

FIFE HOUSING GROUP NEWSLETTER

at home with...

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group

Issue 76: Autumn 2017

RETIRED RESIDENTS REMEMBER ROSYTH

Local senior citizens spent a lovely afternoon 'Remembering Rosyth' at an afternoon tea hosted by Fife Housing Group at the end of August, having been awarded funding from City Gate Construction as part of their 'Afternoon Tea with CGC' initiative.

As Engagement Officer, Helen Miller, explains 'The purpose of this event was to help tackle the loneliness and isolation felt by some older residents of Rosyth, allowing them the opportunity to reminisce with each other and enjoy the social interaction which many can be sadly missing'.

Over 60 guests enjoyed not only a range of sandwiches, cakes and refreshments, but also activities including an exhibition of Rosyth through the years, produced by Martin Rogers, reminding everyone of the changes they had lived through in their community and bringing back a lot of fond memories.



Thanks to a generous donation from Babcock, a slipper exchange also took place, giving guests the opportunity to exchange their old slippers for brand new ones. Every year many elderly people end up in hospital as a result of falls and trips in their home and often these falls occur due to loose, worn or ill-fitting slippers. These falls can destroy confidence, increase isolation and reduce independence so by providing a slipper exchange Fife Housing Group hope to help reduce the chance of these, often avoidable, falls occurring.

In addition to the popular slipper exchange, attendees took advantage of a book swap,

free manicures and our expert IT volunteer, Ross Riddock, who provided one-on-one support and guidance for anyone interested in learning more about using a computer and the wonders of the web.



A number of different agencies were also in attendance and kindly donated their time, including the Disabled Person's Housing Service (DPHS), Cosy Kingdom, EATS Rosyth, Rosyth Community Council, Rosyth Foodbank, Fife Elderly Forum, Link Living and Sacro, all offering relevant and useful information on services available to the elderly.



On top of this, a special mention needs to be given to the many local businesses, such as Stephens, Greggs, Baynes and Scotmid, who generously supported this special event, as without them it would not have been possible.

Thanks to everyone who got involved, the event was a huge success and the elderly community of Rosyth certainly proved that they still know how to enjoy themselves!

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KEEPING IT IN THE COMMUNITY

Our Housing Team paid a visit to Rosyth Centenary Orchard, community garden and the community hub at the end of August and were greatly impressed with what had been achieved on the land which we have donated for community use. Colleagues were given a tour and talk by one of the project managers who was very knowledgeable on all things green.

The orchard itself is full of different varieties of fruit trees and houses a new beehive which they hope to start collecting honey from next year. It also has its own weather centre on the roof of the newly built outdoor classroom, which has seen a steady stream of children from the local nurseries since it opened.

The community hub, which is linked to the Orchard, is based in Aberlour Street and offers local residents the opportunity to enjoy three-course meals on Thursday and Friday nights, made from donated ingredients, surplus stock from local businesses and food grown in the community garden and Orchard, all cooked by local volunteers. There is also access to bread, fresh fruit, vegetables and frozen meals for free, although donations are always welcome.

For more details on the Rosyth Community Hub you can visit [facebook.com/rosythcommunityhub](https://www.facebook.com/rosythcommunityhub)



Readability

Can you read our other articles ok? If not, you can ask for your newsletter to be provided in a large print format – or if you know of a tenant who does not have English as their first language and is unable to read their information from us

then please ask them to get in touch with us.

Just contact our newsletter editor, Karen Begg, on 01383 607549 or via karen.begg@fifehg.org.uk to request a large print copy or to enquire about alternative copy formats.



ARE YOU READY?

Universal Credit will be rolled out to the whole of Fife in December.

This means that, in less than three months, if you have a change in circumstances, e.g. your current benefit ends or you have to apply for a new benefit, you will be applying for Universal Credit.

Going forward, the housing element (formerly known as 'Housing Benefit') which is the part of Universal Credit you are entitled to for your rent, will be paid directly to you as part of your full monthly benefit payment. If you would prefer the rent element of this to be paid to us then you need to ensure you choose this option when making your claim.

Depending on your age, circumstances and how your household is made up, the housing element of your payment may not cover your full rent charge. If this is the case it is your responsibility to make up the difference out of your monthly income.

As the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will pay Universal Credit in arrears, you may also accrue rent arrears until your payments are received.

If you do need to make an application for Universal Credit, please contact our office immediately so that we can give appropriate advice and update our records. Please also remember that we are here to help you through these changes.

KEEPING WARM IN WINTER

As the nights draw in and the temperature starts to drop it's important to ensure that you are able to keep your home warm in an economic manner. If you experience any issues when switching your heating back on after summer then please follow the steps below in order to have them dealt with as soon as possible.

Gas central heating

If you have a gas boiler this will already be serviced annually, but, should further repairs be required please either;

1. Call us on freephone **08000 274 007** and select **Option 1** to be put directly through to our gas contractor, WRB Gas;
- OR**
2. Call WRB Gas directly on freephone **0800 281 856**.

Any other heating

Call us on freephone **08000 274 007** and choose **Option 2** to report a repair.

Out of hours

We do offer a service for emergency repairs, which includes having no heating or hot water. If you have a problem with your heating outside of office hours you should still use the contact details above. Your call will be directed to our out of hours service, who will arrange for an engineer to attend if it is an emergency which cannot wait until the next working day.

Heating advice

We are also keen to ensure that our tenants receive value for money, and this includes being able to heat your home in an efficient and cost-effective manner. For free advice on how best to do this, you can contact Cosy Kingdom on **01592 858458** or via info@cosykindom.org.uk.

STAYING SAFE – ELECTRIC BLANKETS

With an autumn chill now in the air, many people will be thinking about dusting off their electric blankets before winter sets in but, while they may be great for keeping you cosy they are also responsible for over 5,000 house fires each year so, it's definitely worth making sure yours is safe to use first by taking it along to one of the FREE events below:

Date and time	Venue
Tues 3 October 11.00am - 2.00pm	East Neuk Centre, Ladywalk, Anstruther, KY10 3EX
Wed 25 October 10.00am - 1.00pm	Baldridgeburn Community Centre, Baldridgeburn, Dunfermline, KY12 9EH
Wed 1 November 10.00am - 1.00pm	Templehall Community Centre, Beauly Place, Kirkcaldy, KY2 6EX
Thurs 9 November 10.00am - 1.00pm	Corn Exchange, St Catherine Street, Cupar, KY15 4BT
Tues 14 November 10.00am - 1.00pm	Lochgelly Centre, Bank Street, Lochgelly, KY5 9RD

COMMUNITY CAFÉ COMES TO METHILHILL

The weather may not have embraced the spirit of the event, but our summer-themed Community Café in Methilhill went ahead regardless, with Fife Housing Group colleagues braving the elements in the days prior to the event, to knock on doors and invite local residents to attend.

The day itself was a little less dreich, and around 50 residents took the opportunity to come along and meet colleagues from across the Group, who were on hand to provide a wealth of housing-related information, including details of our repairs and maintenance services, the housing allocations process and our plans for the future, as well as some ideas on getting more involved, to help improve the services we deliver.

Four members of Resident VOICES were also in attendance and their stall proved to be very popular, with several people indicating they were interested in finding out more about the work the group does.

In addition, two members of Kingdom Housing Association's Scrutiny Group attended the event and have indicated they are very keen to work together with the Resident VOICES group in the future. A HUGE thank you goes out to all of the engaged residents

who came along to support the event.

Various partner agencies, including The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Fife Council's Safer Communities Team, Community Wardens, Wise2Welfare, NHS Health Services, Jobcentre Plus, Kingdom Housing Association and Greener Kirkcaldy were also on hand with jam-packed stalls to provide information and advice on the range of services they provide to communities.

The appearance of a fire engine was certainly a hit with the kids (big and small) and the kids' corner provided plenty of activities for children, with crafting, competitions, snacks and free face-painting on offer.

As always, a free prize draw was arranged, with prizes generously donated by local businesses including Fife Housing Group, Singapore Hot Food, The Co-operative, Nisa One Store, Café Nova and The Scottish Deer Centre. A big thank you also goes out to each of them for their support for this community event.

Our next Spoooooky Community Café will take place in Kirkcaldy in October. Keep an eye on our website and social media for more details in due course...



Could you be eligible for Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is payable to people over 65 years of age who have a physical/sensory disability or mental disability (or both) and who need help caring for themselves, or need someone to supervise them for their own safety.

If you think you, or someone you are caring for, may be eligible to apply for this benefit, please check online at gov.uk/attendance-allowance or phone the Attendance Allowance helpline 0345 605 6055 for further details.

TEAM NEWS

We have recently said farewell to Finance Officer, Rachel Magowan, and were also sad to see Plumber, Stuart Laird, retire at the end of September.



TENNIS TOURNAMENT SERVES UP SUPPORT FOR SCOTTISH AUTISM

Scottish autism

Scottish Autism took centre court at Fife Housing Group in July, as colleagues began fundraising for their chosen Charity of the Year with a tennis tournament to rival any grand slam!

The call of 'Anyone for tennis?' was answered by almost 30 colleagues, including the Group's Chief Executive, who duly paid their entry fee and limbered up to take part in the event, which ran over the same two week period as Wimbledon.

Those of a less energetic persuasion could still get involved with appropriately branded 'deuce' and strawberries and cream available for spectators to purchase during the latter stages, helping to 'net' over £110 for Scottish Autism.

Despite going out in the first round Chief Executive, Nicki Donaldson, 'loved' taking part, 'This was a really fun event which gave everyone the opportunity to join in during their lunch breaks, get a little bit of exercise AND raise money for a really worthwhile cause'.

Scottish Autism was nominated to be Fife Housing Group's charity of the year by Housing Officer, Stephanie McCulloch, whose son is autistic and who has personal experience of the fantastic work they do, 'Scottish Autism provide invaluable emotional and practical support to families like mine, at the times when they need it the most and I'm delighted that my colleagues at Fife Housing Group have chosen them as our Charity of the Year.

'This was our first fundraising event and it's been an 'ace' start but we've already got lots more lined up with

colleagues undertaking everything from Ultra running events to abseils to raise even more cash for this deserving cause'.

Fran Miele, Corporate Fundraiser at Scottish Autism said 'We are delighted to be working in partnership with Fife Housing Group this year to raise much needed funds and awareness for people living with autism in Scotland. Scottish Autism focuses on supporting individuals with autism through the whole life journey and enabling them to have fulfilling life experiences. We have lots of services throughout Fife so receiving support from local businesses is invaluable and really makes a difference to people's lives'.

You can find out more about the fantastic work Scottish Autism do on their website - scottishautism.org



GETTING INVOLVED: RESIDENT INSPECTORS

As a tenant receiving a service from us, you are one of the best people to look closely at the quality of the housing services we provide. This is why we would like to invite any interested tenants to become involved in our Resident Inspector Programme.

These inspections offer tenants a unique opportunity to become involved in reviewing an area of service and making recommendations on how the service can be improved. At this time, we are particularly keen to seek tenants' views on the condition and cleanliness of our empty properties, prior to them being re-let.

As a Resident Inspector you would become involved in visiting empty properties, accompanied by one of our Maintenance Officers. These visits would allow you to gain a greater understanding of the challenges we face but, more importantly, give you the opportunity to influence and shape our acceptable letting standard.

Full training will be provided to allow you to carry out this role with confidence and ongoing support will continue following completion of any training. If you are keen to find out more or become involved in our new Resident Inspector Programme, please contact our Engagement Officer, Helen Miller on 01383 608127 or via helen.miller@fifehg.org.uk.



BIRDS NESTING IN LOFT SPACES

As a general rule, all birds, their nests and their eggs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and it is, therefore, an offence to damage or destroy an active nest or prevent parent birds access to their nests.

As such, should you suspect that you have birds nesting or causing damage in your attic space, legally we are unlikely to be in a position to have them removed, or to arrange for access holes to be filled, until the young have left the nest. This has usually happened by September or October, however, pigeons can nest throughout the year so it may only be possible to remove them if it can be shown that this is necessary in order to preserve public health.

If you wish to deter birds from nesting in your roof, work to deny access must be done during the winter months. If you have had issues in the past we would recommend checking your building between October

and February and then contacting us to arrange for an inspector to attend and assess areas in question and have them filled or repaired as appropriate.

Further information on this subject can be found on the RSPB website <http://www.rspb.org.uk/joinandhelp/campaignwithus/law/whatsintheroof/index.aspx>



PREVENTING PEST INFESTATIONS

In the vast majority of instances the responsibility for dealing with pest infestations lies with the tenant of the property affected. As a landlord our responsibility is to the fabric of the property, which means that we have an obligation to deal with any disrepair which is contributing to the problem, such as gaps or holes in the wall or floors. If you believe that this is the case then we can arrange for an inspector to attend and assess areas in question and have them filled or repaired as appropriate, however, as stated in your Tenant Handbook, we will not arrange or pay for the removal of any form of infestation e.g. wasps nests, ants, mice.

If you do have a problem with pests traps, sprays and pellets are readily available from supermarkets, DIY stores and the like at minimal cost.

Alternatively Fife Council's Pest Control team charge £55.83 per treatment and can be contacted on 03451 55 00 22 – please note that if you do arrange for the Council to deal with your infestation you will be liable for this full cost.



- ✓ Make sure your home, especially the kitchen, is always clean, by wiping down surfaces and sweeping or vacuuming floors regularly to remove any trace of food
- ✓ Store food in sealed containers
- ✓ Don't leave uncovered food out in warm weather as it attracts flies, ants and wasps
- ✓ Clear up any water spillages or leaks, as these can encourage pests
- ✓ Keep the kitchen bin closed and empty it regularly
- ✓ Put rubbish out in properly sealed bags or bins
- ✓ If you have a garden or yard, don't let it become overgrown or dump old furniture, mattresses or other rubbish there, as this provides a good home for mice and rats
- ✓ If you feed garden birds, don't put food out in the evening and always use a bird table rather than just putting bird food on the ground as this can attract rats
- ✓ If you have a compost heap, don't put cooked food on it as, again, this can attract rats

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

Our 21st Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at our Pitreavie office on 18 September 2017.

Chair of the Board, Maureen Garvie, took the opportunity to highlight that it had been another challenging year for the housing sector in an uncertain economic environment, which looks unlikely to become any more settled with the EU Withdrawal Bill moving onto the next stage of the lawmaking process and the imminent introduction of Universal Credit to our area.

She also discussed how last year saw us switch emphasis from our business change programme to concentrate on creating a strong corporate culture throughout the organisation as our values, and the behaviours which underpin them, inform how we deliver services and help us to ensure a positive end result for our tenants and other customers.

Looking to the future Mrs Garvie advised that our aim is to secure the long-term future of Fife Housing Group by delivering the high quality, transparent, value for money service our tenants and customers deserve and commented that we are looking forward to working with all of our stakeholders to achieve this over the coming year.

Our rules state that a third of our Board Members must stand down at the AGM each year and in this instance the three Board Members required to stand down were: Patricia Dickson, Derek Adam and Sandra Stock. Both Derek Adam and Sandra Stock were willing to stand for



re-election, however, Patricia Dickson indicated that she wished to retire from the Board.

As the number of members standing for election did not exceed vacant spaces available, the members standing again were elected without a vote.

In a vote at the Board meeting which following the AGM, Helen Boath was also elected as Vice Chairperson.

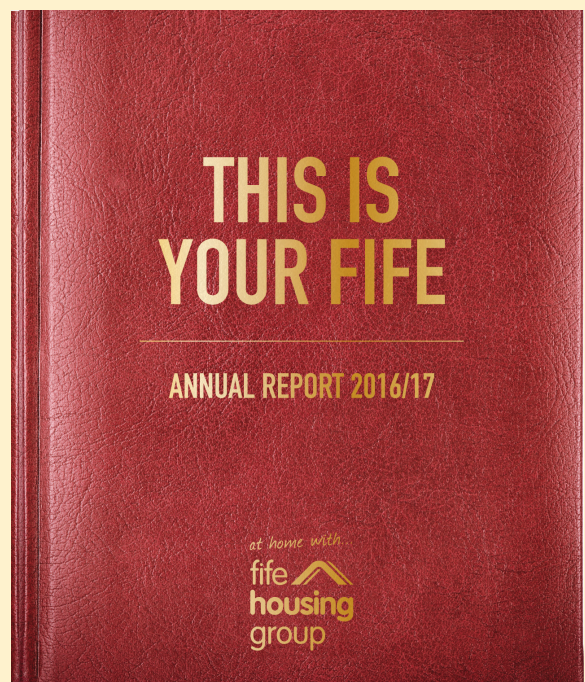
Therefore, our Board members for the coming year are as follows: Maureen Garvie (Chairperson), Helen Boath (Vice Chairperson), Anila Ahmad, Derek Adam, Colin McNeill, Stephen Clark, Katherine Dewar, Fiona Hunter and Sandra Stock.

ANNUAL REPORT

You will also notice that this year's Annual Report, which may look a little familiar to you, has been included with this newsletter. 'This is your Fife' is an extension of the theme which formed the basis of our Colleague Conference this year, highlighting the positive impact the work that colleagues do can have on tenant's lives, some of whose stories you will see inside.

Developing this idea further we wanted to emphasise that it's not just colleagues who influence the future of Fife Housing Group, tenants, members, other customers and stakeholders all have a role to play as well, so this is really your Fife too.

If you have any comments or queries regarding this year's Annual Report please do not hesitate to get in touch.





PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME UPDATE

WORK	CURRENT POSITION
Electrical testing	Remedial works are now underway to 64 properties that did not pass their original inspection. A new programme of testing at a further 250 properties is due to commence in November.
External painter work	Currently underway in Lumphinnans with the Methil area already complete. The other areas included in this contract are Burntisland, Cowdenbeath, Crombie, Limekilns, Dalgety Bay, Kinghorn, Lochgelly and Lochore.
Kitchen replacement programme	Properties Fife-wide are currently being inspected for inclusion in next year's programme.
Roofing	24 roofs have been completed to date, including Aberlour Street in Rosyth. Further addresses are now being identified for inclusion in future programmes.
Heating systems	80 central heating systems are in the process of being changed to modern, efficient combi boiler systems. This includes 25 properties that are being converted from electric heating to gas heating. Work at Dunearn Drive and Valley Gardens in Kirkcaldy is currently underway with 18 properties in Ochilview, Lumphinnans already completed.
Insulation Works	Over 100 addresses across Fife are currently having loft and/or cavity wall insulation upgrades with more planned for later this year.

Please note that works will not necessarily be undertaken in all properties within the areas listed.

Tenants in affected properties will be notified individually of expected start dates and timescales.

HOUSING BENEFIT FOR UNDER 35s TO BE CAPPED FROM APRIL 2018

If you are a single person under the age of 35 and you signed the tenancy agreement for your home after 1 April 2016, your entitlement to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit will be capped from 1 April 2018.

From this date, you will only be able to claim the shared accommodation rate which is currently £59.95 per week. This means you will have to pay any difference between this amount and the full rent charge out of your remaining benefit.

CASE STUDY

Jim is 33 years old and signed a lease for a three bedroom property in October 2016.

The monthly rent for the property is £356.95 and, at the moment, the full amount is paid by a combination of housing benefit and discretionary housing benefit, which covers the under occupancy charges (bedroom tax). Jim also receives Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

As of April next year, Jim will only be entitled to £259.78 per month towards his rent and will have to pay the remaining £97.17 per month out of his ESA.

If you think you will be affected by these changes and would like to discuss your situation further please do not hesitate to talk to your Housing Officer directly, call us on freephone 08000 274 007 or email info@fifehg.org.uk.

WANT TO JOIN US ON A WALKABOUT?

Our popular estate walkabout events give you the opportunity to join your Housing Officer, and other colleagues from Fife Housing Group, on a tour of your local area, giving you the chance to learn about what matters to your neighbours, our plans for improvement, meet other stakeholders and see for yourself the issues we are managing in your area.

Please find our walkabout schedule for the next few months detailed below:



Date / Time	Location	Housing Officer
October 2017		
Tuesday 10 October - 2.00pm	Rosyth - Admiralty Road and Backmarch Road	Gavin Waddell
Thursday 12 October - 1.30pm	Lumphinnans	Audrey Cameron
Thursday 19 October - 10.00am	Kirkcaldy - Valley Gardens	Lynn Mather
Thursday 26 October - 1.30pm	Camdean - Primrose Lane, Primrose Avenue, Daniel Place, Booth Avenue, Brankholm Crescent	Stephanie McCulloch
November 2017		
Thursday 9 November - 10.30am	Crombie	Angie Munton
Tuesday 21 November - 10.30am	Kinghorn	Karen Gilruth
December 2017		
Thursday 7 December - 2.00pm	Methil – Oakvale Road, Birch Grove, Hollybank, Poplar Road	Greg Turner
Tuesday 12 December - 1.00pm	Dunfermline – Leishman Drive	William Earnshaw

If you would like to participate in any of the walkabouts detailed above, please give us a call on freephone 08000 274 007 or email info@fifehg.org.uk

Walkabouts scheduled for the start of next year will be listed in coming newsletters. Alternatively, the full schedule for 2017/18 can be viewed on our website

<http://www.fifehg.org.uk/news-events/events/>

MYSTERY SHOPPING

Our recently launched Mystery Shopping Programme is now in its third month and proving to be an invaluable way for us to gather relevant feedback from the people who are receiving our services.

The launch of this programme would not have been possible without the interest and enthusiasm shown by our mystery shopping volunteers, who are key to helping us understand the actual experiences of our tenants and customers and subsequently which areas of our service

are performing well and which would benefit from greater focus in order to improve their delivery.

If you would like to become involved in helping improve the services we provide and are keen to learn more about our Mystery Shopping Programme, please contact our Engagement Officer, Helen Miller on 01383 608127 or via email on helen.miller@fifehg.org.uk



SOME OF OUR LUCKY WINNERS RECEIVING THEIR PRIZES

Our annual garden competition aims to reward tenants who, by taking pride in their garden, make a real difference to the communities they live in, and this year's event was hailed another blooming success with additional categories, including a children's award, attracting more entrants than ever.

Congratulations to all of the winners in, what was once again, a very hard fought competition showcasing some incredibly impressive gardens. In fact, the standard of entries was so high that our judges even had to introduce three new categories – Inspirational Landscape, Kitchen Garden and a Special Improvement Award (and still ended up having to award some first and second places).

A huge thank you goes out to everyone who took part, as well as our two judges, keen gardener and Resident VOICES Chair John Bell, and Fiona Ross, a horticultural expert from The Plant Market in Hillend. Both Fiona and John did a fantastic job in what proved a really difficult competition to judge, given just how impressive so many of the entries were.



Best Other Display

**Joint Winner – Annette Tullis
(Cameron Drive, Dysart)**

Annette loves gardening, saying 'It's very therapeutic'. She will be using the gardening vouchers she received to buy a selection of plants and shrubs which we're sure will make her garden look even more lovely next year.



Best Other Display

**Joint Winner – Lorna Paterson
(High Valleyfield)**

Lorna says she is 'Thrilled to bits', about her win. She enjoys doing her garden and admiring other people's and is always on the look-out for cuttings. Lorna's garden has been completely transformed in the past year and is looking better than ever.



Best Horticultural Garden

**First Place – Robert Cowan
(Oakvale Road, Methil)**

Robert entered the competition for the first time this year and was delighted to discover he had won first place in this category. He finds gardening therapeutic, enjoying helping his family and elderly neighbours to take care of their gardens too, and is even hoping that he may be able to turn his hobby into a job.

Our thanks also to the following businesses who kindly donated prizes for the winners and helped to make this event possible; your support is much appreciated:

- The Plant Market / Growforth
- Joe's Gardening Services
- Panda Print
- Grahams Hygiene Services
- Pankhurst Decorators
- WRB Gas
- Rogerson's Plumbers
- RB Grant
- Continental Landscapes Scotland
- Tenants' Information Service (TIS)

Other Gardening Success Story



Improvement Award

**Josephine Curry
(Dunearn Drive, Kirkcaldy)**

Josephine has spent many hours trimming back bushes and shrubs and working hard to develop her garden even further since receiving a recognition certificate in last year's competition. She plans to use her gardening vouchers to buy a pear tree.



Best Children's Display

Julia, Sarah, Mahrienne, Evie and Mason (Methil Brae, Methil)

Well done to the young green-fingered gardeners of Methil Brae. All of the children got stuck right into the competition, growing their own herbs, vegetables and wildflowers and building bug hotels. The children were delighted with their prizes and will be using some of their vouchers to buy more items for the garden.

Once again, we would like to thank everyone who participated and encourage any gardening enthusiasts out there to get involved next year.



Best Communal Garden

First Place

Mr and Mrs Mitchell (Cairnwell Place, Kirkcaldy)

Mr and Mrs Mitchell were delighted to complete a hat-trick of wins in this category with Mr Mitchell crediting his wife Cheryl for the work in the front garden and saying 'Thanks very much for giving us this award again, it's very special having three'.

STERLING SILVER AWARD

We are delighted to announce that we have successfully achieved the prestigious Investors in People (IIP) Silver Accreditation.

This award represents a true commitment to employees' training and development and demonstrates a solid foundation of good practice, recognising not only those who are amongst the best in the world when it comes to people management but also the people and teams within the organisation who make a difference every day.

Commenting on the award Chief Executive, Nicki Donaldson, said, 'Having first secured IIP status in 2003 we have always had an ambition to achieve a

higher award and are absolutely delighted to have now done so.'

'We have been on quite a journey over the past few years and I would like to highlight the commitment of our colleagues in achieving this accreditation, which will also have a positive impact for our tenants and other customers.'

Peter Russian, Chief Executive of Remarkable, the home for Investors in People in Scotland, said 'This is a fantastic achievement for Fife Housing Group. I would like to congratulate the organisation and its people on their commitment to continuous improvement and I hope that more organisations in the area will be encouraged to sharpen their competitive edge by choosing to work with us.'



COULD YOU HELP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

We have recently seen an increase in interest from residents who are keen to help make a difference in their community and influence decisions which could improve where they live. This desire to become a voice for their community has resulted in a number of different groups coming together to discuss setting up their own residents' association.

A residents' association is a group of people living in an area, street or block who have come together to tackle issues of common concern in relation to their housing, community and general environment. It is often the case that concerns you may have about the area in which you live, are shared by your neighbours and a residents' association is a great platform for addressing these issues collectively.

We are particularly delighted with the success of the newly formed Lumphinnans Tenants' and Residents' Association, who now meet regularly at Lumphinnans Bowling Club. The committee have a real enthusiasm for what can and should be done to boost the Lumphinnans area and are always keen to welcome new members to the group.

Communities within both Dunfermline and High Valleyfield have also indicated that they would like to have a greater say in how their neighbourhood is managed. Unfortunately, the number of attendees at these initial meetings were disappointing, however, it is hoped that with greater awareness, both of these areas will also achieve success in forming their new groups.

This is your opportunity to have a say in what happens in your community. Whether you and your neighbours are keen to start up your own residents' association or become involved in an existing one, our Engagement Officer, Helen Miller will be happy to answer any questions and support you through the process. If you would like any more information on how you could get involved, please do not hesitate to contact her on 01383 608127 or via email on helen.miller@fifehg.org.uk.



CRACKING DOWN ON CANNABIS



Whilst instances of domestic cannabis farms remain relatively rare these can have a huge impact on a community and are something that Fife Housing Group and Police Scotland take extremely seriously. If you suspect that a neighbour or local resident is growing cannabis you should **ALWAYS** phone the Police on 101 or Fife Housing Group on 08000 274 007 and **never** take your own action.

There are signs that you can look out for and these are useful to remember:

1. Strong, sickly smells

It may sound obvious, but you would be easily able to smell the drug.

2. Windows constantly covered

Having windows blocked up with panelling or sheeting may suggest there's something the occupants don't want anyone to see.

3. Excessive security

Growers live in constant fear that their farms will be discovered by police, landlords or rival drug dealers. If there are padlocks on the gates, massive grilles and double or triple locks on the doors, that might raise questions – especially if the street is relatively safe.

4. High levels of condensation

From the outside, a neighbour might spot condensation on the windows, even when it's not winter. This can come from the intense heat created by growing equipment within the property.

5. Lots of visitors - and at unsociable hours

There is nothing wrong with a neighbour being popular and having lots of visitors or friends and family 'round, but, it's different if unfamiliar faces are regularly turning up at all hours, often for very short periods of time.

6. What happens when it snows?

Cannabis factories produce a lot of heat, which can cause tell-tale signs, especially in winter. When it snows, the roofs of properties used as cannabis farms can be obvious as the snow melts very quickly; it may be the only house on the street without a snow-covered roof.

7. Constant buzz of ventilation

If you live in a block of flats or you may hear the constant noise of a fan, at all times of the day and night.

8. Excessive amounts of soil/compost bags lying around the property

Your neighbour might have a very small garden which would be unlikely to require 10 bags of compost.

Again, if you suspect that a neighbour or local resident is growing or dealing cannabis, please phone Police Scotland on 101 or Fife Housing Group on 08000 274 007 so we can investigate and take action if necessary.



COMING TOGETHER FOR A COMMON GOAL

In June, Resident VOICES Chair John Bell and our Engagement Assistant, Melissa McManus, attend the Tenants' Information Service (TIS) Annual Conference, focusing this year on 'Health, Wealth and Housing' and showcasing good practice in tenant participation.

The conference offered delegates access to new knowledge, skills and experience and provides an invaluable opportunity to network with other tenant champions, sharing both experiences and best practice. In fact, John and Melissa met with two of their counterparts from Kingdom Housing's scrutiny group at the event and are now looking forward to opportunities for working together on training and other initiatives.

RESIDENT VOICES ELECT NEW VICE CHAIR

The Resident VOICES Vice Chair position has been empty since the former incumbent, John Bell, stepped up to become Chair last year but an election in May saw Adeline Rose unanimously elected to fill this role.

Here she chats to us about her background and hopes for the future of the group...

What made you decide to join Resident VOICES?

I was going through a very difficult time when I was invited along to an upcoming Community Café. I really enjoyed this event and at the time, I really needed something to do which would keep my brain occupied. Being encouraged to join the Resident VOICES was like a lifeline for me and becoming involved in this has given me back my confidence, which I was struggling with at the time.

What made you consider becoming the Vice Chair?

Having been heavily involved in community initiatives in the past, as well as working as a local councillor in Wales for several years and being trustee for a local community association, I felt that the skills and experience I had gained could be beneficial to the group in this role.

What would you like to see Resident VOICES achieve in the future?

I would like to see the group press forward with their

drive to help deliver service improvements for the benefit of all residents and also to see us become more independent, with the help of a specialist consultant.



What have you most enjoyed about your involvement with the group?

I have enjoyed every minute of working with Resident VOICES; meeting new people from all walks of life, and listening to everyone's opinions on how we can help to better services.

What would you say to other people who might be interested in joining?

Joining the group is a great opportunity to improve your knowledge of housing, meet new people and boost your self confidence. I would encourage anyone who has some spare time to get in touch and try it out as I would really love to see people of all ages, from different backgrounds and minority groups get involved so that the group can be as diverse as the communities it works to improve.

If you would like to find out more about Resident VOICES, or how to get involved, please contact our Engagement Assistant, Melissa McManus, on 01383 608105, or via email at melissa.mcmanus@fifehg.org.uk

MAKING MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS

A medical adaptation is usually a permanent change which is made to your home to make it easier for you to live there.

If you believe you, or someone you know, may benefit from a medical adaptation then the first thing you should do is request an Occupational Therapist assessment through the social work contact centre, who will make arrangements for you to be assessed in your home.

If the Occupational Therapist determines that any adjustments are required, they will send a referral form with their recommendations to your landlord.

Each year, the Scottish Government allocates a budget to Local Authorities and Housing Associations to enable adaptations to be carried out where the tenant has been assessed as requiring adjustments.

Unfortunately, this budget is not usually sufficient to cover

all of the requests submitted by Occupational Therapists, meaning that it is often exhausted very early in the financial year.

On receipt of an occupational therapy referral, we consider whether there is sufficient budget to carry out the work before writing to the tenant and Occupational Therapist confirming whether the work will be proceeding immediately or if it has to be put on hold.

If the work is to proceed, we will pass the tenant's contact details to the contractor so that they can arrange a suitable time to carry out the work. If not, the referral will be retained by us until such time as funding becomes available.

If you wish to enquire about receiving a medical adaptation you can contact social work directly on 03451 55 15 03 or via fifedirect.org.uk.

FOCUS ON FACTORING

Fife Housing Group have offered a factoring service since 1997, having an obligation to provide factoring services to neighbouring owners where we are named within the Title Deeds as a managing burden/factor.

As part of our restructure in 2015/16, we recognised the need for a more focussed approach to this part of our business, creating a specific Factoring Officer role which was filled by Heather McIlroy.

Heather has been in this position for just over two years now and, supported by the rest of the Housing team, has made significant progress in developing the factoring service, which we offer to 150 owner occupiers, to include procurement, debt recovery and property inspections.

Recently, Heather successfully completed the 'Foundation in Factoring' qualification as part a new accredited programme provided by SHARE (Scottish Housing Associations' Resources for Education).

Completing this qualification has helped Heather to identify gaps in the service that Fife Housing Group provide to tenants and owners and, as a result, we will shortly be reviewing key aspects of our factoring provision to ensure that our customers are provided with the best possible service.

Following her success in the final examination, Heather has also become an Associate Member of the Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM).

The knowledge, expertise and skills Heather has obtained from undertaking such further professional development, and the associated professional membership, are integral to the delivery of a customer-centric service which supports our aims as we strive to provide value for money with a strong emphasis on performance, stakeholder engagement, taking responsibility and operating an efficient and effective organisation.



What a factor does:

- Organises common insurance for the building.
- Arranges stair cleaning and gardening.
- Organises scheme meetings.
- Carries out periodic inspections.
- Obtains quotes, hires contractors and arranges for repairs to be carried out.
- Deals with owner complaints.
- Collects payments from all the owners of a property for works carried out in jointly owned areas and chases any owners who fail to pay these bills.

How might factoring affect me?

Essentially our factoring service means that we manage common repairs and maintenance on behalf of owners, where there is a mix of tenants and owners in a block, and are required to meet certain standards when dealing with these.

As part of this there is a delegated amount of money, specified in each owner's title deeds, which can be spent on repairs. If this sum is not specified then the Tenement Scotland Act 2004 decides the level of spend allowed, however, any improvement works require 100% approval from all owners within a block.

If works exceed the delegated amount the factor is required to obtain a majority vote from all owners. If all owners fail to agree then we can only carry out emergency repairs - this is why your block may only receive a minimum repairs service.



We hope that everyone affected by the full roll-out of Universal Credit at the end of this year is fully prepared for the changes, however, if you are unsure where you stand, please contact our office or your housing officer directly and we will provide all of the advice and assistance that we can.

The nights are also getting longer and the colder weather is setting in so, if you feel you are starting to struggle with paying for gas or electricity please do speak to us - there is plenty of support out there and we can help you to get it.

Oakley and Blairhall

The estate walkabout here on 18 July highlighted some environmental issues including potholes, uneven slabs on paths and overgrown trees in the park areas - these have now been reported to Fife Council for attention, however, the area in general is maintained to a high standard by owners and tenants.

Our planned maintenance programme has also seen some of our tenants in Oakley and Blairhall having new kitchens fitted recently.

Levenmouth

Previous estate walkabouts in Methil have been successful in bringing the Safer Communities Team, Councillors, owners and tenants together to raise and resolve local estate issues, however, greater tenant involvement is essential to continue to make these worthwhile. The next walkabout for Methil will be on Tuesday 5 December so please consider coming along if you live in the area.

In relation to this there has been a massive increase in the amount of untidy or uncut gardens in our Methil properties. We would like to take this opportunity to remind all tenants that, where you have a garden, you are responsible for its upkeep and tidiness. If you are struggling to maintain your garden please contact

your housing officer, Greg Turner to discuss how best to remedy the situation.

We would also like to remind all tenants that you must not drive over grassed areas to park nearer to your property. This not only churns up the grass but is dangerous to pedestrians and children using the area for its designated purpose.

Meanwhile, we are still looking to set up a residents' group in the Ivy Grove and Main Street area of Methilhill. Should you wish to get involved with this, or be interested in setting up a similar group elsewhere, please do contact Greg or a member of our Engagement team directly.

Lumphinnans

The geo-thermal heating has now been replaced by gas in our properties at Ochilview. In total 18 homes have benefited from this change and, although initially there was a time delay in getting a gas supply installed into the area, due to issues beyond our control, the process to install the heating systems themselves was problem-free and we have received very positive feedback from tenants.

Lumphinnans will also be included in the external painting contract commencing early October and now benefits from a resurrected residents' group as well.

Two bin stores were recently demolished in Hilton View due to repeated misuse of the area.





Dunfermline, Rosyth and Camdean

The condition of some of our tenants' gardens over the summer period has raised concerns and we would like to remind you of the importance of maintaining any outdoor space you are responsible for. An untidy garden will attract complaints, vermin and the attention of your housing officer – please give consideration to your neighbours and other residents of the street and think of the impact your mess has on the overall feel of the street. If you are struggling to maintain your garden please contact us to discuss how best to remedy the situation.

Over the summer holiday period there has been a reduction in reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in a number of areas in both Dunfermline and Rosyth and we would like to thank everyone for their good neighbourliness, hard work and vigilance. There is no room for complacency, however, and as always, please telephone, text or email us with any concerns.

We are actively engaging with a newly formed residents' group in Dunfermline, called 'BASICSIM TRA', which currently covers Bute Crescent, Allan Crescent (partial), Shields Road, Islay Road, Clunie Road, Skye Road, Iona Road and MacBeth Road. Issues raised include: parking, lighting, and rubbish and the group are issuing information to residents in the areas concerned with the hope that by working together we will be able to alleviate these problems.

Housing officer, William Earnshaw, will be conducting our next estate walkabout in the Leishman Road area of Abbeyview on 12 December at 1.00pm, please contact him directly should you wish to attend.

We have recently had some success in Rosyth, addressing overgrown trees and bushes with the help of tenants. One garden in particular is unrecognisable from our first visit and we are delighted that the tenant is now able to enjoy spending time in her garden with her grandchildren.

We are also hopeful that Fife Council will re-address the area of disused land to the rear of Holborn Place as we would be keen to see this put to much better use.

Councillor Sam Steele recently accompanied us on the first of our three scheduled Camdean area walkabouts, with the main issue identified being that of overgrown trees.

Despite some tenants advising that they would attend, unfortunately none were present and housing officer for the area, Stephanie McCulloch, is really keen to see some resident involvement at her next Camdean walkabout on 26 October (covering Primrose Lane, Primrose Avenue, Daniel Place, Booth Avenue and Brankholm Crescent) – please contact Stephanie directly if you would be interested in coming along.



High Valleyfield and Culross

Fife Fire and Rescue carried out a leaflet drop and spoke to residents in Pentland Terrace recently. The purpose of the visit was to highlight fire safety in the blocks and encourage residents not to store rubbish or items in the close - this includes bins. There are also some instances of tenants not recycling properly and bins being left on the roadside instead of being

returned to the rear of the properties. Please ensure that you only put the correct items in the bins provided and remove the bins from the front of the block once they have been emptied.

Some residents in High Valleyfield have recently had new bathrooms installed as part of our planned maintenance programme and others are due to have new gas heating fitted shortly.



Kirkcaldy and Dysart

Housing officer, Karen Gilruth, has recently arranged for the installation of barriers at Roomlin Gardens in Kirkcaldy to try and prevent damage to landscaped areas and, more importantly, deal with the safety concerns voiced by local residents.

In the wake of the Grenfell tragedy, we would like to thank all tenants who have made the effort to ensure that their stairwells are kept clear from fire hazards, however, there are still closes where further action is required.

Please ensure that you read the letters you received regarding fire safety and the leaflets which are situated in the communal areas and be aware that YOU MUST NOT store any household items or rubbish, including bags, in the stairwell. The dumping of any rubbish in any communal areas is a serious breach of your tenancy agreement and any residents found responsible for this act will be recharged if they refuse to remove and dispose of these items themselves. If you do have items which require an uplift, please contact Environmental Services on 03451 55 11 22 - Fife Council charge £15 for this service.

We would also like to remind you that it is a breach of your tenancy agreement not to maintain any garden areas for which you are responsible. If you have noticed any issues with things like this in your community then why not come along to one of our estate walkabouts where you will have the opportunity to discuss any problems like this with representatives from Fife Housing Group and other agencies.



Lochgelly

A recent estate walkabout highlighted minimal issues in the area, however, the area is scheduled to benefit from the external painting contract commencing on 30 October for a 15-day period. The team is also going to make the most of having the scaffolding in place by taking the opportunity to clear all the gutters in Union, Russell and Grainger Streets.



Crombie

The new build properties here are coming along really well and some of them may even be ready for let before Christmas! Consisting of 19 new homes, which will be a mixture of two and three bedroom houses, this development will deliver much needed affordable housing in this popular village.





Kennoway

In Leven Road, Kennoway, work will be starting shortly to improve the residents' communal bin area. This will prevent Fife Council from being unable to collect bins and will mean an end to inconsiderate parking

by some residents. Hopefully this will go some way to improve the look of the area, and we would like to thank those residents who have been going above and beyond to make sure the area is kept clean and tidy when overflowing bins have been an issue.

Hill of Beath

A rather soggy estate walkabout in June saw an improvement to trees and bushes in the area.

Housing officer for the area, Audrey Cameron is also currently in talks with Fife Council regarding the demolition of some bin stores in the area and their replacement with communal large bins – watch this space for further information...



Housing Officer	Contact Details
Angie Munton	t: 07811 439939 e: angie.munton@fifehg.org.uk
Audrey Cameron	t: 07747 895965 e: audrey.cameron@fifehg.org.uk
Gavin Waddell	t: 07771 776679 e: gavin.waddell@fifehg.org.uk
Greg Turner	t: 07811 393822 e: greg.turner@fifehg.org.uk
Karen Gilruth	t: 07825 855224 e: karen.gilruth@fifehg.org.uk
Lynn Mather	t: 07973 827628 e: lynn.mather@fifehg.org.uk
Stephanie McCulloch	t: 07811 439905 e: stephanie.mcculloch@fifehg.org.uk
William Earnshaw	t: 07525 260447 e: william.earnshaw@fifehg.org.uk

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH YOUR GARDEN

We would like to take this opportunity to remind tenants with private gardens that, as per your tenancy agreement, you have full responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of these, as well as that of any trees situated within the boundaries of your property. As such, you are expected to ensure that they are cut regularly in order to limit their growth and ensure they do not become overgrown, and should be aware that we will only provide assistance with this in exceptional circumstances.

If, for any reason, you are unsure exactly where your garden boundary lies then please contact us directly and we will arrange for a Maintenance Officer to visit and confirm on site.

Although it is our responsibility to maintain common boundary fences, it is up to you, the tenant, to maintain and replace any dividing fences between your garden and any neighbouring gardens.

If there is not currently any fencing around your garden then it is intended to remain open, as per the planning permission received when the houses were built. Should you wish to erect a fence then you must contact us to request an alterations form, complete and return this, and then await a decision as to whether it is approved or not. Please note that if approval is granted then any new fencing installed will have to meet our specifications.



SIMPLE CHORIZO AND BEAN STEW

(Recipe from the BBC's 'Eat well for less' collection)

Spice up your stew with chorizo and stir in some cannellini beans for a hearty dinner on a budget – perfect comfort food as the cold nights start to creep in.



Ingredients

- Splash of rapeseed oil
- 110g/4oz cooked chorizo, cut into pieces, skin peeled off
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 600g/1lb 5oz tinned cannellini beans in water, drained
- Handful of fresh flatleaf parsley, roughly chopped
- Crusty bread, to serve
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large lidded saucepan over a medium-low heat. Add the chorizo and cook until the oil starts to run from the chorizo.
2. Add the onion and garlic and cover with the lid. Cook, stirring from time to time, until soft.
3. Add the tomatoes and beans, stir well and cover, simmer for 10 minutes. Add a little water if the stew is too thick.
4. Add the parsley, season to taste with salt and pepper and stir well.
5. Serve in soup bowls, with crusty bread.

- Prep
Less than 30mins
- Cook
10 to 30mins
- Serves
2

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AUTUMN WORDSEARCH

Enter our AUTUMN competition and you could WIN a £25 ASDA voucher .

To enter: Complete the wordsearch, cut along the dotted line and send your entry to the address below by 30th November 2017

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| BLUSTERY | CRACKLING | FROSTY |
| BREEZY | CRISP | ORANGE |
| BROWN | CRUNCHY | PUMPKIN |
| CHILLY | FIRESIDE | RUSTLING |
| COZY | FOGGY | YELLOW |

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ TEL: _____



Wordsearch winner

Thanks to everyone who entered our spring competition and congratulations to our lucky winner, Leonie Dunn of Dunfermline, who received a £25 Asda gift voucher and will be able to treat herself to something nice next time she's in store.



Contact us

Freephone: 08000 274 007

Gas emergencies: 0800 281 856

Text: 0771 77 3666 Email: info@fifehg.org.uk

Our opening hours are:

Monday to Thursday 8:30am - 5:00pm

Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

Fife Housing Group

7 Pitreavie Court, Pitreavie Business Park,
Dunfermline, KY11 8UU

at home with...



fifehg.org.uk