



Hi and welcome to our March Newsletter.

In this edition you will find key information about the annual rent increase, information for owner-occupiers and details of our school arts project.

If you have any views on the content of our newsletter, please complete the tear off slip at the back and return it to our office.

On behalf of the Committee of Management and all the staff at Larkfield Housing Association I wish you and your family a happy and peaceful Easter.

Agnes McMillan, Chairperson

Environmental Arts Exhibition



Larkfield Housing Association has staged its **6th Annual Environmental Schools Arts Project**. Working with each of the local primary schools in Larkfield, the Association stage an annual arts event where children are encouraged to develop their skills, self-confidence and increase their knowledge of local environmental and social concerns. **Impact Arts**, the Association's arts consultants, have been working with each of the six schools over the past three months running workshops and other activities and the culmination of their work was displayed at the Exhibition. Over 100 children attended the Exhibition, proud parents, councillors and other invited sponsors of the event. Guest speaker was Catriona Henderson, Art Development Officer, Inverclyde Council. **Chairperson of Larkfield, Agnes McMillan**, who hosted the day, said: "This event is one of the highlights of the Association's year. Each year the exhibition seems to get bigger and better and the work the children create continues to delight visitors to the exhibition. "Their enthusiasm, imagination and creativity in producing the work is one, which we as a local association and the local schools are very keen to encourage and develop." In appreciation of their efforts each of the children involved received a goody bag from the Association. Pictured is an example of exhibit produced by children from Sacred Heart Primary focusing on their local Larkfield community.



Larkfield Housing Association, 14 Lothian Road, Larkfield, Greenock, PA16 OPG

Tel 01475 630930 / fax 01475 636111 e-mail info@larkfieldha.org.uk Web: www.larkfieldha.org.uk

Office Opening Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9.00am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 4.00pm

Wednesday 9.00am to 12.30pm Closed Wednesday afternoon

Owner Occupiers

The Association will be issuing its annual Common Areas Maintenance Charge at the start of April for the period 1st April

2008 to 31st March 2009. This includes certain paths, grass and common raised footpaths in the area, which are the responsibility of the Association and owners, and not the council. You have been given six weeks to the **22nd May 2009** to make payment. Please note that you will incur additional administrative charges to your bill if you fail to pay by this date. If you bought your house during the year we will recalculate the sum due if you contact the office with proof of your date of entry. Your bill should be paid by cheque or postal order, as **the Association does not hold cash in the office.**

The majority of Owner Occupiers pay their Annual Maintenance Charge, however there is still a small number who do not pay and in previous years we have successfully taken owners to court for non-payment of maintenance charges. The Sheriff granted decree jointly and severally against the defenders for payment to Larkfield Housing Association with expenses and interest added to these outstanding balances until full payment was received. Inhibitions orders have also been served on a number of owners. Inhibition causes an owner of a property the inability to sell or re-mortgage their property without repaying the debts due. A register of Inhibitions is kept in Edinburgh and all Inhibitions are served by Sheriff Officers. The costs are borne by the owner and not the Association. Both legal methods are successful and will be used against owners each year for non-payment of maintenance charges. Outstanding debts for the previous year are currently being assessed for court action.

Owners this is for YOU! Mortgage to Rent Scheme

The mortgage to rent scheme is run by the Scottish Government. The scheme aims to help people, whose homes are at risk of being repossessed, to stay in their homes.

If you apply successfully for the mortgage to rent scheme, your home will be bought by a Housing Association, but you will continue to live there as a tenant. Your new landlord will receive funding from the Scottish Government to carry out any necessary repairs so they can charge you a reasonable rent.

Mortgage to rent will not be right for everyone. Before applying applicants must have received independent advice about their financial situation.



To find out more about the scheme please contact the Mortgage to rent Scheme Team on 0845 279 9999 (calls are charged at the local rate)

Finally the longer daylight hours have arrived and the first flowers of the year mean that spring is on the way. Lawnmowers that have lain rusting all winter will soon be seeing active service again. The Housing Management staff will be doing their rounds, so let's make Larkfield a place to be proud of! The Management Committee is currently looking at running the Garden Competition again this year with prizes to be won. So what are you waiting for! Here's to a warm summer and we hope that things will be looking rosy in Larkfield.

Spring's On the Way



Repairs Prize Draw

The winner of the £20 TESCO voucher for Dec/Jan is Ms Susan Turner 32 Oxford Road **Congratulations** Please remember to return your repair receipts to ensure your entry to the next prize draw.



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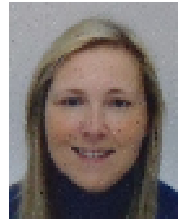
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New Member of Staff

Hi, My name is Carine Strain and I am delighted to have joined Larkfield Housing Association as the new Maintenance Officer. For the past 4 years I have been working within the construction industry as a building inspector and previous to this within Property Management, where I was involved with all aspects of residential property management. This is my first experience working within Social Housing, and I look forward to the challenges and rewards this will bring. Since joining the team back in October 2008 I have already met many residents, and I look forward to getting to know many more of you over the coming months.



Annual Rent Increase

The rent increase will be effective from the first Monday in April 2009. The rent increase for the next financial year is inflation of 0.9% plus 1% equating to an increase of 1.9%. The table shows the comparative rent increases for all the local social landlords. As you can see Larkfield's rent increase is one of the lowest within Inverclyde.

Association	Rent Increase
Larkfield Housing	1.9%
Cloch Housing	4.5%
Oak Tree Housing	4.9%
River Clyde Homes	4.2%
Link Housing	0.9%

ALL PAY

By now all tenants of the Association will have received a new Allpay payment card. We would encourage you to start using these cards to make payments to your rent account. Allpay offers greater choice of outlets where payments can be made and payments made via Allpay reach your rent account more quickly than Girobank or bank payments. Allpay also allow you to set up direct debits, which can be taken at specified intervals from your account. For any further information regarding Allpay or setting up a direct debit please call the office on 630930.

Office Closure

Our Office will be closed for Easter on **Friday 10th April 2009 & Monday 13th April 2009**. Our office will also be closed on the following public holidays: **Monday 4th May 2009 and Friday 22nd May 2009 & Monday 25th May 2009**.

Tenant Participation

Our Tenant Participation Strategy was approved at December's meeting of the Committee of Management. The action plan for this year's strategy includes the following:

- To ensure that residents and tenants are involved in the continued development of the Community Safety Group and its work in the local area.
- Organise and promote an Environmental Arts Schools Project among local Primary Schools to help raise awareness of their environment.
- To continue supporting community projects such as the Community Garden & Fun Day.
- To continue promoting Public Meetings such as AGM to ensure maximum attendance.
- To continue to look to improving the Association's Newsletters.
- Maintain our established Register of Interested Tenants and Service Users for different areas of the Associations Services.
- To provide a range of promotional items promoting the name and work of the Association and it's Services.

If you would like a full copy of our strategy or have any suggestions on how we can improve our strategy please contact the office on 630930.

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NEW CONTRACTOR

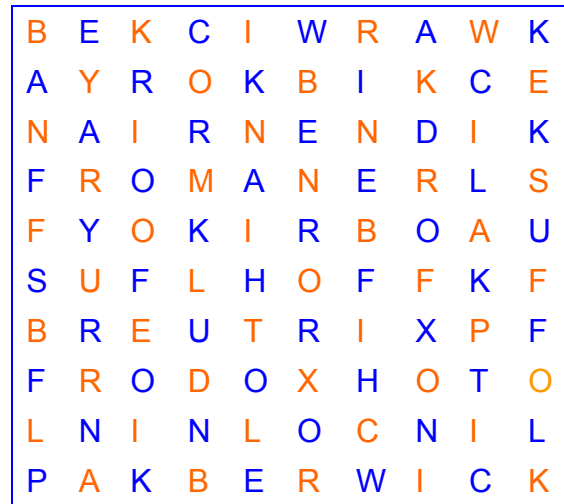


As from 1st May 2009 we have appointed a new contractor for General Repairs and Gas Repairs who are City Building. We would like to thank Carillion PME & Quality Gas for all their hard work over the past number of years and wish them all the best for the future.

We will be informing all our tenants of new emergency numbers and contact details separately.

Puzzle

Once again here's a chance for you to WIN!! There are 10 Larkfield street names in the grid going any which way – forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically and diagonally. When you've found all ten just send the tear off slip to the Larkfield office, address below, or hand it in to us. The winner will be picked at random from all entries received before the closing date of 29th May 2009. The prize is a £10 gift voucher for Tesco stores.



The winner of last issue's word search competition was **Cara Turner from Lothian Road** who took home a £10 gift voucher for Tesco.



NAME: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR NEWSLETTER:

How can we improve the services we provide to you? _____

Please put your answers to the puzzle on a separate sheet and attach it to your tear off slip.

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