

March 2009



Issue Number

35

ChitChat

Current Housing Information To Clydebank Housing Association Tenants

Future of Centre81 Secured

Centre81, our £2.85 million regeneration centre which opened in May 2008 and whose future was in doubt as a result of a funding crisis, has been secured for at least the next four years.

Our Board had a change of heart after being inundated with offers of practical support from Whitecrook residents and organisations using the centre and this played a major part in the decision not to close. But a last minute proposal from the Tulloch Trust, which has already provided the adjacent sports facilities, was the lifeline the centre desperately needed.



Fiona Webster, our Director, said;
"We could not ignore the very strong support for keeping Centre81 open, from the people of Whitecrook. Closure of the centre would have deprived them of a much-needed resource and vital services to enhance their quality of life and help them develop new skills. Various activities, planned to reduce anti social behaviour, improve people's health and bring back a sense of community pride will now be allowed to continue for the foreseeable future."

Since the centre opened last year, it has already had an impact in reducing crime levels, providing positive activities for young people and helping people into work. Official figures, just released from Strathclyde Police show a marked decrease in anti-social behaviour, with the number of calls received, between June 2008 and February 2009, down to 762 from 1128 in the same period, the previous year.

New Contractor Gas Maintenance and Servicing

From 1 April 2009 the McDougall Group will be our new gas maintenance and servicing contractor.

For the past 8 years this contract has been carried out by James Frew Limited. It was therefore time to re-tender for this contract and the McDougall Group was the successful contractor.

We have had a good working relationship with James Frew and would like to thank them for the service they provided to our tenants.

The McDougall Group has worked with us for a few years on routine maintenance work and we look forward to extending our working relationship with them to include all gas maintenance and servicing.

One of the benefits for tenants is that there will be one emergency number for all out of hours repairs including central heating breakdowns.

The new number is:
0845 6123 160



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HIRE AN ECAR
only £5 a day!!

See page 7 for more details



ChitChat

Maintenance Update

Tenants' Responsibilities

We would like to remind tenants of their responsibilities when ending a tenancy.

When a tenant advises us they are intending to end their tenancy a pre-end of tenancy inspection will be arranged with the tenant.

This allows us to:

- Ensure the property is to an acceptable standard
- Note any works which we expect you to complete
- Explain the end of tenancy procedure
- Answer any other questions

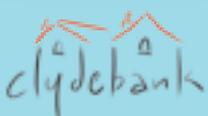
We expect that all properties:

- Be left clean and tidy and have all floor coverings removed
- Have any damaged/broken items repaired or replaced
- Have any alterations which are not to an acceptable standard reinstated to their original condition

At the end of the inspection tenants will be advised of any works to be carried out.

Unfortunately many tenants do not carry out the work which they are asked to do, or do not see why they should do the work. When this is the case, we undertake the work to bring the property up to the minimum standard for re-let. This can often be quite expensive and understandably we expect payment from the former tenant for this work. We take this matter very seriously and will pursue the former tenant for payment. Whilst there are tenants' rights there are also tenants' responsibilities. It is up to the tenant ending their tenancy to carry out any work which is considered their responsibility.

Staff in the maintenance section are always available to give help or advice to any tenant on the above matters.



Digital TV Aerial Upgrade **digitaluk**

We are now coming to the end of this contract and all properties with a communal aerial should now have been upgraded to a digital aerial. We are planning to switch off the old systems during the month of April.



Apart from the works to install a common digital aerial you should also have had a new TV socket installed in your living room.

If you have not had one of these sockets fitted in your home, you will be unable to receive a signal and will have no picture on your TV when the old system is switched off.

Please contact the Maintenance Section, as a matter of urgency, if you have not already given access to our contractor to fit your new TV socket.

Summary of Major Repairs Programme for the coming financial year April 2009 to March 2010

- Renewal of passenger lifts at Castle View and Cowal View
- Renewal of patio doors at Ian Smith Court and Fleming Avenue
- Renewal of kitchens in Atholl steel & brick type properties in Linnvale
- Renewal of central heating systems at 161-167 Dumbarton Road
- Renewal of attic insulation in all properties
- Bannerman Place, Cumbræ Court and Montrose Street
- Renewal of windows
- Renewal of kitchens
- Renewal of flat entrance doors

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Go Greener 'Waste'

There can't be many Scottish households who couldn't save some money by paying closer attention to how much food they throw out. Whether it's binning half a plate of pasta after cooking too much, or coming home from the supermarket to find that we didn't need to buy those bananas after all because there's still a bunch left in the fruit bowl, we've all been responsible for wasting food.

Reducing food waste is currently a key focus for the Scottish Government's Go Greener campaign, which aims to encourage people to make small changes to their everyday behaviour to help contribute to a greener Scotland.

Food waste is a common problem, and although it might not seem like a big issue to throw away a still-wrapped package of vegetables or leftover

dinner a few times a month, the cumulative effect can be bigger than you might expect.

In fact, the average Scottish household throws away enough food to fill a 50-litre bin every year, or to put it another way, food worth £410. Being smarter about reducing food waste can help you to stop wasting cash.

Less waste also benefits the environment as less energy is required to create and process wasted products and the need for landfill sites is therefore reduced. Less landfill also means that less methane (the powerful greenhouse gas release released by rotting food) will be introduced into the atmosphere.

If all Scottish households stopped wasting food, it would have an environmental impact equal to taking one in four cars off the road.

So what can be done to reduce food waste?

- Make sure you only buy what you need when you go shopping. Have a look around the kitchen and take note of what you have and what you need to buy to reduce the chance of buying food you already have at home.
- Be more careful about the portion size of the meals you prepare. Smaller portions reduce the chance that there will be anything left over at the end of dinner.
- Make sure you check the "best before" and "use by" dates on packaged food before you throw it out. If it's still good to eat, could you make a soup, stew, curry or other tasty dish from these ingredients instead of throwing them out?
- Re-use carrier bags when you shop
- Buy more seasonal and unpackaged food
- Hang your washing up to dry rather than using a tumble dryer
- Organise or volunteer in an environmental project in your local community
- Avoid flying when you can, and pay back the environmental impact of any flights you have to take

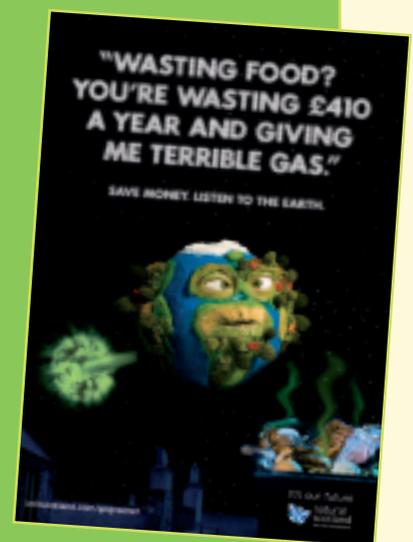
It can be much easier than you think to start cutting back on the amount of food you throw away, and you can start saving money today!

The Scottish Government's 10 steps to a Greener Scotland are:

- Recycle household waste using locally-provided facilities
- Turn the tap off when brushing your teeth
- Switch to using energy-saving light bulbs
- Leave the car at home and walk, cycle, use public transport or car share at least once a week instead.
- Use rechargeable instead of disposable batteries

Visit the Go Greener website and you can benefit from fantastic offers and giveaways from a range of partners who are giving their support to the campaign. To sign up to the 10 steps and to see some of Mr Earth's green tips and offers, go to

www.infoscotland.com/gogreener



Housing Management Update

Housing Management Performance Year to date 2008-2009

The table below shows our performance for the period up to January 2009 for the financial year April 2008 to March 2009 in some of our most important Housing Management functions, such as letting a property and arrears. As can be seen we continue to operate within, or around our targets and are performing at a high level in most areas. This said we are always trying to find ways to continually improve, as well as ensure that the services we offer provide

maximum benefit and value for money to our tenants and customers alike.

Further performance information will be published in future newsletters. We also welcome ideas from tenants and customers on what Housing Management performance they would like to see reported. If you have any ideas please contact our Senior Housing officer Joe Farrell for an informal discussion.

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Indicator	Performance April 2008 - 31 January 2009	Target 2008-2009
Maximum rent loss on vacant properties	0.3% to date	0.9% of annual rent income
Non-technical arrears (current tenants as % of rent receivable)	1.3%	1.2%
Number of calendar days to let a property	15.5	25 days
Processing of housing application forms	10.8 days	20 calendar days
Carrying out new tenant visits	98% visited within timescale**	Within 4-8 weeks of tenant moving in
Investigating neighbour complaints	Category A 100% within timescale Category B 80% within timescale* Category C 83% within timescale* Overall 82% within timescale	Category A (Extreme) 2 working days Category B (Serious) 10 working days Category C (Dispute) 15 working days

* All of the complaints outwith timescale were due to us waiting for further information, for example from tenants, the Police or other organisations.

** This means we have made an appointment and called at the tenant's home to carry out the visit.

Rent Increase 2008/2009

We previously consulted with tenants in our December 2008 and September 2008 editions of Chit Chat regarding the rent increase for the next financial year. We indicated the increase would be between 5% and 6% for our core stock tenants, and the December 2008 RPI figure plus 1% for our transfer stock tenants. In January 2009 the Association's management committee approved the rent increase as shown below:

For Core Stock tenants

(stock not acquired through Scottish Homes transfer), a rise of 3.5% was agreed, this being the minimum rise required for the Association to provide its services over the year and below the estimate of between 5% and 6%.

For Transfer Stock

(stock acquired through transfer from Scottish Homes - mostly Linnvale, Radnor Park Multi's and some parts of Whitecreek), a rise of 1.9% was agreed, this being the maximum increase we could impose under the terms of the transfer agreement from Scottish Homes. This figure was based on the December 2008 RPI figure of 0.9% plus 1%.

The rent setting exercise again showed our rents to be broadly in line with our Housing Association, and Council peers in the area, and for some properties amongst the lowest. Our rents were also set with affordability in mind and tailored to our own tenant base.

All tenants and sharing owners should have received a letter around mid February 2009 advising them of their individual increase amount from 28 March 2009. Please note if you are currently in receipt of Housing Benefit your entitlement should change to match the new rent figure, meaning little or no change in the amount that you currently pay. If on receipt of your letter you have any questions please contact the Housing Management department.

Email: info@clydebank-ha.org.uk

Radnor Park issues - Youths gaining entry to buildings

The Association has received a number of complaints in the last few weeks regarding youths gaining entry to a number of blocks. The youths in question do not appear to be relatives of any residents, and moreover have no reason to be there. This is even more concerning when entry is being gained at night as well as during the day, meaning that some residents are letting these youths into the building. In recognition of its role, the Association has been in touch with Strathclyde Police and the Councils Community Warden Service who will patrol the area. This is to ascertain the level of the problem and take action where appropriate. We have also checked the door entry systems at the blocks in question to ensure there are no malfunctions. Our inspections have shown all door entries to be secure and operational.

In the meantime we appeal to all residents not to allow entry to the block under any circumstances unless you are 100% confident in the identity of those calling. Concerned residents should report all incidents without fail to the Police. Please do not wait until the next day, or until after the weekend to inform us as there is little we are able to do in terms of direct action. Residents have a responsibility to manage their own doors, as well as ensure all incidents of concern are reported to the correct authorities. We highlight that the Housing Association is unable to take any direct action against individuals who are not tenants.

As stated it does appear that some residents are allowing entry to their block, which in turn is responsible for this problem. If anyone is found to be deliberately allowing access of this kind, immediate action will be taken against them for breach of their tenancy conditions.

If anyone has any information regarding those responsible please contact your Caretaker or the Housing Management Department at the office in confidence.

Rubbish Chutes at Radnor Multi Stories

A reminder to all our Radnor Park residents to take care when disposing of items down the rubbish chutes. In the last few months we have had several reports of blockages caused by misuse of the bin chutes. The chutes are not suitable for the disposal of bulk items. If in doubt about how to dispose of any bulk items please contact a caretaker or our office.

..... www.clydebank-ha.org.uk



ChitChat

Competition time!

Wee Chitchat For 8-15 years old only!

Many thanks to all who completed our recycling related question. The slip of Chloe Wright of Linnvale, was picked from all correct entries.



Lucky Chloe received a family ticket to the X Factor Live Tour at the SECC in March!

6 For your chance to see the film of your choice on the big screen, simply complete and return the cut-off slip below by Monday 14th April 2009.

The correct entry picked at the closing date will win £15 of vouchers for Empire Cinema in Clydebank.

Empire Cinema tickets Competition March 2009

Question: "Name something that can be done to reduce food waste"

Answer: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Age: _____

Rules: you must live in the house you put down as your address.

Wee Chitchat

Do you need information in a different way?

There are many of our residents who need information, such as letters and newsletters, in a different format. All information sent to these residents is sent automatically in the format of their choice, for example, in large print or on audio tape.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ali at the office if you would prefer information in Braille, large print, on audio tape, on computer disk or in any other language.

General housing information packs are available in many languages from our reception, including Polish, Chinese, Gaelic and Kurdish.



E cars



Only £5.00
per day
to hire*

For more information on this radical, new eco-friendly car hire scheme or to book, please call 0141 941 1044, email ecars@clydebank-ha.org.uk or visit our new website at

www.clydebank-ha.org.uk

and click on eCars.

Open to all CHA tenants, sharing owners and owner-occupiers.

*terms & conditions apply, limited period only



March 2009

ChitChat

Clydebank Housing Association Emergency Number

Only to be used in
an emergency

0845 6123 160

Also available on our
website and on our
office answering machine.



Cut Out and Keep



Obituary

It is with deep sadness that we must report the passing at the end of last year, of one of our board members and friends, Patricia Rice.

Patricia had served on the Management Committee for long periods, from the very beginning in 1988, throughout the Association's development and was a major campaigner for improved housing and services for the people of Clydebank.

Always with the interests of others at heart, Patricia was also a committed supporter of the Independent Resource Centre, where she represented both West Dunbartonshire Council (as an elected member) and the Clydebank Trades Union Council.

Mary Collins, of the Independent Resource Centre, said of Patricia "The staff and centre users were all very fond of Patricia and had great faith in her position as a first class chairperson and spokesperson. Her understanding of all the funding procedures, political astuteness, historical knowledge and wit were greatly admired by most and feared by others and stood the centre in great stead during some of the more difficult times."



We feel very privileged to have known and worked with Patricia, who will be very sadly missed.

Office Hours

Please note that the office will be closed on the following public holidays:

- Friday 10th April and Monday 13th April
- Monday 4 May
- Friday 22th May and Monday 25th May

Our usual office opening hours are as follows:
Monday to Thursday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm and Friday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm

The office closes between 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm each day for lunch.

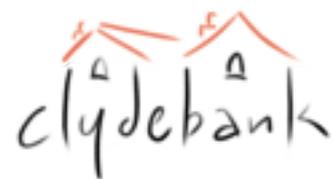
The office also closes on the first Wednesday morning of each month for staff training.

YOUR NEXT CHITCHAT WILL BE DELIVERED IN JUNE 2009



Please recycle this newsletter

To the best of our knowledge all of the information contained in this newsletter is correct at the time of going to print



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