



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

Speaking Forth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

Winter 2016

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SEASONS GREETINGS!

*The Committee and Staff would like to wish you
 all a very happy time over the Festive Season.*

Have Your Say
 – Take part in
 our Annual Rent
 Consultation.
 See Sheet
 Enclosed.

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

Office Closes Friday 23rd December at 1pm –
 Office Reopens Wednesday 4th January 2017
 at 9am.

**If you have any genuine emergency repairs
 during this period please contact:**

Gas Central Heating/Hot Water -
 Tel: 0800 048 2710 (Saltire)

Any Other Genuine Emergency Repairs

McDougall Group on Tel: 0333 123 1011
 Gas Leaks – Tel: 0800 111999

New tenants at Cultenhove Road/Crescent &
 Earlsburn Avenue, St Ninians should refer to
 the information given at Tenancy sign-up.

Early Closing –

Friday 16th December at 12 Noon

Our offices will be closed from 12 noon on
 Friday 16th December. Staff are having their
 annual lunch get together. If anyone has a
 genuine emergency repair on that afternoon
 they should use the emergency contact
 numbers on this page.

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How To Avoid Condensation and Mould

Condensation starts as moisture in the air, caused by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors. Examples are condensation on misted mirrors after bathing or misted bedroom windows on cold mornings. When the moist air hits cooler surfaces it turns into water, which can sometimes lead to mould. Condensation is most likely in places where there is little flow of air, particularly in corners, on or near windows, and behind wardrobes or cupboards.

What can be done to prevent it?

- Wipe down the windows and sills every morning. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.
- Keep rooms on a low heat setting.
- Cover pans when cooking.
- Always vent tumble dryers outside the home. Close the door when having a bath or shower and turn the extractor fan on (if you have one).
- If you dry clothes indoors, open a window.
- Don't dry clothes on radiators.
- Leave space between the back of furniture and the wall to allow air to circulate.
- Keep the perma-vents in your windows open.
- If mould occurs use an anti-fungicidal wash and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Keeping condensation to a minimum reduces your risk of dampness and mould growth. If your property has been damaged because you have not adequately heated or ventilated it, then we may recharge the costs. Therefore, we are happy to visit to help you reduce condensation levels and to provide advice. To arrange a visit contact Paul Fraser, Maintenance Officer, at the office Tel: (01786) 446066.

Avoiding Frozen Pipes

At this time of year please remember to take reasonable precautions to protect the water supply pipes inside your home from frost damage. You are responsible for ensuring that your home is adequately heated to ensure pipes do not freeze. General precautions you should take to cut down the risk of frost damage include:

- Ensure you know where your main stopcock is and that you can turn it off and on.
- Make sure that your home is adequately heated.
- Make sure that you do not leave taps dripping.



Staff Raise Money for Children In Need



Raising money for Children In Need brought staff together for a Teddies' Bear Picnic lunch and a lot of fun was had by taking part in games and a special "bear" themed quiz. Raffles were drawn and staff dressed "down" or "up." Staff raised an impressive £150.75 for this worthwhile cause, helping disadvantaged children and young people in the UK.



Hannah Comrie, School work experience from Alva Academy, is pictured with our own Margaret Glencross, who organised the event

Good Neighbour Award 2016

We are pleased to announce that John and Rona Duff have won the Good Neighbour Award 2016. Nominated by their neighbour Harry McKendrick they really are the best neighbours anyone can have next door. Harry said: "Over the years they have always been there for us. They offer to cut the grass, bring in soup and give us lifts. On one occasion they give us a lift to and from Alloa late at night. They always go the extra mile, even when things have been very difficult for them. This award would be a small token of our gratitude."

On being told of the award Rona Duff said: "All 3 of us in the terrace just help each other, and you could not get better neighbours. They are just like family."



John and Rona Duff, winners of Good Neighbour Award 2016



Please Be Neighbourly This Winter

It is all our responsibility to keep a look out for older or vulnerable neighbours, during the Winter Period. Check to ensure that they are warm enough, have stocks of food and medicines - so they don't need to go out during the very cold weather.

HATE CRIME

– A TENANT'S OWN EXPERIENCE

Hate Crime is any crime motivated by malice, ill-will or prejudice against disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity. Hate Crime is an offence, which is punishable through the Courts. The damage to the victims is inexcusable. One of our own tenants has kindly given us the following insight into the impact in their own words:

"Hate. It's such a strong word often used without thought for its true meaning. Hate crime, that's something you'd never stand by and watch, but are you sure?"

I see you looking, judging, what a naughty child, that parent can't control them, I know what I'd do. Do you? Do you know what it's like to have a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? A child with limited social skills, a social age far different from their physical age. A child you can't always switch off, a child who is always anxious, always worried about possible change and the future ahead of them.

It's easy to laugh, poke fun at somebody who's different, especially when it's children doing the laughing, making fun, it's just a joke I hear you say, get over it. But what's a joke? A child with ASD

doesn't always have a sense of humour, certainly not one like yours. It hurts the parent to see. The child doesn't always understand, it can take a long time for them to realise a friend isn't actually being a friend, they are bullying. Then trust is gone, anxiety builds, behaviour can change.

It's my child you poke fun at, it's my child who plays differently, whose mobility may not always look 'normal', who doesn't have a social filter. It's my child who lies awake at night worrying somebody will try and get in the house after somebody has played a joke knocking on the door and running away. And that's hate.

So next time you see that child upset, behaving differently, acting oddly. Stop and think, don't judge."

Hate Crime can also have an impact on your tenancy. This could result in legal action being taken against a tenant to remove them from their home. As a tenant you are responsible for your household and visitors. If you are a victim of Hate Crime or a witness to a Hate Crime, please contact the Police by phone or via [Police Scotland website](http://PoliceScotland.gov.uk) or contact a Third Party Reporting Centre.

Helping The **Younger Generation**

Everyone knows that the jobs market these days is very competitive and it is becoming increasingly important to gain some work experience to help decide a future career choice.

With this in mind Forth is continuing to work with local Secondary Schools to provide pupils with work experience placements. For a week at a time we offer pupils a chance to experience what real work is like in an office situation. Those studying business administration or thinking about a career in

office administration get hands on experience by helping us with a range of office tasks.

Under the scheme they get a real taste of office work and we get real help with everything from opening the mail and photocopying to filing and shredding. Sometimes they even get out of the office to see what building and managing homes actually involves.

Who knows in years to come some of them might return to Forth as receptionist, Housing Officer or even Director - we all have to start our experience somewhere!



Kyle (Alloa Academy) at Earlsburn Avenue, Cultenhove



Callum (Dunblane High School) at Reception

New Faces On Committee

Following our AGM, back in September, 2 new members have been added to our Management Committee. They are Brian Telfer and Ian Anstruther.

Brian is a Stirling Council tenant who is active in a variety of voluntary groups. This and his previous working experience involved in adaptations work for those with disabilities will bring benefits to our Committee.

Ian is recently retired from working in

the residential care sector and brings a knowledge and interest in working for marginalised groups and individuals. He is particularly interested in how we might work to support a growing number of older tenants.

Coleen Sharp who was previously a co-opted member of the Committee, was elected in her own right, and as a Forth tenant she has firsthand experience of how we provide our homes and services.

Be a Winner - Have Your Say!

Whether it's the service you have received when reporting a repair or the standard of the close cleaning service, we want to hear your feedback and any recommendations. Each survey we issue by post includes a freepost service. All tenants that participate in surveys are entered in to a prize draw to win £25 of supermarket vouchers. It's this feedback that helps us to improve our services to you, our customer.

Congratulations to our recent winners:

Points of View Repair Card:

April-June: A Livingston, Raploch.

July-Sept: D Lister, Riverside.

Landscape Maintenance :

T Hamilton, Riverside

Gas Survey & Repair:

D Arthur, Cultenhove

Housing Scotland Act 2014 – Review of Allocations Policy

The Housing Scotland Act 2014 will bring in changes about how we may let our properties and how we deal with anti-social behaviour. Later in the year the Scottish Government will issue guidance on how these rules should be implemented.

Once the guidance is published we will be reviewing our Allocations Policy. The revised policy will be discussed at our Tenants' View Forum next year and will be circulated to our E Group. So please join either of these groups to have your say by contacting the office.

Now Recruiting for Tenants!

We are looking for you to get involved in our Tenants View Forum. We want you to bring your knowledge and skills as a tenant, to examine our performance and improve quality and standards.

- Can you attend one meeting every 3-4 months in our office?
- Are you willing to act as a voice for customers and give us your opinions?
- Do you like meeting new people and focusing on improving services?

Our Tenants' View Forum:

- Agrees our approach to self-assessing our activities
- Identifies and focuses on customer priorities and needs
- Involves our customers in setting policies and standards
- Takes customers' views into account before decisions are taken
- Demonstrates our accountability to customers

Our Tenants' View Forum members find the work worthwhile and interesting. If you would like more information on joining the Tenants' View Forum please contact Angela Laley at the office. Travelling expenses are paid. Support and training are also provided as necessary.

A New Home In Time For Christmas

Just over 2000 years ago Mary and Joseph found themselves homeless on Christmas Eve - not a pleasant experience. For 22 families in Stirling in 2016 Christmas came a bit early this year when we gave them the “gift” of a new home in Cultenhove.

The homes at Earlsburn Avenue and Cultenhove Road were completed early by our builders, Marshall Construction, and this means that people have great new homes in which to celebrate the festive season. Built to high standards of insulation and complete with efficient heating systems they should be



Earlsburn Avenue, Cultenhove

able to enjoy warmth and comfort: certainly no need to fear being homeless or on the streets.

Credit Unions Providing Cash For All Ages

A Credit Union is a self-help co-operative whose members pool their savings to provide each other with credit at a low interest rate. This can often mean helping those who can't get access to ordinary bank products; a lifeline for folks grappling with their finances. Plus, they can be a welcome alternative to payday loans or doorstep lending. Credit unions will now be encouraging children to manage their money through new Junior Savers Schemes.

Stirling Credit Union is set to receive £20,000 to set up new projects in schools. Additional funding will also be used to develop and

produce a new Junior Savers toolkit which will provide booklets and online resources for both credit unions and schools to use to set up their own schemes.

To obtain a list of credit unions in your area log on to: www.scotlandsfinancialhealthservice.gov.uk and type in your post code, at the bottom of the home page.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties and would like free and impartial advice, contact Tracy Doran, our Income Maximisation Officer, on Tel: 01786 431921 or alternatively Tel: Scotland's Financial Health Service on 0800 707 6696.

Over 65? Need Help To Remain Well At Home?



NHS Forth Valley are working with local Council partners to find new ways to support people to remain well at home. They have developed Your Plan, a personal care plan to help you, your family and carers to write down all the important things that matter to you in relation to your health and care needs.

They have also developed ALFY (Advice Line For You). This is a new nurse led telephone advice line available **24 hours a day**, 7 days a week on **Tel No: (01324) 567247**. Trained nursing staff will take your call and make sure you receive the right help and support.

This could include:

- arranging for a nurse to visit you day or night if necessary.
- organising for you to receive certain equipment.
- arranging an appointment to attend the Rapid Access Frailty Clinic.
- arranging a referral to the Community Reach Service (Rehabilitation).
- prioritising access to social care services determined by need.
- signposting you to the relevant voluntary organisations and other locally based services.

‘One Scotland’ Bus Passes – IMPORTANT NOTICE for OVER 60s



Are you aged 60 years or over? Stirling Council is replacing all ‘One Scotland’ bus passes. If you are still using the ‘One Scotland’ card you need a replacement before 31 December 2016. If you have not received your new card, please contact 01786 404040 or your local Council Office for advice.

Staff Changes And A Fond Farewell!

After 24 years' service with us Isabel Reilly is retiring at the end of December. During her time with the Association Isabel held a number of posts, including Secretary/ Receptionist, Rents Officer, Housing Officer and latterly Housing Assistant.

No one has worked longer for us than Isabel and there can be very few tenants who have not had contact with her at some time. She has always believed in providing a quality service to our tenants and has worked tirelessly for Forth. We will miss Isabel's input but as a Forth tenant she'll continue to have a connection with us.



Isabel Reilly, Housing Assistant,
Retiring in December.



Claire Rowland, Assistant Housing Officer
and Paul Fraser, Maintenance Officer.

As Isabel leaves us we have recently been joined by Claire Rowland, who is our new Assistant Housing Officer, and by Paul Fraser, our new Maintenance Officer.

Claire will focus on working alongside the Housing Officers to provide our Housing Management service. As a tenant you will occasionally find yourself talking to Claire instead of your Housing Officer in future. Paul is focusing on planned maintenance work so will deal with everything ranging from adaptation requests and gas servicing to painter work and new kitchens.

Tenants View Forum and Forth's Performance Report

We are grateful to our tenants who gave their time to the independent researchers to complete the satisfaction survey over the Summer.

At the meeting held in September, the Tenants View Forum was presented with the results and agreed to develop the Performance Report in the same format as previous years. In it we share some of the key performance monitored and reported in-line with the Social Housing Charter and highlights areas for improvement. If you would like a hard copy posted out please contact Margaret Glencross at the office. For more information on our performance and to obtain a comparison with all other social landlords visit the Housing Regulator's website: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

The next Tenants View Forum meeting will be held on **Tuesday 10th January 2017 at 10.30am** at our offices. This will discuss the rent increase and our performance over the last 6 months. We hope that you will be able to attend and you will be made very welcome.



Thomas Brittain Court, Dunblane

Building work on our 8 new homes at Thomas Brittain Court, Bogside, Dunblane is progressing well. The 2 wheelchair accessible bungalows and 6 cottage flats have all been designed to meet the needs of those who have a physical disability or are maybe less mobile due to ill health or getting older.

We hope that people will move into the new homes in the Springtime. If you are currently a resident of Dunblane, or have relatives living in the town, you may be able to apply for rehousing at this small development. To find out more contact the Forth office on phone 01786 446066.



Thomas Brittain Court,
Dunblane Under Construction

Please Give Us Your Views On Rents And Complete Our Consultation Sheet

We are busy planning our budget for 2017/18 and as part of this we need to agree what our rents will be from April onwards. For several years we have tried to keep our rent increases in line with or below inflation. This still remains our long-term objective.

Last year we were able to freeze our rents but sadly this year some form of increase will be required. You will therefore find a Consultation Sheet enclosed with this Newsletter and we want you to read this and return it with your thoughts, (a freepost envelope is enclosed).

Our Management Committee will be deciding the rent increase at their meeting on 30th January 2017. The more tenants who give us their opinion the better, as this ensures that our decision is informed by the people who matter – you!

Young Scot National Entitlement Card – Handy All Year Round!



This card is available free of charge to everyone aged 11-25 years living in Scotland. Use it for the money-off things you

love, exclusive rewards, proof of age and lots more. If you're 16, 17 or 18 years (or a full-time volunteer) you can get special deals on travel using your Young Scot card, including 1/3rd off bus journeys and up to 50% of train travel within Scotland.

If you are in School and don't have a Young Scot Card please contact your School Office and they should be able to arrange a new one for you. Alternatively, if you are no longer at School you will need to complete an application form and take it to a validation point with relevant identification.

You can get an application form by:

- Phoning Youth Services - Stirling Council on **01786 233 562**
- Emailing: stirlingyoungscot@stirling.gov.uk

Landscape Maintenance Feedback



We recently surveyed our developments at Dunblane, Riverside and Whins of Milton regarding landscape maintenance. Overall, we were pleased with the satisfaction results: 80.8% of our tenants were satisfied with the overall quality of work. We are not complacent and we have noted below the actions we will take to monitor the landscape service.

- As part of Estate Management inspections Housing Officers will continue to monitor weed control and will also ensure that contractors are meeting the contract specification regarding shrub pruning, grass removal etc.
- As result of survey feedback the Tenant Services Manager will discuss with the Landscape Contractor areas of poor performance.
- Random checks will be carried out by the Tenant Services Manager to ensure standards are improved and maintained. In particular, there will be a focus on areas where satisfaction has reduced compared to the previous year.
- As part of the contract, 6 monthly meetings will be held with the Contractor and the Tenant Services Manager, and any issues discussed and resolved.

Keep the Roof Over Your Head - Paying Your Rent

At this time of year budgets are tight as Christmas approaches and pressure is put on finances. However, the number one priority should still be your home and therefore making sure your rent is paid. We view rent arrears very seriously and will take action where necessary: ultimately leading to eviction in a number of cases.

To avoid this action, please ensure that your rent continues to be paid on time. Our Income Maximisation service is here to help and will help you maximise your Welfare Benefits. So don't bury your head in the sand – contact Tracy Doran our Income Maximisation Officer if you are having difficulties, Direct Dial No: 01786 431921.



Estate Management Visit Dates From Your Housing Officer

Our 2 Housing Officers cover the following areas:

Elaine Shepherd – Raploch, Cambusbarron, Dunblane, Riverside, Stirling Town – Cowane Street, Myles House, Tannery Lane/Queen Street, Crosbies Court, Victoria Place.

Elaine will be carrying out an estate visit to your area **week commencing:**

16th January 2017 and 13th March 2017.

Caroline Stevenson – Bannockburn, Braehead, Fallin, Cornton, Cowie, Pleau, St. Ninians, Whins of Milton, Stirling Town - Baker Street/Morris Terrace, Barn Road.

Caroline will be carrying out an estate visit to your area **week commencing:**

9th January 2017 and 6th March 2017

Free Computer Skills Training - Join Up Now

Thanks to Big Lottery funding our Connecting Stirling project can provide any of our tenants,



or their household members, with one-to-one training designed around their knowledge and needs. Craig McNicol and Ian Brown can do a home visit or use a local venue, whichever is more convenient. By the end of their sessions you should be able to browse with confidence, apply for jobs/benefits, shop for deals, send/receive e mails and engage with social media.

It is completely free and is designed for you, whatever your skills level. So give us a phone at the office to provide your contact details and we will arrange an appointment on your behalf.



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Useful Contact Details...

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