



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

June 2011

Inside:

New Employment Support Allowance	4	Planning To Avoid Disaster	11
Back to School	5	Resolving Nuisance Issues	12
Archie Bone Way	7	Estate Management	14
Money Newsround	8	Who's Who on Committee	16

Joint Tenants Conference Unites Locals

See page 2



Forth Housing Association Limited

4th Floor Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling FK8 1JU

Tel: 01786 446066 • Fax: 01786 445846 • E-mail: info@forthha.org.uk

Forth Housing Association Limited is a Registered Scottish Charity, No. SCO03550



Successful Joint Tenants Conference Unites Local Tenants and Landlords

Forth tenants together with tenants from Ochil View, Rural Stirling and Stirling Council attended a successful Joint Tenants Conference in March at Raploch Community Campus. The Conference was to provide feedback and discuss any issues requiring action, further to the Joint Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Furthermore, the Conference also sought tenants views on the Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter Discussion Paper.

The recent Survey had interviewed tenants on a number of performance related questions. The 4 landlords involved are now able to compare performance in all main areas such as repairs, customer care and estate management. The Conference discussed areas where landlords are doing well and identified any areas where improvements can be made.

Stephen Harland, Chairperson of De Moray Association and tenant of Forth Housing said: " It was great to be able to prepare feedback to the Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter Discussion Paper with tenants of other landlords. The Paper affects all tenants and it is vital that tenants have their say. It was also helpful being able to compare your own landlords results with other landlords, working in the Stirling and Clackmannan areas."

For more information on the Social Housing Charter log on to <http://Housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk>.



Joint Tenants Conference Winner!

Well Done to Adam Scott, Milnepark Road, Bannockburn!

Adam Scott from Milnepark Road attended our Joint Tenants Conference on 26th March 2011 and won £25 in vouchers for taking part.

Immediately, Adam kindly asked if we would donate this to a charity of our choice. The charity we currently support is Start-Up Stirling. A cheque for £25 has been given to Start-Up Stirling, which provides practical support to homeless people who get a new home. (see www.startupstirling.org.uk)



CONGRATULATIONS!!!
To David McCormack & Michelle Couper for winning the £25 shopping voucher for returning their `Points of View` card during January-March!!!

Bin Pull-Out Service

Stirling Council operate a bin pull-out service for those tenants with physical difficulties. Residents that have physical difficulties can apply for assistance. Clarification can be sought by the Council from your Doctor to ensure that you are eligible to receive this service. Please telephone Stirling Council on 0845 277 7000 for more information.

BEWARE LOAN SHARKS!

Please find in your newsletter an information leaflet regarding loan sharks. If you have any concerns regarding loan sharks working in your area please contact your Income Maximisation Officer, Tracy Doran at the office, for advice. Alternatively, you can report a Loan Shark in confidence by phoning 0300 555 2222. Calls are charged at a local rate, even from a mobile.

Attention – New Employment Support Allowance

For those in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Income Support on the grounds of disability - you will be contacted between now and April 2014, for an assessment to change to Employment Support Allowance(ESA). (unless you were born prior to 5th April 1952).

The process is as follows:-

1. Telephone call from Jobcentre Plus to advise that a medical assessment form will be sent to you. This is to gather some information relating to your medical condition and difficulties.
2. Medical assessment form is received. This must be completed and posted back within timescales. (if not returned your benefit can stop).
3. Telephone call from ATOS(assessment for fitness to work), to advise you when to attend a medical and where this will take place. You should also receive a letter confirming this and non attendance at medical will result in your benefit being stopped.
4. Attend medical.
5. Telephone call from Jobcentre Plus to advise they have received medical and to ask if you would like to supply any further information. If you have failed your medical they are likely to ask if you wish to appeal or if you wish to apply for Jobseekers Allowance. They will pass your telephone call through to appropriate section. (Please note anyone can appeal a decision).
6. Letter from Jobcentre Plus advising outcome of assessment – if passed you will be transferred to ESA and there should be no change in amount of money received. If you do not pass your medical you will require to claim another benefit ie Jobseekers Allowance or else appeal decision that you failed the medical.

If you require any further information on the above, or would like to appeal a decision, please contact Tracy Doran, Income Maximisation Officer on 01786 446066.

Back To School

John Cameron, Forth's Director, recently spent two days back at primary school.

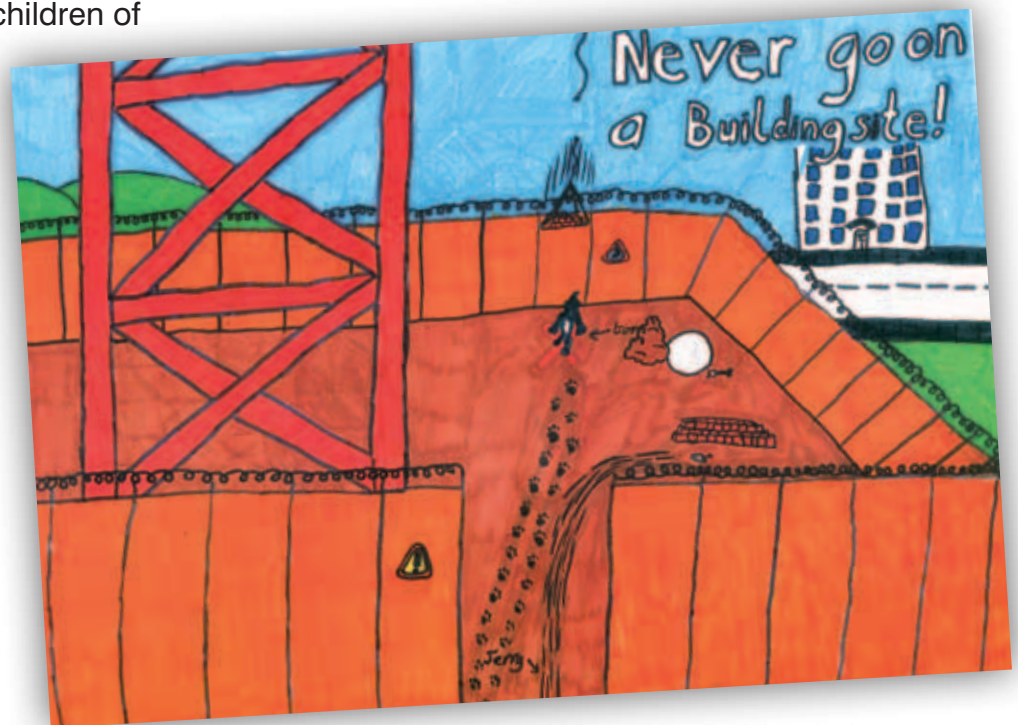
Thanks to the co-operation of the staff at Fallin Primary School, John was able to spend almost an hour with each class in the school and together they looked at the risks associated with building sites.

Through a presentation which involved video clips, bursting balloons, hammers and squashed tomatoes, the children of Fallin were able to enjoy something a little different whilst at the same time appreciating the dangers that can be experienced when people access building sites without permission.

It is most encouraging that since the school visit, problems with vandalism and site trespass at our Dry Pow Park site have dropped markedly. As a thank you, our contractor, Marshall Construction, has agreed to finance a class trip out to the Risk Factory, an

interactive learning experience in Edinburgh. Here the P6s will have some more "hands on" opportunities to learn about keeping safe in daily life.

The Fallin Primary children also designed some safety posters which will be erected at the Dry Pow site to further share the "Keep Out, Keep Safe" message.



Winner by Robbie Laister p7

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE — Tax Credits

Anyone who is in or was in receipt of tax credits should have received their annual declaration pack by now. If you have not already completed this, please phone tax credits on 0845 300 3900 and give your information over the phone.

If you have sent in your information on the annual declaration form and have not yet received a new award letter, the chances are your annual declaration form has not been received. Therefore, you should phone tax credits on 0845 300 3900 and give your information over the phone.

Please note that if you were in receipt of tax credits and no longer receive these you

MUST still complete the annual declaration information. Or tax credits will state that you have received an overpayment for the monies you previously received.



Have We Got Your Latest Details?

Have we got your current e mail address, landline and/or mobile phone number? These tend to change regularly and it is all too easy to forget to let your contacts know. It is important for us to have this

information in case we require to contact you in an emergency. Please advise Margaret Glencross at the office if you have had a recent change.

Getting Ready at Archie Bone Way, Fallin

We are getting ready to welcome the first tenants to their new homes at Archie Bone Way, Fallin.

This is the name designated for the new homes being built at Dry Pow Park Fallin. The street has been named after Archie Bone, a former resident of the village who was actively involved in community life in a variety of ways.

People may remember that this development

got off to a bad start when the appointed builders went into liquidation due to the financial climate. However, our replacement contractor has been able to make tremendous progress on site and the first new homes will be ready for tenants in the early summer.

Work is already underway to plan the letting of these homes and we expect the building works to be completed by the early autumn. There are 42 homes in total, ranging from 1 bedroom flats to 4 bedroom houses, and they have all been designed with easy access, effective insulation and high performance heating systems.



Struggling to Pay Bills?

Money Newsround Can Help

Families/Lone Parent with Child(ren)

Clothing grant (children from Primary 1 to age 16 before 30th September 11)

- Parents on income support, employment support allowance income based or jobseekers allowance income based.
- Parents in receipt of child tax credits but not working tax credits and less than £15,860 annual income.
- Parents in receipt of child tax credits and working tax credits and less than £15,860 annual income.

Applications for clothing grant MUST be made by 31.12.11

Free school meals (school age children)

- Parents on income support, employment support allowance income based or jobseekers allowance income based.
- Parents in receipt of child tax credits and NOT working tax credits and less than £15860 annual income.

- Parents in receipt of child tax credits and working tax credits and less than £6420 annual income.



Form for both clothing grant and free school meals available from Stirling Council 0845 277 7000 or www.stirling.gov.uk/footwearclothinggrantapplicationform-2.doc

Educational Maintenance Allowance(EMA)

If your child is 16 years old or over before 30th September 11 and still at High School they will be eligible from start of school year (ie August 2011).

If your child is 16 years old between 1st October 2011 and 28th February 2012, they will be eligible from January 10th 2012.

Forms available from Stirling Council 0845 277 7000 or www.stirling.gov.uk/emaform.pdf

CHILD BENEFIT

When your child is 16 years old and leaves school, Child Benefit will normally stop on the 31st August after the 16th birthday. In some circumstances, Child Benefit can be extended :-

If your child is aged 16 or under 20 and

- is on a full time non advanced education (ie school) or
- is on an approved training course

Child benefit can be paid until the date that falls after the education or training ceases, which is either last day in February or 31st May or 31st August or 30th November.

If your child is aged 16 or 17 and has left education or training and

- is registered for work with the Careers Service and not in paid work and

- you were entitled to Child Benefit before education/training stopped and
- you apply within 3 months of this date

Child Benefit can be extended for 20 weeks from date education/training stopped, or until payday prior to child's 18th birthday.

Child Benefit can be complicated and you require to keep Child Benefit fully informed of any changes. However, Tracy Doran, at our office is available to help. So contact Tracy if you have any questions or would like assistance with completion of forms etc.

**Income Maximisation
Officer, Tracy Doran**



Office Closure Due to Public Holidays

Friday 15th July and Monday 18th July 2011

If you have a genuine emergency repair on these dates please phone the office and listen to the message on the answering machine. Alternatively, log on to www.forthha.org.uk and on the home page, click on News.

Policy Reviews

During 2011/12 the following policies are under review:

Policy	Date Of Review
Voids	June/July
Harrassment	June/July
Rent Arrears	June/July
Right to Repair	Nov/Dec
Minimum Standard for Relet	Dec/Jan

We welcome and value your opinions and views. Therefore, if you would like to be involved in helping to update and improve these policies please contact Angela Laley at the office or e mail angela@forthha.org.uk . Alternatively, you can request a copy of the proposed revised policy and provide comments The policy can be sent to you by post or e mail, by contacting the office, during the review period. You can also join our E Group who are sent a policy whilst under review, and asked to return a short questionnaire. To join our E Group just contact the office.

Gas Safety Checks

We are currently well through our programme of gas safety checks to our properties. However, our contractor has experienced some difficulties in gaining access to a number of our properties. As we have a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check it has been necessary to arrange 5 forced entries to properties to ensure that the safety check is complete. Should you have any difficulties in providing access to our contractor, please contact Iain Stirling, Senior Technical Services Officer, to agree a suitable appointment to complete the safety check.

Survey Winners

We recently carried out 3 surveys to find out your views. Thanks to all those that participated in these surveys.

The 3 winners are:

Close Cleaning: Adam Wright

Electrical Safety: Jennifer Hogg

Gas Servicing: Sharon Craig

Each of these 3 winners have received a £25 voucher for Tesco's.

The results of the surveys can be viewed by logging on to www.forthha.org.uk.

Planning To Avoid Disaster

We can never tell when disaster might strike or the subsequent consequences.

With this in mind, Forth, along with the other Associations who make up the Strath For Housing Alliance, have been thinking about what we can do to plan ahead.

As a result the 3 associations, Forth, Rural Stirling and Ochil View, recently signed a Business Continuity Cooperation Agreement. A grand title for a commitment that we will do our best to help each other in a crisis.

We recognise that our priority must be to

provide a good service to our tenants, so if disaster strikes one of the organisations, whether it be loss of an office due to fire, major illness amongst our staff, or the sudden loss of a contractor, we are committed to helping each other out with practical support.

The Cooperation agreement is a classic example of organisations working together to improve efficiencies and services at no extra cost. If you'd like a copy of the Strath For Housing Alliance's Annual Report, to discover what other work we've been doing, please email a request to john@forthha.org.uk



Resolving Nuisance

We encourage our tenants and residents to talk to one another. If you are experiencing a disturbance, talk to your neighbour about the problem. It may be that they have no idea their actions are having an impact on you. If you tell them, calmly and politely, they may stop and you may be pleasantly surprised!

Don't speak to your neighbours when angry or upset.

This can make things worse. Always stay calm and if tempers rise, walk away.

What should you do?

- Contact your Housing Officer either by phone, letter or in person at our office.



- A member of staff record details of the problem on a special form. This is called the Anti-Social Behaviour Report Form. Please try to give as much information as possible in your Report. It will help us to investigate.
- Keep a diary of incidents and note down the date and time when they happened and how they affected you.

Local Issues

If this doesn't work...

Your Housing Officer will carry out an investigation based on the information you provide.

All details you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

There are a number of steps your Housing Officer can take by working with the Police and other agencies.

Mediation

Often, talking about the problems helps the situation. Mediation is a way of getting people round a table to discuss issues and try to reach some kind of agreement. Mediation agencies are completely independent of Forth and so are impartial. They do not take sides. The service is free, voluntary and completely confidential. In very serious cases, legal remedies such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) or Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), may be the most appropriate way of tackling the situation.

These legal remedies do take time and are not always the best option. They should be considered a last resort.

What can we do to help?

We categorise reports of antisocial behaviour according to the following criteria:

Category A

Very serious/acute anti-social behaviour involving personal attack – For example, violence, unprovoked assault, threatening and abusive behaviour and any form of harassment.

Category B

Serious anti-social behaviour involving other criminal activity – For example, drug dealing, vandalism and criminal damage to property, ongoing noise, and ongoing neighbour disputes.

Category C

Other complaints – For example, noise disputes, rubbish dumping, dog fouling.

Please remember that resolving anti-social behaviour takes time. There are no quick fixes! However, don't allow things to build up – contact your Housing Officer and seek our advice.

Finder File Edit View Go Window Help

Focus on Estate Management Menu



Over the next year, we will focus on one main function of the website and explain its use. In this issue, we are focusing on the Estate Management Menu.

On the home page, click on Housing Menu and then click on the Estate Management Sub Menu. This takes you to the Estate Management page which describes the Estate Management service that you can expect. It also summarises the Pets Policy and enables you to download a copy of both the pets and estate management policies.

One of the main benefits of this page is that it also enables you to report an estate management issue direct to Housing Management, at a time convenient to yourself.

To do this, click on the form on the Estate

Management page. Type in your details, including your e mail address. In the comments box provide a summary of the estate management problem you are experiencing. For example, if you are having a problem with your close not being cleaned, grass not being cut or neighbours dumping rubbish in your bin, you can contact Forth on-line at a time convenient to yourself, 24 hours a day.

Therefore, the benefits are:

- You can report the problem 24 hours a day, outwith office hours.
- You will receive an acknowledgement e mail from ourselves. This is proof of the date and time you advised us of the problem.
- The note of the problem will go direct to Housing Management.
- Housing Management will have a typed record of the problem.
- It is a quick and easy process.

For further information please contact Angela Laley at the office.

Website In-House Demonstration

We will be having 2 demonstrations of our website at our office following tenant feedback at our recent Conference. Those attending the workshop confirmed that the demonstration was extremely useful. Moreover, that they were not aware of the website's functions, such as being able to report a repair or an anti-social problem, on line, 24 hours a day. The dates for the demonstrations are:

Day time: Monday 25th July from 2.30pm-3.30pm

Evening: Tuesday 9th August from 6.15pm-7.15pm

To reserve your place, please call the office and advise Margaret Glencross or Angela Laley of your details. They can also arrange an alternative date if these dates are unsuitable.

The Bids Are In!

By the time you read this our bid for Government grant funding for 2011/12 will have been submitted.

The system for awarding grant funding, to build new homes, has totally changed this year: a much reduced sum of money is available and there is an attempt by Government to make it go further.

Whilst we used to get about £65,000 for every new home we were able to build, this year the maximum available will be reduced to £40,000. Obviously homes aren't getting any cheaper to build. The result is that we need to take out bigger loans from the bank, which could require higher rents to allow pay back, and/or come up with new ways to improve efficiency.

By working closely with our partners at Stirling Council we have been able to agree 2 bids for new projects to start this year. One will involve 14 homes at Raploch to provide supported housing for adults with learning disabilities. The other involves up to 29 new homes in Dunblane. If Dunblane gets approval it will see us building some homes for sale, to first time buyers and others with limited budgets. We will use the "profits" from these sales to finance other homes for rent.

Only time will tell if we are successful with these bids but keep your fingers crossed and watch this space for an update.

Who's Who On Committee?

Continuing our introduction to the Committee members of Forth, here are two more individuals.



Margaret Turner

Margaret is another Committee Member who joined us at the 2010 AGM and who recently retired after working with Stirling Council.

A varied career in housing, in England and Scotland, has brought Margaret an expansive knowledge of everything from association finance to housing development. She is able to bring this knowledge along with a useful understanding of local Stirling issues to her work with the Committee and this is of great benefit to both her fellow Committee Members and Association staff.



Ian McLean

Ian was involved on Forth's Management Committee for an extensive period up until 2007 and during that period he served for some time as Chairperson.

In 2010 Ian retired from his work at Stirling Council and that was an ideal opportunity for him to re-engage with Forth and make use of the extensive knowledge and skills that he had built up. He was therefore re-elected at last year's AGM and has now caught up with the changes that took place during his time away. He has a wide range of interests in various aspects of the Association's business and is therefore never short of something to be focusing on.

Tenants Groups

De Moray Association are holding a free summer fun event for the children of De Moray Court, Cornton on Sat 30th July from 2-4pm. Their next meeting takes place on Tuesday 19th July 2011 at 6.15pm at 43 De Moray Court. Cambusbarrow Forth Tenants held a successful meeting on Tuesday 7th June and are having a Summer Party for the children of Auld School Wynd and Clayhills Drive at the the end of July. For more details log on to www.forthha.org.uk under News or contact Angela Laley at the office.



Useful Contact Details...

Forth Housing Association Limited

4th Floor Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling FK8 1JU

Tel: 01786 446066 Fax: 01786 445846

E-mail: info@forthha.org.uk Website: www.forthha.org.uk



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.