



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

December 2014

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Season's Greetings as Staff Raise Money for Children In Need

All in the spirit of charity and raising money for Children in Need, Forth staff were "dressed down" in their onesies, dressed up in their finest attire or disguised as Pudsey! Staff also held a coffee morning with cappuccino's, latte's, home made cupcakes, empire biscuits and cookies followed by a lunch of home made soup & sandwiches. The fun also included a special Children in Need themed quiz, bingo, face painting and Pudsey nail painting.

Staff raised an impressive £147 for this worthwhile cause, helping disadvantaged children and young people in the UK.



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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 Weds 24th December at 12 noon – Office Reopens Monday 5th January 2015 at 9am.

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

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

Gas Leaks – Tel: 0800 111999

**Any Other Genuine Emergency Repairs
McDougall Group on Tel: 0333 123 1011**

New tenants at Raploch should report genuine emergency repairs to Cruden Construction:

Electrical Emergency Tel: 07917 507 402

Gas Emergency Tel: 07917 436 272

New tenants at Barn Road, Stirling should report genuine emergency repairs to

JB Bennett (Contracts) Ltd :

Joiner 07836511329

Plumber 01786 812273

Electrician 07796335775

Early Closing - Friday 19th December

Our offices will be closed from 12 noon on Friday 19th 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.



Keeping The Rent Increase Low

This is the time of year when we are planning our budgets for next year and a key part of that is deciding what rents we will need to charge.

Last year our Management Committee decided that they would seek to keep rent increases in line with price rises over the coming years. As a result we are asking tenants whether they would agree with an increase from next April.

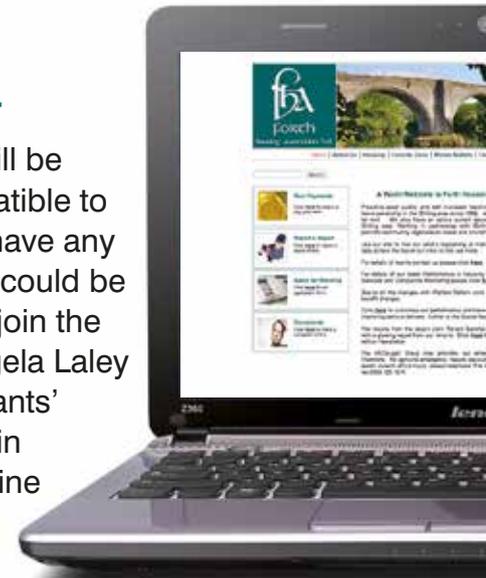
Tenants will find an information sheet enclosed with this newsletter and it is important you give us your opinion so that this can be taken on board by the Committee when they meet at the end of January to make their final decisions.

You can do this by returning the reply sheet with or without an additional letter in the freepost envelope provided.

Tenants' View Forum And Forth's Performance Report

At the meeting held in October tenants discussed our results reported in the Performance Report 2014/15 in line with the Social Housing Charter. Our Performance Report is available on-line. Log on to www.forthha.org.uk and click on Tenants' Zone/Performance. Alternatively, if you would like a hard copy posted out, please contact Margaret Glencross at the office. The website was also discussed at this meeting. Over

the next few months we will be making the website compatible to all mobile devices. If you have any ideas on how our website could be improved or would like to join the Forum please contact Angela Laley at the office. The next Tenants' View meeting will be held in March 2015 and will examine our performance over the last 6 months.



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 surveys that are returned to us are entered into a prize draw to win £25 of supermarket vouchers of your choice.

Congratulations to our recent winners:

Points of View (Repairs)

– S Dove, Baker Street, Stirling

Close Cleaning Questionnaire

– A Duffy, Barn Road, Stirling

Landscape Maintenance

– D Woodman, Gillespie Terrace, Plean



A Duffy

Customer Satisfaction Results (Points of View Cards) - Repairs

Our average results from July to September 2014 are noted below:

Overall Satisfaction	Very Satisfied
Overall satisfaction with repairs service provided by Forth.	82.29%
Contractors Service	Very Satisfied
How satisfied are you with the quality of the repair?	90.63%
Overall how satisfied are you with how the Contractor dealt with repair?	88.5%
Overall how satisfied are you with the access arrangements made by the Contractor?	81.25%

We value your feedback as this lets us improve our services. Angela Laley, Project & Communications Co-ordinator, will be happy to help if you want to discuss anything about improving our service further.

Money News Round-Up

If you have any questions regarding the following benefits please contact our Income Maximisation Officer, Tracy Doran, who is here to help. Tracy's Direct Dial at our office is Tel: 01786 431921.

Attention: Employment Support Allowance (ESA)/Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)

As from 27th October 2014 a 7 day waiting period has been introduced for those claiming ESA or JSA.

This means that anyone making a new claim for either JSA or ESA will not be paid for the first week of their claim. This should not apply to those moving directly from ESA to JSA or from JSA to ESA.

At present, Housing Benefit is paid from the Monday after the date that the payment for either JSA or ESA is made. This could mean that you lose out on a week of Housing Benefit. If this happens you

will require to request a backdate of Housing Benefit which normally will only be able to be claimed after your Housing Benefit has been processed.



Job Centres Go Digital

The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) are changing the way that job seekers search for jobs. Job points are being removed and replaced by computers to access 'Universal Jobmatch' and other various recruitment sites.

Free WIFI access will also be available in the Job Centres so those job seekers with their own mobile devices can access the various sites with no cost implications.

This 'high-tech equipment' will be installed at more than 700 sites which will include Stirling Job Centre. This will include specially designed computers that will bring all the Job Centre services together in one device in an effort to make it easier for people to find work.

The biggest change will see the installation of electronic 'signing-on pads' which the DWP claim will improve security and reduce fraud.

Scottish Power – Prepayment Meters



Scottish Power currently has a 'debt amnesty' for those customers on prepayment meters who have a debt amount being deducted weekly from their meters.

This means that if you currently have a debt being deducted on your prepayment meters and you are a customer of Scottish Power you should contact them on

Tel: 0800 027 2700. You should then request that the debt recovery be put on hold until the end of the winter as you are experiencing financial hardship. (It would be likely that this would be reinstated in March). If you have any health difficulties Scottish Power operate a 'priority service' whereby if you register you may be eligible for other help from Scottish Power ie if your heating breaks down you would have an engineer call to you before someone who is not registered on the 'priority services'. To register please contact them on Tel: 0800 027 1122.

A Christmas Shopping Story

(KIDS + CHRISTMAS = SKINT)

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. Also, if you go to

<https://www.youngscot.org/offers> you can see all the different places where a discount can apply.”

Santa is happy the cost of his Christmas is going to be less and thinks the elf is very clever. Now parents and children in the Stirling area can be just as clever!

Homeswapper



Homeswapper is a direct home swap service for social housing tenants in a rented property who want to swap their house or flat. This is called a mutual exchange.

Once you have joined homeswapper you can attach a photo to adverts to promote

your home. This will give other tenants a better idea of the standard of internal decoration and may just make the difference in swapping.

Log on to: www.homeswapper.co.uk for more information.

Estate Management Visit Dates

Our 2 Housing Officers cover the following areas:

Elaine Shepherd – Cambusbarron, Cornton, Dunblane, Raploch, Riverside, Stirling Town – Cowane Street, Myles House, Tannery Lane/ Queen Street.

Elaine will be carrying out an estate visit to your area **week commencing:** 19 January 2015 and 16 March 2015.

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

Caroline will be carrying out an estate visit to your area **week commencing:** 12 January 2015 and 9 March 2015.



Elaine Shepherd



Caroline Stevenson

Recording Complaints and Improving our Service

Between 1st July and 30th September 2014 we received 10 complaints regarding a variety of issues. This is a similar number of complaints to the previous period with 9 complaints being received between April and June 2014.

Complaint Outcomes – July to September 2014

Stage	Responded to in full	Upheld	Not upheld
Stage 1 (frontline)	6	2	4
Stage 2 (investigation)	4	2	2

In line with the Complaints Handling procedure, every complaint received is either classed as Stage 1 (frontline resolution) or Stage 2 (more detailed investigation required). After investigation, if the complaint is upheld (ie found to be valid) then we will implement any necessary changes so that our services to our customers can be improved: we use complaints and feedback to improve our services whenever we can. Examples of complaints and improvements are noted below:

Nature of Complaint	Learning Outcome
Dispute between tenant and contractor.	Appoint a third party sooner for advice, where there is no evidence to support tenant or contractor.
Complaint regarding external painterworks.	Provide tenants with paint colour choice for external painterworks prior to works commencing.

All Winners - Annual Good

Very well done to our 4 tenants who have won our annual Good Neighbour Award. Each won £25 in supermarket voucher of their choice:



Adam Moffat with winner Christine McBride

Firstly, Christine McBride, Raploch was nominated by her neighbour Adam Moffat for being a great neighbour. Adam said in his letter that nothing is too much trouble for Christine including:

“She makes dinner 4 times per week for an elderly neighbour who is very unwell at present. And pops in regularly. She also sometimes makes dinners for other residents when she has any leftovers. She is an all round good neighbour.”



John and Rona Duff

John and Rona Duff were nominated by their neighbour Harry McKendrick who said that: “he couldn’t praise them enough. Their support level is second to none and that over the past few months they have both given so much help and that this has made such a difference. Nothing is too much trouble for them – including cutting my grass for me. They are the best neighbours you could have.”

Neighbour Awards - 2014!

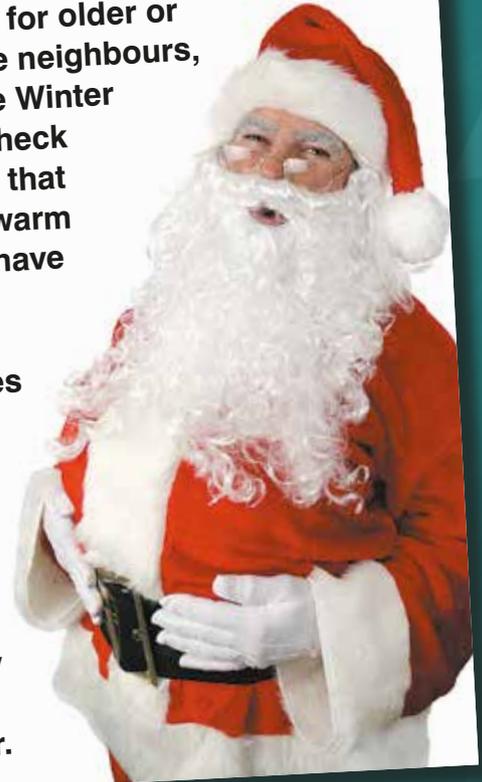


Lynda Neilson with Margaret and Jimmy Wells and Grace Robertson

Our last nomination is from one of our tenants who had the terrifying experience of having a house fire. Lynda Neilson of Cowie nominated 2 households after this experience: "Margaret and Jimmy Wells were a great help to me on the night it happened. Trying to calm me down. Margaret stayed with me until the fire brigade left. On the Sunday Grace Roberston came in to make sure I was ok. She got stuck into my kitchen, cleaning up all the mess as well as the rest of the house. I really don't know what I would have done without them all." Lynda also highlighted that Calum Carberry from our office was: "brilliant throughout the whole process."

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.



Next Phase at Raploch Now Complete

We are delighted to announce that 20 houses at our development at Cordiner Close/Huntley Crescent/Waulker Avenue Raploch have now been allocated. We now have a total of 48 properties in this area of Raploch. The properties have been built to the highest standard, using the latest building techniques.

Our Chairperson, Margaret Turner said: “Everyone at Forth Housing is delighted to see the regeneration of Raploch moving on to the next stage. The demand for our housing continues at a very high level and our recent tenant satisfaction survey showed that 96% of our Raploch tenants expressed satisfaction with their neighbourhood.”



Building Moving Swiftly On at Cultenhove, St Ninians

The Contractor is making good progress at our development at Cultenhove, St Ninians. Completions will therefore be ahead of programme which were originally due for March 2015.

This will add another 16 properties to our stock, bringing the total to 737. The housing mix for this development is:

- 8 x 2person/2apt cottage flats
- 8 x 4 person/3apt cottage flats



Cultenhove, St Ninians

Properties are in the process of being allocated. The Housing Officer for this new development will be Caroline Stevenson. All properties are

barrier-free and have high insulation standards. So by Spring 2015 16 new households will be in a warm and cosy home!



Salt Bins

The provision of salt Bins is the responsibility of Stirling Council and details of their Winter Service Policy can be found on their website:

www.mystirlingcouncil.gov.uk

However, there are a few of our developments which have yet to be adopted by Stirling Council and therefore we will continue to provide salt bins to these developments only. These bins will be checked and topped up on a regular basis.

RENT IS A PRIORITY NOT A LUXURY!

Paying your rent 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 Caroline Stevenson, or 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 2015 in debt. This will avoid a first footing from the Housing Officers.



TENANTS' GROUPS - NEWS ROUND-UP

Cambusbarron Forth Tenants

Cambusbarron Forth Tenants prepared Halloween goodie bags for all the children at Cambusbarron. Some of the children dressed up and helped distribute the bags. A great time was had by all but special thanks must go to Alex Currie (Treasurer) who made up these bags.



The group have also applied to the Climate Challenge Fund for bike storage and outreach work which would involve working with the children on cycling safety, bike repair workshops, family cycle routes etc Both our Tenants Groups have requested extra bike storage and if the grant is approved a number of our developments will be considered for bike storage.

De Moray Association, Cornton

At their last meeting the group agreed that they would concentrate on environmental improvements for their development. They are waiting to hear if Stirling Council will grant a 5 year License to Occupy to enable a grant application to be prepared for the community garden.

Tenants Groups Meeting Dates and Minutes

These are posted on our website under Tenants' Zone/ Participation.

Details of forthcoming meeting dates will also be issued by a flier nearer the time, to each household. Please support your local group by attending meetings.



Right To Buy

Over the coming months you may hear or read information about Council and Housing Association tenants losing the Right To Buy. This follows a decision by the Scottish Government to change the law.

This won't actually change anything for our tenants because they have never had that right. This is because of our charitable status, which we have had since we were founded in 1988. If you want to read more about it however you may like to look up the Government's web site at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/11/8564



Find Out What Is Happening...

Speaking Forth is written for you. We want to bring you the latest news about developments here and in the housing world that might be of interest to you. If there is anything specific you would like us to include in future editions or have an idea for a story, please e mail us at info@forthha.org.uk or phone Angela Laley at the office.



Useful Contact Details...

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