear on your internal walls. This is due to your property drying out and settling. For settlement cracks we will ask you to keep a note of these and they will be attended to at the end of the defect liability period. Other issues reported will be attended to within normal repairs timescales as appropriate.



Nearing the end of defects

When your property is around 10 months old we will contact you to arrange an “end of defects inspection” to identify any remedial works required. This will usually be undertaken by Albyn’s Clerk of Works and our Agent. If any remedial works are identified these will be attended to by the contractor and a further inspection may be required to confirm they have been completed or you may be asked to sign a form to confirm they have been completed, depending on the complexity of the works required. It is important that you allow access for both the inspection and for any remedial works to be carried out, as no access will result in any works becoming your responsibility. Any new issues reported after the end of defects inspection has taken place will be treated as normal repair and managed by our Repairs and Maintenance Team with attendance by our repairs contractors.

New tenant survey

You may be asked to complete a survey in relation to your property. We ask that you take the time to complete the survey as your views are important to us. The results of the surveys help inform us of what we are doing well and any improvements we can make. We hope you will be very happy in your new home. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us.

Your Development Team.

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Recognising the huge cost-of-living challenges that many tenants continue to face, Albyn has continued to give high priority to supporting tenants in as many ways that we can.

Between April 2023 and February 2024:

- ✓ Almost **800** tenants received supermarket vouchers to help free up money for fuel bills through Albyn's Energy Fund
- ✓ Over **200** tenants received vouchers or essential household items through Albyn's TRUST Fund to help alleviate temporary hardship.
- ✓ **414** tenants living in qualifying homes have received a £150 cash grant to help with fuel costs, following our successful application to the Scottish Government's Social Housing Fuel Support Fund.
- ✓ **205** Albyn tenants have been referred for 1:1 energy advice from Changeworks through our Affordable Warmth Highland project, and 31 tenants have taken up targeted energy advice and information for new tenants.
- ✓ The Affordable Warmth Highland project has achieved over **£65,000** of financial savings for Highland tenants, with **219** tenants also referred for onward support.
- ✓ Albyn's new Tenancy Sustainment Team has provided support to **583** tenants on a wide range of issues affecting their ability to manage and sustain their tenancies.
- ✓ **67** households successfully referred to the Fuel Bank Foundation for emergency credit to avoid going 'lights out'.

“ Tenants have reported significant decreases in their level of worry about energy costs and significant increases in their confidence to tackle energy issues. ”

Feedback for Affordable Warmth Highland - get referred today.

Cost of Living Survey

Thank you to all tenants who recently completed our Cost of Living Survey – we received a fantastic 498 responses!

The results of this survey will be used to help Albyn understand what help is most needed by our tenants and provide valuable evidence to support funding bids and lobbying for continued cost of living support for those who need it most.

We will report more detail of the results in a future issue and provide updates on how they are used. For now, here are some of initial headlines based on those who responded:

- 59% are struggling to pay their energy bills
- 68% have had to cut back on food and other household essentials
- 66% have had to cut back on clothing and shoes
- 66% have had to seek help to get food in the last year
- 9% do not have internet access, with the main reason being that they can't afford to
- 55% report an increase in stress or anxiety over the last 12 months
- 22% report an increase in long-term physical illness



Community Fund

So far in 2023/24 Albyn has provided 20 community groups with grants of up to £500 to support projects that benefit the local community. A wide variety of projects have benefitted by being able to purchase essential equipment, arrange activities and provide much needed support to local individuals in need.

STAYING CONNECTED

How we communicate with you

By using different channels, we offer you choice in how you stay informed. Staying connected with Albyn is not just about receiving information. It is about being an active participant in your community. By engaging with our communication channels, you empower yourself with knowledge and help shape the decisions that matter.



Direct communications

When we want to keep you informed about something important to your tenancy, we will usually pick up the phone, visit or communicate with you by letter.

Telephone

Letter

Face to Face

Printed materials

We try to limit what we print, both to reduce our impact on the environment and to keep costs low. However, this is often the most reliable way to ensure that all tenants stay informed about Albyn's activities.

Leaflets

Newsletter



Online services

Fast, efficient and cost effective, our digital communications aim to keep you informed and empower you to find out more about the topics that interest you.

Digitally - email and text

Website – we are planning to review our website in 2024, see page 2 to get involved.



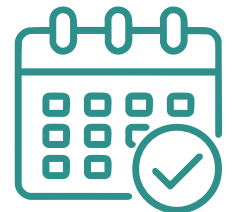
In person events

Face to face communications play a central role in building relationships, allowing us to visit communities and offer support on your doorstep.

New tenant events

Pop up surgeries

Estate visits



At Albyn, our commitment extends beyond housing provision, our aim is to keep you informed, empowered, and supported throughout your tenancy journey. We do this by keeping you informed about a diverse array of topics that directly impact your living experience.

About us

We will keep you informed about the delivery of our functions, our organisational structure, what we spend and how we spend it, how we manage our resources, and how we are performing. We also share the numerous ways that you can use your voice to take part in shaping the organisation.

Your home

We aim to empower you by providing information on many aspects of managing your home and your tenancy such as: how we rent homes, your housing options including mutual exchanges, your rights, and responsibilities and how we will respond to repairs and anti-social behaviour, and how to stay safe.

Ways we can help

In addition to managing your tenancy, we want to support you to live well, and we aim to provide information and advice on various sources of community resources, support and advice, as well as grants and funds tailored to your specific needs.

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS



"I just wanted to say that your staff did a super job at our event yesterday – engaging, fun and informative. They were a great rep for Albyn so thank you."

"Thank you Paula this will really help mum. Would also like to say thank you from you and Gary helped a feel things are getting done and I'm not as stressed or worried you have really helped gave me peace of mind."



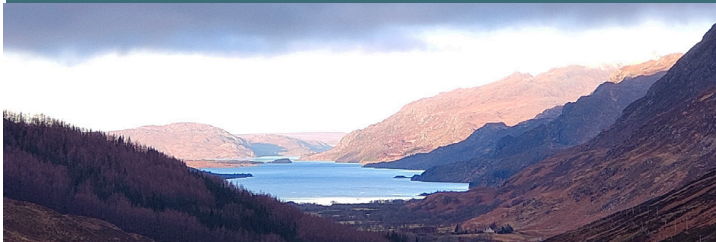
"Dear Ann, Thank you ever so much for all the time you gave me before I became a tenant! (A wee shout out to Ruby also :) Mostly I wanted to thank you for allocating me my new home and for making me feel at ease on my sign up day."



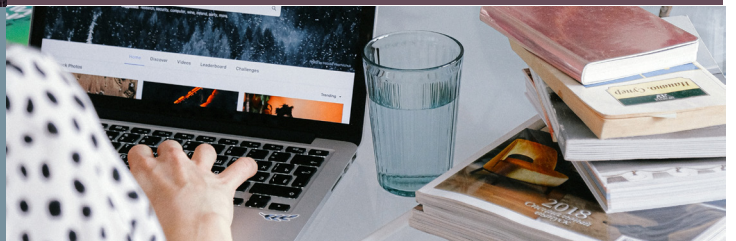
"Just a quick note to say a huge thank you for all the help that I've had from you and your staff. I would not have been able to manage if it hadn't been for us joint working and looking at the very best use of every property available. Big thank you to everybody."



"To all at Albyn housing team, it is very much appreciated for helping to keep us warm and clean through our boiler breakdown."



"Thanks so much for the quick turnaround on this from you guys. I really do appreciate it!"



Do you wish to make a complaint or provide a complimer

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

- Call us on 0300 323 0990 and select option 3.
- Report your complaint via our website, www.albynhousing.org.uk
- Email us at office@albynhousing.org.uk



SPRING CLEANING



If you are taking advantage of the brighter days to do a spring clean and find yourself with heavy items you no longer want: here's a reminder of the ways to dispose of them responsibly.

Curb collection by the Highland Council's **Bulky Uplift** service. The service must be requested at least 2 days in advance and costs £25 for up to 3 items, or £50 for up to 6 items.

Visit www.highland.gov.uk and search bulky uplift.

If your items are in a good, safe condition, consider donating them to **New Start Highland**, they will collect from your home and they will help people back on their feet after experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

Find out more at the New Start Highland website:

www.newstarthighland.org/get-involved/donate-furniture

DEVELOPMENTS

We are delighted to have welcomed tenants into 86 new build homes for a mixture of social rent and mid market rent and includes 15 **FitHomes** which are fitted with our innovative technology that supports independent living for tenants who might otherwise have to live in full time care or be supported by family.

A small number of these homes are part of an ambitious development of 10 homes, in Lairg, made possible with the partnership of Lairg and District Community Initiatives, who donated the land at the site of the former Sutherland Arms. This along with funding from *The Highland Council Infrastructure Fund, Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal*, and *Scottish Government's More Homes division* have allowed us to use local contractors to complete the development which consists of 5 one-bedroom FitHomes and 5 two-bedroom bungalows.



We handed over 18 homes at Phase 6 of our Dalmore estate in Alness















22 new homes at Cawdor Road, Nairn including 10 FitHomes



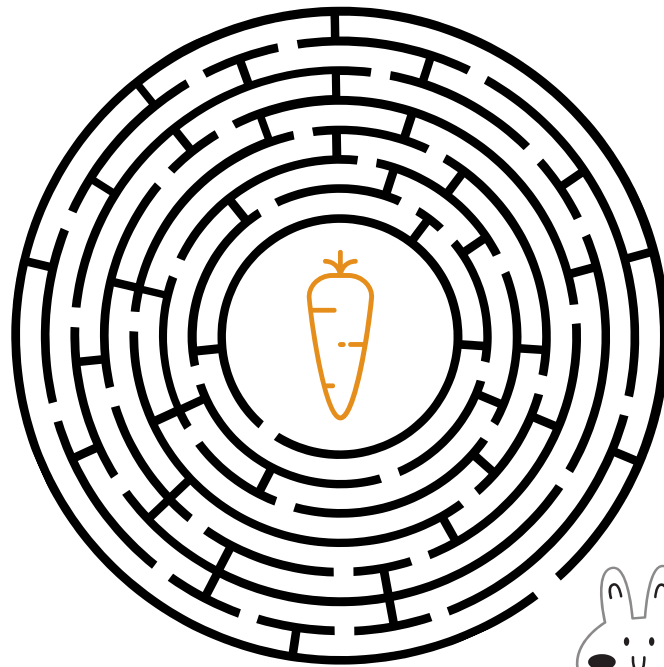
We completed 21 Social Rent and 3 MMR homes in Kirkhill.

KIDS ACTIVITIES

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Help the bunny to find the way through to the carrot.



Invergordon Office | 98 - 104 High Street | Invergordon, Ross-shire | IV18 0DL

Inverness Office | 68 MacLennan Crescent | Inverness | IV3 8DN

Call us on 0300 323 0990.

Option 1 for repairs, Option 2 to pay your rent, and Option 3 for everything else.

Join the conversation

