



### Community Planning in Orkney – July 2016 update



April's meeting of the Orkney Partnership Board featured discussions on two big topics – social housing and fuel poverty.

The main issues around housing are build costs and funding regulations that sometimes don't suit the islands, although the Scottish Government's new Rural Housing Fund will hopefully provide some much needed housing in Orkney's communities. While Government unit funding for social housing has increased, it's difficult to deliver properties in Orkney within the funding limits due to higher costs, particularly when developing houses in the isles. In April there were 550 households on the social housing waiting list, 300 of these in Kirkwall. On the planning side, it's hoped that the independent review of the Scottish planning system might result in some flexibility in planning regulations, although the Council will continue to lobby for fully island proofed policies.

Fuel poverty is a real issue in Orkney and worse in the isles. The main reasons for this are the high cost of fuel, relatively low incomes and the quality and age of some of our housing. Orkney produces more than 100% of the electrical energy it uses, yet electricity still costs more than in Inverness and most of the rest of the United Kingdom. There is a wide range of fuel poverty and energy efficiency initiatives but the sheer number of these and the complexity of some of the schemes themselves can be very confusing. Grants are often designed for urban housing and don't take account of the fact that rural detached properties cost much more to insulate. Partner agencies will



encourage frontline staff such as home carers and GPs to identify some of Orkney's vulnerable households so that they can be offered help and advice.

The Orkney Partnership Board has written to the new Scottish Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart MSP, to lobby for assistance. The 'one size fits all' national approach to fuel poverty and housing provision rarely works in Orkney and a more flexible approach, like that demonstrated through the Rural Housing Fund, would assist Orkney to meet housing need and combat fuel poverty.

If you're having difficulty heating your home, or if you know someone who is, there are organisations that can help by giving free and impartial advice on energy efficiency.

Home Energy Scotland can advise you on the various grants and funding available to make your home more energy efficient. You can phone an advisor on **0808 808 2282**

THAW Orkney can give you advice on energy efficiency, energy switching and securing grant funding. Find out more on their website [www.thaworkney.co.uk](http://www.thaworkney.co.uk) or by phone on **01856 878388**

The Orkney Partnership's Positive Ageing Delivery Group aims to keep us active and independent as we get older. As part of that they want to help older people play a



positive part in their communities and to be valued for that. The group, along with [Orkney Voices](#), recently held an 'Unexpected ageing – changing the view' photo competition. It had been launched along with a questionnaire as part of the group's work to address stereotyping of older people. They had asked for photos of younger and older people engaging in activities showing

something unexpected and positive about ageing. One of the winners was 'Learning at the potter's wheel' by Jenny Hall, and the others can be seen [here](#) on the Orkney Communities website.

The June meeting of the Orkney Partnership Board looked at the Place Standard, a new way of analysing your locality to highlight what's working well and what needs improving. Will it work for islands? More on this in our next update.

If you would like more involvement in community planning, and making a difference to your community, or if you would like this publication in a different language or format, please contact us by email on [corporateservices@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:corporateservices@orkney.gov.uk) or telephone 01856 873535 ext 2155