



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

Autumn 2017

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Forth Prepares to Go to Hospital Next Year!

Don't worry Forth isn't needing medical attention. We are however preparing to move to hospital next year.

The hospital in question is the former Kildean Hospital on Drip Road, Raploch. We are preparing to buy this so that we can refurbish it and relocate our office from mid-2018. The facility will be bigger than we require and therefore we are working in partnership with Stirling Community Enterprise and STEP. Both organisations will be renting buildings to use as their own office/training base and a small Business Centre respectively.



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



The move is designed to save our tenants money, as we will no longer pay rent for our offices. It also secures the future of Stirling Community Enterprises, which provides a variety of supported training opportunities for people aged 16 – 64 years from across the Stirling Council area that are experiencing unemployment. This will also bring a number of small businesses to the Raploch community.

Although a number of the buildings at the Kildean site are currently boarded up and in disrepair grant funding has been secured to allow refurbishment to take place. Therefore, by the time we move next year we'll have a comfortable working environment.

Tenants will receive plenty notice about our office move before it happens. So don't worry as we won't be doing a moonlight flit!

STAFF JOINTLY HAVE 60 YEARS EXPERIENCE!

We are delighted to announce that Anne Matthew and John Cameron have both been awarded with 30 year Service in Housing Awards from Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH).

Anne Matthew started work with Dunfermline District Council as a Housing Management Trainee, then worked for Link Housing Association in Edinburgh before joining Forth. John started with City Of Edinburgh Council as a Welfare Services Officer then worked for

Ark Housing Association, Wester Hailes Community Housing Association, and Copperworks Housing Cooperative before

finally joining Forth. This experience has resulted in a knowledge base that helps keep Forth running smoothly.



De Moray Fun Day!

De Moray Association have been hard at work over the last few months. In May, the group arranged a trip to the Safari Park. Great fun was had by all and the sun shone. In August, the group held a fun

evening with a bouncy castle disco. Again, the weather was fairly kind and a good time was had by all. The Group will be organising community future events and need your help. So please keep



supporting by attending any meetings and events.

CAUTION - TAKE FIRE RISKS SERIOUSLY!

No one who saw or heard of the Grenfell fire in June of this year could fail to be shocked at the devastation and loss of life. Although we have no multi storey homes and no homes with external cladding of the type used at Grenfell, this doesn't mean that we or our tenants can ignore the risk of fire.

Fires can happen in any home and there are a few steps that can be taken to reduce the risks. These are as follows:

- Ensure that smoke alarms are working. We carry out an annual check on all alarms but tenants should use the test button on a regular basis and should make sure they replace the battery when required.
- Don't horde flammable materials in or around your home. If you are advised to remove stored items from your garden/home etc, please do so promptly.

- Don't store buggies, bikes or similar items in the common stair. If the stair fills with smoke tripping over these items could result in tragedy.
- Think through how you'd escape from your home if it fills with smoke at night. Make sure everyone in your home knows the plan and how they can open the front door in particular.

If you'd like specialist advice contact Scottish Fire and Rescue and ask them for a home safety visit. You can contact them in the following ways:

- Call 0800 0731 999
- Text "FIRE" to 80800 from your mobile phone
- Complete the online form at www.firescotland.gov.uk
- Call your local Fire Station

Good Neighbour Award 2017 - **Win a £25 Supermarket Voucher**

We are 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, John and Rona Duff of Riverside were winners. They consistently go the extra mile for their neighbours.

To nominate your neighbour, who requires to 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, 4th Floor, Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling, FK8 1JU prior to 24th October 2016. Alternatively, e mail angela@forthha.org.uk.



Our 2016 winners Mr & Mrs Duff

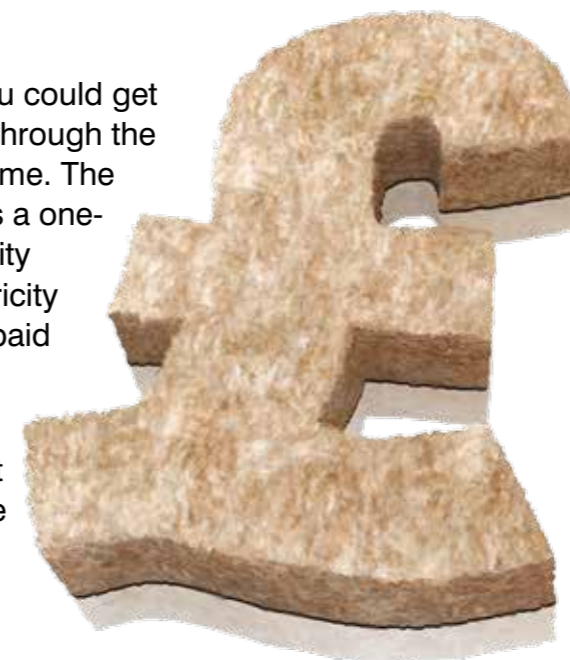
ATTENTION! Save £140 - The Warm Home Discount Scheme

What You Could Save:

For Winter 2017 to 2018, 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 or credited to your electricity prepayment meter, usually paid before end of March 2018.

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.

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.



(NB: At time of going to print British Gas had not opened for applications).

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 our Income Maximisation Officer, Tracy Doran, Tel: 01786 446066. Tracy can help you complete the application in your home or at the office.

Complaints Performance – April to June 2017

We value complaints as it enables us to improve the level of service to you our customer. Each complaint received is investigated in line with the Complaints Procedure.

What Is A Complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us on your behalf.

What Can I Complain About?

You can complain about things like:

- Our standard of service
- Treatment by a staff member or attitude of staff member
- Failure to provide a service
- Delays in responding to your enquiries and requests

How Do I Complain?

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, e mail or by using our complaints form. Between April and June 17 we received 18 complaints and 6 were upheld. The main learning outcomes are highlighted at our staff meetings. An example during this period was:

Amendment to Universal Credit procedures for staff to stop phoning tenants monthly when tenants making Universal Credit payments timeously.

For a detailed report of the Complaints received log on to www.forthha.org.uk and click on Tenants' Zone/Performance & Scrutiny/Complaints Performance. Alternatively, contact Angela Laley for a hard copy of the report at the office.

Estate Management Visit Dates From Your Housing Officer

Our 2 Housing Officers cover the following areas:

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



Elaine will be carrying out an estate visit to your area **week commencing:**
6th November 2017 and **22nd January 2018**

Caroline Stevenson – Bannockburn, Braehead, Fallin, Cornton, Cowie, Plean, St. Ninians, Whins of Milton, Stirling Town - Barn Road.



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

20th November 2017 and **8th January 2018**

Texting Service – Have We Got Your Current Mobile Number?

Have you ever received a text message from your Doctor or Dentist regarding your appointment date? Those who have signed up to this service know that it can be a useful way to be reminded of an appointment etc

In order to improve our service to you we are currently trialling text messaging for Repairs Surveys and reminders for housing management issues. For the past couple

of months we have been issuing a text to tenants who have recently had a repair asking them to rate our service.

It is therefore important that we have current mobile numbers for all our tenants. So if you have changed your mobile number recently, please phone the office and let us know.



Feedback From Landscape Maintenance Survey

Despite a particularly wet Summer resulting in an abundance of weeds, 88.2% of tenants who were recently surveyed, were satisfied with the Landscape Maintenance service. This is an increase of 7.4% compared to the previous survey. To maintain standards Tenant Services will monitor the landscaping contract by:

- 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.
- As result of survey feedback the Tenant Services Manager will discuss with the Landscape Contractor any 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, as we want to continue to improve this service.

Two New Faces At Forth

People of a slightly older generation might associate “New Faces” with a talent show in a similar vein to “Britain’s Got Talent”. Well we haven’t resorted to



selecting staff based on their dancing, singing or juggling abilities but we are in the business of recruiting talented people.

Our 2 latest recruits are Becky Ramage and Elisha Kimani. Becky is our new Modern Apprentice and over the next 2 years she’ll be working as part of our team and studying for an SVQ in Business Administration. She left school in the early Summer and this is her first real job. If you visit or phone our office there is a fair chance that Becky will be the person dealing with you in Reception.

Elisha started work with us in early August and is our new Finance Officer, taking over from Elizabeth Rowan, who is now enjoying her retirement.



Elisha’s role will involve keeping our day to day finances ticking over and keeping our accounts in order. Those of you with good memories may remember that Elisha worked voluntarily with us back in 2010. Since then his qualifications and working knowledge of Finance have developed greatly and he’ll now be expecting a wage in recognition of his efforts.

When you see either of these staff, please do make them feel welcome.

Need Help to Apply for Benefits etc? – Try our Free Service

Would you like to get online? Complete online benefit applications? Apply for jobs? Shop for all the latest bargains?

With the introduction of Universal Credit in the Stirling area it has never been more important to get online and be able to complete online Benefit Applications.

It does not matter how much or little you know already, Craig McNicol or Ian Brown

can come to your home, or use a local venue, whichever is convenient for you.

By the end of their sessions you should be able to

- Apply for Benefits and Jobs
- Shop for deals
- E mail and engage with social media
- Pay rent on-line
- Set-up car insurance etc

To contact Craig or Ian, please phone or office and we will arrange an appointment on your behalf.



Do You Need Medicine for a Minor Ailment?

This is a NHS service for children, people aged 60 or over, people who hold a medical exemption certificate and people on certain benefits.

When you are registered for the Minor Ailment Service, your pharmacist can give you medicine for a minor illness or complaint, if they think you need it. You will not have to pay for this.

The NHS Minor Ailment Service is available from pharmacies across Scotland and you can choose which pharmacy to register with.

For more information, contact your local pharmacy or Doctor. Alternatively, phone the free NHS Inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

New Annual Report and Calendar

Along with your Newsletter tenants should have received a copy of their Annual Report and Calendar. This highlights the main 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.

We would appreciate any feedback on this Report and any ideas on how to improve it in the future. So please just give Angela Laley our Project & Communications Co-ordinator a phone at the office.

If you would like a hard copy of the Performance Report posted out, please phone the office.



Our Performance Report - Available To Read From End of October!

Following on from the Annual Report, our detailed Performance Report will be available on our website from the end of October 2017. Our Tenants View Forum that meets quarterly discusses our performance throughout the year. If you would like to become a member of the Tenants' View Forum, please contact Angela Laley at the office.

If you would like a hard copy of the Performance Report posted out, please phone the office.



Forth Obtains Reaccreditation for Information and Advice Standards

We are pleased to announce that we have been reaccredited by the Scottish Government for the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.

An audit was undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government in March 2017: policies and procedures were reviewed and staff were interviewed. The audit also assessed the quality of advice given by staff.

Grahame Cairns, our Tenant Services Manager 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."



MSP Annabelle Ewing presenting Information and Advice Certificate to Chairperson, Margaret Turner

Survey Winners!

We are pleased to announce the following winners who each won a £25 Supermarket voucher.

Points of View – D Goodwillie, Riverside.

Gas Service and Repair – L Wallace, Riverside.

Electrical Safety Questionnaire – S Bell, Fallin.

We value our tenants' feedback as it is this feedback that helps us improve our services to you. So please keep returning your questionnaires.



Providing Work Experience for Pupils from Local Schools

This year, as part of our wider role in the community we have had a programme of work experience placements, from our local High Schools. Some of these placements have been out and about meeting our tenants and finding out the work we do in our local communities.

Safa, from Stirling High School, wrote this piece during her work experience placement.

"For the past week, I have been spending my time doing my work placement. I have taken part in many tasks such as organising newsletters with my colleagues. Doing these tasks allowed me to develop my skills such as, communication and working with others. On the first day of my work experience, I have to admit I was a little nervous but that soon faded because of the welcoming hospitality of my colleagues. During the beginning of the week I had the opportunity to see the different sites and developments that are built by going on a 'stock tour' with my manager and fellow colleagues. I had the pleasure of seeing how well adapted these houses were for people with mental and physical disabilities. Forth housing take into account any problems that could be fixed or anything that could be improved on. As the week went by, I began to see that the people that work at Forth really have a true passion for their job and work hard to do it, to the best of their ability."



Safa at Reception

New loan secured

Forth recently secured an additional £4million borrowing facility from the Bank Of Scotland. This will allow us to build some 130 homes over the next 3 years and is evidence that Forth is seen as having a secure financial future.

There were no shortage of banks willing to lend us the money but our Management Committee chose to enter an agreement with the Bank of Scotland because they offered us a very competitive deal and worked well with us when a previous loan was in place.

Douglas Spowart, Relationship Director, Social Housing & Commercial Real Estate, Bank of Scotland Commercial, recently visited Raploch, along with Forth's Chairperson, Margaret Turner. This allowed them to see the new homes being built as a result of the new funds.

Speaking about the loan deal Douglas said "we're proud to be able to support Forth Housing Association, which is developing and delivering solutions to the housing pressures that are being felt particularly keenly in Stirling".



The Gardening Winners Are Announced

Once again there has been fierce competition amongst tenants in our annual garden competition. A huge number of tenants have once again pulled out the stops to make their gardens beautiful, despite the often wet Summer.

The standard of gardening was again very high which made the judges' job extremely difficult. We are therefore delighted to announce that the winners are:

Rona and John Duff, Riverside – Best Garden

Heather Arthur, Cornton – Best Basket

Monument View, Raploch – Best Scheme

The winners have all received vouchers for their choice of Garden Centre.

Furthermore, we have issued a number of commended Certificates to households who have made a massive effort to brighten up and improve their garden areas.

Also, if you did not win this year don't worry as we will be running the competition again next year and the prizes will be £40 Best Garden, £25 Best Basket and £50 Best Scheme. Happy Gardening!



Office Closure Due To Public Holidays

Please note that our offices will be closed for the following public holidays:

Friday 22nd September 2017 and Monday 25th September 2017

If you have a **genuine** emergency repair over this period please contact:

Gas Central Heating - 0800 048 2710 (Saltire)

Gas Leaks – 0800 111999

For genuine **emergency** repairs (excluding gas heating and hot water) **outwith** office hours please telephone The McDougall Group on Tel No: 0333 123 1011.

Information Updates

For further information and updates please refer to our website, **www.forthha.org.uk** under News.

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 please e-mail us at **info@forthha.org.uk** or telephone Angela Laley at the office.



Useful Contact Details...

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