

TENANTS NEWSLETTER

June 2008

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

Homes for Life Housing Partnership
57 Market Street
HADDINGTON
East Lothian
EH41 3JG
Tel 01620 829300
Fax 01620 829993



Here's your latest newsletter to let you know how your Company is doing

This is your newsletter - if you would like an article published please send it to:

Hilary Mark
Customer Service Manager
Homes for Life Housing Partnership
57 Market Street
Haddington
East Lothian
EH41 3JG

Homes for Life reserve the right to refuse publication

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NOTE:

Please see the enclosed "Any Changes?" questionnaire and information about the Tenant Forum Meeting and Prize Draw.

Any Changes? Prize Draw

We need your help to keep us up to date

Our data base now needs to be updated and we have enclosed a brief questionnaire for you to complete and return to us. The questionnaire is very short and we hope you will return it as quickly as possible but just in case you need an incentive we are running a Prize Draw !

Why are we asking these questions?

The Company is aware that more and more tenants are using mobile phones and these telephone numbers change more frequently than landline numbers. It is vitally important that we and our Contractors have up to date details of how to contact you if for example, an appointment needs to be re-scheduled or we need to arrange emergency access to your property, for example when a neighbour's property is being flooded.

Each year the Company sends statistical information about its properties and its tenants to the Scottish Housing Regulator (formerly Communities Scotland). For this we need a true picture of the number of our tenants who regard themselves or someone in their household as having a disability. We also need to know if we are likely to need to spend money on adaptations to tenant's houses.

For legal purposes we must know about any changes to your household (if anyone leaves or moves in).

If you'd like to join a group of tenants to discuss Tenant issues at the meeting on Tuesday 24th June please contact Hilary or James on 01620 829300

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Review Update - Delay in securing Approval – September EGM now likely

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), formerly Communities Scotland, required that we address conflicts of interests they perceived with the Founder Members on our Board of Directors. The Founder Members are the representatives on the Board from East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association. Following completion of the Option Appraisal in November 2008, we undertook extensive consultation, including the Tenant Meetings held in January, on proposed changes to our key governance documents- our Memorandum & Articles. Detailed proposals were finally submitted to our regulators in February 2008, as summarised in our Tenant and Member Briefing note of March 2008.

Unfortunately, whilst the charities regulator, Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), supported our proposals, the Scottish Housing Regulator, did not. This was both disappointing and unforeseen given the prior consultation.

The changes required by the Scottish Housing Regulator are significant, but the Board have worked hard to ensure that our tenants will have the potential to control the Company and to determine its future.

The Board have been supported in this additional work by the same consultant who has provided specialist support and advice throughout the Option Appraisal and Review process.

Earlier proposals for restrictions to ensure tenants comprised around 2/3 of the Board, as well as requiring that the Chair be a tenant, have had to be replaced by a simple requirement that tenant directors have a majority of available places on the Board.

Proposals to continue a separate category of tenant membership were rejected, as were proposals that around 2/3 of the membership should be tenants. Our separate Membership Policy will instead be revised to ensure that tenants can always comprise a majority of members, so no provision for this needs included in the Articles. The format of the Articles has also been revised to make it more attractive and easier to follow, with more complex clauses simplified.

Revised proposals will now be resubmitted to both regulators for approval. It is now likely that any EGM for our members to finally consider and hopefully approve proposals will need to take place in September 2008, with notices and other documents issued in late August.

Meantime copies of the revised proposals are available, from the office and will be available at the meeting on 24th June.

Gas into Elphinstone

A number of our tenant's in Elphinstone have been in touch to ask if the Company is planning on changing their central heating now that gas is being piped into Elphinstone.

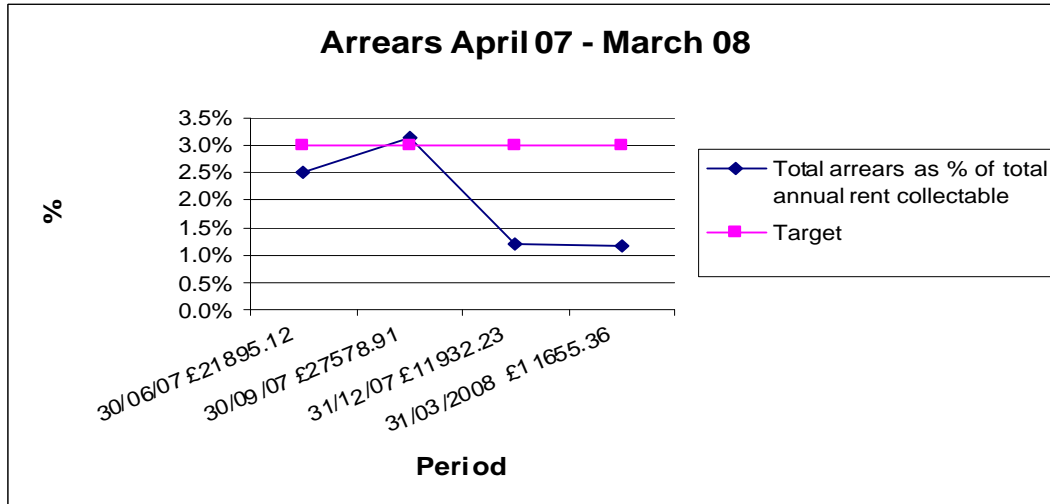
The straightforward answer is no. Each component in a property, for example your kitchen, bathroom, roof etc has a life expectancy for how long they are expected to last. This is built into the Company's Budget and means that we can plan expenditure on maintenance for many years ahead which helps ensure the long term future of the Company.

The central heating systems at Elphinstone are only 5 years old so the Company is unlikely to be considering replacement for a further 10 years. However it is considering paying to have pipework brought to the outside of each property for ease of future connection

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Housing Management Performance April 2007-March 2008

Rent Arrears



Recovery of outstanding rent arrears has continued to be one of the strongest areas of performance for Homes for Life.

The number of tenants who owed the Company money for their rent at the end of the year has fallen even lower than from last year. Last year there were only 9 housing associations in Scotland with a lower arrears figure.

Well done our Tenants!

Tenancy Changes - ALLOCATIONS For Year 1/4/07 - 31/03/08

We advertised 22 properties for relet which represents a turnover of 7.2%. The vacancies which arose were:

	Flat	House/bungalow	Average Nos. of applicants
1 bed	12	0	94
2 bed	4	3	140
3 bed	0	3	111

Homehunt Passes used

Homeless/ Harassment	Medical	Overcrowding	Ntbic*	Unsuitable Housing	No Pass
9	2	5	0	0	6

* Need to be in a community

Other Tenancy changes

Internal transfers	3
Mutual exchanges	6
Relet to own tenant post decree	1

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Equality and Diversity Monitoring for the properties let April 07- March 08

Household type

Single older person	9.7%
Single adult	22.6%
2 adults	16.1%
3+ adults	3.2%
1 adult +children	16.1%
2 adults +children	22.6%
3 or more adults +children	3.2%
Mixed adult + older person	6.5%

Economic Status

Full-time work	51.6%
Job seeker	6.5%
Retired	6.5%
Not seeking work	9.7%
Full-time student	3.2%
Long term sick	22.6%

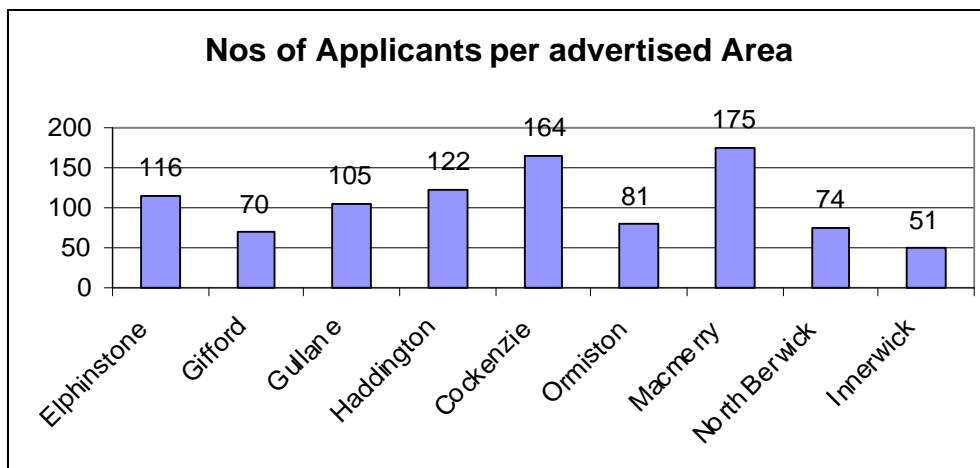
Ethnicity

White Scottish	96.8%
White –any other	3.2%

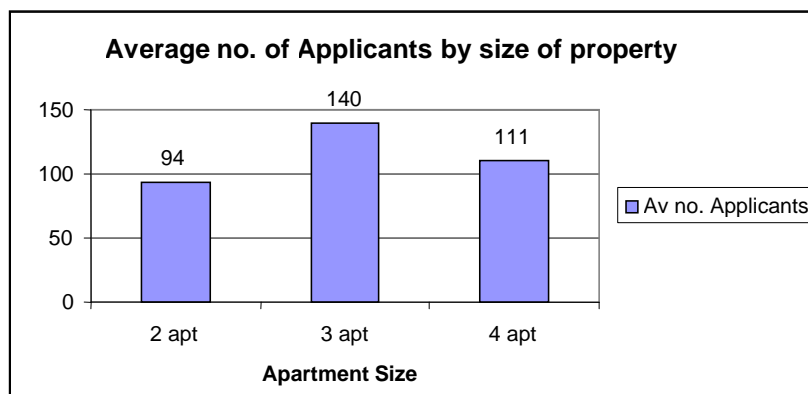
Gender

Male	48.4%
Female	51.6%

Demand by area advertised and property size



The table above show the average number of people that registered an interest in properties we advertised by area. The table below shows demand by size of property.



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Complaints

For the year April 2007 – end March 2008 there have been 56 neighbour nuisance complaints made by 49 complainants

Nature of Complaint	Nos.
Foul language	1
Litter	3
Children	10
Noise	21
Harassment	3
Pet fouling	9
Car Repairs/parking	1
Gardens	4
Drugs	3

The most frequent cause of complaint is **Noise**, followed by **Children** and often the two are connected. With the summer months and school holidays ahead, tenants need to be aware that with windows open, noise travels much further. Tenants also need to have sensible expectations of what amounts to unacceptable noise and what is reasonable noise associated with day to day living.

Please be a good neighbour!

Gardens – More recently we have received a number of complaints regarding neighbours unkempt gardens. The growing season is well under way and if you are fortunate enough to have a personal garden space you have a duty under terms of your Tenancy Agreement to look after and maintain your garden. As part of the review of our Estate Management Policy we hope to start up joint estate inspections with tenants. If you'd be interested in this please see the enclosed flyer and come along to our meeting on 24th June.

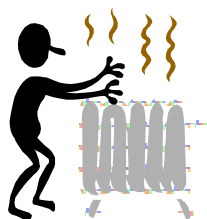
Repairs Performance

SUMMARY 2007/2008					
Priority of Repair	Code	Number Completed	Number Within Target	% of Jobs within Target	TARGETS
Emergency - Day	A	83	82	99%	100%
Emergency - Night	B	121	119	98%	100%
Urgent	C	1	1	100%	90%
Priority	D	1	0	0%	90%
Normal	E	659	489	74%	90%
TOTALS		865	691	80%	

We will be going out to tender for the Maintenance Contract soon and would like tenants to be part of the process in deciding what level of service they require and assist in selecting the successful applicants.

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Tenant Forum Meeting - Please see the enclosed invitation. We will be contacting tenants who have previously agreed to take part, however anyone else who may be interested is very welcome to attend. Just let us know. The meeting will take place at 59 Market Street Haddington and we will be providing, tea, coffee and a light snack.



Annual Gas Inspections....if

you can't keep the 1st appointment sent to you for your Annual Gas Service, please make sure that you phone Hepburn Engineering to advise them you can't be available **and** that you make another appointment at the same time. It is vitally important that your Service is carried out within a year of the previous inspection. As your landlord we have a legal duty to ensure that your gas central heating is safe and as a tenant you have a duty to allow access to your property for this important service.

Changes to Repairs Numbers

Over the coming months East Lothian Council aim to gradually phase out all of the Freephone 0800 and Low-call 0845 service line numbers that come into their Contact Centre. These lines will then be replaced with standard 01875 numbers.

**For HOUSING REPAIRS
call 01875 824311**

This number should now be used to report any repair and replaces 0845 602 2223.



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 Hepburn Engineering and if you experience any problems with your system you should call **0845 600 3455**.

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

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