

Tenants Voice

Issue 111 - September 2020



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

FRIDAY 27th NOVEMBER
TIME TBC

REGISTRATION

Call 0131 475 2509

info@edinburghtenants.org.uk

www.edinburghtenants.org.uk



VENUE

Online Via
Zoom

Support is available
to get online. Please
get in touch with us
to discuss further.



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

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.



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ETF update on office closure



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

We are pleased to say that Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) continues to operate during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The Albion Trust has been liaising with the Scottish Government regarding the re-opening of Norton Park and are keeping us up to date. Currently the Scottish Government do not intend to make a statement

regarding the re-opening of non-essential offices before 10th September 2020.

Whilst the office base is closed staff continue to work from home and can still be contacted in the usual ways – by email to info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or by phoning 0131 475 2509 and they will do their best to assist you.

We are in the process of holding all our meetings online and you can find out more in this edition of *Tenants Voice*.

On behalf of everyone at ETF, stay safe and take care.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation Annual General Meeting (AGM)

As advertised elsewhere in this edition of *Tenants Voice*, this important event will take place on **Friday 27th November 2020**.

As you know the process for the AGM has a few stages and hopefully this article will explain the process and dates attached to each of the steps.

By now all ETF's member groups should have received an invitation to submit proposals to amend the constitution and propose resolutions regarding the work of the Federation. If your group has not received this information please contact the Federation office.

Proposals to amend the constitution and resolutions must be received in the Federation Office by **Friday 25th September 2020**.

The next mailing will be posted out, to member groups and groups that ETF are aware of who may wish to become members of the Federation, on Tuesday 29th September 2020. This mailing will include:

- Agenda for the meeting;
- Draft minutes of the AGM held in 2019;
- Proposals to amend the constitution;
- Proposed resolutions regarding the work of the Federation;
- Membership application form;
- Form to nominate a member of your group to become a member of the Federation's Executive Committee (EC).

If you or your group wish to become a member of ETF but have not received this mailing by Monday 5th October please get in touch and the relevant paperwork will be posted out to you.

If anyone in your group is interested in becoming an EC member and would like a chat about what is involved in being an EC member please contact us.

Applications to become a member of ETF and nominations to become an EC member must be received in the Federation office by **Friday 13th November 2020**.

So to recap - the important dates are:

- Deadline for proposals to amend the constitution and resolutions - **Friday 25th September 2020**;
- Second mailing posted out by ETF on **Tuesday 29th September 2020**;
- Deadline for membership applications and EC applications - **Friday 13th November 2020**;
- AGM - **Friday 27th November 2020**.

As we are having to do things differently this year and hold the meeting online, we are still busy planning how to make this a fun and successful event involving as many member groups and tenants as possible. If you would like to discuss how you / your group can attend the event please contact us on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

Moving Online

If you read our last edition of *Tenants Voice* in April, you'll know that the decision was taken to close the Federation's office in Norton Park. This was done to protect staff and service users as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry explains how the Federation has managed to adapt and the future plans to ensure ongoing communication between ETF and tenants.

Background

When the Federation office closed at the end of March, it was important that ETF tried to keep a meaningful dialogue with our member groups and individual associate members. As traditional face to face meetings were not going to happen for the foreseeable future, this meant we had to change our approach to working, and hold meetings online. This represented a challenge for a couple of reasons - some of our Executive Committee (EC) members have limited digital skills and do not have the appropriate equipment, and that even those EC members who have digital knowledge and staff had to get used to a new way of working.

Our approach

When the EC were informed that meetings would be taking place online, comments ranged from, "I'll never be able to take part in online meetings" to "I won't be able to understand any of this". The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) approached us to say that they were able to provide equipment to ETF courtesy of City Fibre and Openreach. These have since been given to some of our EC members and we are grateful to the support given to us by CEC.

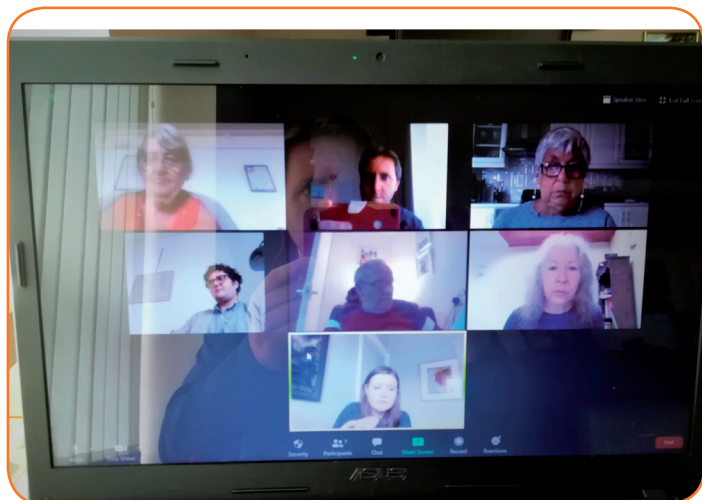
If ETF was going to hold meetings online, it was important that our EC felt confident and able to contribute. ETF's Admin Assistant Adam Hussain has worked very hard to ensure that all our EC members are able to use their IT equipment and also access meetings online via Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

The results

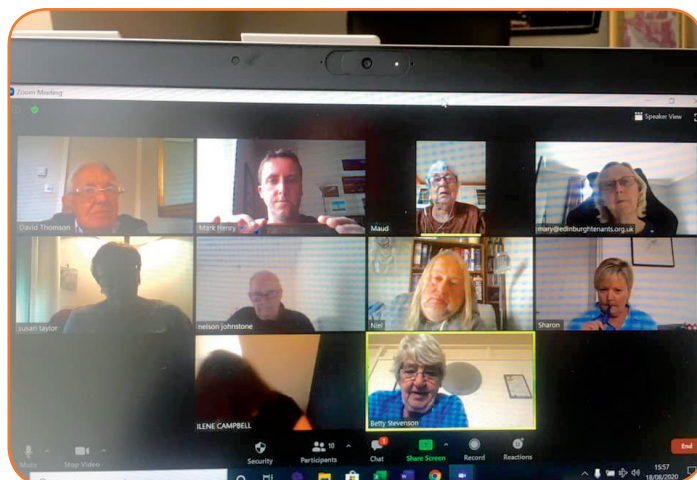
ETF is very proud to say that we have been having meetings online for the past few months. The meetings that have taken place include:

- EC Meetings;

- Meetings with Councillors Campbell and Watt (Convenor and Vice Convenor of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee);
- Senior Housing Managers within CEC;
- Repairs and Performance Meetings;
- Stair Cleaning Meetings;
- Scottish Housing Regulator Consultation discussion.

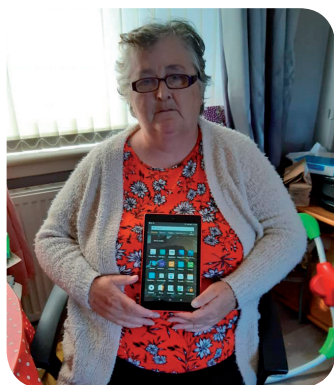


ETF members meet with Councillors



EC Meeting

EC members are beginning to adapt to having meetings online now. Comments we are hearing now include, "I'm beginning to understand online working" and "I'm beginning to get the hang of things now".



Barbara with her kindle

Barbara Stark who received her Kindle from City Fibre commented, "When I first received my Kindle it was quite difficult to understand how it worked. Now I am much more familiar with my Kindle. It has made such a positive difference being able to join in meetings and I can now keep up to date with everything that is happening."

Maud Wylie who received her Kindle from Openreach commented, "The tablet has been hugely beneficial to me as it has allowed me to join in the various Zoom meetings, including those with the EC, Senior CEC Managers and Councillors. It has been great to keep up to date with what has been happening during the lockdown, but also make contributions during meetings."



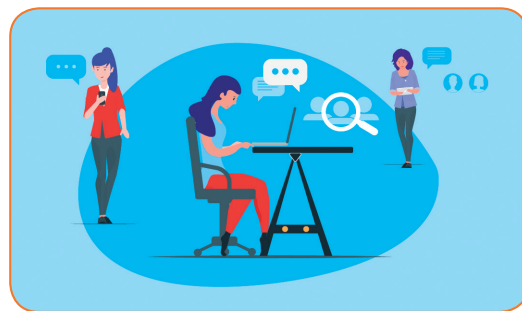
Maud with her kindle

This demonstrates that ETF members are still able to influence housing issues on behalf of tenants living in Edinburgh, albeit in a different way. EC members and staff have responded very well to the current pandemic and the challenges it has brought. With every passing meeting, EC members are becoming more and more confident about using their equipment and making meaningful contributions at meetings. It is also pleasing to see that more tenants are taking part in ETF activities online and this is something we will be encouraging over the coming weeks and months.

The future

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ETF has prioritised digital working, participation and training in the Federation's Work Plan for 2020-2021. As you will have read elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*, our AGM will be held online. ETF will also be holding the next Federation Meeting on **Wednesday 23rd September 2020, 7.00pm-8.00pm, online**. This meeting will allow ETF and our member groups to give an update on the activities we have been involved in over the coming months.

You can book a place for the meeting by emailing info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509. We are also looking at holding ETF Repairs and High Flats Group Meetings online over the coming months. If you have a smartphone, tablet or computer and would like to take part in these meetings or know more, please email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509. Training and support will be provided to assist you get involved in these new, virtual ways.



EC Review and Work Plan

Each year ETF carries out a Work Plan review to identify achievements and challenges in its implementation and operation. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the 2019/2020 review was conducted via Survey Monkey on-line and by telephone.

The aims of the review were to identify:

- The aspects of ETF's work that have been successfully implemented;
- Any challenges experienced over the year;
- Aspects of the work that have not been implemented or are outstanding and reasons why;
- Workload and actions for the year ahead.



This review helped to inform ETF's Work Plan for 2020-2021, which was agreed by the EC. This ambitious Work Plan will see ETF deliver on a number of exciting innovations. Our Work Plan objectives for the year include:

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

If you would like a copy of the Work Plan, please email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509. A summary copy of the Work Plan can be viewed at <https://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/etf-work-plan-2020-2021-executive-summary>.

Coping during lockdown



ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry has written about how he has adapted to working from home and the coping mechanisms which are helping him during the lockdown.

We are certainly living in mysterious times at the moment and I've never experienced anything like this before in my lifetime. I have been working from home since we went into lockdown at the end of March. In order to work from home, it was important that I felt ready and prepared.

Working from home had never really appealed to me before and I always felt I worked better in the office. I have experienced some mental health issues in the past and working from home has been quite difficult at times, particularly as my living room is also my office space. I live in

a one bedroom flat in Glasgow; which means I don't have a great deal of choice and space in which to work. Therefore separating my work life and personal life has been challenging. Although I speak to my colleagues on the phone and via zoom, I miss the face to face contact, the office camaraderie and attending physical meetings.



My work space in my living room

I have introduced a number of methods/techniques that have really helped me during the lockdown. These might be completely different for others but I wanted to share my experiences in the hope that they might be able to help people.

Try to follow a regular routine

The easiest thing to do is to have a long lie. However I have tried to discipline myself to wake up at a reasonable time. I feel I work best from early morning to mid-afternoon, so my work pattern is usually 8am-4pm. I have tried to follow a strict work related routine and it has really helped.

Exercise before starting work

As I work in Edinburgh and live in Glasgow, exercising before work was virtually impossible. However I have found that exercising every morning before I start work is great and really sets me up for the day. I carry out various exercises which include stomach squats, using my exercise bike or going for a run. I alternate my exercises on a daily basis.

Take regular breaks throughout the day

I take regular breaks of between 5-10 minutes throughout the day. During the breaks, I access my social media accounts, including Facebook and Instagram. I am on a number of WhatsApp groups with friends and family, so I keep in touch with them.

Exercise during my lunch break

I go for walks during my lunch break, which is something I do even when I work in Edinburgh. The fresh air really helps and it allows me to re-charge my batteries and concentrate better in the afternoon.

Switch off after work

After I've finished work for the day, I try to switch off and catch up on the day's news events. As the lockdown measures have been eased, I also try and go for a walk before my dinner. If the weather is nice, I often go for a walk after dinner as well or sit outside my flat. If the weather is bad, I'll normally enjoy a nice DVD or catch up with various programmes I had recorded.

These methods/techniques have enabled me to find the balance of working from home, carrying out my work related tasks, but also try to enjoy a social life.

Developing Tenant Participation in your local Area Housing Hub

We're local and listening to you: the tenant

Over the last few editions of *Tenants Voice*, members of our Executive Committee have been giving updates on their meetings with senior Council CEC housing staff in their respective localities. Due to the current pandemic, many EC members have been unable to hold these meetings. However some EC members have been able to hold online meetings and reports on these are given below.

North West Locality Report

Birnies Court

Through this difficult time it's amazing that I can still deal with local issues and reach out to both the tenants and CEC staff. It has been quiet down here in the North West Locality and I am very proud of the way the local people have responded to COVID-19. There have been the odd occasions when the bins have not been emptied but these were soon addressed. The Locality Housing Manager George Norval and his team have addressed the issues when I have contacted them. I would also like to thank all CEC staff that I have dealt with since lockdown for being so prompt and understanding at this difficult time.

I would like to thank the concierge staff in the North of Edinburgh for cleaning and power washing the buildings. You have given up your weekends to come out to work and we are all very grateful considering the current shortage of staff. I would like to thank Keith Wilson for giving the concierge staff overtime in order to do this. There has been plenty of positive feedback from other tenants as a result. Thanks again.

Betty Stone (nee Stevenson)



North East Locality Report

Magdalene and Willowbrae

After our last meeting with Libby Strong and her team, Nicol and I were pleased to hear that CEC are monitoring the health and wellbeing of staff. This helps CEC Team Leaders and Locality Managers to identify staff suffering from stress. The current situation has been very difficult for everyone, in particular housing staff who have been on the front line during the pandemic. They do not have an easy task and we have to remember they are only human beings, like you and me.

We also learnt how CEC have been operating since lockdown. The locality offices will be manned for emergency only and this is done on a rota system. We would like to thank, in particular, the waste services who have been brilliant since the lockdown. Finally we would like to say thank you to Libby Strong, Stuart Avinou and Tam Welsh for the work they have carried out during the lockdown. It has been difficult for everyone, but they have led by example during this difficult time.



Nicol Johnstone and Sue Taylor

Update on ETF's local groups

Lochend House tribute to NHS Workers

Residents in Lochend House recently paid tribute to our amazing NHS workers. The letters NHS were enscribed in the back garden of Lochend House. Well done to everyone involved.



News from Moredun

Campaigners in Moredun have won a major victory after



plans to build 188 houses on what they describe as the “back garden” for the area’s 500 high rise households, have been shelved until at least 2022 following a high-profile campaign. The much loved and well used green space is used for community events, dog walking, helps combat social isolation and is the only safe place for local kids to play and socialise.

CEC pledged a 3-stage consultation process prior to the start of any work. When they had to postpone the consultation due to COVID-19, instead of suspending the development, they attempted to proceed without any consultation. Giving residents just a few days’ notice, CEC sealed off the green space, announcing their plans to commence, on 2nd June, exploratory digging to investigate the viability of building on the area.

Within 24 hours, George Jenkinson, a local resident, set up a tent in the field. Moredun Multis & Maisonettes Residents Association (MMMRA) called on others to join him. CEC helpfully marked the areas of the green where they planned to drill. When they returned to begin the drilling they found residents had exercised their unique Scottish right to “free camp” on the proposed drilling sites, while other protestors placed themselves between the contractors and the field in a peaceful, socially distanced and good-natured act of defiance, preventing drilling on 2nd and 3rd June.

A newsletter was produced and distributed to more than 1,000 local homes. An online petition attracted around 1,500 signatures in 48 hours and currently stands at 2,000. The Edinburgh Evening News dedicated their entire front page to our campaign and covered developments in detail daily. Councillors, MSPs and the local MP lined up to voice their support. Banners appeared across the site and in the windows of local homes. MMMRA held stalls in the foyers of all the blocks to enable folk without online access to sign the petition.

We used the weekend to call for the biggest protest so far on Monday 6th June. By 8am more tents had appeared, and 35 activists braced themselves for another stand-off with contractors. But the contractors never came. CEC announced a suspension of all work on the site pending discussions with MMMRA aimed at “re-building trust” with the community.

We are delighted that at the first meeting between us, CEC officers and elected Councillors was incredibly positive with a guarantee of no further attempts to build on the site until at least 2022. Future meetings will focus on ideas for improving the open space, investment in housing and the wider community and increasing and improving community consultation. While we

remain vigilant, we are cautiously optimistic that Moredun will be omitted from the 2022 Local Development Plan and out back garden will be safe for good.

To find out more, join the association and get involved please see our page at <https://www.facebook.com/Moredun.Multis> or email us at moredun-multis@outlook.com.

Look out for details of our Annual General Meeting coming soon!



We are delighted with the success of our campaign

Niel Hansen, Secretary, MMMRA

Community Garden takes a massive step forward

It certainly has been a busy few months for West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court Residents Association (WPCRA). The group has been hard at work getting a community garden just beside the community flat at Persevere Court up and running.



The Community Garden



WPCRA's Chair, Damian May explains the thinking behind the garden and progress made so far. "We wanted to create an environment where tenants can relax and feel safe. We hope that we will be able to hold events such as barbeques in the garden. We recruited some volunteers who have been brilliant with all their help and support. I would like to especially thank the following for all they have done in getting us to this stage. Our volunteers, Katie and Christine for all their help in the garden. Hannah and Colin from Inspiring Leith for donating two tonnes of soil for the garden. John Swanson from Swany's pub in Leith for sponsoring us and donating tools for us to use in the garden. Jennifer Lavery from CEC for all her support and finally ETF for all their advice, guidance and patience in getting us to this stage."

There will be a further update in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*. In the meantime, if any tenants living in the area would like to help out in the garden or would like more information, please contact WPCRA's Chair Damian May by emailing una666@live.co.uk.



Damian and volunteers hard at work in the garden

Damian May, Chair, WPCRA



A journey of Edinburgh's High Rise Flats



A few months ago, the Edinburgh Evening News ran a feature about early memories of Edinburgh's high flats which were built in the 1960s. You can read more about the feature at <https://cutt.ly/Kd15nnw>.

As we have our own issue group relating to high flats here at ETF, we spoke to some of our members about their experiences of living in a high rise flat in Edinburgh both past and present. Some of the stories were very interesting and here's what they had to say.

Name: Sue Taylor Area: Garvald Court Gracemount

I lived in Garvald Court in Gracemount, from 1988-1996, which has since been demolished. I now live in sheltered housing in Willowbrae Road.

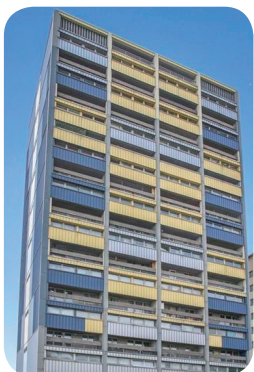
I would say that it has definitely changed for the better over the years. Organisations like ETF have helped to ensure that there are better refuse collections for tenants living in high rise flats. The lift facilities in high rise flats are also better and again that's due to ETF helping to influence improved conditions.

Unfortunately I didn't particularly enjoy living in a high rise flat as there were a number of fires which broke out during my time living in Garvald Court. Some of them were started deliberately and it was not a particularly pleasant experience. The lifts were constantly breaking down and there were problems with dumping rubbish and refuse. There were also problems with fires, which I've mentioned previously.

I used to love sitting out in my balcony during the summer. Tenants living at the top would have had fantastic views, particularly of the fireworks at New Year.



Garvald Court, Gracemount.



Name: Damian May Area: Citadel Court, Leith

I currently live in Citadel Court in Leith and have lived here for the past 21 years.

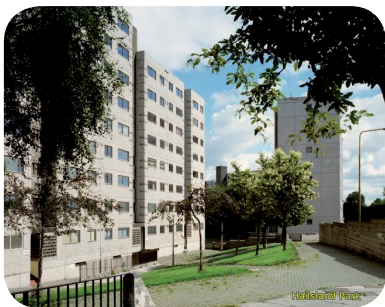
Living in a high rise flat has changed for the better over that time, but it can take time for improvements to be made e.g. new kitchens, bathrooms, heating and windows. However, these have made real differences to tenants' lives and that's definitely a good thing.

The best thing about living in a high rise flat is the fantastic community spirit here with a lot of nice people living here; we stick together and help each other out. Another thing is the fantastic views from my flat which is great, particularly at New Year.

The main challenges about living in a high rise flat are that as a result of what happened at Grenfell in London a few years ago, the issues of fires and suitable cladding in my block is always at the back of your mind. I feel that the cost of the heating in my block is expensive.

One of my fondest memories of my time here is when my family, who live in Belfast came to visit me and I had a great time with them. They enjoyed the lovely views and loved how my flat looks.

For the future, I'm looking forward to getting the community garden up and running after COVID-19. This will allow local people to contribute to making improvements and we'll be able to hold events such as barbecues.



Name: Maud Wylie Area: Hailesland Park, Wester Hailes

I currently live in Hailesland Park in Wester Hailes and I've lived here for the past 25 years. This is the first flat I have lived in.

I believe living in a high rise flat has changed for the better. The housing conditions are so much better than what they used to be. The door entry systems make the flats more secure. In addition all visitors are required to report to the Concierge Office, so I don't have to worry about Bogus Callers or Burglars entering my flat.

Getting to know the neighbours can be difficult as some like to keep to themselves. The issue of dog fouling and fire safety are particular challenges as well. I must say the Council were great in dealing with concerns arising from the Grenfell Tower fire in London and moved to reassure tenants and carried out the necessary works.

I have really enjoyed taking part in various initiatives relating to Hailesland Park over the years. I was previously chair of the South West Area Board and I'm currently chair of the Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council. I enjoy attending the ETF High Flats Meetings and getting to know tenants from other high rise blocks across the city.

Name: Betty Stone Area: Birnies Court, Muirhouse View

My first experience of living in a high rise flat was when I moved into Birnies Court 32 years ago and I still live here today.

They have definitely changed for the better as the door entry system makes you feel very safe and secure. We now have better parking facilities here in Birnies Court and improvements works to the block and the surrounding areas has made a huge difference.

The 24 hour concierge service is very reassuring. The community spirit here in Birnies Court is second to none and you get to know your neighbours and we are able to trust and look out for each other. The views are great, particularly at New Year.

There have been many issues with the lifts here in Birnies Court constantly breaking down. This is very problematic for tenants with disabilities who live here. Throwing out waste can be a problem at times as items often get stuck in the chutes. Some tenants ignore the signs indicating what items should be put in chutes and it costs a lot of money to repair them.

I don't have a particular fondest memory, but just seeing the overall improvements that have been made in high rise flats over the years is good. These have made a real difference in tenants' lives. We have good working relationships with staff at the local housing office.



News from City of Edinburgh Council



As lockdown has eased, CEC has been able to start reintroducing more services while continuing to follow government guidance to ensure the safety of tenants, staff and the general public.

Essential as well as emergency repairs are now being completed. As the guidance allows, further repair and maintenance services will restart. If you need a critical repair, please call 0131 200 2345. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Stair Cleaning Service has resumed with additional cleaning completed in blocks to bring them back up to standard following missed cleaning during the coronavirus outbreak. If you need to request a stair clean, call 0131 529 7484 or email stair.cleaning2@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Available homes are being advertised on Key to Choice once again with a focus on assisting homeless households move out of the temporary accommodation provided during the pandemic. Landlords will advertise the number of homes they can safely manage to let each week while following social distancing guidelines. If you've any questions, please email edindex@edinburgh.gov.uk.

The latest annual tenant survey has been carried out as a telephone survey and the results will be shared with tenants once they become available. Hearing from tenants is always very important and plays a key role in improving your housing services.

The first 12 new homes for social rent at Craigmillar Town Centre were handed over for letting at the start of July 2020. A further 61 social rent and 133 mid market rent homes are due to be completed by the end of November. These range in size from one to five bedrooms and include a one-bed wheelchair adapted home.

Four digital devices have been provided, to date, through community benefits drawn from Council contracts. These tablets are enabling tenants to keep up to date with what's going on and contribute online - individually, in their groups and with ETF.

The RoSPA President's Health and Safety Award is an internationally recognised award, which the Housing Property service, for the second time, received recognition. The competition for RoSPA's awards is extremely high with nearly 2,000 entrants competing to achieve the highest possible recognition for their work. Well done to all involved.

Don't forget it is important to keep up to date with your rent payments - if you're concerned about paying your rent during the current emergency, please get in touch as we can help. We're offering support and advice to tenants who need benefits and other financial help. Contact our Income Maximisation Team: call 0131 529 7905 or email IncomeMaximisation@edinburgh.gov.uk.

First new affordable homes completed since lockdown

Mandy Watt, Vice Convenor for Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee



The pandemic has been a difficult time for almost everybody, with very few stories that are enjoyable to read. When *Tenants Voice* offered me the chance to write something, I decided to take the opportunity to write about one of the nicest days that I've had since lockdown started.

I recently had the pleasure of officially handing over the keys to one of the first properties to be completed at Harewood Road – suitably sanitised and socially distanced, of course!



William and Adele Halliday, their children and their very cute little dog gave us a warm welcome to their new neighbourhood. The Hallidays are moving from a cramped high-rise flat into a three-bedroom home. William told us “We have a 10-year-old, a one year old and another on the way so the move is perfect timing for us as a family. We had been living nearby in a flat on the 10th floor of a high rise - now we have our own home and the kids have a garden to play in. It’s very spacious and modern. We’re delighted with it and enjoying settling in. Getting to my work is easy too with the public transport connections here in Craigmillar.”

Another new tenant, Valerie McMillan, couldn’t be happier with her adapted one-bedroom home. Valerie said “I love my new home, I’m here to stay. I feel so much more comfortable here and the house is really bright and sunny. I haven’t had to put the heating on once and it’s very warm. When I was 18, I lived on this street in my first home; now I’m 52 and I’ve come full circle. I’m home again. You notice a big difference in how the streets and the shops look. It’s all changed and is a really nice area with a tight community - everyone I’ve met says hello and is very friendly. Harewood Road is going to be beautiful once it’s finished.”

Dozens more tenants will have a brand-new place to live thanks to the investment that all our Edinburgh tenants have supported, which has allowed CEC to build 61 new homes for social rent and 133 for mid market rent, as part of the transformation of Craigmillar Town Centre.

As a direct result of their contract to redevelop Craigmillar Town Centre, CCG (the builder) has provided a series of community benefit initiatives including three full-time jobs, four trade apprenticeships and two work placements. The local community has also benefited from donations to Grass Roots Clothing, the Craigmillar Literacy Trust, the Castlebrae Memorial Garden and the Richmond Hope Mile of Memories project.

Edinburgh has one of the most ambitious house-building plans of any local authority in the UK and these are the first Council-led homes to be completed, now that the City’s construction industry is back up and running, and households can safely move.

CEC has nearly 800 affordable homes under construction across the city with nearly 3,500 new homes in design development.

Visiting Harewood Road and hearing first-hand from people whose lives will be transformed by having a new home made me realise, more than ever, that we must keep pushing as hard as we can to build high quality houses, in attractive surroundings, so that more of our tenants can have the homes that they need.

National News

ETF responds to Scottish Housing Regulator COVID-19 Consultation

The Scottish Housing Regulator recently consulted on temporary changes to its Regulatory Framework to enable it to continue to respond during the COVID-19 epidemic. ETF submitted a response to the



consultation and some of the key themes we identified are included below.

ETF is concerned that the proposals and timescales are too tight.

ETF is concerned that the proposals and timescales are too tight.

Themes identified

Landlords should ensure that all tenants have been able to participate in meetings/ consultations and training should be provided to those who are not skilled in digital technology.

ETF would like to see evidence of how each landlords' engagement plans are protecting tenants and service users. ETF is particularly interested to know how much it costs to produce the engagement plans and whether tenants' rent money funds this.

A copy of ETF's response can be downloaded at www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk/etf-response-to-scottish-housing-regulator-consultation-on-covid-19/. Alternatively please contact ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburgh tenants.org.uk to request a copy.

Update from Scottish Human Rights Commission

Housing Rights and COVID-19



In recent months the Scottish Human Rights Commission has been working hard to highlight areas of human rights concern during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to constructively engage with how rights can inform Scotland's recovery in the months ahead. Human rights law provides both a set of agreed standards and a way to orientate law and policy making in complex and challenging times like these.

Here are some of our key COVID-19 policy briefings:

- Care Homes and Human Rights;
- Prisons and Human Rights;
- Police use of temporary powers;
- The Right to Food;
- The Right to Housing;
- The Right to Social Security;
- Evidence to Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery;
- Evidence submitted to the Scottish Parliament Inquiry into COVID-19 and Human Rights.

We are also finalising a monitoring report on social care, human rights and COVID-19, which we will publish in the coming weeks.

Looking ahead, the Commission has called for and welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to a human rights based approach to a public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic, including what happened in care homes.

We are also calling on the Scottish Government to take a rights-based approach as we plan for economic recovery and social renewal. This should include pressing ahead with incorporating economic, social, cultural and environmental rights in Scotland's laws so that we have a robust framework for the future. The work of the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership is crucial to this. The continued development and implementation of Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights will also be key to ensuring that people's rights are realised in practice, particularly when it comes to addressing inequalities of access to rights that COVID-19 has highlighted.

You can find out more about our COVID-19 work at <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/covid-19/>, email us at hello@scottishhumanrights.com or phone 0131 297 5050.

Want to campaign for more social housing?

Housing charity Shelter Scotland is looking for people with personal experience of long waits for social housing or transfers to more suitable social housing to help them campaign for a new building programme.



The charity hopes to be able to give a platform to people to speak out about the impact of having no choice but to live in expensive or inadequate accommodation.

This would include people who are currently living in privately rented accommodation, overcrowded accommodation, living with parents, living in housing that doesn't meet a physical disability or sensory impairment or living in temporary accommodation having made a homelessness application.

While first-hand stories tend to be the most powerful the charity would also like to make contact with community representatives who can speak out on behalf of local groups. Please share this appeal with anyone you know who you think might be interested in taking part. To find out more get in touch with Susie (underscore) Rose@shelter.org.uk or phone 0344 515 2442.



Convenor's Report

Welcome to my Convenors' Report. Although we continue to live in uncertain times, it's great that ETF representatives are still able to take part in online meetings with CEC staff. We are also holding EC meetings online too, which is very encouraging. The circumstances are very different to what we know, but ETF is still representing tenants throughout the city and we will continue to do so.

I have been especially busy with the work of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission and the Every Life Counts Group, which was formerly the Choose Life Group over the last few months. As a result of the current pandemic, many people have been struggling badly. However the work of both groups has ensured that plans are in place to deal with the many issues raised and solutions are found.

It has been frustrating not been able to hold our regular meetings. However ETF is in the process of organising online meetings, including our AGM and you will be able to find out further details elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*. Staff are currently still working from home. We will continue to take advice from the Scottish Government and the Albion Trust on when it is safe for staff to return to the office.

My husband Walter and I would like to say thank you for the heartfelt wishes that we received when we got married in July. It was overwhelming to receive such wonderful presents and kind words and we both really appreciate it. Although we were not able to celebrate as we would have liked due to the current situation, it was still a wonderful day. We're looking forward to meeting up with people to celebrate properly once we are able to. Thanks again

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Federation Office will be closed on Monday 21st September 2020 for the Edinburgh Public Holiday

Federation Meeting

Wednesday 23rd September 2020, Zoom, 6.45pm for 7.00pm-8.00pm

Deadline for proposals to amend the constitution and resolutions

Friday 25th September 2020

Deadline for membership applications and EC applications

Friday 13th November 2020

ETF Annual General Meeting

Friday 27th November 2020, Zoom, time to be confirmed

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.

Thoughtful Quotes

'Courage does not always roar. Sometimes it's the quiet voice saying, I will try again tomorrow.'

'Life has knocked me down a few times. It has shown me things I never wanted to see. I have experienced sadness and failures. But one thing is for sure... I always get up!'
Unknown

Copy Deadline



Tenants Voice is usually published three times a year and is distributed to nearly 3,000 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:

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EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

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

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