

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

## OFFICE OPENING TIMES

Monday - Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm

Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

Contact us on 01620 829300

Or by email [info@homesforlife.co.uk](mailto:info@homesforlife.co.uk)

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East Lothian  
EH41 3JG  
Tel 01620 829300  
Fax 01620 829993



[www.homesforlife.co.uk](http://www.homesforlife.co.uk)

**Note the office will be closed for Public Holidays on 22<sup>nd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April**

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### QUICK REMINDERS:

- Tenant Meeting – Wed 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011 6pm
- Did you cancel your Standing Order and switch to Direct Debit or payment card?
- Please see all your enclosures,
- check the website [www.homesforlife.co.uk](http://www.homesforlife.co.uk)

## Rent Consultation

Thank you very much to all the tenants who have got involved in helping us through the rent consultation process, whether by attending tenant meetings or responding to our survey. Full Feedback was included with your new rent notification letter and further more detailed feedback is enclosed with this newsletter.

### Please also find enclosed:

- A copy of the New Pet Policy
- Planned Estate walkabout dates
- Digital Switchover news
- Rent Consultation Feedback
- Review of Tenant Participation 2009-10
- Flyer for Community Pride Awards

You will find copies of other recently reviewed policies such as our Sustainability Policy, on the website.



## Tenant Panel Meeting

**The next Tenant Panel Meeting will be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm**

At the last Panel meeting on 11th January the Panel discussed the Proposed Rent Increase and tenant feedback, the Tenant Participation review, the new Pet Policy, Repairs Reprourement, and the forthcoming Digital Switchover. They also carried out the Direct Debit Prize Draw. Copies of the Tenant Participation Review, the new Pet Policy and briefing on Digital Switchover are enclosed along with further feedback on the rent consultation.

We will be holding the next meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and are **looking for more tenants to be part of your Tenant Panel.** This meeting will look at:

- Review of Tenant Participation for 2010 - 2011 – New targets?
- Board member vacancy – what does it involve? Would you be interested?
- Service development - how would you like to see your services improve?

We are also looking to involve tenants in the reprourement of our repairs contractor selection process. If you think you may have any experience or expertise in the area of repairs and would like to be involved please let us know.

We will be pleased to offer help with transport and childcare costs – please let us know your needs on the enclosed reply slip – remember to include your name and a contact telephone number!

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

## New Pet Policy

Enclosed you will find a full copy of our new Pet Policy which was drawn up in consultation with the Tenant Panel and approved at the last Board meeting.

The Pet policy was drawn up with reference to "Guidelines on Pet Management for Housing Providers" published by the Pet Advisory Committee. The Policy aims to ensure responsible ownership and provide sanctions against tenants who's pets cause nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours.

Pet ownership has risen over the last few decades. Over 6 million households in the UK are now estimated to own a dog; 5.2 million to own a cat and 4.7 million to own fish. The welfare of these animals is governed by the **Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) 2006** which lays down legal requirements for pet owners to ensure their pet has:



- a proper diet
- protection from suffering and disease
- ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- a suitable environment to live in

We are aware some tenants may breach this new policy due to the number of pets they already have. **If this includes you, please contact the office to let us know.**

We don't plan to take immediate action on this unless we receive complaints of nuisance. But excess numbers of pets must not be replaced as their number naturally reduces.

We would prefer for tenants to voluntarily arrange to rehome any excess pets but we *will* take action where necessary.

## Digital Switchover



East Lothian is part of the 'central' area covering Edinburgh & Lothians and the changeover to Digital TV is due to take place between April 2011 and June 2011. **After this date, analogue televisions will no longer be able to pick up TV signals without a freeview box, telephone connection, or cable or satellite connection.**

Our contractor has reviewed the communal aerials Homes for Life is responsible for and declared them all satisfactory. **If you do not have a communal aerial, the upkeep of your aerial is your responsibility.**

There is no such thing as a digital aerial, most rooftop aerials and some set-top aerials will be fine after switchover. You need to ensure your equipment is ready to receive the digital signal.

Please see the enclosed insert

You can get further advice and information on going digital by contacting Digital UK on 08456 50 50 50 or visiting [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk).

They will in any case notify all license holders well in advance of their final timetable for switchover.

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

## Estate Walkabouts – your community improvements



**ISS Waterers Landscapers** have been working through out the winter period addressing the neglected shrub beds.

**Do you want to help make your development a great place to live?** If so, come and join an estate walkabout and help to improve the appearance of your estate.

### What is the aim of an estate walkabout?

Estate walkabouts happen to give tenants and officers the chance to work together to identify improvement you would like to see in your development which will make it a better place to live.

**Who is involved?** Tenants are joined by their Housing Officer and other key staff who can help make improvements to the estate.

**What do I have to do?** All you have to do is take part in the walkabout and turn up on the day!

Each walkabout will involve:

- **a tour of your development** - tenant and officers will walk the estate together looking for anything which may make the estate look unsightly such as untidy gardens, cars parked on grass, litter, fly tipping or unreported repairs
- **discussion** – between tenants and staff over any ideas tenants may have to improve their development
- **a log of all the issues identified** - during the walkabout the Housing Officer will make a record of all the issues identified by residents
- **the development of an action plan** - Officers and residents will agree what to do next

**Enclosed is a sheet of planned visit dates to put in your diary**

## Rent, Arrears & Direct Debits

### Direct Debit

A Big thank you to all those of you who have cooperated with our requests to switch to Direct Debit. We have been in touch directly with the small number who did not convert by the end of March and will be sending Allpay cards out to those who are still paying by Standing Order.

### The Prize winners of the Direct Debit Draw were:

<b>First Prize :</b>	<b>£150</b>	Chris & Amber Connelly	Dunbar
<b>Second Prizes</b> <b>x 2</b>	<b>£75</b>	George & Elaine Scott	East Linton
	<b>£75</b>	Sheila Williamson	Athelstaneford
<b>Third prizes</b> <b>x 4</b>	<b>£50</b>	Sarah Hogg & Steven Mowat	Gifford
	<b>£50</b>	Eileen Craig	North Berwick
	<b>£50</b>	Alex Young	Elphinstone
	<b>£50</b>	George & Jessie Gold	East Linton

### Arrears & Evictions

**We have reluctantly had to carry out two evictions during March and April.** Recovering a person's home and making them homeless is always a last resort and Homes for Life have an excellent record for keeping arrears low and helping tenants who get into difficulties come to a sustainable arrangement to repay their debt.

However where someone chooses not to work with us and staff have exhausted all the routes to helping someone with their debt, the Company has a duty to its other tenants to prevent the debt from continuing to increase. The best way to avoid getting in to arrears is to pay your rent by Direct Debit.

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

We use **allpay.net** to collect rent.



There are **four** ways you can pay your rent through **allpay.net**

Our preferred method of payment is Direct Debit.

## 1. By Direct Debit



All payments made by Direct Debit are guaranteed, this means that in the unlikely event a payment is made in error, you will receive a full and immediate refund. **Please contact the office and we can arrange you direct debit over the phone.**

## 2. Telephone Payments - contact telephone payments on :

**0844 557 8321**

## 3. Online at

<https://www.allpayments.net/allpayments/>

## 4. By Card at various outlets – for example the Post Office or anywhere displaying the **Paypoint** logo

*In order to use any of the services other than Direct Debit you need your allpay card number. If you don't have an allpay card and would like to pay by one of the card methods – please contact the office and we can order one for you.*

# REMINDER

## Repairs Telephone Numbers



### 1. DURING OFFICE HOURS

Phone East Lothian Council's call centre on:

**01875 824311**

### 2. EMERGENCY REPAIRS

**Outside office hours** for an **EMERGENCY** repair that cannot wait until the morning - Contact East Lothian Council's Property Service on their Emergency Number

**01875 612 818**

- for **all EMERGENCY** repairs **except Gas Central Heating**.

*PLEASE NOTE - if you call out an emergency repair which is either your responsibility or which is not a genuine emergency, the cost of the call out and the repair will be charged back to you.*

### 3. GAS CENTRAL HEATING

Your gas central heating is covered by a contract with **Kingdom Gas** and if you experience any problems with your system you should call **FREE** on **0800 389 9463**.

## THINK YOU SMELL GAS?

If you think you can smell a gas leak, **NEVER** attempt to find a gas leak yourself. Instead contact **National Grid Gas plc** **immediately** on the following number –

**0800 111 999**

Telephone 01620 829300

Fax 01620 829993

email: [info@homesforlife.co.uk](mailto:info@homesforlife.co.uk)

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