

TENANT NEWSLETTER WINTER 2010

Alex Neil Scotland's Minister for Housing and Communities launches our new housing development



Our latest project at Dalmilling Crescent, in Ayr will see the creation of 25 houses for affordable rent, whilst still retaining key parts of the Roman Catholic church's former Cathedral of the Good Shepherd. This development, located in the Dalmilling neighbourhood is close to the town's racecourse.

Ayrshire Housing's Vice-Chair and tenant Pearl Boyd welcomed the support of the Scottish Government and South Ayrshire Council. Pearl said "it's not everyday that a housing scheme involves the re-use of a cathedral."

Alex Neil said "I've lived in Ayr for much of my life and I'm well aware of the local housing pressures. That's why I'm delighted to welcome this initiative."

Councillor Douglas Campbell, South Ayrshire Council's Portfolio Holder – Housing and Customer First added "we're delighted to be working with Ayrshire Housing on another much needed project."

The total cost of the project is £2.8m. It is being supported by a grant of £1.6m from the Scottish Government.

The expected completion date for this development is November 2011.

SEE INSIDE FOR:

- ❄ Rent Consultation
- ❄ Energy Efficiency
- ❄ Winter Weather Advice
- ❄ Staffing News
- ❄ Christmas Holidays



Rent Setting Consultation 2011-2012

The decision to set rents for next year has to be taken by the Board at their meeting in February 2011. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 we have a duty to consult tenants on the proposed changes to rents and service charges. This article will provide some of the information that is taken into account when changes to rents are being considered.

Ayrshire Housing is a “not for profit” organisation. This means that the rent you pay is used to meet the costs of the management and maintenance of your home and any services that are provided. From the rent we receive we also make payments on loans which were part of the funding package when your property was acquired or built. Your rent pays for the staff costs involved in providing services to you and also for other costs such as office accommodation, computers and stationery. Repairs to the properties are also paid for from the rent income.

Affordability

We are also bound to consider whether our rents are affordable. The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) provides guidance to associations on how to measure affordability. Based on this, our rents are considered to be affordable.



Longer term planning

We also have to ensure that the income we receive is available for the future management and maintenance of our properties rather than just the next couple of years. For example, at some point in the future your kitchen, bathroom or central heating may need to be replaced. Other components such as windows and gutters also need regular painting and maintenance. Between November and January each year, Ayrshire Housing’s senior management work on financial projections to ensure that income we receive from rents is sufficient to cover all projected costs. We have to adopt a sensible and prudent approach to financial planning. While we don’t want to increase rent more than is necessary we have to be sure that funds are sufficient to secure the future of Ayrshire Housing and its properties for the benefit of current and future tenants.

Comparisons with other landlords

We also compare our rents with those of other housing associations and the local councils. Inflation levels, interest rates, increased VAT rate and costs in the construction industry are also analysed as these all affect our financial projections.

Proposed increase

Taking account of the various elements we have to consider, it is proposed that we will be able to restrict any increase to no more than £4.00 per week for a typical 2 bedroom house. Which is broadly in line with the rent guarantee maximum that Ayrshire Housing was previously held to.

Expressing your views

We are inviting you to give us your views on the proposals for next year’s rent increase. In particular we would like you to tell us if you think our proposals are fair and also do you think that the basis for settings rents is fair. You can let us know your views in several ways:

- By writing to us at our office;
- By telling your housing officer who will pass on your views to senior management;
- By e-mailing your views direct to info@ayrshirehousing.org.uk;
- By posting a comment on our blog at www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk;

All views expressed will be considered by the Board when making their final decision.



In 2010/11 the STV central region will switchover to Digital TV. After switchover, you will be unable to watch your TV unless it has the facility to receive Digital TV broadcasts. You can either purchase a new digital ready TV or convert your existing TV. If you buy new, make sure it has the 'digital tick' logo. Most rooftop and some internal aerials will continue to work after switchover. Visit Teletext P284 to test signal strength and determine if your aerial will work. Help is available if you are over 75 or receiving Attendance or Disability Living Allowance or are registered blind or partially sighted.

Remember to consult with us if you are thinking of fitting a satellite dish. More information is available from www.digitaluk.co.uk by phoning 08456 50 50 50. Tenants with a hearing impairment can use the textphone service on 0845 234 0380.

Energy Efficiency: A few tips to keep you warm and save some money around the house.

In the kitchen:

- * Only boil as much water as you need;
- * Keep lids on your pans when cooking;
- * Why use hot water when cold will do?
- * Rinse plates & wash vegetables in cold water;
- * Use a bowl to wash up twice a day rather than leaving the hot tap running. Saves around £25 a year;
- * Chopping vegetables in to smaller pieces means they cook faster. Less energy is wasted during the cooking process;
- * Defrost food in the fridge rather than microwaving it;
- * Try not to keep the freezer too cold.

In the living areas:

- * Cosy up and close your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in;
- * Turn your thermostat down by 1°C and save around £55 a year on your heating bill;
- * Use your heating controls sensibly and use the timer, room thermostat and radiator controls. This will keep room temperatures comfortable without wasting too much energy. Look at your manuals or contact our maintenance section on 01292 880120;
- * Replace all the bulbs in your house with energy saving light bulbs and save around £590 over the lifetime of the bulbs.

These savings may appear small, but when they are added together they make a good saving for you.

Further energy efficiency advice is available at www.energyagency.org.uk or www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotlandsw

Energy Performance Certificates

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) give information on how to make your home more energy efficient and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The certificate provides 'A' to 'G' ratings for your home, 'A' being the most energy efficient and 'G' being the least. The average rating up until now being 'D'.

Energy Efficiency Rating		Current	Potential
Very energy efficient - lower running costs			
(92-100)	A		
(81-91)	B		
(69-80)	C		73
(55-68)	D		
(39-54)	E		
(21-38)	F	37	
(1-20)	G		
Not energy efficient - higher running costs			

ReadyScotland@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

The Scottish Government has published information on preparing for winter at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/ready-scotland/winter>.

The website contains some practical advice and simple steps people can take to protect themselves, their families and their businesses.

We can supply this document in a print size to suit. It is also available in Braille, audio and other formats, and in other languages. Our website also has several accessibility features which you may find useful.

Winter Weather Advice—Frost Precautions

Some tenants are caught out by cold weather and suffer damage, distress and inconvenience from burst pipes. Even with minimal damage, you could be faced with disruption whilst repairs are completed.

KNOW YOUR SYSTEM: Ensure you know where your stop valve is; normally close to where the supply enters your home. This valve enables the water supply to the whole house to be turned off or isolated.

KEEP YOUR HOUSE WARM: Avoid burst pipes by keeping your property reasonably warm at all times during spells of cold weather. Despite insulation, pipes still freeze at low or sub-zero temperatures. Heating your home is the most effective protection against cold weather.

If you intend to go away overnight or for a longer period:

- * Leave your heating on to maintain a reasonable background temperature;
- * Ensure pre-payment meters have sufficient credit to continue heating while you are away;
- * Leave keys with a relative or trusted friend/neighbour;
- * Advise neighbours where to contact you or the person who has access to your home;
- * Ask someone to visit the property regularly.

Alternatively, drain down the system:-

- * Turn off the supply at the stop valve;
- * Open all taps and leave open. Ensure plugs are removed from sinks and wash basins;
- * Flush the toilet to empty the cistern.

IF YOU DISCOVER FROZEN PIPES:

- * Turn off the supply at the stop valve;
- * Switch off gas and electric water heaters;
- * Before attempting to thaw the pipe, remove or protect anything that may be damaged by a burst;
- * Gently heat the frozen section of pipe using a fan heater, hairdryer, hot water bottle or heated cloths wrapped around the pipe. Thaw from the tap side and work towards the frozen section of pipe.

NEVER use a blow lamp or naked flame.

DO NOT light the central heating boiler or switch on an immersion heater to thaw a hot water pipe or part of a heating system.

ALWAYS take care to prevent a fire risk or risk of an electric shock.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PIPES BURST:

- * Turn off the supply at the stop valve;
- * Switch off the electrical supply at the mains. **Do not** operate affected appliances;
- * Contact Ayrshire Housing or if the office is closed, contact **0845 719 0019**;
- * Open all taps to drain the system;
- * Switch off central heating systems or water heaters;
- * Warn neighbours if they are likely to be affected;
- * If water is coming through the ceiling, collect it in buckets and move items likely to be damaged;
- * If the ceiling starts to bulge, pierce the plaster to allow the water through;
- * If possible wrap a towel around the burst and place a bowl under the leak.

DRYING OUT: There are a number of measures that should be taken to assist in drying out your home. Thorough drying before redecorating is essential as failure to will result in damage to the new decoration.

- * Leave windows, doors including internal and cupboard doors open to ventilate the affected area;
- * Keep affected rooms heated but do not over-heat as this could lead to further damage.
- * Store damaged contents in a dry place – your insurer may wish to inspect them.

TENANT LIABILITY: If you fail to take reasonable precautions to prevent burst pipes, you may be held responsible for the damage caused to the property. Your neighbours might also have a claim against you for any damage to their property and contents. Burst pipes can cause considerable damage to your home. Ayrshire Housing's insurance provides cover for the structure and fittings owned by us, **this does not cover your contents.**



House Contents Insurance. Can You Afford Not To?

The severe cold weather of last winter highlighted the need for tenants to ensure they have adequate household contents' insurance. In addition to the potential damage caused by burst pipes, tenants also need to consider the consequences of their property being burgled. Criminals often target vulnerable households or those where there may be additional items such as Christmas presents. How would you replace these if they were stolen during a break-in?



Household Contents' Insurance is a necessity not a luxury. For most people the cost of resolving incidents would be too expensive. Contents Insurance could offer peace of mind. The **SFHA's Diamond Insurance Scheme** for example provides low cost standard cover at competitive rates and includes protection for fire, burglary, flooding, storm damage and loss or damage caused by burst pipes.

To find out more pop into our office, visit www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk or call us on 01292 880120

Safety at Christmas

Grit Bins

We have received a number of requests for grit bins and grit spreading services. For adopted roads, responsibility for snow and ice clearance rests with the local council. Priority will be given to main roads and bus routes which may leave some residential streets and footpaths untreated. Ayrshire Housing are unable to supply grit bins for a number of reasons; complaints about location (nobody wants them outside their home), vandalism, inappropriate use or theft of grit and damage to floor covering from grit and salt being brought into the home



If you clear snow and ice yourself be careful - don't make the pathways more dangerous by causing them to refreeze.

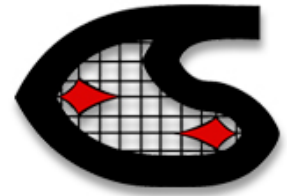
- * Don't use warm water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice;
- * It's easier to move fresh, loose snow rather than hard snow;
- * When shovelling snow, take care where you put it. Don't block paths or drains.

Electrical Safety

The festive season brings additional dangers due to the increase in the number of electrical appliances. The Scottish Government supported by the Fire Service, has produced a checklist to keep your home safe all year round:-

- * Check Christmas lights conform to British Safety Standards, fairy lights heat up and should be kept away from anything that burns.
- * Lights intended for internal use should not be used outside.
- * Don't overload electrical sockets.
- * Never leave burning candles unattended.
- * Ensure decorations; especially paper which burns easily, are kept away from lights and heaters.
- * Avoid putting washing machines, tumble dryers or dishwashers on when you leave the house or go to bed.
- * Be especially careful with chargers for mobile phones or laptops.
- * Ensure cigarettes are extinguished properly and ashtrays are emptied.
- * Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.
- * Most fires start in the kitchen – never leave a cooker unattended.
- * Use Christmas as a reminder to test your smoke alarm and ensure it is working properly. Use the Test facility to check it weekly.
- * Make sure you and your family know what to do in an emergency – prepare a fire escape plan.

Finally, celebrate Christmas and New Year safely. The risk of accidents, especially in the kitchen is increased when alcohol is consumed.



Ayrshire Housing were delighted to present a cheque for £500 to Care and Share.



Care and Share is an organisation for people who are homeless, have been homeless or are vulnerable to homelessness. There is a weekly drop-in at Riverside Church (next door to the Job Centre Plus) on John Street, Ayr, every Wednesday between 2:00pm and 4:30pm. This gives visitors a chance to enjoy a hot meal, make new friends, find out about activities and access a range of help and advice (benefits, housing, addiction and education).

The Care and Share Logo

The mosaic's central board is derived from developmental work based on observations of features on the church building and in the content of the church programme. Created with smashed crockery it represents the windows of the church, which in turn represent the plates that held the food that feeds the members on a Wednesday afternoon.



pick up or pay up

Dog fouling is a crime, make sure you pick up or you could receive a fixed penalty of £40 or be reported to the Procurator Fiscal.

£40 FINE

Report offenders by calling 0845 601 2020
environmental.health@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

south
AYRSHIRE

Ayrshire Housing is working with South Ayrshire Council and Strathclyde Police to develop a course of action to deal with dog fouling.

Should you wish to report an individual for allowing their dog to foul in this area you should contact Connie Lobban of South Ayrshire Council's Environmental Health service on **0300 123 0900**.

Should you be issued with a warning or fixed penalty we may withdraw our permission for you to keep your dog and alternative homing arrangements will have to be made. Stray dogs will be uplifted by Environmental Health.

If you have not already obtained permission from Ayrshire Housing to keep your pet, it is imperative that you now do so. Please contact your Housing Officer on 01292 880120 who will send a pet permission application form to you.



Staff News

Ian Nelson joined us in November as a Housing Assistant. Ian came to us from Ferguslie Park Housing Association in Paisley.

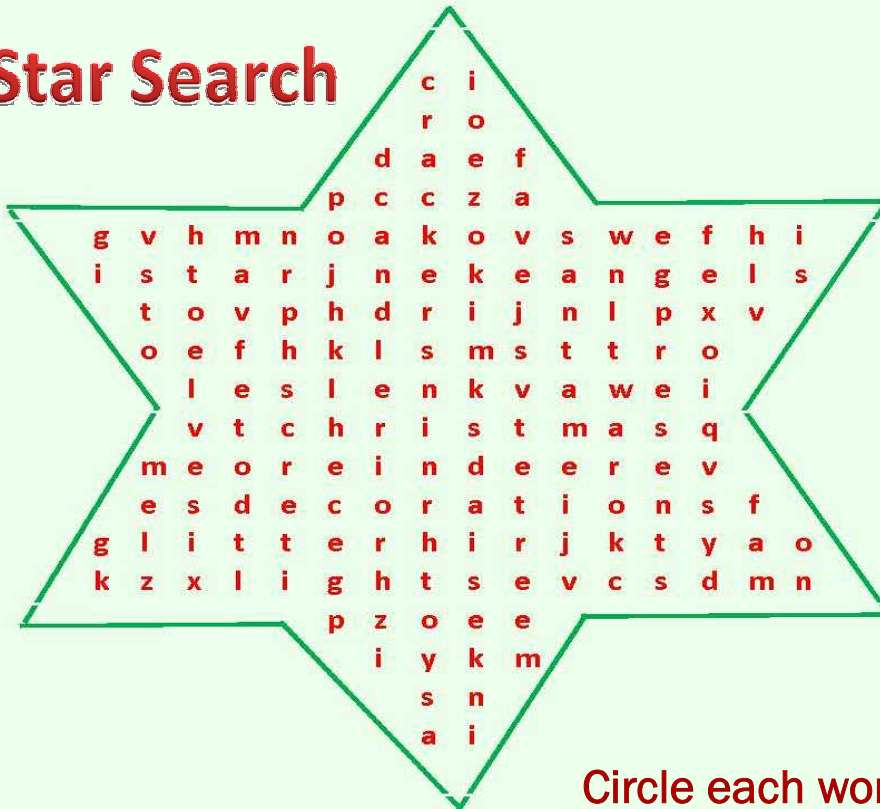


Ian has settled in well and is a valuable member of the team.

We are all looking forward to welcoming Zoe McGrady back in January after the birth of her son Zac.

Murray Paton is hoping to return to work after the Christmas break. Murray sends his sincere thanks for all the good wishes he has received.

Star Search



- Decorations
- Angel
- Toys
- Candle
- Glitter
- Lights
- Santa
- Presents
- Christmas Tree
- Reindeer
- Crackers
- Elves
- Star

Circle each word as you find it.

All the answers are numbers:

1. How many reindeers does Santa have?
2. How many gifts did the Wise Men bring?
3. How many Sundays are there in advent?
4. In the Christmas Carol how many "Lords a Leaping"?
5. Traditionally when should Christmas decorations be taken down?



Answers
(1) 9 (2) 3 (3) 4 (4) 10 (5) 12th night



CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS
OFFICE CLOSURE AND EMERGENCY REPAIRS



Our office will close at lunchtime on Friday 24th December 2010 and re-open on Thursday 6th January 2011 at 9.00 a.m.

Please note that if you need to report an emergency repair when our office is closed you should telephone **0845 719 0019**

This number should be used for all emergency repairs until Wednesday 5th January 2011.

On Wednesday 5th January 2011 between the hours of 9:00am and 4:45pm please call 07787154429 for all emergency repairs.

The Emergency Response Centre will arrange for an appropriate worker to respond if the request is an emergency. It is important that this service is only used for genuine emergencies.

Examples of these include:

Burst pipes, no heating, no electricity or gas, dangerous electric fittings such as switches or sockets, no hot water, insecure doors/windows at ground floor level, toilet not flushing (if there is no other toilet that you can use in the house), blocked sink, bath or drain.

**EVERYONE AT
AYRSHIRE HOUSING
SENDS YOU SEASON'S GREETINGS**

