



Perthshire Housing Association Newsletter

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openhouse

Autumn 2009

Benefits Advice Service

Our Benefits Advice Officer Denise Taylor will be focusing on residents with disabilities and ill-health later this year. The aim will be to ensure that residents have the correct health-related benefits and allowances and



Denise Taylor

to assist in making claims where appropriate. Each resident will therefore receive a brief questionnaire to complete and will later be contacted in respect of their individual circumstances. If you are currently experiencing difficulties in claiming or receiving health-related benefits or allowances, you can contact Denise prior to the questionnaire being issued on 01738 474816 or by e-mail at dtaylor@perthha.co.uk to discuss. You can also call at Reception for an appointment at PHA's office at 5 South St John's Place, Perth, PH1 5SU.

Look Out For 'Bogus Callers'

We have recently received reports from residents that "Bogus Callers" are trying to gain access to people's homes by claiming to be staff members of Perthshire Housing Association.

These people have been attempting to look around properties and also obtain personal information about the residents.

If for any reason you do get a house visit from a member of our staff team, then please ask us to show our identification badges – all of our staff members carry these. If you are then still unsure please contact our office on 01738 – 441088 for advice.

We would also be interested in hearing from you if you think any bogus callers claiming to be an Association team member have called at your home.

Residents Convention Feedback

The Association's Annual Residents Convention took place on Saturday 27 June, 2009 at Dewars Rink in Perth and was once again an enjoyable and informative day.

The residents who came along enjoyed a highly entertaining and emotive play presented by Naomi Breeze of Breeze Productions on the subject of homelessness and the impact this can have on people's lives. This was followed by a presentation by Liz Cooper, Perth & Kinross Council, outlining the improvements and changes proposed to the way housing advice is given and homes are allocated.

The Convention is an ideal opportunity for residents to meet with staff and other residents, and consider the issues that matter to you – including how well we provide our services. Options are being considered for next year with perhaps a change of venue and format. The Residents Panel will be actively involved in planning the 2010 Convention over the coming months.

If you would like to know more about how to get involved in the work of the Residents Panel and the Association, please get in touch and we will happily provide you with more information.



Resident Convention, Stuart Robertson & Naomi Breeze

Resident Satisfaction Survey... looking for your views

Inside this edition of Open House you will find a Residents Satisfaction Survey. This is a short survey to find out what you think about key aspects of our services. Feedback on our activities is very important and I hope that you will take time to give us your views and return the survey form – we have a FREEPOST address for the survey returns so it won't even need a stamp. The outcomes of the survey will be reported in full in the next edition of Open House.



Data Protection... keeping your details safe

You may have heard of the Data Protection Act. It is an important law that helps protect your privacy and confidentiality by ensuring that organisations gather, use and share information in a responsible manner. This includes organisations such as Perthshire Housing Association and Perth and Kinross Council. We are required by law to ensure that the information we hold about you is:

- Fairly and lawfully collected and processed
- Only used for limited, clear and well explained purposes
- Adequate and relevant to our needs and not excessive in detail
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept longer than necessary
- Processed in accordance with your rights
- Securely stored

The law also gives you the right to view any personal information that we hold on you.

Every year we undertake a review of all the information we hold to ensure it is up to date, and also to ensure we do not hold information longer than necessary. It is very important that you let us know of any change in your circumstances, so that we know the information we have on our records is accurate. Please contact the Association in one of the usual ways to check your details are up to date, or to let us know if your circumstances have changed. For more information about the Data Protection Act, pick up a leaflet from our office or ask to speak to David Walker, our Policy and Information Officer. David can also be contacted by email at dwalker@perthha.co.uk

Dumped Items

In recent months there has been an increase in the number of tenants and residents dumping items in communal areas. This includes large pieces of furniture, such as three piece suites, beds and various other items.

Items dumped in this manner increase the risk of fire and create a potential health and safety hazard. If you do have items you no longer require, please arrange for these items to be disposed of responsibly. You can take them to your local recycling centre for disposal free of charge. If you do not have the means to do this yourself, Perth & Kinross Council operates an uplift service. Please contact them on 01738 476 000 for more information on this.

Remember - if you have arranged for items to be uplifted, please store them safely and do not place them in communal areas such as closes or bin shelters.

If you have any problems with dumped items or see someone disposing of items irresponsibly, please contact Marc Donald on 01738 474 807 with any information you may have that will be of assistance.



Repairs Top Tip

It's that time of year again when the cold air is building up and the tree leaves are falling...

To avoid unnecessary blockages with drains etc. sweep up any fallen leaves that have gathered around these areas.

Remember... "A small job fixed quick, saves it being a bigger job later!" ☺

If you do require assistance with any repairs please call 0844 7360 450.

Home Insurance - Don't Leave it Until its Too Late

During winter more people suffer loss or damage to household contents and personal belongings through events such as fire, burst pipes or storm damage. Although we arrange insurance to cover the cost of repairing major structural damage to your home, we do not provide insurance cover for your household and personal goods.

It is your responsibility to arrange and pay for your own contents insurance, and we strongly advise that you do this. There are many products for you to choose from nowadays, and you are entitled to pick the insurance company or agent of your choice. You will find details of numerous companies listed in the telephone directory.

You will also find leaflets in our office which contain details of insurance schemes offered by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and the Dunfermline Building Society.



The SFHA Diamond Insurance Scheme is underwritten by Royal and SunAlliance and run by Jardine Lloyd Thompson, and is designed specifically for housing association residents. You can contact the SFHA for more information on this scheme on 0845 601 6006.



The ABC Insurance scheme from the Dunfermline Building Society is underwritten by AXA, and also offers accidental damage cover. For more information, contact the Dunfermline Building Society's Insurance Team on 0845 40 20 400.

You can also find out more information for both these schemes if you pick up a leaflet from our office.

Listening to your views... Improving our services

Want to be in with a chance of winning £25? Just tell us how we're doing!

At Perthshire Housing Association, we pride ourselves on the quality of the services we provide to our residents. To ensure we continue providing top class services, we issue customer satisfaction surveys asking you to tell us what you think about the way we handle lettings, neighbour disputes, gas servicing, repairs and benefits advice. We use this feedback to identify strengths and weaknesses, and improve the services we deliver to you.

All residents who complete the questionnaires are entered into a monthly prize draw to win £25 – all you have to do is fill in the survey and return it to our office!

This season's prize draw winners so far are:

Mrs D Cruickshank	Perth	April
Miss P Higgens	Perth	May
Miss R Hindmarch & Mr J Rodger	Coupar Angus	June
Mr E McLean	Perth	July
Mr G Moran	Blairgowrie	August

Remember - your views are very important to us, so please take the time to fill in the surveys. It only takes a few minutes, and you might end up being our next winner!

Perthshire Housing Association Ltd
Lettings Satisfaction Survey

Name: _____
Address: _____

- Following our first contact with you to tell about your housing requirements, was the information you received from us helpful and informative? Yes No
- Do the lets that you signed your tenancy agreement with the information given to you clear and easy to understand? Yes No
- If your home was not in a clean, tidy and in good condition, please let us know about this in the box below: _____
- If requirements still to be carried out, did we advise you when these would be completed? Yes No N/A
- Overall, were you satisfied with the service provided by the Lettings Services Team? Yes No
- If you have any other suggestions or comments please write them below: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. You will be entered into a prize draw for the chance to win £25. Don't forget! Please return the questionnaire to the nearest address nearest provided.

This information may be used to inform the planning and delivery of Perthshire Housing Association services.

Do I like my agent?
Agent Name: _____
Housing Partnership: _____ Yes

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Satisfaction Survey

Local News – New Homes Update

EASTERN PERTHSHIRE

New Homes at Kirkmichael

Delighted residents have moved in to their new houses in Whitefield View, Kirkmichael. There are ten houses in the development - this is a long awaited and much needed development in a rural area of Perthshire and will help to sustain the local community.



Whitefield View

BRIDGE OF EARN

New Residents Move in to Glenearn Terrace, Bridge of Earn

This much sought after development comprises 15 family sized homes. The new residents received their keys in August and September and are all settling in well.



Glenearn Terrace



Elm Court

Opportunities for Low Cost Home Ownership – Elm Court, Bridge of Earn

This development comprises 18 flats for shared equity purchase. These flats proved extremely popular and it is hoped the final keys will be handed over to the new owners mid October 2009.

HIGHLAND PERTHSHIRE

Muirton Phase 2 now Complete!

Phase 2 of the regeneration of the Muirton area is now complete. This phase included town houses which is a totally new design for the Association.

Eagerly anticipated new homes in Stell Park, Birnam

As this newsletter reaches you the new residents of the 10 new houses in Stell Park will be moving in to their new homes which are due for completion mid October 2009.

Further details on these developments will be announced in future editions of this newsletter - so watch this space!



Stell Park

The Right to Repair – A Quick Reminder...

By law we are required to meet with the requirements of the Scottish Government's Right to Repair Scheme. Here's a quick reminder of what this is all about...



The scheme applies to all housing association tenants in Scotland.

Tenants have the right to have certain small urgent repairs carried out by PHA within a given timescale.

Certain repairs, up to the value of £350, are covered.

When you report a repair we'll tell you if it qualifies under the scheme. We'll also say how long we have to carry it out, and give you the name of an alternative contractor.

If your repair is not carried out within the timescale we've indicated, you can ask the alternative contractor to do the work for you. Under such circumstances, we will pay you a sum of compensation (as set by the Scottish Government) to cover any inconvenience caused.

We should emphasise however, that if your repair qualifies under the scheme, we'll tell you on every occasion. You should also note that there are only specific circumstances when you can contact the alternative contractor – we don't want to leave you facing the bill for a repair which doesn't qualify. Again we'll advise you of the situation each time you report a repair.

We have a leaflet that explains the scheme in greater detail. We can send you a copy of this on request or you can pick up a copy in our reception area.

The Association marks the Retiral of Chairman, Tom Band

Over fifty members and guests of the Association gathered for the organisation's 19th A.G.M. in Dewars Rinks, Perth, on 1st September. They were welcomed by the Association's Chair Mr Tom Band who described 2008/09 as "another busy and successful year for the Association."

Presenting his report Mr Band said, "In the course of the past year, the Association has continued to provide new housing in Perthshire. Our commitment to the redevelopment of Muirton continues apace. The second phase of new housing is nearing completion and tenants are moving into their new homes. The physical progress in redeveloping the estate is being matched by a growing air of optimism amongst residents."

Mr Band also referred to the challenges represented by the Credit Crunch and spoke about how the shortage of both private and public funds is bound to have some effect on the speed with which the Association will continue to develop new homes.

The main item of the evening was the retiral of Tom Band as Chair of Perthshire Housing Association. Mr Band noted the increasing complexity of providing and managing affordable housing; and the increasing burden being placed on voluntary members of the Boards of housing associations. He said however that he looked back on his years with the Association with an enormous sense of pride. Mr Band said that when he joined the Board, PHA had 79 houses under management and now 16 years later the Association had over 1600 houses, with a further 98 being built or in the pipeline.

Mr Band paid tribute to his fellow Board members and staff. "My seven years as Chairman would not have been possible without an outstanding Board prepared to give their time and widespread skills on an entirely voluntary basis. I must thank too the Chief Executive, John Kernahan and his hard working staff for all their efforts."

Earlier in the evening, the Board of Perthshire Housing Association had elected Ian McMillan as the new Chair of the Association. Mr McMillan has spent six years on the Association's Board, the last four years as the Association's Vice Chair. Mr McMillan praised Tom Band's chairmanship and direction of the Association, and his contribution over the years as a Board member. He thanked Mr Band for his decision to continue to serve on the Board, and to chair the Association's Audit Committee for the next year. The Association also elected Ian McLaren (John S McLaren) as Vice-Chair.

Mr McMillan stated the Association was working in challenging times and that he looked forward to addressing and tackling these challenges.

The evening concluded with Ian McMillan making a presentation of a small gift to Tom Band, in recognition of his hard work over the years, on behalf of fellow Board members and staff of the Association



L to R – Tom Band, Ian McMillan and John Kernahan

Shaping our services....

In the last edition of Open House we told you about the range of service policies that we would be reviewing this year. These included our Housing Management and Repairs and Maintenance Policies. Following detailed discussion with the Residents Panel we have made the following changes to the policies :

Repairs and Maintenance Policy – we have completely re-written this to make it more user friendly and up to date. The main aims remain in place including providing an efficient and responsive reactive repairs service and providing homes that offer a warm, comfortable and healthy living environment for our residents.

Housing Management Policy – we have made a number of changes to this policy including the following :

- A commitment to providing information on our Complaints Policy on the website including details of the Public Services Ombudsman
- A new system of ensuring that properties are inspected by one of our Maintenance Officers before a tenancy ends
- A commitment to review decoration allowances for properties that are re-let
- Clarifying the eligibility criteria for shared ownership housing

- Streamlining the wording in the policy where possible to remove any technical jargon

Full copies of all of our service policies are available on request from our office. They can also be found on our website www.perthshireha.co.uk

Allocations Policy Review

Our Allocations Policy provides information on the way in which we presently allocate our available properties. This involves the use of a points based system to assess the level of housing need and priority applicants have for one of our properties. Over the past 10 years we have been part of a Common Housing Register with Perth and Kinross Council and Hillcrest Housing Association.

Each organisation has its own Allocations Policy within the Common Housing Register. However the Council recently introduced a new Allocation's Policy and Hillcrest and ourselves are looking at the option of adopting this.

This new policy would involve moving away from our current points based system to a system involving priority bandings for different types of housing need e.g. overcrowding and medical difficulties. This new system would also be supported by more detailed information on local housing options being provided by Perth and Kinross Council through their local area offices.

We are keen to look at the possibility of progressing this proposal with the Council and Hillcrest and will be holding further discussions with them on this over the coming months. We have also drafted a new revised policy for the Association based on the Council's Allocation's policy – we have discussed this with the Residents Panel over the past two months. If you would like to come along to the Residents Panel meetings to hear more about the policy proposals then just contact our Housing Services Team. If you can't come along to the meetings but would still like to know more or make any comments on our proposed revised approach to housing allocations then please contact our Housing Services Team Leader, Lynn Gowrie. Lynn can be contacted at the office or by email on lgowrie@perthha.co.uk



Your Rent... Your Views

Around November to January each year we look at our budget considerations for the next financial year and the rent levels that the Association will apply. This work involves a review of our Rent and Service Charge Policy.

When considering the Rent and Service Charge Policy and possible rent levels for the coming year, there are a number of key issues for the Association:

- The affordability of our rents for residents
- The long term financial viability of the Association
- How well our rents compare to other housing associations

It is very important that the Association is able to take account of resident's views on the way that we set our budgets and the rent levels that result from this. As in previous years, it is our intention to discuss our rent proposals in detail with the Residents Panel over the coming months.

We would like to encourage as many people as possible to come along to the Residents Panel meetings whether or not you have been involved in these before. If you would like to come along, please contact our Housing Services Team for more information.

In the meantime, we would welcome any general comments, ideas or suggestions that you might want to make about your rent payments and the Association's Rent and Service Charge Policy, and the type of issues that you think we should consider when reviewing these. If you have any suggestions that you would like to make please contact any member of our Housing Services Team in the usual ways.

New Faces in the Staff team

Over the summer months there have been a number of changes to the staff team here at Perthshire Housing Association.

Gary Hallam has taken up the new post of Maintenance Services Manager and will be focusing on making improvements to our repairs and maintenance services over the next year.

Tony Slevin takes up the post of Planned & Cyclical Maintenance Officer and will concentrate his efforts on reviewing our planned maintenance programme for the next 30 years.

We are sure that Gary and Tony will become well known faces with residents as they settle in to their jobs over the coming months.



L to R – Tony Slevin and Gary Hallam

contact us

Visit us in person, write to us or get in touch by phone, fax or e-mail:

Perthshire Housing Association
5 South St. John's Place
PERTH PH1 5SU

Tel: 01738 441088
(office hours and answering machine)

Fax: 01738 441060
Email: info@perthha.co.uk

Office Opening Hours

Mon-Thurs 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you are on the net,
visit us at www.perthshireha.co.uk

This newsletter can be made available on tape, in Braille, in large print and in languages other than English. Contact us for information.

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If you have difficulty in reading or understanding English and require help in translating or interpreting any information that Perthshire Housing Association provides, or if you have other special requirements and need further help, please ask at reception or contact us on (01738) 441088.

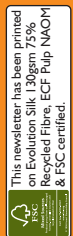
यदि इंग्लिश पढ़ने वा सुनने में आपको कठिनाई है, तो हम आपको इंग्लिश से हिंदी में अनुवाद करने में मदद कर सकते हैं। यदि आपको अन्य विशेष आवश्यकताएं हैं, तो हमें सूचित करें। हमारे कार्यालय में, (01738) 441088 पर हमें सूचित करें।

如果您在阅读或理解英文方面有困难，需要翻译或解释任何信息，或如果您有其他特殊要求，需要进一步的帮助，请向我们索取或致电(01738) 441088与我们联系。

यदि आपको इंग्लिश पढ़ने वा सुनने में कठिनाई है और आप इंग्लिश से हिंदी में अनुवाद करने में मदद चाहते हैं, तो हमें सूचित करें। यदि आपको अन्य विशेष आवश्यकताएं हैं, तो हमें सूचित करें। हमारे कार्यालय में, (01738) 441088 पर हमें सूचित करें।

ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਖੋਜ ਲਈ ਅਸੀਂ ਸਮਝਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਲਈ ਅਸੀਂ ਕੀ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ। ਸਾਡੇ ਕਾਰਜਕਾਰੀ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। (01738) 441088

اگر آپ کو انگریزی پڑھنے یا سنانے میں مشکل ہے، تو ہم آپ کو انگریزی سے ہندی میں تراجم کرنے میں مدد کر سکتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ کو دیگر خصوصی ضروریات ہیں، تو ہمیں مطلع کریں۔ ہمارے کاروبار کے وقت، (01738) 441088 پر ہمیں اطلاع دیں۔



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