

CEO Welcome to the Summer Edition

Hello everyone and welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter. The weather has typically turned very Scottish just as the school holidays began and we are emerging from lockdown!

The First Minister (FM) announced on **9th July** that **Scotland had entered Phase 3** of the route map out of lockdown. The changes included: meeting with up to three households indoors being allowed for the first time; face coverings becoming mandatory in shops; organised outdoor play and contact sports for children and young people under 18 resumed; indoor restaurants; cafes and pubs; museums; galleries; cinemas and libraries and places of worship were allowed to reopen. We also finally have hairdressers open again!

On the 30th July the First Minister announced that we will be staying in Phase 3 for a little while longer. With the recent outbreak of some small clusters across the nation, the FM advises that all **non-essential offices and call centres are to remain closed until the 14 September at the earliest.**

We will continue to work from home for the next 5/6 weeks, indeed working flexibly will remain the default position for many of us for the immediate future. We anticipate that all being well, **our office in Doune will reopen week commencing 14th September** with a reduced staff team working in the office/working from home on a rota basis. During lockdown we had to completely change the way that we did things and we had to do this very quickly. However, along with our contractors we are now planning for the restarting of services that were severely disrupted as a result of the coronavirus situation. It won't be quite a return to normal just yet with strict physical distancing and new hygienic measures to be adhered to so things will look and feel very different for some time to come.

We are preparing our General Workplace Risk Assessment and carrying out staff training to make sure our staff know about and understand the new Health and Safety measures we will be introducing, to keep everyone safe when they come to work and you, your families and our contractors safe when they carry out work for us or when we visit your homes.

To begin with, the office will be open for tenants to visit on an appointment basis only. We will also need to ask you some Covid 19 related questions before you attend an appointment or we visit you in your home. We have prepared a leaflet which helps to explain why we need to do this and how you can help prepare for this. We have printed the details of this leaflet at the end of the newsletter. We also have a short video which can be viewed on our website.

This edition is packed full of useful information that we hope will help you and keep you informed. Please read the newsletter and enclosed leaflet and visit our website where you can find lots of links to other great sources of support and information **www.rsha.org.uk**.

Over the last 4 months we have demonstrated that we are a strong and resilient team. I am amazed by how well our staff team coped during the crisis and I am proud of and grateful to them all. I would also like to thank you for your patience and understanding during this very challenging time.

It is very important that we all remember that the virus in Scotland has been suppressed, but it has not gone away.

Please remember the key guidance – the FACTS: face coverings should be worn in enclosed spaces; avoid crowded areas; clean your hands and hard surfaces regularly and thoroughly; 2 metre distancing remains in place; self-isolate, and book a test immediately, if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

Our website will be updated regularly with new information as and when we have it, so please continue to visit www.rsha.org.uk to keep abreast of our plans.

Please also see inside for further details on when certain services will resume.

Stay safe everyone.

Donna



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COVID 19 Survey

We are delighted to announce that we have a new partnership with CX Feedback who will be helping us to carry out digital customer surveys to gather tenant opinion. One of the first surveys we are planning will be around your experience of lockdown and our communication and support provided to you during this time. We will also be asking you about some aspects of our services going forward to give you the opportunity to feedback and involve you in any changes that we make. Watch out for more details and a text or an email from us.

Open Letter to Social Housing Tenants from Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government Housing and Planning

At the end of this edition you will find a letter from Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning to all Council, Housing Association and Housing Co-operative tenants in Scotland.

We are helping to publicise this letter by including it with this newsletter. A copy can also be viewed on our [website](#).

Group Strategic Plan

Our Board have approved a new three-year Group Strategic Plan. This plan sets out our hopes and ambitions for the next three years. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to tell us what you thought about our proposals and for your feedback. **The final version is now available on our website.**



If you would like any further information please contact us.

Annual Assurance Statement

All Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) must submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). This provides assurance that we are complying with the relevant requirements of the SHR's Regulatory Framework.

This includes regulatory requirements that apply to all social landlords and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management that apply to RSLs. We have started to prepare our next Annual Assurance Statement due to be submitted in October 2020.

We would like to involve our tenants and include your feedback on the Assurance Statement submission.

Would you be willing to participate in a small Working Group of Staff and Board members or could you take some time to give us your views?

We want to hear what you have to say

If you would like any further information about what this involves or wish to talk through what the commitment would be, please contact us by emailing enquiries@rsha.org.uk.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Housing Minister made references to antisocial behaviour (ASB) in his letter. Unfortunately, we have had to deal with a spate of really quite serious antisocial behaviour incidents in a few of our developments. We take all incidents of ASB very seriously. Under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and 2014 we can take action against tenants for serious incidents of ASB behaviour. In the most extreme cases this can lead to a tenant losing their home. To take legal action we must have clear evidence against the perpetrator, whether that be multiple witness statements or a Police Report. During the Coronavirus "lockdown" period all Scottish courts have been closed and this has had an impact on our ability to raise actions for recovery of possession of tenanted properties.

The Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service (SCTS) recently announced their plans for a phased return of criminal and civil business in the courts.

If any RSHA tenant or any of their visitors engages in anti-social or criminal behaviour we will work together with other agencies and the Police to manage that behaviour once we become aware of it. Unfortunately, due to the requirement to gather evidence and the court process, ASB cases do inevitably take longer to resolve than all concerned would like. We will take the necessary action should police investigations suggest any of our tenants are involved and have breached the terms of their tenancy agreement with us.

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, please contact us immediately and if you feel unsafe or in any danger, please contact Police Scotland. Further information can also be found online at <https://www.mygov.scot/antisocial-behaviour/>



Board recruitment update

We were very sorry to say goodbye to one of our longest serving Board members, Colin O'Brien, who stood down in April this year.

Colin was a very valued member of the Board, passionate about building more homes across our rural communities for those in housing need. Our thanks go to Colin for his contribution over the many years that he was involved with RSHA.

We have been recently recruiting for new Board members and are delighted to welcome Lorna Cameron and Fionn Stevenson on Board! Lorna has an extensive background in housing, having recently been Chief Housing Officer at Stirling Council, and is now the Chief Executive of Horizon Housing Association. Professor Fionn Stevenson is an architect with a particular interest in an ecological approach to sustainable design in order to address climate change. Fionn has held a number of academic appointments and we are delighted to welcome both Lorna and Fionn to the Board of RSHA.



New Model Rules 2020

Our Board have agreed to adopt the new Model Rules approved by the SHR and SFHA earlier this year. Adoption of the new Model Rules will be a recommendation to the membership at a Special General Meeting (SGM). This will take place immediately before the Annual General Meeting (AGM). There is more information on our AGM below.

Save the date for RSHA's first virtual AGM Thursday 17th September 2020



Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus crisis we need to make some changes to the way we hold our AGM. This year we will be holding a virtual AGM. This is necessary to keep our members safe while ensuring that we can carry out the business required. We will be issuing the AGM invitation very soon so please watch out for more details.

If you have recently changed your email address or your phone number please let us know, so that we can amend our details and ensure you get an invite. Remember to visit our website where we will post more details of how to join the meeting.

Adaptations to Help You Continue to Live in Your Home

We recognise that a number of our tenants may require adaptations to their homes in order to provide an enhanced quality of life.

Adaptations also allow you to continue to live more comfortably in your home for as long as possible and they also help us to create stable, sustainable and inclusive communities.

Adaptations such as handrails, stairlifts, & wet rooms can make your home more accessible and usable. They allow tenants to cope with advancing age, disability or caring responsibilities, thereby enabling you to maximise your independence in your own home.

If you require your home to be adapted in some way, for example a handrail or ramp at the entrance to your home, or a shower unit in place of a bath, the Association can often do this through an Adaptation Grant Award from Scottish Government.

Your application to the Association for such an adaptation would require to be based on specialist written advice, usually that of an Occupational Therapist or your GP.

Funding for such adaptations is made annually and, as this may get used up quickly, sometimes requests have to be put on a waiting list until more funding is made available.

If you have difficulty in using or dealing with any areas of your home, or the fitments provided in it, please contact your Housing Officer who will advise you what you need to do to make an application to have your home adapted to suit your needs.

Repairs Satisfaction survey

As a means of improving our customer service as well as monitoring the performance of our contractors, we invite all tenants to complete a repair satisfaction survey once the repair is completed. **Please complete the survey as it lets us know when repairs go wrong as well as when repairs go well.**

Every quarter we have a prize draw and pick a winner from the returned questionnaires. The lucky recipient will receive a £25 shopping voucher.



WINNER!

**Congratulations
to Mrs MacDonald
from Callander
who won last
quarter's £25
M&S voucher**

Lettings during Lockdown

Rural Stirling Housing Association, like every other business up and down the country, has had to adapt and adopt new ways of working to keep functioning through the coronavirus pandemic.

One area of our operations that we were all keen to see disrupted the least, was lettings. We understand that people wish to move and set up a new home for a variety of different reasons, i.e. seeking a home of their own, under-occupying or indeed overcrowding.

From mid-May 2020 we have been allowed to consider lettings of properties again and restart the work associated with turning around empty properties once more.

The various trades typically needed to work in empty properties are usually electricians, gas engineers, joiners and cleaners. A small number of our contractors were available for work (albeit with reduced capacity) and we agreed new procedures for staff to follow when undertaking allocations to keep them and our applicants safe.

The main changes are

Once the keys for a property have been returned to Rural Stirling, we will instruct contract cleaners to thoroughly clean the house before any repair work starts. This will effectively remove the risk of infection to those entering the property.

The Housing Officer (wearing mask & gloves) will inspect the empty property and note any repair items.

Work orders are then raised for Contractors to attend to carry out their work. Everyone working in an empty property should maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene at all times. By following the guidance and this will ensure that the work environment is safe.

Once the repair work is completed, the property will be ready to be relet. To complete the sign up,

Housing Officers will meet the applicants at the property, and unlock the front door.

The Housing Officer will not enter the property, and will maintain a safe distance at all times.

The documents will be left at the front door for signing and once the sign-up is completed, tenants should pass the documents back to the Housing Officer for processing & filing.

This procedure will continue until Government guidance changes and these precautions are no longer necessary



Comments,

Complaints &

Compliments

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is responsible for ensuring complaints are handled effectively by most organisations across Scotland, including housing associations and Scottish Government agencies or directorates.

They are also responsible for developing a Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) which all Housing Associations must be compliant with. A new version of the SPSO complaints guidance will be implemented in April 2021 and we need to be ready to comply with the new guidance as soon as it comes into effect.

The new MCHP for our sector "Registered Social Landlords" is available on the SPSO website or follow the link: <https://www.spsos.org.uk/the-model-complaints-handling-procedures>

We shall be working to ensure we have implemented any changes to our internal procedures to align with the revised model procedure over the next few months. We will share our the draft of our new CHP and communicate the key changes to all of our tenants later this year.

RSOA received **60 Stage 1 complaints** and **nine Stage 2 complaints** during the year ended 31st March 2020 with all being responded to in full. On average we responded within the targets set by the SPSO for Stage 1 complaints but were slightly over the target of 20 days for responding to Stage 2 complaints, ie on average 21 days.

A Stage 1 complaint can usually be resolved within 5 working days and is relatively straightforward. For example, if a repair wasn't carried out within time limits set by us.

A Stage 2 complaint is more complicated and usually requires more investigation by a senior member of staff as to what went wrong and thus has a target resolution time of 20 working days.

We appreciate your feedback - both good and bad. Where things have not gone so well, we can use the feedback to learn and improve. We report quarterly to our Board of Management on the types of complaints received and our performance on handling the complaints. We also report our complaints performance to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

Teleswitch Switch OFF

Be Smart - If your energy provider offers you a Smart Meter, take it!!



A radio teleswitch allows electricity suppliers to switch large numbers of electricity meters between different tariff rates, by broadcasting an embedded signal in broadcast radio signals. it is used to switch between tariffs including Economy 7, Economy 10, and Total Heat Total Control (THTC).

The radio teleswitch is controlled by the BBC from its Droitwich Transmitting station. However as the years progress the transmitter hardware has become obsolete and the BBC admitted that if one of the last two remaining valves breaks, no effort would be made to manufacture more nor to install a replacement transmitter.

The BBC maintains that if the Droitwich transmitter fails, they will cease to broadcast on longwave forever.

While most Energy Suppliers acknowledge that the Teleswitch system could ultimately be replaced by smart meters, there was general agreement that the system would need to continue to avoid significant inconvenience to customers and agreement was secured for the service to continue until the end of March 2021.

There are approx. 1.6million households in the UK that depend on the Radio Teleswitch to provide the dynamic switching required to operate switched electric meters such as Economy 7, Economy 10, and THTC.

The primary impact is on those customers who rely on the service for their electric storage heating, and this affects quite a few of RSHA's houses.

Therefore, the priority is for Energy Companies to develop contingency proposals, in the event that the service is discontinued before a viable alternative has been implemented for dynamic switching.

Any Metering Systems can be migrated to a new 'clock-switch' on installation of a smart meter, with switching scheduled via the Supplier. No changes to the current arrangements would be required.

The greatest risk to dynamically switched customers, if the Radio Teleswitch service fails, is that the meters would resort to their default factory setting applied and the tariff conditions would not be met.

The UK Government announced the rollout of smart meters in Great Britain to open up new sources of flexibility and new ways in which consumers can engage with the market. The rollout is being led by Energy Suppliers, who are responsible for installing smart metering equipment, consisting of a smart electricity meter, a smart gas meter, a communications hub and an in-home display at no upfront cost.

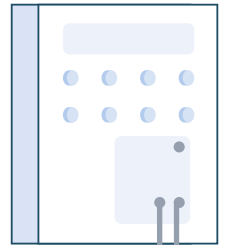
In September 2019 the Government pushed back the deadline for smart energy meter rollout by four years until 2024.

It should be noted that customers are not obliged to have a smart meter fitted, but energy firms must have offered them to all UK households by the end of the new deadline.

Should tenants refuse the installation of smart meters but still be on a metered system controlled by the Radio Teleswitch this may lead to issues in the future such as not being able to access cheaper tariffs.

If your energy supplier offers you a Smart Meter then accept it or you might be at a disadvantage when the Teleswitch is eventually deactivated.

If you would like to read more about this, Citizens Advice Scotland publishes information on smart meters on their website <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/your-energy-meter/getting-a-smart-meter-installed/>

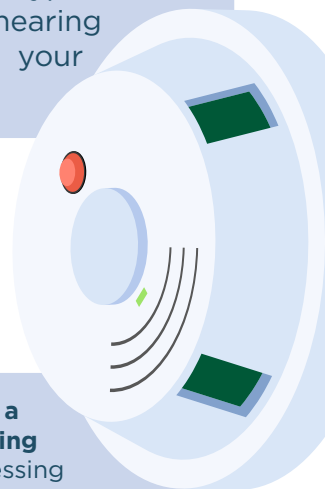


Remember to test your Smoke Alarms!

All our properties are fitted with a smoke alarm. This will give you an early warning by making a loud noise if fire breaks out. (We can provide a different type of alarm for tenants who have hearing difficulties - please ask your Housing Officer for details).

You should not:

- **Disconnect your alarm**
- **Remove the battery (unless replacing it with a new one)**
- **Move it**



Check your alarm at least once a month to make sure it is working properly. You can do this by pressing or holding the test button until the alarm sounds. Many of our properties now have mains powered alarms. These do not require battery replacement. However, many are also fitted with battery back-ups. The battery should be changed in these smoke detectors once a year or when the battery "chirps".

It is also recommended that you have a fire escape plan for your home that all of the occupants are clear about. Practise this regularly - a few seconds saved can save lives.

We recently placed Scottish Fire & Rescue posters in all common closes sharing advice about what to do in the event of a fire. Please take the time to read these. For further information and good advice try visiting the Fire & Rescue Service website on:

<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/for-householders/in-an-emergency.aspx>

During the course of 2020-2021 we will be carrying out upgrades to Fire Safety equipment to bring them up to the new standard. Our Contractor SST anticipates starting back to work mid-late August and will contact households directly for access.

Your Housing Officers

Staff Changes



Hello
Michelle!

We say hello to Michelle Johnson, Customer Services Adviser and John Mallon who has recently joined us as temporary Housing Officer, and goodbye to Andrew Robinson, Housing Officer who has left for pastures new. Josh Campbell having successfully completed his Modern Apprenticeship programme with us has recently taken up the role of Finance and Corporate Services Assistant. We are still in the process of a formal staffing structure review which has been delayed due to COVID-19.



All Housing Officers, are currently working from home during normal office hours and can be contacted by phone or email (see contact details below).

TELL US HOW WE CAN HELP YOU



Gillian Lynas

Gillian works part time, all day Monday & Tuesday and till 1.00pm on Wednesday.

Tel: 01786 843034

Mob: 07341 730601

Email: gillian@rsha.org.uk



Peter Davies

Tel: 01786 843031

Mob: 07464 543154

Email: peter@rsha.org.uk



Rebekah Hawkins

Rebekah works part-time, from 1pm on Wednesdays, all day Thursday and Friday.

Tel: 01786 843034

Mob: 07464 543158

Email: rebekah@rsha.org.uk



John Mallon

Tel: 01786 843035

Mob: 07464 543157

Email: John@rsha.org.uk

Kippen
Estate visits will take place
on the 2nd Tues (pm)
of each month

Callander
Estate visits will take place
on the 1st Tues (pm)
of each month

Deanston, Doune,
Locheearnhead, Killin,
Tyndrum and Strathyre.
Estate visits will take place
as follows; Doune /Deanston -
1st Thurs of each month (am),
Strathyre / Locheearnhead (pm).
3rd Thurs of each month,
Killin(am), Tyndrum (pm).

Gargunnoch, Balfron,
Drymen, Strathblane
and Killearn.
Estate visits will take place
on the 3rd Tues (pm)
of each month

Aberfoyle, Kinlochard,
Stronachlachar, Buchlyvie
and Gartmore
Estate visits will take place
on the 2nd Thurs (pm)
of each month

UK Government Summer Statement and Plan for Jobs

Recently, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a new package of measures including 'A Plan for Jobs' aimed at preventing mass unemployment as a result of Covid-19.

More info can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>

More Jobcentre support

As part of the Plan for Jobs, the UK government has announced new funding for Jobcentres, including doubling the number of work coaches for those that have been unemployed for over 3 months. Plans to deliver a new online job finding support service have also been announced.

You should look on our [website](#) for more information about help available.

If you have any enquiries regarding any of the above please contact **Kevin McGhee our Income Maximisation Officer on 01786 841101 or email kevin@rsha.org.uk**

Job Retention Scheme

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is due to come to an end on 31 October; however, this includes measures to help employers keep furloughed workers.

UK employers will receive a one-off payment of £1,000 for every furloughed employee they bring back and is still employed as of 31 January 2021. There are some stipulations to receiving the bonus - one of which being that employees must be paid a **minimum of £520** on average each month from November until the end of January which is the equivalent of the lower earnings limit in National Insurance.

Good Neighbour Award Scheme: When good neighbours become good friends

It's not too late to nominate a neighbour for our Good Neighbour Award scheme. Perhaps particularly relevant at present with Covid-19 restrictions affecting our freedom and ability to get out and about. Closing date for nominations is the 21st of August.

Is there someone or a family whom you would particularly like to highlight for their "neighbourliness" and generosity of spirit which has helped you through this particular difficult time or who is always there to help out?

If so, we want to know.

We know that there are many people living in the rural Stirling area who deserve to be recognised for their thoughtfulness and consideration to their neighbours. We would like to give you the chance to pay tribute to someone special, either adult or young person, whose kindness has made a real difference to your lives or that of another neighbour.

A good neighbour could be someone who:



Looks after your home or pet when you are on holiday



Puts out and brings your bin in



Helps out with gardening and shopping



Has been there when you needed someone to talk to



Or someone who is simply a good neighbour all the time

Terms and conditions:

- Either you and/or your "good neighbour" must be a Rural Stirling Tenant.
- Unfortunately, we can't accept nominations for a family member or someone living in the same property as you.
- We will write to you to let you know if your entry has been successful and we will also write to the "Good Neighbour" to let them know that they have been nominated.
- Rural Stirling will seek agreement from all parties before we use any details for publicity.

The closing date for entries is Friday, 21st August 2020. To enter call the office or email us at enquiries@rsha.org.uk or speak to your Housing Officer.

All nominees will receive a certificate and prize winners will be announced in due course. A prize will be awarded to an overall good neighbour winner and all nominees will be acknowledged in our Rural Matters Newsletter.

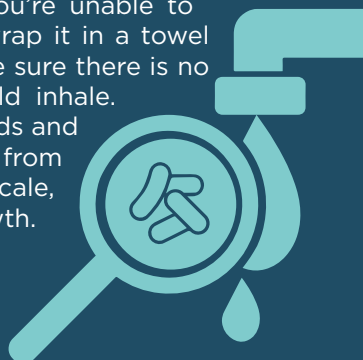
Legionella Alert

Legionella is a type of bacteria found naturally in freshwater environments, like lakes and streams. It can become a health concern when it grows and spreads in human-made water systems like showerheads, taps, hot water tanks and heaters.



Catching Legionnaires disease in your home is rare but if you have been away from home for more than a week there are a few steps you can take to minimise the risk such as:-

- Flushing out your water system e.g. If you aren't using showers or taps regularly, make sure you flush them through at least once a week.
- To flush out your water you need to run the water in all showers, baths, wash basins, sinks and taps continuously for at least 5-10 minutes, beginning with the sink taps. You must do both hot and cold taps.
- When turning taps on, turn them on slowly so that you don't splash water, as this might release water droplets into the air.
- Flush toilet/s with the lid down following a period of non-use.
- When flushing showers, remove the shower head and lower the hose into the bath. If you're unable to remove the head, wrap it in a towel or facecloth to make sure there is no spray that you could inhale. Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from a build-up of lime scale, mould or algae growth.



Planned Maintenance Updates



External Painting Contract

Mitie started their external painting works in Burngreen Kippen on the 6th July. The weather was kind to them and works progressed well allowing them to move onto the Old Nursery development on the 20th July.

The remainder of Mitie's 2020-2021 programme, weather depending of course, is as follows:

Montgomery Place Buchlyvie Phase 1 and Phase 2

Early/mid August

Donaldson Way Balfon

Mid/late August

Old Kirk Loan, & Craigmore View Aberfoyle

End August

Ritchie Place, Waverly Drive, Campbell Court, Stirling Rd,

End of August

Buchanan Place, Pearl St & Main St Callander

Early/mid September

Cameron Court Lochearnhead

Mid/late September

Mansfield Tyndrum

October



Kitchen Replacements

As advised in the Spring edition of Rural Matters we had to cancel all scheduled kitchen replacement installations. If you are one of those affected, please be assured that your replacement kitchen will be re-programmed as soon as we and our appointed contractors Everwarm, are able to return to normal working.

We are currently in programme discussions with Everwarm and are hopeful that **works will resume in late August 2020.** Everwarm will complete the works already started in Old Kirk Loan Aberfoyle before moving onto Donaldson Way, Balfon. We will be in touch as soon as we can confirm a new installation date.

Please accept our sincere apologies for the delay and any inconvenience caused and thank you for your continued patience during this unprecedented period.

If you require any further information at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact our Asset Management Team.



Fire Safety Upgrades

We have a legally-bound duty to ensure the electrical safety of your home. We are currently working with our Electrical Contractor, SST to ensure that all of our properties are compliant with the law. SST suspended all works mid March 2020 however **they hope to restart their programme of safety upgrades and EICR checks in mid/late August 2020.**

SST will contact you directly to arrange your electrical safety check. The work should take about two hours and will be carried out by a qualified electrician. During this time the electrician will need to check the fuse board and will require access to all rooms in your property. The electrician will also need access to your electricity meter as part of their check. **If your system requires upgrading they will do this at the same time.**

They will follow government guidelines during all visits and wear PPE when appropriate.



Please help us to help you stay safe in your home by allowing the electrical safety check to be carried out.

Corgi Gas v Audit

Corgi have advised that they will be resuming their audit service in August 2020, so if you have had a gas service or repair carried out by Saltire in the last 6 months you may be contacted by Corgi so that they can carry out an audit of Saltire's workmanship. **Your co-operation is gratefully appreciated.**



Reactive Repairs

We are currently only attending to emergency and urgent repairs, but we hope to resume call outs to routine repairs shortly. Please bear with us whilst we try to attend to the immense backlog of routine repairs reported over the last 5 months. We really do appreciate your patience.

Stock Condition Survey

Every 5 years we carry out a stock condition survey to gather data relating to your home. The information collected is really important as it is used to identify and programme future replacement and improvement works.

The survey itself is a visual inspection of the inside and outside of your home; **it takes approximately 30 minutes.** The surveyor collects information on the condition of your home such as the age and condition of the major elements,



he will specifically consider the:-

Outside – roofs, walls, windows and doors, fences, paths etc.

Inside – kitchens, bathrooms, heating system, electrical wiring, insulation etc.

The common and external parts of a block of flats such as corridors, lifts, fire alarms, communal lighting, door entry systems and pathways.

The information we gather will update us on the condition of your home and allow us to plan for any work that is needed in the future such as replacement kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors.

The surveyor will not collect information regarding any outstanding repairs to your home. But if there are any safety related repairs outstanding, they may pass details onto the Asset Management Team to action.

The 2020 survey will capture 20% of our stock base, however moving forward we would like to continue to survey one in five of our homes each year. So, if you are not visited this year you may be visited in future years. Sometimes we carry out extra surveys to look at specific components such as the kitchen or windows but we would always write to you in advance to suggest an appointment.



Our surveyor may need access to all rooms, the loft and outside areas. The surveyor will make notes, ask you for your views and take photographs. Any shared communal areas will also be surveyed.

Once the Surveyor has completed their surveys, a survey report will be sent to us along with the data collected to inform our 30 year Life Cycle Costings.

The Surveyor doesn't provide individual reports for each house so we wouldn't be able to share this with you. Whilst the Surveyor will provide us with recommended re-inspection dates for elements of your home, based on recommended lifecycles, these dates are used to support financial planning only and are not a confirmed year of re-inspection or replacement dates. It helps us decide how much we need to spend on repairs and replacements to keep your home at the highest possible standard.

However if your home has been identified as requiring planned replacements such as kitchens, bathrooms, boilers or windows, we will agree a provisional year when this will be done and contact you nearer the time.

If your home is identified for a survey then we would appreciate your co-operation in providing access.

Development Updates

Claish Farm Callender

Further to the site closing, as a result of coronavirus restrictions in March, Lovell Partnerships Ltd have resumed construction in line with the Scottish Government's guidance for the phased restart of the construction industry. Progress on site includes the formation of a new access from the trunk road and foundations for houses.



Croftamie

The outline planning application for 14 units at Croftamie is currently pending decision with the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park planning authority. Subject to achieving planning consent, the Association intend to acquire the site in Autumn 2020.

Balmaha

The Association's design team have achieved all statutory consents for the proposed development at Balmaha and the innovative funding package is now in the final application stage. Subject to achieving development funding, it is the intention to achieve a site start later in 2020. The development offers 22 new homes including 10 homes for rent, 6 for Shared Equity, 4 key worker homes with ELLCT and 2 self-build plots.

Gartness Road Drymen

Further to coronavirus delays, MacTaggart and Mickel are now progressing the precontract programme for the development and intend to begin construction later in 2020 subject to the Association achieving a full funding package.

Lampson Road Killearn

Stirling Council have now issued outline planning consent for the development. We have submitted our detailed planning application and the Design Team is now progressing with proposals for the building warrant submission prior to progressing contractor procurement later this year.

Kippen

The Association have now secured a full funding package for the proposed development of 9 units (see houses with red roofs below) at Burngreen Phase 2, Kippen with Dawn Homes. The intention is to achieve a site start in 2020 and completion in 2021.



How to pay your rent

Rent is our main source of income. The money we receive from tenants' rents is needed to allow us to provide our service, to maintain and improve our houses and build much needed new homes. Without rental income we couldn't do all these things.

It is no surprise then, that we focus so much of our time and effort on making sure all tenants pay their rent, and pay it on time. It is really important to remember that paying your rent on time is a condition of your tenancy and if you do not do this you are putting your tenancy at risk. We can, and do, take legal action against tenants who fail to pay what they are due. We encourage anyone who is facing difficulties keeping up their payments to contact us as soon as possible. We will be sympathetic to your circumstances and do what we can to help.

The rent of all Association tenants is due on or before the 28th of each month or at other regular intervals if agreed in advance with your Housing Officer.

There are a number of ways to pay your rent. You choose the one that suits best.

allpay



allpay
Payment App



Allpay App - The app is available for Apple iPhone and Android Smartphones. The App works in much the same way as an Internet Browser. The App allows you to create an account, store your payment related information and make payments. For further information about the Allpay app please visit <http://www.allpay.net/app>

QR Code Android - <https://market.android.com/details?id=net.allpay.consumer.allpay>

QR Code Apple - <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/allpay/id500135368?mt=8>



Allpay phone payments - An automated telephone system, allowing you to make payments from a landline or mobile telephone whenever you want. All you need is your allpay card and your debit/credit card. Simply dial 0844 557 8321 (calls to this number incur a charge).



Allpay on line payments - <https://www.allpayments.net>



Callpay - we can take your debit card payment over the phone 01786 841101



Direct debit - This is the easiest and most flexible way of paying your rent. Payments can be made weekly, fortnightly, 4 weekly or monthly. We can set up a direct debit over the phone for you, or you can download a form from our website. We will need 14 days' notice to set this up.



Post Office - You can pay at the Post Office with an allpay card. If you would like an allpay card please contact us.



PayPoint

Pay point - As with payments at the Post Office, tenants can pay by cash using their allpay payment card at any shop, petrol station, etc., displaying the Pay Point logo.



Universal Credit payments - direct to landlord - If you are claiming UC you can choose to have the housing costs in your UC award paid direct to the Association. If eligible, you will be offered this choice of payment on your UC online account, after your first UC payment.



By bank transfer - to make payment using your telephone or internet banking service, contact the us for the sort code and account number and your six digit rent reference number.



By housing benefit direct payment - if you receive housing benefit, it is usually paid directly to us, but remember, if your housing benefit does not cover the full rent, you will have to pay us the remaining amount.

Annual Garden Competition

This year we have three categories:



Best Individual Garden



Best Vegetable Garden



Best Communal or Shared Garden



Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, we are asking entrants to send in photographs of their gardens. Our Housing Officers can help take photos if you need some assistance – just let us know.

The closing date for entries is 14th August 2020. Our eminent judge Bill Tait will judge the Competition. Bill has over 30 years' experience in horticulture and judging garden competitions. All prize winners will be announced in due course **To enter call the office/email enquiries@rsha.org.uk or speak to a member of staff. Remember you can also nominate your neighbour's garden.**



RSHA's Text Messaging service (SMS)

Occasionally we send out information via our text messaging service. To receive these messages please ensure we have your up to date mobile number so that we can keep you updated. Text messages we send out are for information only. It is a one-way service which means we do not have the ability to receive replies to these texts.

Best Start Grant and future plans for jobs

Best Start Grant – Did you know?

The Best Start Grant is a package of three payments that will give extra money to low income families during the early years of a child's life.

It's a package of **three separate payments of £250** to low income families during the early years of a child's life.

They can only be paid once per child at the following stages:-

- 1 Pregnancy and Baby Payment
- 2 Early Learning Payment
- 3 School Age Payment

The Early Learning Payment is a new £250 payment to help with the costs of early learning when a child is between 2 and 3 years old. Social Security Scotland began taking applications on Monday 29 April 2019.

The School Age Payment is the 3rd stage of Best Start Grant for your child. It is a new **£250 payment to help with the costs of preparing for school** around the time a child might start Primary 1. The money can be used for anything from school uniform and shoes to a school bag, books or days out. Social Security Scotland began taking applications from Monday 3 June 2019. **You can apply by freephone on 0800 182 2222 or online at <https://www.mygov.scot>**

Applications will remain open until 28 February 2021. Parents who have deferred entry to August 2021 should still apply in the 1 June 2020 to 28 February 2021 window. **If you wait until after, then it will be too late and they will miss out on their payment.**



Kickstart Scheme

A new "kickstart scheme" will be launched to create new jobs for young people at risk of unemployment due to Covid-19. The fund will subsidise work placements of six months for young people aged 16-24 who are on Universal Credit and are at risk of long-term unemployment.

Contact Details

Stirling Road, Doune, FK16 6AA

Tel: 01786 841101 www.rsha.org.uk Email: enquiries@rsha.org.uk

(Normal working hours are 9am – 5pm Mon to Thur and 9am – 4pm Fri)

Registered as a Scottish Charity No. SC037849.

Rural Stirling Housing Association is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 No. 2376 (s)

Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator No. HAL232

Property Factor No. PF000330

Letting Agent Registration No's LARN 1907004 & LARN 1904083



Rural Stirling
Housing Association



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot
7 July 2020

Open letter to Council, Housing Association and Housing Co-operative tenants in Scotland

In the short space of a few months, none of us could have envisaged the significant impact that Covid-19 would have on Scotland. I know this has been an extremely difficult time for you and your families and it has brought unprecedented challenges for our country.

I am writing to social housing tenants to provide information and advice, following the publication in May of [Scotland's Route Map](#) for moving out of the crisis, which sets out the steps that will help us to return to a more normal life. This is being done on a gradual basis, as quickly and fairly as possible, and is being matched with careful monitoring of the virus.

As we move through the different phases of easing restrictions we are providing clear guidance on what that will mean for individuals and families in Scotland. Individual landlords are also now beginning to plan for resuming services following the guidance available, and taking account of local circumstances.

During this crisis I have been particularly impressed at how people have come together to support each other and I greatly appreciate the inspiring community effort that we've seen up and down the country.

I want to thank every single individual, organisation and volunteer who has responded to the pandemic and helped to keep people safe, connected, and well and every social landlord in Scotland who has been working tirelessly to maintain and provide essential and wider community services in these challenging times.

The safety, security and wellbeing of all social housing tenants is a key priority for both the Scottish Government and social landlords, and we have been working closely together to address the challenges that have emerged in the social housing sector as the weeks and months have progressed.

If you're experiencing financial difficulties or are having difficulty paying your rent as a result of coronavirus

If you are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of coronavirus, there is a variety of financial support available as well as advice on maximising income. You can access this through your local welfare advice agency including [Citizen's Advice Scotland](#) and the [Money Talk Team](#).

The efforts that tenants are making to ensure their rent is paid during this difficult time is much appreciated and you must still continue to do so if you are able. If you have difficulty paying your rent at any time you should contact your landlord immediately as they will be able to provide or direct you to sources of financial advice and agree a plan with you to pay your rent.

Protection from eviction during the pandemic

In response to the public health crisis, the Scottish Government passed an emergency law to protect tenants from eviction during the pandemic. This requires landlords to give longer notice periods to tenants, of up to six months, where they intend to take legal action in the Sheriff Court to re-possess a property and end a tenancy. To ensure landlords and the courts were able to continue to deal with serious antisocial and criminal behaviour, which cannot be resolved by other measures during the pandemic, shorter notice periods are in place for those cases.

Support for victims of domestic abuse

It is a Scottish Government priority to ensure that anyone who is a victim of domestic abuse gets access to the support services they need. For anyone who is or feels they are at risk of abuse, help and support is available to you, including police response, online support, helplines, refuges and other services. You can find further information here:

<https://safer.scot.nhs.uk/page-6/>

Allocation of properties and mutual exchange requests

The Scottish Government eased restrictions on house moves on 29th June and social landlords are now beginning to plan for resuming allocations safely and for processing mutual exchange requests. For some time to come, most landlords will however be prioritising allocations to those who have become homeless during the pandemic. If you have any questions about moving home, want to apply for housing or have submitted a housing application with a landlord you should contact them directly as they will be able to provide advice on all your housing options.

Staff and contractor visits to your home

I know that some tenants will be anxious about having staff, contractors and gas engineers into their home to carry out repairs and safety checks, however be assured that your landlord will have clear processes in place to ensure this can happen safely, in line with the current public health guidance and including any Personal Protective Equipment required.

If an appointment for a home visit is being made with you, you should let your landlord know if you are vulnerable, shielding, self-isolating, or having symptoms of the virus so that appropriate arrangements or rescheduling of the visit can be agreed with you. Appointments will be made in advance and you will be advised of the process that will be followed, and anything you need to do to prepare for the visit.

Repairs, maintenance and planned improvement programmes

Since the start of the pandemic, social housing landlords have been prioritising repairs and have been focussing on providing emergency repairs and other essential services. As we move forward, landlords are now starting to plan how they can safely resume routine repairs and planned maintenance work. This includes programmes such as window, bathroom and kitchen replacement, adaptations and installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and fire alarms. You should continue to report any repairs to your landlord as normal. As your landlord begins to work through any backlogs, your repair may take a bit longer than normal so please bear with them. Your landlord will get in touch with you if they require to get into your home to carry out any work and will have processes in place to ensure this can happen safely and in line with the current public health guidance.

Gas safety checks

Landlords are continuing to make every effort to meet statutory safety obligations, such as annual gas safety inspections. When you receive your gas inspection letter, please contact your landlord immediately if you are vulnerable, shielding, self-isolating or having symptoms of the virus, so that appropriate arrangements or rescheduling of the visit can be agreed with you. Please do not ignore the letter as your landlord may not know about your situation and will continue to contact you to arrange a visit. These checks are essential to ensure the safety of your household and it is therefore very important that you allow access to your home so they can be carried out.

If you smell gas, or if you have concerns about the safety of your appliances, you should call the gas emergency service provider on 0800 111 999, and switch off appliances until the gas emergency supplier, or a registered gas engineer, has attended and confirmed that the appliances are safe to use.

Anti-social behaviour

Tenants in Scotland have displayed exceptional respect, care and kindness towards their neighbours in these difficult times but regrettably not everyone has done so and instances of antisocial behaviour are still going on. Social landlords take antisocial behaviour very seriously and have a wide range of measures, including legal remedies and liaising with other agencies, to deal with persistent antisocial or criminal behaviour which breaches the terms of their tenancy agreement.

If you experience anti-social behaviour you should contact your landlord in the first instance and if you feel that you are in any danger you should contact Police Scotland. Your landlord will be able to provide you with support and advice on what they can do to help resolve the situation. More information can be found online at <https://www.mygov.scot/antisocial-behaviour/>

Wellbeing

The coronavirus outbreak has had an effect on everyone's daily lives and information on wellbeing and sources of support can be found at the mygov.scot website. This covers a wide range of issues including looking after yourself and others, how to look after your mental health, food, medicine and other supplies, work, unemployment and sick leave, domestic abuse and child protection.

Further advice on coronavirus

It is essential that we all continue to follow the current public health guidance, practise good hand hygiene and follow the guidelines on who, where and how we meet others.

The Scottish Government guidance on Coronavirus is reviewed regularly so please check for updates at www.gov.scot/coronavirus

Advice is also available from the Scottish Government's Coronavirus helpline - telephone: 0800 111 4000, Scotland's Citizens Advice helpline - telephone: 0800 028 1456 and Shelter's Housing Advice helpline - telephone: 0808 800 4444.

If you have any specific questions about your home or tenancy that need to be dealt with urgently you should contact your landlord directly.

I would finally like to take this opportunity to thank all social housing tenants and landlords in Scotland for everything you have done, and are continuing to do, to help control the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Stewart', with a stylized flourish at the end.

KEVIN STEWART



COVID-19

Safety Measures

This is a short message to explain how we are working to ensure we can enter your home safely whenever we need to do so in order to provide you with our services.

To help us prepare for our visit there are a few **simple questions** our staff will ask **before** coming to see you:

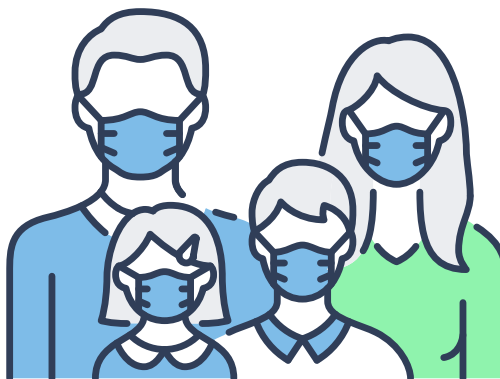
COVID-19

Safety Measures

- 1** Are you or any members of your family displaying symptoms of Coronavirus, such as high temperature, new and near persistent cough, or loss of taste or smell?




- 2** Are you or any of your family considered vulnerable or have you been self-isolating?



- 3** Are you happy for us to enter your home and do you understand that we may need further access within it?



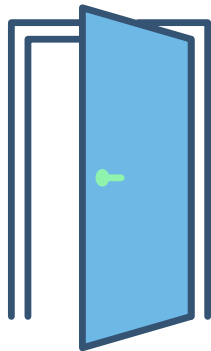


It is important that you remember to inform us of any change in circumstances before the date we are coming to see you.

COVID-19
Safety Measures

Before our staff member enters your home there are some **simple steps** you can take to help us do so safely. **If possible, please:**

- 1** Leave all internal doors open



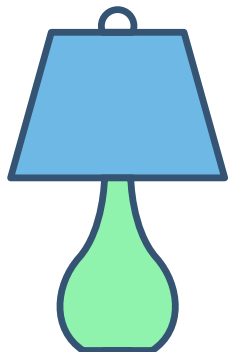
- 2** Leave windows open for ventilation



- 3** Keep clear pathways within the home, and free of any obstructions



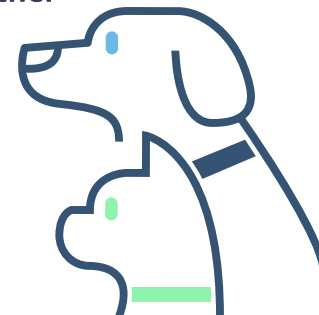
- 4** Keep all areas well-lit and open window coverings




- 5** Where possible other occupants of the house should vacate the property and stay together in one area such as the driveway or garden or, congregate in one other room



- 6** Shut pets away safely within another room



A blue-tinted photograph of a family. A man is on the right, leaning in to kiss a woman on the forehead. The woman is holding a baby in her arms. The baby is looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a home interior.

Our staff have received training on how to conduct their business safely whilst within your home and will take the following steps to ensure everyone's safety.

COVID-19

Safety Measures

8 simple steps our staff **always** take to ensure everyone's safety

COVID-19

Safety Measures

- 1** At all times, our staff will ask questions from a safe distance and where possible will do this from outside of the property.



- 2** Our staff will wash or sanitise their hands before and after every home they visit.



- 3** Our staff may wear a fresh pair of disposable gloves at each home they visit. They will dispose of used gloves safely without compromising you.



- 4** Similarly, where required, staff may wear a fresh face covering at each home they visit. They will dispose of these safely without compromising you.



- 5** Any equipment our staff may use will be disinfected before and after each use.



- 6** To minimise the time we spend within your home, we will try to complete our notes and forms outside of your property.



- 7** Our staff will take care to keep their own clothes clean during visits and will also wear fresh workwear daily.



- 8** Where we have to spend a long time in your home, we will also do our best to stick to all of the above standards, to minimise risk to everyone within the home, including our own staff.



A photograph of a family of three—a man, a woman, and a young girl—all wearing white face masks. They are gathered around a table, playing the game Jenga. The man is on the left, carefully placing a block on top of a tall stack. The girl is in the center, also focused on the game. The woman is on the right, watching the man. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a home interior. The entire image has a blue tint, and there is a white decorative bracket on the left side of the text area.

Thank you for
considering this.

We are committed to
providing a safe working
environment for our
people and for service
users whose properties
we may have to enter
from time to time.

COVID-19

Safety Measures

Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

We confirm we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

• FIVE STEPS TO SAFER WORKING TOGETHER •

- ✓ We have carried out a **COVID-19 risk assessment** and shared the results with the people who work here
- ✓ We have **cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures** in line with guidance
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **help people work from home**
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain social distancing **in the workplace**
- ✓ Where people cannot maintain social distancing we have done everything practical to **prevent transmission risk**

For more information please contact Rural Stirling Housing Association on 01786 841101
(or the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk or 0300 003 1647)

We are happy to confirm that we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of Covid 19. This guidance is often referred to as **"Five Steps to Safer Working Together"**. You may have seen this poster which explains the five steps.



Rural Stirling
Housing Association