

Working with Communities



Strathclyde Police, working in partnership with, Inverclyde Council, Larkfield Housing Association and River Clyde Homes continue to work to make Larkfield a safer community.

However, unfortunately in recent weeks we have witnessed an increase in fly-tipping, vandalism and general anti-social behaviour across the estate.

The cost to the community in repairing damage and clearing up areas is considerable. Efforts are currently being made to identify the culprits and action will be taken against those persons responsible.

I would encourage residents to report all incidences of anti-social behaviour to:

Strathclyde Police	01475 492500
Community Wardens	0800 01 317 01
Crime Stoppers	0800 555 111

With your support and the work of the partner agencies we can help make Larkfield a safer and more pleasant community to live in.

Welcome



Welcome to our bumper summer edition of our newsletter. In this edition you will find our yearly report card on how well we are meeting our targets, some of the new ventures we are launching, and much, much more. Also we say goodbye to 2 of the longest serving Management Committee Members, Danny & Agnes McMillan. A huge thanks to

both of them for all their hard work and dedication since 1997 and we all hope they enjoy their retirement from the Committee.

On behalf of the Committee of Management and all the staff at the Association we hope you enjoy your summer, whether you are staying at home or going away.

Office Closure:

Our office will be closed for the Greenock fair on **Friday 1st July and Monday 4th July, 2011 and on Friday 4th September and Monday 7th September for the September weekend.**



Repair Prize Draw:

The winners of the £20 Tesco voucher for **Feb/Mar** are **A Mitchell 181 Banff Road** and for **Apr/May** is **G Jenkins 11 Essex Road**, Congratulations. Please remember to return your repair receipts to ensure your entry to the next prize draw.

Free Home Fire Safety Advice

There is an increase in the number of domestic house fires being attended by the Strathclyde Fire Service throughout Inverclyde and your local fire fighters are looking to help their community by providing **FREE Home Fire Safety Visits**; which can be easily arranged by calling either **Greenock Fire Station on 722222 or 0800 0731 999.**

During the visit fire fighters will check each room of your house with you, helping you to make sure your house is safe. If you don't have a smoke alarm they will fit one Free of Charge.

Think fire can't happen to you? Think again!
Call Now!



Garden Competition

It's that time of year again when staff are out and about in the estate carrying out garden inspections and compiling lists of the Best Gardens. As in previous years there will be a tenant's competition and an owner's competition with a **1st prize of £100, 2nd Prizes of £60** and an additional category for tenants of **"Most Improved" with a prize of £85.** The short listing of entries and judging will be as in previous years and the judging will take place on **Wednesday 27th July 2011**, weather permitting.



Spot the Lolly

Can you spot all the Ice lollies which are hidden throughout this issue of our newsletter! Please send in how many you can spot to the office for a chance to win a £5 Tesco Voucher. Entries close on the **18th July 2011.**



Rent Free Weeks:

The summer rent free weeks are **4th July and 11th July, 2011.** Remember, however, if you have an arrangement to pay towards any rent arrears, you should continue to make your payments during this period. If you are unsure please contact Sharon, Maria or Jackie at the office.

AGM:

The date for your diary is **20th September 2011.** The venue this year will be Larkfield Tenant's Hall at 6:30pm. The AGM is an opportunity for you to hear what the Association has been doing all year and to let us hear your opinion regarding our services.



Free Trip to Tall Ships

As many of you will know the Tall Ships are coming to Inverclyde from the 9th till the 12th of July. To mark this special occasion the Association as part of our tenant participation strategy is planning to take 10 lucky tenants to the Tall Ship events on Monday 11th July where we will provide transport to and from the event site, a special lunch and a tour of one of the ships. If you are a tenant, aged 60+ and would like to be part of this extra special event please contact Sharon Rowatt, Housing Officer at the office 630930, no later than Thursday, 7th July 2011.



Summer play Scheme

Its that time of year again when the kids finish school and you are wondering what is happening around the area. Well look no further, below is some of the activities happening within Larkfield and beyond to keep the kids amused.

- Ravenscraig Summer Playscheme at Ravenscraig Sports Centre starting Monday 11th July till Friday 5th August – Monday till Friday 9.30am till 12.30pm and 1.30pm till 4pm. For further details contact Bev Mathieson on 715595/97. Admission £2 per session.
- Football Summer Programme – Battery Park – Monday 11th July till Friday 15th July and Monday 1st August till Friday 5th August from 10am till 12 Noon. £20 per week or £5 per session. Ages 5-12 years of age. For further details contact 715775.
- Mini Athletics Camps – Inverclyde Academy for 5-8 years old starting 10am till 12 noon on 4th – 8th July, 11th to 15 July, 18th to 22nd July and 25th to 29th July. For further details contact 07538210221.

For more information please go to www.inverclyde.gov.uk



Junior Newsletter

As part of our last tenant participation focus group it was suggested that the Association produce a Junior Newsletter for the younger members of our community. To enable us to do this we would like to have the young people of Larkfield's input. With your help we hope to produce our 1st Junior Newsletter in September, so if you are aged between 8 & 16 years old we would love to have your input into a junior newsletter. If you are interested in helping us please contact the office on 01475 630930.

Tenants Hall update

The tenant's hall is going from strength to strength with Mother and Toddlers groups taking place twice a week, Dance Troup rehearsing 2 nights a week. However, if you would like to hire the hall for a special occasion then **please contact Danny McMillan on 01475 639353 or Georgie Wilson at 114 Burns Road.** Alternatively you can collect a booking form from our office. A date for your diary **28th June, 2011** Youth Connections is holding a psychic night. **Admission is £3 and the fun starts at 7.30pm.** Everyone welcome!

Annual Tenancy Visits

Over the next 12 months we aim to visit each of our tenants as part of our tenant participation strategy. The aim of these visits are to update our records and ensure you are receiving all the services you need, to check if you have any repairs you would like to report, to check the occupancy of your home and to follow up any outstanding issues. We will start with Angus Road and Nairn Road and work our way through the remainder of the scheme. All members of the Housing Management Staff will be involved and they will have their ID badges to identify themselves. We look forward to having a chance to speak to each tenant individually and we would be grateful if you can take the time to speak to us. If you are not in when we visit we will leave a card. Please telephone the office to re-arrange a suitable time for the officers to call back.

Important Gas Servicing



The Association has a number of properties which are due for their annual gas servicing soon. We would be grateful if when you receive your letter that you contact us immediately to arrange your appointment for City Building to carry out this necessary check. Please note it is a condition of your tenancy agreement to allow access. Your assistance is much appreciated.

Ways to pay your rent

By Swipe Card – at the Post Office or a Paypoint outlet

By Direct Debit – This means your rent will be paid automatically from your bank account. We can arrange to complete this form with you. We can automatically increase your rent when your rent increase is due, which means you do not need to do this.



W.I.S.H.E.S

Women's Initiative for Socialising, Health, Education & Skills is a newly formed group of women aged 50+ who meet every **Thursday 10am-12pm at Youth Connection's in Burns Square.** The upcoming activities include Lotions & Potions, Healthy Cookery, Hair & Nail Care, Knitting, Sewing & Crochet & much more. To find out more pop into Youth Connections on a Thursday morning.

Thank you to Danny and Agnes McMillan



After being with the Association for over 14 years, Danny and Agnes McMillan have retired from the Committee of Management.

Danny and Agnes were both founding members of the Association and were involved in the Larkfield Area Repairs Board which led to the development of the Association in 1997.

They both have held various posts over the years including chairing the Association, representing Larkfield at

the Inverclyde Housing Association Forum and on the EVH Executive.

They were also heavily involved in the negotiations which resulted in Larkfield joining the Link Group in 2007 and have represented Larkfield's interests at Link Board meetings in Edinburgh and Falkirk.

At a recent celebration in recognition of their dedication and service to the Association over the last 14 years they were presented with gifts and flowers

by the committee and staff. Links Chief Executive, Craig Sanderson and Chair, Robbie Robertson were also in attendance to present a token of their appreciation on behalf of the Link Group.

They both will be sorely missed by both staff and Committee and we wish them both a long and happy retirement.



Equality and Diversity Update

You will recall in the last newsletter that we sought your help in gathering equality and diversity information. We sent forms to all our tenants in May 2011. Thank you to those who took the time to return the form. To date we have received over 100 completed forms. However, we are looking for as many of our tenants as possible to complete the form.

It would be very helpful therefore if you could take the time to complete and return the form to the office. This information will help the Association know what our tenants needs are and help us plan for the future. Please note, we have a supply in the office if you have mislaid the form that was sent out.

Three of the initial batch of returned forms were selected at random for a prize. The winner of the £50 voucher is Catherine Kelly, Burns Road. The two runners up each receiving a £10 voucher are B McLeod, York Road and E McQuillan, Cambridge Road. Congratulations to all.

Grand Central Savings

If you've ever had difficulty opening a bank account, had to pay high charges to cash a cheque or struggled to budget your money help is at hand through Grand Central Savings.

Based at Nicolson Street, Greenock, Grand Central Savings' friendly staff can help you open a bank account in minutes, where you can keep your money safe with no fees or bank charges.

GCS' Chief Executive Jackie Cropper says "Many people find it difficult to open or run a mainstream bank account for a variety of reasons; whether through lack of ID, debt issues or because of bank charges. Grand Central Savings offers a real solution. Wages, benefits and other payments can be paid directly into your account and we won't charge any fees to cash cheques."

Grand Central Savings is a confidential and independent service that can also provide information and advice on money management and budgeting. Ms Cropper continues



"We work on behalf of our customers to help them manage their money. We can set up rent payment accounts for Larkfield Housing Association tenants that take the hassle out of paying your rent and can also work on your behalf to establish an arrears repayment plan with your landlord if needed"

To find out more call **Grand Central Savings on 01475 884 389** or pop into the branch at 30 Nicolson Street, Greenock, PA15 1UL

Larkfield gives its New Tenants a helping hand



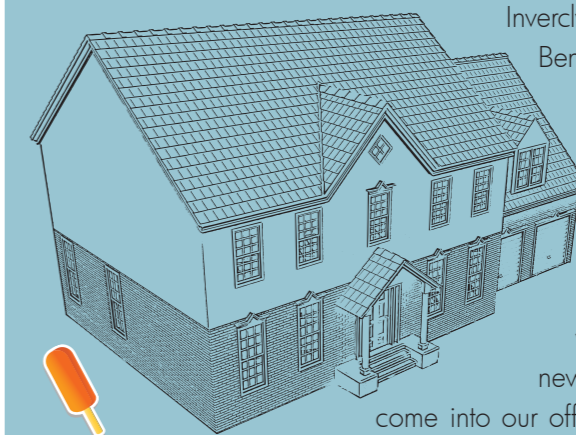
Pictured above is Heather McWilliams of Banff Road receiving the first starter pack.

As part of our Tenant Participation Strategy we are starting an exciting new venture. Larkfield Housing Association will give each new tenant a starter pack consisting of bleach, flash, cloths, washing up liquid, bin bags, toilet roll, Brillo pads and washing up brush, tea, coffee and marigolds. Our new packs aim to help our new tenants start their new life on the right foot!

NEW Advertising Feature

This is a new addition to our newsletter. If you have a Larkfield event or business you would like to let everyone know about we would be pleased to advertise this in our newsletter. For example, "Grass cutting services", "handyman", "dog walking services", "coffee mornings", "babysitting". Please contact the office if you are interested in advertising in our newsletter.

Housing Benefit



Inverclyde Council's Housing Benefit Section have asked us to pilot a new electronic Housing Benefit application form they are introducing. We are the 1st local Association to have this and are looking for tenants who require to complete a new Housing Benefit form to come into our office to fill in their form. This

will save you having to travel into the town and this should speed up the time it takes to process your Housing Benefit Application. If you are interested in completing a form please **contact Sharon Rowatt our Housing Officer on 01475 630930.**

National Home Decoration Pack



and much more – everything you need to decorate your home as well as expert advice from friendly professional staff and FREE delivery. A Discount card is available at the office for collection. All card holder's need to do:

- Order their goods online at www.crowndecoratorcentre.co.uk.
- Visit or ring Alex Robertson and his team at the Crown Decorating Centre – Unit 4, 39, Underwood Road, Paisley, PA3 1TQ – tel: 0141 8874242
- Remember to quote your discount card number when making the purchase

Larkfield Housing Association team is the first Housing Association in the area, to sign up to a 'National Home Decorators Pack' scheme with Crown. The scheme will benefit new tenants as well as current tenants and leaseholders.

Benefits for new tenants

New tenants receive a Crown Home Decorators Pack voucher which will entitle them to claim their comprehensive selection of paint and decorating tools. With 21 carefully selected colours to choose from, which is all delivered free direct to your door with free technical advice and support from Crown Decorating Centre's.

Crown is offering all tenants and owners great discounts of up to 20% off the trade price when they purchase Crown decorating products. Paints, wall coverings, brushes, rollers

- The special discount prices will be automatically calculated and delivery is free regardless of the size or value of order.

Liz Bradley Chairperson of Larkfield Housing Association said:

"We are working with tenants to improve satisfaction levels and we want to give all our new tenants the best possible start in their new homes by providing them with the decorating packs.

But we also wanted to encourage and enable our existing tenants to look after their homes and we hope they will take advantage of the NEW Home Decorating Pack scheme offered by Larkfield.

Tenant Participation Strategy

This year's tenant participation strategy and action plan was approved at the Committee of Managements meeting in May.

This year's action plan includes:

- Provide New Tenants with a welcome pack
- Continue to support community projects
- Engage with tenants and residents on a range of topical housing issues.

- Explore the possibility of setting up a young people's forum/Committee
- Update and revamp the Association's Website.

If you would like a full copy of our tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan, please contact the office.



Performance Review 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011

Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	Comment
Total Rent Arrears	5.1%	3.7%	Performance is better than Target
Non – Technical Arrears	3.5%	2.5%	Performance is better than Target
Time to re-let Vacant Houses	14 Days	14 Days	Target met
Rent Loss from Vacant Property	0.6%	0.2%	Performance Better than Target
Emergency Repairs	100%	99%	1% Under Target
Urgent Repairs	97%	97%	Target met
Routine Repairs	97%	89%	8% under target
Customer Satisfaction with Repairs Service	97%	98%	Performance is better than target
Completed Gas Servicing on or before service anniversary date	100%	100%	Target met

Key: ■ Target Exceeded ■ Target met ■ Target not met

Report Card

How are we doing? We are happy to say that over the past year the Association met or exceeded 7 out of 9 of its targets. The table above shows that in 4 areas we have exceeded our specified targets. This is a good result for the Housing Management & Maintenance staff particularly in the current challenging financial times. If you want to find out more about our performance, contact Martin McKendrick, Assistant Area Manager.

Low Energy Lightbulbs

The Association has purchased a quantity of Low energy light bulbs for the bathroom which are available to our tenant's. The light bulb is £10.50 inc vat and will last 15000 hrs of use or 19 months continuously. This bulb is 12 % more efficient than its predecessor and will save you around £7 a year in energy costs.

If you would be interested in buying a light bulb please contact a member of the Housing Management Team at the office on 01475 630930.

