

Spring 2025



New Payment Method

We will shortly be rolling out a new way for tenants to pay their rent – Pay By Link.

This is a service which will allow tenants to make secure payments directly to their rent accounts using a link they can be sent by text message or email.

This means if you normally go to your local Pay Point or call our Income Team to make a rent payment, you can now pay directly via the link at any time of day without having to download any apps to your device.

If you are interested in finding out more about Pay by Link, or to discuss any other payment options, please contact the Income Team on 0300 323 0990 (option 2).



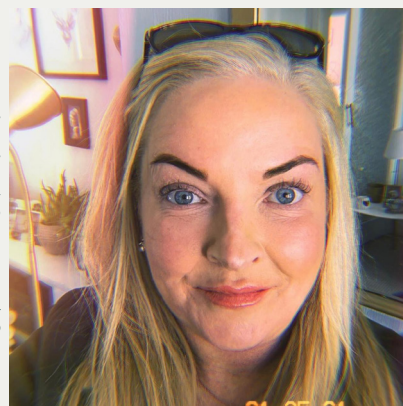
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Lithium Battery Safety
- Rent Consultation
- Your rights; complaints and serious concerns
- Equalities and Diversity Report
- Tenant Support
- Where to find key information on your home

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Spring newsletter welcome

Welcome to our 2025 Spring Newsletter. As we move towards lighter nights and warmer weather (hopefully!), it is also time to launch our 2025/26 Year 4 updates from our Business Plan 2022-2027. Having a business plan that sets out the society's objectives for the year, and a budget to support those objectives, is required by the Scottish Housing Regulator. They look after the interests of tenants by ensuring landlords are meeting their requirements, and are performing well, especially in relation to tenant safety, such as gas servicing and managing damp and mould.



This year's business plan sets out how we will respond to the Highland Housing Challenge as the largest registered social landlord in the Highlands. Our board and staff are fully committed to supporting the need to deliver more affordable housing as the region grows and thrives in the coming years.

Some key highlights from the plan include:

- The aim to deliver 600 new affordable homes over the next 5 years, including social rented homes, mid market rent homes and low cost home ownership
- Aiming to invest in sustainability for current and new homes
- Supporting customers further to sustain their tenancies, including energy efficiency advice, our £150,000 tenant support fund, increasing tenant satisfaction
- Investing in our IT by upgrading our infrastructure and delivering on our Customer Portal
- Developing and improving our recruitment, retention and succession planning for our Board and staff
- Working closely with partners to deliver more FIT homes, including homes for rent and technology supplied in customers' current homes, and lessening the need for social care interventions
- Investing £1.19 million in planned and cyclical maintenance works and a further £2.5million in component replacements in our homes.
- Across the five-year planning period, invest a total of £7.1million in planned and cyclical works to focus on preventative maintenance impacting the requirements and pressures on day-to-day reactive maintenance.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, with interesting articles on a new way to pay your rent, how to become more involved in the society and our focus on improving our complaints process.

Kirsty

REMINDER

Albyn offices in Invergordon and Inverness remain closed unless by appointment. Here's a reminder of how you can interact with our housing teams.

Call us on 0300 323 0990, select **option 1** for repairs, **option 2** to pay your rent, **option 3** for reporting ASB, flytipping, dog fouling or to speak about a housing application, **option 4** for everything else.

Email office@albynhousing.org.uk for general enquiries or the relevant team; [Repairs@](mailto:Repairs@albynhousing.org.uk), [tenancymanagement@](mailto:tenancymanagement@albynhousing.org.uk), [incometeam@](mailto:incometeam@albynhousing.org.uk), [tenancysustainment@](mailto:tenancysustainment@albynhousing.org.uk)

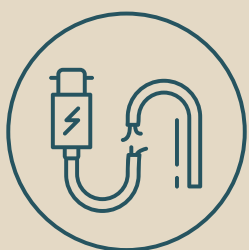
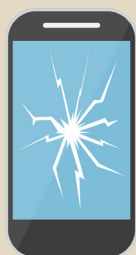
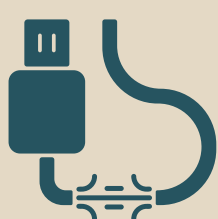
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Electrical Safety: Lithium-ion batteries

Risks

Lithium-ion batteries can pose a significant risk due to thermal runaway which occurs when internal temperatures exceed safe limits.



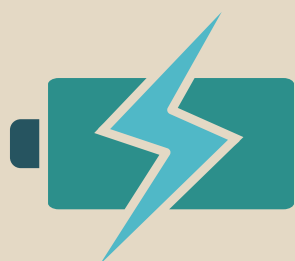
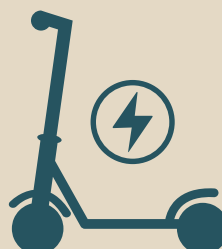
Causes

- poor quality and substandard components
- flawed design
- physical abuse
- improper charging or discharging

Devices

Items such as Phones, Laptops, Vapes, E-Scooters and E-Bikes.

Use them safely to prevent fires.



Be safe

Always purchase from reputable retailers.

Use approved chargers, unplug after charging, and avoid charging while sleeping.

Warning signs

Look for smoke, heat, swelling, leaks, hissing or cracking sounds or unusual smells

Stop using damaged batteries immediately.



More information can be found on the Scottish Fire and Rescue website.

Fly Tipping

What is Fly-Tipping?

Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of unwanted items in the wrong place, such as household waste being left beside bins, in communal areas, or on Albyn's estates. This includes large items like mattresses, electrical goods, and furniture, as well as commercial and industrial waste.

Fly-tipping is not just unsightly—it harms the environment, attracts pests, and can lead to further anti-social behavior. It is a criminal offense, and those responsible can face prosecution.

Report fly tipping by calling us on 0300 323 0990



Reminder: Bulky Uplift

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



Changes to repairs & maintenance service

As part of our ongoing commitment to tenant safety, a dedicated compliance team has been created within Albyn's Property Services department. The team has responsibility for co-ordinating a range of compliance tasks including annual gas safety checks and 5-yearly fixed wire testing (EICR), as well as our wider activities relating to fire safety, water hygiene, management of asbestos and maintenance of other heating and cooling systems.

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Tenancy Support Available

Albyn has a fund to help tenants who would benefit from support with the cost of living or who are facing exceptional hardship.

The Albyn Tenant Support Fund is a discretionary fund that can be used to provide shopping vouchers to tenants who would benefit from extra help to meet ongoing household costs. Help through the fund can also include support in a variety of ways including essential household items, items to help keep warm, school uniforms and mobile phone top-ups to stay digitally connected.

If you are finding it hard to meet your rent or other living costs, please contact tenancy sustainment to discuss what support is available to you. To be referred you can email tenancysustainment@albynhousing.org.uk or call us on 0300 323 0990.



Winter Welfare Checks

Throughout December 2024 staff from across our Customer Services teams contacted 365 tenants over the age of 70 to check on their wellbeing and find out if they required any support managing their tenancy. We managed to contact the majority of these tenants but there were 40 that we could not contact so staff carried out home visits to make sure they were well and managing in their homes.

As a result of these calls and visits, 64 referrals were made to our Tenancy Sustainment Team. The Team was able to assist with a range of issues including Energy Advice, Financial Difficulty and Isolation. Where the team cannot assist tenants directly, we will signpost to advice or community services who can provide help. We work in partnership with Changeworks who provide support to our tenants on all energy-related matters. This may include reducing energy consumption and costs or operating your heating system more effectively. We have our own Tenant Support Fund to help households who may be struggling with the cost of living and need help to buy food, energy or essential items. If you feel you would benefit from assistance, please contact our team on tenancy. sustainment@albynhousing.org.uk

office@albynhousing.org.uk | 0300 323 0990 | www.albynhousing.org.uk

Rent Consultation 2025/26

For this consultation, 3,353 households were contacted by email, text, and post on Wednesday 11th December 2024. When the consultation closed on 10th January 2025, we had received 542 responses.

This resulted in a total response rate of 17%.

Rent increase choice

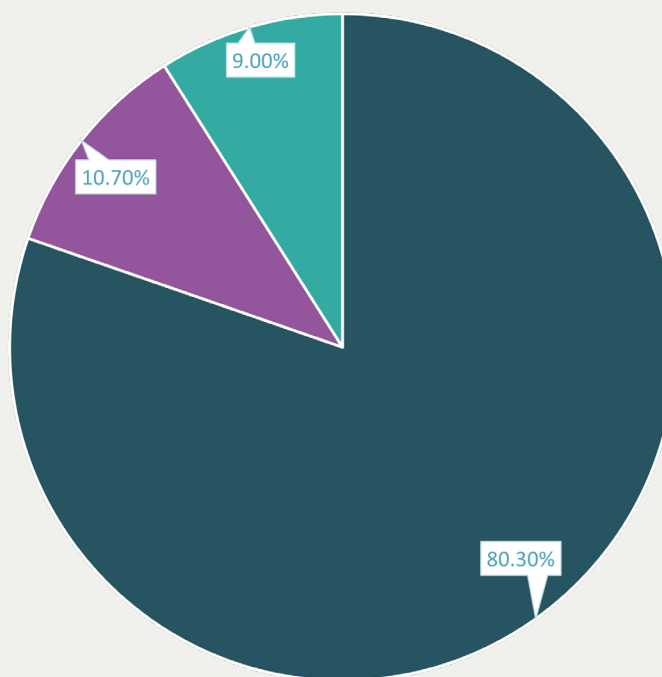
Rents are the main source of income for Albyn Housing Society. We gave our tenants the opportunity to choose a rent increase of either;

A) 2.7%

B) 3.2%

C) 3.7%

The majority (80.3%) of tenants voted for a 2.7% increase. Responses were used to inform our Board's decision-making on Rent levels for 2024/25.



This is the lowest level of increase that we agree is feasible if we are to maintain a reasonable investment in our existing stock and the services that we provide to tenants. As this is the preferred option, Albyn will invest £17.5million across the next 5-year period improving the fabric and energy efficiency of tenants homes.

Changes to rent and service charge levels will be effective from 01 April 2025.

Equalities Data Collection Results

We're pleased to share that our latest Equalities Report and Action Plan is now available on our website. This report is an important step in ensuring that our services meet the diverse needs of all our tenants. By gathering equalities data, we can make more informed decisions, identify any barriers to accessing our services, and improve how we support our communities.

A huge thank you to everyone who took the time to participate in the survey. Your input is invaluable in shaping the future of our housing services. While collecting this data is a regulatory requirement, we firmly believe that it goes beyond compliance—it allows us to enhance our service delivery and respond to the needs of all our tenants. We encourage you to read the report and see how your feedback is helping us build a more inclusive future.

www.albynhousing.org.uk/equalities_data_collection-report

Shape our Website!

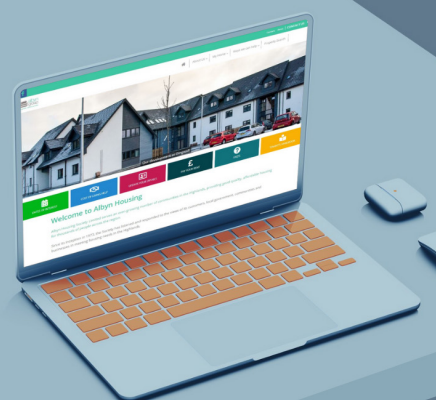
As part of our commitment to improving our services, we're reviewing our company website to ensure it meets the needs of our tenants, staff, and external partners. Our website is a vital resource—providing key information, supporting our customers, and enhancing Albyn's reputation.

To make meaningful improvements, we need your input! Our Website Working Group has launched a survey for all site users to share their feedback. Your insights will help us create a more intuitive, user-friendly website that truly serves our community.

Have your say—complete the survey now!

www.albynhousing.org.uk/website-survey

WE NEED YOU!



Tenant voice is at the heart of everything we do at Albyn. The feedback we receive through consultations, surveys, and direct engagement helps shape our services, ensuring they truly meet the needs of the people who live in our homes. Whether it's improving repairs and maintenance, shaping policies, or influencing future developments, tenant input drives real change.

By taking part in consultations and sharing their experiences, tenants play a key role in strengthening our communities and making sure our services are effective, fair, and responsive. We are committed to listening, learning, and acting on feedback, and we encourage all tenants to get involved—whether through formal consultations, tenant groups, or everyday conversations. Every voice matters, and together, we can continue to improve the homes and services that so many people rely on.

Finding Information About Your Home

At Albyn, we want to make it as easy as possible for our tenants to find the information they need about their home, their tenancy, and the support available to them. Whether you are a new tenant settling in or a long-standing resident looking for guidance, we have a range of resources and teams ready to help.

Your New Tenant Handbook

When you move into an Albyn home, you receive a New Tenant Information Pack, also known as the tenant handbook. This handbook is designed to provide all the essential details about your home and your tenancy. It covers:

- Who we are and how we are managed.
- How to contact us.
- Your tenancy agreement, rent, and other charges.
- Fire safety and home maintenance.
- Repairs and maintenance responsibilities.
- Useful contacts.
- Healthy living advice.
- Specific guidance for new-build homes.

Additionally, tenants in new-build properties receive a Quick Guide to Property, a handy document with photographs explaining different features of the home, such as switches, heating controls, and other key elements.

The handbook is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains accurate and up to date. If you have any suggestions on how it could be improved, please let us know.

Who to Contact for Help

We know that questions and issues can arise at any time, and we have dedicated teams in place to provide the right support:

- Business Services: Your first point of contact for

general enquiries. They also support our other teams to ensure a smooth service for tenants.

- Repairs & Maintenance: If something needs fixing in your home, this team is here to help. You can report a repair online, by phone, or in person.

- Income Team: If you have questions about rent payments, financial difficulties, or benefits advice, our income team can offer guidance and support.

- Tenancy Sustainment: This team is here to help if you're struggling to manage your tenancy, need support with independent living, or require advice on maintaining a stable home environment.

- Tenancy Operations: If you need assistance with any aspect of your tenancy, including changes, transfers, or anti social behaviour or neighbourhood management, this team is available to help.

Staying Informed

We encourage all tenants to stay connected with us and keep up to date with any changes or important updates. You can do this by:

- Visiting our website for up-to-date policies, FAQs, and service information.

- Checking our social media channels for the latest news and updates.

- Calling or emailing our Business Services team with any queries.

- Engaging with our newsletters, where we share key information and useful advice.

At Albyn, we are committed to providing clear and accessible information to all our tenants. If you ever need guidance or support, don't hesitate to reach out – we're here to help.

Annual Visits

As part of our service improvements, we will shortly be rolling out a programme of annual visits to all our properties.

The purpose of these visits is to get to know you better and establish where we can offer support to manage your tenancy. At the same time we will check that fixtures and fittings are in good condition and meet compliance with national standards.

The visits will take approximately 30 minutes and we will need access to every room in your home and outdoor space if you have it.

You will be contacted in advance to let you know when we will be visiting, and it is essential you allow our staff access to carry out these visits.



Migrating to universal credit

You'll have to move to Universal Credit when you get a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) telling you to claim by a certain date - this is a 'migration notice'. If you get a migration notice, you should claim Universal Credit by the date on the letter to keep getting financial support.

If you haven't had a migration notice, you might still choose to move to Universal Credit if:

- you'll be better off on Universal Credit compared to your legacy benefits
- one of your legacy benefits has stopped because your situation has changed - for example, if you've separated from a partner or moved to a different council area

You must claim Universal Credit by the deadline on the letter to keep getting financial support. Your deadline day should usually be at least 3 months after the date the notice was sent.

The DWP might pay you extra to make sure you're not worse off than on your legacy benefit. This is called 'transitional protection'. You can only get transitional protection if you have a migration notice.

If you can't claim by the deadline

If the deadline day hasn't passed yet, you can ask the DWP to extend it. You can only ask for this before the original deadline in the letter. If the DWP agree, they'll send you a new deadline day. If you claim after the final deadline, you can still get Universal Credit - but you can't get transitional protection.

This advice and more can be found at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Complaints in 2025/2026

Whilst we hope that making a complaint is something you will never need to do, there are times where you may feel we aren't quite getting things right. If this happens, we want to ensure we support you through the process and get your issue resolved as quickly as possible. Over the last year, we have focussed on improving our communication and providing quicker response times to your complaints.

So, how have we done?

We are currently on track to improve our Stage 1 response time almost a day faster than the previous year and our Stage 2 responses are on average 4.12 days quicker.

What are we doing next?

We are currently working on an update to our systems which will allow us to better record, monitor and respond to complaints as well as introduce in-depth reporting capabilities so that we can understand common issues or recurring complaints and make changes to how we deliver improvements to our services. This will be rolled out in April 2025.

We have also put together an extensive action plan for the year ahead which will focus on improving the quality of our processes, procedures and the customer experience.

This will involve gathering valuable feedback from you to help shape the service going forward as well as creating new training resources to ensure that all staff are confident and best equipped to help guide you through the complaints process.

	2024/25	SPSO Target
Stage 1	4.34 Days	5 Days
Stage 2	19.53 Days	20 Days

Complaints & Serious Concerns

As a tenant of a social landlord, you have the right to expect good service and fair treatment. The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets the standards that landlords must meet. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors these standards to ensure landlords are performing well.

Raise a Complaint

If you have a problem with your landlord, follow these steps:

1. Use the landlord's complaints process – This can be found on their website or by contacting them directly.
2. Contact the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman** (SPSO) – If you're unhappy with how your complaint was handled, the SPSO can review it. Call 0800 377 7330 or visit www.spso.org.uk.

Reporting a Serious Concern

If an issue affects a group of tenants and your landlord is failing to meet its legal and service responsibilities, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) may consider these Significant Performance Failure. These can be reported to the SHR.

- Unsafe conditions, such as repeated failure to carry out gas safety checks.
- Consistently poor repairs and maintenance.
- Unfair rent increases without consultation
- Failure to report on performance or meet governance standards.

How to Report a Serious Concern

- Fill out the Serious Concern Form (available on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website).
- Provide details of the issue, how it affects tenants, and what steps you have taken to resolve it.
- Email shr@shr.gov.scot or call 0141 242 5642.

For more information, visit:
www.housingregulator.gov.scot.

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Compliments And Complaints

You said	We did
Complaints received about the quality of Estate Management.	New process for estate management being implemented, includes tracking for recent visits, ensuring all estates are regularly reviewed. This also allows for enhanced review of factoring being carried out.
It was sometimes hard to know where to direct repairs queries via email.	We have now set up a centralised mailbox for all repairs emails, if you need to raise repairs, or want to chase the progress of a repair you're waiting for, you can email repairs@albynhousing.org.uk . Please remember that if you have an emergency, you should always call us to ensure it gets picked up as quickly as possible.
When you report anti-social behaviour, it can feel like you are not regularly updated or checked in with throughout the process	Anti-Social Behaviour cases, can in some cases, take a while to progress given the evidential basis we need to progress cases. Our teams, as part of the report, will let you know exactly what we need and what steps we will take. However, we recognise there is an opportunity to strengthen this and make it much clearer, and to that point we are currently in the process of comprehensively reviewing our anti-social behaviour policy and procedures, which will be complete Spring 2025. We will be back in touch with you to let you know what this means for how we manage cases moving forward so we can better support you in handling these cases.
You didn't always feel that we delivered on our promises in complaint responses.	We have now implemented a more robust plan on how we follow up and deliver all promises made as part of complaint resolutions. This includes timescales so we can communicate with you on precisely when we will complete this by so you can be confident the issue is fully resolved

“I wanted to thank you for everything that you did to help us. We have our insulation and the new air source heating and it's been great. Truly thank you for your patience and understanding getting us through this, it's greatly appreciated.”

“I just want to thank Albyn for the help with electricity and food vouchers. It has made a huge positive difference to me so please thank all those involved for me please. You made a real positive difference to me and I'm incredibly thankful.”

“I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Albyn for their payment of £122 that I received this morning. This will greatly assist me towards paying back the carpets as I have found myself on an exceptionally high repayment scheme. This will also reduce my current worry and stress over these payments and hopefully improve my health. I am very grateful for both the payment towards the fitting and the above payment.”

“I'd just like to thank you and the joinery team who resolved the issues with the flooring in my kitchen. The kitchen looks brilliant and I'm so happy now the repairs have been performed.”

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KIDS PAGE

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you find six differences in this springtime picture?



j	s	c	o	w	p	a	r	s	l	e	y
b	r	u	d	e	r	a	f	j	s	g	u
u	f	c	d	s	i	n	h	f	z	w	s
b	s	k	c	a	m	g	o	u	j	x	n
v	c	o	v	q	r	s	g	f	b	a	o
w	o	o	d	s	o	r	r	e	l	d	w
s	w	f	q	d	s	q	a	u	u	p	d
f	s	l	w	g	e	d	m	b	e	f	r
u	l	o	d	j	g	s	s	y	b	g	o
o	i	w	f	o	f	m	o	f	e	o	p
n	p	e	b	s	n	b	n	j	l	d	s
g	h	r	d	f	h	d	s	d	l	a	h

bluebell
cow parsley

cowslip
primrose
ramsons
snowdrop

cuckoo flower
wood sorrel

