

# Tenants Voice



20<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

Issue 77 January 2011

## And the winners are...Edinburgh!

Edinburgh Tenants Federation Convenor Betty Stevenson, was "over the moon" when the winners were announced at the prestigious Guardian Public Services Award Ceremony in London in November.

Betty was even more surprised when invited to collect the award on stage from the BBC's Jeremy Vine, on behalf of the Federation and the Council. Although typically understated in her acceptance of the award, commenting afterwards that "the most important aspect is that more and more people are becoming aware of the work that the group is carrying out" Betty acknowledges that that winning the award was a fantastic achievement.

Edinburgh won in the Skills Development Category for the work of the Mental Health Awareness Group (MHAG). The MHAG, which was founded by ETF and the Council, was singled out for praise for training more than 200 Council staff to spot the warning signs of a potential suicide. The Federation has heard of four lives being saved since the training started.

ETF and the Council were up against organisations from all across the United Kingdom, and this makes the award even more special. Jim Davidson, Housing Property Services Manager from the Council commented, "The buzz around the events hall in London when Edinburgh was awarded the Guardian Public Services Award was breathtaking. It proved, once again, how important this work is. I was very proud to represent the city and to know that tackling mental health matters is a truly UK-wide objective."

This is the second national award for ETF in our 20th Anniversary year, since winning the Tenants Information Service' Frances Nelson Award in June 2010, again for our mental health work. It just goes to show that great tenant participation and partnership working can bring real results for tenants.

The work of the Mental Health Awareness Group is crucial in developing services for tenants with mental ill-health in Edinburgh, and ETF will continue to work hard with the Council and

other organisations to ensure tenants with mental ill-health get the support they need, when they need it.



Betty collects the Guardian Public Service Award

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## Celebrating 20 years of ETF

ETF is delighted to announce that our 20th Anniversary celebrations continue with another three exciting events in the coming weeks.

First up is a **civic reception** being hosted by the City of Edinburgh Council on Monday 7th March 2011, in recognition of the contributions that Edinburgh Tenants Federation and our member associations have made to the city in the past 20 years. ETF is delighted to have a good working relationship with the City Council, and we have had great influence in improving housing in the city over that time. Our member groups have made enormous changes happen locally, and we are very proud that the work of tenant volunteers across the city is being honoured in this way.

Hot on the heels of the recognition from the City Council comes our second celebratory event; a **parliamentary reception** being sponsored by Sarah Boyack MSP on Tuesday 15th March 2011. This event is special for us, as it gives the Federation and our members the chance to celebrate our successes with MSPs at the Scottish Parliament. The parliamentary reception will be unique as we

will launch our **new DVD** that tells the story of ETF's achievements through the eyes of our members.



Scottish Parliament, Image © Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body – 2011

And from 15th to 17th March 2011, ETF will be holding an **exhibition** in the MSPs area of the Scottish Parliament, featuring stories and photos from member associations, and highlighting the differences ETF has made in improving Edinburgh's communities.

So, it's an exciting time for ETF, and we hope that all our member associations will be able to share in our collective pride at what we have achieved in the past 20 years, and continue to join our voices together through ETF to achieve greater improvements for the future.

### More details

The **civic reception** will take place on **Monday 7th March 2011**, 6.30pm-7.30pm in the European Room at the City Chambers. This event is invitation only due to limited places. Invitations have been sent to member associations. Please note that places are available for one person from each member association and must be booked in advance.

The **parliamentary reception** will take place on **Tuesday 15th March 2011** at 6.30pm to 8.00pm in the Scottish Parliament. Attendees must arrive at least 30 minutes before the start time due to security checks. This event is also invitation only due to limited places. Invitations have been sent to member associations. Please note that places are available for one person from each member association and must be booked in advance.

The **exhibition** will not be in the public area of the Parliament; however we hope to take the exhibition round local areas later in the year. If you have any suggestions where the exhibition could feature in your area please contact the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## Sharing Learning at ETF

Members of ETF are being asked what training or information sessions would be useful to help groups in their local work. The Federation has recently sent out a questionnaire for member associations and will use responses to set the topics for a new training and information programme in the spring.

The training and information programme will include four informal sessions (subject to demand) that will bring tenants together from all over the city to learn from each other. The programme will cover the main topics that groups want to find out more about, so make sure your group responds to the questionnaire by **Monday 14th February 2011**.

The sessions could cover topics like:

- Committee skills
- How to chair a meeting
- Taking minutes
- Simple book-keeping
- Public speaking
- Getting new members
- What is tenant participation
- What do rents pay for
- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing conditions and standards

For more information, contact the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## Block Walkabout Training Day

The next Block Walkabout Training Day will take place on Wednesday 9th March 2011 in south west Edinburgh. This will be organised jointly by the Federation's High Flats Group and the Council's Caretaking Service Improvement Forum.

There are two main aims when organising block walkabout training days.

- The first is to show tenants who are new to high rises what's involved in carrying out a block check and to encourage them to become more involved in their own blocks.
- The second is to learn about updates to the marking scheme and act as a refresher course for those who regularly check their own blocks.

By checking different blocks with different people, tenants often pick up on aspects that they may not have noticed before. We welcome all interested tenants to come along to our High Flats Group meetings to learn more about what we do.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Mark at the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or by email at [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## Seeking members' views

In the next few weeks members and individuals who have attended any ETF events in the past year, will receive the annual ETF membership questionnaire. The questionnaire is used to review the work of the Federation, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, and helps the Federation monitor what our members think.

Make sure your voice is heard by responding to the questionnaire when it comes.

## EC Review

The Federation's Executive Committee (EC) is currently looking at work priorities for 2011, and will be drafting a workplan for members to approve at our forthcoming Annual General Meeting on Friday 24th June 2011.

## Rent Consultation

The City of Edinburgh Council asked tenants before Christmas to comment on rent proposals and the housing service. Tenants and the Council agreed some time ago that to maintain investment in housing, rents should be set at the rate of inflation (RPI) + 2.7% until 2015. (The rate of inflation in November 2010 was 4.7%).

This rent policy would enable the council to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) – the standard of housing that all social landlords must achieve by 2015. In addition, the Council has approved a 0.2% charge to share the cost of new build homes across all council tenants.

Tenants responded to questions asked by the Council in the following way:

Questions	Yes	No	Not Sure
Should we keep the same investment levels on our home improvements?	78%	5%	17%
Should we reduce staff costs	39%	39%	22%
Should the number of repairs per home be restricted?	15%	71%	14%
Should rent for new homes be higher than current levels?	36%	47%	17%
Does the rent you pay just now provide value for money?	62%	24%	14%

The Council will take into account tenants' comments and will set its rents for 2011/2012 at a forthcoming Council meeting and ETF will have more comment in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

## LOCAL GROUPS

### Laichfield Community Association

Laichfield Community Association has a conditional offer from the Award for All Grant of £2459. This is to fund *Fitness for All*, a free weekly fitness class based in their community hall.

The name says it all; the classes, run by a qualified instructor and physiotherapist, are suitable for all residents, regardless of ability. Thanks to the National Lottery they've received enough funding to ensure the residents can have access to this class for the next year!

If you're a Tenants and Residents Association and have a project which you need help to fund, then you should find out if you'd be eligible. If you need support or

would like some further advice please don't hesitate to get in touch with Edinburgh Tenants Federation. Or you can apply to Awards for All at any time using an application form and guidance notes. To order a paper copy call 0845 600 20 40 or text phone 0845 755 6656. You can download a copy from [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk).

You can complete the form electronically and email it to [scotlandapplications@awardsforall.org.uk](mailto:scotlandapplications@awardsforall.org.uk)

You can also post the form to:  
Awards for All  
1 Atlantic Quay  
1 Robertson St, Glasgow  
G2 8JB

## News from SABRO

Lynne Tait from Southouse and Burdiehouse Residents Organisation (SABRO) tells us about the campaign for environmental improvements in her area.

"In July 2009 we were informed that there was £50,000 available for upgrading the shops in our area. They were badly needing upgraded, with broken slabs, peeling paint and dangerous walls.

After a lot of consultation, plans were agreed and we managed to secure an extra £20,000 funding from the roads department budget.

This money would only pay for the upgrading of the pavement, steps and road in front of the shops. We then had the problem of getting the shopkeepers to agree to upgrade the front of the shops themselves. As this has not happened, the shop fronts will now only get a coat of paint.

There will also be new lighting going in at a cost of approximately £6,500, and bollards will

be put round to stop the shopkeepers parking on the pavement to unload their vans. Work started at the beginning of November 2010.

Another project we are fighting to get is traffic lights on the Burdiehouse Road. We do have one set at old Burdiehouse Village; unfortunately, there is no pavement to get to them. So it is the case of either taking your life in your hands and crossing the dual carriageway to reach the bus stop into town, or walking along a grass verge to reach the traffic lights."

Hopefully it won't be too long before the group successfully campaigns for better road safety!



## The Lochend and Restalrig Community Growing Study

### Tenant Participation isn't 'all meetings'!

On a bitterly cold November morning, an undisclosed road in Restalrig found two members of the Restalrig House and Lochend House Residents Association, a Development Worker from Carr Gomm, and me, peering through a high metal fence, chattering about the endless possibilities.

Last month I met Michelle Woodall; she works for Carr Gomm Scotland, a charity working with people to help them live in their own homes, follow their interests, and achieve their ambitions.

Michelle's a Development Worker and her role involves enabling people to take part in activities which contribute to enhancing their own lives and the communities they're a part of.

We met to discuss how ETF could help her get in touch with local tenants and residents, and also to find out if they'd want to get involved in the development of The Lochend and Restalrig Community Growing Study.

This study has been grant funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and is a partnership between Carr Gomm Scotland and Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association.

It's hoped that the study will result in a new community growing initiative for Lochend and Restalrig. Once the study is complete the plan is to develop a piece of unused land and turn it in to a community growing site. Set to be open all year round participants can go on Grow Your Own courses and take a raised bed at the site to grow on.

The community growing site would have a shared tool shed and tools, a community orchard and seating areas and would provide growing spaces such as raised beds and community patches.

These would be installed through the first year by participants on Grow Your Own courses and also supported by local volunteers.



The project is based on the community gardens established by Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association, which are maintained and managed by their group members ([www.ecba.org.uk](http://www.ecba.org.uk)).

Having met with Michelle I got in touch with some members of the Restalrig and Lochend Residents Association. The group includes devoted gardeners who were keen to meet with Michelle and hear about the project.

So there we all were...peering through a high metal fence onto an expansive green

patch, chattering about the potential of the place: the coming together of a community; the sharing of expertise and learning of new skills with the aim of growing and nurturing produce; the shared ownership and responsibility which these could bring to the local community.

And the endless possibilities!

- **Live in the Restalrig/Lochend area?**
- **Interested in growing fruit and vegetables?**

We are hoping to give a helping hand to local people to grow fruit and vegetables on disused land. It could mean you learn to grow your own, save money, learn how to cook healthy food and/or get to know other people.

If you are interested in any way please call Michelle on 0777 064 3929. Or get in touch with me, Miriam at Edinburgh Tenants Federation on 0131 475 2509 or by email at [miriam@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:miriam@edinburghtenants.org.uk). You can also follow the project and find out more here: <http://lrcommunitygrowing.ning.com/>

And if your Tenants or Residents Association would be interested in setting up a similar community growing project contact Greig Robertson at 0131 243 2696 or [g.robertson@ecba.org.uk](mailto:g.robertson@ecba.org.uk)

## News from North Bughtlin

We are pleased to be able to report that some of the issues we have been focusing on during the past year have finally produced results.

Building of the new homes at the old Somerfield site at Bughtlin Market is well under way now. Unfortunately only 17 of these will be for rent, but at least this will help some of those who cannot afford to buy. The for-rent units are owned by Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association.

In December both the Co-op and Lloyds the Chemist moved in to their new units at Bughtlin Market. A fast food outlet is due to move in to Unit 3 soon, and the fourth Unit is still to be tenanted. It is really good to have a local shop again after four years of having to travel in to town for a pint of milk!

Secondly, after over a year's negotiation through the East Craigs Wider Action Group, the No.64 Horsburgh bus is now calling in to East Craigs. This service started just before Christmas and

gives local people a direct link to the Gyle, Edinburgh Park Station, Cramond, and Tesco at Davidson Mains. North Bughtlin Tenants Association are doing their part to advertise the service as widely as possible.

The recent spells of severe weather have brought their problems though. As most rural areas' reps will agree, once again we feel let down by the Council as far as gritting of our roads and clearance of our pavements is concerned. Though we are quick to request assistance, it would seem that rural areas are among the last to receive it. The winter is by no means over, and we will continue to campaign to have these services improved.

A difficult year is ahead, with heavy cut-backs in funding planned not only for Council and Housing Association grant funding but also for more locally funded organisations. This may cast doubt on the continuance of some Registered Tenants Organisations due to them receiving reduced annual funding, and no doubt will also impact on planned maintenance programmes throughout the housing sector.

Tina Beattie  
North Bughtlin Tenants Association Secretary/Treasurer

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Year of the Volunteer

A New Year campaign has been launched to increase the number of volunteers in Scotland for the European Year of Volunteering.

The campaign is asking the population of Scotland to embark on a volunteering journey in 2011 as part of their New Year's resolution has been launched to raise awareness of the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

The campaign, launched at Edinburgh Waverly Station by Alyn Smith Scottish Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and Neil Mitchison, European Commission Representative for Scotland aims to highlight the benefits to individuals interested in volunteering and hopes to encourage more people in Scotland to volunteer within their community with the hope to see an 11% increase throughout the country this year.

Alyn Smith MEP commented: "As a volunteer I know that volunteering is an integral part of life, and it is high time that we recognise and mark the fantastic contribution that volunteers make in such a variety of different sectors of society. More than 100 million Europeans volunteer for all sorts of things each year, by making 2011 the European Year of Volunteering we can go just a little way to giving all of Europe's volunteers the thanks that they deserve".

Whether you are from Kracow, Cables Wynd or Coatfield Lane, volunteers are making a positive contribution to our common European community by investing their free time in supporting their local communities. Why not kick off the New Year with a resolution to volunteer in your local area and make a difference.

In ETF, volunteers are already making an enormous contribution to their communities, and we hope that many more will join us in this, the year of the volunteer. To find out how to get involved in your local tenants and residents group just contact the Federation office for a chat on 0131 475 2509 or by email at [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

If you have any time to donate to your local community and would be interested you can find out more about volunteering by visiting the portal for all volunteering in Scotland [www.volunteerscotland.org.uk](http://www.volunteerscotland.org.uk) or by contacting Volunteer Centre Edinburgh on 0131 225 0630.

[Parts of this article were originally featured in the Third Force News [www.scvo.org.uk](http://www.scvo.org.uk) ]



European Year of Volunteering 2011

## Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

The Scottish Parliament has recently passed the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The Act includes reform to the Right to Buy and modernising social housing regulation.

ETF was involved in making comments on the consultation draft of the Act, and some of the main features include:

- Ending the Right to Buy for **new supply social housing**;
- Ending the Right to Buy for **new tenants**;
- Introducing more flexibility and local control over **pressured-area designations** (where a local authority can apply for the Right to Buy to be suspended because of pressure on stock)
- Establishing the **Scottish Housing Regulator**
- Developing a **Scottish Social Housing Charter**

The Act **does not mean** the end of the Right to Buy because tenants with existing Right to Buy entitlements are largely not affected by these changes. The Scottish Government will be producing a guide for tenants called *Your Right to Buy Your Home* and ETF will have copies of these in the office when they become available.

### Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Act includes powers to modernise the regulation of social housing. It will create an independent Scottish Housing Regulator to look after the interests of tenants, homeless people and others who use the services that social landlords provide.

The Act also asks Ministers to consult on and then set the outcomes that social landlords should achieve. The Scottish Social Housing Charter will be the document which contains these outcomes.

The Regulator will use the Charter as the starting point for assessing a landlord's performance. It will publish performance reports, and will be able to set performance improvement targets.

In developing the Scottish Social Housing Charter the Scottish Government started with a blank sheet of paper and brought together tenants and landlords in a series of events to enable them to find out:

- What makes a good housing service; and
- What should be included in the Charter?

The BEEM (Borders, Edinburgh, East and Midlothian) Regional Network held an event for tenants and carried out a survey of tenants groups in November to contribute to the discussions. An event for tenants and landlords in Edinburgh was held on 6th November 2010.

## Timetable

In taking forward the Charter, the Scottish Government has set out the following timetable:

Early 2011	The Scottish Government will publish a discussion paper which will reflect what has been said in previous events and it will set out the Government's intended approach.
Spring 2011	Discussion groups will be convened to consider the proposals in the paper.
Summer 2011	The first draft Charter will be published for formal consultation. The final version will be submitted to Parliament for approval towards the end of 2011.
April 2012	Subject to Parliamentary approval, the first Charter will come into effect.

ETF will be fully involved in this process. Contact the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or by emailing [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) if you would like to find out how to get involved. If you would like to find out more about the Charter or join the discussion about housing services you can by:

Website: <http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/>

Email: [housingcharter@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:housingcharter@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/housingcharter>

Post: The Tenant Priorities Team, Social Housing Division,  
The Scottish Government,  
Area 1H(S)  
Victoria Quay,  
Edinburgh,  
EH6 6QQ

### Counting on You

Scotland's biggest population count, the 2011 Census, takes place on Sunday 27 March and work is underway in Edinburgh to ensure everyone is counted.

Locally, the census is managed by Alastair Macintyre and his team, who will strive to make sure the count produces information which the likes of City of Edinburgh Council can use to plan future public services - including health, housing and transport - across Edinburgh.

Further details can be found at [www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk) or by contacting: Alastair Macintyre  
Census Regional Manager  
Edinburgh West

Phone: 07872 457603

Email: [cdm18@scotlandscensus2011.gov.uk](mailto:cdm18@scotlandscensus2011.gov.uk)



**Scotland's  
Census 2011**  
Shaping our future

## **Government Changes to Housing Benefit**

Over the next few years, the UK government is bringing in a number of changes to Housing Benefit and Welfare Benefits. These changes will affect Edinburgh's council tenants, particularly those who claim Housing Benefit.

The main changes are set out here in the date order they will be introduced.

### **Increases in non-dependent charges**

**April 2011**

A non dependent is an adult sharing a home with a tenant who is not their husband, wife, or partner.

A non-dependent charge is a deduction from the claim for Housing Benefit of the tenant. The amount to be paid depends on the non dependent age, their income, and whether they are in work or not.

Around 800 tenants have a rent charge to pay as a result of a non-dependent charge and they normally ask the non-dependent for this money.

The government had frozen the level of these charges in the past four years. From April 4th 2011, they will increase by 27% and further increases well above inflation can be expected each April for the next four years.

The increases in the charges from April 2011 will range from £2 a week for the lowest charge to £13 a week for the highest charge.

The Council will be writing to all tenants in March to confirm the change in non-dependent charges and contacting them by phone too.

If you have a concern about your level of your non-dependent charge or what to pay from 4th April 2011, you can contact your local neighbourhood team on the telephone numbers noted below.

<b>South</b>	<b>0131 529 5179</b>
<b>South West</b>	<b>0131 527 3800</b>
<b>North</b>	<b>0800 587 4465</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>0131 529 3111</b>
<b>West</b>	<b>0131 529 7440</b>
<b>Leith/City Centre</b>	<b>0131 529 7061</b>

### **Reduction in Housing Benefit for some tenants who are living in a house that the UK Government says is too large for their needs**

**April 2013**

The UK Government believes that tenants in council housing should be living in homes that are the right size for their needs.

For working age tenants only claiming Housing Benefit and living in a property too large for their needs, their Housing Benefit will be reduced, leaving a rent charge to pay.

The UK Government has not yet said how much Housing Benefit will be reduced by, but it has confirmed that a single person or a couple in a two bedroom property would be counted as living in a house too large for their needs.

If for example the government decides to reduce Housing Benefit by 10%, this would mean a working age tenant receiving £80 a week Housing Benefit would have £8 a week more rent to pay. A tenant receiving £40 a week in Housing Benefit would have £4 a week more to pay.

At the moment, Edinburgh Council estimates that it may have as many as 1,100 tenants that would be affected by this change. Under its current allocation policy for empty homes, as many as one in five new tenants could be affected by this change.

## **Reduction in Housing Benefit of 10% for tenants who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for more than a year**

**April 2013**

The UK Government believes that it should provide incentives for households without a job to move into work.

From April 2013, working age tenants who have been claiming JobSeekers Allowance for more than 12 months will have their Housing Benefit reduced by 10%.

As with the example given earlier, this would mean a working age tenant receiving £80 a week Housing Benefit would have £8 a week more rent.

The UK government is also making a number of changes for tenants with Housing Associations or in the Private Rented Sector. Housing Benefit will be a lot less generous than it is at the moment. Whether working, or on benefits, or on both, it will be more difficult for around 10,000 tenants in Private Rented Flats in Edinburgh to get their housing costs covered.

### **Government Changes to Welfare Benefits**

The UK government is also planning for a number of other changes in its welfare benefits in the years ahead.

The main change is the introduction of Universal Credit. This new benefit will replace a whole range of benefits including JobSeekers Allowance, Working Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit. They hope to make the system easier to understand, run, simpler, and to help make moving into work pay. But, making this change for all of the millions of people claiming these benefits will take around seven years to complete.

To start with Universal Credit will concentrate on those people who out of work. New claims will start in October 2013.

Universal Credit will be paid by the Department for Work and Pensions. Because of this local councils will no longer be responsible for dealing with Housing Benefit claims. Instead, Universal Credit will include a housing allowance that will help cover rent.

### **What will happen next?**

The detail of many of the changes will become clearer in the coming months and years and *Tenants Voice* will be keeping you up to date.

Stuart Orr, from City of Edinburgh Council tells us about how the council is planning for these changes:

"The Council has a team based in the Housing and Regeneration service looking at these UK government changes. Already, we can see a number of effects on Edinburgh's tenants and the money they live on, on demand for council housing, on how we let our housing, and on how well we collect rent to pay for services that tenants need and expect. The services we provide to tenants may need to change quite a bit to take account of these changes."

"We are aware too from talking to Edinburgh Tenants Federation that this is an issue that is important to them. We will keep our discussion going with ETF, as we look to respond to the changes and prepare for them."

If you want any further information on the UK Government changes to Housing Benefit and Welfare Benefits and the Council's response to them, please contact Stuart Orr, Revenue and Debt Manager on 529 7619 or by e-mail at [stuart.orr@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.orr@edinburgh.gov.uk)

## Digital TV Switchover

Many of you will know about the planned change from analogue to digital TV. There have been a number of information pieces broadcast on our television screens in the past few months - with many more to come.

This is good news. When the changeover happens in Edinburgh in June this year it is expected that all of us will benefit from increased strength of television frequencies, which will improve the standard of viewing. It may also increase the number of channels available.

Householders can currently receive the digital signal by having either a "set-top" digital box or through a digital compliant television set. Those with Sky TV, Virgin Media or Freesat services now are also ready for the digital switchover.

Communal television systems in Council

multi-storey blocks and in all sheltered homes have been upgraded over the last number of years and are ready for the switchover.

It is important to note that the switchover is being led by Digital UK. The contact arrangements in place are through Digital UK's website at [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk) or its **FREE Helpline on 08456 50 50 50.**

Please make use of these contacts to get the information you need.

If you have any specific questions or concerns about your home please contact your landlord.

This is an exciting time as the switchover approaches and which will provide improved television reception.

## Thank you to Colinton Hair Design

Edinburgh Tenants Federation would like to take this opportunity to thank Colinton Hair Design, and in particular Jennifer Fleming for contributing a voucher for a hair cut and hair products towards a raffle which was held at our Shindig in October. We appreciate their generosity and as a result we raised £150 for Breast Cancer Care.

## Forthcoming event

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Friday 24th June 2011 from 7 p.m. The AGM will be followed by a social event and buffet.

This event is always very popular so remember to book your place as soon you receive the invitation.

## Spotlight on...



### **Who are you?**

Miriam Hodgson, Temporary Outreach Worker for the Federation - I joined ETF five months ago to cover Justine's post while she's off on maternity leave.

### **What attracted you to work for ETF?**

I firmly believe comfortable and safe housing is a human right and so a vital necessity for physical and mental well being. I felt being able to support people to come together and speak up to improve their housing and community would be extremely rewarding. It also appealed to me that ETF was an organisation run by and for the tenants and residents of the city of Edinburgh, which leads me to my next answer!

### **What are the most interesting aspects of working for ETF?**

Working for an organisation run by and for its members!

### **What's the most challenging aspect of working for ETF and how do you cope?**

The work flow! It's never consistent...I'm either feeling on top of things or unsure of how I'm going to find the time! I cope by having a nice cup of tea with a drop of milk and a biscuit. Lately, however, I've taken to inhaling the fumes from a tin of Roses.

### **What would you like to see the Federation do in the future?**

Firstly, ETF need to carry on with the great work they're doing, but they need to further promote what they do! Secondly, the face of Edinburgh's housing is changing and most people now live in mixed tenure communities, so ETF need to develop with the times and the city it represents. This means trying to encourage a true representation of Edinburgh's diversity through its members!

ETF have the potential to branch out, and so need to further develop working links with different community organisations.

Only by constantly adapting with the ever changing face and needs of the city will ETF be able to ensure their existence!

### **What do you do in your spare time?**

At the moment I'm spending the majority of my spare time trying very hard not to become a Bridezilla. When I'm not wedding planning I enjoy The Arts and baking.

### **What's your favourite joke?**

Being a natural comic genius, I've never felt the need!

If you have a suggestion of someone you would like to see 'In the Spotlight' please contact the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or by email to [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk)

## Cllr Norman Work

### "S'NO FAIR"

I have been out and about speaking to both staff and tenants to find out how they have been coping with the snow. I have heard many inspirational stories about the great lengths they have all taken to keep the city moving.



You may recall the heckling I got in the *Evening News* last year for saying that we should all be doing our bit, but it's the only sensible way that we can get things moving. It's also good to see how communities look out for one another and try to help those less able.

I can vouch for the Council staff who have been working round the clock trying to make sure that our vulnerable citizens are taken care of and that the main roads are a priority to keep deliveries of food and supplies getting to the shops and the petrol stations.

Many have given up spending time with their own families to come in on their days off to provide cover at our care homes and many have volunteered their 4x4's and as drivers to work round the clock to ensure out of hours care services are provided.

Here are just some of the many stories of our staff:

- Community Alarm Telecare Staff (CATS) responded to a call about a 97-year-old man who had suffered a stroke, they managed to get him hospital treatment after getting through the snow with heavy lifting equipment
- A home help spent four hours walking eight miles through the snow to get to her frail elderly client
- Council volunteers have been working through the night driving home helps to extremely vulnerable older people to ensure they had the regular care service they rely on
- Care home staff have been working longer shifts to cover for colleagues who can't get in to the Council's care homes
- Social Care Direct have been at the end of a phone operating round the clock
- Staff alerted police when they found an 80-year-old man was missing from his home and found wandering by police outside in the cold
- The concierges who are monitoring the residents, getting milk, bread and papers to them and keeping an eye on a resident who is just out of hospital.

We also had requests for emergency supplies to 73 people so far. Many of these were reported by good neighbours so please keep an eye out all the time for anyone who needs help and contact the Social Care Direct team at the Council on **0131 200 2324**, and staff there will follow up. In the evenings and weekend contact can be made with the out of hours service at **0800 731 6969**.

#### .....Talking about the concierges-

Proud to report that the mental health project received 'The Guardian' Society award. Congrats to all involved and keep up the great work.

## Convenors Report



Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants Federation

First of all, let me take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy New Year, I hope Santa was good to everyone.

2010 was a good year for the Federation and we're hoping that 2011 will be just as productive. It was unfortunate that we had to cancel a number of events before Christmas, most notably the ETF Repairs meeting and the Federation meeting. However this was due to the bad weather and the events were rescheduled.

Let me first of all start by congratulating ETF and the Council's Mental Health Awareness Group for winning the Guardian Public Services Award. We won in the Skills Development Category and were up against organisations from across Britain. I travelled down to the awards ceremony in London along with Jim Davidson, Senior Manager and Councillor Norman Work and it was a tremendous honour to be asked to receive the award on the night. However the most important aspect is that

more and more people are becoming aware of the work that the group is carrying out. We will continue to work alongside the Council to improve services for tenants in high rise flats with mental health difficulties.

It continues to be a very busy period for ETF. The Tenant Led Inspectors are just about to start carrying out the Inspection of the Kitchen and Bathroom programme within Dunedin Canmore Housing Association and the Council. At the end of the inspection, the team will produce a report containing their findings and recommendations for both landlords on how they could improve tenants' experiences. I look forward to hearing what they have to say.

We are very much looking forward to the Civic Reception in the Council as well as the Parliamentary Reception in the Scottish Parliament. The reception will allow politicians to see firsthand the hard work that ETF carries out.

We wait to hear feedback from the Scottish Government on the Scottish Social Housing Charter. I attended a consultation event on the Charter before Christmas and it was great to see elected members, tenants groups and Landlords come together to discuss issues of relevance to tenants. ETF will consult with tenants in Edinburgh when putting in a response.

I would like to thank every one of our members, supporters, tenant representatives, Executive Committee members and staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the year - we couldn't do it without you!

Betty Stevenson

Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants Federation

## Dates of Meetings

### Federation Meeting

Monday 31st January 2011, 7pm; Norton Park Conference Centre

### ETF Repairs Meeting

Monday 7th February 2011, 7pm; Norton Park

### Housing Association Tenants Meeting

Thursday 10th February 2011, 11am; Norton Park

### High Flats Meeting

Monday 21st February 2011, 7pm; Birnies Court

### ETF Civic Reception – by invitation

Monday 7th March 2011; City Chambers

### Block Walkabout Training Day

Wednesday 9th March 2011; time and venue to be confirmed

### ETF Parliamentary Reception – by invitation

Tuesday 15th March 2011; Scottish Parliament

### Public Holidays – office closed

Monday 18th April 2011

Friday 22nd April 2011

Monday 25th April 2011

Friday 29th April 2011

### Federation Meeting

Wednesday 27th April 2011, 7 pm; venue to be confirmed

### Federation Annual General Meeting

Friday 24th June 2011, 7pm; venue to be confirmed.

## Gitta Wilson

Some of you may remember Gitta Wilson who represented Greenview Neighbourhood Council. Gitta sadly passed away in December. Gitta was a member of the Federation's Executive Committee from June 2005 until February 2007. During this time Gitta was an active member of the Executive Committee's Staff Sub Group and the Information and Publicity Group.

The Federation wishes Gitta's family well and would like to let them know our thoughts are with them at this sad time.

## 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.

## 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 deadlines:



**March edition: 14th February 2011**

**August edition: 11th July 2011**



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