

at home with...

COVID-19

LATEST CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

COPING DURING CORONAVIRUS

The health and safety of our tenants, other customers, contractors and colleagues is paramount during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and we are committed to following the guidance issued by the Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland.

We are endeavouring to continue delivering our services under the current restrictions, whilst taking all possible precautions to safeguard our tenants, colleagues, contractors and others against the risk of infection and, to this end, ask that you advise us in advance if we are due to visit your home and you are self-isolating or have been diagnosed with Coronavirus.

Our office is still closed to the public but, having invested in technology which allows for home working, our colleagues remain fully contactable on **08000 274 007** or via **info@fifehg.org.uk**.

Please visit [gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support](https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support) to find out more.

What can you do if you are struggling because of Coronavirus?

We understand that this is a difficult time for many people but there is help available.

The UK Government has launched an online service where you can find support and advice if you are concerned about any of the following:

- Feeling unsafe
- Going into work
- Paying bills
- Being made redundant or unemployed
- Getting food
- Having somewhere to live
- Mental health and wellbeing

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NEW TEXT NUMBER

Our text number has changed to 07520 632 740 - please update your contacts accordingly.

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 might struggle to read information from us, did you know that we can arrange to have it translated for them?

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.

Festive Hours



Thursday 24 December: 8.30am – 5.00pm

Friday 25 December: Closed

Monday 28 December: Closed

Tuesday 29 December: Closed

Wednesday 30 December: Closed

Thursday 31 December: Closed

Friday 1 January: Closed

Monday 4 January: Closed

Tuesday 5 January: Closed

Wednesday 6 January: 8.30am – 5.00pm

08000 274 007

info@fifehg.org.uk

fifehg.org.uk

REPORTING EMERGENCIES

Please note that you can continue to report emergencies throughout the festive period by calling **08000 274 007**.

For gas central heating emergencies please call the contractor for your area directly:

East Fife (Hill of Beath to Ceres) – Kingdom Gas – 0800 389 9463

West Fife (Dunfermline to High Valleyfield) – City Technical – 0333 202 0708

COULD YOU BE ELIGIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE?

Every year hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of benefits go unclaimed so it's important to ensure that you're receiving everything you are entitled to.

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.

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

At the start of the year, Fife Housing Group and Kingdom Housing Association hosted the East of Scotland Scrutiny Network Meeting, an event organised by the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS), where tenants from 16 different Housing Associations and Local Authorities met to discuss the ways they hold their landlords to account.

Following presentations made by Tony Kelly from TPAS, Drew Nisbet from Fife Housing Group and Max Scotto from Kingdom Housing Association, covering the purpose and value of scrutiny, lively discussions took place about the range of work groups had been undertaking with their landlords, highlighting the challenges faced and the outcomes achieved.

Having shared lots of worthwhile information and learning, participants left invigorated with a new network of contacts and a desire to put the various nuggets of information that they took from the day to good use, helping to further improve services for tenants throughout the East of Scotland.



COPING DURING CORONAVIRUS CONTINUED...

The Scottish Government is also running a 'Clear Your Head' campaign, which highlights the things people can do to look after themselves during the Coronavirus outbreak. Find practical tips on how to stay positive and feel better at clearyourhead.scot



Alternatively, if you need to talk to someone about any of the issues highlighted above you can contact the **Fife COVID Community Helpline** on **0800 952 0330** or call one of the agencies listed below:

PERSONAL SAFETY

Fife Women's Aid - 0808 802 5555

FearFree (Men and LGBT+ communities) - 0131 624 7270

Adult Protection - 01383 602200

MONEY

Citizens Advice and Rights Fife - 0345 1400 094

Universal Credit Line - 0345 600 4272

Scottish Welfare Fund - 0300 555 0265

FOOD

Local foodbanks – contact your Housing Officer for a referral – 08000 274 007

EATS Rosyth – 07782 848705

Abbeyview Community Council - 07729 356926

HOUSING

Homeless Emergencies - 0800 028 6231

Housing Information/Advice - 03451 55 00 33

Frontline Fife (homelessness service) - 01592 800430

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

NHS Inform - 0800 22 44 88

Samaritans - 116 123

Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87

If you or a family member/friend are experiencing issues, please do not suffer in silence. Both we and the agencies above are here to help and taking the first step of picking up the phone to talk to someone could make all of the difference.

NOMINATE YOUR COVID COMMUNITY CHAMPION

It goes without saying that the entire country will long remember the NHS staff and other key workers whose personal sacrifices helped keep our country running when the COVID crisis struck.

We know, however, that these are not the only heroes who have gone above and beyond to help others during this difficult time and we want to recognise the community champions whose acts of kindness have really made a difference to those around them.

To ensure that these good deeds don't go unnoticed, we've launched our COVID Community Champion Awards, searching for local residents who have selflessly given up their own time to improve the lives of others.

As Director of Housing, Su Bramley, explains 'We are acutely aware of how challenging this year has been for the people of Fife but, in these troubled times, we have also seen many examples of great care, compassion and community spirit and we wanted to take a moment to celebrate the special people who, even when dealing with uncertainty and adversity themselves, have gone out of their way to brighten the lives of others'.

Our COVID Community Champions will receive a luxury food hamper to thank them for their efforts so, if there's a star in your community whose hard work deserves some recognition, why not nominate them via our website (fifehg.org.uk) or by completing the form below and returning it to us at 7 Pitreavie Court, Pitreavie Business Park, Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 8UU.



The closing date for entries is **12 noon on Monday 14 December**, and following the decision of our judging panel, the winners will be announced **later that week**.

Your details		Who would you like to nominate as your COVID Community Champion?	
Name	<input type="text"/>	Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	Address (if known)	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>	Phone (if known)	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>	Email (if known)	<input type="text"/>

Please tell us why you are nominating this person and what they have done to help your community since the COVID-19 outbreak began - the more details you can share the better...

(please continue on a separate sheet if required)

TEAM NEWS

Welcome

We are pleased to introduce the newest members of our Operations Team:

Joiners - David Birrell, Ryan Pentland, Ronan Turpie and Paul Baron
Painter and Decorator – John Duthie
Skilled Labourer – Graeme Horsburgh

Additionally, we have a new Apprentice Painter and Decorator, Owen Fernie, who started a four-year apprenticeship with us at the beginning of October.

We are also delighted to welcome Paula Skelton and Linda Irvine, who join us as Human Resources Manager and Finance Assistant respectively.

Permission for pets

Do you have pets in your household?

If you do, then you need to let us know about them.

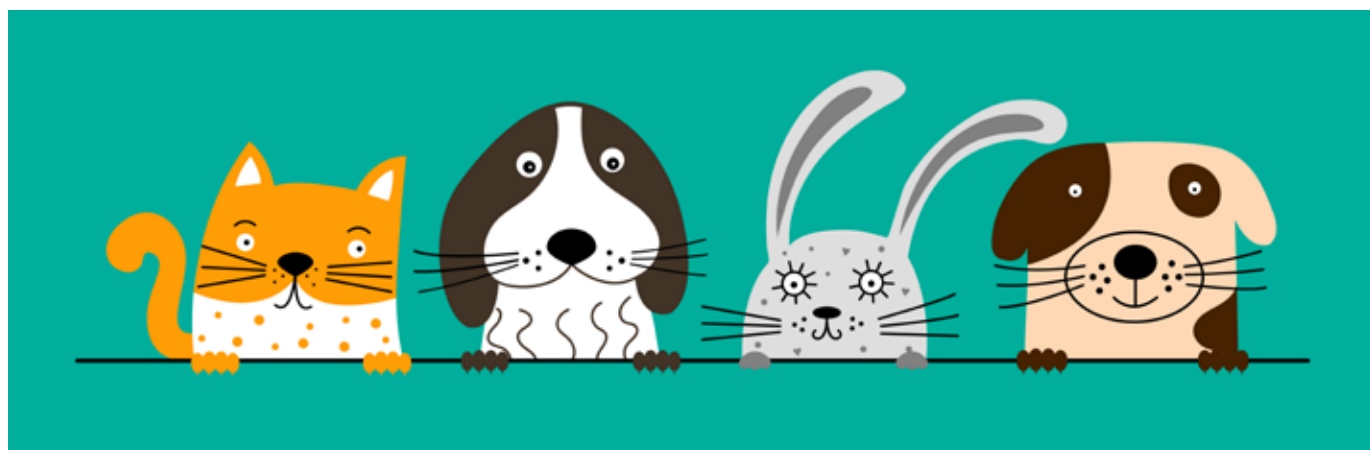
With the introduction of our new Pet Policy and the implementation of our new housing management system, we need to ensure that you have been provided with the required permission to keep a pet within your home.

If you haven't already received written confirmation that this permission has been granted, please email

the details of each pet, confirming the type, breed, age, sex and whether they have been microchipped, to info@fifehg.org.uk.

If you do not have access to email then please contact us by phone or letter so we can arrange to have the details logged against your household and the necessary permissions issued.

If you are unsure of what you need to do please contact your housing officer to discuss your pet situation further.



CONSIDERING COMPLAINTS

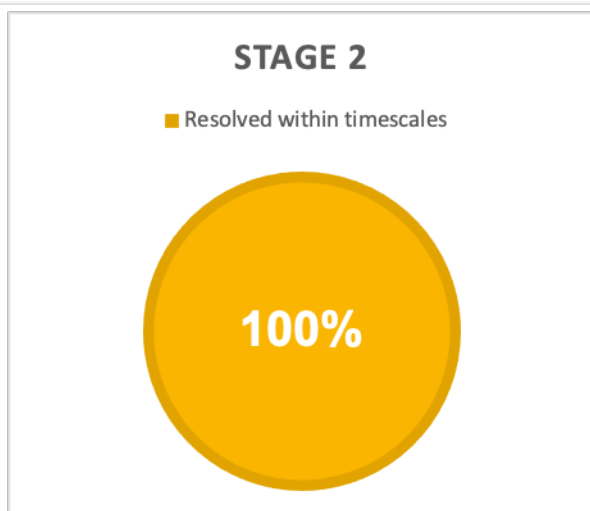
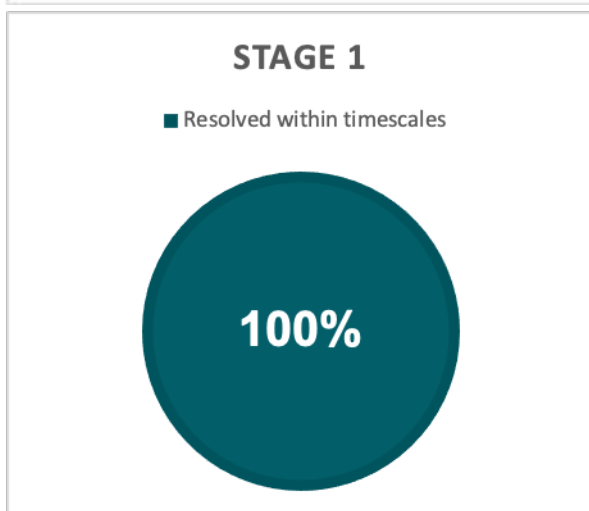
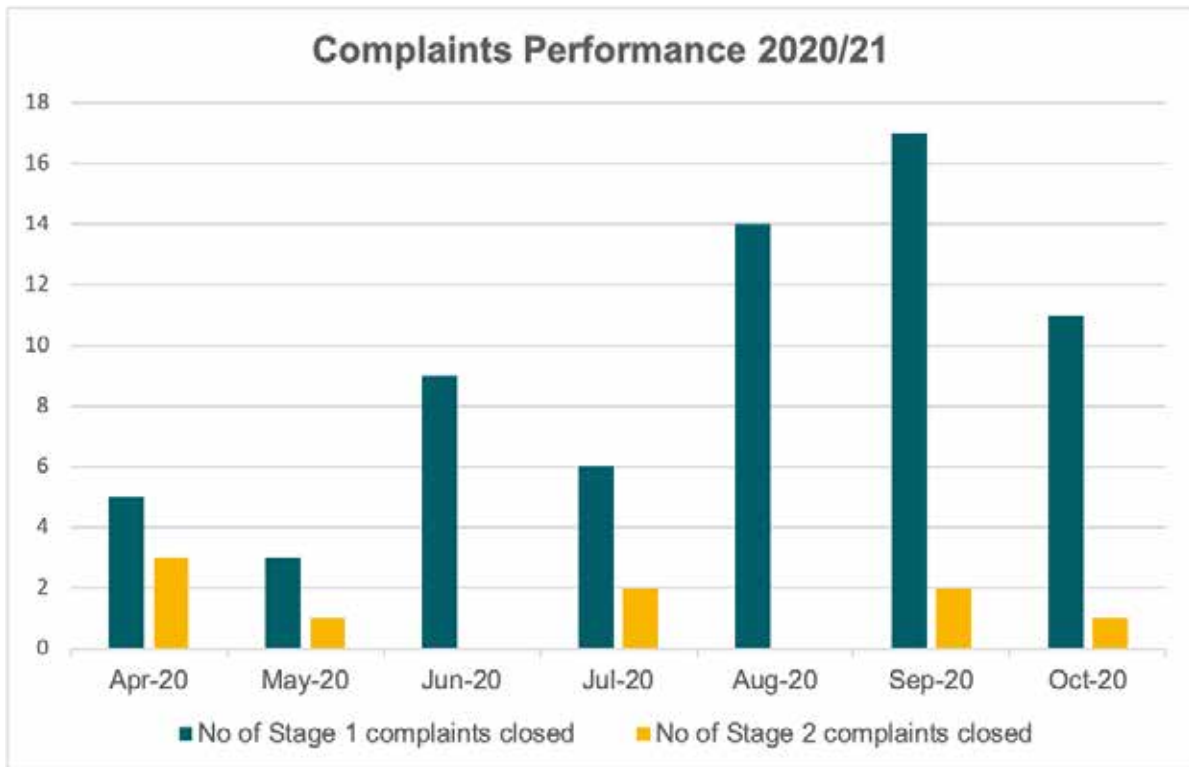
2020 has been like no other year but, whilst the global pandemic has forced us to consider alternative ways of working, we are endeavouring to maintain a high level of service when dealing with complaints and striving to meet the timescales set out in our Complaints Handling Policy.

Our focus on learning from complaints is also ongoing, helping us to continue improving our services and to ensure that previous mistakes are less likely to be repeated in the future. Below is an example of a recent complaint which resulted in a change to the way we communicate our actions prior to our planned roof replacements taking place:

It was brought to our attention that neighbours with properties adjacent to our tenants were unaware that any roofing works were due to take place and, more

specifically, that in order to allow safe working at this height, it is often necessary to erect scaffolding which crosses into the boundary of adjoining gardens.

Following this complaint, our notification procedure has been updated so that private owners who will be affected by our planned roof replacements in this manner are contacted by our contractors prior to works commencing. A visit by scaffolders and, where possible, our Clerk of Works also takes place to manage everyone's expectations and ensure that all parties are comfortable with the arrangements.



Money Matters

Winter Warm Home discount schemes now open

If you are on a low income or receiving benefits, you may be eligible to apply for up to **£140** off your electricity or gas bill (if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity) between September 2020 and March 2021. The discount will not affect your cold weather payment or winter fuel payment, however, not all energy suppliers participate in this scheme so please check directly with your provider.



Further information and eligibility criteria can be found at gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

Check if you could be entitled to the new Scottish Child Payment

The new £10 Scottish Child Payment is now open for applications, with payments to start from the end of February 2021.

Families with children under six, who claim certain tax credits or benefits (including Universal Credit), could also be entitled to an additional **£10** per child, per week, to assist with living costs.



More information on how to apply can be found at gov.scot/policies/social-security/scottish-child-payment

Carers – check you're not missing out if you claim Universal Credit (UC)

Many carers claiming Universal Credit are missing out on the addition of the 'Carer Element' to their UC award - worth up to **£162.92** a month.

Where the claimant is a (non-paid) carer, looking after a severely disabled person or child for 35 hours or more a week, then the UC award should include the 'Carer Element', regardless of whether you are getting Carers Allowance or, if working, any earnings.

If you think this element may have been missed from your claim you should request a Mandatory Reconsideration on your UC journal, explaining your circumstances and giving the date from which you believe you became entitled.



Introduction to online banking



Online banking has become the norm for many people, but, not everyone is accustomed to using it and managing your money digitally can be daunting if you've never done it before.

With this in mind, Money Advice Scotland have set up MAS Online Bank – a free platform which allows users to learn about and practice carrying out online banking activities such as setting up a direct debit or standing order, paying a contact and checking their balance.

The platform has several different profiles, including a young professional, a family with children and a retired person, so users can practice completing the types of transactions that are most relevant to them, with support available from the Money Advice Scotland Financial Capability team whenever it is needed.

Try it out for yourself here - moneyadvicescotland.org.uk/Listing/Category/mas-online-bank

Have your say on...

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



Would you like the opportunity to tell us what you think about the services you receive from us?

We have commissioned an independent market research company, Research Resource, to carry out a customer satisfaction survey with the aim of finding out what you think about the home you live in, the services you receive from us and the opportunities that you have to get involved with what we do.

The survey will take place by telephone during December 2020 and January 2021.

If you receive a call from one of our researchers, please help us by taking part – it should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer their questions.

This is an ideal opportunity for you to have your say in how we do things now and to influence how we shape our services in the future



RESIDENT VOICES REVIEW – VIRTUAL AFTERNOON TEA

The pandemic has forced us all to consider alternative ways of communicating and engaging with family, friends and colleagues and the same is true for our Resident VOICES scrutiny panel.

Pre COVID-19, the group met once a month at our office, however, since March they have been unable to get together like this and instead have embraced the introduction of virtual Zoom meetings.

Most recently, we arranged for individual afternoon teas to be delivered to Resident VOICES members taking part



in a virtual consultation session as a 'thank you' for their continued commitment during these difficult times. The purpose of this meeting was to obtain the views of the group in connection with some of our customer-facing policies, giving them the opportunity to review existing processes and comment on whether they believed them to be fair, concise and user-friendly.

During the meeting, our Gas Safety Policy, Fire Safety Policy, Engagement Strategy and Income Maximisation Strategy were all reviewed with invaluable feedback received, allowing us to fully understand how these policies are interpreted by our tenants and to recommend amendments accordingly. All of the feedback provided during this meeting has now been referred to our leadership teams so that it can be considered and implemented as appropriate.

Consultation such as this is key to enabling us to ensure our policies and procedures are effective for both ourselves and our tenants. If this is something you would be keen to get involved with, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact Helen Miller on 01383 608127 or via helen.miller@ffehg.org.uk to obtain further information. Your views are crucial in helping us drive service improvement and it would be fantastic to have more tenants involved in this process.

STRUGGLING TO PAY YOUR BILLS IN THE BUILD-UP TO CHRISTMAS? PLEASE READ ON...

We are acutely aware that the current COVID-19 restrictions are causing high levels of stress and anxiety amongst some of our tenants, especially those who have seen their income significantly reduced or are facing unemployment for the first time.

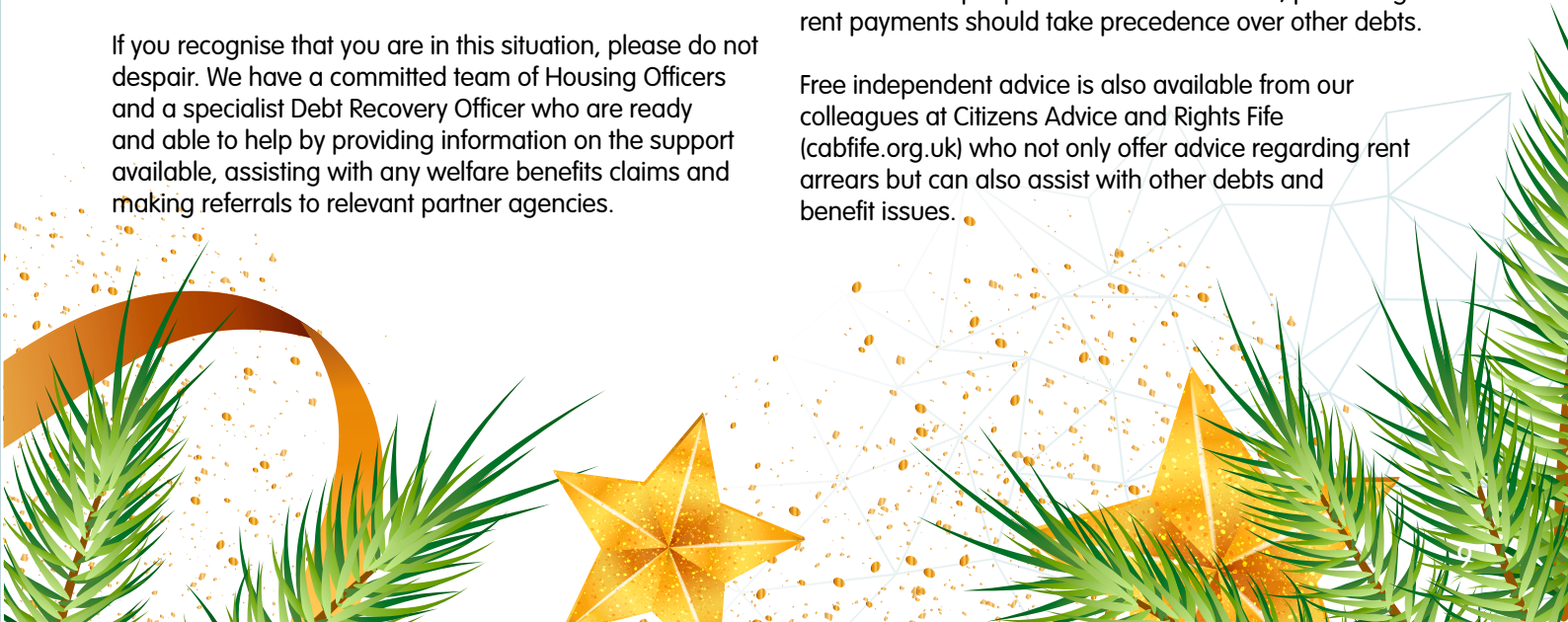
We are also conscious that in some cases, tenants may be even more worried about paying their rent as financial pressures increase in the build-up to Christmas and often don't know where to turn for help.

If you recognise that you are in this situation, please do not despair. We have a committed team of Housing Officers and a specialist Debt Recovery Officer who are ready and able to help by providing information on the support available, assisting with any welfare benefits claims and making referrals to relevant partner agencies.

In particular, we want to ensure that tenants know they can talk to us about any problems they may be facing rather than simply hoping that the problem will go away. If you fall behind with your rent, simply talking to our one of our team and putting an affordable repayment plan in place can take a huge weight off your shoulders and help to reduce any stress you may be feeling.

While we fully understand the impact of COVID-19 and how it has affected peoples' lives and livelihoods, prioritising rent payments should take precedence over other debts.

Free independent advice is also available from our colleagues at Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (cabfife.org.uk) who not only offer advice regarding rent arrears but can also assist with other debts and benefit issues.



12 WAYS TO SAVE AT CHRISTMAS

With Christmas approaching fast the pressure to spend more than you can really afford could be even more of a concern for a lot of people this year, but, there are lots of ways to save some cash without sacrificing your enjoyment of the festive season.

1 BUDGET

Before you start planning, consider this: many list every wished for item, gifts for all, and a banquet meal, then only afterwards consider: 'How will I pay for it?' That's a recipe to be broke.

Instead, calculate your budget and ask: 'What can I afford to spend on Christmas?' Christmas is one day - don't ruin the whole of the next year for it.

A free Christmas money planner is available on the Money Advice Service website

moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/tools/christmas-money-planner

2 DRAW UP A CHRISTMAS LIST

Christmas shopping on impulse can be expensive. So, using your budget planner make an old-fashioned shopping list and stick to it.

3 GO D.I.Y

From making your own jewellery to homemade sweet treats, there are lots of presents that won't cost a lot of money.

4 CHECK FOR UNNECESSARY GIFTS

We're not talking about gifts for parents or to grandchildren, but the ever-widening glut of friends, extended family and colleagues.

There are free letters, emails and postcard templates available online if you are not comfortable speaking to the person.

5 MAKE USE OF LOYALTY CARDS

If you have points saved up on a store card, now is a good time to redeem them.

6 DO SOMETHING NICE GIFTS

Presents don't have to equate to lots of money. Offering to babysit for a friend once Coronavirus restrictions are relaxed could be the best present. So pledge to do something nice, not spend.

7 SHOP AROUND

If you have access to the internet shop around using price comparison to get the best deals.

8 CUT THE COST OF FOOD

Don't assume you will prefer higher brand foods. Taste with your tongue, not the label.

Brand shift, supermarket switch, compare prices and don't forget to price food from local butchers, fishmonger and markets.

Here are some top tips from Citizens' Advice and Rights Fife to help you avoid having a Christmas debt hangover this New Year:

9 BOOST YOUR CHRISTMAS BUDGET

Small sacrifices can help boost a Christmas budget – try out the Quick Cash Finder to see where you could save:

moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/tools/quick-cash-finder/calculators

10 EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Aged 11 - 26? You are entitled to discounts via Young Scot. Show your MyFife card as proof at participating retailers. If you have left school and require a replacement card, download an application via the website:

youngscot.org/the-young-scot-card/

11 GO ECO-FRIENDLY

Sending cards to loved ones and friends is a lovely Christmas tradition but it can be costly, mainly because of the amount of stamps you have to buy. This year, instead of having to buy 50 stamps, send e-cards. There are different designs to choose from and you're saving the environment at the same time!

12 DE-CLUTTER

Sell your old CD's, DVD's and clothes online to make some extra cash and free up some cupboard space!

Fife EU Settlement Partnership

PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS

All EEA and Swiss citizens are expected to apply for Settled Status as soon as possible.

Act now!

CENTREFOREQUALITIES.ORG.UK/EUREFERRAL

FIFE MIGRANTS FORUM 01592 642927
CITIZENS ADVICE HELPLINE 0800 916 9847

Fife Centre for Equalities



Citizens Advice & Rights Fife

Independent advice for our community



Fife COUNCIL

Fife Centre for Equalities is a Company Limited by Guarantee registered in Scotland No.536028 and a registered Scottish Charity No.SC046683

Planned maintenance update

We are now part-way through our planned maintenance programme for 2020/21 with the major component replacements ongoing as detailed below:

	Total planned	Completed (as at 31 August)
Kitchens	137	77
Bathrooms	104	59
Roof replacement	35	25
Full heating systems	3	3
Window replacements	2	3
Front/rear doors	6	3

During the recent pandemic, it has been important for us to be able to continue to deliver our investment in our stock and make valuable improvements to your homes. In order to do this, we have focussed much of our investment into work packages that can easily be undertaken safely, distanced and, where possible, in the outdoors.

Our roofing contract with MAC Roofing has been particularly valuable for us this year. To date, we have completed 25 new roofs to properties in Dunfermline and, in addition to this, many of these properties have also been fully re-rendered.



One of the larger projects undertaken by MAC Roofing this year was the re-roofing and re-rendering of the full block of flats in Ochilview, Lumphinnans. In total, 12 properties benefited from these works and the aesthetic improvement made to the area has been very well received.

We have been able to put the appropriate precautions in place to allow our in-house team to carry on installing new bathrooms and award-winning Magnet kitchens and they remain on-track to complete the full programme, which continues to be very well received by tenants.

'Everything was fantastic, you have got fantastic workies, cleaned up after themselves too' Kitchen replacement - Hilton View, Lumphinnans

In addition to the replacement of major components, we continue to undertake our cyclical compliance activities which include our gas servicing on an annual basis and our electrical installation reports on a five-year cycle. As part of our electrical inspection work, we have also been installing new smoke and heat detectors as it will soon be a legal requirement for all of our properties have an LD2 fire system installed. Work on this has primarily been

undertaken by our electrical contractor, RB Grant, with some being undertaken by our own, in-house electrical team.



With regards to external works, we have recently completed the renewal of boundary walls in two areas of our stock; Gallacher Place in Lumphinnans and Pentland Terrace in High Valleyfield. Both developments had walls

which were in an extremely poor and dangerous condition and these have now been replaced by our contractor, Smart Maintenance, making a significant improvement to the areas in question.



Over the last few months, we have also been working with our utilities partner to upgrade a number of the stair lighting supply meters in our closes to smart meters. This will allow readings to be taken remotely instead of requiring colleagues to visit the blocks and take readings every quarter, saving time and ensuring accurate billing. We are almost at the end of the programme but several of these meters are situated in ground floor flats and we will require access to these in order to make the change. If you live in one of these properties, we will contact you directly to make appropriate arrangements, however, please be assured that, although the communal meter is located in your flat, it is entirely separate from the one which provides your power.



Keep cosy this winter with these top tips

Everyone would like their home to be warm and cosy this winter, particularly as many of us will find ourselves staying in a lot more than usual, but, especially at the moment, expensive energy bills can make this difficult. There are, however, steps you can take to help reduce these costs and our partners at free and impartial energy and debt advice service Cosy Kingdom, have kindly shared their top ten tips to help you stay warm and save money this winter.

1. Use your heating controls

If you're going to use your heating this winter, you may as well do it properly. Turning your thermostat down by just one degree can save up to £85 a year and using all of your heating controls, can cut your fuel use by up to 42%, ensuring you're getting the benefit of your heating when you need it most.

2. Consider thermal curtains

It's tricky trying to keep the heat in, especially through our windows. Thermal curtains have a thick lining which act as an extra layer of insulation. Make sure you close them at dusk when the temperature starts to drop and roll up the bottoms onto the window to remove any draughty gap.

3. Do some draught-proofing

Draughts account for around 10% of heat loss in our homes. Consider using draught-excluders at your doors, you don't even need to buy one, you can easily make one out of old clothes, find out how on the Cosy Kingdom website - cosykingdom.org.uk

4. Switch your furniture around

Moving furniture out of the way of radiators is an easy way to help your home heat more efficiently as it lets the warm air circulate.

5. Shut doors between rooms

Shutting the doors (after you switch the lights off!) when you leave a room helps keep the heat where it's needed most.

6. Opt for a slow cooker

A slow cooker is an energy efficient alternative for cooking a meal, costing an average of 10p over the course of a day, as opposed to around 40p for an oven.

7. Look at your lighting

Lighting accounts for around 18% of the average electricity bill. If you haven't already, get some low-energy lighting (LEDs) which use 90% less energy and can last up to 25 years! Remember to switch lights off after you leave a room as well.

8. Wrap up warmly

Wrapping up in blankets and wearing multiple layers of clothing can help keep the chill off and save a bit on your heating costs too.

9. Apply for the Warm Home Discount

If you haven't done so already, check if your supplier offers the Warm Home Discount. This is a grant for £140 towards your electricity bill if you're on qualifying benefits or struggling with your heating costs.

10. Switch suppliers

You could save up-to £300 off your annual bill by moving to a different supplier. Remember to consider smaller suppliers too, as this is often where the competitive deals are – contact Cosy Kingdom for more details on how to do this.

Anyone in Fife can book a free and impartial home visit with a Cosy Kingdom energy advisor by visiting their website (cosykingdom.org.uk), calling 01592 858458, emailing info@cosykingdom.org.uk or texting 'COSY' then 'YOUR NAME' to 88440. You can also find them on Facebook and Twitter - @CosyKingdom.



Give a kid a coat

Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions mean that we have been unable to run our 'Give a kid a coat' campaign in its usual form this year, however, we are acutely aware that many families will be more in need of assistance than ever and that there are many others who would love to be able to help. In fact, our very own Engagement Officer, Helen Miller, has raised over £400 to purchase coats for less fortunate kids in East Fife by swimming 5k over a three-week period.



If you do have pre-loved coats you would like to donate, you may wish to consider joining us in supporting the fantastic new Children's Clothing Bank in Dunfermline by dropping them off at their 21 Chalmers Street premises instead – opening hours as detailed below:

Monday 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm
Wednesday 10.00 am – 3.00 pm
Thursday 12.30 pm – 2.30 pm
Friday 12.30 pm – 2.30 pm
Sunday 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Facebook: @ClothingBankDunfermline

£4,000 donation to support local foodbanks

Recognising the additional pressures foodbanks were facing at the start of lockdown, we donated a total of £4,000 to three of the centres which provide assistance to those most in need within our local communities:

- Dunfermline Foodbank (which also serves communities in Inverkeithing, Rosyth and Cowdenbeath)
- Kirkcaldy Foodbank
- Levenmouth Foodbank

Chief Executive, Nicki Donaldson, explains why we felt it was so important to provide additional financial support for local foodbanks during the current crisis, *"With the impact of coronavirus being felt across the world, a growing number of families throughout Fife are struggling to make ends meet and being forced to turn to foodbanks for essential, everyday items.*

"We were already working on developing partnerships with our local foodbanks as we are acutely aware of the fantastic work these voluntary organisations do supporting

our tenants and others within their community at times of need, but wanted to do our bit to try and ensure that this safety net remains available now so that no-one in our local area has to go without during this pandemic.

"We have also donated a further £250 to Frontline Fife to assist with their provision of vital homelessness services at this very difficult time."

Chair of Kirkcaldy Foodbank, Joyce Leggate, said *"We are so grateful to Fife Housing Group for their generous donation to Kirkcaldy Foodbank. Receiving a cash donation such as this enables us to have the funds to purchase the items we need to pass on to those struggling especially during this very difficult time. At this time more than any other, we rely on the support of local businesses to maintain our essential service."*

These donations were made possible by the generosity of 17 contractors who signed up to become part of our charitable framework, donating 2% of their invoiced costs to help deliver projects which benefit local communities, as part of our ongoing commitment to making a difference and 'Giving Something Back'.

The 17 contractors who contribute to this framework are MAC Roofing, Rogerson Plumbing, QAPM Ltd, Moffat Electrical Projects Ltd, Bell Decorating Group, Eurojet (Scotland) Ltd, Pankhurst Decorators, Saltire Facilities Management Ltd, Kingdom Gas, City Technical, Shine Cleaning Services, Belac, Virtue Services Group, RB Grant Ltd, Forth Plasterers Ltd, Mitie Property Services and Metro Rod Ltd.



Community clear up days

Despite the current restrictions we have been able to safely continue the rollout of our popular free skip initiative, launched last year as part of our commitment to 'Giving Something Back' to our tenants and local communities.

Targetting areas where fly-tipping and general untidiness are problematic, our 'Community clear up days' not only help to improve the appearance of the neighbourhood but also reduce the health and safety risks associated with cluttered stairwells and communal areas.

Our most recent such event took place at Dunearn Drive in Kirkcaldy at the beginning of October and was a great success, with tenants making great use of three skips to de-clutter their homes, closes and bin store areas.

Our next 'Community clear up day' will be taking place in Lochgelly at the end of November, with skips provided for the tenants of Russell Street, Union Street and Grainger Street completely free of charge. Full details regarding this will be sent to tenants as soon as they are confirmed.

Any tenant who does not currently have a bin should call Fife Council free of charge on 03451 55 00 22 to arrange delivery of a replacement.

Charity of the Year – The Cookie Jar Foundation

Although fundraising for our charity of the year, the Cookie Jar Foundation, has also been affected by the pandemic, with a number of planned events cancelled as a result of ongoing restrictions, colleagues have still managed to raise over £3,000 and we are hoping that virtual activities planned in the run-up to Christmas will take us closer to our £4,000 target so that we will be able to fund a vein finder for donation to a local hospital.

For more information on the fantastic work The Cookie Jar Foundation do, you can check out their website - thecookiejarfoundation.co.uk



ESTATE INSPECTION PROGRAMME

Government restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic have created additional challenges in relation to the management and maintenance of our estates. In particular, we are aware that the limitations imposed on access to recycling facilities has led to an increase in fly-tipping in public areas and that there is also a risk of fire hazards being created if people leave items of household waste, including furniture, in communal areas in flatted blocks.

Holding estate inspections is an effective way for us to identify where such anti-social behaviour is taking place which, in turn, enables us to take action to address these issues and, as such, we are continuing to deliver this programme.

The table below highlights the estate inspections which are scheduled take place over the next four months:

Date / Time	Location
December 2020	
Wednesday 2 December @ 10am	Dunfermline - Linburn Road
Tuesday 8 December @ 10.30am	Culross
Tuesday 22 December @ 2pm	Rosyth
January 2021	
Friday 15 January @ 2pm	Burntisland
Thursday 28 January @ 10am	Rosyth - Queensferry Road
February 2021	
Tuesday 9 February @ 3pm	Methil - Methilbrae, Kirkland Walk, Cedar Avenue, Birch Grove and Oakvale Road
Wednesday 24 February @ 10am	Dunfermline - Allan Crescent
March 2021	
Friday 5 March @ 2.30pm	Kirkcaldy - Cheviot Road, Carnethy Crescent and Morven Grove
Tuesday 9 March @ 10.30am	Oakley
Thursday 18 March @ 2pm	Buckhaven - Bird Scheme

CHANGES TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD

It is very important that you let us know if the members of your household change. Failing to keep the information we hold up-to-date could mean that those who live in your household are unable to succeed or assign to your tenancy, or become a joint tenant should anything happen to you, as these options are only available if we have been notified that they are part of your household and are using the property as their only or principal home at least 12 months prior to these changes being required.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Check out our brand new SkyVac machine, a nifty piece of equipment which enables us to view the contents of a property's gutters from the ground and means that the cleaning can be undertaken by one Operative, rather than the two usually required for ladder access, saving our colleagues' time and delivering value for money.



FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO HELP YOU STAY SAFE DURING SEVERE WEATHER

With winter officially on the way and snow likely at some point, it's worth taking a few minutes to do a little preparation BEFORE severe weather hits. As well as creating a household plan for emergencies we suggest taking these five simple steps help to keep you and your family safe during severe weather.



1 Keep a mixture of salt and sand and a shovel handy to put on steps or paths in icy weather.



4 Keep a battery-operated radio, torch and spare batteries handy in case there's a power cut



2 Keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house and order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time.



5 Keep a list of emergency numbers, such as your utility companies, by your home phone or store them in your mobile



3 Keep three days-worth of water and basic food items in the cupboard or freezer in case you cannot get out to go shopping

You can find lots more advice about preparing for and dealing with emergencies, such as severe winter weather, on the Ready Scotland website (readyscotland.org)

Are you ready for winter?



PREVENTING FROZEN AND BURST PIPES

Frozen and burst pipes are often an issue during the winter months, and we all know the inconvenience and damage that they can cause. Follow the advice below to prevent these problems occurring in the first instance, or to manage the issue should these measures fail to be effective.

Prevention is better than a cure:

- Keep your heating on at a low setting rather than turning it off
- Make sure all taps are turned off and are not dripping
- Know where your stopcock is to turn off water in an emergency
- If you are taking a winter trip, turn off your water, drain the system and leave a key with someone who can check your property regularly
- Call us if you need any additional information or advice

If you do find a frozen pipe:

- Turn off the water at the stopcock as soon as possible
- Turn on all cold taps to drain the system – never turn on a hot tap
- Thaw out the frozen pipe using a hair dryer or warm cloth on the pipe - do not use an open flame
- Call us for advice

If you have a burst pipe:

- Turn off the water at the stopcock as soon as possible
- Call our emergency plumber on freephone 08000 274 007

RECYCLED RAMP ALLOWS WHEELCHAIR USER TO REGAIN INDEPENDENCE

Earlier this year we received a referral from an Occupational Therapist, requesting the installation of an access ramp for a tenant who, having recently started using a wheelchair, was unable to enter or exit their home unaided. Unfortunately, due to the limited funding available for medical adaptations, it looked as though we would not be able to undertake this work until new funding was released, rendering the tenant essentially housebound until this time.

However, our Operations Team had recently removed a similar ramp from another property and a site visit established that it would be possible for us to adapt and install this for the tenant in question ourselves, without the need for any additional funding.

Five of our trades colleagues undertook this work and the tenant was absolutely delighted with the results:

'I would like to thank Graeme, Ross, Barry, Jim and Stuart for the wonderful work they did on my new ramp they were so nice and did a marvellous job. I can now get out and about on my own the first time in over six months so thank you for all you guys did.'



GREAT REASONS TO JOIN OUR BOARD

Ever wished you had the opportunity to influence the decisions we make?

Thought about getting involved to ensure tenants' voices are heard?

Then now is the time to step forward and start making a difference!

We are committed to improving the services we provide and recognise the need for tenant representation at the highest level in order to accomplish this.

This being the case, we are currently looking for a motivated tenant to join our Board of Management, who are responsible for setting the strategic agenda and agreeing all major decisions affecting Fife Housing Group.

As a Board Member you will:

- Play an important role in major developments and shaping the business
- Bring your experience so that decisions are made in the interest of tenants
- Monitor our progress and performance

You should be:

- A tenant of Fife Housing Group
- Interested in housing issues and tenant participation
- Able to provide a voice for our tenants and their communities but understand business constraints

Our Board meets six times a year with an additional Annual General Meeting, strategic event and ongoing development sessions.

The post is voluntary but offers an excellent opportunity to gain additional career skills or enhance your knowledge of business and social housing as, although no previous experience is necessary, full training and support will be provided. Travel expense will also be paid.

To arrange an informal chat with our Chief Executive or request an application pack, please contact Laura Grieve on 01383 606162 or via laura.grieve@fifehg.org.uk.





Did you know you can report repairs online?

Please visit our homepage (fifehg.org.uk) and select 'Report a repair'.

Likewise, you can also make rent payments from the comfort of your home. Just download the allpay app from the Apple or Google Play stores, completely free of charge.

Communal area reminders

- Whilst some flats have a stair cleaning service, please remember that in all blocks, it is resident responsibility to clean up any spillages they make for the health and safety of everyone residing in or visiting the block, it is particularly important to maintain hygiene standards given the current pandemic.
- Smoking is prohibited within closes.
- Belongings or rubbish should not be stored within the close or communal areas.
- Close entrances should not be deliberately left open.
- Dogs should not be left unattended in communal gardens or drying areas and any dog mess should be cleared immediately.

Rosyth

Housing Officer, Stephanie McCulloch, is enjoying being back from secondment, albeit on a part-time basis at the moment and in these very strange times. Visits are limited and restricted, however, she has still been able to see some new faces and some familiar faces whilst out on her patch.

We understand it is a concerning time but have heard some great stories of communities pulling together and the EATS Rosyth Community Hub has been a great lifeline to many. If you aren't aware, they have moved to a larger, temporary home at Rosyth Baptist Church during COVID restrictions and are open weekdays between 10am and 2pm for anyone who is struggling to access food, with no referral needed.

As we enter winter in The Garden City, there are still some gardens which require attention and we ask that everyone ensures their own is cut back to a reasonable standard and kept in good order going forward.

Boyle Drive

Due to recent changes within the team, Housing Officer, **Gavin Waddell**, now manages the Boyle Drive area of Rosyth. If any tenant living on this street has anything they would like to discuss, please contact they can contact him directly on **07771 776 679** or via **gavin.waddell@fifehg.org.uk**. Once current restrictions ease, he intends visiting each property to introduce himself face to face.

Dunfermline

As the festive period can often lead to the accumulation of extra household waste it is pertinent to remind all tenants that storing waste outwith the bins provided by Fife Council is not only unhygienic and inconsiderate, it also constitutes a breach of your tenancy agreement. Where tenants fail to properly dispose of rubbish, and after all other options have been exhausted, we will instruct contractors to do so and charge the relevant tenants accordingly. No one wants to see a mess in the street so please, everyone... play your part in making Dunfermline look better.

Leishman Drive

The issues caused by soil and stones running off the sloped area and accumulating in the parking area have been a concern for both residents and ourselves for some time. Previous interventions have been unsuccessful and we are currently looking at a more permanent solution. In the meantime, please ensure you use the pathway or either set of steps to go between your home, the parking area and street level. Taking shortcuts through the shrubbed area, unfortunately, only makes the problem worse.

If there are any other stories you would like to see covered here, please do not hesitate to talk to your Housing Officer or contact our editor directly via **karen.begg@fifehg.org.uk**.



Lumphinnans

Residents will have noticed new signage located at the front and rear entrance doors to the flats. This is a reminder that smoking is **not permitted** in the close and that main entrance doors should be kept closed for added security.

The Lumphinnans Tenants' and Residents' Association would appreciate any assistance from local residents to maintain the community garden located at the end of Furnace Place.

Lockdown has had an impact on progress with the garden this year, however, the area is a great place to have a socially distanced chat with other residents in a safe, controlled environment,

Please do not hesitate to contact the group if you have any ideas for the area, they would love to hear from you. Likewise, if you have any items you would like to donate to the group for the community garden, they would be most grateful. If you have access to Facebook, you can also 'like' their page for updates.



Hill of Beath and Cowdenbeath

We are in the process of identifying rear bins stores which are no longer fit for purpose as some residents have using these to store recycling rather than the bins they were intended for.

This is a serious breach of health and safety regulations, particularly given the ongoing pandemic and Housing Officer, Audrey Cameron, would like to remind all residents of their responsibility to ensure that all recycling bins are used correctly.

Recent months have highlighted an increase in residents using the stairwell to store **cycles, prams and shoes**. This is a serious breach of fire safety regulations, it also prevents the cleaning contractors from carrying out a proper clean of the stairs, a service which all residents pay for.

The stairwell is not an extension of your home and must be kept clear at all times.

Residents will also have noticed new signage located at the front and rear entrance doors to the flats. This is a reminder that smoking is **not permitted** in the close and that main entrance doors should be kept closed for added security.

Please refer to internal communication boards for details about your bin collection days and how to report any issues with your central heating or general repairs. If there is any other information you would like to see displayed on the communication board, please contact the office or discuss this with Audrey directly.

Leven and Buckhaven

As we enter winter, there are still some gardens which require attention and we ask that everyone make sure their own is cut back to a reasonable standard and kept in good order going forward.

Please also ensure that you advise your Housing Officer, Ross Glancy, of any changes to your circumstances, on 07456 841943 or via ross.glancy@fifehg.org.uk, to ensure that our Records are kept up-to-date.



Kirkcaldy

We would like to remind tenants again that the dumping of rubbish in stairwells is prohibited as it is a breach of your tenancy agreement, posing both a health and safety risk and a serious fire hazard.

We understand that many tenants accumulated additional waste whilst Fife Council recycling centres were closed during lockdown and, in an effort to help alleviate this issue, arranged for three skips to be provided on Dunearn Drive so that tenants could take ownership and responsibility for removing their items from the internal closes and communal drying areas to the rear of the flats.

Unfortunately, not all tenants took advantage of the opportunity to do this and, as a result, will be recharged for the costs of removing some these items, unless they arrange for them to be removed by other means. The recycling centres are open again, but you must ensure that you book an appointment with the appropriate recycling centre. Alternatively, you can contact Fife Council Environmental Services on 03451 55 00 22 to arrange a special uplift at a cost of £15.

If there are any items being left or stored in your stairwell, please report this directly to your Housing Officer in order to avoid any communal recharges in the future.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind tenants that there is no smoking allowed in the communal areas within our blocks of flats. If you do wish to smoke outside, please be courteous to all other residents in the block by disposing of any litter appropriately and leaving enough room for those who wish to enter and leave the block.

Additionally, we would like to encourage tenants to report anti-social incidents, as we can only deal with issues if we are made aware of them. We have been advised that there have been a number of instances where tenants are complaining to each other but not reporting the situation to us so that the housing officer can deal with the issue. In some circumstances, it may also be advisable to contact the Police when the incident is happening.



Kennoway

We would like to remind tenants that it is important to recycle and dispose of waste appropriately in the bin stores, particularly at this time of year as they will be starting to fill up more quickly now.

We will also be checking to ensure that gardens are not overgrown and we ask that everyone make sure their own is cut back to a reasonable standard and kept in good order going forward.



Lochgelly

Residents in block number 41-63 Grainger Street, Lochgelly will be offered the opportunity to have their say regarding the rear grassed garden area through a consultation process.

The distance between the flats and the furthest-away gardens has made it problematic for some residents to cut their grass area and maintain their space. To try and resolve this issue, Housing Officer, Audrey Cameron, has asked for this work to be included in our gardening contract for next year. Costs have been sought and our Engagement Team will be carrying out a consultation with all tenants in these blocks. If the consensus is to go ahead with this then the costs will be applied to each tenant's rent account monthly.

Due to the continued dumping of household items and bin bags, the rear bin stores have previously been demolished, however, the recycling centres are now open if you have any items to dispose of.

If anyone would like to report another resident for illegal dumping, you can contact Audrey confidentially on 01383 608128 or 07747 895965.

Recent months have highlighted an increase in residents using the stairwell to store **cycles, prams and shoes**. This is a serious breach of fire safety regulations, it also prevents the cleaning contractors from carrying out a proper clean of the stairs, a service which all residents pay for.

The stairwell is not an extension of your home and must be kept clear at all times.

Residents will also have noticed new signage located at the front and rear entrance doors to the flats. This is a reminder that smoking is **not permitted** in the close and that main entrance doors should be kept closed for added security.

Please refer to internal communication boards for details about your bin collection days and how to report any issues with your central heating or general repairs. If there is any other information you would like to see displayed on the communication board, please contact the office or discuss this with Audrey directly.



High Valleyfield

We continue to receive a lot of feedback regarding fly-tipping and the inconsiderate disposal of rubbish in Pentland Terrace and High Valleyfield in general. Fly-tipping is not only a huge fire safety risk it is also inconsiderate and against the terms of the good neighbour agreement which all tenants have signed up to. We always investigate such reports in conjunction with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and take action against those responsible so, if you witness anyone disposing of their waste in the wrong way, please contact our office, anonymously if you would prefer, to allow us to speak with those involved.





Methil

With many people being at home more than usual as a result of the current restrictions, we are experiencing an increase in reports of anti-social behaviour. While we would ask everyone to be as tolerant and kind as possible, if you are experiencing problems of this nature, please contact Housing Officer, **Greg Turner**, directly on **07811 393822** or via **greg.turner@fifehg.org.uk**, to discuss the options available for dealing with these. We take anti-social behaviour very seriously and have access to an independent mediation service with an excellent record resolving such issues, however, in recent times have issued a final warning, two written warnings and numerous verbal warnings. This is the last thing we want to do but everyone has the right to live peacefully in a safe environment.

We also understand that this may be a very confusing and worrying time financially. If you have any concerns at all in regards to paying your rent then please contact Greg straight away. It is a difficult time for everyone so please reach out or seek independent money advice at the earliest opportunity and remember, we are here to help.

Crombie

Responsibility for the open space maintenance in Crombie is due to change to our contractor, Continental Landscapes within the next few months. As part of this, we will be in touch with all residents in the area to discuss what will happen next and how the transition will be managed.

Housing Officer	Contact Details
Ross Glancy	t: 07970 804740 e: ross.glancy@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
William Earnshaw	t: 07525 260447 e: william.earnshaw@fifehg.org.uk
Stephanie McCulloch	t: 07811 439905 e: stephanie.mcculloch@fifehg.org.uk

And finally...

After a challenging year, we will all be looking forward to Christmas, even if it feels a little different to normal. We would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our tenants who will be celebrating, a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and ask everyone to be considerate of their neighbours over the holiday period.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



 **Prep**
5-10 mins

 **Cook**
35-40 mins

 **Serves**
4

TURKEY AND PARSNIP CURRY

(recipe from bbcgoodfood.com)

This cheap, one-pan Christmas curry is full of flavour, incredibly easy to make and works well with chicken or meat substitutes too!

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 onions, halved through the root and thinly sliced
- 500g parsnips, peeled and cut into chunks
- 5 tbsp Madras curry paste
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 500g boneless cooked turkey, cut into chunks
- 150g pot low-fat natural yoghurt
- cooked basmati rice to serve

Method

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the onions and fry gently for 10 minutes until they are softened and lightly coloured. Add the parsnips and stir well.
2. To make the curry, stir in the curry paste, then add the tomatoes with a little salt, and stir well. Add 1½ canfuls of water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes, until the parsnips are just tender.
3. To finish, stir in the turkey chunks, cover the pan again and simmer for a further 5 minutes until the turkey is heated through. Remove from the heat. (The curry can now be cooled and frozen for up to 2 months.) Lightly swirl in the yoghurt and serve with basmati rice.



WINTER WORDSEARCH



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

To enter: Complete the wordsearch, cut along the dotted line and send your entry to the address below by 30 November 2019

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| WINTER | FROST | JOLLY |
| SNOW | TINSEL | SPARKLE |
| CELEBRATE | REINDEER | MISTLETOE |
| FAMILY | HOLLY | TURKEY |
| SANTA | CHRISTMAS | STAR |

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ TEL: _____

Contact us

Freephone: 08000 274 007

East Fife - Kingdom Gas: 0800 389 9463

West Fife - City Technical: 0333 202 0708

Text: 07520 632 740 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