

For tenants of North Lanarkshire Council

Issue 33/February 2022

Chief Executive's update

It goes without saying that 2021 was another year of unprecedented challenges as Coronavirus continued to have a major impact on our daily lives.



Whilst the health pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of housing service delivery, we have confronted challenges head on and continued to improve performance whilst delivering essential housing services to our tenants.

This is reflected by the fact we had three shortlistings at the prestigious Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Scotland Housing Awards 2021 for excellence in housing. Congratulations to our Tenant Participation team who received national recognition and scooped the title of "Best Frontline Housing Story" for their efforts during the pandemic. Well done also to our Central Rents and Housing Property Repairs and Maintenance teams who were both nominated and shortlisted for Housing Team of the Year. These awards promote and highlight the vital role housing professionals have across Scotland making a big difference to people's lives.

High levels of tenant satisfaction are also evident in our Annual Housing Performance Report 2020/21 which illustrates that 91% of tenants were satisfied with their overall housing service - exceeding the Scottish average of 88.9%. The report also highlights that 98.9% of reactive repairs were completed "right first time" - again exceeding the Scottish average of 91.5%.

With £170.608m Affordable Housing Supply Programme investment over the next five years, we are on track to meet our target to deliver 5,000 energy efficient and affordable new homes by 2035. We have now built 905 new homes with an additional 296 currently onsite and good headway has been made to identify more sites for a further 1,265 homes across North Lanarkshire in town centres and on tower reprovisioning sites.

Another key milestone was achieved by our Open Market Purchase Scheme's 500th purchase since its launch in April 2018. The scheme lets us buy back homes in areas where there is local demand for a type and size of property and in turn, it increases the supply of affordable housing across North Lanarkshire.

Plans to demolish over 1,700 flats including 15 tower blocks and redevelop the sites for new council homes are well underway. The physical regeneration and targeted investment towards towns and local communities will further develop the local economy and benefit those who live, learn, work, invest and visit North Lanarkshire. We want to create attractive well connected neighbourhoods and offer choices in housing and employment and further grow the local economy for all.

Our Local Housing Strategy for 2021-2026 is now finalised and details our ambitious vision for housing and related services. It is the culmination of two years of consultation and involvement with local people, communities, groups and wider stakeholders. I look forward to working with our communities and partners to deliver on our vision to achieve real change and improvements to people's lives.

Read on to find out more about our latest housing news and projects.





- Scottish Housing Day
- Garden awards
- Challenge Poverty Week
- Allocations policy review
- New build update



LIVEHERE





Foreword



Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter for tenants, where you can find out about our housing services and projects as well as our plans for 2022.

In November 2021 our new five year housing plan was approved and the "Local Housing Strategy for 2021-26" sets out our future plans for the service in areas including; housing delivery, homelessness, property condition, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, health and wellbeing and older people's and specialist housing. I'm proud of the real progress we've made so far in delivering some of its key actions and committed to building on this. Our ambition is to transform and regenerate communities, reduce inequality and disadvantage and create opportunities for people across North Lanarkshire to achieve their full potential and I believe this plan will see us achieve that.

One of our ambitious targets is to deliver 5,000 new council homes by 2035 and \pounds 170.608m of investment over the next 5 years and in the newsletter you will read about the progress and investment we have made so far.

One of the places I had the pleasure of visiting recently was Allershaw Tower where I was fortunate to meet those residents whose lives are being transformed with access and support to the internet, many of them for the first time. Getting online can improve an older person's day to day life and provide vital contact to the outside world. Our project supplied 200 devices and internet access to users and was funded through Connecting Scotland.

And finally, my congratulations to all the worthy winners of the 2021 garden award competition **North Lanarkshire in Bloom**. I was amazed at their efforts and the beautiful gardens they produced. Every year our entries get better and better, and I hope this year we will see even more entries from those of you with gardens to be proud of.

Cllr. Heather Brannan-McVey Convener, Housing and Regeneration Committee

Housing service praised by regulator

As Scotland's largest local authority landlord, we have responsibility for over 36,000 homes.

The Scottish Housing Regulator noted better performance than the Scottish Council average in categories including tenant satisfaction, homes and rents, quality and maintenance of homes, neighbourhoods and value for money.

The Regulator examines the performance of all social landlords in Scotland against a set of standards for delivering services to tenants and residents.

Highlights from the report included:

 weekly rents of £70.90 are well below the Scottish average of £83.70 with rent collection levels for 2020/21 being 97.9%.

- tackling antisocial behaviour saw 99.6% of cases being resolved compared to the Scottish average of 94.4%.
- housing repairs showed 98.9% of reactive repairs were completed "right first time" compared to the Scottish average of 91.5%. In addition, 98.8% of tenants who had repairs or maintenance carried out were satisfied with the service they received, compared to the Scottish average of 90.1%.
- tenant satisfaction showed 91% of tenants were satisfied with the overall service provided compared to the Scottish average of 88.9%. 92.5% of tenants were satisfied with keeping tenants informed compared to the Scottish average of 91.7%.

• The time to re-let homes fell to 29.1 days over the last year due to the health pandemic but compared well to the national average of 56.3 days.



Retired tenants are getting online

Elderly tenants in retirement complexes across North Lanarkshire are now getting online and enjoying all the benefits the internet will bring to their lives.

This is thanks to a new collaborative project with Housing Solutions, Service Integrator partner Agilisys and Digital NL's Driving Digital Locally campaign.

The project has been funded through Connecting Scotland with an award of 200 devices and MiFi boxes to support residents. Many elderly residents have never used the internet before and so a crucial part has been to set up a team of digital champions who help tenants connect with friends and family, carry out tasks like shopping and banking, and access services such as their GP surgery and the council. Isa Cox, a resident of Allershaw Tower is putting her new skills to good use "I have always been frightened of the internet and never owned a computer never mind an iPad, now with help and support I have an email address and have downloaded apps. It keeps my mind active, and my family are now sending me family photos".







Team at Energy Efficiency Awards

It was success for our Investment Team whose commitment to improving energy efficiency throughout North Lanarkshire was recognised by winning Scotland's Energy Efficiency Large Scale Project of the Year Award.

The award in conjunction with Pro-cast was for large scale energy works such as roofing and rendering and insulation. Our innovative energy efficiency measures to reduce fuel poverty also earned us a highly commended in the Council of the Year category.

We are investing over £63m in our homes over the next five years and energy efficiency works will help save tenants money as well as help deliver a carbon free Scotland.

Scottish Housing Day

Scottish Housing Day took place on 15 September 2021 and celebrated the impact that housing makes to the lives of people and communities across the country.



This year's theme was how housing can help tackle the climate emergency and all day we shared stories

about successful projects and signposted our tenants and residents to sources of advice, information and support. The Tenant Participation Team helped support the campaign by holding a series of successful online events for local communities.

We also showcased how our new build housing programme is helping to build for a greener future, with Net Zero homes being built in Airdrie as well as all our new build projects providing electric vehicle charging points.

<u>#scottishhousingday</u> <u>#scotclimateweek</u> <u>#LocalGovScot</u>

Awards success

Congratulations go to our Tenant Participation Team who were victorious at the prestigious Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Scotland Housing Awards 2021 for excellence in housing.

The award ceremony took place in November 2021 and our team had a well deserved win in the best frontline housing story category for their efforts during the pandemic. Well done also to our Housing Repairs and Maintenance Team and Central Rents Team who were both shortlisted for Team of the Year. Both teams were recognised for their outstanding work over the past year. These awards promote and highlight the vital role housing professionals have across Scotland making a difference to people's lives.

Help challenge poverty

Challenge Poverty Week took place in October and all week we highlighted what we and our partners are doing to tackle poverty, from the advice and resources available to a series of free virtual events.

Virtual events took place over the week on: Love Food Hate Waste, Helping Save Energy at Home and The impact housing can have on reducing poverty and ill health.

As well as events for communities there was also a series of Business Gateway events aimed at local businesses and opportunities to meet Business Gateway advisors individually.

Overall, the week was a great success and plans are already underway for future events. Help us make North Lanarkshire a place where people and communities are poverty free. **#ChallengePoverty #NowlsTheTime**

If you are worried about debt or experiencing financial difficulties contact our trained debit advisors. We can help with claiming benefits and money advice. Our team of trained money advisors can be contacted on 01698 332551 or visit northlanarkshire.gov.uk/benefitsand-money/money-advice



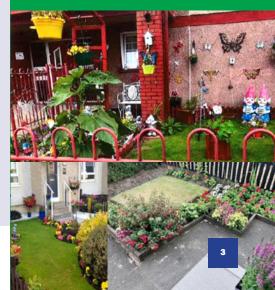
Gardens are Blooming Lovely

North Lanarkshire in Bloom Garden Awards had another great year and the standard was higher than ever.

Winners were chosen from an exceptional number of nominations and the results speak for themselves. Thanks go to North Lanarkshire Federation of Tenants' and Residents' who formed the judging panel.

Every winner received a certificate, trophy and prize voucher.

Congratulations to all and if you have a garden to be proud of then why not take part in this year's competition in summer 2022?







Routine repairs back on track

With the easing of restrictions and the reintroduction of internal routine repairs the Housing Property Repairs and Maintenance Team have managed to complete over 46,000 repairs in the last 7 months many of which had built up during the COVID restrictions.

Get a LIFT onto the property ladder in North Lanarkshire

The LIFT (Low-cost Initiative for First-Time Buyers) scheme helps first-time buyers, and other priority groups including current social renters, get onto the property ladder with Scottish Government support.

The Scottish Government contributes between 10% and 40% towards the property price and gets the same percentage back when it is sold. Alternatively, buyers can increase their share if they wish to at any point in future.

Allocations policy review

Plans to update council housing allocations are progressing following a survey with tenants.

The current policy, which was implemented in 2009, gives priority to those in most housing need whilst still recognising the aspirations of current tenants wishing to move to another house or area.

In line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, we have been consulting with stakeholders including tenants and the North Lanarkshire Federation of Tenants' and Residents' to get their views on proposed changes and a sample survey was carried out. The teams have faced enormous challenges since the onset of the pandemic with ongoing changes to material availability and COVID health and safety requirements.

Whilst the past few months have proved challenging our Annual Performance Report demonstrates the quality of our service.

"If it wasn't for LIFT, I would not have been able to purchase a property as I found it difficult to save a large amount of money for a deposit. I'm so grateful for LIFT and would definitely recommend it to others." Tracy, LIFT scheme buyer

In addition to first-time buyers, LIFT is open to:

- social renters
- people with a disability who can demonstrate a housing need
- members of the armed forces and veterans who have left within the past two years
- widows, widowers and other partners of those who have lost their life while serving

Changes include:

- encouraging people under occupying homes to consider downsizing if appropriate
- assisting veterans and armed forces personnel find suitable housing in line with commitments in the Armed Forces Covenant
- the timescale for how we prioritise people who are at risk of losing their accommodation/being made homeless within two months
- continuing to use discretionary powers to consider owner occupiers for social housing

The survey results showed 76.7% of the 644 respondents in favour, with plans now being



In 2020/21 housing repairs showed 98.9% of reactive repairs were completed "right first time" compared to the Scottish average of 91.5%.In addition, 98.8% of tenants who had repairs or

maintenance carried out were satisfied with the service they received, compared to the Scottish average of 90.1%.

in the armed forces within the last two years

 People aged over 60 who can demonstrate a housing need (not required to take a mortgage)

For more information and to find out if you are eligible, visit <u>www.linkhousing. org.uk/lift-tenants</u> or text 'LIFT' to 66777.



taken forward to update the current policy to include the amendments from April 2022.

Stephen Llewellyn, Head of Housing Solutions said: "Demand for council housing is very high in North Lanarkshire and we want to try and ensure our policies are fit to meet the needs of our communities.

The changes are aimed at maximising usage of our housing stock, prioritising those most in need and trying to ensure we best use the resources available to us.

We want to make it easier for people to downsize or move to council homes which are better suited for their needs to free up larger properties for families who need them".

Tenant Participation Team here to help

Whilst our Tenant Participation Team cannot hold their usual forms of consultation or meet face to face right now they are still here to support existing groups with advice and support and help new groups set up.

You can request a virtual meeting with any of the team via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

They are always happy to answer any questions you may have and to hear your views on what matters most to you within your community.

Visit online at: **northlanarkshire.gov.uk/** housing/get-involved or call 01698 302565

Upcoming Events

North Lanarkshire Federation: Food for Thought Programme 2022 **Tuesday 15th February 2022:** Social Security Benefits for Older People: Facilitated by the Voice of Experience Forum

Teams Online: 1.30pm - 2.30pm

For more information and to book a place contact the Tenant Participation Team at <u>TenantParticipation@northlan.gov.uk</u> or call 01698 302 565



Support

GREEN LIGHT for fiveyear housing plan

We've outlined our vision for housing and housing services across communities in our new five-year housing plan.

Our Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for 2021-26, sets out our future plans for the service in areas including; housing delivery, homelessness, property condition, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, health and wellbeing and older people's and specialist housing.

To produce a meaningful plan, we carried out a range of consultation to ensure local people, communities and wider stakeholders could share their views.

We've set ambitious targets. We're:

- delivering 5,000 new council homes by 2035, and £170.608m Affordable Housing Supply Programme investment over the next 5 years
- reshaping and populating our town centres to achieve our Town Visions
- continuing to transform our communities by delivering the tower re-provisioning programme (1,760 demolitions planned in phase 1)
- delivering the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to prevent and tackle homelessness

tackling climate change and fuel poverty by delivering key energy efficiency measures and contributing to our Net Zero targets.

Commenting on the plan, Convener of Housing and Regeneration, Councillor Heather Brannan-McVey, said: "I'm proud of the real progress we've made in delivering key actions to date and committed to building on this. Our LHS will see us realise our ambitions to transform



and regenerate communities, reduce inequality and disadvantage and create opportunities for people across North Lanarkshire to achieve their full potential."



Building on our supply of new housing

We've released our first yearly New Housing Supply update, highlighting the project's progress, targets set and challenges faced, as we deliver our ambitious housing plans for 5,000 new homes by 2035.

We've already built 905 new homes with a further 296 on site and 175 in total expected to complete by April 2022. Sites have been identified and are at various stages of progression for a further 1,265 homes across North Lanarkshire, including a number of town centre sites and Phase 1 of our tower programme, to transform our towns and communities and improve the lives of our residents.

Convener of Housing and Regeneration, Councillor Heather Brannan-McVey, said: "We're continually adding to our housing supply and building on the progress already made. Our new modern homes are designed to the highest standard and are helping to meet the needs of households affected by disability, to tackle fuel poverty and reduce social inequality.

"By driving forward our ambitious housing plans we're transforming local communities, providing jobs that boost the local economy and meeting the needs and aspirations of our tenants now and for the future."







Are you unemployed and looking to get into work?

North Lanarkshire's Working can help!

In partnership with Routes to Work, North Lanarkshire's Working offers a range of support and advice to help get you into work.

It provides access and funding to training to boost your chances of securing a job, can help with confidence-building to improve your self-esteem and offers advice about debt, money and childcare. Aftercare support is also offered once you've secured a job. North Lanarkshire's

Towering investment

Our towers investment and reprovisioning strategy continues to make great progress despite the difficulties we have faced because of the pandemic.

Our fire door installation and associated works to all towers is now almost complete. The installation of interlinked fire alarms in all our properties is now almost complete. The legal requirement to have connected alarms comes into force this month and applies to all Scottish homes not just council tenants. Ensuring that if one alarm goes off within a property they all do means quicker detection of fire and safer homes.

The demolition programme is also still ongoing and the most recent tower to be demolished was Burnside Tower in Coatbridge. The next planned demolition will be the low rise properties at Stanhope Place, Wishaw that will be commencing at the start of 2022. Coursington, Allan & Draffen Towers in Motherwell will follow

closely behind and preparations begin in April 2022 with expected demolition in summer 2022.

Other works include sprinklers being installed and completed shortly in Burnside Lodge and Doonside Tower. Works are also being scheduled for Glassford, Woodside, Glen, Coltswood and Redbridge Towers in the coming months.

For information on all our investment programme visit: northlanarkshire. gov.uk/regeneration-andinvestment/investing-housing



Alternatively you can contact the TP Team for more info at



Working has access to a wide variety of exclusive, permanent jobs with local businesses - only available to those living in North Lanarkshire. The scheme has already supported over 7,000

people into work and can help you too.

To find out more, or to register text JOB 60060 or call 08000730226



TenantParticipation@northlan.gov.uk or on 01698 302 565.

North Lanarkshire Federation's Annual Conference 2022: Saturday 11th June 2022 - Bellshill Hilton

Save the date!

Due to the pandemic the North Lanarkshire Federation of Tenants' and Residents' has been unable to host its annual conference for the last two years but this year it has been provisionally booked for Saturday 11 June, restrictions permitting at the time.

We will keep you updated on our plans and more information will be provided via our Facebook page, through our website, and the Tenant Participation Team Facebook page.





Telephone switchover on its way

Did you know the UK is moving from analogue telephone to a faster digital system? With work already underway, there are plans to switch off the old analogue network for good in 2025.

This change will affect homes and businesses throughout the UK, including homes that have community alarm equipment. The switchover may seem daunting, but it needn't be.

What does the telephone switchover mean for you?

From 2025, you will no longer plug your landline phone into its own socket on the wall. Instead, it will be plugged into your Wi-Fi router and work off your household internet connection.

If you don't currently have broadband, don't worry. The UK communications regulator, Ofcom, has said that providers

Advice for households on preventing vermin

Tenants are being asked to follow practical advice to prevent rats and mice around their homes.

Our Protective Services Team is contacting residents in areas affected by rats with an information leaflet explaining how to deter vermin from properties and gardens. The council is also cutting back vegetation and removing rubbish in communities. Rats are attracted to a food source, so please put all rubbish inside your household bins, keep the lids closed and store bins away from a fence or wall.

If you put food out in your garden for wild birds, it should be cleared away at the end of each day.

As rats only need a gap of 15 mm to get through, any gaps in house or shed walls and around pipes should be sealed.

Information is available on the council's web site at <u>www.northlanarkshire.gov.</u> uk/pests-and-pollution/rats



must offer basic internet connections for phone calls only. You won't need to fork out for a superfast connection that you don't intend to use

What about the telephone switchover for community alarm users?

The Community Care alarm used in North Lanarkshire currently uses a traditional landline connection which will be affected by the switchover, but this is no cause for concern. There are things we can do to let you continue to have a community alarm response service.

What do you need to do?

For the most part, you don't need to take any action. Instead, your telephone provider will contact you when work is about to begin in your area.

The digital telephone switchover will not happen overnight. The main telephone

providers began work in 2017 and are completing the project in phases. However, they have not published a schedule for this work. You can contact your supplier directly to find out when they intend to start work in your area, their number will be on your latest bill.

What are we doing to support you?

Work is now underway to assist with the analogue to digital transition within North Lanarkshire. We are looking to upgrade all the technology associated with your community alarm to digital ready models.

This work will be ongoing for the next two years, with further information on the transition to be released over the coming months. Throughout the switchover we will keep you well informed and update regularly.

Test regularly helps prevent the spread of Covid-19

It still remains important to test regularly to help stop the potential spread of coronavirus.

Asymptomatic testing identifies cases which may otherwise go undetected and allows those individuals to self-isolate and reduce the risk of spreading the virus to friends, family or people they come into contact with.

Our asymptomatic testing site at Airdrie Leisure Centre offers testing 7 days a week and offers dedicated advice and free tests. Staff will carry out your registration, record your results, process your test and all you need to do is pop along, take a self-administered swab and you will get your test result within 15 minutes. Test at home - New easier to use lateral flow testing kits are available to everyone, even if you don't have symptoms. You can order them online or pick them up from one of our mobile, regional or pop-up testing centres. Please remember to record your result, even if you test negative.

Reporting every result helps to give a better picture of the level of coronavirus in the community. The most recent advice is to minimise your contacts as much as possible and to take a lateral flow test every time before meeting others.

By following most recent guidance, we can all help protect each other.

For more information on testing visit: <u>www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/</u> <u>coronavirus/latest-health-</u> <u>information/community-testing</u>







Changes to our services

Many of our day-to-day services have been significantly affected by our response to coronavirus.

We have a dedicated section on our website **northlanarkshire.gov.uk**/ **coronavirus** with regular updates on services affected together with the latest national advice and guidance.

Housing

Our first stop shops and housing offices are closed to the public at this time.

If you need to get in touch regarding a housing issue please call your local housing office.

How to contact us

To discuss any aspect of your tenancy or if you need general advice about housing you should contact your local housing office.

AIRDRIE

1st Floor Coats House, Gartlea Road, Airdrie ML6 9JA

t: 01236 758035 e: <u>airdrie-cumbernauldhousing@northlan.</u> gov.uk

BELLSHILL

26 Motherwell Road, Bellshill ML4 1RE

t: 01698 332340 e: <u>bellshillhousing@northlan.gov.uk</u>

COATBRIDGE

Buchanan Centre, 126 Main Street, Coatbridge ML5 3BJ

t: 01236 812561 e: <u>CKHousing@northlan.gov.uk</u>

CUMBERNAULD

Fleming House, Ground Floor, 2 Tryst Road, Cumbernauld G67 1JW

t: 01236 632726 e: airdrie-cumbernauldhousing@northlan. gov.uk

KILSYTH Parkfoot Street, Kilsyth G65 9AA t: 01236 828120 e: <u>CKHousing@northlan.gov.uk</u>

If you need this information in large print, on audio tape, in Braille or in another language, please contact:

t: 01698 274139 **f:** 01698 403005 **e:** <u>housingservices@northlan.gov.uk</u>



MOODIESBURN

Blackwoods Crescent, Moodiesburn G69 0EZ

t: 01236 638888 e: <u>CKHousing@northlan.gov.uk</u>

MOTHERWELL

Dalziel Building, 7 Scott Street, Motherwell ML1 1SX

t: 01698 274135 e: motherwellhousing@northlan.gov.uk

SHOTTS

162-164 Station Road, Shotts ML7 4AW t: 01501 824747 e: <u>shottshousing@northlan.gov.uk</u>

VIEWPARK

135 Burnhead Street, Viewpark G71 5DD t: 01698 403700

e: viewparkhousing@northlan.gov.uk

WISHAW Houldsworth Centre, Kenilworth Avenue, Wishaw ML2 7LP t: 01698 302920 e: wishawhousing@northlan.gov.uk

Home buying scheme hits 500

A scheme delivering additional council homes has hit a new milestone with a 500th property being purchased.

As Scotland's largest local authority landlord, we launched our open market purchase scheme in April 2018, as an expansion to our empty homes purchase scheme, to provide new homes and futures for families and individuals across the authority area. The scheme enables the purchase of properties that are for sale on the open market and are generally former council houses which were purchased under right to buy. We receive a grant funding contribution from the Scottish Government towards the cost of each purchase.

Praising the success of the scheme Pamela Humphries, Head of Planning and Regeneration said: "When we launched this scheme, we identified properties which would boost our current housing stock, represent good value for money and most importantly, make a real difference for people within our communities. Some homes had become an eye sore having been abandoned or neglected by owners, while others were being sold in areas in which we knew there was high demand for council properties.

We are delighted the scheme has proven such a success and has meant we can get more people into homes in the communities they want to live in.

And at a meeting of the Housing and Regeneration Committee, elected members agreed to extend the scheme further to allow the targeted purchase of homes in blocks to allow common works to progress, with the owner being given the option to remain in the property as a council tenant.

For more information contact us at: <u>councilbuyback@northlan.gov.uk</u> or call 07976 851581

MANDARIN

如果你需要用其他语言或者其他格式表示这些信息,请与我们联系 以便讨论你的要求。

POLISH Jeżeli potrzebujesz tą informację w innym języku lub formacie, proszę,

skontaktuj się z nami, żeby przedyskutować Twoją potrzebę.

اگر آپ کودد سری زبان میں یہ معلومات در کار ہو تو برائے مہر بانی ہم سے مندرجہ ذیل پنہ پر رابطہ کر س ARABIC

اذا كنت بحاجة الى هذه المعلومات في لغةأخرى أوعلى شكل آخر، يرجى الاتصال بنا لمناقشة الاحتياجات الخاصة بك