

Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Issue 109 - December 2019

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER



It promised to be a night to remember and ETF's Annual General Meeting (AGM) certainly didn't disappoint. With a mixture of new and familiar faces in attendance, the AGM was a great success and had a brilliant turnout. The setting was Boroughmuir Rugby Club, Meggatland Wynd and here are some of the highlights of the evening.

- The following were approved:
 - > Annual Report;
 - > Finances;
 - > Work Plan.

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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.

- Elected onto the Executive Committee were:
 - > John Aitken, North Sighthill Residents Association;
 - > Christine Hudson, Laichfield Community Association;
 - > Irina Lazarenko, Edinburgh Registered Social Landlord Residents Network;
 - > Betty Stevenson, Birnies Court Tenants and Residents Association;
 - > Davie Thomson, Redbraes Residents Association;
 - > Maud Wylie, Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council.



The Federation's EC



Daniel Johnson, MSP

- Daniel Johnson, MSP spoke about some of the work he is currently involved in at the Scottish Parliament.

The evening was rounded off by a disco and buffet, which gave everyone the opportunity to network and catch up with each other. Thank you to everyone who made it so special and thank you to all our volunteers who give up so much of their free time to help with the work of ETF.



Everyone enjoying themselves at the AGM



HOUSING ROADSHOW

ETF representatives and City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) staff recently took part in a Housing Roadshow at Morrisons, the Gyle Shopping Centre. The aim of the Housing Roadshow was for CEC tenants to find out more about ETF, local Registered Tenant Organisations and CEC housing services. CEC tenants also had the opportunity to ask for advice on issues such as rent and repairs.

ETF and CEC will be holding more Housing Roadshows next year. If you have any suggestions of venues for future Housing Roadshows or would simply like more information, please contact ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



ETF volunteers and CEC staff in attendance at the Housing Roadshow

SUCCESS WITH UPGRADING FACILITIES IN SHELTERED HOUSING



At a recent meeting of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group (SHLG), we were informed that our efforts to have washing machine facilities upgraded in sheltered housing complexes had been successful. There are now nine washing machine facilities in sheltered housing complexes in Edinburgh. The SHLG has pursued this matter for a long time and we would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this campaign for their support. We are also looking into the different types of night time support which can be provided to sheltered housing residents as health and safety are two very important issues. The SHLG would like to pass on their thanks to Councillor Alex Stanisford and the North East Locality Housing Team for their help and assistance. We also receive

valuable help from ETF and with their continued support, we are building up good relationships with the different localities in Edinburgh. There is a growing recognition of the important role that sheltered housing plays here in Edinburgh and we need more sheltered housing tenants to represent their respective areas. We need your continued support in order to achieve success. If you are interested in joining the SHLG or would simply like more information, please contact the Federation's Office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

Nicol Johnstone, SHLG

ETF SAYS – 'CHALLENGE POVERTY? AYE WE CAN!'



Representatives from Edinburgh Tenants Federation came together for an afternoon tea on Tuesday 8th October 2019 to support the Poverty Alliance's Challenge Poverty Week.

There were a number of interesting discussions relating to poverty in Edinburgh and a number of key themes were brought up, including:

'There are too many tenants from both the private and social rented sectors in Edinburgh who are living in poverty and are attending food banks on a regular basis. This can't be allowed to continue!'

'A lot of people are not speaking about poverty because they feel embarrassed. We need to lose the stigma to ensure people feel able to speak about their issues.'

'The issue of poverty is brought up in many meetings that I attend. The impact the benefits cap has had on people in the last five years has been horrendous. People need the right information about what benefits they and their family are entitled to. People are suffering and will continue to suffer if nothing is done.'

ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson commented *'ETF was delighted to support the Poverty Alliance's Challenge Poverty Week. Tenant representatives have seen first-hand the impact poverty has had in Edinburgh and it's only by different organisations and agencies working together that we can make a difference.'*



ETF representatives say 'Challenge Poverty? Aye we Can!'

LOCAL GROUPS UPDATES

Update from Gateside Tenants and Residents Association

As many people are aware, Gateside Tenants and Residents Association (GTRA) were nominated as finalists in the Community Engagement category for the Travis Perkins My Community Awards. It was a tremendous honour for the group to be nominated and my wife Christine and I attended the Awards Ceremony on Thursday 26th September 2019 in Northampton.

Although we reached the finals on this occasion we didn't win. However it was a tremendous honour to be recognised as we were the only group from Scotland nominated. Every group that won in their respective category deserved to win but on the night there were no losers only winners. Christine and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening and we would like to thank everybody that supported us through the year.



CEC's Lord Provost, Christine and myself

Paul Vaughan, Chair, GTRA

Calling all tenants in Drylaw

Take a look around the Drylaw area and you will see all sorts of housing improvements being made by CEC. It may not be totally obvious to you, but it is happening in the area. Here are some examples:

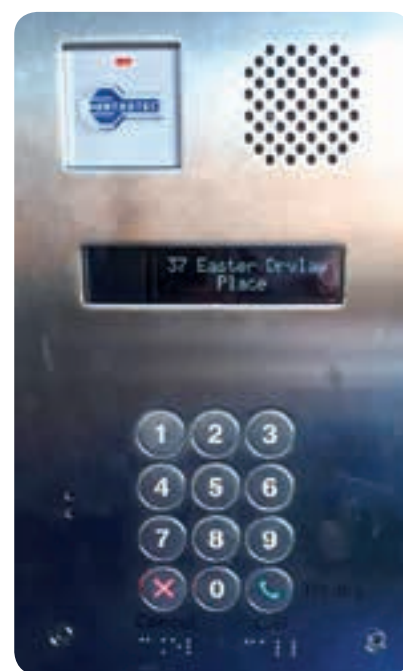
- New door entry systems (both front and rear) installed;
- Roads and pavements are being made safer to walk on especially for the elderly;
- Hedges being trimmed back so that we can walk on the pavements;
- Salt bins placed throughout the area and are refilled during the winter months.



Our new front door



Our new back door



The door's new control panel

This did not happen without the efforts of a number of tenants, including those who volunteer and require no praise nor financial reward, they just simply have a 'let's get the job done' attitude. It is very rewarding to be able to say 'I helped to ensure that happened/I was part of that'.

CEC staff do not live in the area, but we do, and it's up to us to inform them what we require them to do and to ensure that it is done properly. CEC have willing staff and want to help as many tenants as possible but it needs our help too. Information is a two way process and we can help identify the direction to go.

In order to make this happen, I am proposing to form a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) in Drylaw, which will be affiliated to ETF and have huge benefits for the area. To do this I need volunteers who are willing to give up some of their spare time. After all it's up to us to make the neighbourhood a better place to live in. Some of the issues in the Drylaw area include:

- Repairs;
- Rents;
- Parking;
- Antisocial Behaviour.

Myself and representatives from the Drylaw area will be meeting with a representative from Edinburgh Buses at the end of November to discuss some of the transport issues we are currently dealing with in the area. If you think that you can make a difference, please contact me on 0131 476 3783 or email jg011i5116@blueyonder.co.uk for more information. Remember all it needs is people who care for the area and have common sense and go. Together we can make a difference to our area.

James Galloway, tenant volunteer, Drylaw

How to get new members for your tenants' group

In this edition of Tenants Voice, ETF is offering advice to groups on improving and involving their communities in the work that they do. These are a sample of some of the assistance and training ETF can offer to groups. If you would like to find out more please get in touch with ETF's Development Worker, Mark on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk. There will be other articles in future editions, so watch this space.

First up is 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, or a get to know your neighbours session. Striking up a conversation can lead to many possibilities.

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



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

Tell people you exist! What's your news? Social media and newsletters or e-newsletters are a great way to spread news (but not rumours).



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

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



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



Apply to your landlord for a grant so you have a budget to pay for things e.g room hire, publicity and transport.



You'll never know unless you give it a try!

Developing Tenant Participation

We're local and listen

If you have been reading our past couple of editions of *Tenants Voice*, you will know that members of our committee meet with tenants from their respective localities. These meetings take place on a regular basis throughout the year and allow Elected Members to hear more about the work of ETF. Here are updates from various EC members.

North West Locality Report

Birnies Court



I have continued to attend successful meetings with George Norval, Housing Operations Manager and Keith Wilson, Block Manager. Work has commenced on the parking space at Birnies Court, which is looking very impressive and is a solution to the issue of car parking in the area. We carried out a walkabout around some of the blocks in Muirhouse and identified weeding work required which Keith has already addressed. There is also good news for the tenants of Gunnet and May Courts as the improvement works to the blocks will start in January 2020. Overall it was agreed that things are shaping up quite well and the work plan is on target.

Betty Stevenson

North East Locality Report

Newcraighall

We were invited to attend a walkabout at Newcraighall village. Also in attendance were Libby Strong, Housing Operations Manager, Stuart Avinou, Team Leader and Heather Maltman, Housing Officer. The purpose of the walkabout was to put in place an action plan, drawn up by Libby and her team, to address the various issues in the area including lighting, roads and the parks. We were joined by some tenants from the area, who were very enthusiastic at the opportunity to take part in the walkabout. There were a number of suggestions made by the tenants in attendance as well as a question and answer session with CEC staff. A newsletter will be produced and distributed to tenants soon. Hopefully more walkabouts will take place in the very near future, as they are a fantastic opportunity for tenants to contribute towards improvements to their localities. Thanks to all those who took part.



Susan Taylor and Nicol Johnstone

in your local Area Housing Hub

ing to you: the tenant

of the Federation's Executive Committee (EC) are meeting with senior housing staff in their
C members to find out what is happening in their respective areas and for CEC staff to find out

South West Locality Report

We have continued to hold very productive meetings with Michaela Smith and her team on the various issues in the South West locality. Here are some of the highlights:

Following concerns raised in the Broomhouse Cottages area regarding the condition of the main path leading to sheltered properties, CEC looked at the options available and took a decision to carry out an emergency project to replace and upgrade the path to make it safer for all residents. Now complete, it also makes the place look tidier and brighter and the residents are pleased with the new path.



In early 2018, capital works were carried out in the Westburn Park/Grove areas. This centred on the refurbishment of nine blocks (72 properties) in the locality, undergoing external insulation and security works to raise the energy efficiency within the properties and enable residents to feel safe in their homes. To compliment this work, common areas at the front and back of the blocks were also improved through a Neighbourhood Environment Project (NEP). Since the NEP's work in 2018, further work to improve the local community have

taken place and include ongoing metal fence work to re-galvanise the existing fencing in the Westburn area and CEC's Window Replacement Programme. The improvements have generated much positive comment from the local residents. These works are being carried out as part of an ongoing wider housing and environment programme of projects across the South West Locality.



Maud Wylie and John Aitken

***There will be further updates from EC members in
the next edition of Tenants Voice.***

NEWS FROM THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL



Councillor Mandy Watt, Vice Convenor of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

I was recently chosen to be Labour's Vice Convenor of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee. So, what qualifies me for this role?

My personal experience of housing has taken me on a journey from couch surfing with family and friends, to living in bed and breakfast accommodation before finally finding a private sector let that would accept a tenant with a child. I'd been there for about three years, when the landlord decided to sell the flat and I was given an eviction notice.

The eviction notice could hardly have come at a worse time because I'd just started my accountancy apprenticeship and was struggling with childcare and all the other issues that face a parent in low-paid, full-time work. I was barely able to pay the bills, never mind cope with finding a new flat. I was incredibly fortunate to get help from Councillor Sheila Gilmore, who went on to be the MP for Edinburgh East. Sheila was a lawyer back then, and she wrote to my landlord and CEC explaining everything and, after a nail-biting wait, I was allocated a flat in Dumbiedykes. Getting the keys to that CEC flat was one of the best days in my life and I'll never forget it! It meant I'd be able to give my son a secure home within walking distance of the council nursery, where he'd just been allocated a place. I'd be able to keep my job and, if I worked hard, complete my apprenticeship and have a chance at a career that would allow me to pay the bills and make my little council flat into a nice home for us.

Since then, I've had a successful career as an accountant and now own my own flat in the New Town. When I got the chance to become a Labour Councillor, I saw it as an opportunity to help people facing the same problems that I struggled with as they try to make a secure life for themselves.

I've used this article to tell you a little bit about my personal experiences of homelessness, housing, work and childcare - and I'm hoping that I'll be able to contribute to a future edition of *Tenants Voice* to share my perspective on the work that the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee is doing.

City of Edinburgh Council Draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2020-2023



The City of Edinburgh Council's (CEC's) final stage consultation on its new draft Tenant Participation Strategy for 2020-2023 is now open on the Council's website. Tenants can have their say in a number of ways:

- Online at <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/tenantparticipation/>;
- Email tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk;
- By phone on 0131 529 7805.

Through the draft Tenant Participation Strategy, CEC wants to ensure that tenants really:

- Know the different ways they can become involved;
- Can take part and influence decisions if they want to;
- Have the support and resources they need to take part;
- Can help to develop quality services.

Tenants' developed these outcomes and a recent survey confirmed they want us to continue to aim for these results, with increased transparency and accountability to tenants and greater tenant influence. The closing date for responses is Friday 10th January 2020.



The Strategy has been developed taking account of feedback from the Tenants' Panel and Registered Tenants' Organisations, including ETF.

A paper copy is available by emailing tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk or calling 0131 529 7805. Please send completed responses to Tenant and Resident Services, Level G.5, Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh EH8 8BG.

Making a real difference in your community – Neighbourhood Networks



THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

We're looking for people from community and third sector groups across Edinburgh to join the city's new neighbourhood networks.

The 13 networks are a space for different voices across our communities to promote discussions, identify priorities to improve the lives of people who live there, and find solutions for local issues. Members include community and third sector groups and local councillors that work in an area.

Network members will decide the shape, format and how the network will operate. So, this is a real opportunity for your tenants' group to be involved in setting the agenda for the neighbourhood network in your area.

Neighbourhood networks are an integral part of the community planning arrangements in the city and will inform the work of the four locality community planning partnerships. These partnerships are accountable to the Edinburgh Partnership Board for leading, delivering and progressing the locality improvement plans. They are made up of local representatives from neighbourhood networks, councillors, staff from public bodies such as CEC, Police Scotland and third sector organisations. They will work together to deliver services influenced by the views and needs of local communities.

Want to take part or need more information? Email us at communityplanning@edinburgh.gov.uk. You can read more about community planning in Edinburgh at http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20133/community_planning/391/edinburgh_partnership.

Michelle Mulvaney, Community Engagement Manager, CEC

THE REMOVAL OF FREE TV LICENSES FOR OVER 75'S

The issue of removing free TV Licence for over 75's appears to be 'cut and dry' with the Government's decision to only award the licence to those in receipt of Pension Credit but is this decision fair? Personally I feel there should be an equal 'playing field' with other channels, fundraising via advertising like others and implement a review of their costs. At present we do not pay an annual fee to use public transport nor do we pay a fee to gas providers, phone services, electricity etc... we have the choice. There are providers of Cable TV that supply many channels for the same price as we pay for a TV Licence! However at the moment we have to pay one provider, BBC for the privilege. The comment I often hear is "someone should do something about it". Who is that someone? It needs you and others to become involved and make your feelings known.

Davie Thomson, Redbraes Residents Association

IMPROVEMENTS ON THE WAY?

Recently tenants in my area of Redbraes had the opportunity to have their heating and hot water systems upgraded. Whilst the offer was appreciated, the thought of all the possible upheaval in the properties created an element of 'Is it worth the bother', and 'I'll have to tidy up all the mess' etc. They were about to be proven wrong!



Over the past year CEC staff including Michael Thain, Head of Place Development, Jennifer Hunter, Tenant and Resident Services Manager, Councillor Kate Campbell, Convenor, Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee and their colleagues have been busy creating a 'partnership' between the local CEC Housing Locality Teams and ETF. This has provided opportunities for tenants to meet and discuss the various ways they can become more involved in ensuring 'older' housing would not be left behind in terms of upgrading. A recent opportunity to monitor an upgrade of gas central heating in CEC properties in Redbraes, including my own certainly impressed me.

After the initial visit to assess what was required, the contractor Gas Call provided a date and time when work would commence. On the date given, 15 minutes prior to their arrival, a phone call was received from the Gas Call's Planning Officer, Margherita to give the tenants' security details and the names of the installation engineers for the tenant to check against the engineers IDs. The installation work started promptly with the removal of the old radiators, boiler etc. and these were taken out to the van for disposal. Once these items were cleared, the new materials arrived on a pallet. Within two hours the installation of the new radiators and the boiler were completed. The electrician finished off the work and took time to give the tenant information on how the heating system works. The Site Supervisor, David, was on hand to ensure everything ran smoothly and each of the properties in Redbraes was left in a tidy condition.

The CEC's Housing Localities Team are certainly taking onboard issues which were identified in the past, including bad workmanship and are working with tenants to eradicate the images of the past and, if this is an example...lets have more. Well done CEC and Gas Call.

Davie Thomson, Redbraes Residents Association



ETF's housing blog features stories, reflections and pictures about what's hot in housing and the communities world.

We are looking for contributors to help tell the story of what's happening in housing in Edinburgh (... and beyond) and we need YOUR help. If you're a tenant, work in housing, interested in community development, or just plain passionate about where you live why not become one of our guest bloggers?

No experience necessary and support will be provided if you need it. Just give us a shout on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk to tell us you're up for it. Some of our previous blogs can be found on our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/category/guest-bloggers/>.

Practical tips:

- Maximum 300 words;
- Keep it short and snappy. If it's more than 300 words words – fantastic – that's two blogs;
- Include a photo and a bit about you (name, organisation and why you're blogging). We know some people might want to be anonymous and that's fine too.

CONVENOR'S REPORT



Welcome to the last Convenor's Report of 2019. I can't believe how quickly this year has flown in. I would like to start by thanking everyone who attended our AGM at Boroughmuir Rugby Club. It was one of the best ETF AGM's I have ever attended and thank you to everyone who helped make it a success.

I would like to encourage CEC tenants to respond to the draft Tenant Participation Strategy. This is a crucial piece of work which will determine how ETF and CEC will work together in the future and it is important that we continue to hold CEC to account. However we need your help in order to do this.

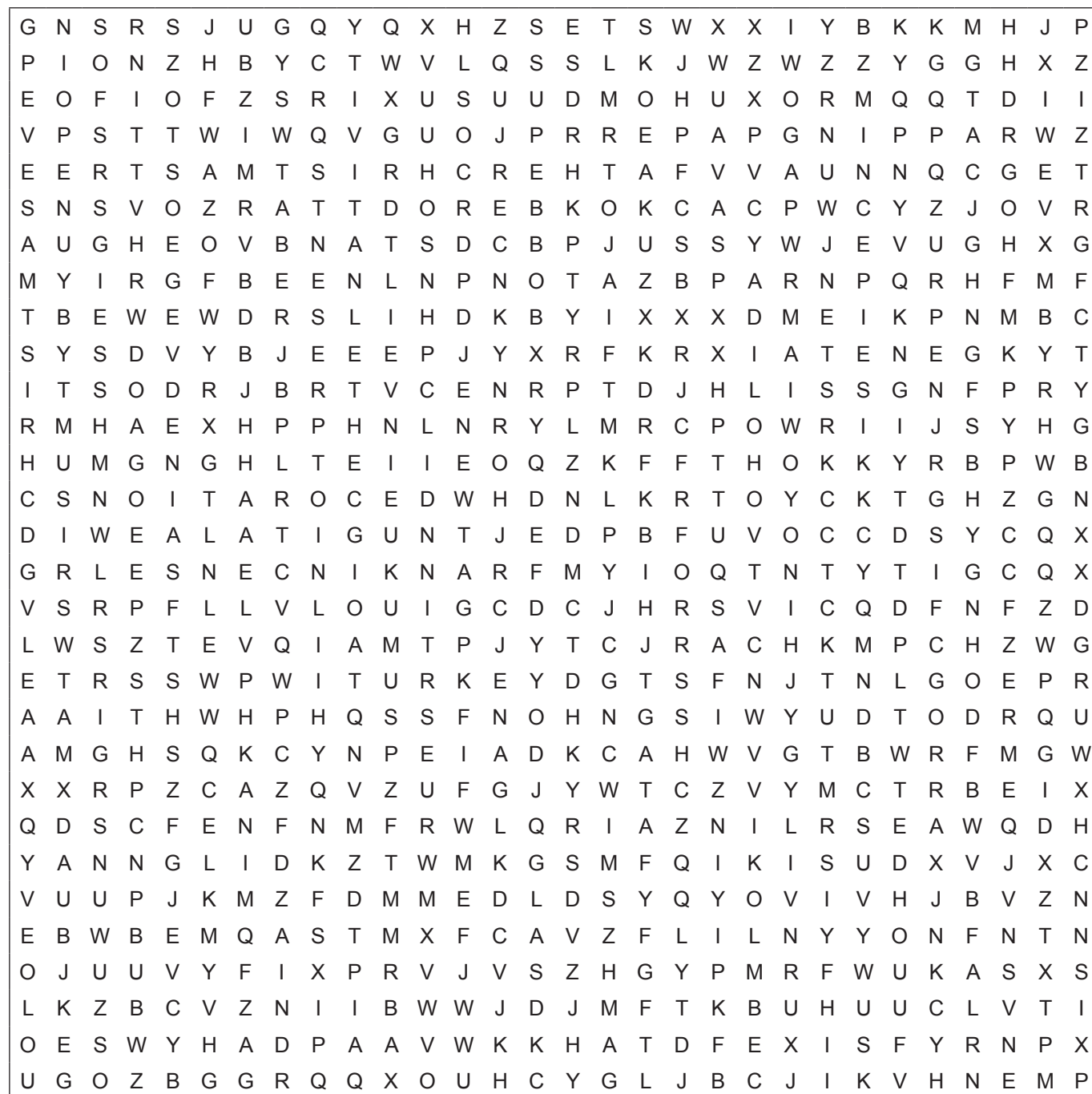
As well as being Convenor of ETF, I am on the Board of both the Edinburgh OneCity Trust and the Edinburgh Poverty Commission. These are both very rewarding roles and it is great to see the work being done by both organisations in helping to make a positive difference in people's lives. ETF was very happy to support the Poverty Alliance's Challenge Poverty Week back in October.

On behalf of the Federation's EC, I am delighted to report that our Vice Convenor Maud Wylie has made a full recovery following recent surgery. Maud has asked me to thank everyone for all the prayers and best wishes that she has received over the past couple of months. Maud is very popular with our EC, member groups and staff and it is fantastic news about her recovery.

On behalf of everyone at ETF, I would to take this opportunity to wish our readers a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and best wishes for 2020. In particular I would like to take this opportunity to thank the EC members and staff for all their hard work and support over the year. I'm sure next year will be both a challenging and exciting year for ETF and we look forward to embracing the many opportunities too. With your continued support, I'm sure it will be another memorable year for ETF.

ETF Christmas Word Search

Why not try this fun Christmas word search? Just cut out your completed word search and send it to the Federation office by **Friday 10th January 2020** for the chance to win a mystery prize.



CANDY CANE
CELEBRATION
CHIMNEY
CHRISTMAS CARDS
CHRISTMAS EVE
CHRISTMAS TREE
DECORATIONS
ELVES
FATHER CHRISTMAS

FESTIVE LIGHTS
GIFTS
GINGER BREAD HOUSE
HOLIDAY
ICICLES
MINCE PIES
MISTLETOE
NATIVITY
PRESENTS

REINDEER
SANTA CLAUS
SLEIGH BELLS
SNOWMAN
STOCKING
TURKEY
WINTER BOOTS
WRAPPING PAPER
WREATH

Your Name:

Your Contact Details:

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Federation Office closes on Friday 20th December 2019 at 2.00pm for the Christmas and New Year holidays. We reopen on Monday 6th January 2020 at 9.00am. We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and all the best for 2020.

Federation Meeting

Wednesday 5th February 2020, 2.00pm-4.00pm, Norton Park Conference Hall, 57 Albion Road

ETF Repairs Group Meeting

Wednesday 19th February 2020, 2.00pm-4.00pm, Napier Room, Norton Park Conference Centre, 57 Albion Road

ETF High Flats Meeting

Monday 2nd March 2019, 2.00pm-4.00pm, Birnies Court Community Room

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 for more information.

Copy Deadline



Tenants Voice is usually published three 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:

February 2020 edition

Monday 27th January 2020

Thoughtful Quotes

'Keep walking through the storm.... Your rainbow is waiting on the other side.'

Heather Stillufsen

'Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.'

Maya Angelou



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