

# What's on the



# horizon

Housing Association Ltd

## A SUCCESSFUL A.G.M.

The Association's AGM was held at its offices in Livingston on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September. It was well attended, with members coming along from as far a field as Paisley, Glasgow and East Lothian.

In presenting the Association's Annual Report to members, Chairperson Julia Fitzpatrick highlighted the very positive achievements during an extremely busy year. She cited examples of how the Association continually strives to fulfil its mission statement of "Working with Communities to Achieve Equality of Housing Opportunity".



As regards the other formal business conducted at the AGM, members approved the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003 and re-appointed Baker Tilly as Auditor for the current financial year.

Disappointingly, no nominations were received for election to the Management Committee. However, three retiring committee members; Margaret Prior, Bill Fisher and Frank Rochford were re-elected.



There are places available within the Management Committee and any member interested in filling a casual vacancy is welcome to contact me for further information.

Remember it is YOUR Association. Why not consider taking an active part in helping it achieve its objectives.

Finally, following the completion of the formal part of the AGM, Sharon Smith who has been working with the Association for the past few months, shared with members her experiences of overcoming her sight impairment. Sharon was most complimentary about the way she was welcomed into the Horizon staff team. For our part, we are inspired by Sharon's absolute determination to overcome her impairment and her commitment to fulfilling her role with the Association. Sharon was accompanied by John Spiers of the Glasgow Disabled Persons Housing Service. We are extremely grateful to both Sharon and John for attending the AGM and for the constructive messages they gave about the positive contribution which disabled people can make in the workplace.

All in all a very successful evening.

JIM WATT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Following feedback from our tenants survey we have changed our provider of the out of hours emergency service as follows

In the event of an **EMERGENCY** outwith office hours - please contact Field Response 24hr on:

**Freephone 0800 783 7937**

During office hours, please report all repairs, including Emergencies to Horizon Housing Association on:  
**01506 424 140**

Thank you for your continued support in assisting to improve the services we deliver to you.

Remember, this number is for emergency repairs only. Do not use it for non emergency repairs or you may be re-charged for the cost of these.

## Web Site Launched

The Association has now launched its own web site, with a number of pages already up and running, and others to be added in the near future.

Our intention is to give tenants access to information on the Association and its activities and the facility to request information via the web site or email.

The web site can be accessed at  
[www.horizonhousing.org](http://www.horizonhousing.org)

If you have any comments regarding our web site please let us know, and we will try and accommodate these. One of the pages, we intend putting on the site, will be a web version of the Newsletter. In the meantime if you would like to receive this by email please contact us on 01506 424140.

Other pages to be included shortly are Housing, Finance, Development and also Committee news.

So remember to watch this cyber space for more news.

## TENANTS AND STAFF AWAY DAY

We held our tenant staff away day in August at the Inchyra Grange Hotel in Polmont. All tenants were invited with an amazing 40 tenants turning up to participate. We discussed a number of key issues including:

- HOW PEOPLE WANT TO BE INVOLVED
- FUTURE PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES AND EVENTS
- ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
- ALLOCATION OF HOUSES
- RENTAL INCREASE



It was clear from the interest on the day and the feedback that we are likely to make the event an annual occurrence.

### Tenants and Staff Away Day – Summary Recommendations

- Quality invitation to attract attention
- Provide transport
- Telephone to remind people – and get accurate numbers
- Series of briefing notes on key strategies and policies
- Series of face-to-face presentations on key strategies and policies
- Feedback on aspects which have not been actioned to let tenants know the reasons why
- More detailed information to be provided on specific strategies and policies which are up for debate/review prior to a series of local meetings to discuss tenants' views
- Publication of email addresses to facilitate reporting of repairs.



Thanks to all the tenants who attended the Away Day. The feedback we have received was all very positive and by all accounts it was a worthwhile day, which everyone seemed to enjoy.

A new tenant in Blartyre commented;

*"As a new tenant I enjoyed my day. I have found my new home a boon, before I had stairs, now I have my own front and back door everything is fine, with no stairs I can now get out my house"*

### Gas Appliances – Servicing

We reviewed our Gas Servicing policy and procedures in October last year. This has resulted in an excellent performance in the number of services carried out without the need to take court action. Sadly, a minority of tenants still either refuse to allow us entry or make arrangements, which are subsequently not kept. Not only does this result in additional costs but delays servicing of the gas appliances and causes unnecessary risk to the households concerned.

Please make every effort to keep appointments, if for whatever reason you have to re-arrange, telephone Kingdom Gas in advance and let them know. A new arrangement will be made which we hope will be mutually convenient. If you work we can offer a Saturday morning call.

Please don't waste our resources on abortive calls, with this money we could replace the equivalent of 10 boilers each year!

### "Satisfaction Card Competition"

Again thanks to all who sent back satisfaction cards. Here are some of the comments we have received over the last 3 months:

- 'Workmen both courteous and efficient'
- 'More than satisfied'
- 'Excellent repair'
- 'Handle loose please recall tradesmen'
- '1st class response from contractor'

The winning comment was 'excellent service, much appreciated' from Mrs Allison Jean Cree at Waddell Court in Kilmarnock who wins our £20.

Please continue to return your cards as your comments are essential in helping us improve our services.

## PLANNED WORK UPDATE

If you live in Kelty, Auchtermuchty or Whitburn we have still to attend to the external painting in this Financial Year. Prior to the work commencing we will write to you giving you adequate notice.

### TV Aerials

We are currently seeking tenders for an upgrade to a digital system in the following areas:

**Blackburn, Kincardine, Erskine, Falkirk and Kilsyth**

We will write to you should the replacements be going ahead in this financial year.

## AVAILABLE HOMES

Good news for Horizon Housing Association tenants – HOMESWAP, the UK-wide home exchange service run by HOMES is now on the Internet, at [www.availablehomes.org.uk](http://www.availablehomes.org.uk). The web site also advertises Council and other Housing Association properties available for rent. If you have been waiting some time for a transfer or a home exchange, this could create new opportunities for you.

If you are not in a position to exchange your property you can use the web site to search for properties available to rent in parts of the country that you may be able to move to immediately.

If you don't have Internet access phone the local call rate number **0845 080 1089**. HOMES' Customer Service Team will tell you about your options in the area you want to move to.

The launch of HOMESWAP on the Internet gives you access to 40,000 HOMESWAP registrants. You can search HOMESWAP properties anywhere in the UK and get details of people who want to move to where you live and into the type of property you have. No more trawling through hundreds of swappers who don't want your area.

Full property details enabling you to make contact with potential swap partners, are only available if you are registered on HOMESWAP.

You can ask Horizon to send you a registration form or telephone HOMES on **0845 080 1089** or email [customer.services@homes.org.uk](mailto:customer.services@homes.org.uk).

When you are registered on HOMESWAP, HOMES searches for matches for you every six weeks and will send you details of possible swap partners when they become available.

There are lots of places where you can get access to the Internet. Some council's provide Internet access for their tenants, or you could try your local library, or use a friend's computer to do your own matching on line.

**REMEMBER** you cannot go ahead and swap your home without our permission – once you have found a match you need to speak to us.

HOMESWAP on the Internet is the latest development from HOMES, the Government funded housing mobility and exchange service, which offers a variety of services to help you, move.

## ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

There have been some significant legal changes introduced in the management of anti social behaviour. As a result we are to review our Policies and Procedures in this area. If you would like to be involved in this please contact our office and give your name and contact telephone number.

We anticipate having our first meeting in November. This will last approximately 2 hours and we would not anticipate meeting more than 3 times. This is an ever-increasing problem within our estates and we hope to fully utilise the amendments included in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003.

Remember anti social behaviour is a criminal activity, which can ultimately lead to prison and eviction. We hope that by raising the issue and seeking a representative view from tenants, we can reduce the amount of anti social incidents that can blight tenants' lives.

# NEWSDESK

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### Competition Winners

Our garden competition results were:-



Anne Marie Hendrie from Coatbridge for most improved garden.



Best estate was won by Coatbridge Development.



In the childrens section the best planters display was won by Heather Brackenridge from Johnstone aged 9.



Runner up Gemma Bennett, Age 4 from Fouldhouse!

**Congratulations and thank you to all who took part.**

## STAFF UPDATE

### Staff Leaving

Unfortunately we said goodbye to Christine Steele, Development Officer who relocated south of the border at the end of August. We wish Christine all the best in the future.

Stuart Ramage one of our Housing Services Assistants leaves us at the beginning of October to join Edinburgh University as an Accommodation Manager. We wish Stuart every success in his new job.

Kathleen Smillie one of our Admin Assistants left us at the end of September to go to University. We wish Kathleen good luck and all the best for the future.

### New Start

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Scott Smith as our new Finance and Admin Manager.

### New Arrival

We are pleased to announce the birth of a baby boy for Gail and Steven Harkins. Gail who works in our Finance department gave birth to Ethan on Thursday 7 August 2003. Congratulations and hopefully not too many sleepless nights.

### Graduation

Congratulations to Audrey Rankine on successfully achieving membership of the Association of Accounting Technicians. Audrey will be graduating in November.

## Benefit Fraud Report

Please remember that any improper claim for Housing Benefit which results in a claim back by the local authority, will result in the whole debt being due by tenant. Housing Benefit is a tenant benefit. It is not the local authority's responsibility to ensure that tenants' rents are paid via Housing Benefit, it is the responsibility of each individual tenant.

Fraudulent misuse of the Benefit system is a criminal offence. Loss of rental income through the claim back of Housing Benefit affects all tenants as it reduces the amount of income available to deliver services. If you suspect someone of making fraudulent claims you should contact the Benefit Fraud Hotline 0800 854 401.

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Properties in defects - Blantyre - Winton Crescent & Tennyson Gardens.  
Please contact Beid on 0800 783 937. Beid will contact the appropriate contractor.

Kingdom Gas Service - Gas Heating/Hot Water 0800 389 9463

The Association produces this newsletter on a quarterly basis to keep tenants, sharing owners and members informed on issues relating to their homes and surrounding areas.

We would be happy to receive news/views that you would like to see published in this newsletter.

Please contact Yvonne O'Hara at our offices. Tel: 01506 424140

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