



FORTH

housing association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

Winter 2018

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SEASONS GREETINGS!

The Committee and Staff would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy time over the Festive Season. We would also ask you to note that the office will be closed as follows:

Office Closes Monday 24th December at 1pm –
Office Reopens on Thursday 3rd January 2019
at 9am.

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

- Gas Central Heating/Hot Water - Tel: 0800 048 2710 (Saltire)
- Any Other Genuine Emergency Repairs
McDougall Group on Tel: 0333 123 1011

- Gas Leaks – Tel: 0800 111999

New build tenants who are still under the Defects Liability Period should refer to the emergency telephone numbers provided by the Contractor at sign-up.

Early Closing – Friday 14th December at 12 Noon

Our offices will be closed from 12 noon on Friday 14th 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.

Forth Housing Association Limited

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



Director Update and A Fond Farewell to John!

With John Cameron retiring at the end of the year our Committee have been busy planning for the future.

Before rushing ahead with recruitment they took the time to carefully review things and explore the options. This allowed them to confirm that we have a viable and purposeful future as an independent association serving the Stirling area. They have therefore concluded that recruiting a new Director to support them and lead the staff team is the option they wish to follow.

The Director's post has therefore been advertised and by the time you read this newsletter an appointment is likely to have been made, or at least be very imminent.

A new Director is expected to start work in early 2019 and we'll keep you informed so that you know who the person is and when they will start. In the meantime, the staff and Committee will continue to ensure the effective delivery of our services.

We thank John for his hard work and



considerable achievements over the past 10 years which include co-ordinating our new Business & Enterprise Hub, obtaining funding for our Digital Inclusion project and maintaining very high standards of service whilst doubling our housing stock size. A fantastic legacy for our next Director!

Spray or Snip and Chip Your Cat From £5 – Cats Protection

Cats Protection recommends that cats are spayed or snipped at around 4 months of age or younger.

Microchipping offers cats a safe method of identification so should they go missing they are more likely to be reunited with their owner. If you live in the FK1 – FK21 post code areas and are on low income or benefits, you can get your cat done from just £5.

For more information Tel: 03000 12 12 12, or log on to www.cats.org.uk/forth-valley-campaign. There is also a snip and chip information stall at Raploch Community Campus, Raploch, every Wednesday from 11am-2pm.



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:

14th January 2019 and 4th March 2019

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:

28th January 2019 and 18th March 2019

— GETTING READY FOR WINTER —

Win a Chance to Win FREE Energy Bills for A Year

Did you know that heating accounts for about 55% of what you spend in a year on energy bills, and that the average saving you could make by switching supplier is £200 but it could be as much as £300 if you have never switched at all?

Funded by Scottish Government, Home Energy Scotland (HES) provides free, impartial energy advice designed to help householders make informed decisions.

Advisors can help in a range of ways, including how to manage your heating controls, and simple ways to help you save energy and keep your home warmer for less. The team can also see if you're eligible for financial support, benefits and

incentives, and advise on shopping around for a cheaper energy supply.

To find out how HES can help you, family or friends, call free of charge on Tel: 0808 808 2282, quoting **Winter2018**. Alternatively email adviceteam@sc.homeenergyscotland.org and an advisor will call you back, or contact the team on Facebook (@HomeEnergyScotlandSC) or Twitter (HES_SC).

FREE PRIZE DRAW - HES is offering a chance to win FREE energy bills for a whole year. Imagine a year with no energy costs; and if you follow the team's top tips too, a cheaper annual cost in future.

HOMEENERGYSCOTLAND.ORG
0808 808 2282
FUNDED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



energy[®]
saving
trust



Share Your Views Regarding Our Rent Increase & Win £25!

Our Committee are in the midst of their budget setting for next year and they would appreciate your input.

When your Newsletter was delivered you should have received a separate sheet outlining the proposed rent increase, to take effect from April. This sheet also invites you to give Committee your views by returning the voting slip, in the Freepost envelope, and making whatever comment you think appropriate.

All of our day to day costs, ranging from staff wages to postage stamps, need to be covered by rent payments. We also need to ensure that we save enough cash to pay for future upgrades to people's homes, such as new kitchens and rewiring.



The general feedback that we get suggests that tenants generally approve of our priorities and services. However, it is important that you give us realistic feedback so that we can try and ensure that our priorities reflect those of our tenants.

Go on fill out the return slip and send it in! Your Reply Slip will be entered into a free prize draw to win £25 of vouchers.



Festive Budgeting – Start Preparing Now!

Please make sure that you start budgeting for the Festive Season now. January can be grim enough as it is, without the added stress of being unable to cover your rent and bills. Remember that you must prioritise

things which can have a significant impact if you do not pay them.

The top 5 things, which need to be paid in full and on time are: Rent, Gas, Electric, Council Tax and TV Licence.

Why Not Use Our Income Maximisation Service?

With the Festive Season being an expensive time of year why not use our Income Maximisation Service? Tracy Doran is here to help. So don't bury your head in the sand contact Tracy on Tel: 01786 431921.

Recently we received an e mail from our local MP's Support Officer who said about Tracy:
“...am sure you must be aware of what a

positive difference you make to vulnerable peoples' lives who cross your path, but from what I've experienced over the last 18 months, it is surely true that you are the most well-loved and well spoken about lady in Stirling!”

So don't delay – contact Tracy on Tel Direct Dial: (01786) 431921, if you need financial help or advice.

A New Kitchen Is A Dream Come True

One of our households at De Moray Court, Cornton, has received a Scottish Government grant to enable a fully adapted kitchen to be installed to meet the requirements of a wheelchair user.

The new kitchen includes a hob and sink that lowers on sensors and a cool drawer to put hot items on underneath the oven. Food is stored in metal baskets that can now be easily reached as they also lower within easy reach.

Chelsea said: “Before I could not do anything in the kitchen. Now I can make a meal. It has improved the quality of my life and given me more independence. It’s great not to have to wait until a Parent comes home to make a meal.”

As well as cooking meals Chelsea is now going to bake cakes to raise funds for her local tenants group De Moray Association. What a great way to use a new skill.



I Am Me - Keep Safe National Initiative

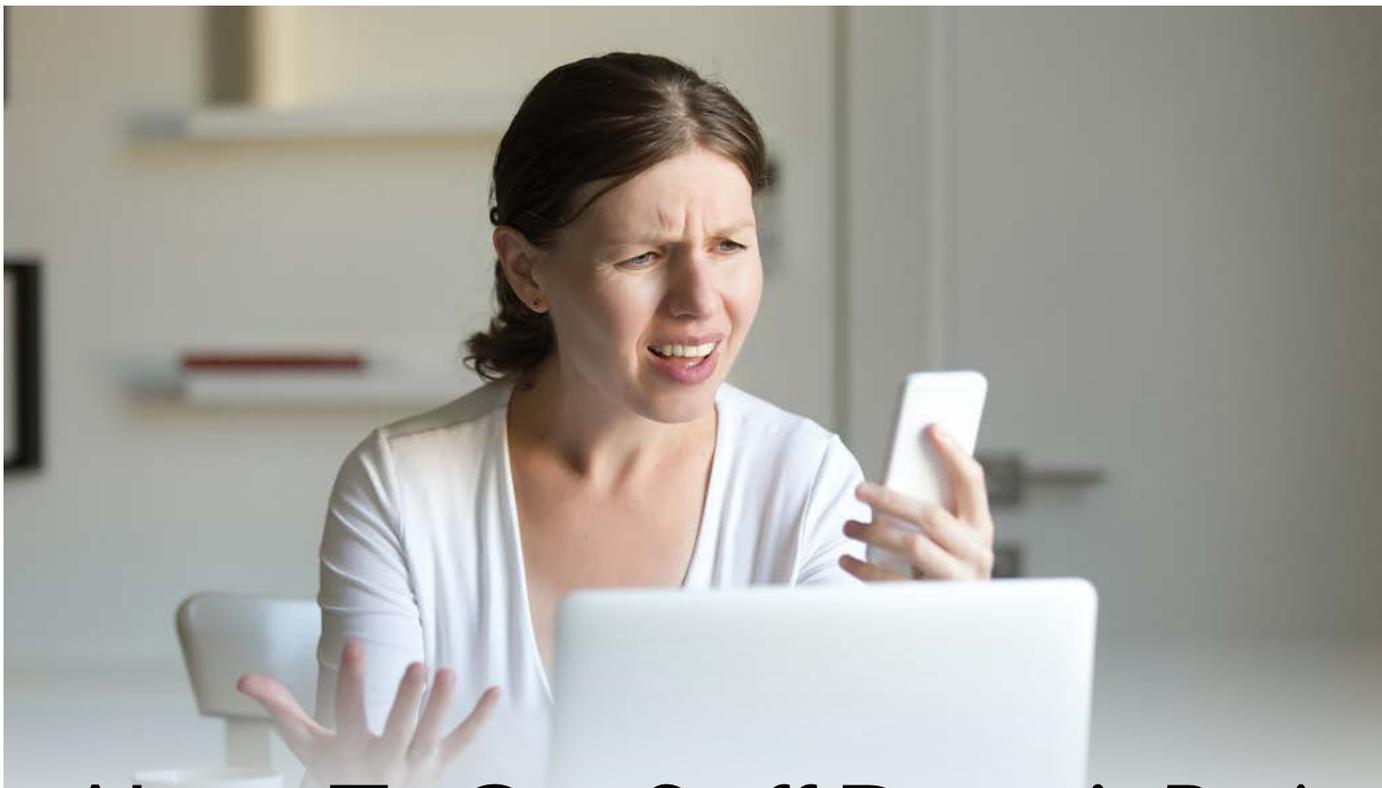


Forth is a safe place for those who might be vulnerable.

The Keep Safe project is a national initiative developed by the community based charity I Am Me, working in partnership with Police Scotland. The aim of the initiative is to establish a network of safe places for people who may be vulnerable. This might be due to a physical or learning disability, mental health issue, a sensory impairment, dementia or frailty. Our offices are somewhere where they can go when lost, distressed or frightened. Individuals utilising the scheme will carry a card with the contact details of the person they would like to be contacted if they are in need of assistance. The card may also include information

about the person's health and how they communicate.

As we have signed up to the project we display a sticker on the front window of our premises to indicate our participation. Our staff have all recently had training from Police Scotland. They will contact the person's support or in cases of criminality the Police, when presented with the Keep Safe card. A mobile app also allows users to plan routes, identify participating businesses, as well as contacting and reporting incidents to police. You can access more information relating to the project via this link <http://www.iammescotland.co.uk/>



Abuse To Our Staff Doesn't Pay!

We can all get frustrated at times but it is important to remember that our staff have a job to do and we don't get paid to take abuse.

A former Forth tenant was recently taken to Court and was convicted of an offence under the Communications Act 2003. This followed a series of abusive phone calls to our office, during which, amongst other things, they threatened to stab a

staff member and put the whole street up on fire.

If anyone is dissatisfied with the conduct or work of a Forth staff member they have the right to legitimately complain, via our complaints process. However, they don't have the right to be offensive, rude or violent to staff. As this recent case shows criminal action will be pursued if this proves necessary.

Bikes for All

Annual
Membership
for £3



Nextbike is the city's public bike share scheme to enable you to cycle around Stirling in an affordable and enjoyable way. There are 23 stations located around

Stirling, Bridge of Allan, and Bannockburn, where you can collect and return a bike. The Nextbike scheme provides convenient access to a bike without worries over the cost, storage, maintenance or theft of a personal bike.

For just £3, Forth Environment Link can provide the equivalent of a £60

annual membership to the scheme. This will give you access to over 150 bikes across Stirling. The bikes can be used for any kind of journey; to access everyday services; commuting to education, employment or work experience; or social journeys to visit friends and family.

For more information, please contact Chris James, FEL Bike Share Officer: Tel: 01786 474160 or chris@forthenvironmentlink.org

Scotland's On-line British Sign Language Service



This enables contact with all of Scotland's public bodies and third sector organisations by using an Interpreting Video Relay Service. It is open 8am to midnight, 7 days per week.

To connect to an on-line interpreter all you need is an:

- Laptop or pc, webcam and internet connection.
- Alternatively you can register for the contact Scotland - BSL app for your smartphone/tablet.

For more information log on to: <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

Help From Start-up Stirling

Start-up Stirling, a local charity that helps homeless people, has 3 areas of focus:

- **Start up Foodbanks**
- **Helper Packs**
- **Start up Support**

People are referred for a number of different reasons but have one thing in common—they are in financial hardship and have no means to provide the basics for themselves or their family. They may be caught in the revolving door of poverty; they may have had benefit sanctions or delays imposed on them; they may have lost their job; their family may have broken down; even an unexpected bill can leave some in crisis.

There are 3 Foodbanks each week across Stirling in: Stirling City Centre, Hillpark and Raploch.



Each food pack contains the staples—dried and tinned foods—to feed an individual or family for 3–4 days. Start-up rely almost entirely on the local community to donate these items. We now have a Donation Station located in our office reception if you wish to donate dried or tinned foods.

Log on to <https://startupstirling.org.uk/> or phone 01786 561027 for more information about any of Start up Stirling's services.



Legionnaires' Disease is Uncommon But Can Be Serious – Reduce Your Risk!

Legionella is a lung infection you can catch by inhaling droplets of water. There are some simple steps to protect you in the home:

- 1/ You have to turn your shower on and run it for a few minutes at least weekly, preferably more often than this, to flush out stale water.
- 2/ On a weekly basis run water through all the taps.
- 3/ Descale your showerhead every 3 months or earlier if scaling is evident.
- 4/ If you have an electric hot water tank fully heat the water in it and then use the water immediately after, at least 2-3 times per week. Temperatures above 60 degrees will kill legionella bacteria so set the temperature of your boiler/cylinder to a minimum of 60 degrees. However, beware of scalding and take extra care if you have children.

If you would like any more advice please contact Paul Fraser at our office
Direct Dial Tel: 01786 431026.

Cooks and Diners Wanted!

Meal Makers is an initiative by the established charity Food Train and is active in the Stirling area.

The initiative connects people who love cooking, and who are happy to share an extra portion of home cooked food, with an older neighbour who would really appreciate a freshly prepared meal and a friendly chat.

If you are, or know of, an older person (55+ years) who could benefit from a home cooked meal and some company once a week referrals can be made via the Meal Makers website. At the moment there are particular opportunities for people to sign up in Stirling, Bridge of Allan and Dunblane.

In addition, if you enjoy cooking you could volunteer as a cook. The initial commitment is for one meal and you can review things thereafter. More information is available on the web site www.mealmakers.org.uk or if you would prefer you can call them on Tel: 0800 783 7770.



Tenant Participation Update

De Moray Association, Cornton

De Moray Association have been hard at work organising more community events. The Christmas Panto was a great success and this was thanks to the MacRobert Arts Centre for again providing free tickets for this event. There is also a Bingo Night being organised to raise funds for the Group on

Saturday 2/2 at 7pm at Cornton Community Centre. There will be lots of great prizes, so if you stay in De Moray Court, please support by attending this event. Without your support at meetings and events, the group will be unable to continue.

Tenants View Forum and E Group

Thanks to all our tenants who reviewed our Anti-social Behaviour Policy. The next Tenants' View Forum meeting will take place on Tuesday 7th February at 11am at our offices. This will discuss an update on performance for the year, budget/rent plans and an area of tenant's choice. So why not come along, you will be made very welcome. Refreshments will be served and travel expenses reimbursed. Please contact Angela Laley Direct Dial Tel No (01786) 431021 if you are interested in joining this group.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Recruiting – Join The National Panel of Tenants and Service Users

The SHR is recruiting for new tenant members.



**Scottish Housing
Regulator**

The Panel helps the SHR hear directly tenants views, experiences and service priorities. It has a broad membership with about 450 members. If you have an interest in housing and are interested in becoming a Panel member, please contact the SHR by e mailing shr@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk or Tel 0141 242 5642.

Can you Claim The New Pregnancy and Baby Payment?

The new Scottish Government Pregnancy and Baby Payment will be available to apply for from 10 December 2018.

You could be eligible for a payment of £600 on the birth of a first child and £300 for each sibling born thereafter. To be qualify for the payment the family requires to be in receipt of any of the following benefits:- Income Support/Income-based Jobseekers Allowance/Income-related Employment and Support Allowance/Pension Credit/Universal Credit/ Housing Benefit/Child Tax Credit/Working Tax Credit

Applications can be made from the 24th week of pregnancy or up until the child is 6 months old.

If the expectant mother is under 18 or 18/19 years and still dependant on their parents and in full time education or training – they do not need to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit to be eligible.

To claim the Best Start Grant from 10th December 2018 log on to: <https://www.mygov.scot/pregnancy-and-baby-payment/> or Tel: 0800 182 2222.



Changes to your Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) Rights

Introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

The implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 has introduced changes to your rights under your Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) Agreement. In August 2018 we wrote to all our tenants confirming the changes. These changes will be implemented in 2 phases. This article summarises the main changes that will be implemented from May 2019, in the first phase.

1st May 2019

Ending a SST by Court Order:

The Act changes the way in which a SST can be ended following a conviction for serious anti-social or criminal behaviour. In certain circumstances a Court does not have to consider whether it is reasonable to make an order for eviction where the landlord has grounds for recovery of possession.

Adapted Properties:

The Act allows us to ask a sheriff to grant an order to end the tenancy of an adapted property that is not occupied by anyone who needs the adaptations. This only applies where the landlord requires the property for someone who does need the adaptations. In these circumstances we will offer you suitable alternative accommodation and you would have the right to challenge the decision.

Conversion to a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy or Antisocial Behaviour:

The 2014 Act extends the circumstances when we could serve notice on a tenant converting their SST to a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy. A Short Scottish Secure Tenancy has a fixed duration, unless we agree to extend it or convert it back to a SST.



Useful Contact Details...

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