



FORTH ESTATE

December 2008

Finally... site start!

We are very pleased, that after more than a fair share of waiting, we have begun building works at site 5 in Raploch.

This site, next to the Community Campus, will see 50 new homes being built. They range from 1 bedroom flats to 4 bedroom houses. We expect the first tenants to move in early 2010. These homes are part of a larger development of homes for sale. Together



they are the next important step in building the new Raploch. Anyone who wants more information about our homes for rent should contact our office. All enquiries about the homes for sale should be directed to Wimpey and Crudens, who both have sales offices in Raploch.



Seasons Greetings

The Committee and staff of Forth would like to wish you all a very happy time over the festive period.

We would also like you to note that the Forth office will be closed as follows:

Office closes 24th December at 1pm

Office reopens 5th January at 9.00am

If you have any emergency repairs during this period please contact Stirling Council (see details elsewhere).

Have a great time and we'll see you in 2009!

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

To Mr & Mrs Sellstrom for winning the £25 voucher for returning their 'Points of View' card during July-September 2008.



Early Closing

19th December

Our offices will be closed from mid-day on Friday 19th December.

We apologise for any disruption that this may cause but the staff are getting their party frocks on and heading out for a Christmas lunch together (the maintenance staff in particular will no doubt look their best!).

If anyone has a genuine emergency repair on that afternoon they should contact Stirling Council. Telephone:

07715 004 265



but you still need to pay your rent! We all know that Christmas can be an expensive time of year, however you need to budget to ensure that you can pay your bills and prevent starting 2009 in debt.

A New Year is all about starting afresh and making resolutions: the Housing Officers do not wish to first foot tenants in 2009 regarding rent arrears.

If you are going away over the festive period, remember to take your payment card with you. Whether you are going to Aberdeen or Ayr, you can still make your rent payments with your payment card. You can pay at any Post Office, or outlet displaying the following logo's:



If however you do have any problems paying your rent please contact your Housing Officer immediately to advise and to make a repayment arrangement with them.

Elaine Shepherd
Housing Officer
01786 431 927

elaine@forthha.org.uk

Isabel Reilly
Housing Officer
01786 431 926

isabel@forthha.org.uk

New Gas Cooker Regulations

New Regulations have been introduced concerning gas cookers which may affect you. Unfortunately, these Regulations have not been well publicised amongst the general public.

Simply put:

if you live in a flat, and are thinking of buying a **new gas cooker**, this **must be fitted with a flame supervision device** (FSD).

The flame supervision device (FSD) is a safety system which cuts the supply of gas if the flame goes out or becomes unstable.

If you live in a flat, and buy a new cooker **without a flame supervision device**, a CORGI engineer **will not** be able to fit it.

Where gas operatives identify gas cooker appliances without flame supervision devices during the **annual gas servicing** these should be labelled as not

to current standards (NCS). This does **not** mean that the appliance is unsafe or that you need to buy a new cooker.

If you move house to a flat, either by transfer or mutual exchange, you do not need to buy a new cooker. When installed by a CORGI engineer it should be labelled as not to current standard. Tenants may also find that some gas engineers are reluctant to fit second hand cookers.

Forth is number 1!

You may, or may not realise, it but Forth is the number 1 association in the Stirling area!

Every year the Scottish Government publish statistics measuring how wee housing associations are performing in a number of key areas. This years statistics were recently published (see

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk) and in several areas Forth came out top in the Stirling area.

Of all the housing associations working locally we have the most homes, the quickest response to filling empty homes and the lowest loss of rent from empty homes. Even in areas where we are not number 1, such as rent arrears or

repair responses we are performing well above the average.

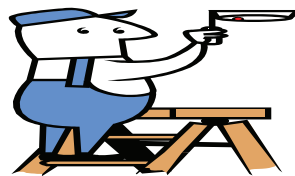
These statistics are not the be all and end all. However, they do indicate that we are operating effectively: the more efficient we are, the lower our costs and the lower your rents.



Access

Normally, when works are required to our homes we will advise you of when access is to be provided. When you report a repair to our office, the contractor is usually given your telephone number and asked to contact you, to make a suitable appointment. However, where Planned and/or Cyclical works are to be undertaken, such as the annual check of smoke detectors or boiler replacements, it is not always possible to have individual appointments. When Planned and Cyclical

works are to be carried out, the contractor will produce a programme of works with dates against each of the homes\developments, where the work is to be completed. We will then write to you informing you of the proposed date when the work will be carried out.



This year we have successfully carried out:

- Electrical safety checks
- Annual safety checks to smoke detectors
- Installation of new gas boilers
- Replacement weather seals to windows and doors
- Painter works
- Annual gas safety checks.

We appreciate that you may have other demands on your time and that the proposed appointments may not always be suitable. If this is the case, all we ask is that you

**A big thank you
from Technical
Services!**

either contact the contractor or this Office, to cancel\re-arrange the appointment. Unfortunately, not all tenants rearrange appointments. This leads to lost time on the

contractor's part and can lead to increased costs, which you pay for through your rents!!! So to all of you who make the contractors job easier..... and ours, a big thank you from Technical Services.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

It is proposed that estate management visits and close cleaning will be carried out during the weeks beginning:

Month	Estate management	Close cleaning
January	12 th & 26 th	5 th & 19 th
February	9 th & 23 rd	2 nd & 16 th
March	9 th & 23 rd	2 nd , 16 th & 30 th



Rent Setting Review

You will probably recall that earlier in the year we announced that we were reviewing our rent setting policy. We also asked tenants to give us their views by completing a brief questionnaire.

Several months on and we can advise you that we now have a new policy in place. Thanks to a large number of tenants who completed questionnaires and a smaller number who accepted the invitation to attend a focus group, we are confident that the new policy will do the things you wanted.

There won't be major changes on how we set the rents for our homes but the new system will be easier to administer and is flexible enough to address changes over time. The rent for our homes will continue to vary according to size and amenities, to reflect the cost of building and repair. However, there will be no variation based on location because our homes are very similar wherever we build them.

The new rents will take effect from April next year. There are "winners" and "losers" in any change. However, we have agreed to phase in any changes. The overall effect is keep our rental income unchanged with the exception of the annual rental increase. On the subject of the annual increase our Management Committee will be considering this subject very soon. So watch out for a consultation exercise before Christmas. This is intended to give you your say and it is important you don't overlook this in the festive rush.

Kitchen Replacements

We are pleased to announce that PME Partnerships Ltd has been appointed to carry out the replacement of kitchen units to our developments at Barn Road, City Centre, and Colquhoun Street, Braehead.

This work is programmed for

January – March 2009. Residents have been sent Tenant Choice sheets to record their choice of new fitments. Residents will be kept up to date with further information as the contract progresses.

**Replacement
Kitchens at Barn
Road and Colquhoun
Street**

In the mean time, should you have any questions regarding these works, please contact Iain Stirling, Senior Technical Services Officer, at our office.

De Moray Court Action

A number of tenants at De Moray Court are keen to take some action to improve their area.

They recently met with staff and chatted about a number of improvements that they'd like to see, ranging from less litter to better landscaping.

Everyone agreed that it would be good to build better relationships with their neighbours and to en-

courage a stronger sense of community. Two ideas being considered are organising a "community action day" in the spring and setting up a Tenants Association.

If you live at De Moray Court watch out for details of a second tenants meeting in the early New Year and make the effort to go along. If you live in another devel-

opment and you too would like to see it improved, speak to your Housing Officer in the first instance.





EMERGENCY NUMBERS
REPAIRS SERVICE
STIRLING COUNCIL BUILDING SERVICES
07715 004 265

During the Festive period the Emergency Repairs service at Stirling Council Housing Services (SCHS), will operate with a skeleton staff, who will only respond to emergency and urgent repair requests.

We aim to make safe and/or secure an Emergency Repair within 4 hours of the contractor being notified. The following are considered an emergency:

- **Gas leak.** *Turn your gas supply off at the meter and open windows. Telephone: SCHS 07715 004 265
Or TRANSCO 0800 111 999*
- **No Heating/Hot water.** Tenants with gas fired combination boilers should contact SCHS
- **No cold water supply.** Check that the stop cock at your mains supply is turned on. Check with neighbours to see if they have a supply of cold water. If they do not, contact Scottish Water on 0845 601 8855. If it is only your home that is effected contact SCHS
- **Choked WC.** ***This is considered to be a rechargeable repair.*** Should you call SCHS you will normally be recharged any costs incurred in clearing the choke. Normally a choked WC can be cleared by using a plunger which can be bought at most "Pound" stores for very little cost.
- **Blocked waste pipes.** (Sink, bath, Wash-hand basin ,or shower) These too are ***rechargeable repairs.*** You will normally be recharged any costs incurred should you call SCHS. Again most choked waste pipes within the property can be cleared using a plunger.
- **Broken windows.** This will normally be boarded up/made safe for attention after the Festive holidays.
- **No Electricity.** Check there is credit in the meter. Check if your neighbours have been affected. If this is the case, contact Scottish Power. Remember if there are severe weather conditions a power line could be down.

Alternatively check your Consumer Unit (This will normally be located in the hall or hall cupboard) Are any of the "trip" switches down? If so, something will normally have caused this to "trip". Has a bulb blown? If this is the case, replace the bulb and reset the switch. Normally when there is a problem with the sockets (power circuit) this will have been tripped by an appliance overloading the circuit. Where this has happened you should switch off all sockets and unplug all appliances. Reset the "trip" switch. Now go round each socket and plug in the appliance and switch this on. If the circuit trips again after switching on an appliance this indicates that the appliance is faulty and has caused the power failure. **Do not use this appliance.**

- **Security/Access to the Property.** Tenants are reminded that they are responsible for any works carried out on their behalf due to them losing keys or keys being broken in the lock. The contractor will gain access to the property and change the lock. Please note close doors which do not lock are not considered an Emergency repair.
- **Urgent Repairs** should be attended to by the contractor within two days of notification. These are considered repairs which are necessary *to prevent a serious loss of facility, or where delay is likely to cause serious delay deterioration to the property or inconvenience to the occupier.*

If you are in any doubt about a repair please telephone 07715 004 265 and you will be advised whether they will attend and when.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Each energy supplier offers an energy efficiency service which will give you advice over the phone and send leaflets:-

British Gas 0845 965 0650

Scottish Power 0800 33 22 33

Scottish Hydro 0800 300 111

Scottish Hydro can arrange for someone to visit your home and offer energy efficiency help. All other suppliers offer the energy efficiency help by telephone.

******Please note that Home Heat Helpline can put you through to your supplier (ie British Gas) to discuss tariffs and energy efficiency and they offer a FREEPHONE number 0800 33 66 99******

SAVE ENERGY, SAVE POUNDS

Lighting

- Switch off lights you don't need
- Ensure lamp rating is no higher than required

Laundry

- Ensure Use economy button on machine if you have one
- Use low temperature washing powder
- Front loading machines are usually more efficient
- Dry clothes using washing line whenever possible
- Make sure filters are fluff free in tumble dryers

Appliances

- Microwave is cheaper to run than a conventional cooker
- Match pan size to cooker ring
- Try more than one vegetable in a pan
- Keep lids on saucepans
- Toasters are cheaper to use than the grill
- Boil only the water you need for a cuppa not the whole full kettle
- Slow cookers and pressure cookers are cheaper to run than the oven

Water Heating

- Shower for a fraction of the cost of a bath
- Never wash hands/dishes under running water
- Don't fill the bath more than you need, put cold water in first to avoid condensation

Refrigeration

- Try not to position refrigeration equipment next to heating appliances or boilers
- Defrost regularly
- If purchasing new equipment look out for energy efficient labelling on the appliance.
- Allow air to circulate around the back of fridges and freezers.
- Frost free refrigeration is generally less efficient than conventional.
- Chest freezers are generally more efficient than upright freezers.
- Do not put hot food in the fridge or freezer
Try to keep your freezer full and at the correct temperature of -18c.

Heating

- Draw curtains early in the evening
- Close doors – keep heat where you want it
- Don't open windows in winter for long periods
- Try using 'sausage dogs' to stop draughts
- Control your heating and hot water as much as possible
- Never cover heating equipment – allow heat to move freely
- Don't use your oven to heat your kitchen



20th AGM

We held our 20th Annual General Meeting on 9th September at the Stirling Tollbooth.

This meeting was the members once a year chance to hear how the organisation has been performing, how the finances are and what the plans are for the coming year.

It also gave members a chance to determine who controls the organisation, by standing for a place on the Management Committee and voting for Committee Members.

The Management Committee for the coming year will therefore be as follows:

- Audrey Anderson
- Thomas Bell
- Wilma Burns
- David Cumming
- Clark Davidson
- Harry Deerin
- John Fyfe
- Patrick Heneghan
- John Holliday
- Gordon Mason
- Linda Mason
- Neil Macleod
- Cllr Jim Thomson

This still leaves 2 spaces for anyone who is interested in getting involved. Serving as a Committee member is both interesting and worthwhile. Training is available for Committee members and further information about what is involved is available from our Director, John Cameron.



Strategy Planning Day

A few weeks ago the committee members and staff spent a Saturday getting their heads together to think about the future.

We are approaching our 21st birthday and over the past 20 years we have had to adapt to changing circumstances. However, there has seldom been a time when the world of housing has seen so much change, as at present. Our funding system has changed greatly in recent months. Plans are afoot which may change the whole way we build our new homes and for the first time in years

we may see the council building new homes too. None of these things cause us too much concern but we do need to make sure that we adapt to make the most of this "new world" and to protect the position of our existing tenants.

Over the coming months you may see some changes in what we're doing but in reality for you it will remain pretty much the same. Behind the scenes meanwhile we'll be beavering away, losing sleep and going grey!



Website Continues to Grow!

The success of our website continues to grow. More of you are logging on daily to www.forthha.org.uk. Our website enables a number of activities to be carried out from the comfort of your own home or wherever internet access is available. These activities include:



- ⇒ reporting a repair
- ⇒ reporting an estate management issue
- ⇒ applying for a house
- ⇒ providing your views
- ⇒ applying for Committee membership

Moreover, our website also contains a host of other useful information such as: current news, developments that are on site and our free Money Advice service.

We are keen to minimise our running costs, to keep rents as low as possible. If you are able to have the Newsletter e mailed or are willing to read it on-line by using our website, please contact Margaret Glencross Tel No: (01786) 446066 or e mail Margaret@forthha.org.uk. This will not only keep rents low, but by using less paper, you will be helping us to save the planet!

The website address is www.forthha.org.uk.

ANNUAL RENT INCREASE CONSULTATION

As in previous years we will be consulting tenants about next years prospective rent increase.

You will shortly receive information about this and an invitation to give us your views. Please make sure you read this and respond if possible.

This will be your chance to have your say!

Good growth at the farm

We are making great progress with our new homes at Polmaise Farm!

Persimmon the builder has been cracking on good style and the first Forth tenants are due to move into their new homes in Cambusbarrow before Christmas.

Presently, Persimmon are building a total of 14 homes and the first four will be finished very soon. The remaining ten will be ready in the early New Year and so fourteen lucky households will be getting a



brand new home in the near future.

We are presently in discussion with Persimmon about the possibility of them

building us even more homes at the Polmaise farm site. This is dependent on the Scottish Government giving Forth some of the extra

money that it has recently made available to address some of the "credit crunch issues". However, it is widely recognised that Stirling needs more housing for rent so we are hopeful that this money will come our way.