



## ETF Communications Strategy

### Introduction

The Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) Communication Strategy 2020 – 2021 aims to layout a coherent narrative in which the Federation presents itself to its membership and wider community. The strategy brings together a series of core themes that will drive positive developments throughout the Federation, and will include clear objectives, audiences, priorities, milestones, and an overview of how these goals will be achieved.

Effective communication with members is essential to achieve the objectives and outputs, identified in ETF's Work Plan.

As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, it is vital that the Federation looks to digital, online technologies and resources to involve and gain the views of tenants and that we recognise the need to support and enable tenants to get online. Never before has it been so important that we look to the means of digital to overcome isolation, loneliness, health and wellbeing.

The strategy is a support tool for all Executive Committee (EC) members, staff, member groups, individual associate members and organisation associate members to act as supporters, promote key messages, and champion the good work of ETF and its local communities.

### Who we are

ETF is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated organisation. Our aim is to represent tenants' and residents' throughout Edinburgh and to work together with their landlords to ensure tenants' and residents' have their say and influence decisions about the running of their communities. ETF was launched in 1990 and is formally recognised by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) as the negotiating body for tenants. As the umbrella organisation of tenants' and residents' groups throughout Edinburgh, our purpose is to represent

tenants at a citywide policy level and we aim to promote the improvement of the quality of life of residents and the housing conditions of all tenants. During 2019/2020, 18 tenants' and residents' groups were members of ETF.

The Federation provides:

- Independent advice, information and learning opportunities for tenants;
- Information, advice and support to tenants' and residents' organisations to assist them develop and achieve their goals;
- Networking opportunities bringing local organisations together to work on issues of collective interest;
- Events to assist people to participate individually and through their groups in decision making about their homes, locality and environment.

### **How we operate**

Membership of the Federation is open to Tenants' and Residents' groups throughout Edinburgh. Each year members vote in the Executive Committee (EC) of the Federation at the AGM who as volunteers are responsible for delivering the work of the Federation. Individual tenants can join as non-voting members. ETF employ a dedicated staff team to assist in the development and delivery of services.

### **Our objectives**

ETF's objectives in the Federation's Work Plan for 2020-2021 are as follows:

- 1) Tenants are working with CEC to improve housing and related services citywide;
- 2) Tenants are working to improve housing and related services on a national level;
- 3) Tenants' and residents' organisations are more vibrant, effective and are helping CEC to shape housing localities and neighbourhood services;
- 4) Communicate with individuals, member associations and all tenants and residents;
- 5) Ensure effective organisation, strong governance and member participation make ETF more robust and effective.

ETF's current work plan for 2020/2021 keeps activists, volunteers and staff very busy and new activists and volunteers are always welcome. Our ongoing work includes areas such as:

- Support to local groups, including the development of new groups;
- Attending bi-monthly meetings with senior managers of the City of Edinburgh Council to discuss issues such as Tenant Led Inspections, support for Registered Tenant Organisations and planning for Tenants' Conferences;
- Provide training and learning opportunities for member groups, tenants and interested persons;
- Helping to formulate ETF's responses to Scottish Government and other consultations;
- Support the work of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group;
- Develop tenant links for ETF in the localities.

### **Overall communication goals**

The overall objectives of ETF's Communications Strategy are:

- To help ETF achieve our core aims;
- To increase the profile of ETF and our work amongst key stakeholders and member groups;
- To continually increase ETF's membership and promote and engage our members and people they represent in the main areas of ETF's work;
- To increase the use of digital media and online technologies to promote ETF and tenant participation opportunities.

### **Key audiences**

ETF's Communications Strategy focuses on the following key stakeholders, including:

- ETF's members;
- City of Edinburgh Council;
- All tenants and residents living in Edinburgh;
- Third sector organisations in Edinburgh;
- Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator.

ETF brings together tenants' and residents' associations, organisations, and individuals to ensure the views of tenants are influential in shaping policy and practice. There are many practical advantages to be gained from membership of ETF including:

- Annual General meeting (AGM) voting rights and influence on ETF's work plan (ordinary ETF members only);
- Up to date news and briefings;
- Get your voice heard and influence national policy;
- Learning and capacity building opportunities, including ETF's Learning Programme;
- Knowledge sharing and networking opportunities such as Federation Meetings, Special Meetings and ETF's AGM.

### **Communication objectives**

This section sets out communication objectives, looking at both general and target audiences. ETF's general objectives include:

- Providing high quality and effective communication with stakeholders;
- Staff members and stakeholders gain a better understanding and are meaningfully engaged in ETF's work.

### **Objectives for existing ETF members**

To increase members' understanding of, and capacity to engage in ETF's work and to facilitate conversations that inform ETF's work and as a result shape policy, service and good practice.

### **Objectives for non-ETF members**

To promote the work of ETF including, its role, benefits of becoming members of ETF and grow the organisation's membership.

### **Key Messages**

Key messages can be an important element in achieving communication objectives and should be regularly conveyed across the wide range of objectives.

ETF provide extensive opportunities for members to be involved in our work. The key to involvement and participation is information and we regularly inform members of our activities. All major policy decisions are made by our members through regular Federation meetings, the AGM and Special Members Meetings. As the workload of the organisation is considerable and

expanding, ETF follows a detailed work-plan which is discussed and approved by the membership and which form the basis of maintaining accountability to the membership.

### **Communication Tools**

ETF's website [www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk](http://www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk) is the public face of the organisation and is updated on a regular basis. Visitors can access the following on ETF's website:

- Background information about ETF;
- Benefits about becoming a member of ETF;
- ETF's Member groups (Groups will have the opportunity to include information about their area/issues on their own web page);
- Up to date news and information;
- How to get involved in the work of ETF, including ETF's issue based groups;
- Guest blogs.

It is important that ETF's website is kept updated on a regular basis.

### **Leaflet**

ETF has also updated its leaflet which has been circulated to all CEC tenants. The leaflet includes information on:

- Who We Are;
- What We Do;
- How We Work;
- How We Can Help You;
- Data Protection;
- How You Can Join.

Tenants have asked to be included on ETF's mailing list on a range of topics, which is very encouraging, and we will look to build on this in the coming year. This includes follow up phone calls, letters, and further circulation of the leaflet to other agencies where appropriate.

### Newsletters

ETF sends out newsletters and publications on a regular basis. Keeping the membership well informed and up to date on developments at all levels is carried out through a variety of methods. Member groups receive a bi-monthly newsletter, *Federation Matters*; members can also sign up to our monthly E-Newsletter. Over 3000 copies of our quarterly magazine *Tenants Voice* is read widely in paper form or downloaded from our website. Ad hoc mailings are also circulated. Members receive quarterly and annual reports on all areas of work and have an opportunity to determine future policy direction on all of these.

Newsletter	Distribution	Number of recipients	Frequency	Who prepares	Distribution methods
Federation Matters (A4 2-sided letter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent to all member groups, individual non-voting associate members and interested parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bi-monthly on 1<sup>st</sup> of month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ETF's Development Worker and Admin Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post and email</li> </ul>
Monthly E-newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent to those who subscribe via ETF's website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> of month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ETF's Development Worker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MailChimp</li> </ul>
<i>Tenants Voice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent to all member groups, individual non-voting associate members, MSPs, MPs, Edinburgh Councillors, landlord staff, Community Centres, Libraries and other interested parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three times a year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers, ETF's Development Worker and Admin Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post and email</li> </ul>

<i>Annual Report</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent to all member groups, individual non-voting associate members, MSPs, MPs, Edinburgh Councillors, landlord staff, Community Centres and libraries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers, ETF's Development Worker and Admin Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post and email</li> </ul>
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### ETF Blog

Appearing monthly on our website and e-newsletter, our blog features stories, reflections and pictures about housing and communities.

If any of the following applies to you and you wish to contribute an article for our blog, ETF would certainly be interested in hearing from you:

- Are you a CEC tenant?
- Do you work in housing?
- Are you interested in community development?
- Do you care about where you live?

Examples of previous blogs can be found at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/category/guest-bloggers/>. Some useful hints and tips for writing blogs can be found at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/draft-blog/>.

### Social media channels

ETF's social media channels includes Facebook ([www.facebook.com/EdinburghTenant](http://www.facebook.com/EdinburghTenant)) and Twitter ([twitter.com/EdinburghTenant](http://twitter.com/EdinburghTenant)). These are updated by ETF staff. ETF currently has 650 followers and 600 likes on Facebook. Many of these come from our members and other key stakeholders. Both Facebook and Twitter provide an effective platform to keep them up to date with ETF activities and raise our profile among this group. ETF's social media presence has grown considerably over the past few years. It is an increasingly useful mechanism to share news related issues to our members. Some of the ways in which ETF will look to expand on its current social media contents include:

- Planning ETFs own specific social media campaigns;
- Having daily or weekly polls on our Facebook page;
- Engaging with other users, i.e. commenting and tagging etc;
- Creating content that is relevant to ETF but also links to national events. An example could be ETF contributing to Scottish Housing Day and the Poverty Alliance's Challenge Poverty Week;
- Creating different types of content. i.e. is it directing people to a blog, advertising ETF's membership, short & catchy videos, surveys etc.?
- Running competitions to boost ETF's follower count.

Although ETF recognises that our social media presence is growing, there are other channels that ETF could use. Therefore, ETF will look to introduce further social media channels including Youtube, Vine, Instagram and Snapchat.

### **Digital and online meetings**

Digital work is a key theme for ETF as we realise the need to support tenants to get online, particularly because of COVID-19. During the COVID-19 outbreak, ETF staff kept in touch via Skype and Zoom as the Federation Office was closed. EC meetings are currently taking place on Zoom and meetings with CEC staff are taking place on Zoom and Microsoft Teams. As it is looking increasingly likely that social distancing will remain throughout 2020 and indeed the early part of 2021, ETF are holding events such as our Federation and Annual General Meetings online via zoom. ETF will look at feedback from online meetings to discuss what worked well and what if anything can be improved. This feedback will allow ETF to plan for future meetings and how we can ensure that tenants are still able to influence issues. ETF was successful in applying to Port of Leith Housing Association to buy digital equipment to enable staff to communicate more effectively with member groups and tenants. ETF will look at applying for further IT funding, if and when it is appropriate. Furthermore, providing appropriate IT training to member groups and interested persons is a priority in ETF's Work Plan for 2020-2021. It is hoped that some aspects of IT training could be delivered by EC members as well as staff.

### **Resource Pack**

This pack is given to new EC members to help them in their work with the Federation. It contains:

- Background material about the Federation;

- Information about the EC;
- Directories of useful names and telephone numbers;
- Briefings on key issues, policies and guidelines;
- Resources: what else is available?

### **Residents' Association Starter Pack**

This contains information for those who are thinking about starting a Tenants' and Residents' Association.

### **Policy briefings and consultations**

ETF supports members to engage directly in the policy making process by generating policy briefings on housing related subjects.

Effective consultation can bring to light informative responses to politicians and policy makers and has an essential part to play in influencing policy. ETF holds regular consultation events and Focus Groups with members and interested parties to share and discuss their views.

ETF regularly generates consultation responses, based on the views of our wide-ranging membership. Consultation responses are then submitted to a range of sources, including the Scottish Government, Committees of the Scottish Parliament or other organisations who can influence policy affecting Council and other social housing landlord staff. ETF has recently submitted responses to the following consultations:

- Strengthening Fire Safety for high rise domestic buildings;
- Housing to 2040;
- CEC's Housing Budget;
- The Scottish Housing Regulator's future approach to COVID-19.

### **Flyers and Posters**

ETF will provide posters to promote meetings for our citywide groups which include:

- Repairs;
- High Flats.

In addition, ETF will provide posters/flyers for ETF's Learning Sessions, quarterly Federation meetings, ETF's AGM and member group meetings where appropriate.

As a result of updated General Data Protection Regulations, ETF needs permission to hold personal contact details on our database to allow us to keep members informed of our work. We keep details confidential and they will not be shared with anyone without consent. You can request to be removed from our database at any time.

### Monitoring of communications

Media monitoring – press clippings	Collated by ETF's Development Worker and Admin Assistant. Folder is in ETF's office
Social media statistics	Likes on Facebook and hits on Twitter are included in Staff Team Report which is presented at monthly EC meetings.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

ETF will use the following methods to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our Communications Strategy:

- ETF Survey Report, including Survey Monkey and paper version. (ETF will look at whether the number of respondents completing the survey via survey monkey has increased compared to previous years);
- ETF Progress Reports;
- Annual Report;
- ETF Work Plan;
- Evaluation forms from meetings and training/learning events;
- ETF social media statistics looking at social media users.

## **Conclusion**

This Communication Strategy will form a basis for ETF to communicate more effectively with member groups and individuals. It is more important than ever to use different communication methods, particularly during and after the COVID-19 epidemic. ETF is always striving for continuous improvement and we will look to add to the Strategy where possible.