



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

# SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

Autumn 2016

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## Highly Satisfied Customers!

**Earlier this Summer independent consultants, Research Resource, completed a satisfaction survey with our tenants and the results are in.**

We're absolutely delighted to report that almost in every area of activity tenants are reporting higher levels of satisfaction than they did 3 years ago and the results then were very positive.

For example satisfaction with the quality of our homes has risen

from 89% to 92%, satisfaction with opportunities to get involved in decision making has increased from 90% to 96%, and 94% of tenants are now satisfied that their rent is good value for money, up from 84%.

You'll find more detail of the results in the centre section of this newsletter and if anyone wishes more information this can be obtained from our office.



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# Office Closures



Please note that Forth's office will be closed on the following dates and any tenants with genuine emergency repairs should contact the numbers below:

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September Public holiday**

**Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September Public holiday**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October Staff training**

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

**Gas Leaks – 0800 111999**

**Any Other Genuine Emergency  
Repairs – 0333 123 1011  
(McDougall Group)**

**Adamson Place tenants –  
Marshall Construction -  
01259 219500**

If you call out a contractor please let us know as soon as our office re-opens.

## The New HomeSwapper App Has Arrived!

The new Homeswapper app will give you instant access to your Homeswapper account for quicker matches and messaging. You will only be asked to log in once using either your Homeswapper or Facebook credentials.

Great features in the app include:

- Push notifications for alerts
- Instant messaging
- Instant matching
- Swiping function to flick through ads or deleting messages
- Facebook log in



For more information log on to [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)

# Annual General Meeting Reports Success!

**By the time you read this newsletter our Annual General Meeting will have taken place. This meeting receives a report on the last year and in particular considers our accounts for 2015/16.**

After another successful year in which we exceeded many of our performance targets, agreed a rent freeze and built 16 new homes we finished the year with a healthy financial surplus. This will allow us to

finance the future improvements planned to every tenant's home in the years to come.

The meeting also considered the election of Committee Members for the coming year. Indications at the time of writing are that this is likely to involve a number of new faces. If you'd like to check out what happened, visit the news section of our web site at [www.forthha.org.uk](http://www.forthha.org.uk) or contact John Cameron at our office.

## Performance Report – Give Us Your Views!

Following on from the Annual Report our detailed Performance Report will be available on our website from end of October 2016. Our Tenants View Forum that meets quarterly discusses this Report. We would also like to hear your feedback, so if you have any comments please contact Angela Laley at the office, or e mail [angela@forthha.org.uk](mailto:angela@forthha.org.uk).

If you would like a hard copy of the report please phone the office and we will arrange for one to be posted out.

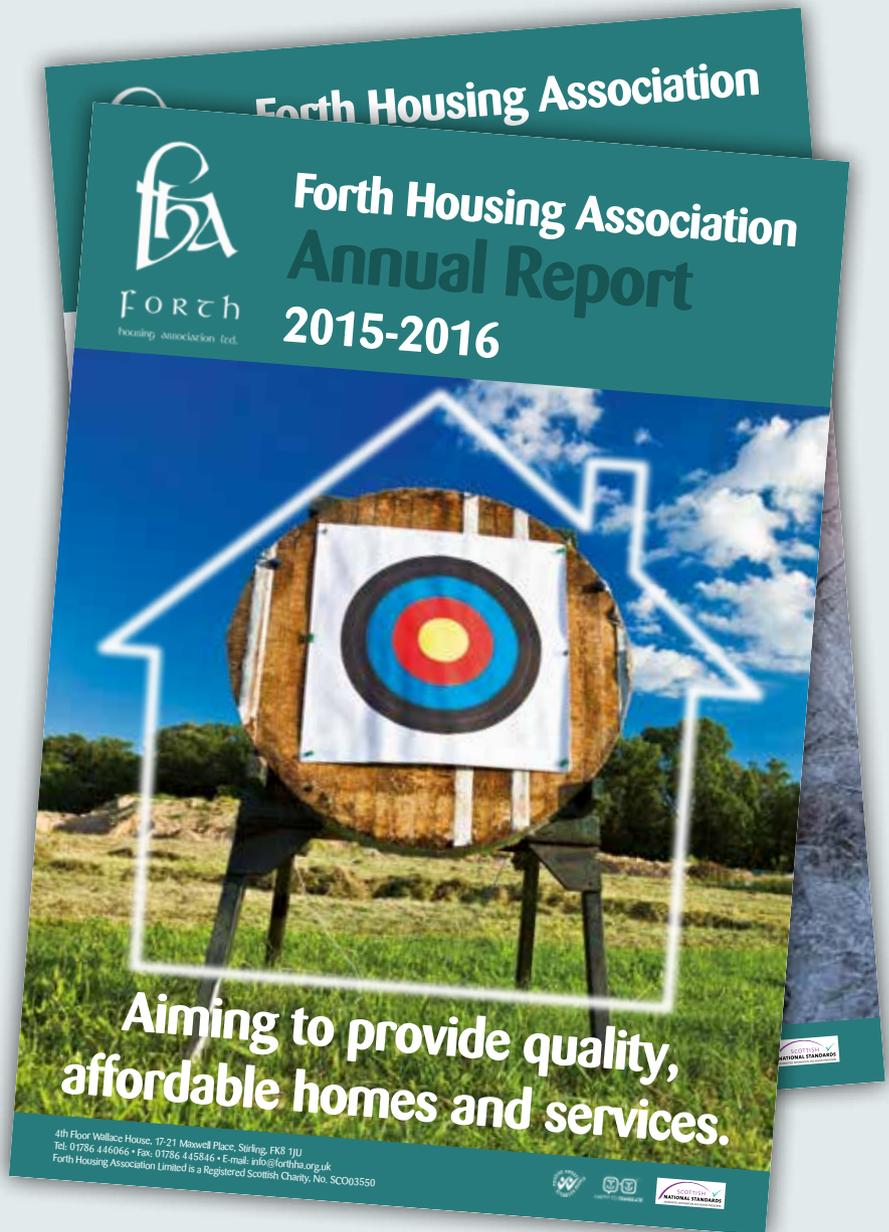


# New Calendar and Annual Report

Along with this newsletter tenants should have received a copy of our Annual Report and Calendar. This document spells out the main highlights and achievements of the past year and allows you to get an idea of how we have been performing.

The Calendar section also allows you to keep track of key issues over the course of the year, with highlights to remind you when rent payments are due, what landscaping schedules are planned, office closures etc.

This year the Calendar features a series of photographs submitted by tenants or their household members. These show various sights around Stirling, which remind us what a beautiful and varied area we live in. They also show what talented photographers we have living in our homes. Well done to the people who submitted the photos and we hope you are pleased with the end result.



# Benefit Cap and Affect on Housing Benefit

**As from 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016 for benefit claimants aged 16-64 years old, the Government will reduce the Benefit Cap to:-**

- £384.62 per week (£20,000 a year) if you're in a couple, whether your children live with you or not
- £384.62 per week (£20,000 a year) if you're single and your children live with you
- £257.69 per week (£13,400 a year) if you're single and you don't have children, or your children don't live with you

If your income is higher than the Benefit Cap then your Housing Benefit/housing costs will reduce to the Benefit Cap amount which will mean that you will require to pay monies towards your rent.

**You're not affected by the Cap if anyone in your household qualifies for Working Tax Credit or gets any of the following benefits:**

- Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or Armed Forces Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Employment and Support Allowance (if you get the support component)
- Industrial Injuries Benefits (and equivalent payments as part of a War Disablement Pension or the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme)
- Universal Credit payment for 'limited capability for work and work-related activity'
- War pensions or War Widow's or War Widower's Pension

***The DWP will be posting letters to claimants that may be affected by the Benefit Cap changes. The letters will be posted out from 19 – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016.***

***Please contact Tracy Doran at the office if you have any questions.***

# New Waste Collection Service

From Autumn 2016 the Council are introducing a new collection service. The following is a brief overview:

- Introduction of 2 new wheeled recycling bins to provide greater capacity for recyclable materials.
- The frequency of the recycling collection will be changed to reflect the capacity of your bins.
- Blue bin: Plastics, cans and cartons emptied every 2 weeks.
- You will be able to recycle a greater range of materials including, plastic pots, tubs and trays, which previously went to landfill.
- Green bin: Paper & cardboard emptied every 4 weeks.
- Blue box: Glass bottles and jars, emptied every 2 weeks.
- Food and garden waste will be collected together, all year round, emptied every 2 weeks.
- Grey non-recycling bins will continue to be emptied every 2 weeks.

For more information please use the link below:

**<http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/waste-and-recycling/improved-waste-collection-service>**

## Landscape Maintenance Survey Feedback

We recently carried out a Landscape Maintenance survey and in order to maintain standards the following actions are being taken:

- As part of Estate Management inspections Housing Officers will monitor weed control and will also ensure that contractors are meeting the contract specification regarding shrub pruning, grass removal etc.
- 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.

Therefore, if you are unhappy with any aspect of the Landscape Maintenance service please contact the Tenant Services Manager, Grahame Cairns, at the office and let him know.

# You Said It!

In the early Summer independent researchers interviewed around one third of our tenants. This was to find out exactly not only what you think of Forth as a landlord but also our homes, staff and services. Over the next few pages we've summarised the findings for you.



## Overall Satisfaction

When asked “How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by Forth as your landlord” 94% of our tenants said they were satisfied or very satisfied. This is the same result as both 2010 and 2013 so it would appear we're pretty consistent.

When asked which things we should give most priority to the top 5 choices were:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Listening to tenants views and acting upon them
- Keeping tenants informed
- Making improvements to existing homes
- Maintaining the neighbourhood where you live

This is useful information to have and we'll try to reflect these priorities as we plan ahead.

# Keeping You Informed, Getting Involved



96% of those surveyed said that they were satisfied with how good Forth is at keeping tenants informed about services and decisions and a similar percentage were satisfied with opportunities to get involved in decision making. Both of these levels are up from last time.

100% of people said they found the Tenants' Handbook useful and the result for the web site was 96%. 84% of tenants read Speaking

Forth and 97% of those think it is good at keeping them informed.

88% of tenants are happy just to be kept informed about Forth's work. However, 12% said they would like to have a say or be involved in making decisions. **If you are one of those 12% contact Angela Laley at our office to chat about how we can involve you more.**

# The Quality Of Your Home

92% of tenants indicated that they are satisfied with the condition of their home and for new tenants, who'd moved in in the last year, the figure was 95%. Both of these are up from 3 years ago and suggest that our home improvements are paying dividends.



93% of tenants were satisfied with the last repair they had carried out, with 100% satisfaction with the attitude of workers, 98% satisfaction with keeping dirt and mess to a minimum and 97% satisfaction with getting a time slot that suited them. These all show that our maintenance contractors are doing a good job.

# Quality of The Neighbourhood

96% of tenants are satisfied with the maintenance of open spaces and 98% with common areas such as drying greens, common closes etc. Both of these are well up on 2013, with common areas satisfaction being up by 18%. These results are particularly pleasing given the changes to our Close Cleaning service.

Whether tenants were asked about rubbish and litter, noisy neighbours or general

crime in their neighbourhood satisfaction results were up from 2013. Also, in a number of categories such, as problems with pets, abandoned cars or harassment there were no reports of dissatisfaction from our tenants.



## Value For Money

In 2013, 84% of tenants stated that they were satisfied that their rent represented good value for money. This has increased to 94% this year. It would therefore seem that our aim to keep rent increases as low as possible, without sacrificing our service standards, is paying off.

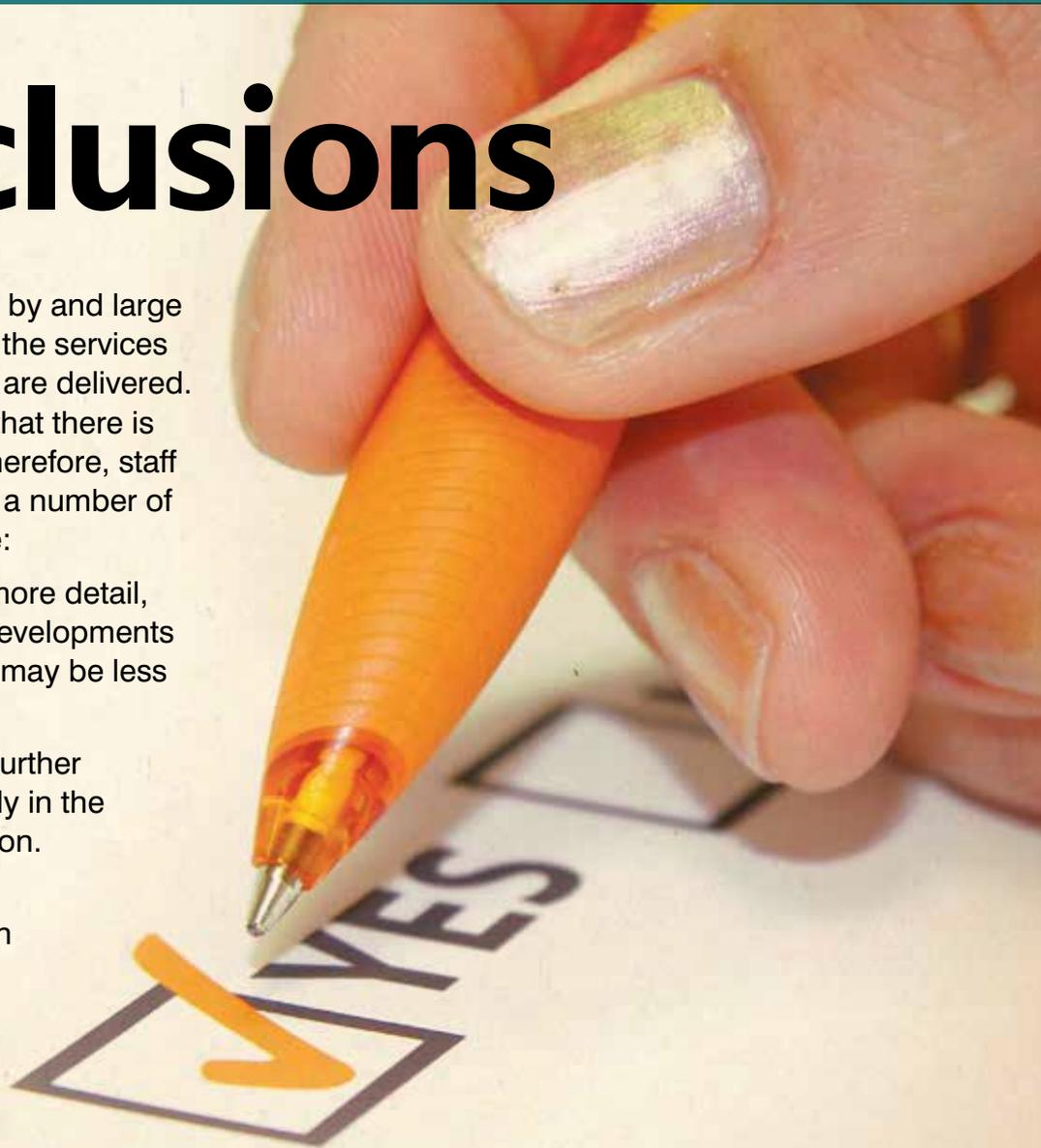


# Conclusions

We are delighted to hear that by and large our tenants are satisfied with the services we provide and the way they are delivered. That doesn't however mean that there is no room for improvement. Therefore, staff and Committee will be doing a number of things in the months to come:

- Looking at the results in more detail, in an attempt to identify developments or groups of tenants who may be less satisfied than others.
- Coming up with plans to further improve things, particularly in the areas with lower satisfaction.
- Trying to ensure that in 3 years' time the satisfaction levels will be just as high, if not better.

**If you have any specific thoughts or would like to be more involved in working with us do contact Angela Laley at our office.**



# Good Neighbour Award 2016



Having a good neighbour brings many benefits. We are therefore holding our Annual Good Neighbour Award competition. If you would like to nominate your neighbour for going that extra mile please let us know. This could be for doing your shopping, nipping in for a cup of tea and a friendly chat, clearing your path of snow, making you feel welcome when you moved in, helping to tidy up your garden etc

The winner will receive a £25 voucher for a local supermarket of the winner's choice and will be featured in the Christmas Newsletter. Last year Fiona and Willie McAllister were winners.

Grahame Cairns, our Tenant Services Manager, said: "It is great to focus on positive action in our developments and to give an award to tenants who make a real difference to other peoples' lives and communities."

To nominate your neighbour, who requires to



Our 2015 winners

be a Forth tenant, just explain in no more than 100 words why they deserve Forth's Good Neighbour Award.

To enter please phone or write to Angela Laley, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling, FK8 1JU prior to 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Alternatively, e mail [angela@forthha.org.uk](mailto:angela@forthha.org.uk).

# Bloomin' Good!

**It hasn't been the best of Summers but still our green fingered tenants have excelled themselves.**

We recently judged the garden competition and after some hard deliberation prizes have been awarded as follows:

- |                 |                                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Best garden     | Mr & Mrs Duff, Riverside          |
| Best pot/basket | Ms McDonald, Cowie                |
| Best scheme     | Ms Matkin, Monument View, Raploch |

When you view the results we hope you'll agree these were worthy winners and if you think you can do better, there is always next year!



## Staff Changes

**Since our last Newsletter, there have been a couple of staff changes which we would like to highlight, as follows:**

**Barry Lees, our Maintenance Officer,** moved on to a new job as his family are relocating and he needed to reduce his commuting time. We are currently recruiting for a replacement.

**Isabel Reilly, Housing Assistant,** has reduced her hours as a forerunner to retirement later in the year. She is working Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday but some of these are half days. To supplement our Tenant Services team we have appointed Christina Ward as a part time temporary Housing Assistant.



# How To Control Giant Hogweed

**We are aware that some properties either have hogweed, or are close to Hogweed. This is an extract of how it should be managed. Please report to us when Hogweed is present but, if you are responsible for your own back garden area, the best way is to mow often to prevent the Hogweed from flowering.**

This is best started in April or May.

**Herbicide** – This is best when the plants are young. A garden herbicide with Glyphosate (contact herbicide) kills plants when they are small. Please follow the instructions on the packet and check after 2 weeks to make sure that all the plants are dying. Re-apply if necessary.

**Cutting** – Cutting the plant repeatedly

throughout the season will stop it from flowering and it will die eventually. Wear long sleeves and gloves – keep the sap off your skin – and wash everything afterwards.

**Digging** – If you have only a few plants, dig them up, making sure you cut the tap root at least 10 cm (4 inches) below ground level and shake all the soil from the root. To prevent any possible spread, do **not** take the plant away (and do **not** put it in your brown bin, if you have one). Let it rot, with the roots exposed to dry out. Wear long sleeves and gloves – keep the sap off your skin – and wash everything afterwards.

**Keep Checking** – Whichever treatment you use, check it, and make sure you have got them all. And do the same thing next year. Be thorough and there will be less and less!

# New Homes Keep Coming!

**It seems no time since we told you that we'd started work on 22 new homes at Cultenhove and already we are planning for the first tenants to move in within the next couple of months. Progress to date has been very good and we expect all the homes to be complete before Christmas. This will provide 22 households with a new venue for their festive celebrations.**

Activity won't stop there however as we have begun building work on 8 homes at Bogside, Dunblane. This small development will provide homes which have been specially designed

to meet the needs of those who have mobility restrictions due to disability or old age. Under a special lettings agreement we will be prioritising individuals or households who are current or former residents of the Dunblane area and/or have family living there. Interested parties should contact our office.

Finally, for now we can also report that Planning Approval for 23 new homes at Johnston Avenue, Cornton has been approved and we are continuing to work on similar plans across the Stirling area.



Margaret Turner, Chairperson and project members at Bogside, Dunblane.

# ATTENTION!

## SAVE £140 - The Warm Home Discount Scheme

### What You'll Get:

For Winter 2016 to 2017, you could get £140 off your electricity bill through the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The money isn't paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, usually paid between September and March.

The discount won't affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

The discount is normally if you are on benefits or on a low income but please check if you are entitled.

### Pre-pay or Pay-as-you-go Meters

You can also qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter. Your electricity supplier can tell you how you'll get the discount if you're eligible, eg a voucher you can use to top up your meter.

The criteria for each of the energy suppliers is different and further information can be obtained by following the link <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/eligibility>. Then scroll down the page and follow the link for your electricity supplier

All of the energy suppliers have a limit on the number of applications for Warm Home Discount and when this limit is reached they will take no more. So please complete the application as soon as possible if you are eligible.

**If you have any problems or queries regarding Warm Home Discount or have no access to the internet please contact Tracy Doran, Income Maximisation Officer, Forth Housing Association, Tel 01786 446066. Tracy can complete the application on your behalf.**

# The common stair is your only means of escape in the event of a fire.



Have you ever thought what you would do if fire were to break out in your stair? It may not necessarily be in your flat! A fire started in a common stair could kill you and your family. Even a small bag of rubbish can create enough smoke to fill a whole stair. Items left in a common stair are often deliberately set on fire.

## Keep it clear

- Get rubbish, old furniture, etc out of the building
- Make sure storage areas are kept locked
- For advice on uplifting items contact your local Council

## If fire does start

- Keep doors closed to prevent smoke filling your house
- Dial 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service, giving as much information as you can

For free home fire safety advice  
**CALL 0800 0731 999**  
or visit our website at  
**[www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)**



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**  
Working together for a safer Scotland



Useful Contact Details...

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