



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

March 2010

Inside:

Strathfor - Working Together
Supporting Start-Up Stirling
Promoting Equality
Good...but not good enough!

p2
p3
p4-5
p6

Free Power Saver
Who's Who?
Cyclical and Planned Works
Notices

p7
p13
p14
p16

Forth Obtains National Standards for Information and Advice Providers



We are pleased to announce that we are the first housing provider in this area to be accredited by the Scottish Government for the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.

Staff undertook on-line training on 15 housing information and advice topics. This was facilitated by Shelter. An audit was also undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government in February 2010: policies and procedures were reviewed and staff were interviewed. The audit assessed the quality of advice given by staff.

Continued on Page 2

Forth Housing Association Limited - 2 Viewfield Place, Stirling, FK8 1NQ
Tel: 01786 446066 • Fax: 01786 445846 • E-mail: info@forthha.org.uk
Forth Housing Association Limited is a Registered Scottish Charity, No. SCO03550



Forth Obtains National Standards for Information and Advice Providers

From page 1

Angela Laley our Project & Communications Co-ordinator who managed the project said: “it is rewarding to know that not only our policies and procedures meet the required standards, but also our staff, are giving information and advice to our customers, that meets a high standard. This underpins a good quality advice service.”

Judi Reid, Information & Advice Standards Unit, Scottish Government, presented the accreditation Certificate to Gordon Mason, Chairperson and Grahame Cairns, Housing Manager at our offices.

Judi Reid, Information & Advice Standards Unit, Scottish Government said: “ by obtaining the accreditation Forth have demonstrated that they are providing quality advice and information which is an integral part of their service.



Working Together

We are working with two neighbouring Housing Associations, Rural Stirling and Ochil View, to look at the benefits of joint working.

All three associations are fully committed to maintaining their independence and retaining the distinct communities where they work. However, we realise that by sharing our knowledge and expertise we can hopefully gain extra benefits and achieve things that we couldn't achieve on our own.

The Management Committee's of all three organisations have recently agreed the formation of the Strath For Housing Alliance (“Strath For” being Gaelic for “Forth Valley”- where we all work) and an action plan covering a number of joint initiatives.

Our tenants will not see any differences in the day to day services nor the staff who deliver them. However, through time we are likely to see the benefits of joint working, through the introduction of new or more cost effective services. In tough economic times, we need to be ahead of the game when it comes to achieving savings or responding to Government initiatives. Through the Strath For Housing Alliance we aim to be at the forefront.

Supporting Start-Up Stirling



Left to right Calum Carberry and Angela Laley, Forth Housing, and Christine Hancox and John McRitchie Start-Up

Our staff recently presented Start- Up Stirling with a cheque for £1,000. Start-Up help homeless families and individuals when they move into a long-term tenancy from temporary accommodation. This money was raised by our staff team over the past year by fundraising lunches, dress down days and other fundraising events.

Christine Hancox the Project Co-ordinator said, “Start- Up Stirling has seen a steady increase in the demand for its services in the last year. This kind donation from Forth will allow us to help many more families.”

Each household gets allocated a starter pack which consists of 3 boxes containing household goods, food and cleaning materials and each pack costs approximately £45. A kettle, toaster and duvet are also provided and these cost another £40.

Start-Up Stirling relies on donations of foodstuffs, cleaning materials etc to keep the cost of starter packs to a minimum. If any individual or groups would like to know how they can help, they should contact Start Up Stirling at c/o The Rock Community Project, 61 - 63 Murray Place, Stirling, FK8 1AP.

Promoting Equality of Housing Services – Happy to Translate



We recently held a joint multi-cultural event at Raploch Community Campus, raising awareness of the pioneering Happy to Translate (HTT) language service, with Ochil View Housing Association.

Guests from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, Stirling & Clackmannan Councils, Central Scotland Police and the Central Scotland Racial Equality Council, heard speakers explain Happy to Translate: a service which ultimately overcomes language barriers, and enables good customer service to be provided to all, whatever their nationality.

Staff have been trained to use the Happy to Translate toolkit and intranet. This enables staff to determine the language spoken by the customer and the services required. Point pages can be downloaded from the intranet,

and these enable staff and customers to have a conversation and most importantly, understand each other.



Priscilla Maramba, Central Scotland Racial Equality Council said: “It is important to have initiatives like Happy to Translate which help effective communication and promote access to information, and services to all.”

Gordon Mason, Chair, Forth Housing Association; Helena Buckley, Vice Chair, Central Scotland Racial Equality Council; Priscilla Moramba, Employment Development Officer, Central Scotland Racial Equality Council; Rohini Sharma Joshi, Housing Equal Opportunities Manager, Trust Housing Association and Teresa McNally, Chair, Ochil View Housing Association.

Guests were entertained by Indian and Chinese Dancers. Students from Raploch Community Campus prepared a buffet reflecting the nationalities in attendance.

Rohini Sharma Joshi, Housing Equal Opportunities Manager, HTT, said: “It has been great to work with Forth and Ochil View on this multi-cultural partnership event. Forth and Ochil View are building links and trust with communities, through initiatives like HTT, and are demonstrating they are organisations which value diversity.”



Good... but not good enough!!

Each year we must complete a gas safety check of all our homes with a gas supply. Of the 308 annual gas safety checks to be completed 303 (98%) were completed on time. Unfortunately, this is not good enough, as all properties legally must be complete within 12 months of the previous safety check.

To meet our legal duty we have reviewed our procedures to enable us to gain access to properties within the 12 month period. Under the terms and conditions of the Scottish Secure Tenancy, we have the right to gain entry to a property to carry out the safety check without going to Court. Therefore, if the Contractor does not obtain access to your home we will letter you advising you of what action you should take. If we again fail to get access, we will force entry and you will be recharged any associated costs.

Programme of Annual Gas Safety Checks 2010 -11

Street	Area	Week commencing
Bryden Road	Whins of Milton	1\3\2010
Waulker Avenue	Raploch	1\3\2010
Cordiner Close	Raploch	1\3\2010
King Robert Court	Raploch	1\3\2010
Muirend Road	Braehead	1\3\2010
Cooperage Quay	Riverside	8\3\2010
Gillespie Terrace	Plean	8\3\2010
Raploch Road	Raploch	8\3\2010
Craighall Street	Raploch	8\3\2010
Menzies Drive	Raploch	8\3\2010
Huntley Crescent	Raploch	8\3\2010
Barn Road	Stirling	15\3\2010
Barnsdale Road	St Ninians	15\3\2010
Chapelcroft	Cambusbarron	5\4\2010
Monument View	Raploch	5\4\2010
Abbey Road	Riverside	5\4\2010
Cowane Street	Stirling	5\4\2010
Cask Crescent	Riverside	5\4\2010
Bruce Street	Bannock burn	12\4\2010
Thistle Place	Raploch	12\4\2010
Colquhoun Street	Braehead	12\4\2010
Forth Street\Place	Riverside	10\5\2010
Auld School Wynd	Cambusbarron	14\6\2010
Gillespie Place	Whins of Milton	26\7\2010
De Moray Court	Cornton	4\10\2010
Clay hills Drive	Cambusbarron	18\10\2010

Should you have any questions regarding the annual gas safety checks or access to your home please contact Iain Stirling (Senior Technical Services Officer) Tel 01786 431925.



Free Power Saver

Would you like to save up to £33 a year on your electricity bill?

If so complete the voucher on this page and send it to the freepost address shown. In return British Gas will send you a six way electrical socket that

detects when you switch off your TV with the remote. The socket then shuts down all the devices plugged into it, so that they don't stay on standby and waste electricity.

This is a genuine something for nothing deal, limited to one per household!

Please complete all details on the coupon and return to:

British Gas Offer, FREEPOST NWW1657, PO BOX 7, Manchester, M19 2PB

Please tick to receive the following product:

Standby Saver

You do not need to be a British Gas customer, but please indicate if you are.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Name: Date: / /

We may want to contact you by mail, phone, visit or email about other products and services provided by us, or our partners. By providing your information you will be indicating your consent to us keeping you informed in this way but please tick this box if you DO NOT wish to hear about such products and services

Offer limited to one per household.

A/80/S&C/1

Energy Rebate Scheme

An energy rebate scheme has recently been announced for people aged 70 or over on 26 March 2010, who are in receipt of the guaranteed credit element of pension credit. The government has made an agreement with the energy suppliers that most of this age group should be eligible for a one-off rebate of £80 from their electricity bill. No other details are known as yet.

Crystal Ball Gazing

Could you have predicted 20 years ago that we'd all be surfing the worldwide net on a mobile phone the size of a match box? And who knows where we will be in the next 20 years?

Some would say you can't double guess the future and others that you can never be too prepared. At Forth, we tend to think like the Boy Scouts. So we've been busy trying to work out what the next 30 years might bring and how we can ensure we'll be able to meet the challenges. This has involved us completely reviewing our long term maintenance plans, looking at how big we might grow and considering how many staff we may or may not require.

Once this information was

pulled together, we also had to look at what our rental income might be, how much we'd have to borrow from the bank and how much it would all cost.

This can never be an exact science. However, we're delighted to say that our future looks to be very secure. We're confident that in 20 years time our tenants will be sitting in well maintained homes receiving a first rate service.



Willing Volunteers



For some time now Forth has provided opportunities for students at College or University to gain work experience, on placement with the Association.

This allows students to put into practice the theory they have learnt in class and in return we benefit from their enthusiastic input and the extra work they can produce. Our latest student, Susanne Swan, was for instance largely responsible for securing the loft insulation programme.

We have now decided to take this a stage further and we are providing voluntary placements for people seeking paid employment but who lack some practical experience. In conjunction with Central Scotland Race Equality Council, we are providing work experience to compliment the training and other assistance that is available to people seeking employment.

Our first such volunteer is Elisha Kimani who is gaining experience in finance and administration tasks. If you come across Elisha in your contact with Forth you'll now know who he is and you'll be part of his learning experience.

Child Maintenance

As from 12th April 2010, child maintenance will no longer be treated as income, for income related benefit purposes. This means for those on:

- income support
- jobseekers allowance (income based)
- employment support allowance (income based)

who formerly were only allowed a £20 disregard, (and then any child maintenance

above this level was deducted from their benefit entitlement), their benefits should increase.

For those in receipt of child maintenance above £84.30 per week, who were unable to claim benefits, you may now be eligible. For further information on this change, please contact Tracy Doran, Money Adviser, on Tel: 01786 446066.

Far From Quiet On The Development Front



Waiting to begin construction are 14 new homes at Craighall Crescent, 60 off Huntly Crescent, Raploch and 42 at Drypow Park, Fallin. All of these we hope to start building in the next year and we already have a list of other new homes to build in 2011 and beyond.

As you'll know public expenditure in the coming years is going to be squeezed markedly. The result is that less money is going to be available for housing construction. Along with Rural Stirling Housing Association and Stirling Council, we are going to be doing everything possible to ensure that the investment in new homes for Stirling, remains as high as possible.

We certainly can't claim to be quiet on the development front these days.

Not only are we finishing off our homes at Drip Road, Raploch and Clayhills Drive, Cambusbarron we also have 23 new homes under construction at Gateside Road, Cultenhove.

Rent Increase Consultation Responses

We issued a consultation questionnaire to get tenants views on the proposed rent increase for 2010/11.

Although the level of response was limited, at 12% of tenants, it would appear that those responding have given some thought to the question and provided some useful feedback.

I would prefer? (Tick one option)

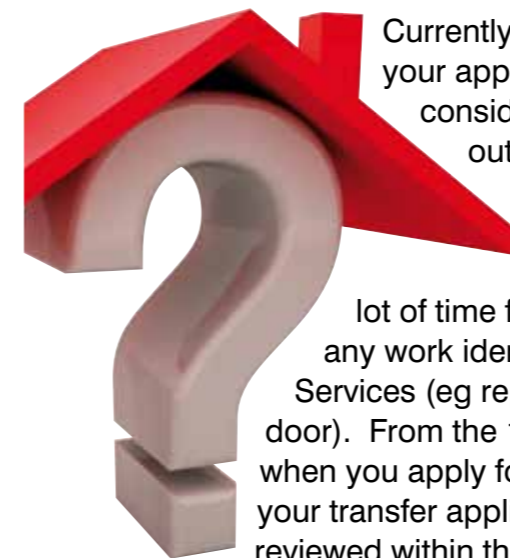
1% average rent increase	46
Rent freeze	8
2% increase	5

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

To Catherine Johnston for winning the £25 shopping voucher for returning her 'Points of View' card during October-December !!!

How to Transfer to Another Forth Property

As a tenant there may be a time when you would like to move to another Forth house. After submitting your transfer application we have to undertake a number of checks. We review your rent account to check that there are no rent arrears. Also, we check that there are no outstanding arrears for rechargeable repairs. Then if there are no problems, you will be lettered advising how many points you have been awarded.



Currently, only when your application is being considered, do we carry out an inspection of your home.

However, this may not allow a

lot of time for you to carry out any work identified by Technical Services (eg replacing a damaged door). From the 1st April 2010, when you apply for a transfer or if your transfer application is being reviewed within the next twelve

months, we will arrange to visit your home. We believe this will help your application

by identifying necessary repairs that must be done before you can be considered re-housing. Thereafter, a further visit will be undertaken to ensure that the work has been completed as requested and is to an acceptable standard.

If we do not obtain access, or you do not carry out the work, your application will be suspended until you have arranged another inspection. In the meantime, you will not be considered for re-housing. If you require more information on this article please contact your Housing Officer or you can e-mail the Housing Manager, Grahame Cairns, directly at Grahame@forthha.org.uk.

Well Qualified Committee



Having a Management Committee with a wide range of knowledge and skills is vital for any Housing Association.

We are fortunate to have Committee Members with knowledge of banking, accountancy, the law, civil engineering, construction, welfare advice, housing management and maintenance; amongst other things.

We can now also say that we have two of the most qualified Committee Members in the country. Gordon & Linda Mason who are both Forth tenants were each recently awarded an SQA Accredited Qualification "Governance of Scottish Housing Associations."

This qualification introduced in 2008 is based on a vocational qualification format and involves external assessment of the individual's knowledge and approach to Housing Association governance. To date, only a small band of people have received the award.

What Was In The Budget?

No we're not talking about Alistair Darling. We're talking about our budget for the coming year, which was agreed at the January Management Committee meeting.

Budget setting always involves some hard decisions and this year was no different. We sought to keep rent rise down but at the same time ensure that we maintain out service

standards and our homes. Almost 60 tenants (12% of those possible) took the time to respond to our rent setting consultation. 80% of these supported the 1% increase proposal. 11% wanted a rent freeze and 9% actually voted in favour of a larger rent increase. In the light of the response and other information presented, the management committee agreed to a 1% rent increase

to take effect from April. This will allow us to maintain all our existing service commitments and we will be able to carry out external painter work at Barnsdale Rd, Stirling Place, Flint Crescent, Bruce Street and Waulker Ave. In addition, we will also investigate the possibility of replacing old electric heating with new gas central heating systems.

Who's Who?

Continuing our focus on Management Committee, here are two more of our current members we would like to introduce...



Pat Heneghan is a founder member of Forth but rejoined the Management Committee in 2008. He is a lifelong resident of Stirling and has worked in housing for longer than

he cares to remember. He currently works for Clackmannan Council.

Pat is able to combine his extensive working knowledge and local knowledge to the benefit of Forth, its tenants and others in the local communities. He loves nothing better than seeing Forth succeed in what it is doing.



Harry Deerin has been a Committee Member since 2007. Prior to retiring, he was Director of Environmental services at Stirling Council, and now he is as busy as ever through a variety of voluntary commitments.

Harry combines his working knowledge from his employment and his voluntary activities, to ensure that we are never complacent about what we are achieving.

Proposed Cyclical and Planned Works 2010 - 11

In order to maintain and improve our housing we propose carrying out the works detailed in the tables below. This will depend on costs coming in at budget. If it is over budget some alterations to the programme may be required.

The works are programmed for throughout the year and tenants will be notified prior to works starting. However, an indication is given in the table below of when you can expect the works to be undertaken:

Cyclical Maintenance		
Work	Addresses	Period
Electrical Safety Check	Baker Street / Morris Terrace King Robert Court / Crosbies Court Monument View / Bruce Street	October – December '10
Smoke Alarm Safety Check Painter work	All our properties Barnsdale Road / Stirling Place Flint Crescent / Bruce Street Waulker Avenue	October – December '10 July – September '10
Annual Gas Service & Safety Check	All our properties with a gas supply (Not properties under Defects Liability Period: Winchel Place & Gordon Square)	March '10 – March '11
Annual safety check of roof anchors	Bruce View / Myles House Baker Street / Morris Terrace	January – March '11
Planned Maintenance		
Work	Addresses	Period
Storage Heating Upgrade	Queen Street / 1 – 10 Tannery Lane Bruce View	July – September '10

If you have any questions or queries regarding the proposed works please contact Iain Stirling (Senior Technical Services Officer) Tel: 01786 431925

Happy Easter!

The Committee and Staff would like to wish you all a very Happy Easter!

We would also like you to note that our offices will be closed for the following public holidays:

Office closes Thursday 1st April at 5.15pm

Office reopens Tuesday 6th April at 9am

In addition you should note the following office closures in May:

Office closed Monday 3rd May,
Friday 28th May and Monday 31st May.

If you have a genuine emergency repair during these holidays please contact the appropriate contractor detailed below

Existing Forth Housing Association tenants contact Stirling Council on **Telephone: 07715 004 265**

New tenants at Raploch: Winchel Place, Gordon Square, Fisher Row and Drip Road
Telephone Cruden Homes (East) 0131-442-3862. If this office is closed please contact:

- Electrician 07917-507-402
- Plumber\Heating 0141-766-0100
- Joiner 01506-468888

New tenants at Clayhills Drive (Phase 2), Cambusbarron: nos 20 -38, Flats 35A – 35J and 37A – 39J. **Telephone Persimmon Customer Services 0870-060-5520.**

Should you be in any doubt please refer to the Tenant Handbook which you were given when you signed your Tenancy Agreement.



Notices



Tenants Open Day

All our tenants are invited to attend an **Open Day** at the Albert Hall, Stirling on Saturday 17/4/10 from 10.30am to 2pm. This is being hosted by Stirling Council. We are having a stall at this event together with most of the other housing providers in the area. As well as housing stalls together with money advice, there are also lots of other stalls such as a reflexologist, beautician, face painter, balloons and podiatrist etc. Why not come along and enjoy this free event? Tea and coffee will be provided.

Joint Tenants Conference

We are hosting a Joint Tenants Conference on Saturday 5th June 2010 at Forth Valley College, Falkirk. Lunch, transport and child care will be provided free of charge. If you are interested in attending this event you require to register prior to 30 April 2010. For further information please contact Angela Laley, Project & Communications Co-ordinator, at the office or e mail angela@forthha.org.uk.

Help Us Reduce Our Carbon Footprint...

If you would prefer to receive your copy of Speaking Forth via e-mail please e-mail your name, postal address and e-mail address to info@forthha.org.uk

Feedback... Your Views

We welcome feedback as it helps us improve our services. For recent comments on

our services log on to the views page on our website under News. If you have any questions or comments about our services or the articles in this newsletter, please e mail us at info@forthha.org.uk



Useful Contact Details...

Forth Housing Association Ltd

2 Viewfield Place, Stirling, FK8 1NQ

Tel: 01786 446066 Fax: 01786 445846

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



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

