



East Ayrshire Tenants & Residents Federation

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Working Together For Better Communities



Chairperson's Welcome

Hello everyone. Well hasn't this year flown past. We say that every year, but I really think it has this year. Every year that passes the Federation and the member groups achieve more than the previous one and this year was no exception.

I wish to thank each and every person that is a member of the Federation Executive Committee and our local groups for all the work and effort they put in to making this year a success, whether it was in the numerous projects the groups have developed or in the work of the Federation on Tenant Scrutiny, attending training and assisting the Federation provide responses to The Scottish Government Consultations that appear all too regularly.

Our work on Tenant Scrutiny gives us an insight into the Council's Housing Service policies, procedures and services which, in turn enables improvements and builds upon the joint working between the Council and its tenants. This has been recognised as being amongst the best in Scotland, with many groups nationwide wishing to use our methods as blue prints.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Management and Staff of East Ayrshire Council, The Provost and local Councillors for their support and funding provided to the Federation and local groups and the Tenants Information Service who provide our independent advice and support as well as encouragement to both the Federation and its groups.

I hope when you read this newsletter it will encourage you to try some of the projects you see others doing or if you are not part of a group, why not join one or set one up in your area! How to get involved is contained in this newsletter.

I hope that the work that is ongoing at the moment will raise the profile of The Federation and our member groups and keep our record of success in the premier award for tenant participation, The Frances Nelson Award.

Keep up the good work!

Yours,

Bruce Cuthbertson *Chairperson, EATRF*

The Federation Out & About



This year the Federation planned our Outreach Programme to either support local groups achieve their goals or lay the foundation for meetings in areas with no groups in the hope of assisting local people to set up new groups in the near future.

In May this year, we held an information stall at the Holy Fair in Mauchline for the first time with the hope of starting a new tenants and residents group. As a result of this, we signed up a new individual member from Mauchline, and plan to visit the area again in the coming months to see if we can assist local people to set up a tenants and residents group of their own.

Also in May we had a stall in the Grand Hall, Kilmarnock at an event organised by the East Ayrshire Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Council's Vibrant Communities Service for Third Sector groups. This was another great opportunity for us to re-establish communication with old friends as well as making new contacts for the future.

June was another busy month for the Federation where we attended Gala Days and Fun Days in Crosshouse and Auchinleck with the purpose of talking to people from far and wide and supporting our member groups as well as having a stall at the Tenants Information Service Conference, where we met with over 200 tenants and residents from all over Scotland.

In July, we visited our friends in Bellsbank, providing support and also the PA system to allow the day to progress smoothly, and for once our gazebo did not try to fly.

Well, we are now in September and again we visited the Annual Fun Day in Kilmarnock, full of excited children and harassed parents, a very good day; and in the same week we visited Newmilns for another well organised Gala Day.

All of this work helps us to meet tenants and residents from across East Ayrshire to find out more about what is going on in local areas and to promote the work of the Federation and our member groups. If you are having an event in your area, we would love to come along, bring our stall and meet people in your community to let them know more about the Federation's work.

Please call 01563 524073 to invite us to your area.

Russell Murdoch *Secretary, EATRF*



The Federation – Our Tenant Scrutiny Progress...

As you will know from articles in our previous newsletters, Tenant Scrutiny in its many guises has been ongoing for quite a while now, and at the moment we are working with the Council's Housing Service to scrutinise and give our views and make recommendations for improvement on the Housing Improvement Programme, Housing Repairs, Antisocial Behaviour, Housing Allocations and Estate Management.



To carry out scrutiny, we rely on tenants and residents to give up a bit of their time to receive training which enables them to have the confidence and skills to carry out the work required.

Our latest training has enabled our volunteers to carry out mystery shopping, this allows them to focus on a particular part of a service and test the system to see if it delivers the information you, the service user require. This training is simple, informal and fun to get involved in and is based on common sense. The training can be provided in the Federation office, as well as other venues across East Ayrshire and some of the mystery shopping activity can be done from your own home in some cases, such as telephone calls and surveys.

Mystery shopping is only one method of scrutiny, others such as work shadowing, focus groups, Tenant Led Inspections and meetings with staff have all been used by us over the last couple of years to help improve the service to the customer as well as assisting us to build better relationships with the workforce. In addition, the methods we have used are seen as some of the best in Scotland and have helped us establish contact with many groups nationwide who are wishing to come study our work which has won national acclaim and awards.

Would you like to get involved or find out more? If so, we are looking for ordinary people who have a few hours every month to come forward help us improve the services we pay for. You can contact us on 01563 524073 or e-mail secretary.eatrf@yahoo.co.uk and help us make a difference. We think that like us, you would really enjoy it!

TIS

Conference

In June this year members of local tenants and residents groups attended the Tenants Information Service (TIS) Annual Conference in Glasgow. This gave us an opportunity to meet tenants from all over Scotland, hear from the Housing Minister, Margaret Burgess MSP, find out more about the important issues of the day and go on study visits to see first-hand some of the great work and excellent regeneration projects going on in Glasgow. We were also really delighted to see members of Gauchalland East Tenants and Residents Association, Frank Dawson and Peter Hood collect their certificate as runners up in the national Frances Nelson MBE Award, no mean feat with over 25 nominations made from across Scotland.

TIS CONFERENCE – “This was the best TIS conference that I have ever attended and I returned buzzing with new ideas that we will use in East Ayrshire”. “The workshops and the study visit were excellent and informative”. “Once again we were able to network with tenants from across Scotland” – EATRF members



More about Mystery Shopping – would you like to get involved?



Become a Mystery Shopper!!

Would you like to get more involved with East Ayrshire Council's Housing Service?

Mystery Shopping is a form of market research for tenants to test the service and record their experience and impressions. The Council has introduced Mystery Shopping as an alternative way of involving tenants in the review of Housing Services.

The initiative provides management information for East Ayrshire Council Housing Services to assist in the development and improvement services.

It also gives those involved a chance to develop their organisational and interview skills. Tenants are given specialist training and support from the Customer Liaison Team.

This enables the Mystery Shoppers to effectively test the Service.

If you would like to become a Mystery Shopper please contact the Customer Liaison Team on **01563 554878**, or email **housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk**

East Ayrshire Garden Competition

Once again two members of the Federation Executive Committee were really pleased to be involved in the judging of the East Ayrshire Garden Competition. Sam Craig, Federation judge said "It is really great to be involved in judging the Garden Competition and once again the gardens we visited were fantastic. So many people work really hard to grow beautiful flowers, shrubs, overflowing containers, hanging baskets and healthy vegetable plots, it really makes East Ayrshire bloom. We would like to commend all entrants for all their hard work and look forward to hearing the announcement of this year's winners."



Seeking Views of Younger Tenants

- Are you a tenant under 25 years of age?
- Would you like to have more of a say in housing and other local issues?
- Do you think your home or community could be improved?
- Are you the only young person living in your block?
- Is there anything happening in your area that worries, concerns or annoys you?

If you have answered yes to any of the above, the Federation would be delighted to hear from you. We're keen to find out what younger tenants think and how we can improve our communication with you. Please give us a call on **01563 524073** or e-mail **secretary.eatrf@yahoo.co.uk**

Update from East Ayrshire Council.....

ROUTINE REPAIRS

Repairs and maintenance of your home is organised and carried out by Housing Asset Services.

The Housing Asset Service is split into two divisions:

Housing Improvement with a focus on ensuring the Council Housing Stock achieves and maintains the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 and beyond.

Housing Maintenance with a focus on repairs and maintenance outwith the Scottish Housing Quality Standard/Gas programmes.

Recent improvements in the Housing Maintenance service have seen the introduction of pre-inspections by appointments. This was introduced following feedback from tenants who welcomed an appointed visit **thus relieving them of the unknown** as to when an Officer will attend. Similarly an appointment system for carrying out routine repair work has been introduced. This process allows Housing Asset Officers to arrange a mutually convenient date for internal repair work, when with the tenant at point of inspection. Tenants who require an external repair will be contacted by Housing Asset Services within 5 days of inspection and given an appointment on an agreed date.

The next part of this overall improved service to tenants is to review and revise the established timescales for routine repairs and the Tenants and Residents Federation will, over the coming months, be working in partnership with Housing Asset Services to agree and introduce new target timescales.

PAYING YOUR RENT

Your rent is due to be paid in advance on a weekly basis. You can arrange to pay your rent every fortnight or every month, in advance, if this is how you prefer to make your payments. You should contact your Housing Officer if you choose to pay out with the normal weekly pattern.

Annual rent is paid over 48 weeks, with 4 free weeks. However, if your rent is in arrears you should continue to make payments during the free weeks to reduce your arrears balance.

A large amount of rent goes into repairing and upgrading our tenants' homes. Failure to pay your rent limits the amount of money we have available to carry out the repairs and upgrades you may wish.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Local Community Hub: From April 2014, payments can be made in person at any of the five local community hubs

Post Office / Pay Point: You can pay your rent at over 100 Post Offices and Pay Points across East Ayrshire. Payments can be made at any local Post Office or in premises displaying the Pay Point sign. In many cases these outlets have extended opening times, allowing you to make payments at a time most convenient to you. To make payments at these outlets, you will need a payment card or bar-coded bill.

Phone: Payments can be made by telephoning 01563 554400 or by using our automated payment line – 0845 372 5334. You must have your Tenancy Reference Number and credit/debit card details available.

Online: You can make payments online at www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk using a debit / credit card for a number of Council services. These services include: • Rents • Home & Contents Insurance • Council Tax • Non Domestic Rates • Community Charge • Debtors • Accounts Receivable

Payments made by credit card will be subject to an additional charge which equates to the card transaction charge currently levied on the Council by operating banks.

Payments can be made by logging onto East Ayrshire Council's website at: www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk

VOIDS

The Voids Section within Housing Asset Services aims to ensure that the Council's properties are repaired and ready to relet as quickly as practicable.

During 2013/14, over 1800 void properties were returned to Housing Services prepared and ready for let. All properties meet the Council's minimum Lettable Standard within the established timescales of either 10 or 20 working days.

The minimum Lettable Standard, first introduced in 2002, is applied to every empty property before being relet, to ensure our new tenants are provided with homes that are free from major repair, meet health and safety requirements and are clean and fit for habitation.

New tenant satisfaction levels are extremely positive, as reflected below; but to ensure these standards continue to remain relevant: East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation will, in the near future, be jointly working with Housing Asset Services to review the agreed minimum Lettable Standards.

Very Satisfied/Fairly satisfied	94.41%
Neither Satisfied/Dissatisfied	3.37%
Fairly Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	2.21%

Post: Cheques/postal orders should be made payable to "East Ayrshire Council" quoting your Name, Address and Tenancy Reference Number on the reverse and sent to your local community hub. Remember to cross your cheque/postal orders.

Direct Debit: One of the easiest ways to make regular Council payments is by Direct Debit. These are easy to set up and once in place, all your payments will be made automatically, on time - and in line with your instalment plan.

We can help you complete the appropriate mandate form and we will arrange payments with your bank/building society. Direct debit mandate forms are available from any local community hub; from www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk or by calling 01563 554400.

Standing Order: If you wish to pay your rent by Standing Order you will need to complete a Standing Order request form, which once completed should be handed into your bank.

Forms are available by telephoning (01563) 576375/576431/576364 or alternatively, contact your Housing Officer.

Council Employees: If you work for the Council your rent can be deducted directly from your salary.

Customer account: A customer account gives you access to your rent, insurance and council tax accounts online. You can view your balance and payment history online and make a payment at your own convenience. To sign up for an account go to www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/signin

Problems Paying your Rent: If you are having problems paying your rent, please arrange to speak to your Housing Officer at the earliest opportunity, who will be happy to make a realistic and affordable payment plan to help you pay off any arrears. If you make and keep to your payment plan, we will suspend any current recovery action against you.

Legal Action: If you do not make arrangements to pay off your rent arrears, or if you fail to keep to your arrangement then the Council may take court action against you.

This could result in the Council evicting you from your home or withdrawing your right to a secure tenancy.

Useful Contacts: More information is available on our website at: www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Housing / Council Tax Benefit Section: Tel: 01563 554400

In Court-Advisor: Tel: 01563 549367

Citizens Advice Bureau
Kilmarnock, Tel: 01563 544744
Cumnock, Tel: 01290 429500

Or for further information please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

Property Factoring

In response to the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011, East Ayrshire Council became a registered Factor, providing a factoring service to most mixed tenure flatted properties with a common entry.

The Council's main function as factor is to manage the repair and maintenance of the common parts of factored blocks and services that are common to residents.

The service is provided by a dedicated team within Housing Asset Services, with homeowners in factored blocks, paying a management fee to cover the cost of providing the service.

Since the service was established, the Property Factoring team has received and dealt with over 400 enquiries.

The team has also taken in excess of 500 calls

regarding common repairs to factored blocks, many in response to inspections carried out by the Property Factoring Asset Officer.

It is in everyone's interest to ensure the condition of properties is well repaired and maintained, and this service aims to deliver a prompt repair and maintenance service for common areas; making it less problematic for those living in buildings with shared ownership.

Most homeowners have been receptive to, and positive about the factoring service, realising well managed and well maintained properties protect their investment in their property.

For all enquiries to the Property Factoring Team contact (01563) 555555 or e-mail factoring@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Welfare Reform Update Universal Credit

What Does This Mean To You?

The Universal Credit system merges six working-age benefits - income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, income support, child tax credit, working tax credit and housing benefit - into a single payment in a far-reaching change designed to encourage work and reduce fraud.

It is currently being rolled out at 10 job centres throughout the UK to single claimants but a further 90 jobcentres will shortly start to roll out Universal Credit. Current plans will see new claims to existing benefits closed during 2016. This will mean that all new benefit claimants across the country will claim UC instead of the benefits it replaces. From 2016 – 2017 most existing benefit claimants will be moved over to Universal Credit. However, it has now been

acknowledged that at least 700,000 claimants will not be on Universal Credit by the end of 2017.

One of the major changes is that claimants will receive all the income from Universal Credit as a monthly sum. Housing Benefit will be paid directly to the claimant as part of the Universal Credit.

Housing Services is currently reviewing its service to face the challenge of Universal Credit thus allowing us to adapt to new ways of working and to support our tenants. Benefit advice and budgeting help will be important through this period as is developing new ways to engage with our tenants to avoid people falling into arrears.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) may be made by way of financial assistance to claimants who are entitled to Housing Benefit and who appear to require some financial assistance in order to meet housing costs.

Under these regulations the authority has the discretion as to whether or not to make payment in particular cases and as to the amount and period of award.

DHPs are extra payments to help pay rent. We give DHPs to people claiming benefit who need more help with their housing costs, if these are more than the amount of benefit they get.

The Government gives us an amount of money to pay out each year as DHPs and we cannot spend more than this.

We cannot give DHPs for the following:

service charges not covered by Housing Benefit
to cover any shortfall in Housing Benefit that occurs due to an overpayment being recovered when your Housing Benefit payments are suspended
rent, if you are only entitled to Council Tax Reduction

The Scottish Government has committed funding to alleviate the 'Bedroom Tax' for all. If you are an East Ayrshire Council tenant and in receipt of Housing Benefit you will be entitled to a Discretionary Housing Payment.

Contact your housing officer, who will arrange this for you.

Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) is a national scheme run by local authorities, based on guidance from Scottish Government.

The guidance takes the previous Social Fund rules (which were administered by the Department for Work and Pensions) as the starting point, but has important differences and takes Scottish priorities into account. The SWF aims to take advantage of the opportunity to strengthen links to other local services and provide a better service to vulnerable members of the local community.

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- provide a safety net in a disaster or emergency, when there is an immediate threat to health or safety
- enable independent living or continued independent living, preventing the need for institutional care

There are two types of grants in the SWF:

- Crisis Grants
- Community Care Grants

A Crisis Grant aims to help people, typically on benefits, who are in crisis because of a disaster or an emergency. A disaster is something like a fire or a flood. An emergency might be the need to travel to visit a sick child or when money has been stolen.

A Community Care Grant aims to help people on benefits who may have to go into care unless they get some support to stay at home, or if they are leaving any form of care and need help to set up their own home (for example, they may be leaving hospital, prison or a residential care home). A Community Care Grant can also help families facing exceptional pressures with one-off items like a cooker or a washing machine.

The SWF is a discretionary, budget-limited scheme that prioritises applications according to need. It provides grants that do not have to be repaid. It does not provide loans. These grants may be in the form of goods being ordered and delivered to you, a voucher for fuel or a cash award in certain circumstances.

WHO CAN APPLY?

You must be over 16, on a low income or in receipt of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit

HOW TO APPLY

By phone: A separate telephone number has been set up at 01563 576900 to accept applications

By post: You can download an application form from www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk and then post it to us at Scottish Welfare Fund, PO BOX 13, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire, KA1 1BY

Online: You can apply online at https://swf.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/OPENAccess/live/scripts/orev.wsc/ibxmlpr.r?docid=da_screentree

No face to face service is available unless there are exceptional circumstances. If this is the case, the SWF Team should be contacted for further information and to make arrangements.

The SWF Team will check personal circumstances, using information we already have where possible. In certain circumstances further information or proof will be required from the customer.

The target is to process Crisis Grant applications within two working days and Community Care Grants within 15 working days; however we will aim to process these more quickly where possible.

A different member of the team will make a decision from the person who takes the application; therefore it will not be possible to give an instant answer when an application is made. As the funds are budget-limited there will be claims that are not paid because they do not meet the priority set for that period.

HOW OFTEN YOU CAN APPLY?

There is a limit of three awards per rolling 12 month period for Crisis Grants. There is no restriction on how many times someone can apply for Community Care Grant.

PAYMENT

Where a cash award is granted, payments will be made using PayPoint, which has many outlets within the East Ayrshire area. You will be sent a code by text message and will take this to your nearest or most convenient PayPoint outlet. You will need to provide proof of your identity and will be given cash for their code. Where a text message cannot be sent, arrangements will be made to provide a voucher to you which can be used with PayPoint.

Where an award has been made that includes white goods or furniture (e.g. fridge or bed) these items will be ordered and delivered to you. Where appropriate these will also be fitted. You will be advised of when the goods will be delivered so that arrangements can be made to receive them. We will not give you money to buy white goods or furniture yourself and we will not refund the cost of goods if you have bought them before your grant is decided.

APPEALS

For those claims that have been refused, you have the right of appeal. Appeals must be made in writing within 20 working days of our decision. There is a three stage appeal system. The first tier appeal will be considered by managers within the Revenues and Benefits Section who have not had any input into the original claim. The target for dealing with these is two working days for Crisis Grants and 15 working days for Community Care Grants.

Should you wish to appeal this decision, the second stage appeal will be dealt with by a panel (minimum of two people) made up of staff outwith the Revenues and Benefits Section. The maximum time for dealing with these is five working days for Crisis Grants and 30 working days for Community Care Grants. Any further disputes would be dealt with by the Ombudsman.

Benefits Calculator

CALCULATE BENEFITS ONLINE



Turn2us has launched a new, free online benefits calculator in response to major changes to the welfare benefit system.

The calculator helps individuals to find out what welfare benefits they are entitled to, how much they should receive and how to make a claim. The calculator, which is accessible on

desktop computers or mobile devices, estimates any expected UniversalCredit entitlement and how it compares to current benefit rates.

Also, the Turn2us Grants Search tool helps people find other sources of help.

For more information, visit
www.benefits.turn2us.org.uk

Fuel Savings: Don't Be Left Out in the Cold

We all know that as the winter approaches the cost of heating our homes will be on our minds. This year to help us find out how we can try to reduce our bills, there will be a workshop specifically on this subject at our Conference on 4th October 2014.

The workshop will be delivered by Citrus Energy Ltd which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cunninghame Housing Association Ltd.

Citrus Provides a Home Energy Advice Service and information on the benefits and savings to be made by switching energy suppliers.



So if you want to find out more and hopefully save some money on your fuel bills, come along to our conference – see the back page of this newsletter for your personal invitation.

You can also call Citrus Energy on 0800 221 8089

DRAINAGE

During 2013 the Response Repair service dealt with over 2000 drainage related issues.

A high proportion of these repairs were blocked drains due to non disposable substances being disposed of down sinks and toilets. This places unnecessary demands on the Response Repair service; tying up resources and resulting in delays in

attending more urgent works.

To alleviate the number of instances where the Council is called upon to clear blocked drains/sinks/toilets; Housing Asset Services has produced this useful guide on what should and should not be disposed of into the drainage system and which tenants and residents should take note of and comply with.

By following this simple guidance tenants and residents can avoid being recharged the cost associated with clearing any blockages within the drainage system which are due to misuse.

**Housing Asset Services
East Ayrshire Council**

Bag It & Bin It

Information for tenants on bathroom and kitchen waste

East Ayrshire Council is encouraging tenants to follow the simple information below to avoid any unnecessary blocked toilets and sewage pipes at council and residential properties.

The waste water drain which runs from your house is just 4 inches wide, and is only designed for human waste and toilet roll. When other items are flushed down the toilet they can get lodged in the pipe and build up a blockage. Even items that appear to have same texture as toilet paper (such as wipes) may not break down if flushed down the toilet.

Sanitary items and other personal waste should be disposed of responsibly in the household waste bin. Personal products, should, for health reasons, first be placed in bags and then put in the bin.

Be part of the solution. Follow the simple disposal code: Don't Flush it.... Bag It & Bin It.

CHECKLIST FOR DISPOSING PERSONAL ITEMS....

- ✓ Only flush human waste and toilet roll (not too much!)
- ✓ Keep a bin in the bathroom for any used personal items - special disposal bags are available at pharmacies and supermarkets.



The following items and other "personal products" should not be flushed down the toilet....

- ✗ Fats, oil or grease, which will harden even if put down the sink with hot water or soap
- ✗ Cotton buds and cotton wool
- ✗ Razor blades (place used blades in solid container before putting in Bin to avoid injury)
- ✗ Sanitary products, Colostomy bags, condoms.
- ✗ Decorating waste, Paint, cement and plaster
- ✗ All wipes (baby, facial and cleaning wipe of any type) put in the bin
- ✗ Kitchen roll and paper handkerchiefs
- ✗ Dental floss, medicine, tablets and old bandages
- ✗ Disposable nappies and Incontinence pads (wrap well and put in the bin)
- ✗ Syringes & needles (dispose of them safely in a sharps box or take them to your nearest needle bank)
- ✗ Other items such as food, plastics, chemicals, toilet roll inners, old clothing and rags etc

It can be difficult and expensive to remove some of these items because the Council may have to dig down to the pipe to extract them!

Cooking fats and fat derived substances: Think.... not down the sink!

CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING FAT DERIVED SUBSTANCES, OIL AND GREASE IN YOUR KITCHEN

Do's

- ✓ Do wipe and scrape plates, pans and utensils before washing, including dishwashers (and put the waste into the food recycling bin)
- ✓ Do collect waste oil in a suitable secure container e.g. used animal fat, bacon, grease or chicken fat and small particles of food waste and dispose of responsibly. Use your separate food recycling bin supplied by the Council.
- ✓ Do use strainers in sink plug holes

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not put cooking oil, fat or grease down the sink
- ✗ Do not pour waste oil, fat or grease down the external drain
- ✗ Do not put food scrapings into the sink
- ✗ Do not put building or garden waste down external drains
- ✗ Do not put boiling hot water down the sink to try to dissolve fat and grease. ***It does not work!***



The above simple guidelines will significantly help to maintain free flowing water both within the drains of your property and in the sewage system.

Tenants may be charged the cost to clear blocked Toilets/Drains which are due to tenant fault.

Newton Tenants & Residents Association

Newton Tenants and Residents Association continues to work with East Ayrshire Council and the Federation to ensure continuous improvements in the area. Over the last year as a result of our efforts we have seen several improvements including: a new bin area and new bins in the back garden at 9 Robertson Place, big improvements at St Andrews Walk with scaffolding erected and external rendering in progress, doors repaired, new guttering installed and roof repairs being carried out. Gilmour Street has been greatly improved via the grass cutting service with weed killer sprayed in all areas. Cleaning of guttering and painting of entries in the area is scheduled.

Safety as always is a priority in the Newton area and we ask that tenants and residents ensure that all entry doors are locked at all times. In addition all trees have been trimmed, pathways cleared of leaves and slabs made safe and secure.

We would like to remind all tenants that if the Council carries out a repair for you, please complete the feedback card that the workman will leave and let Newton TARA see a copy of this so that we can continue to work with the Housing Service to ensure services continue to be of a high standard.

Would you like to get involved or find out more? If so, the association is always looking for more members, so if you are 16 years old or over and would like to get involved please come along to our open meetings and have a chance to air your views. All Council tenants, private owners and private rented tenants are most welcome!

Campbell Area Tenants & Residents Association & Neighbourhood Watch

Campbell Area Tenants and Residents Association were formed in 2006, by tenants and residents in the area who wanted to tackle the anti-social behaviour issues affecting them. This then led onto the group fighting for better housing and improvements of the surrounding area.

Recently we have secured new bow top fencing for Campbell Street from the Council's Housing Service environmental budget, we have built planters and filled them with flowers and dwarf fruit trees these



have been placed throughout the surrounding area, this project was made possible through funding provided from Grahams the Plumbers merchant in conjunction with The East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation. We have representatives attending workshops alongside EAC and the EATRF on allocations, antisocial behaviour and tenant's scrutiny, we recently attended the draught Housing Bill consultation and found that being involved and having a voice can make a difference at a government level.

We also have our annual projects of providing hanging baskets for the surrounding area, and at Christmas providing selection boxes to the children who live in the Campbell Area.

Future projects on the agenda are to have a tidy up around the flats in Isle Street, by having the shrubbery removed and flowerbeds installed. We are also planning a memorial rose garden for Kathy Brown MBE for her services to the community. Another project we are hoping to achieve is to provide a new bench at the bus stop at the bottom of Campbell Street in memorial to Elizabeth Gordon for her services to the whole community. This project will be in conjunction with her husband Ian.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation and TIS for all their support and for the use of their resources.

**For more information please contact Lisa Fulton (Secretary): 07716 017548.
E-Mail: lisafulton72@gmail.com**

Gauchalland East Tenants & Residents Association

This year Gauchalland East TARA has established a community garden with a twist. The project utilised waste ground which is now leased from East Ayrshire Council and not only have the new facilities given residents the chance to come and enjoy the outdoors but this work has achieved many things on top. The project has reduced the carbon footprint of the local community by supplying, selling and growing its own fruit and vegetables. Twice weekly we sell locally sourced fruit and vegetables to the local community meaning that you don't have to drive to the supermarket. Ongoing the group will be growing its own fruit and vegetables which we will also sell. The installation of 2 Eco domes ensure that produce which is susceptible to the elements can be grown all year round.

We identified the need to get children involved in the Eco Friendly elements of the project and one of eco domes has been allocated for the local school. The children are encouraged to come along and get involved with the growing of produce and get to see the "seed to plate" way of life in action.

Our portacabin which has many uses is fully functional with electricity, running water, telephone and internet access. Local groups regularly use the cabin to hold meetings and it is available for anyone to generally come along, make friends and have a cup of tea and a chat. The garden and the portacabin have been designed with all groups in mind and are easily accessible by wheelchair users and the infirm.

If you would like to get involved or want more information about the group or our projects please contact: Peter or Alec on: 01563 822656 or email: gauchallandtara@gmail.com



Onthank Tenants & Residents Association



As a follow on extension of our previous projects of 3 community gardens and hanging baskets throughout the whole of Onthank area, the Tenants & Residents Association this year

developed our "Commonwealth in Bloom" project, in recognition of the Commonwealth Games being held in Scotland this summer.

Local children from the 2 area primary schools were invited to participate in a commonwealth themed art competition. There was 2 prize winners picked (one from each school) and their artwork was put onto banners which are now displayed in 2 of the community gardens.

Some of the flowers and plants have been grown by local residents and in some instances these are specialist and are being grown in the area for the very first time. Planters within the 3 gardens depict the Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish flags. In addition to the planters 90 hanging baskets are also commonwealth themed.

The gardens will now form part of the schools eco programme with 2 eco domes to be installed at the end of the summer season and become the symbol and lasting legacy of the Commonwealth Games in Scotland.

The project was supported by EAC, Housing, Roads, Environmental Services and Outdoor amenities, North Division Federation, East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation, TIS and the CVO.

2 trees will be adopted by the 2 local schools (1 per school).

Funding for this project was successfully secured from 2 sources = Big Lottery Funding and CSGN (Central Scotland Green Network).

The group is hoping that local residents and visitors to the area continue to enjoy the gardens.



Kirkstyle Tenants & Residents Association

This year Kirkstyle Tenants & Residents Association successfully worked with East Ayrshire Council to get new play facilities installed on a site that had previously been a play area but had become run down and dilapidated. Most of the original play equipment had been removed due to its state of disrepair and had never been replaced and we began discussion with East Ayrshire Council approximately 5 years ago with the idea of replacing the old play area with new, exciting and safe equipment. Initially budget restrictions delayed any progress on this project, however we did not give up and maintained constant contact with the council, ensuring the idea of the new play area did not fade.

We involved local children to get ideas on exactly what they would like the play area to look like and what play equipment they would like to see in it. The children requested trips to other play areas and together with the group they put together a wish list and plan of the play area. Based on the plans and ideas given by the local children the group successfully

saw the installation of the new play facilities in March this year.

The area consists of 10 items of play equipment and was installed with safety in mind and the area now benefits from a new drainage system which was not in place previously.

The area has been a great success and is used daily by local children who cannot get enough of it. The group have agreed with the Council regarding the ongoing maintenance of the play area to ensure it is well maintained and does not fall into disrepair again.

If you would like to get involved or receive information on the work of the group contact: Russell Murdoch on 07543 099516 or email: secretary.eatrf@yahoo.co.uk



Auchinleck Tenants & Residents Association



Auchinleck Tenants & Residents Association has now been up and running for around one and a half years. As expected, it took

a wee while to find our feet and we couldn't have done it without the support and expertise we received from Sharon Donohoe. Sharon has given us loads of help, along with East Ayrshire Council, as regards applying for funding etc. Caroline Harte, the Federation Administration Officer has also been great, printing flyers, tickets and posters etc, when we needed them and for which we are very grateful.

Since starting out we have increased our Members from seven to ten, which we are pleased about. Everyone works well together and hopefully we are going forward apace.

Since the start we have a few projects under our belt. Our first one was taking a stall at the local Gala Day. We didn't actually make any money but we had a great day [in the rain] and the kids loved our games, and prizes. We had Hoopla, Coconut Shy, Play Your Cards Right and Roll the Pennies. A Litter-

Pick was next, with help and advice from Gordon Crocket, Environmental Officer, EAC. This was good fun and a few kids did turn up and helped us pick up 20 bags of rubbish in one hour, which went along way to making the area look much tidier.

In February this year we had a very successful "Freddie Mercury Tribute Night" in the Boswell Centre. It was a resounding success. Our Chair, David Shirkie, organised the appearance of "Freddie". It turns out he works beside David [we thought he was dead!!]. What a great night everybody had and folk are always asking when we are doing it again.

Our latest project was our biggest yet. It was a Graffiti Wall on the gable end of the local Co-op store. Funding for this came from the Co-op Community Fund and the Minerals Trust.

The artist, Frank Carty, from Artisan Artworks in Newmilns, worked with the local community to do portraits, in Graffiti style, of local people, young and not so young. It's been a real talking point in the village ever since. So, we've not been idle here in Auchinleck and more recently had some stalls at the Gala Day on 21st of June. So onwards and upwards!!

Reaching Out Across Scotland...

As well as working to influence and improve housing services within East Ayrshire, the Federation and members of our local groups agree that it is equally important to try to influence housing services at a Scottish national level, where housing legislation is set. This means that we arrange meetings and discussions with our members and sometimes Housing staff as well, to give our views on any housing related consultations that are carried out.



In addition, through our membership of the Regional Network, we meet regularly with tenants and resident group members from Region 6, which covers East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway. Also once a year we meet with groups from all over Scotland, as well as having the opportunity to meet with Civil Servants and the Housing minister, Margaret Burgess MSP.

Also at a recent joint meeting of the Region 6 & 7 groups, George McMaster, a tenant of River Clyde Homes approached members of EATRF and explained his landlord River Clyde Homes had given his Tenants & Residents Association funding to arrange 2 study visits to see how local groups operated.

We were delighted when he told us he wished to come study our methods and have a look at some of our local groups and their projects, with the hope that he could take some ideas home with him.

We invited him to our office and introduced him to members of our EC and several members of EAC staff, James McKee, Gary Craig, Karen McGourty and John McSheahy. We had a lengthy discussion about how the Federation was set up and operated and how River Clyde Homes was implementing its scrutiny and tenant involvement methods. The tenant representatives' have gone back up to Inverclyde with the idea of duplicating our model for Tenant Participation. The group were also very interested in our work with Housing Asset Services to improve the repair system, particularly the categories and response times.

After a buffet which in reality was a networking session, we went on our mystery tour, starting off in Newmilns, at the Campbell area, showing them the damp proofing and fencing work carried out, as well as the planters and hanging baskets all achieved by the hard work of the group as well as the future projects planned.

Our next stop was at Gauchalland East area where we examined the Bio Domes as well as the other work done by this hard working group members. We then crossed the road to look at a project that has had a lot of planning and paper work done but is still in its early stages of building at Gateside. At all three areas the members of our groups shared their experiences both good and bad with the tenants of Weir Street and as the group boarded their bus to take them home they were full of praise for the projects and for our members who made them possible.

The Federation presented each visitor with mementos of their visit and George said that they certainly got their eyes opened with the work done by both our Federation and our groups and we had given them many ideas for them to put in to practice in their area.



Scottish Housing
Regulator

News

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) have finalised work on its website to allow tenants and other users to access the new Landlord Report, and other information about landlords. This new facility is now available for access at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

The Landlord report is accessible from SHR's website home page. The website has a new search facility to help find information about a landlord and open the Landlord Report. The Landlord Report displays data that the landlord has sent to SHR in their Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). The Landlord Report focuses on the areas of a landlord's performance that tenants have told SHR matter most to them. Tenants are able to not only see their

own landlord's Report, but also compare their landlord's performance against that of up to four other landlords, at any one time. All of the data that has been sent to SHR in the ARC returns is also available through the SHR website www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk.

Tenants and others are able to access the ARC data sent to SHR by Councils and Registered Social Landlords.

To help tenants and others find the information they may need about a landlord's performance against the Charter, SHR has produced a short video that is on its website to guide users through the whole journey."

More Fed News

COMMONWEALTH BATON RELAY



Saturday 21st June 2014, was a great day a day East Ayrshire will not forget, that's the day the Commonwealth Baton visited our communities. The federation was privileged to have 2 members of our Executive Committee carrying the baton, both of them, Bruce Cuthbertson and Frank Dawson were proud to be given the honour, for themselves, the Federation and the groups they represent.



Bruce from Hurlford did his 'running' in New Cumnock and Frank 'ran' in his own village of Galston with both men surviving the experience. It was great to hear the reasons why all the baton bearers were taking part and we believe all the runners did East Ayrshire proud.



DRUMHEAD SERVICE



During the next five years people in communities across Scotland will gather together to remember the sacrifice made by those who endured the first world war. This year East Ayrshire Council ran two buses, one from Kilmarnock and the other from Cumnock to the event which was held in Edinburgh Castle Esplanade. After the service everyone was invited to march along the Royal Mile to Holyrood Park, where one of our ex-service members laid a wreath on behalf

of East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation.

We were pleased to be in attendance at this service and it was definitely something worth being part of! The pipes and drums of the three services played fabulous music as wreaths were laid and even the heavy rain could not ruin this poignant event.





You're Invited



**THE 2014 EATRF AND EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
JOINT CONFERENCE FOR TENANTS & RESIDENTS**

We are delighted to invite you to attend the first joint East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation and East Ayrshire Council tenants and residents conference

ON Saturday 4th October 2014

AT 9.30am-3.30pm

IN St. Joseph's Campus

GRASSYARDS ROAD, NEW FARM LOCH, KILMARNOCK

Come along to meet the Federation Executive Committee, Housing Minister Margaret Burgess MSP, Senior Officers, Elected Members, staff of East Ayrshire Council, Federation member groups and other tenants and residents from all over East Ayrshire and get involved in our discussion sessions or study visit. There will also be an opportunity to browse and pick up lots of useful information and free gifts from the many stalls in our Market Place.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided and travel expenses will be paid – there will also be a free raffle.....

To book your place please call Caroline Harte on 01563 524073
or e-mail charte@tis.org.uk before 2pm on Tuesday 30th September 2014

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like to find out more about East Ayrshire Tenants & Residents Federation, set up a tenants and residents group in your area, become a "Community Voice" for your area or find out about Federation membership or any issues mentioned in this newsletter please contact us at:

East Ayrshire Tenants & Residents Federation 19 Portland Road, Kilmarnock, KA1 2BT
Telephone: 01563 524073 E-mail: secretary.eatrf@yahoo.co.uk or Visit our web site: www.eatrf.org.uk



East Ayrshire Tenants & Residents Federation



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