

Island Cottages Limited

Newsletter



Winter 2023

Winter is here and we are fast approaching Christmas and we hope everyone is keeping safe and well.

The office will be closed from Friday 22nd December 2023 until Tuesday 2nd January 2024 but we will have a member of staff pop into the office on the 27th & 28th December to see if there are any emergencies. If you have any emergencies, please contact them on the emergency numbers below.

We have been talking about having a summer fayre. Could we please have any thoughts on whether you would be interested and if so, an idea's you would like to see there. Please contact Sarah at islandcottages@outlook.com.

If you have any concerns that we may be able to help with or signpost you to the correct person do not hesitate to contact us in the office. Numbers for our out of hours repair emergencies are included in this newsletter.

Telephone: 741001

Email: islandcottages@outlook.com

By letter: 1 Taylor Court, The Green, Shorwell, PO30 3LQ

Website: <https://www.island-cottages.co.uk/>



OFFICE OPENING HOURS

Please be aware that the office will be closed on a **MONDAY** until further notice. For electrical and plumbing emergencies contact LEMLEC on **01983 294557**. If they are not emergencies, please leave a message on our answer phone and it will be responded to when we are back in the office.

The office will be open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 9.00am until 4.00pm.

Occasionally, some of you have not had your call answered on our normal working days. As you are aware, we only ever have one member of staff in the office on a working day and unfortunately if that member of staff is off sick or called out on an emergency there will be no one available to answer your call.

Also, staff will occasionally have holidays which also means the office will be closed. When holidays occur, we will try to make sure the office has cover or that another member of staff will come into the office to check the answer phone.

General Enquiries: islandcottages@outlook.com

Rent Enquiries: islandcottagesfinance@outlook.com

Housing Manager Enquiries: islandcottageshousing@outlook.com You can of course contact any of these emails for any issues and we will direct them to the correct person but bear in mind that our Finance Manager only works on a Tuesday and our Housing Manager only works on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

All repairs should be phoned through to any member of staff Tuesday to Friday.

For any emergencies please contact the out of hours number below.

Please Read - Changes to Out of Hours

OUT OF HOURS

When the office is closed, please report **emergency electrical repairs** and **emergency plumbing repairs** directly to

LEMLEC on 01983 294557

If you are having difficulty in contacting either of these contractors, you may contact your own contractor for emergencies only. If you do contact your own contractor to undertake works without contacting LEMLEC we will require further detailed information

from you including times you tried to contact our emergency contractor, circumstances etc.

RESIDENT CONTACT DETAILS

If you have an email address that you access please can you pop an email to us at islandcottages@outlook.com as this is the fastest, most cost effective and also environmentally friendly way of communication.

If You have any questions about rent payments please contact the Finance Manager in the office or by email islandcottagesfinance@outlook.com

Message from the Housing
Manager

Tenant Satisfaction Questionnaire

Thank you for all of you who returned the questionnaire, we will be analysing the results and a report will be provided to you in January. Those of you who provided comments that require an answer will be contacted separately.

The successful winner of the £50 prize draw has been notified and they have received their prize. They said it will come in handy for Christmas as we are sure it will.

2023 Inspections/Surveys



The 2023 survey is now completed and was primarily for programming future improvements where we have to predict potential failures and ensure we have sufficient finance to carry out the work but equally, ensuring that we do not overspend.

Costs are being analysed and following a Business Plan meeting in January during which Board members will confirm the budgets, we will be in a position to start programming the work for 2024.



GENERAL ACCESS FOR INSPECTIONS/APPOINTMENTS

We would just like to remind you that it is in your tenancy agreement that access must be given in order for your landlord or your landlord's representatives to carry out necessary works/repairs and inspections. We appreciate there are a number of occasions when access is required in order that we may carry out essential maintenance/chimney sweeps/

fire safety checks etc, but I am sure you will appreciate these are essential so we can keep your home in good order.

However, we are aware that some tenants may be reluctant to have Trades people in their homes, If you have any concerns regarding this please contact us so that we can discuss and try to resolve any issues. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued co-operation, however, should you experience any difficulties please do contact us.

SMOKE & CO ALARMS – Although we carry out annual checks, please remember the Fire Service recommend you check the batteries in your smoke and CO alarms every week to ensure they are working. If you experience any difficulties with either of the alarms including battery replacement please contact us immediately.

Damp and Condensation

We are now approaching the time of year where damp and condensation may become a problem in UK homes, particularly when the temperature drops very low outside.

There are 3 main causes of damp - Rising Damp, Penetrating Damp and Condensation.

Rising and Penetrating Damp are problems that are fully our responsibility and after reading the attached/enclosed advice article from National Energy Action, (who are a charity offering free advice on energy matters), you think you have a Rising or Penetrating Damp problem, please contact us as soon as possible on 01983 741001.

Condensation is a joint responsibility. For tenants, you should follow the guidance in the enclosed/attached advice note and for us as Landlords, we should offer advice and consider any improvements that may reduce condensation, e.g.; providing extractor fans where you do not have any and help to improve the insulation value of your home.

If you have any queries or worries regarding damp in your home, please contact us.

National Energy Action also offers lots of free energy advice to help with fuel poverty and this can be found on their website nea.org.uk.

Allocations, Transfers and Exchanges

All Registered social housing providers have to comply with Standards set by the Social Housing Regulator and Government, one of these standards is the Tenancy Standard which includes Allocations and Mutual Exchanges.

There is an expectation within the Standard that Registered Providers, such as ourselves, shall co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties and meeting obligations in nominating agreements.

In the past, as Island Cottages are a small and relatively unknown social housing provider on the Island, those in need would contact the larger housing associations on the Island and IW Council. We had very few applicants and those that we did have were not in critical need and none were what might be considered urgent.

There are four housing associations on the Island, namely; Southern Housing Group, Sovereign Housing, Vectis Housing and ourselves. All of the other housing associations have signed up to what is known as Island Homefinder with the Isle of Wight Council who administer the letting system. The Council operates the Housing Register and will only place applicants that qualify onto the Register/Homefinder. The qualifying process is far more rigorous than ours and ensures that only those in need are housed.

Therefore, we no longer keep our own Housing Register and liaise with Isle of Wight Council as and when a vacancy in our properties occurs.

However, there is an opportunity for our tenants to exchange or transfer into an existing Island Cottages property providing they are eligible and if you are interested in being placed on our internal list please contact Sarah on 01983 741001 or email any of the staff via the emails provided at the beginning of this newsletter.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Island Cottages Ltd are members of the Housing Ombudsman scheme. Although we have a Complaints Policy, you can contact them direct if you wish but they may refer you back to us to deal with your complaint through our policy.

Complaints may be difficult to determine as any concern might be a complaint e.g., a repair you are reporting. If, however, the repair has not been actioned within a certain time. (All Island Cottages reactive repairs should have been actioned within 1 month), then it becomes more serious and you can then commence the official complaint process. We would hope it doesn't get to this stage and we will work with you to try and resolve any concerns before they get to this stage but you can contact the Ombudsman if this is the course of action you want to take.

Attached/enclosed with this newsletter is a guidance note for contacting the Ombudsman but details are:

- Online complaint form: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/
- Phone: **0300 111 3000**
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Postal Address: **Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ**

The Ombudsman Service also has on its website an area where residents can access to see what type of complaints you can complain about and what service you should be receiving from us.

This can be seen by logging onto the following website.

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/>

With all the news of the latest energy price hikes please find some sources of information that may be helpful if you are struggling with rising costs.



On Universal or Pension credit?
Essential Broadband is Here

The same speeds but at a more affordable rate, for those on Universal or Pension Credit.

Full-Fibre Ess. 100/100
£24.95pm
£16.50 pm
£100 guarantee

wightfibre
Because We Care

ESSENTIAL BROADBAND

A low cost full-fibre broadband for the home, available if you're on Universal or Pension credit. Stay connected and enjoy broadband that just works.

Who is eligible?

WightFibre Essential Broadband is available to anyone who is currently claiming Universal Credit or Pension Credit. You can apply if you're a new customer or an existing customer. Only the person who is claiming the benefit can apply.

With all the news of the latest energy price hikes please find some sources of information that may be helpful if you are struggling with rising costs.



We save most households £200 per year on their energy bills. We can help you switch to a cheaper supplier, reduce your energy and water use which will help you stay in budget. We also help people access grants and other assistance. Every year we help over 1000 people including young families, veterans, pensioners and disabled people. We work in partnership with many organisations including Island Cottages.

To book a visit, please email visits@footprint-trust.co.uk or call 01983 822282

Help for Households



**Help for
Households**

Help for households is a Government website explaining how you can gain financial support:

If you claim certain benefits or tax credits, you may be eligible for an extra payment to help with the cost of living. If you're eligible, payments will be made automatically.

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk>

Turn to us is a national charity helping people in financial hardship to see what benefits, grants and resources that may be available to them.

Turn to us calculator: <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>



Direct.gov Universal credit information

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/other-financial-support>



<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/>

GETTING HELP PAYING YOUR ENERGY BILLS

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/>



Support with gas, electric and water bills - Isle of Wight

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/connectforcommunities/supportforfamilies/supportwithbills-overview/utilities-iow>

Xmas Events

Garlic Farm – I love Wight Pop up Christmas Shop will be at allium Barns at the Garlic Farm daily from **10th November – 24th December 2023**.

*Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New
Year*

