

talkback

autumn '12



AGM

Members gathered for our AGM on the 24th of September at the Corn Exchange in Haddington. Several Management Committee members were re-elected, and it was announced that there is a vacancy on the Management Committee, and we will be recruiting in the coming year.

The guest speaker was Lesley Baird, the Chief Executive of the Tenant Participation

Advisory Service Scotland (TPAS), who gave an entertaining and informative speech on Tenant Participation, and our strengths in giving our tenants the opportunity to get involved at a level which suits them. Ms Baird then officially presented Housing Manager, Karen Barry, with our TPAS Accreditation plaque.



Good Neighbour Award

Congratulations to Alex May from Whitecraig who won our 2012 Good Neighbour Award for the good work he does looking after the gardens of neighbours in amenity (over 50) housing and keeping the communal garden areas looking their best.

The Chief Executive of TPAS Scotland, Lesley Baird, presented Mr May with a trophy and a cheque for £100 at our AGM. Congratulations also go to runners up Joanne and Peter Reynolds from Musselburgh and Duncan Milne from Haddington.

Well done! We'd also like to thank everyone who nominated their neighbour.



Alex May and Lesley Baird

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Quids in! is Back

We had a great response to the Quids In! magazine we included with the Spring Talkback, so we've included a new edition with your Autumn newsletter. Those of you reading this newsletter on-line as part of our Paper-Free service, don't worry – yours is on its way!

Remember Your Housing Benefit

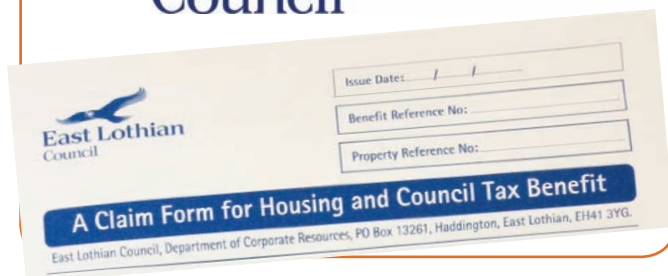
If you claim benefits like Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support or Employment Support Allowance (ESA), and there is a stop on your claim, this will have the knock-on effect of cancelling your Housing Benefit.

Even if your other benefits are then re-instated, your Housing Benefit will remain cancelled until you contact East Lothian Council.

It is a common mistake to assume that your Housing Benefit will be re-instated along with your other benefits, and many people end up in rent arrears as a result.



East Lothian Council



Care & Repair moved (again)

When we moved to our new offices on Market Street, Haddington, they seemed huge. Barely two years later, we're bursting at the seams again. In order to free up some space, Care & Repair are moving back to the offices at 24 Hardgate at the end of September. All phone numbers and e-mail addresses will remain the same.



Farewell Irene

The Finance Department said goodbye to Irene Pears, Finance Assistant, on Friday 3rd August as she retired from the Association after 12 years of service. Irene will be missed by all her colleagues who valued her hard work both in Finance and as a member of the Healthy Working Lives Team.

Irene will be kept busy with her garden, dogs, bird watching and travel plans and, we hope, popping in to Market Street to visit her ex-colleagues.

Irene (centre) and the Finance Team



New Staff – Welcome Julie!

Julie Peat joins our Finance Department as Finance Assistant, replacing Irene Pears who retired recently.

Julie has previously worked for us as a temp in both the Finance and Corporate Services Departments.

Chat to Us Now –

Our On-Line Housing Office

Our Live Help Service on elha.com is a handy resource for anyone who wants to get in touch with us.

The Live Help is open from 9.30am to midday, and from 2pm to 4.30pm Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 2pm to 4.30pm on Tuesdays and 9.30 to midday and 2pm to 4pm on Fridays.

Comments from Live Help users:

"This is a very efficient and user friendly system. Much quicker than the phone for simple enquiries."

"Best service given. It's so convenient and easy to use."

The service has also been expanded to cover R3 Repairs Limited – now, if you click the Live Help button while using the on-line repair service, you will get straight through to a member of R3's staff.

Live Help

Chat to us now

ONLINE





RENT? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

As visitors to our Facebook will already have learned, Allpay have recently launched their new smartphone app. The app is available for Apple and Android smartphones and is free to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play (formerly the Android Market).

Tenant Census

Our tenant census is now underway, and we urge all tenants to take part, as this census will help us to make sure that we have the correct services in place before they're needed. We also need to know who is living in our properties so that if the household is going to be affected by the changes to Welfare Benefits, we can offer help and advice.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

This year's large scale tenant satisfaction survey is more important than ever, as it is the first which must take the new Scottish Social Housing Charter into consideration. We need to know what you like and don't like about your home and neighbourhood, and your opinion on the services we provide. We would love to say our tenants are 100% satisfied, but we know that there is always room for improvement, and your help targeting problem areas is invaluable.



SPSO

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

SPSO Consultation

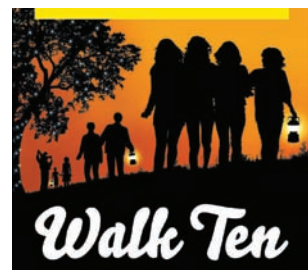
The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is asking all housing associations to consult with their tenants about their new approach to complaints handling – but it's an unusual consultation to say the least because the approach has already been set by the SPSO and cannot be changed! Nevertheless, if you would like to make any comments, please let us know.

The SPSO requires all housing associations to have a two stage complaints process, stage one being "frontline complaints" and stage two "investigation stage". We will adopt this approach for stage two from October this year, but we need new software to handle stage one complaints in the way the SPSO wishes us to, so we will develop and roll out this approach from April 2013.

For more information, please talk to us or have a look at the SPSO's website – www.spsos.org.uk

Fundraising Fun

Staff raised over £500 for Marie Curie Cancer Care by taking part in Walk Ten in August. Walk Ten, supported by HomeServe, takes place in dozens of stunning locations across the UK, and ends with a twilight picnic and fireworks. The weather for East Lothian's walk, starting from Athelstaneford, stayed lovely, and a great time was had by all (despite the nettles).



Back: Alison Hogg, Elaine Hill, Angela Brunton, Claire McMillan, Anne Rattray, Denise Cran

Front: Dale Finlayson and Dawn McFadden

SAVE A TREE

GO PAPER-FREE

Tenants who are registered for on-line tenant services can also join our Paper-Free Service. While you'll still get letters from us, things like reading Talkback, responding to consultations and receiving your annual rent statement can all be done on-line. To join the service, just visit the 'Paper-Free Options' page on elha.com.

If you'd like more information on our on-line services, visit elha.com and click the big red Live Help button, or e-mail us at info@elha.com.



"But I Don't Pay Rent!"

If you have your Housing Benefit paid directly to us, you need to make sure you are ready for the change in how Housing Benefit is paid. Soon, your Housing Benefit will be replaced by Universal Credit and paid to you, and it will be your responsibility to make sure you pay your rent to us on time. The easiest way to do this is to set up a Direct Debit from your bank account to ours.

If you do not have a bank account, or you have a Post Office account which does not allow Direct Debits, you should shop around for a bank account which does. Our Financial Inclusion Service can offer advice on what to look for, and what to avoid.



ALERT – Bogus Callers!

Please remember to always ask for ID when anyone visits and asks for access to your home. Reports of bogus callers have increased over the year, and they seem to be targeting mothers with young children.

All our staff and repair operatives carry photo ID, and you should ask to see it before letting anyone into your home, even if you are expecting someone to call.

If you think a bogus caller is trying to get into your home, please contact the Police.

Planned & Cyclical Maintenance Calendar 2012-13



Due to the vagaries of the weather and the construction industry, we have decided to provide an updated maintenance calendar for the year ahead. These dates are, as always, only a rough guide to when work will start, and we will confirm exact dates by letter nearer the time.

Area		Work	Estimated* Start Date
Dirleton	Castlemains Place	Painting	October 2012
East Linton	Stories Park	Kitchen Replacement	March 2013
		Rewiring	March 2013
	Bridge Street	Kitchen Replacement	March 2013
		Rewiring	March 2013
Garvald	Kirkbrae	Heating	November 2012
Gifford	Walden Terrace	Heating	January 2013
Gullane	Hopetoun Court	Painting	October 2012
	Muirfield Terrace	Painting	October 2012
Haddington	Edward Court	Kitchen Replacement	Completed
		Bathroom Replacement	March 2013
	Kennedy Court	Painting	October 2012
Musselburgh	Delta View	Kitchen Replacement	January 2013
		Rewiring	January 2013
	Moir Place & Terrace	Kitchen Replacement	January 2013
		Rewiring	January 2013
	Pinkie	Bathroom Replacement	December 2012
North Berwick	Quality Street	Kitchen Replacement	December 2012
		Painting	October 2012
Ormiston	Clarks Buildings	Heating	March 2013
	Oxenford Buildings	Heating	March 2013
Pencaitland	Tyne Park	Painting	Completed
Port Seton	South Seton Park	Painting	November 2012
Stenton	The Crofts	Heating	March 2013
		Painting	Completed
Tranent	Plough Lane	Kitchen Replacement	Completed
	Potters Path (amenity)	Kitchen Replacement	Completed
	Well Wynd	Kitchen Replacement	Completed
	Coalgate	Kitchen Replacement	On-site
		Rewiring	On-site
	The Hedges	Shower Installation	Completed
Wallyford	Albert Close	Door Replacement	December 2012
		Painting	October 2012
	Fa'side	Painting	On-site
West Barns	Edinburgh Rd	Painting	November 2012

*All works are subject to a pre-contract survey and are dependent on the availability of resources.



Tea and Sports

Residents at the Osborne & Winton Court sheltered housing complex got into the Olympic spirit with a fun afternoon tea.

