

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

Homes for Life Housing Partnership
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HADDINGTON
East Lothian
EH41 3JG
Tel 01620 829300
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Here's your latest newsletter to let you know how your Company is doing

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QUICK REMINDERS:

- Can you make your estate Walkabout date?
- Some people still haven't increased their Standing Order for April's rent change – have you?
- Note the date of this year's AGM
- Have you completed the Mutual Exchange review form?
- Please check the Company's website www.homesforlife.co.uk for full copies of recently reviewed policies including :
Anti Social Behaviour & Data Protection

Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place on **15th September 2010** at the **Maitlandfield House Hotel in Haddington.**



The AGM is a great opportunity for you to join other tenants, members of staff, directors and representatives from partner agencies to hear how your company is doing.

Each year 1/3 of directors have to stand down for re-election. This year these are **Jim McLeish** (the current Chair and tenant) and **David Rose** (current Vice Chair and Community Council representative) and **Kevin Blackie** (a tenant appointed to a casual vacancy since the last AGM).

In advance of the meeting we will also be looking for other nominations for election. Only members are eligible to vote in elections.

Tenant Director Vacancy -

We are sorry to say goodbye to tenant director Louise Munro but wish her well in her new venture as a home owner! Her time on the Board of Homes for Life has been greatly appreciated.

This means there is currently a vacancy for a tenant who many be interested in becoming involved in the running of the Company.

If you'd like more information in what's involved please don't hesitate to get in touch with Hilary on 01620 829300

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Irresponsible Dog Owners targeted in new campaign



East Lothian Council has launched a new hard-hitting public awareness campaign aimed at reducing the problem of dog fouling across the county. **Dog Watch** aims to get the message over to irresponsible dog owners that, regardless of where and when an offence is committed, someone is likely to witness it and report it. Dog owners are reminded of the consequences of not cleaning up after their pets. Many owners are still not picking up their pet's waste and instead leave behind piles of unsightly and potentially dangerous mess.

Dog fouling is one of the top complaints received by the council. Dog excrement not only looks disgusting but can also seriously affect people's health. The campaign is not anti-dog but about responsible ownership and keeping streets and parks clean and safe places for people, particularly children, to enjoy.

Dog Watch - Who's Watching You ? - is designed to allow the public to easily report when they witness an offence being committed. One of the main reasons that dog owners don't clear up after their dog is because they think there's not a Council officer watching. However, once the message gets out that the general public can now take direct action to report offences, dog owners are far more likely to behave responsibly.

Dog fouling legislation can be enforced by over 30 employees of the Council and the Police. East Lothian Council's community and environmental wardens enforce dog and litter legislation and issue fixed penalty fines to people who drop litter or don't clean up after their dog.

[Lothian & Borders Police](#) can also issue fixed penalty notices to offenders on behalf of the Council.

The fixed penalty fine for dog fouling is £40; this rises to £60 if it's not paid within 28 days.

Anyone who doesn't pay a fine within the given time period will be pursued by sheriff officers who have the legal right to recover both the amount of the fine and any expenses incurred.

Who is responsible for cleaning up after dogs?

Under the [Dog Fouling \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#), if you are in charge of a dog you **must** clear up after it - regardless of your age and whether or not you own it. You must pick up any fouling immediately and throw it away in a proper bin or take it home with you. (Please note that picking up dog fouling in a bag and then leaving the bag lying around is still an offence.) Excuses such as not knowing your dog has fouled or not having a bag with you to pick it up won't be accepted by the wardens, and you will still be fined.

Poop scoop bags Free poop scoop bags are available from most Council offices, libraries and community centres.

Reporting an offence Details provided of offences, by members of the public, will be kept confidential. In certain cases, where the information provided by the public is of sufficient detail and accuracy, reported offenders may be visited by a Warden and given a formal warning or issued with a Fixed Penalty Fine under the [Dog Fouling \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#).

For Dog Watch to be successful, the general public of East Lothian need to play their part. People who are plagued with dog fouling in their street or local park and who see an offence taking place, can contact the council via a dedicated email address to landscapeandcountryside@eastlothian.gov.uk or telephone 01875 824305.

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Estate Walkabouts – your community improvements

ISS Waterers Landscapers have been working round the developments implementing the improvements approved after last year’s estate walkabouts.

Estate improvements which are now complete include:

- Numbering & marking of parking bays at Hares Close
- Supplying bench seating in Barga Court and Limeylands Court
- Replanting 330 new shrubs at Gifford and Cockenzie
- Supplying and fitting a new sturdy fence around a shrubbed area at Gifford
- Supplying a security gate at Forth Street
- Replacing existing gravel with larger 20mm to help prevent pet fouling



The most significant amount spent was to provide the trip rail to a shrubbed area at Gifford which had sustained severe damage from local children. The next most costly was to Hares Close, Cockenzie which had longstanding parking issues and greatly benefited from having parking bays numbered and painted

This year’s Estate Walkabouts will take place during July

Scheme Address	Date	Time
<i>Hares Close</i>	Thurs 8 th July	10.00am
<i>Kennedy Court</i>	Tues 13 th July	11.00am
<i>Davidson Terrace / Place</i>	Tues 13 th July	12.00pm
<i>Goldenstones Avenue</i>	Friday 9 th July	10.00am
<i>Limeylands Court</i>	Thurs 15 th July	10.00am
<i>Smiddy Wynd</i>	Friday 9 th July	11:30pm
<i>MacFarlane Court</i>	Thurs 15 th July	11:30am
<i>Roodlands Court</i>	Tues 13 th July	10:00am
<i>Muirfield Drive / Gardens</i>	Tues 20 th July	10.00am
<i>Walden Terrace / Place</i>	Wed 21 st July	10.00am
<i>Barga Court</i>	Thurs 8 th July	10.45am

We want to ensure that your neighbourhood is an attractive, well looked-after and safe place to live and **your input is very important.** We will be looking at all common areas such as stairwells, landscaped areas, bin stores, car parks, play areas and so on.

If you cant make it this time...

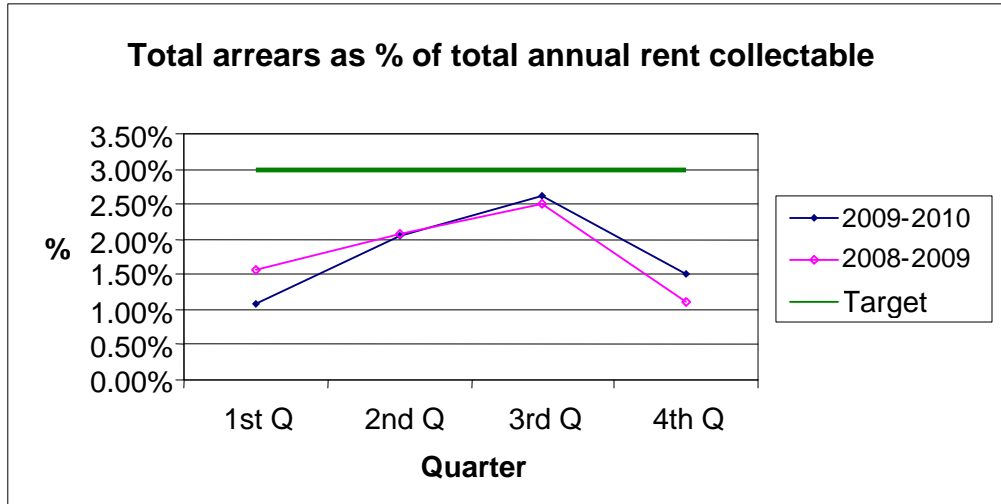
Please call your Housing Officer James McCallum-Browne on **01620 829 300.** He will be pleased to hear any comments you have.

Your comments and suggestions will be noted and later an Action Plan for improvements will be drawn up and sent out to you.

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Housing Management Performance April 2008 - March 2009

Rent Arrears



Recovery of outstanding rent arrears has continued to be one of the strongest areas of performance for Homes for Life and has followed a similar pattern to that of the previous year.

Arrears action taken during the year April 09 – March 10

Nos. of Notice of Proceedings (NoPs) served during the year	Nos. of current Live NoP's at the year end	Nos. of repayment arrangements made over the year	Nos. of Evictions carried out	Abandonment notices served
14	7	34	1	4

Homehunt Passes used

Passes Used	
Gold Pass – Homeless	9
Silver - Overcrowding	2
Silver Pass - Medical	1
Bronze - Homeless	1
Bronze Pass – First Affordable Home	3
No pass	2

Evictions carried out

One eviction was carried out of with an arrears balance of £1107.13. The tenant has now reduced this to £272.73

Internal transfers - 2

Mutual exchanges - 17

Tenancy Changes - ALLOCATIONS for Year 01/04/09 - 31/03/10

We advertised 18 properties for relet which represents a turnover of %. The vacancies which arose were:

Development	Nos. vacancies	Property size	Average no. applicants
Cockenzie	4	2 x 2 apt flats , 2 x 3 apt flats	129
Dunbar	1	1 x 2apt flat	68
Elphinstone	2	3 x 2apt flat	62
Gifford	4	3 x 2 apt flats 1x 3apt house	67
Gullane	3	2 x 2apt flat, 1x 3 apt house	68
Haddington	3	1 x 2apt flat 2 x 3 apt flat	78
Ormiston	1	1 x 2 apt flat	89

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Repairs Performance

SUMMARY 2008/2009					
Priority of Repair	Code	Number Completed	Number Within Target	% of Jobs within Target	TARGETS
Emergency – Day/Night	A/B	130	128	98.46	100%
Normal	E	320	278	86.88	90%
TOTALS		450	406	90.22%	

We are going out for re-procurement however we do not want to exclude ELC from this process as they do provide a good service which is valued by tenants. After consulting with tenants they have overwhelmingly indicated that they would like the ELC to be part of the tendering process.

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.

Complaints

For the year April 2009 – end March 2010 there have been 46 neighbour nuisance complaints and 19 Service complaints.

Neighbour Complaints

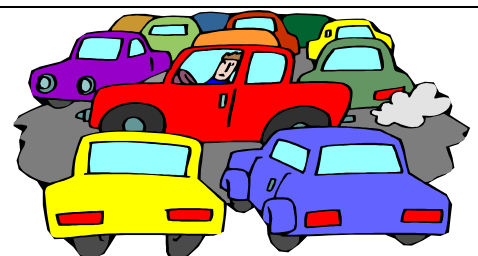
The most frequent cause of complaint is **Noise**, followed by **Parking**. With the summer months and school holidays, tenants need to be aware that with windows open, noise travels much further. **Please be a good neighbour!**

Nature of Complaint	2009-2010
Litter	1
Children	2
Noise	22
Pet fouling	4
Car Repairs/parking	7
Harrassment/bullying	2
Antisocial Behaviour	4
other	4

Inconsiderate Parking

We continue to receive complaints regarding inconsiderate use of the parking areas within our developments. There is one parking space provided for each property and therefore in order not to inconvenience other tenants if your household owns more than one vehicle, you must you make alternative appropriate parking arrangements.

Similarly you will need to ensure that any visitors are aware that there are no parking spaces provided for their use and that they do not use a space provided for a Homes for Life tenant.



Recently there was a serious incident on one development which involved the police attending and caused a great deal of stress all round. All this would have been avoided entirely had the guilty party adhered to this policy and parked in their own space.

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Our ex East Lothian Council stock - Modernisation Underway !

Work finally started on site on Monday 21st June, and is due to be completed within 15 weeks, by Friday 8th October. Overall, improvements and repairs to these 27 homes will cost over £1/2million, which is a major commitment on the part of Homes for Life. We have been setting aside reserves for a number of years to help meet the full costs without any additional borrowing. The objective is to bring all 27 older homes previously acquired from East Lothian Council up to Scottish Housing Quality Standards- broadly equivalent to our new Build Properties.

The first 2 homes are already complete, with another 6 underway. Feedback from these first homes is very encouraging. Tenants report that the quality of work is high, with the workforce respectful, conscientious and flexible in their approach.

Between 2 and 4 homes are being started each week. Necessary improvements and repairs vary from home to home. These will take between 1-3 weeks to complete, but generally less than 2 weeks.

Tenants are remaining in their homes throughout. Temporary stoves and drinking water supplies are provided for when kitchens are stripped out, and downtime for bathroom replacements is minimised. When work is in progress to replace kitchens and bathrooms as well as for rewiring and renewal of central heating this can be very disruptive. Success depends on trust, goodwill and mutual respect between contractor, tenants, consultants and Homes for Life staff. We're pleased to report that so far we've achieved this, and we'll work hard to ensure it continues.



Main Contractors, **James Swinton**, and their sub-contractors have significant experience of completing similar modernisation packages for other Registered Social Landlords. Our tenants are now benefiting from that experience, with technical support from our surveyors Summers Inman and liaison by the staff team at Homes For Life. Unfortunately George Russell, our Business Manager will be on leave in early July, and other Homes For life staff will deal with all enquiries in his absence.

Local contractor **Dunbar Removals** are providing packing cases, floor protection and removal of goods to storage- as required. They provide a similar service for East Lothian Council modernisation programmes, and again initial feedback from our tenants is favourable.

Joint visits are being carried out to all tenants in advance of works commencing to individual properties. This allows us to check details are correct, and that tenants understand what will be involved for their home. We are doing these in the same order as improvement work will be carried out under, and have already visited 15 out of 24 tenanted homes. We have also finalised tenant choices for kitchen and bathroom finishes for all but 8 tenanted homes. Tenants will receive a disturbance payment equivalent to refund of their full rent for the period that work is underway inside their homes. They can also opt for redecoration of those rooms where wall or ceiling surfaces are damaged to complete works, or to receive a set allowance for each room affected, and to arrange their own redecoration.

Tenants had initially hoped that work would start earlier in the year, but the consensus from tenants whose homes we have been working in over the last 2 weeks is that the warm summer weather is better suited - long may it last !

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before

From a tired old, cramped kitchen, a great deal of rubble and disturbance ...

..to lots of extra space ...



...and a fresh new kitchen!



after

This tenant was “over the moon” with her new kitchen and full of praise for Swinton’s tradesmen who had been very flexible and tried to keep disturbance to a minimum.

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Allpay have changed their phone numbers to the 0844 prefix, which will make paying rent by phone cheaper.

The new number for telephone payments is :

0844 557 8321

Remember you can also make payments online at <https://www.allpayments.net/allpayments/>

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



We plan to introduce Direct Debits later this year and will be in touch with you once this has been set up.

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

Registered Social Landlord No.311

Registered Charity No.028542

Company Limited by Guarantee

Company Registration No. 188299