

# New Committee Members

The Association has recently welcomed two new faces onto the Management Committee!



Margaret Grant has recently joined the Committee as a professional co optee. Margaret says that although she has no direct connection with Larkfield, she has gone through a stock transfer process with Bridgewater Housing Association in Erskine, and so has a lot of the skills and experience that will be of assistance to Larkfield Housing Association in the years ahead. Margaret is very excited to be joining the Committee as the members are so involved and committed to Larkfield. She and hopes that the residents of Larkfield will support the Committee in their work, and she would encourage others in the area to join the Association.

Margaret Bell has also recently joined the Management Committee. Margaret has been a well kent face in Larkfield for the past 9 years, but has recently decided to come on the Committee as she wants get involved, and to play her part in helping to build a better Larkfield. Margaret hopes that residents in the area will feel free to come up and speak to her if they have any comments or problems, as she will be happy to take their concerns forward to committee.

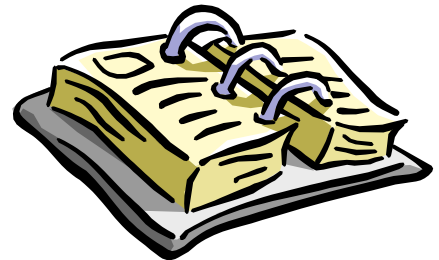


The Newsletter would like to echo the views of our new Committee Members, and to welcome the two Margarets to the Committee!

## Special dates for your diary

The Office will be closed for some of the upcoming holidays.

We will be closed: Easter Holiday: March 25 and 28.  
May Day: May 2.  
May Holiday Weekend: May 27 to 31.



## Repairs Prize Draw

Congratulations to the following winners who shall receive a £20 voucher for Tesco:

November / December 2004: Morag Parker, 226 Westmorland Rd  
January / February 2005: P Purdie, 34 Pembroke Road

**Congratulations! Remember to return your repair receipts to the office to be entered into the next draw, and for your chance to win!**



## Message from the Chairman

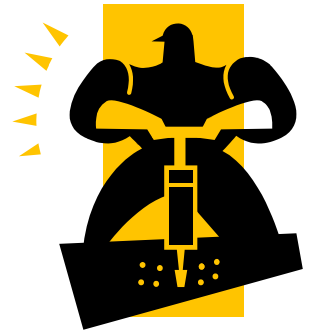


Spring is in the air – March has come in like a lion with such cold but dry weather yet all around there is the colour from spring bulbs. On these lovely clear crisp days I always think that Larkfield is a particularly beautiful area especially as I take in the views over the Firth to the Cowal and Argyll hills. But enough of these matters and down to business. By the time you receive this edition of the newsletter you will have in your possession information about two very important issues on which we are seeking your views. The first of these is our **Internal Management Plan** which is central to the Association's vision for the future and we are seeking your views on the key priorities that we have set for the next few years. Secondly there is the **Scottish Housing Quality Standard** and how this impacts upon the way we maintain and improve our houses over the next 10 years. Please take time to read

the letter and the Information Leaflet. You will also see that there is an opportunity to get answers to questions or more information on these two issues from staff at an **Open Day on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March between 9.00am and 4.00pm** in our office at 1 Cambridge Road. Your views are important to us so please let us know what you think.

Danny McMillan, Chairman

## Planned Maintenance Programme



As part of our ongoing commitment to improving the housing stock in Larkfield, the Association is pleased to advise the following planned work for this year:

- 4<sup>th</sup> phase rewiring improvements
- 3<sup>rd</sup> phase back garden drying areas
- Final phase window and door replacement. This will go ahead in the remaining properties in Auchmead Road, Dorset Road, Caithness Road and Berwick Road

### *Did you know...?*

Larkfield Housing Association will be spending almost **Half a Million Pounds** on these works!

**There will be more information provided nearer the time to those whose homes are affected by these programmes.**



# Rent Arrears Control Policy Update

We wish to inform you that the Rent Arrears Control Focus Group has now completed its review of the Rent Arrears Control Policy. The group felt that the existing aims and objectives of the policy were still appropriate but that they wanted to go further. In particular they wanted to increase the number of ways tenants can pay their rent. They were also keen to increase the use of Welfare Rights Officers and money advice services.

The new policy was approved by the Committee of Management in February and the main aims and objectives of the policy are highlighted below:-

The specific objectives are:

- Prevent arrears arising
- Maintain a fair, effective and efficient arrears control system
- Respond promptly to missed payments
- Establish early personal contact if arrears persist
- Recover arrears efficiently and effectively, wherever possible with the voluntary co operation of the tenant.

These objectives will be achieved through the following methods:

- Advise tenants about payment requirements and the Associations arrears policy and action to be taken if arrears accrue.
- Maximise flexibility of payment options for tenants.
- Monitor tenants' accounts and payment arrangements for arrears regularly
- Identify arrears early and take prompt action to contact tenants.
- Reach realistic arrangements for tenants to pay arrears.
- Effective liaison with relevant agencies
- Maximise use of Welfare Rights Officers and money advice services.
- Institute legal proceedings for recovery of arrears only when voluntary arrangements have failed.
- Institute legal proceedings for recovery of arrears and possession when no other method of recovery is available.

**If you have any questions on our rent arrears policy or procedure or are experiencing difficulties in paying your rent please feel free to contact your Housing Officer at the office for advice or assistance.**

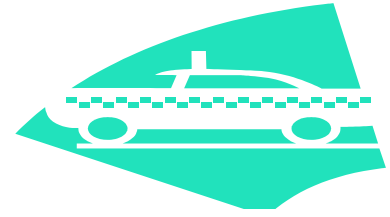
## Spring on the Way!

Although the recent cold snap has had everyone scuttling indoors, the longer daylight hours and the first flowers of the year mean that Spring is on its 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 lets make Larkfield a place to be proud of! The Management Committee are 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!



# Police Surgery

Andy Williams from the Community Police will be holding a surgery on 31<sup>st</sup> March between 2 and 3PM to discuss any concerns you might have.



The surgery will be held in the office at 1 Cambridge Road



## Annual Rent Increase

It's almost the end of the Financial Year and time for the Association to inform tenants of the annual rent increase of 4.2% which is due from Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005.

You should now have received your letter confirming this along with your new rent book. For those receiving Housing Benefit payments, Inverclyde Council have been informed of your new rent. They will notify you in due course of your new Housing Benefit award. For those of you with agreements in place to clear rent arrears please contact your Housing Officer to make a new repayment arrangement to cover the increase.

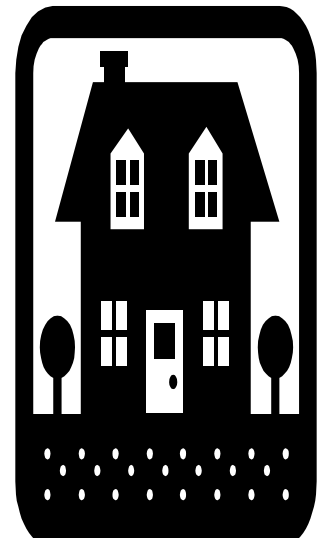
**Should you have any questions or difficulties regarding your rent or Housing Benefit please feel free to contact the Housing Management staff at the office for assistance.**

## Owner Occupiers

The Association will be issuing its annual Common Areas Management charge at the end of March for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005.

As you know from your title deeds, Larkfield has responsibility for maintaining certain common grounds in the area. 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 6 weeks before 4<sup>th</sup> May 2005 to make full payment, or there will be extra administrative charges added to your bill. Please note that if you bought your house during the year we will recalculate the sum due if you contact the office with your full details. Your bill should be paid by cheque or postal order.

**The Association does not hold cash in the office.**



## Join the Association

**£1.00 lets you become a lifetime member of Larkfield Housing Association** which is a *small price to pay to have a **BIG** say* in the running of the Housing Association, and be able to attend the AGM.



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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

