



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

December 2011

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SEASONS GREETINGS!



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



Seasons Greetings!

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



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

Office Closes 23rd December at 1pm

Office Reopens Tuesday 3rd January at 9am.

If you have any genuine emergency repairs during this period please contact Stirling Council Tel No 07715 004 265.

New tenants at Archie Bone Way, Fallin Tel No: 01259 219500.

New tenants at Wordie Road, Gateside Road, Torbrex Tel No: 01786 811811 - leave a message on the answering machine and you will get a call back.

Early Closing – Friday 16th December

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 above.

A Christmas Shopping Story...

It is a few days before Christmas and Stirling Santa is really worried about how much the gifts are going to cost this year.

His little elf listens to his worries and says to him: “why don’t I come shopping with you this year with my national entitlement card (young scot card) and I can get a discount in certain shops and the gift bill could be a lot less.”

Santa says: “What is the national entitlement card?” and the elf answers: “It is a card given to young people between the ages of 11 and 25 years old. All you have to do in the Stirling area is to phone 0845 277 7000 and request Youth Services who will arrange an appointment to get the card. They will be able to advise you of the different places the card will give you a discount.”

Santa is happy the cost of his Christmas is going to be less and thinks the elf is very clever. Now if only parents and children in the Stirling Area were as clever!



Website News: Focus on Report A Repair Menu

In the last issued we focused on the Money Matters Menu. This time we are focusing on the important Report A Repair Menu.

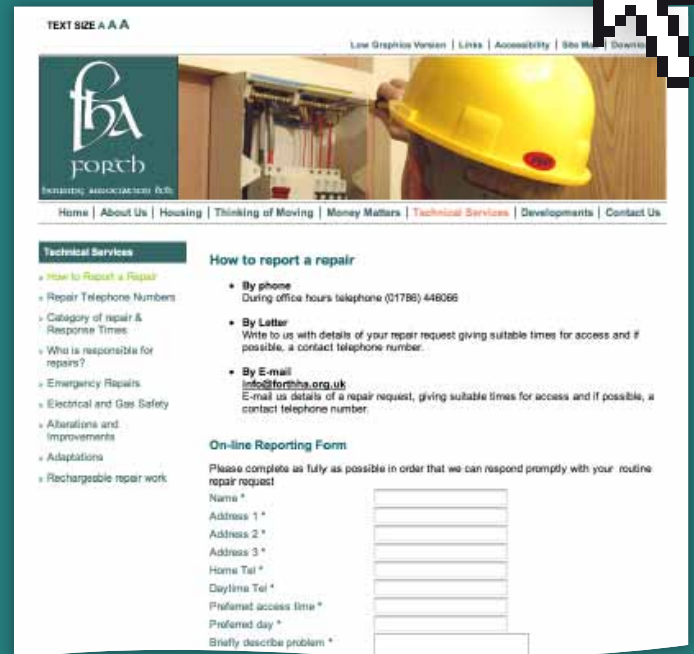
One of the main benefits of this page is that it enables you to report a repair, direct to Technical Services, at a time convenient to yourself and outwith office hours. However, this service of reporting a repair on-line cannot be used for reporting emergency repairs.

On the home page click on Report A Repair Sub Menu. This takes you to the Report A Repair page.

Type in your details, including your e mail address. In the problem box, briefly describe the problem, you are experiencing. For example, if you are having a problem with a living room door jamming or a toilet not flushing.

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 screenshot shows the 'Report A Repair' page on the Forth Housing Association website. At the top, there are navigation links: Home | About Us | Housing | Thinking of Moving | Money Matters | Technical Services | Developments | Contact Us. Below this is a 'Technical Services' menu with options like 'How to Report a Repair', 'Repair Telephone Numbers', 'Category of repair & Response Times', 'Who is responsible for repairs?', 'Emergency Repairs', 'Electrical and Gas Safety', 'Alterations and Improvements', 'Adaptations', and 'Rechargeable repair work'. The main content area is titled 'How to report a repair' and lists three methods: 'By phone' (01786) 446066, 'By Letter' (with details on what to include), and 'By E-mail' (info@fortha.org.uk). Below this is the 'On-line Reporting Form' which includes fields for Name, Address 1-3, Home Tel, Daytime Tel, Preferred access time, Preferred day, and a 'Briefly describe problem' text area. A mouse cursor is visible over the top right corner of the page.

On-line Reporting Form

- The note of the problem will go to direct to Technical Services.
- Technical Services 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.

Winner of Good Neighbour Award!

Well done to Jim and Linda Braid of Waulker Avenue who have won our annual Good Neighbour Award. Jim and Linda were nominated by their neighbour Mrs Jean Neilson for being great neighbours. Mrs Neilson said in her letter that nothing is too much trouble for Mr & Mrs Braid including:

“Bringing the paper every morning, putting the bin out, giving a lift for hospital appointments, cutting the grass.” etc

Mrs Neilson confirmed that this support had made such a difference to her life.



Mr & Mrs Braid are pictured receiving their £25 supermarket voucher.

BE NEIGHBOURLY THIS WINTER

It is all our responsibility to keep a look out for older or vulnerable neighbours, during the Winter Period. Please 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.

Well Done!

Well done to Agnes McTaggart of Auld School Wynd, Cambusbarron. Agnes completed her Cambusbarron Forth Tenants Questionnaire giving her views on the group to help plan next years activities and has won a £25 supermarket voucher.

Forth's Future Thinking

Never an organisation to sit back and stagnate our Committee and staff members recently spent a Saturday focusing on our future.

The main purpose of the day was to allow everyone to share their thoughts and ideas about how we can embrace the challenges of the year ahead.

The coming year will see the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, which will make service to tenants the focus of all landlords' activities. We have for several years sought to prioritise the delivery of

good services and have involved tenants in monitoring and measuring how well we're doing. However part of the day was spent looking at how we can improve what we do even further.

Similarly responding to the changing funding regime for new homes is always something we've done but maintaining a new build programme in the current economic climate will be a challenge. However having considered that challenge we've concluded we're up for the fight and have some ideas that may become reality.



Factoring Forth In

We have provided property factoring services to owners in our own mixed tenure developments for many years. However, we have recently made our first move into “the big world of factoring”.

A group of owners in Victoria Place, Stirling, became disillusioned with the service they were getting from their Glasgow based Factor. They wanted to look for a local alternative and they approached us having heard about and seen the services that we could provide. Therefore, we were elected to become their Factor from 1st December.

This development should make good sense for all of us because the owners will benefit from

our local, responsive service and experience. Our tenants will see no reduction in their service but will in effect see a small reduction in their costs. The additional workload is being undertaken without the need to increase our staffing or any other new costs. The fees earned from factoring will therefore be offset against our overheads.

For some time we have seen the potential for us to provide such services. So who knows this could be the start of something big.

Avoiding Frost Damage

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 that you know where your main stop-cock 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.

Monthly Estate Management Visit Dates

Our 2 Housing Officers cover the following areas:

Elaine Shepherd – Fallin, Raploch, Cowie, Riverside, Stirling Town - Crosbies Court, Myles House, Cowane Street. Elaine will be carrying out a monthly estate visit to your area **week commencing:**

16th January, 20th February and 19th March.

Isabel Reilly – Bannockburn, Braehead, Cambusbarron, Cornton, Whins of Milton, Stirling Town – Baker Street/Morris Terrace, Tannery Lane/Queen Street. Isabel will be carrying out a monthly estate visit to your **area week commencing:**

9th January, 13th February and 12th March.



We Won!

New Housing At Dunblane and Raploch

Have you ever bought a set of raffle tickets and then discovered you won not one but two star prizes?

That is exactly how our Committee and staff felt in September, when the Scottish Government announced the “winners” of their funding bids for new homes.

We had submitted 2 bids, involving up to 29 homes at Anchorscross Dunblane and 14 flats at Craighall Street in Raploch. Never did we think we’d be given grant for both

but that is what happened.

A total of £1,728,905 in grant funding has been awarded to us and early next year will see us starting to build the homes for rent in Raploch and in Dunblane. The Dunblane homes will be a mix of 15 for rent and 14 for low cost purchase through a scheme known as Shared Equity. Anyone who is interested in finding out more about Shared Equity should contact our office where their name can be added to a mailing list for future details.



Don't Give Fire a Home!

A fire in your home can be devastating.

Every hour of every day there's a house fire in Scotland.

Book your free Home Fire Safety Visit Today.

A short visit from your local Fire Service will help to make sure your home is as safe as it can be.

They'll even install a smoke alarm – completely free – if you need one.

It only takes about 20 minutes, and remember, their advice and help could save your life.

To book a free Home Fire Safety Visit text 'Home' to 61611 or visit www.dontgivefireahome.org



Fireworks and Christmas Gifts At De Moray Court!

Well done to De Moray Association who held a successful Guy Fawkes evening for the residents of De Moray Court. De Moray provided free refreshments and Tescos are thanked for their contribution.

At Christmas, all children under the age of 16 years living at De Moray will receive a gift from De Moray Association. This money has been raised during the year through the bonus ball competition – so please keep supporting this competition by buying weekly numbers! Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!
To Sharon Fenney for winning the £25 shopping voucher for returning her 'Points of View' card during July-September!!!

Postal Scam - Royal Mail



The Trading Standards Office are making people aware of the following scam:

A card is posted through your door from a company called PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) suggesting that they were unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to contact them on Tel No: 0906 6611911 (a Premium rate number).

Do NOT call this number, as this is a mail scam originating from Belize.

If you call the number and you start to hear a

recorded message you will already have been billed £315 for the phone call.

If you do receive a card with these details, then please contact Royal Mail Fraud on Tel No: 020 7239 6655.

For more information, see the Crime Stoppers website:

www.crimestoppers-uk.org/crime-prevention/helping-prevent-crime/scams/postal-delivery-scam

Cambusbarron Forth Tenants

Following on from a successful AGM, the office bearers for the next year are:

Chairperson: Lynda Simpson
Treasurer: Alexandra Currie
Secretary : Douglas Findlay

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 31st January from 10.45am-11.45am at Cambusbarron Community Centre. This meeting is being held during the day to enable more residents with young

children to attend. The group will make you very welcome.

We hope that Forth residents from Clayhills Drive and Auld School Wynd will support the group over the coming year.

Recipe Corner

- Babuffca cake



In our last edition we asked if you had a favourite recipe. Agnes Reid, from Fallin has given us one of her favourite cake recipes:

“This is a recipe that came from a young student from the Czech Republic. She was studying English and stayed with us for six months. It’s best made up in a ring tin, if you have one.”

You will need:

- 1 mug of sugar
- 2 mugs of self-raising flour
- 1 mug of milk
- 2 Eggs
- 1/2 mug of cooking oil
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 dessert spoon of drinking chocolate

Plus: large baking tin or ring tin.

Method:

Mix all of the ingredients together except the drinking chocolate. Put half the mixture into the tin. Gently mix the drinking chocolate into the mixture left in the bowl, then add this to the tin and gently blend to create a marble effect.

Bake in the oven at 180°/gas mark 4 for 40-45 minutes.

Bag It & Bin It!

Following on from last editions article regarding dog fouling we are reminding our tenants who have dogs it is their responsibility to clean up after their pet.

When setting off for a walk remember to pick up a dog waste bag so you can bag it and bin it. As long as the waste is bagged you can use any bin – not just a red waste bin. You can also take it home and put it in your grey bin.

Dog waste is a health hazard, especially for young children. Binning dog waste can help stop the spread of disease to other dogs and avoid owners facing expensive pet bills.

If you are experiencing this problem, please contact Stirling Council's Dog Warden Service on Tel 0845 277 7000. If the problem is still not resolved, please advise your Housing Officer.



Switching Energy Providers

Using a comparison site is the easiest way to decide which energy supplier will give you the best deal. To use these services you will require:-

- Name of your current supplier
- Name of your current tariff (this will be shown on your bills)
- Your postcode
- The number of units you use per year (this will be shown on your bill)
- Your current payment method

On inputting this information you will be able to check which supplier will give you the best offer. BUT before moving supplier phone your current supplier and check they will not offer you the same or a better deal for you to stay with them. You can also use comparison sites to check the best deal for prepayment meters.

Comparison Sites Available:

www.energyhelpline.com	0800 074 0745
www.energylinx.co.uk	0800 849 7077
www.uswitch.com	0800 404 7908
www.simplyswitch.com	0800 011 1395

*Please note this is not an exhaustive list of comparison sites.



Apologies!



Apologies to Linda Mason as in error, Linda's name was missed from the list of appointed Committee members for 2011/12 which appeared in the last newsletter. Linda, a Forth tenant from Plean, is one of our longest serving Committee Members.

She is actively involved with MS Society Scotland where she leads training courses and serves on the Scottish Council. How could we forget someone that busy!

RENT IS A PRIORITY NOT A LUXURY!

Times are difficult for everyone and with the tradition of giving loved ones Christmas presents it can make it harder to make ends meet over the festive period. Paying your rent however is not optional. Please ensure that you pay your rent in full and on time. Failure to pay your rent will result in further action being taken against you.

If you are experiencing genuine difficulties please contact your Housing Officers, Elaine Shepherd and Isabel Reilly.

Alternatively, contact our Income Maximisation Officer, Tracy Doran, immediately for advice and assistance.

We are here to help but you have to take the first step! Christmas is an expensive time of year but you need to budget to ensure that you can pay your bills and prevent starting 2012 in debt and with a first footing from the Housing Officers.



Electricity Rebates

The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides a rebate on your electricity bills in winter 2011/12 and will run for four years from winter 2011/12.

Who can get the Warm Home Discount?

Pension Credit customers are automatically considered for the rebate.

Those of pensionable age who receive the guaranteed element of pension credit but not savings credit on 11th September 2011, the Warm Home Discount Scheme will credit their electricity account with a rebate of £120 between October and December 2011. This rebate will be undertaken automatically by the electricity supplier. If you think you should have received the rebate and you have not received any correspondence to say you are eligible or you wish to check if you will be receiving the rebate please phone 0845 603 9439.

Can other people get a Warm Home Discount?

Energy suppliers may also give a rebate to some other customers in vulnerable groups (called the broader group). Each electricity supplier has different eligibility criteria they will use to decide who may get the rebate. In

some instances if you are on Income Support, Income Related Employment & Support Allowance, or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance you may be eligible. **Please contact Tracy Doran at our office to check if you meet the criteria or check our website at www.forthha.org.uk. Alternatively, contact your energy supplier direct to apply.**

All energy suppliers have replaced their social tariffs with Warm Homes Discount. The undernoted is information for each energy supplier on how to apply for the Warm Homes Discount:-

Scottish Hydro

Telephone 0800 300 111 or email priority.services@scottish-southern.co.uk

British Gas

Telephone number 0800 072 8625 to apply if paying by direct debit or quarterly bills or 0800 294 8604 if on a prepayment meter email Homeenergycare.leeds@centrica.com

N Power Telephone 0800 980 5525

EDF Telephone 0800 096 9000

EON Telephone 0800 051 1480

Scottish Power Telephone 0800 027 2700 or email carefree@scottishpower.com

Forth Valley Orchards - Free Workshops

Forth Valley Orchards are holding free training events for residents of the Stirling area. Places are limited so please book early to avoid disappointment. More information on venues etc is available from Amparo Echenique Tel 01786 449215.

- **HARVEST - WAYS TO PRESERVE & COOK WITH FRUIT GLUTS** (Stirling) Saturday, 10 December 2011, 10.00 am - 3.30 pm
- **PLANNING & PLANTING NEW ORCHARDS** (Falkirk) Saturday, 14 January 2012, 11.00 am - 3.00 pm
- **WINTER PRUNING** (Stirling) Sunday, 22 January 2012, 11.00 am - 3.00 pm
- **FRUIT TREE PROPAGATION BY GRAFTING** (Stirling) Saturday, 4 February 2012, 11.00 am - 3.00 pm
- **WINTER PRUNING** (Stirling) Saturday, 11 February 2012, 11.00 am - 3.00pm
- **PLANNING & PLANTING NEW ORCHARDS** (Stirling) Sunday, 12 February 2012, 11.00 am - 3.00 pm
- **PEST DISEASES AND DISORDERS OF FRUIT TREES** (Falkirk) Saturday, 10 March 2012, 6.30 pm - 8.30 pm
- **BLOSSOM BEES & BIODIVERSITY** (Stirling) Sunday, 11 March 2012, 11.00 am - 4.00 pm

TO BOOK COMPLETE THE UNDERNOTED SLIP:

Name:

Address:

Workshop:

Tel: Email:

Please return to: Amparo Echenique, Forth Environment Link, Earlsgate House, Offices 5 and 6, St Ninian's Road, Kings Park, Stirling, FK8 2HE

Tel: 01786 449215, Email: amparo@forthenvironmentlink.org



Useful Contact Details...

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