



**PENTLAND**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

# pentland press spring 2012



## diary dates

Office Closed: 6 & 9 April 2012 and  
4 & 5 June 2012

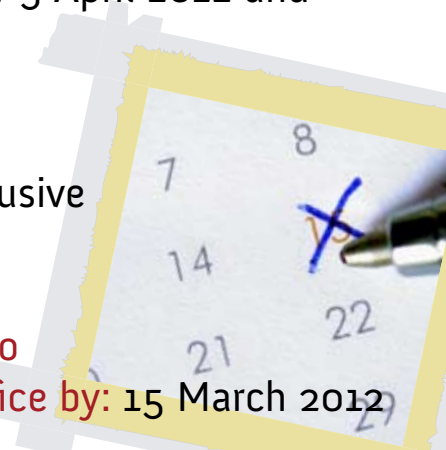
School Holidays:

2 April 2012 to  
13 April 2012 inclusive

Rent Increases:

1 April 2012

Standing Orders to  
be returned to office by: 15 March 2012



## what's inside:

- Garden Checklist
- New Housing Charter
- Board Members
- Rent Increase
- Dog Fouling
- Report A Repair
- Pentland 365

# new housing charter for scotland

Housing binds our communities, contributes to our wellbeing and affects our jobs and health opportunities. The Scottish Government have published their strategy and action plan for housing in the next decade. As part of this, the Housing Charter will be a starting point for assessing a landlord's performance. The government carried out a consultation on the 1st draft of the Charter and received more than 250 responses. In January they released a report of these responses that can be seen on their website [www.housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk).



The Charter will help to improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords deliver for their tenants and other customers and supports the Scottish Government's strategic objective of a safer and stronger Scotland. It will do so in the following ways:

- By providing tenants and other customers with a clear statement of what they can expect from social landlords, and helping them to hold landlords to account.
- It will focus the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their tenants and other customers.
- It will provide the basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well landlords are performing. This will enable the Regulator, tenants and other customers, and social landlords to identify areas of strong performance and areas where improvement is needed.

While the Charter should become enacted in April this year it will be 2013 before the first reporting of results are required by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

## 2 board members successful in achieving SQA in governance of scottish housing associations



*"Getting the opportunity to do the course was great as a tenant sitting on the board. So much has changed and continues to change since joining what used to be the Management Committee of PHA, governance and transparency has come to the fore of any organisation which belongs to its customers which in this case is our tenants. Also it's a bonus at my age! to gain a SQA which was interesting and relevant to our Housing Association as it is for Governance of Scottish Housing Associations."*

**Davie Macleod**

*"I am grateful for the support of the Association, and particularly the tenants, in allowing me to study for this qualification in Governance. I hope that what I have learned can add value to the work of the Board and further the aims of the Association."*

**Jeffrey Maclean**

# around the garden job checklist

- Trim lawn edges to keep the area neat and tidy
- Apply residual path weedkillers to paved and gravel areas
- Mow lawns on dry days if grass is growing strongly
- Treat timber fences, trellis and posts with preservative
- Apply moss killer to lawns
- Dig out lawn weeds, such as daisies and dandelions
- Check your RCD works for all outdoor power tools such as mowers and hedge cutters
- Dig out perennial weeds, such as couch grass and bindweed, from borders as soon as you spot them
- Wipe teak oil or other nourishing wood treatment on to wooden garden furniture to condition it for summer
- Cut back climbing plants that are hanging down



## GARAGES TO LET

PENNYLAND & MOUNT VERNON ESTATES  
(IMMEDIATE AVAILABILITY)

From £28.51 to £43.62 (pca)  
Garage Size Varies eg:

4.9m x 2.4m

4.7m x 2.9m

4.7m x 2.6m

For more details ask for  
Lisa or Yvonne: 01847 892 507

# tenant participation

Tenant Participation is about trying to engage with our tenants and getting their ideas, comments and suggestions included in our decision making so if anyone is interested in getting involved in this side of things there are several ways of doing so. You could come along to the meet and greet meetings which we hold on a regular basis, I promise these are really informal and we just sit and have cuppa and a chat about whatever issues the tenants have on their minds and what can be done to take concerns further.

We also hold meetings on subjects that we think will be of an interest to our tenants, the most recent covered the subject of the upcoming government welfare benefit reforms and money advice. Over the past year or so we have covered credit unions, preparing for winter, tenants rights and dog fouling. If you have any suggestions regarding a tenant issue you would like more information about please let us know so that any future presentations are not about what we think you might be interested in but what you really do want to here about.

If you prefer to talk about tenant issues on a one to one basis we would be very glad to hear from you at any time. We are also very keen to get a group of tenants together whom we can come to for feedback on all manner of tenant issues, repairs, rent etc. This would also be on a one to one basis, coming along to your home or having a chat on the phone so we can get an independent tenants view of our services. If anyone is interested in finding out more or would like to be involved in this process then please contact Carol Treasurer, Senior Property Officer.



## strategy event agrees rent increase at inflation plus 1%

Tenants, staff and Board members met to discuss the future strategy of the Association at its annual event on 28th January. On the agenda was this years rent increase along with the future of our maintenance programme and the development of our subsidiaries.

The day was hosted by Linda Ewart, a well know and respected figure in the field of Scottish Housing. Linda began by explaining the national housing picture and how that effects the Pentland Housing Association. This was followed by the Chief Executive, David Brookfield

highlighting the challenges faced by the Association in the coming months. Those that attended were then divided into groups for discussion and on the first issue, future maintenance programme. There was general agreement for the maintenance programme to be driven by the current plan and for adaptations to be prioritised based on level of urgency and cost effectiveness.

In the next session that considered the rent increase the audience heard that for the last 5 years the current policy of increasing rents by inflation plus 1% had not been applied. There was general agreement that the rent increase should return to inflation plus 1% as in the policy and that using RPIX as an inflation measure as opposed to CPI or RPI. "As we try to base the rent increase on the most recent figure for inflation we have not yet been able to advise what the increase will be. Once this is released by the Office of National Statistics we will write to all our tenants advising of the increase. The RPIX figure for December was 5% and we expect this to have fallen slightly in January." Said David "overall the day was a great success and the organisation is committed to continuing with this kind of event to ensure tenants are directly involved in our decision making processes"



# dog fouling



We all wish to live in a clean and healthy environment; however dog fouling remains a problem in our community and poses a serious health hazard. Did you know that if left on the ground for 2 weeks worms can develop causing toxocara canis, roundworm, salmonella, E.coli, Hydatid cysts and other diseases? This can result in pneumonia, asthma, blindness and even death!

We would like to remind everyone who is responsible for a dog, of the importance of ensuring that they clean up after it. Failure to pick up dog mess can result in a fixed penalty of £40 or ultimately, in you being charged with committing an offence carrying a penalty of £500. Even if you are not responsible for a dog, but witness someone else who is being negligent, you can do something about it! Report them to the dog warden. If anyone is aware of an area where dog fouling is a regular occurrence, then we encourage them to report it.

Pentland Housing Association is keen to join the Green Dog Walkers (Highland) Scheme – this is a community led initiative to combat dog fouling in the Highland Council Area. The scheme is a friendly way to try to combat dog fouling in our community. So if you and your neighbours would like to get together and help to solve the problem, we would be happy to hear from you.

Please remember dog fouling is dangerous, not to mention unpleasant, so always make sure you:

- **Clean up your dog mess immediately**
- **Dispose of it sensibly**
- **Know where your dog is and don't allow it to wander**

Dog waste bags are available at no cost from your Highland Council Service Point so there is no excuse!

# reporting a repair

June Noble  
(Known  
to staff as  
Trooper Noble)

Direct Number:  
01847 807110)



Now you have put a face to the voice on the end of the line when you are reporting a repair.

Reporting a repair is very easy and as you can see from June's smiley face she is more than happy to assist all our tenants. Should you have a repair you can contact the office via phone (**01847 807110**) and speak to June direct, email us or via our website.

If you can't contact us during working hours please leave a message with your Name, Address, Phone Number and a clear description of the repair. Access details should also be given these are essential.

**Alternatively you can phone our emergency number 07802 930 685**

A wee request from June herself, can you please keep the office up to date with your contact details, including a current email address, mobile and landline number.

Finally if you have any pets that are liable to make a break for it or be frightened by any of our contractors please let us know so that we can be aware of this.



*Thanks,  
June*



# fact file

	July '11 - September '11	October '11 - December '11
Units (Housing Stock)	474	486
Association Members	242	243
Arrears	2.18%	2.48%
Properties Let	11	29
Court Actions Initiated	9	2
New Tenancy Survey Completed	60%	100%
Routine Repairs Completed on Time	95%	96%
Emergency & Urgent Repairs Completed on Time	97%	100%
Satisfaction Handyerson Scheme	100%	100%

*"This quarters performance statistics show a good performance in most areas. This increase in the rent arrears figure is perhaps related to the time of year. We will be contacted those that defaulted during the month to ensure that they do not slip into difficulty with their rent."*

David Brookfield, Chief Executive



Never worry about home repairs again

0845 8505 365

www.pentland365.com

FREE TO JOIN

Pentland 365 is a scheme launched by Pentland Housing Association and Pentland Community Enterprises on the 1st November 2011 for home owners and landlords. Aimed at helping people access reliable, local tradesmen at reasonable prices it provides a complete home repair service for Caithness covering everything from 'middle of the night' emergency burst pipes, through to more routine jobs like roof and gutter repairs. It's free to join, there are no catches, members only pay for each repair, and all in the knowledge that we guarantee we'll be there when we are needed.

So far Pentland 365 is proving very popular – to date we have over 290 members and more than 80 repairs reported. People tend to join Pentland 365 when they require a repair. This years milder winter has meant less demand on trade repairs but why wait until last minute – remind your family and friends who are not PHA tenants they can join this scheme for no fee with no catches – just peace of mind.

## garage demolition

PCE Ltd is currently developing three new types of unit to replace the soon to be demolished garages on sites 3a, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10. Where these sites form part of a property boundary the owner/tenant will have been contacted to discuss replacement options.

The three pilot developments proposed are larger, fit for purpose car garages, covered car parking and small workshop/offices – where appropriate.

Not all demolished sites will be redeveloped at the same time, some sites will be taken down to foundation level and made secure awaiting future development.

Demolition was due to start February 2012 but due to unforeseen circumstances this will begin late March early April instead with phased demolition/development continuing throughout 2012.



# pentland energy advice update

It's fast approaching Pentland Energy Advice's first anniversary and what a busy year we have had with much focus on business development. It would be fair to say we have had an exciting and dynamic time since our launch in April 2011.

As well as keeping our usual services going, our biggest development was to train the staff as Airtightness technicians and purchase the equipment. Airtightness testing is now a mandatory test that all new domestic dwellings have to have when the house is completed. The test gives a reading of the airleakage and whether the building is meeting modern building standards. We are offering this service throughout the far north.

PEA are currently preparing to join a Highland Framework Agreement to deliver energy advice for tenants of the Highland Council and other social landlords throughout the highland area. We are also looking at joining the framework for the upcoming Greendeal which will be launched in Autumn 2012.

Our thermal imaging service which originally concentrated on heat loss from buildings is currently being expanded. We are now applying the camera

to other areas and working with businesses within the plumbing industry, veterinary profession and industrial areas. The camera lends itself extremely well to anything that needs a reading of temperatures out with normal operating conditions.

We continue to offer Energy performance Certificates to homeowners who wish to sell or rent the properties and believe we are still the most competitively priced.



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SERVICES:  
[www.pentlandenergy.co.uk](http://www.pentlandenergy.co.uk)



## pentland community enterprises update



PCE Ltd has a number of exciting projects in the pipeline. Working in partnership with Everybody Online, Thurso Harbour centre, Ormlie Young Mums, Melness and Tongue Community Trust, Whirlwind Renewables and the government Adopt an Intern programme to name a few.

We hope to see an IT Hub develop in the coming months which Everybody Online will co-ordinate courses from helping break down barriers to the internet. Depending on the success of a Wider Role funding application this will be based at The Cottage, Davidson's Lane.

Working with the Ormlie Community Association and other localised groups we hope to extend the Ormlie Young Mums group to cover the whole Dounreay drive to work area. Evolving the project to take into account all new mums. – whatever their age.

PCE Ltd are still in negotiations with Whirlwind Renewables to receive community benefit funds from a proposed windfarm in Caithness. Whirlwind recently hit the media after striking a similar deal with North Highland College.

The Centre for Scottish Public Policy runs a

scheme Adopt an Intern aimed at providing companies with a paid graduate for a maximum of 8 weeks. The idea behind the scheme is to give the graduate that vital CV experience to help secure permanent employment. PCE Ltd recruited a Masters graduate from Edinburgh University who worked as a researcher on our Micro Brewery project – thanks to the vital CV experience our graduate finally secured a full time job in London and leaves us after 7 busy weeks. The Micro brewery idea and research will continue as we work towards creating an exciting new business opportunity for Caithness.

The final main project PCE Ltd is working on is in partnership with the Melness and Tongue Community Trust. MTCT are a small organisation in North Sutherland who have identified fuel poverty within their community and wish to develop a project to tackle this. PCE Ltd is also constantly trying to secure funding for energy advice provision through Pentland Energy Advice and a partnership approach seemed logical. The project will aim to appoint two energy advisers that will span the Dounreay drive to work Area, this project is in it's infancy but carbon reduction, energy saving and affordable warm homes is the target this project shall strive towards.



Climate Challenge Fund



Adopt an Intern  
Everybody Online Experience the Internet

# planned property improvements 2011 - 2013

## Kitchen Renewals

The final kitchens are being installed by Steven Joiners, there are around 5 more kitchens yet to install for 2011/12.

## Periodic Electrical Inspections

Around 80% of our properties have now been inspected and checked by Korrie Electrical & Plumbing. The surveys have shown our electrical systems are in a good and safe condition. Some repairs have been highlighted and these will be undertaken by Graham Anderson under reactive maintenance.

## Asbestos Management

In order to ensure the Health & Safety of the contractor carrying out works we have to show that we as an Association are aware of any asbestos products being

present in the property. In order to do this we will be carrying out surveys. We anticipate around 50 properties will be surveyed in the coming months but those affected will be contacted before hand to allow access.

## 2012-13 Planned Property Improvements

We are currently programming the next batch of planned improvements. These will include at least 8 more roofs, 15 more kitchens and 15 more boilers. Should the budget allow we will add more to the above in this current year.

We will also be undertaking the painting of 30 timber clad properties around the St Peters, Fulmar and Howburn Road areas. Tendering for these is currently being under taken.

All those who are to get work will receive notice well before works actually begin, but if you feel that your property has a significant need of improvement please do not hesitate to contact us.

# access to rented housing in the caithness

Do you or any of your family need accommodation? Are you currently overcrowded and need more space? Is your son or daughter needing their own home but cant afford a mortgage? Then we are here to help and it is easier to apply than you may think. Demand for the Associations properties in Caithness is not as high as it used to be and while some of our property sizes are in high demand some can be allocated on low levels of houses need. So for example if your son or daughter is living with you and wants to set up home on their own then they can apply to go on the waiting list for a home and should not have to wait long for a property.

There are currently three housing associations operating locally in Caithness along with the Highland Council: Albyn Housing Society, Cairn Housing Association, and Pentland Housing Association. All are participating in a partnership called the Highland Housing Register, which offers a single way of applying for housing to any of the organisations. To apply for any or all of them, you just have to fill in one application form, [www.pentlandhousing.co.uk/apply-housing/rented-accommodation](http://www.pentlandhousing.co.uk/apply-housing/rented-accommodation). This information is then shared between all of the partners. However you can choose which of the organisations you want to be housed so you don't have to accept a property that you don't want. In addition, there are organisations in Caithness that offer accommodation for people with special needs. So if you or any of your family is interested in finding accommodation then why not call into Pentlands office or the Highland Council service point for more advice on all of you housing options.



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