

# Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

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## LIONS, EAGLES, BEARS, CATS AND ELEPHANTS

With the local elections in May this year bringing in a host of new councillors to represent the people of Edinburgh, we thought it would be interesting to interview all party leaders in the city to find out their views on the big issues for tenants in Edinburgh; like rent affordability, the bedroom tax and poverty.

Over the summer, Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF, armed with a bunch of quirky questions set by tenants, camped out at the City Chambers to chat with the local leaders of the SNP, Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green parties.

As well as quizzing them on what ignites and dampens their fires, there was talk of magic wands, animals and advice to their younger selves. With cats, lions, bears, eagles and elephants in the party leader ranks there sure were interesting conversations.

### Match the leader to the animal

Which Party Leader would like to be which animal? Answers in the interviews on pages 12-18. Enormous thanks to all the Group Leaders for taking part.

### CONTENTS

P1	Lions, Eagles, Bears, Cats and Elephants
P2	ETF's Annual General Meeting
P4	John Fayrer – Tenant Participation Champion 2017
P4	We Are The Champions
P5	Thank You Sheila
P5	Human Rights Based Approach Update
P8	Tenant Led Inspection Update
P8	Fire Safety In High Rise Flats
P10	How To Get New Members
P11	What ETF Can Do For You?
P11	A Warm Welcome to Willowbrae
P12	Councillor Adam McVey
P13	Councillor Cammy Day
P14	Councillor Steve Burgess
P15	Councillor Robert Aldridge
P17	Councillor Iain Whyte
P18	News from City of Edinburgh Council
P21	Research Participants Needed
P21	National News
P24	Linking ETF With USA
P26	Remembering Isabel Adams
P26	Remembering Theresa Biggs
P27	Convenor's Report
P28	Dates For Your Diary

# A NIGHT TO REMEMBER!



Sharon Robertson, one of ETF's volunteers writes her reflections of ETF's Annual General Meeting (AGM).

A mixture of familiar and new faces made ETF's AGM a huge success and there was a great turnout as well. Here's is a flavour of what happened on a truly memorable night for everyone at ETF.

- The following were approved:
  - > Annual Report;
  - > Finances;
  - > Work Plan.
- John Aitken of North Sighthill Residents Association was re-elected onto the Executive Committee;
- The meeting also paid tribute to Sheila Rutherford-McCallum who was standing down from the Federation Executive Committee after 17 years of service.



Sheila receiving a bouquet of flowers from ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson

The AGM also congratulated a number of volunteers for the work they do. ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson invited Councillor Cammy Day, Deputy Leader, City of Edinburgh Council and Marion Findlay, Director of Services, Volunteer Edinburgh to present awards to the following:



The Rent Matters Working Group



Members of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group

**Rent Matters Working Group** – A group of Council tenants working with ETF and the Council to help transform the way the Council consults about rents.

**Sheltered Housing Liaison Group** – The group has worked with the Council to improve the quality of housing and services provided to tenants in sheltered housing.

**Tenant Led Inspections** – This group of tenants has been instrumental in digging deeper into the way Council housing services work in order to make recommendations for improvements.



The Tenant Led Inspection Group



Kerry Quinn

**Kerry Quinn** – Over a number of years, Kerry Quinn of Murrayburn Residents Organisation has worked with her group and Council Officers to ensure there are improvements in her area.

The meeting also paid tribute to the late John Fayrer who was awarded the Edinburgh Tenant Participation Champion Award at the Volunteer Awards Ceremony the previous week.

After the AGM, Shakti Theatre Company presented a play called ‘Dancing in Freedom’, a play about domestic abuse. It was very informative and sparked off some very interesting and honest conversations round the tables afterwards.

Finally we had a buffet and disco to round the night off.

Thanks to all that attended and the hard workers who got us here; the Executive team, staff and all of us, the volunteers.



ETF's Executive Committee



# JOHN FAYRER – TENANT PARTICIPATION CHAMPION 2017

You'll recall that in our previous edition of *Tenants Voice*, we ran a tribute to John Fayrer who sadly passed away earlier in the year. John had been involved in ETF and tenant participation for a number of years and was extremely well liked by those who were fortunate enough to know him.

So it was very appropriate that at the Volunteer Awards Ceremony in the City Chambers in June, John was posthumously awarded the Edinburgh Tenant Participation Champion Award for 2017. John's cousin Richard Smith, accompanied by Nicol Johnstone, Convenor of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group accepted the award on John's behalf. Richard was delighted to attend the awards ceremony and said, "It was a privilege to be there to hear so many amazing stories about the work that volunteers do and it was a very well presented evening. Our family was delighted that John received the award to recognise the great work that he had been doing with ETF."



Richard receiving the award from the Lord Provost, Councillor Frank Ross

## WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

Tenants and Residents In Muirhouse (TRIM) and Friends of West Pilton (FoWP) is a tenant's group set up by local residents in Muirhouse with the help of Link-Up and advice and support from the then Tenants and Residents In Pilton group. The organisation has a vision where Muirhouse & West Pilton is a positive place to live, where regeneration is sustainable and maintainable, where the community has influence on decisions being made on their behalf and where partnerships are formed and developed for the good of the community as a whole.

TRIM and FoWP covers all tenants and residents in Muirhouse & West Pilton – from council, housing association, private lets and owner occupiers. We want to work in partnership with all groups and landlords to make Muirhouse a better place to live for everyone. We aim to build on the positives, deal with the negatives and take an active part in the regeneration of the area.



TRIM and FoWP receiving the award at the TIS Awards Ceremony

Back in June we were crowned Registered Tenant Organisation of the year at the Tenants Information Service (TIS) Annual Awards Ceremony at the Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld. As a group we were absolutely delighted to be nominated then become a finalist. All volunteers on the night couldn't believe it when they announced us as the 2017 RTO of the year. Our group work tirelessly to better Muirhouse and West Pilton. This award gives us the recognition we believe we deserve. It goes to show just what volunteers can achieve.

**Robert Pearson, Chair, TRIM and FoWP**

# THANK YOU SHEILA



ETF would like to pay tribute to Sheila Rutherford-McCallum who has stepped down from the Federation's Executive Committee. Sheila was Treasurer of ETF for a number of years and was Secretary until the AGM. Sheila will be a huge loss to the Federation's Executive Committee and we will all miss her drive and enthusiasm. For this edition of *Tenants Voice*, we have quizzed Sheila about her work.

## How long were you involved with Edinburgh Tenants Federation?

I was involved with ETF for 17 years.

## What made you get involved with ETF?

I became involved with ETF after the organisation helped my village to start solving some very serious problems in our community.

## What advice would you give to anyone joining ETF today?

Try to be active in the organisation. You will not be expected to take on more than you can manage. You will learn a whole lot of things to help you help your community.

## What has been your highlights of being involved with ETF?

There have been so many, these are just a few:

- ETF being awarded the Guardian Prize for the work done by Betty Stevenson on suicide prevention and mental health work;
- Celebrating ETF's 20th and 25th Anniversaries;
- Being recognised internationally for the work ETF has done over its lifetime;
- All the successful campaigns ETF has been involved in over the years;
- ETF's contribution to the legislation in abolishing the Right to Buy Council housing.

## What has been your low points of being involved with ETF?

Our failure to be able to persuade the City of Edinburgh Council to reduce the year on year increase or freeze Council house rents. This has exacerbated the financial problems of many tenants.

## Any other comments?

ETF is on the brink of a major change in the way they do things. With the support of all of its members, they will be able to use this opportunity to go further and do so much more for all tenants in the greater Edinburgh area. ETF is a truly unique organisation and is, and always has been, a great example of community democracy.

# HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH UPDATE

Phew, what a busy wee while it has been for the Housing Rights team! Here's a wee taster of what's been going on:

## Project Board

Tenants have continued to meet with Council staff regarding progressing the improvement works.

The kitchens and bathrooms have been completed in a number of properties in West Cromwell Street with more to be completed.

Asbestos has been removed from the walkway ceiling and the building warrant has finally been granted for the external works to begin.

Over in Persevere and Citadel, tenants have had an opportunity to visit the show flats to see what the kitchens and bathrooms will look like. Design visits have also begun and will take place over the next couple of months. Further investigation into the ventilation replacement is still being considered but it looks like this will go ahead later in the year. Most of the work for Persevere and Citadel Court will begin in the autumn. The Project Board meetings will continue whilst work is taking place.



The kitchen and bathroom show flats

## Meeting with Chicago Tenants Chief Executive

John Bartlett and his wife Melinda were visiting Scotland from Metropolitan Tenants Organization, Chicago. Clare met John whilst on her travels to America (you can find out about this elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*). They spent time visiting ETF and listening to the story of how our housing rights work came about and where the project is at now. Two concierge staff members were on hand to take us around the show flats in all three buildings and gave an opportunity to ask some questions.

## Lessons from the Grassroots

ETF staff, Heather Ford and Chloe Trew from the Scottish Human Rights Commission were invited by the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) to take part in an exciting conference called "Housing and Accommodation Rights: Lessons from the Grassroots". The Conference brought together activists from Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Edinburgh, New Jersey and Cape Town who are using a rights based approach to influence housing conditions.

We were treated to night time entertainment in the form of some lovely home cooked grub and traditional Irish music in a pub. A fantastic trip all round.





## Equality and Human Rights Exchange Wales

ETF was delighted to be invited by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in Wales to deliver a keynote speech about using a human rights based approach in practice as part of their Equality and Human Rights Exchange Annual Conference. Bringing together more than 100 public and voluntary sector leaders in Cardiff in July, the Conference focussed on “A right to be human – human rights and public service delivery.”

Kerry Wakefield, EHRC Wales commented; “The 2017 annual Equality and Human Rights Exchange conference, ***A right to be human - human rights and public service delivery*** was the Commission’s first conference focusing exclusively on human rights. The conference aim was:

- To inspire delegates to take action to embed human rights in service delivery;
- To build the confidence of delegates in talking about human rights.

By achieving the conference aims we hoped that delegates would be able to return to their organisations both enthused and equipped to help advance the human rights agenda within their organisation, and across Wales.

The conference proved to be our largest to date, with around 170 delegates from a wide range of organisations. Many were familiar faces from core stakeholders, but we were delighted by the large number of new faces the conference attracted.

As well as representatives of ETF we were delighted to be joined by:

- Martha Spurrier, Director of Liberty;
- Mark Greenhaf, Deputy Governor at HMP Berwyn (new prison in North Wales);
- Andrew Davies, Chair of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board;
- Cecile Lansford, York Human Rights City Project.

Delegates were asked to identify action they will take to advance the human rights agenda. The Commission will be following up with delegates early in 2018 to see what progress has been made.

General feedback from the event was that delegates felt better informed and re-energised to continue to work towards developing human rights based approaches to service delivery, and to advance the equality and human rights agenda in Wales. Many delegates identified the ETF presentation as the highlight of their day. Delegates commented that the presentation was very inspirational and hearing from an actual tenant brought the case study to life.”



ETF and SHRC representatives with their Welsh counterparts and speakers at the Conference

**Justine Bradd, ETF Outreach Worker**

# TENANT LED INSPECTION UPDATE

Hectic! That's the only way to describe the last few months for the ETF Tenant Led Inspection Team. Our Inspectors have recently completed their inspection of the way the Council communicates with tenants about rent collection. We submitted our draft report to the Council, met with Council staff to discuss their comments and will shortly be finalising the report. We are looking forward to seeing how the Council intend to implement our recommendations as part of their action plan.

All of the Inspectors enjoyed this piece of work, in particular getting the opportunity to meet and interview the housing staff and speaking to tenants as part of a Focus Group. It was very interesting to see how both tenants and Council staff view such an important issue as rent collection communication.

There will be a further update in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*, so watch this space for further details.

**Heather Ford, Convenor, ETF Tenant Led Inspection Group**

## FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH RISE FLATS

As a result of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London back in June, fire safety in high rise flats has been a very prominent issue. Two high profile meetings were held in Edinburgh in the aftermath.

### **Moredun**

In the wake of the horrifying and devastating fire at Grenfell Tower in London, it was understandable that many of those living in Moredun's high rise flats had concerns over how safe they are in their own homes. We knew that for every person contacting us with their concerns there would be many others worrying in silence.

We decided the best way to reassure people was to call a public meeting to which every household would receive an invite, and where officials from the Council and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service would be available to answer questions. We were interviewed by the *Edinburgh Evening News* who ran a supportive piece outlining what we were doing.

On the night, the hall was bursting at the seams - we were nearly in the ironic position of breaching the building's fire regulations. Emotions were running high and only skillful chairing by ETF's Justine Bradd kept the meeting in order.

The central message from the Council and the Fire Service was that our high rises are safe, being fundamentally different to Grenfell in two important essential respects. Each of our flats is essentially a self-contained unit with concrete walls, floors and ceilings designed to ensure a fire in one flat could not spread; the history of the many fires in the blocks in recent decades illustrates the success of this construction concept.

In addition, there is no over-cladding on the outside of our blocks and, without wishing to pre-empt the findings of the Public Enquiry into Grenfell, it seems certain that the cheap, flammable aluminum composite material (ACM) cladding was primarily responsible for the devastatingly fast spread of the fire. This type of cladding has not been used on any of Edinburgh Council's high rises.

Those assurances aside, there remained many concerns, many questions and a great deal of frustration towards the Council and Concierge service. Residents complained of wedged open fire



doors and windows, damaged fire detectors, gaps under front doors, appliances left on landings, crumbling stairs, no emergency lighting, ignored fire alarms and a raft of other fire safety issues which many felt had continually failed to be addressed.

The Concierge Team Leader acknowledged there had been significant failings and that repairs had not been undertaken quickly enough, but promised lessons would be learned. The imminent appointment of additional staff members would also ease pressure on the Concierge service. The meeting was assured that all the concerns raised would be looked into, that residents would be constantly updated and that money would not be an obstacle to the implementation of any fire safety improvements proved necessary following a comprehensive review of fire safety.

For us as a resident's association, we have proved, through the numbers attending this meeting, that residents do care passionately - but it was a real eye-opener to see how much ill-feeling there is towards the Council and Concierge service. Our task is to harness that passion and energy constructively and to work with the Council to create far better communications and to seek to build a relationship of trust, but only with the active cooperation of all can this succeed. Several residents have expressed a desire to join us and by the time you read this residents themselves will have inspected every stair, fire door, window, landing and fire detector to see whether the promised imminent repairs have materialised.

### **Niel Hansen, Moredun 4 Multis Residents Association**

#### **ETF High Flats Meeting**

ETF held a High Flats Meeting in July at the Norton Park Conference Centre with guest speakers, Alex Burns, Housing Property Manager, City of Edinburgh Council and David Dourley, Fire Scotland. Many of the issues highlighted at the meeting had already been raised at the Moredun meeting. It was reassuring to hear that all of the Council's 44 high rise flats have passed their safety checks relating to potential fire hazards and only a number of minor repairs need to be completed.



**Discussions take place at the ETF High Flats Meeting**

The City of Edinburgh Council has established a Fire Safety Tenants' and Residents' Panel which will be open to tenants and residents from tower blocks across the city and will ensure they all have an opportunity to be involved. The Council will also undertake a survey of all tenants in tower blocks to ensure everyone has an opportunity to give their views. If you would like to be involved in the Fire Safety Tenants' and Residents' Panel or would like more information, please phone 0131 529 7172 or email [Tenant.Panel@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Tenant.Panel@edinburgh.gov.uk).

ETF's High Flats Group will be monitoring this issue, so contact Mark Henry on 0131 475 2509 or email [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk) with any issues you would like raised.

# HOW TO GET NEW MEMBERS...

We are trialling a new feature in *Tenants Voice* to offer advice to groups on improving and involving their communities in the work that they do. These will be a sample of some of the training ETF can offer to groups. If you would like to find out about fun and interactive sessions please get in touch with our Outreach Worker, Justine on 0131 475 2509 or [justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## Getting New Members.

What do you do to get new members? How do you involve your community? Do they know you even exist? Here are a few tips...

Get people along to your meeting by offering a social part of the evening such as a cheese and wine night, quiz, get to know your neighbours. Striking up a conversation can lead to many possibilities.



Volunteering looks attractive to employers, make sure people know this.



Tell people you exist! What's your news? Social media and newsletters or e-newsletters are a great way to spread news.

Arrange a stall at an event or even out in the street or near a local shopping centre.



Make potential new members aware that expenses can be covered, as long as receipts are provided.



Find out what residents want, what makes them tick? How would they like to get involved?



If someone is interested but are not confident, offer them training. You have a budget for this if you are a Council tenant or ask your landlord if they know of any courses available.

Speak to people in the street, it seems obvious but the power of face to face contact is phenomenal.



## WHAT ETF CAN DO FOR YOU?

Are you a member of a tenants' and residents' group in Edinburgh? Are you a member of Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF)? If you answered yes to both questions then well done! If your first answer was yes and the second no, then you need to read on.

ETF is run by tenants and is here to support tenants' and residents' groups.

ETF can offer services to help groups run more effectively by providing a wide range of support to help your group including:

- ✓ Training on committee skills and other topics;
- ✓ Assistance with dealing with the group's accounts;
- ✓ Low cost photocopying;
- ✓ Help to publicise the work of the group;
- ✓ Provide opportunities for the group to speak to people who are dealing with similar issues;
- ✓ Assist you to find out what people in your area would like to improve their lives.

Membership is free and can be of huge benefit to groups.

ETF needs the support of tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh to make it a stronger and louder organisation. The more member groups the Federation has the louder it can make tenants' voices heard.

If you would like more information on becoming a member of ETF or wish to be sent an application form please contact the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

We look forward to hearing from you.

## A WARM WELCOME TO WILLOWBRAE



We would like to welcome along new group Willowbrae / Duddingston Residents Association. The new group represents tenants at Willowbrae Sheltered Housing and will be working in partnership with the Council on a number of improvements in the area including better signage, car parking and building improvements. We look forward to having representatives at future ETF events.



# COUNCILLOR ADAM MCVEY

## SNP Group leader and leader of the City of Edinburgh Council

### 1. Tell us your party's priorities for the next five years for housing and the people of Edinburgh?

We want to build 20,000 new, genuinely affordable homes over the next ten years. Delivering this is front and centre of the Council's Administration. Regarding our current housing stock, we want to ensure this is up to standard. We will build upon the progress already made to make sure all our homes hit or exceed the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.



### 2. What will your party do to tackle poverty in Edinburgh?

We want to ensure that Edinburgh is a living wage city. I wish the Council and the Scottish Government had more control of the benefits side of housing. We will look at where there are pockets of poverty in the city and ensure there are better links with transport. We will look to build upon the Skills Academy approach like in Fort Kinnaird.

### 3. Tell us about how your party will address unaffordable rents?

I am concerned that housing in the private rented sector is becoming more and more expensive, which is pushing property prices up. We are looking to introduce developments in places such as Granton and the garden district, which will tackle the pressures of rent increases. We are also looking at the possibility of introducing rent pressure zones in some areas of Edinburgh. If we think there are possible areas in Edinburgh where this would make sense, then we would speak to the Housing Minister. We would never increase Council rents beyond any cap level, however we can't promise that there would be a rent freeze for Council tenants as we need to fund the investment in the properties.

### 4. What are your party's ideas for getting rid of the Bedroom Tax?

The Scottish Government has fully mitigated the cost of the Bedroom Tax on tenants and SNP MPs at Westminster have fought against it. I would love to be able to scrap the Bedroom Tax but all we can do is mitigate it.

### 5. What are some of the big opportunities in housing in Edinburgh and the challenges?

There are huge opportunities for the amount of land that is available in the north of the city. There are a lot of people moving to this area and there is an opportunity to capitalise on this. The challenges are building more homes and investing in our current housing stock.

### 6. Tell us a wee bit about yourself

I am originally from Paisley and I went to study Economics at Dundee University. I have previously worked for Amnesty International and then the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. I was elected as a Councillor in 2012.

### 7. Describe yourself in three words

I'm working class.

### 8. What do you do for fun?

I enjoy playing snooker and going running. I also enjoy going for drinks with my friends and I eat out a lot; there are some fantastic places in Leith for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### 9. What advice would you give your 16 year old self?

I went to Renfrewshire High School and I failed all my exams. I then went to College and then University. I would say try harder and stick in at school.

### 10. What ignites your fire?

I am very angry at policies like the family cap and rape clause because they're such a callous

approach to people. I grew up with families that would have been impacted by brutal policies like that and I take attacks on lower income families like this personally. Education also ignites my fire. If we get it right the next generation will have the kind of opportunities that weren't open to me. It will have a positive impact on those that need it the most.

**11. What dampens your embers?**

I am quite calm and fairly level headed. However, I may need to develop a coping technique for the next five years to keep myself like that!

**12. If you were an animal what would you like to be?**

I would like to be a bear. Eat constantly all day and sleeping, I definitely live to eat rather than eating to live!

**13. How would you use one wish with a magic wand?**

I would want Scotland to become an independent country. I think the policies we could implement at home and abroad would have massive benefits for everyone.

## COUNCILLOR CAMMY DAY

### Labour Group Leader and Deputy Leader, City of Edinburgh Council

**1. Tell us your party's priorities for the next five years for housing and the people of Edinburgh?**

In our election manifesto we had a number of key pledges:

- 1) Investing in education and new schools;
- 2) Build 16,000 low cost homes;
- 3) Respond to issues around homelessness and set up a Task Force regarding what to do with the continued use of Bed and Breakfasts.



**2. What will your party do to tackle poverty in Edinburgh?**

It is a disgrace that there are Foodbanks in Edinburgh. We've asked to set up a Poverty Unit within the Council to look at child poverty within Edinburgh. The Council doesn't do enough to address poverty and I believe the Scottish Government, the Third Sector and the Council should work together more to address poverty in the city.

**3. Tell us about how your party will address unaffordable rents?**

There are a range of rents in Edinburgh. In our manifesto we recommended setting up rent pressure zones and asked the Scottish Government for input. I accept that Edinburgh has the highest rents in the country but we also have the best homes. I would like to have a rent freeze for Council tenants, but would the impact mean less investment in tenants' homes? The Council has installed new heating systems as well as windows and broadband. The impact of Welfare Reform in Edinburgh has been devastating. I know of 16 women in Edinburgh who were thrown out of their homes. Their benefits were being capped as they lived in the private sector. Income from benefits is particularly challenging.

**4. What are your party's ideas for getting rid of the Bedroom Tax?**

Our party is against the Bedroom Tax and when Jeremy Corbyn becomes Prime Minister, the Labour Party will abolish the Bedroom Tax.

**5. What are some of the big opportunities in housing in Edinburgh and the challenges?**

One of the biggest challenges is access to affordable land with greedy developers holding onto land. As part of the City Deal, there is an opportunity to get more land to build new homes. It is important to build a mixture of homes and not just restrict it to flats. One of the biggest

opportunities is building more affordable homes across the city.

**6. Tell us a wee bit about yourself**

I am currently the best looking Councillor. I have been a Councillor for the past nine years. I was previously the party's spokesperson on Housing, then I was Vice Convenor of the Housing, Social Work and Health Committee. My party is currently in coalition with the SNP and I am Deputy Leader of the Council.

**7. Describe yourself in three words**

Cycling, politics and Edinburgh.

**8. What do you do for fun?**

I enjoy going cycling and running. I have a caravan in Seton Sands, East Lothian which I enjoy relaxing in. I enjoy drinking wine and baking gingerbread cake.

**9. What advice would you give your 16 year old self?**

Make sure when you vote, vote Labour. Stick in at school, be more active and keep fit.

**10. What ignites your fire?**

Unfairness. I came into politics through the Trade Union Movement. It's important to unite against unfairness and inequality in terms of race.

**11. What dampens your embers?**

Bureaucracy. You know what you want to achieve, but red tape means tasks take a bit longer to complete.

**12. If you were an animal what would you like to be?**

A lion. I like to lead people.

**13. How would you use one wish with a magic wand?**

Access to clean drinking water across the world or eradicate poverty in Edinburgh.

## COUNCILLOR STEVE BURGESS

### Green Group Leader



**1. Tell us your party's priorities for the next five years for housing and the people of Edinburgh?**

Building more Council homes in Edinburgh. Currently we have a shortage of homes in the city and we want to put pressure on the Council to build more social and mid-market rented homes. Council house building is only a small proportion of housing and it is important that some homes are for sale and some are rented. It will be important to maximise social rents across the city.

**2. What will your party do to tackle poverty in Edinburgh?**

Poverty is a massive issue in the city as there are people who are wealthy and some that are less wealthy. A Poverty Forum in Edinburgh would be beneficial. It is good that the Council pays a living wage and we oppose zero hour contracts for employees. We will ensure that there are advice services available in Edinburgh, so tenants can receive the necessary help.

**3. Tell us about how your party will address unaffordable rents?**

It is important that the Council keeps rents affordable and invests in the quality of Council housing. We need energy efficient homes that are easy to heat.

**4. What are your party's ideas for getting rid of the Bedroom Tax?**

Unfortunately we are stuck with the Bedroom Tax as it's from the UK Government. I was heavily



involved in campaigning against the Bedroom Tax when it was first introduced. The Scottish Government has been able to give Discretionary Housing Payments to Councils to mitigate the effects of the Bedroom Tax.

**5. What are some of the big opportunities in housing in Edinburgh and the challenges?**

The big picture is that we have a housing shortage in the city and prices will go up. In order to keep housing affordable we need to build more homes, however it is important that rents are affordable. The Council will receive new powers in December to introduce rent pressure zones across the city and I am very keen for the Council to use these new powers. Council rents in Edinburgh are on average £94 per week and the average Scottish rent is £68. Green Councillors have consistently opposed rent increases. We need to strike a balance where money is made available to invest in new homes, but at the same time keep rents affordable and look at the increase in short term holidays lets. Supply of land at the waterfront is an issue and we can ask the Scottish Government for certain land to be developed. The Council has the opportunity to force the sale of land through Compulsory Purchases.

**6. Tell us a wee bit about yourself**

I was born in Edinburgh and I have lived here most of my life. I went to College down south for four years. I am married and I live in Meadowbank with my two children who are five and seven years old. I don't have much spare time at the moment but I used to enjoy traditional Scottish music and I used to play the fiddle. I was elected as a Councillor in 2007 and before that I worked for four years in the Scottish Parliament for Robin Harper, MSP.

**7. Describe yourself in three words**

Serious, focussed and committed.

**8. What do you do for fun?**

I enjoy playing with my children by going to the park and playgrounds. I attend the school football games where my son plays.

**9. What advice would you give your 16 year old self?**

Be more confident as I was very shy for a long while.

**10. What ignites your fire?**

Social and environmental injustice. Music.

**11. What dampens your embers?**

When the world is travelling in the opposite direction. Donald Trump and the Tories can invigorate you and that's something to battle against.

**12. If you were an animal what would you like to be?**

A cat.

**13. How would you use one wish with a magic wand?**

Greater equality in the world. If people were equal there would be less conflict.

## COUNCILLOR ROBERT ALDRIDGE

### Liberal Democrat Group Leader

**1. Tell us your party's priorities for the next five years for housing and the people of Edinburgh?**

There is a huge crisis in the supply of affordable and rented homes in Edinburgh. There are also restrictions to the private rented sector. We need to build homes that are of high quality but also suitable for all household types. Many tenants will be on a fixed income so it's important to accommodate them. We need to work closely with the Registered Social Landlords in Edinburgh.



## **2. What will your party do to tackle poverty in Edinburgh?**

In terms of housing it's not just rents that are expensive, but the energy running costs are too. We need better energy costs and Edinburgh's economy needs to be booming. Edinburgh is the engine of the Scottish economy and everyone in the city needs an opportunity to participate. In our election manifesto we proposed introducing an Edinburgh card, which would include discounts for people suffering from poverty and those suffering from disabilities.

## **3. Tell us about how your party will address unaffordable rents?**

The rent question is difficult and we need to strike a balance. Yes we want rents to be affordable but at the same time it is important that funds are in place to maintain properties. It's important we have an open discussion with tenants to strike the right balance. However it is essential that the Housing Revenue Account be used only for housing and not for any other purposes.

## **4. What are your party's ideas for getting rid of the Bedroom Tax?**

The Bedroom Tax is an appalling measure which my party and I are opposed to. People need to be in homes which are suitable for them. However the biggest demand is for one bedroom properties and unfortunately there are not enough of them, so we need to make do with the housing stock which is available to us. The Bedroom Tax is a flawed concept, however I am glad that the Scottish Government has taken steps to mitigate its effects.

## **5. What are some of the big opportunities in housing in Edinburgh and the challenges?**

The challenges are the growing and ageing population in Edinburgh, as well as pressures on affordable homes. An opportunity is helping private landlords manage properties better. We need to help those that are on benefits and ensure that allocation policies are fair. It is important to listen to local people, because if you don't; poor decisions will be made. The obvious example is the fire in Grenfell Tower, London.

## **6. Tell us a wee bit about yourself**

I was born in the Elsie Inglis Hospital in Abbeyhill and I have lived my whole life in Edinburgh. I became a Councillor in 1984 and am currently the longest serving Councillor in Edinburgh. I represent the Drum Brae Gyle ward and that's where I currently live, as I feel it's important to experience first-hand the services in the area. During most of my time as a Councillor I have been on the opposition benches. However from 2007-2012, I was the Environmental Leader, which dealt with parks, refuse and pot holes. Until recently I was the Chief Executive of a Homelessness Charity entitled Homelessness Action Scotland and I was President of the European Network of Homelessness Organisations (FEANTSA).

## **7. Describe yourself in three words**

Determined, caring, committed.

## **8. What do you do for fun?**

I enjoy going to the cinema and attending the White Lady Pub in Corstorphine. I enjoy modern Scottish art and I love to travel.

## **9. What advice would you give your 16 year old self?**

If a door opens go through it.

## **10. What ignites your fire?**

Unfairness, discrimination, people being misled and racism.

## **11. What dampens your embers?**

The length of time it takes to do a lot of things.

## **12. If you were an animal what would you like to be?**

A golden eagle. A few years ago on New Year's Day I was up in the north east of Scotland and I saw a golden eagle in flight.

### 13. How would you use one wish with a magic wand?

Eliminate discrimination.

## COUNCILLOR IAIN WHYTE

### Conservative Group Leader

#### 1. Tell us your party's priorities for the next five years for housing and the people of Edinburgh?

In general there needs to be a speeding up of the house building process across all tenures, particularly the private rented sector. We appreciate the work that our Housing Association partners in Edinburgh do in building new homes. It is important to have a mixture of tenures in different places throughout the city, we should not just build more social housing where there is already a lot, but, for example, mixed tenure properties in the private sector.



#### 2. What will your party do to tackle poverty in Edinburgh?

We want to look at getting people into work and make sure they are on the appropriate benefits. Work is the key to tackling poverty and restoring self-esteem.

#### 3. Tell us about how your party will address unaffordable rents?

There are a number of mechanisms and I see there are already different subsidies around rents in different sectors. There have been changes to the benefits system with one benefit that will now cover everything. This will ensure it is less confusing and people are taking more responsibility. High rents in Edinburgh will only be tackled if we ensure there are more houses being built.

#### 4. What are your party's ideas for getting rid of the Bedroom Tax?

I dispute the term 'Bedroom Tax' and prefer to use the term 'Spare Room subsidy'. This is up to our colleagues in Westminster and the Scottish Government. The Council has some powers to limit the impact on individuals and is doing so where appropriate.

#### 5. What are some of the big opportunities in housing in Edinburgh and the challenges?

The challenges include developing new housing, including the costs, planning and the housebuilding itself. There is a pressure there. I'm not sure if we have the balance right. Brownfield sites are not being developed and there is a slowing up of building on sites that are already available. We need houses to be developed and we should look at policy incentives to develop brownfield sites.

#### 6. Tell us a wee bit about yourself

I have been a Councillor for the past 20 years. My daughter recently graduated from University. I am a keen Hibs supporter. I am currently Chair of the Edinburgh March Riding Association and it's great to help organise an event that sees so many Edinburgh people coming together.

#### 7. Describe yourself in three words

Thoughtful, dedicated and flexible.

#### 8. What do you do for fun?

I moved house around 18 months ago, so I enjoy renovating the house. I like to watch Hibs whenever I can and I enjoy attending arts, especially the festivals in Edinburgh.

#### 9. What advice would you give your 16 year old self?

Chill out and be more relaxed as things will turn out better. Do your best and don't worry as much.



### 10. What ignites your fire?

Seeing something that is completed well. If I am working on a case that is stressful for a constituent, I like to see a positive outcome.

### 11. What dampens your embers?

Bureaucracy. Meetings that are going nowhere.

### 12. If you were an animal what would you like to be?

An Elephant. I try to retain as much information as possible.

### 13. How would you use one wish with a magic wand?

I wish the Conservatives had won the Council election here in Edinburgh.

## NEWS FROM THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

### Your New City of Edinburgh Council

Following the recent election, your Council agreed its political management arrangements for the next twelve months on 22nd June 2017.

The Council has set up six executive committees:

- Corporate Policy and Strategy;
- Culture and Communities;
- Education, Children and Families;
- Finance and Resources;
- Housing and Economy;
- Transport and Environment.

The committees will meet roughly every eight weeks.

Each committee is made up of eleven members drawn from the different political groups: three Scottish National Party, three Conservative, two Labour, two Green and one Liberal Democrat.



All aspects to do with housing will be the job of the Housing and Economy Committee. The chair of this committee is Councillor Gavin Barrie (pictured).

In addition, four cross-party working groups have been set up to lead community and partnership engagement on Locality Improvement Plans. These will be made up of one member from each political group.

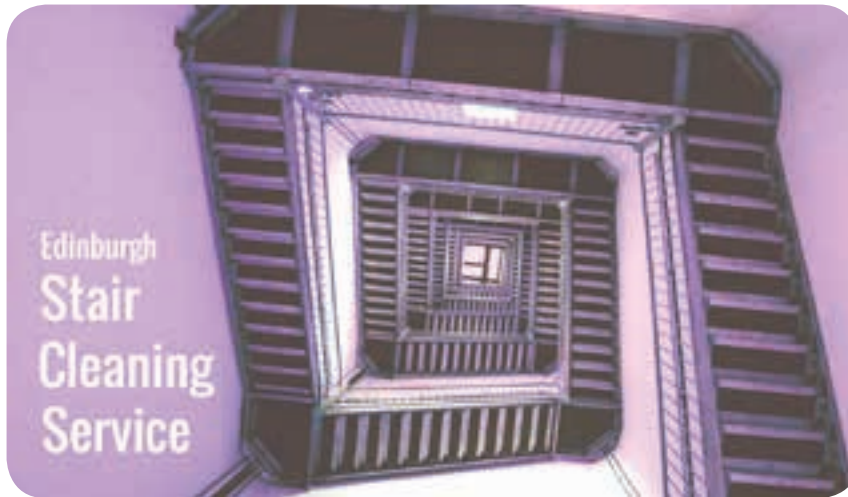
The new Council arrangements will be reviewed in twelve months' time.

Representatives of groups can speak to committees through deputations. Contact Committee Services:

Email: [committee.services@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@edinburgh.gov.uk)  
Phone: 0131 529 4210  
Write to: Committee Services  
2.1 Waverley Court  
4 East Market Street  
Edinburgh EH8 8BG

**Sam Reeves, Senior Housing Development Officer, City of Edinburgh Council**

## City of Edinburgh Council Stair Cleaning Service



You may or may not know that the City of Edinburgh Council Stair Cleaning Service has been operating for nearly 14 years now. The company that currently cleans the stairs for the Council is ISS, a worldwide cleaning and facilities company.

An Edinburgh ISS staff member has recently written about his experiences of cleaning stairs in Edinburgh, his home city where he lives now and where he grew up. He describes how the stairs have many stories to tell us about the city's history and the people who have lived here over time. Take the Grassmarket, there is evidence, he tells us, of the window tax from the 1600's when owners were charged for the number of windows in their home. People would brick up their windows to avoid the tax; some would brick up all their windows leaving no natural daylight at all!

This cleaner speaks movingly about the people he meets in the stairs that he cleans, describing how they will stop to say hello and have a quick chat while he and his team are cleaning. He talks about how he gets a sense of the stairs and the people who live there from the aromas, like tattie soup or a curry cooking, or the things people leave outside their front doors, such as toys, bikes or the odd plant.

He ends his article by saying: "It is with a sense of satisfaction that I leave my stair not only clean but having had a unique opportunity to view my City from a whole new perspective. If you visit somewhere once a week for long enough you will come to develop a relationship of some kind with it. I think it would be difficult not to."

The stair cleaning teams work hard and are committed to keeping stairs and common passages in the service as clean as they can be. ISS will trial a new deck scrubbing machine soon for use where deep cleans may be required to remove stains. This is a new machine developed to be one of the most compact and powerful on the market. We are all looking forward to seeing how this works and where it can be used to help to deliver high quality cleaning in Edinburgh.

If you would like to get in touch with us about anything to do with the stair cleaning service, please use one of the methods below.

Email: [staircleaning@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:staircleaning@edinburgh.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0131 529 7827

Online Feedback Form: [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/staircleaning](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/staircleaning)

Twitter: @edinhelp

Your feedback is important as it helps to shape your services, it could also win you a prize of £40 of shopping vouchers in the quarterly stair cleaning feedback prize draw.

**Jennifer Hunter, Tenant & Resident Services Manager, City of Edinburgh Council**

## Repairs Direct

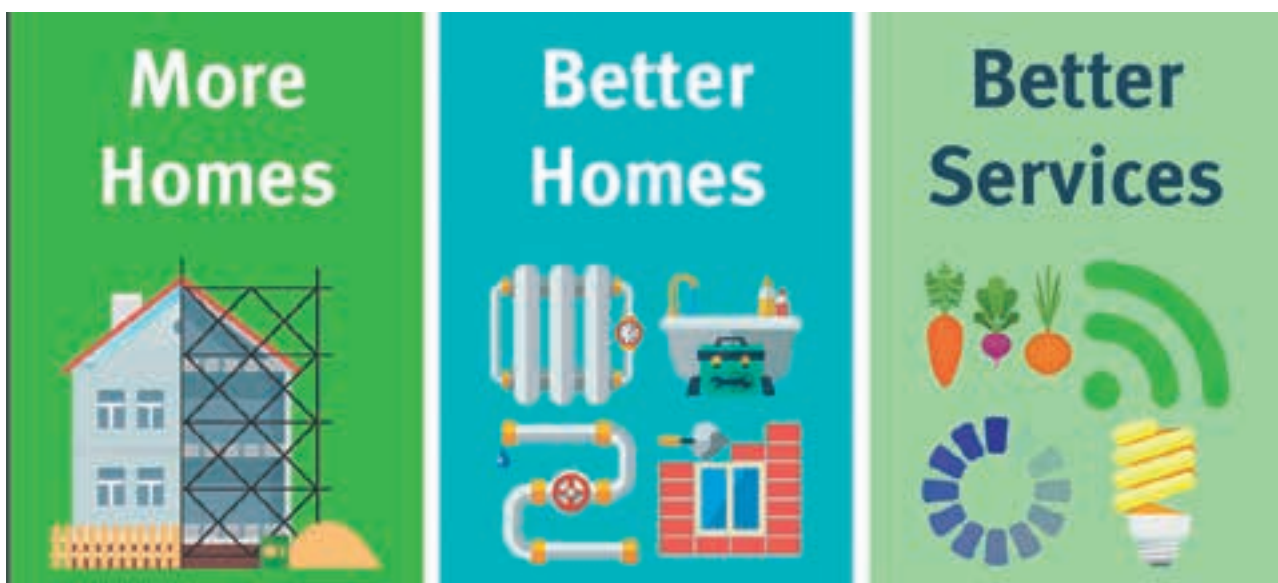
Within the Council's Repairs Direct team we are working hard to ensure we have full resources to be able to meet the demands of the tenants within Edinburgh. We have recruited an additional five members of staff to the team; which will help us over the next few months. We are currently looking at having options for repairs and non-emergency forms on-line to allow a better choice of how to register these jobs at a time suitable for you, this is work in progress.

It was great to have representatives from ETF visit the contact centre a couple of months ago and we look forward to more of these visits. We recently spoke about our plans at a meeting of the ETF Repairs Group Meeting and there will be another update in a future edition of *Tenants Voice*.

**Lisa Hastie, Customer Contact Manager, City of Edinburgh Council**

## The City of Edinburgh Council 2018/19 Housing Budget Consultation

# You said, we did; what next?



Over the last two years Council tenants said they wanted their rent to be spent on building more homes, improving the quality of existing homes, and investing in services that will help reduce costs.

Based on tenants' priorities, the Council agreed to build 8,000 new homes over the next ten years, continue to modernise homes and neighbourhoods and deliver new services such as a Tenant Discount Scheme and an energy advice service.

Council tenants, have the opportunity to give their views by Tuesday 31st October 2017 on what has been delivered so far and how else your rent should be spent.

To find out more visit our website at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/tenantsaving](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/tenantsaving), email us at [housing.research@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:housing.research@edinburgh.gov.uk) or pick up a FREEPOST card from your local Housing Officer, office or library.

Take part to be in with a chance to win £100 of shopping vouchers.

**Douglas Alexander, Housing Development Officer, City of Edinburgh Council**



# UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Changeworks has partnered with the University of Edinburgh to deliver IDEAL, a cutting edge research project exploring how smart technology can help save energy in the home. They are looking for households in Edinburgh and the Lothians (EH1-55) with gas combi boiler heating to participate.

The benefits include:

- Gaining insight into your home energy use;
- Receiving a free android tablet used to display energy use information;
- Receiving tailored advice from University of Edinburgh experts;
- Hopefully saving money on gas and electricity bills.

For more information visit [changeworks.org.uk/projects/ideal](https://changeworks.org.uk/projects/ideal). To get involved email your name, address and contact details to [IDEAL@changeworks.org.uk](mailto:IDEAL@changeworks.org.uk), or call 0131 539 8610.

**Drew Murphy, IDEAL Project Manager, Changeworks**



## NATIONAL NEWS

### Meeting with the Housing Minister Kevin Stewart, MSP

Betty Stevenson, ETF Convenor and Clare MacGillivray, ETF Development Coordinator met with Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Housing and Local Government at the Scottish Parliament over the summer to connect about issues that tenants have been raising with the Federation.

Betty commented about the meeting, “It is important that tenants’ views are heard by the Housing Minister and I welcome the opportunity to have met with him to talk about housing in Edinburgh. Although we didn’t agree about everything, the big issues for tenants were discussed and we had a very positive dialogue.”

The main points talked about were affordable housing, housing rights in practice, welfare reform and the private rented sector. Here is a summary of what was discussed:

#### Affordable housing and rents in Edinburgh

- Regarding rent levels in Edinburgh, questions were raised about how affordable rents are to tenants and is it time for a national rent policy for Scotland?
- There was discussion that there is no clear definition of “affordable” rent;
- On the topic of the performance of landlords against the Scottish Social Housing Charter, Betty highlighted that some tenants have been concerned that the Charter report is not a reflection of their own experiences, and more needs to be done in hearing tenants’ experiences;

- The Minister outlined plans for 35,000 new homes in the social sector and will write to the Scottish Housing Regulator to highlight ETF's concerns regarding the landlord charter reports.

### **Housing Rights in Practice**

- An update was given on the housing rights in practice work ETF is working on with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and Participation and the Practice of Rights in Leith. Meetings with the Council and residents are progressing well and work has started on a major investment programme to refurbish the buildings. Scottish Government officials will meet again with ETF once the project is completed.

### **Welfare Reform and Universal Credit**

- An increase in poverty is worrying for tenants. Furthermore welfare reform is increasing hardship, particularly in relation to sanctions, the onset of Universal Credit and other welfare changes. This is having a negative impact on rent arrears;
- ETF is concerned that help with discretionary housing payments is not being publicised widely enough and that letters from the DWP are confusing. The Minister would provide copies of letters to the Minister for Social Security;
- The Minister highlighted that 18% of social security has been transferred to the Scottish Government's powers and the Scottish Government is using the powers it has to mitigate against some welfare changes such as the bedroom tax.

### **Private Rented Sector (PRS)**

- Discussion about Edinburgh and the need for rent pressure zones in the private rented sector to curb extortionate rents;
- The Minister highlighted that new PRS legislation would see the sector be more strongly regulated in the future. Tenants in the sector would be getting secure tenancy agreements, letting agents were being better regulated and Ministers were looking at introducing an energy efficient standard for all private rented accommodation.



Betty and Clare with the Housing Minister

## Visit to the Scottish Parliament

Representatives from ETF recently joined with tenants from across Scotland in a visit to the Scottish Parliament organised by TPAS Scotland. The group wanted to find out more about the process of engaging with the Scottish Parliament. In a lively morning of sessions, tenants learned how the Parliament works, the difference between the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government, how to submit evidence to Committees and progress on some of the current housing legislation.

Jimmy Galloway, one of ETF's representatives at the event said, "Thanks for the chance to educate myself in the wonders of the working of MSPs, how the system works and why. I am still dazed at the complexity of the system. No wonder we have so many laws and rules to abide by. The presentation was very well done but it strived to get too much into such a small time frame. Well done to the presenters and I would like more of the same."

Tony Kelly, TPAS Scotland commented "We were pleased to welcome tenants from Edinburgh Tenants Federation to the Introduction to the Scottish Parliament sessions. With the high level of demand by tenants from across Scotland for these sessions, I think we'll need some more! The Parliament's Community Involvement Team provided active and enjoyable sessions to improve knowledge and equip tenants with tools to influence decisions, which is what TPAS Scotland is all about. Whether it is presenting a petition, contacting local MSPs or providing evidence to a committee there are ways tenants' voices are heard and the Scottish Parliament is keen to benefit from people's real lived experiences. All at TPAS Scotland welcome ideas, so if you've an idea to help tenants and landlords work together to improve social housing, let us know."



ETF representatives at the Scottish Parliament

## Meeting with Andy Wightman, MSP

Betty Stevenson also met with Andy Wightman MSP over the summer to discuss housing issues in Edinburgh; particularly regarding affordable rents, the supply of affordable housing, the need for rent controls in private sector rents and the housing rights in practice project.



Betty with Andy Wightman, MSP



## Scotland's Social Security Bill

The Social Security (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in June 2017, following a consultation on the creation of a new social security system in Scotland in 2016. ETF was involved and tenants' comments were sent in to the Scottish Government at the time.

The principles of social security in Scotland are that social security is an investment in the people of Scotland; a human right which is essential towards realising other human rights; has dignity and respect for people at its heart; makes Ministers responsible for making sure individuals are given what they are entitled to under the new system; puts the needs of people who require assistance first; is designed by the people of Scotland using evidence; is efficient and provides value for money.

The Bill sets out the Scottish Government's view of how a social security system in Scotland will work.

ETF has produced a Briefing Paper about the Bill which is available on our website at [www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk](http://www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk) or from the Federation office. Please contact [info@edinburgh tenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburgh tenants.org.uk) or call 0131 475 2509 for a copy.

## LINKING ETF WITH USA

ETF's Development Coordinator, Clare MacGillivray was recently awarded the prestigious Nette Nelson Travel Scholarship from the Community Development Society (CDS) to attend their Conference in Montana, USA. She was also invited to present at the University of Kentucky as part of her trip. Reflecting on the award, Clare said, "I was delighted to be recognised by the Community Development Society (CDS) of America. This global travel scholarship enabled me to travel to the USA for two weeks in June to share with international community development colleagues the theory and practice of using a human rights based approach in tenant participation."

Clare's programme was packed with study visits, learning, presentations and networking. Here she tells us about some highlights:



Clare with her award

### 2nd – 5th June: Chicago



Chicago housing as public art

I spent three days in Chicago touring community projects, learning about how community and public art, community gardens and local fun days have become a focus in alleviating poverty through practical means. Division Street Fest for example, is a neighbourhood street festival organised by the community to raise funds and awareness for local foodbanks.

Housing issues were central to this part of the trip and I met with John Bartlett from Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO) (the Federation for tenants in Chicago). Their mission is to educate, organise and empower tenants to have a voice in the decisions that affect the affordability and availability of safe, decent and accessible housing.

I learned how the tenants' organisation uses a rights based approach to monitor and represent tenants' issues in Chicago. MTO offers a free tenants' hotline and repairs reporting app which supports tenants with housing issues and collates data to influence housing investment and improvement at a citywide level.

Tenants in Chicago organise collectively to address problems with gentrification, insecure tenancies, high rent levels, poor repairs standards and a lack of affordable housing. You can find out more at their website <https://www.tenants-rights.org/>.

### 6th – 9th June: Lexington, Kentucky

I was invited by the University of Kentucky (UKY) as part of their Community Leadership and Development (CLD) Unexpected Series to present about using a rights based approach in community development. The seminar for faculty, staff, students and civic leaders highlighted the importance of communities leading public authorities to deliver housing rights.

Through a series of study visits, meetings and tours, I learned about different approaches to community development with a wide range of organisations – particularly in practical solutions to reductions of poverty through fresh food initiatives and economic development models.

I was really impressed by Fresh Stop, a community group which organises local smallholding farmers to bring their produce for sale direct to people living in “food deserts” (areas where there are no fresh fruit and veg available to residents within a two mile distance). This model provides a stable and fixed income for food producers, and access to affordable fresh produce for people on low incomes. Mrs Anna, one the volunteers said, “I couldn’t afford to get the bus to get fresh food, and it’s too expensive in the supermarket. But I like to give my baby good food to eat, which I can get here. Here I learn how to cook the veg as well, and we share community meals. I’ve been a volunteer for a few years now with Fresh Stop and these people doing this work alongside me give me life.”



Mrs Anna, a volunteer with Fresh Stop

### 10th – 15th June: Big Sky, Montana

I was delighted to take part in the CDS Conference in Montana. The Conference brought together global community development academics and practitioners.

I had been invited to deliver a presentation about our housing rights based work as part of a seminar focussing on housing issues. It was incredible to hear reactions to the work of ETF by community development leaders in a global context.

Margaret Stout, from West Virginia University chaired the session and wrote afterwards, “Clare gave one of the most impactful presentations at the conference. She shared what ETF has been doing to improve tenants’ rights and the maintenance and improvement of their homes. ETF is incredibly impressive for its respectful and meaningful engagement of tenants as the shapers of policy and action, while staff provide informed facilitation, guidance, and technical support. The impact of this authentically democratic approach was evident in the stories shared by tenants in the short video portion of the presentation. This is clearly not a relationship of charitable paternalism between experts and clients, but rather caring relationship among people making a better community together. Well done ETF! Keep pushing the boundaries of professionalism in the spirit of participatory democracy! I can assure you that it moved more than me to joyful tears.”



Clare with Hip Hop Community Development legend Supaman

There were many more highlights of the conference, including using hip hop as a tool for community development, learning about indigenous rights through seminars with Tribal Leaders who fought against the installation of a pipeline through sacred lands at Standing Rock, a mobile learning workshop to Yellowstone National Park, as well as learning about Ripple Effect Mapping – a new participatory storytelling tool to evaluate community development programmes and digital participation to form online communities.

Most of all though, the conference gave me the chance to meet incredible community developers, and raised awareness of our work at a global level.

Proceedings from the Conference are now available at <http://scholarworks.montana.edu/xmlui/handle/1/13451>.

If you would like more information please contact Clare on 0131 475 2509 or email [clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## REMEMBERING ISABEL ADAMS



We at ETF were saddened to hear of the recent death of Isabel Adams. Isabel and her husband John lived in Maiden Craig Court and were very active and well respected members of their local residents' association. Both liked to attend the ETF High Flats Group meetings which were held at Birnie's Court.

Isabel was also very active in the Blackhall community where she served as a church elder and a youth leader. Isabel will be very sadly missed by everyone at ETF and her local community.

## REMEMBERING THERESA BIGGS



We were also saddened to hear of the passing of Theresa Biggs. Theresa was a founding member of the Saughton Mains Terrace Residents' Association set up in 2015. She was also involved in the Rent Matters Working Group and attended many ETF events over the years.

We will miss Theresa and send our condolences to her family and friends.



# CONVENOR'S REPORT



I would like to start my Convenor's Report by thanking everyone who attended our AGM back in June. I'm sorry I was not able to stay longer and chat but I had to catch a flight to Portugal very early the next morning. I would like to thank Sheila Rutherford-McCallum for her 17 years of service on the Federation's Executive Committee. We will certainly miss Sheila's input and we wish her all the very best for the future.

I was deeply saddened about the recent passing of both Theresa Biggs and Isabel Adams. Both were dedicated members of their local community and made valuable contributions at ETF events over the years. I have known Isabel in particular for many years as she regularly attended the High Flats meetings. Both will be sadly missed.

I have been very impressed with the way the Council has responded to the Grenfell Tower tragedy in London. Housing Officers and Team Leaders have been very visible in their areas to reassure tenants. I chaired a very successful High Flats meeting in July where attendees found out first-hand the steps the Council and Fire Scotland have been taking to ensure a similar tragedy does not happen in Edinburgh.

I thoroughly enjoyed interviewing all the party leaders for this edition of *Tenants Voice*. It was interesting to hear about each of the party's respective housing priorities for the next year but also finding out more about the party leaders themselves. I would like to thank each of them for giving up their time and offering their thoughts.

Unfortunately we had to postpone the Federation Meeting scheduled for September 2017 as we have not received information on becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation and the legal implications regarding the pension scheme. We are hoping to reschedule this meeting for October and will be combined with a social event.

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## City of Edinburgh Council Tenants' Conference

Saturday 28th October 2017, 9.30am-2.00pm,  
Waverley Court,  
4 East Market Street

## ETF Members' Meeting

Monday 17th November 2017,  
time and venue to be confirmed

## Comments, compliments, complaints

Please give us feedback on this publication. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints we would like to know. Just contact us at the ETF office.

## About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) for more information.

## Thoughtful Quote

*"Nothing is as important as passion. No matter what you want to do with your life, be passionate."*

*Jon Bon Jovi*

## Copy Deadline



*Tenants Voice* is usually published four times a year and is distributed to nearly 4,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation. If you would like to contribute an article, please do so by the following deadline:

November 2017 edition –  
Monday 30th October 2017.



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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

