

Autumn 2007

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Visit by Stewart Maxwell, Minister for Communities

On 15th August 2007, the Minister for Communities, Mr Stewart Maxwell, visited Home Farm, Portree with invited delegates from the Association, The Highland Council, the Highland Housing Alliance, and Communities Scotland.

During his visit, he listened to presentations about Housing Challenges in the Highlands, Housing Solutions for Skye and Lochalsh, and Partnership Working in the Highlands.

The Minister visited the development at Home Farm and expressed his pleasure in seeing at first hand how Highland agencies have worked in partnership to overcome barriers to provide a much needed mixed tenure development to address housing shortages. The Minister wishes to have a representative from the Highlands as

part of his Housing Supply Task Force which has been established to find innovative solutions for housing throughout Scotland.

The first 26 houses and flats in Phase 1 were handed over by Robertson Construction (Northern Ltd) for occupation on 21 September. The properties include 18 for affordable rent, which have been allocated in accordance with the Association's Allocation Policy and the Homelessness Protocol and Nominations agreement with The Highland Council.

The Association has made every effort to make sure that Home Farm will be a quality environment in which to live. The development has been laid out in accordance with pedestrian-friendly Homezone principles, and has obtained Secured by Design accreditation from Northern Constabulary. Each of the carefully designed properties is highly specified, with features including high quality windows and doors, underfloor heating and a highly energy efficient Ground Source Heat Pump to provide inexpensive heating and hot water.

The remainder of the Phase 1 affordable houses are scheduled for completion at the end of October. Work is underway on the properties in Phase 2, with a target completion date of May 2008. Overall completion of the remaining 3 phases of the development is due in late 2010.



Stewart Maxwell, MSP, with LSHA's James Stephenson

Property Surveys

A number of our staff members are carrying out surveys of our properties. Some surveys have already been completed, and we aim to have visited all our properties by the year end.

The surveys look at room sizes, electrical fittings, window and door fittings, and heating and insulation levels. The information which is gathered will allow us to plan to make sure that all our rented properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard which all public sector landlords are required to do.

As a result of our survey work so far, we have identified a need for cavity wall insulation in 45 properties and these works are now being instructed.

Our staff will contact tenants individually to make arrangements to survey their property, and we will also keep you fully advised in the future if any works are going to be carried out to your house or flat.

For further information, please contact **Calum MacPhee**, Technical Officer, email: calum@LSHA.co.uk



Free Low Energy Light Bulbs

The Association has acquired a number of low energy light bulbs which we propose to hand out during the course of our property surveys. Each household will be issued with a maximum of 4 low energy bulbs.

Energy saving bulbs have improved considerably over the years and you can now buy bulbs that look just like their non-efficient counterparts. In addition to 'look-alike' products they also come in stick, candles and even halogen options.

Because they use up to four times less electricity to generate the same amount of light, where you'd normally use a 60W bulb, you'll only need a 13-18W energy saving equivalent.

| Ordinary bulbs | Energy saving equivalent |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| 25W | 6W |
| 40W | 8 - 11W |
| 60W | 13- 18W |
| 100W | 20- 25W |

Energy saving light bulbs last around 10 times longer than ordinary light bulbs and can save you £7 per year in electricity (and 38 kilograms of CO2).

If each house installed three energy saving bulbs, it would save enough energy to run the country's street lights for a year. In the UK we waste £140 million a year by leaving our lights switched on unnecessarily. This causes 900,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions, enough to fill 180,000 hot air balloons.

Did you know that you should recycle your used energy saving light bulbs? The producers of energy saving light bulbs have co-founded an organisation that provides free of charge return facilities. Visit the **Recolight** website to find out more (www.recolight.co.uk/advice_householders.asp).

Estate Management Policy

We are now in the process of reviewing our Estate Management Policy, and we want to know what you think about the draft Policy.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that:-

- Tenants and residents can live in their houses in a safe, secure and decent environment
- Good relationships are developed between the Association, our tenants, sharing owners and adjoining residents
- Our properties and the surrounding environment are managed and monitored to agreed standards and enhance tenant and resident satisfaction
- The length of time that properties are vacant is minimised
- Estate Management services are planned, adequately resourced, effectively budgeted, controlled and monitored
- provision for Cyclical and Major Repairs
- Regular inspections by staff and agents of individual properties and estates to quickly identify issues and appropriate and preventative or remedial action
- The effective provision of Ground Maintenance services
- The effective provision of Communal Cleaning services
- Tenants' and Sharing Owners' adherence to their tenancy and occupancy agreements

Some of the practical things covered in the policy include: Household Refuse Disposal and Litter, Parking, Pets, Satellite Dishes, etc.

If you would like a copy of the whole Policy, please contact our office and we will send it to you. Alternatively, you can access it on our website's Publications page at www.LSHA.co.uk.

We aim to deliver the Policy by:

- Good quality design and construction of developments
- A responsive and effective Reactive Repairs service
- A Planned Maintenance Programme including

We want to hear from you ...

It really helps us if you let us have your views on any aspect of our Policy and we would be pleased to receive comments by **30th NOVEMBER 2007**.

Electrical Regulations Changes

Changes in the electrical regulations mean that tenants **should not carry out any alterations to the electrical circuits in their properties**. Any electrical work that necessitates the removal of switches, sockets or any other electrical connection which involves removing and replacing any wiring within Association property should be carried out by a qualified electrician.



Tenants should also apply to the Association for approval for electrical alterations, for any work that involves rewiring switches, sockets or fitting items such as dimmer switches and alternative light fittings. For further information, please contact **Wilfar Matheson, Property Services Officer**, email: wilfar@LSHA.co.uk

Home Contents Insurance

If you are a tenant or a sharing owner, it is sometimes assumed that we have an insurance policy covering loss or damage to your personal property. This is **NOT** the case.

We are responsible for insuring the building you live in, but not your contents. As the tenant, you are responsible for insuring your own property against theft, fire, flood and other potential risks.

No one really likes paying insurance premiums – until it's too late. In the event of a flood, fire or theft it suddenly becomes worthwhile. If you take a moment to work out how much it would cost to replace each item in each of your rooms, you'll find that it soon mounts up. It's likely that you'll have taken a while to accumulate all the items you own, the things you like to have and the things you have to have. Imagine having to replace some, or even all of them, in one go. It's not something we like to think about too much and it probably won't happen but it just might.

Making sure that you are covered with a suitable Home Contents Insurance Policy

means you don't have to worry about it. It's worth it to avoid having to find the money to replace your belongings all at one time.

It's worth it to have someone to help you sort things out if you do need help. It's worth the peace of mind.

Insurance premiums may not cost as much as you think, and pensioners can sometimes get reduced premiums.

Enclosed with this newsletter are two leaflets from separate Insurers who would be happy to give you a quotation.

Please note: the Dunfermline Building Society can insure sheds as part of your contents.

There are also a large number of other insurance companies that offer a wide range of policies to suit all types of situations – please shop around on the internet or look in your telephone directory.

For further information, please contact **Maureen Beaton**, Housing Services Officer, email: mo@LSHA.co.uk

Sponsorship

The Association has been pleased to help support the following individuals, groups and organisations who applied to us for sponsorship so far this year:

Skye Dolphins £350
Skye & Lochalsh Access panel £500
Highland Cross 2007 £250



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