

Tenants' Groups Want Rent Freeze

In an energetic debate at a recent Federation Meeting, member groups representing City of Edinburgh Council tenants unanimously supported a motion to seek a rent freeze for Council rents in 2015/2016.

Tenants at the meeting were concerned about the Council's rent levels and further possible increases and are calling for a rent freeze because:

- Tenants in Edinburgh already pay the highest Local Authority rents in Scotland.
- There has been a seven year programme of above inflation rent increases.
- The impact of Welfare Reform has been severe on many families and the introduction of Universal Credit in early 2015 may cause further hardship.
- Fuel poverty is increasing - during this Winter, many tenants will have to choose between heating their homes or feeding their families.
- If Council rents are increased, more and more families will be affected and could be made homeless.
- 30% of Council tenants pay full rent. High rents have a high impact on the 'working poor' who do not receive any help from housing benefit and who are experiencing stagnated wages or small increases compared to the increasing cost of living.
- The Council wants to put aside £20 million to deal with the impact of Welfare Reform; however the Council already has a reserve fund of £20 million. We feel this is over cautious and tenants need a break from crippling rent hikes.

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The Council is proposing a new five year rent strategy. Three rent options have been put forward which would see rents increase between £4.27 and £10.03 per fortnight for tenants in a two bedroom flat.

Option	% Increase	Increase per fortnight based on a two bedroom flat
Option 1: Inflation only	2%	£4.27
Option 2: Inflation + 1%	3%	£6.39
Option 3: Inflation + 2.7%	4.7%	£10.03

The Council has assumed 2% as a rate of inflation. (The current rate of inflation is 1.2%).

Rent levels will be decided at the Council Budget Meeting on 12th February 2015. ETF will be sending a deputation to this Council meeting to put forward tenants' views. We are actively seeking tenants' views between now and then, so if you or your RTO would like to be involved in any way, please contact the Federation office as soon as possible.

We will also be holding a Tenants' Conference for Council tenants to discuss this further on **Saturday 24th January 2015 at 9.30am to 1pm in Norton Park Conference Centre**. Book your place via our website www.edinburghtenants.org.uk, by contacting the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk. This is a hugely important issue for tenants and we do hope that you will support Council tenants in our efforts to secure a fair rent.

New Tenants' Panel launched

The Vice Convenor of Health, Social Care and Housing, Councillor Cammy Day launched the new City of Edinburgh Council Tenants' Panel at the Tenants' Conference on Monday 27th October in the City Chambers.

The Tenants' Panel will mean that Council tenants will have more influence over the way their homes are managed. Anyone who lives in a Council home can join to make their views known.



Delegates at the Tenants' Conference

Tenants' Panel members can choose how much they want to become involved, for example, by taking part in discussions or conferences, going on estate walkabouts or completing a survey. Councillor Day said, "Talking and listening to residents is important to us because it's the best way to find out how we are doing. We've set up the Tenants' Panel after tenants told us through last year's Tenants' Survey that they wanted more of a say in decision-making. The survey results were very encouraging, with 90% of tenants surveyed satisfied with the housing service – which

compares highly with other large UK landlords. We're keen to keep up the good work and to make improvements when needed, which is why the panel is so important."

Betty Stevenson, Convenor of Edinburgh Tenants' Federation, cut the ribbon and encouraged tenants to join the Tenants' Panel to make their views known. Betty said, "The Tenants' Panel is a new way for you to have your say on housing services. I would encourage tenants to sign up and make their views known to the Council. It is very important that our views are heard and taken in to account. You could also set up or join a local tenants' group or become involved with Edinburgh Tenants' Federation. Every view helps to make a better housing service."

The feedback from tenants' at the meeting was very positive towards the new Tenants' Panel.

To find out more about the Tenants' Panel or to join, contact the Tenant Participation Team on 0131 529 7805 or email tenant.participation@edinburgh.gov.uk.



ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson with Councillor Day at the Tenants' Conference

Sam Reeves, Senior Tenant Participation Officer, City of Edinburgh Council

City of Edinburgh Council Roadshows



ETF's Development Co-ordinator Clare with our Secretary Maud Wylie at the Wester Hailes Roadshow

The City of Edinburgh Council ran a number of housing advice roadshows throughout October, where tenants had the opportunity to get energy advice and support to help save money, find out about Council house improvements and repairs, tenants' groups and get recycling advice and information. Tenants also had the chance to sign up to the new Tenants' Panel and have their say on how they can be involved with the Council. The Council held a number of discussion groups at some of the roadshows to enable tenants to make suggestions on the Tenant Participation Strategy. It was also an opportunity for ETF to showcase the work they have been involved in as they had a stall at each of the roadshows.

Although the roadshows were very worthwhile, we would like to see them in more vibrant places to attract people. ETF representatives will be feeding this back to the Council and we hope that the Council takes on board ETF's views when planning next year's roadshows.



Our EC member Davie Thomson at the McDonald Road Library Roadshow

Davie Thomson, ETF Executive Committee Member

ETF Study Visit to Dundee Multi-Storeys

Representatives from ETF spent a glorious day in Dundee back in September, finding out about Dundee City Council's District Heating Project at the Lochee High Rise Flats. We were greeted by members of Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations (DFTA) and some of the tenants' groups within the Federation including the Phoenix Group and Bottom of the Hill Group.



ETF representatives learn more about Dundee's District Heating system

Part of the study visit included visiting Adamsons Court and Elders Court. These flats have been totally transformed and are now being supplied with heating and hot water at a reduced cost to the tenants. The new external insulation, rendering and new gas fired hot water system (District Heating) will improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and CO2 emissions. All the works, including internal renovations were carried out through a £6.5 million Greendead Partnership with British Gas. Each tenant pays for their own usage through a pre-payment type metering system. The Council buys the gas which is then used to heat water at a local heating plant and is distributed through the District Heating System.

ETF representatives had the opportunity to take part in a question and answer session with Council officials from Dundee on a range of issues including antisocial behaviour, dogs in multi-storey flats and the Kitchen and Bathroom Programme. It was an excellent information sharing session and there are a lot of similarities between both Councils, but at the same time there are a number of differences as well. We also watched a DVD where representatives of Phoenix Tenants' Association in Dundee described how their partnership with Dundee Council has been of enormous benefit to tenants. We were impressed with the good working relationship that Registered Tenant Organisations in Dundee have with the Council.

The ETF representatives certainly found the day worthwhile with Maureen Millar, Restalrig and Lochend House Residents Association, commenting, "It was a very interesting and worthwhile day." ETF's Convenor, Betty Stevenson commented, "We are hoping to organise a follow up study visit where senior Council officials from Edinburgh can come to Dundee and see how successful the District Heating Scheme is."

Many thanks to the staff who organised the whole day and thanks also to Rena Smith (Chair of DFTA), Wilma McIntosh, Sheila Morrison, Mary Smith, Jean Brown, Sheila Crawford, Gary Pirie, Rona Dawson, Theresa Capon, Cathie Webster and Isabelle Quinn.



Representatives and staff from both organisations outside the West Housing Office in Dundee

Derek Thomson, Moredun Resident

ETF Study Visit to Maryhill Housing Association

ETF has been concerned about the issue of dogs in multi-storey flats for a number of years. This issue has been raised by tenants at the ETF High Flats Group and the Multi-Storey Working Group since 2006 and a positive solution to consider the removal of dogs in multi-storey flats has not yet been found. ETF has recently been on two study visits to find out how other landlords are dealing with the issue of dogs in multi-storey flats; one to Dundee City Council and one to Maryhill Housing Association (MHA); which was successful in April 2014 in obtaining a court order for the removal of a dog from a high rise flat following the implementation of a new dogs policy and registration scheme.

Practice from Maryhill Housing Association

Maryhill Housing Association in Glasgow has a range of high and low rise properties and owns around 3000 homes. The Association has been proactive in tackling the issue of dogs in multistoreys since 2012. This case study outlines the issues and the steps taken to resolve these:

The issues

- ◆ Tenants and Housing Officers had significant issues with dogs in multistoreys including:
 - dangerous or unruly dogs
 - dog fouling
 - tenants failing to control dogs
 - the increase in the number of people with dogs in high flats, despite the tenancy agreement stating that dogs are not allowed in the property.
- ◆ The association was concerned;
 - that where complaints had been made about dogs that were not kept under control, there was a risk of legal action, should a dog bite someone, since the Association had not taken action to ban the dog from its premises
 - about its duty to care for tenants and staff due to health risks with dog waste.
- ◆ Maryhill Housing Association had transferred stock from Glasgow Housing Association and found its policies / tenancy agreements on dogs in multistoreys did not align.
- ◆ The tenancy agreement in relation to keeping pets in multistoreys was not being adhered to by tenants or enforced by Maryhill Housing Association staff. There was a culture of “unspoken tolerance”, whereby the landlord itself reported:
 - We give no clear information about the keeping of dogs in multi-storeys at tenancy sign up
 - Our tenancy agreement makes no reference with regard to the keeping of dogs in multi-storey flats
 - We have signs displayed in the communal areas that say ‘No Dogs’, but it is clear that this position is not enforced as many tenants have dogs and,
 - We do not have a register of dogs in our multi-storey blocks, or any guidance for dog owners living in the blocks.
- ◆ Maryhill Housing Association embarked upon a phased strategy to attempt to eliminate the keeping of dogs in high rises over time.
- ◆ The rationale for this was as follows: “MHA need to take stock of the scale of the problem and attempt to tackle it; feedback from tenants (via the Glenavon Residents Association) supports such a move; and staff would like a clearer position on dogs to be adopted. A fresh approach would give our staff additional guidelines and tools required to help manage dogs in our multi-storey flats.”

- ◆ The Association aimed to sensitively and reasonably address this issue, recognising that pets can be companions, particularly to vulnerable tenants, and their long term goal was to reduce the number of dogs in multi-storey flats over time.

What happened?

- ◆ A Tenants Survey to find out the key issues in the area highlighted dogs in multi-storey flats as the biggest priority for tenants.
- ◆ Consultation process and dialogue with the local Registered Tenant Organisation to explore the issue and get suggestions on how to resolve it (August 2012 to January 2013).
- ◆ Developed a Dogs Policy that highlighted:
 - To new tenants moving in, that they will not be permitted to keep dogs in flats and that whilst they will see dogs around the flats, owners will not be permitted to get another dog when the animal dies
 - New tenants moving in would be asked to sign an undertaking not to move a dog into their home.
- ◆ Introduced a dog registration scheme for existing owners and code of conduct for dog owners living in the flats.
- ◆ Changed the MHA tenancy agreement to include contractual restrictions on dogs in multi-storey flats.
- ◆ Implemented an amnesty period which allowed tenants to keep one dog that had been registered and outlined the sanctions that would happen if the tenant did not comply with this.
- ◆ Worked in partnership with the Dogs Trust to promote responsible dog ownership and enable free chipping of registered dogs as an incentive to tenants to register their dogs.
- ◆ Introduced bold signage in all blocks regarding the new policy and spot checks by concierge / housing staff to ensure compliance.

Testing the system

- ◆ The policy was implemented in February 2013 and one tenant did not comply with the dog registration scheme by not registering and by failing to keep the dog under control.
- ◆ The Association took the tenant to court to seek a notice to have the dog removed and to prevent the tenant from keeping a dog in their premises in future. This route was recommended by legal counsel who advised that to seek a decree of eviction would not be deemed “reasonable” action by the landlord.
- ◆ The Association sought to remove the dog within 14 days as well as seeking legal fees and a removal order was issued by the court.
- ◆ The dog was removed by the tenant on day 13.
- ◆ Publicity from the case highlighted the stance of the Association and has deterred future violations of the policy – all dogs are now registered in the high rise block and monitoring is ongoing.

Next Steps

Representatives of ETF will be holding future meetings with Council officials to discuss the possibility of introducing a pilot scheme in the Edinburgh area. If you'd like to get involved with us on this, please contact the Federation office.

Clare MacGillivray,
ETF Development Co-ordinator



ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson with Janice Herriot, Senior Housing Officer, Maryhill Housing Association

Update on ETF Registered Social Landlord Group

In our last update for Tenants Voice, the ETF Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Tenants Group outlined our progress to date. In this issue we seek to inform further on the group's activities.

At the group's meeting in October, it was agreed that a core group would develop work on raising interest in the group, increasing core membership, exploring links with other potential supporters and developing a business plan for the future.

Members looked at the issue of support and ETF will continue to support the group in relation to meeting space, travel, etc. David Allan from the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) will continue to provide developmental support to the group through the Supporting Communities Programme, over the next six months.

We then went on to look at setting some short term aims and activities where it was agreed, that by the end of March 2015, the group would make effort to ensure that a Business Plan be in place, have a constitution adopted, increase the core membership of the group and have established activity/contact with at least two RSLs and their tenants. It was further agreed that the core group would concentrate their efforts in three main areas, including:

1. Meetings
2. Local activity
3. Communications/information.

Although stamina and action are not lacking in the group it is recognised that numbers and landlords represented are; and this must be developed or we risk burn out of members and criticism for lack of support. In mind of these issues the group agreed that we require to establish a presence at a local level and that a first step would be to meet with key officers from the three RSLs (Hillcrest, Link and Blackwood Group) that have contributed funding so far. Members agreed to develop a mapping exercise which will identify where existing Registered Tenants Organisations are and this will provide a better idea of areas to target development work.

Terry Kirby from the ETF RSL Group and Dave Allan from SCDC had the opportunity to speak at the recent Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Tenant Participation Workers Forum to give an update on the work of the group. The feedback we received was very positive.

So all in all it is a case of onwards and upwards for the group; bearing in mind that this trajectory will require effort and involvement so, if you or your group are interested in getting involved or want more information please contact Matt Wheatley on 0131 554 2464 or email wheatley.matthew@yahoo.com.

Matthew Wheatley and Terry Kirby, ETF RSL Group

ETF Website

ETF's website is live at www.edinburghtenants.org.uk and has links to our Facebook and Twitter pages too. You can access our Twitter page at <https://twitter.com/EdinburghTenant>. Each member group can have their own page on the website and we are encouraging as many groups as possible to get online. To find out more, please contact Mary on 0131 475 2509 or email mary@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



As part of our recent website upgrade, ETF will shortly be carrying out regular website polls on a number of housing related subjects and this is where we want to hear from you! If you have any suggested website poll questions, please contact Mark Henry at the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



We are looking at introducing a text reminder system to ETF. This will be a new way to receive information from ETF via your mobile phone and will enable you to receive reminders about events such as Federation meetings, social events and our AGM. If you would be interested in receiving information via text or would like to find out more information on this topic, please contact Mary Cockburn at the Federation office using the contact details above.

We are also hoping to launch a system to notify people when *Tenants Voice* is available to download as a means to reduce all the envelopes that fall through your letterbox from us. It's friendlier to the environment and of course less postage costs for us. If this is something you are interested in please drop Mary an email – mary@edinburghtenants.org.uk and she will set this up for you.

Mark Henry, ETF Development Worker

Restalrig and Lochend House Wins GOLD Award

Representatives of Restalrig and Lochend House Residents Association attended the Beautiful Awards Ceremony in Dundee back in September. Beautiful Scotland – previously known as Beautiful Scotland in Bloom – is a competition run by Keep Scotland Beautiful, a member of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Bloom Federation. The competition is entered by local authorities, Business Improvement Districts and volunteer groups representing their cities, towns, villages and communities. It was very gratifying to step onto the stage at the Beautiful Scotland award ceremony and hear them announce that our efforts had been rewarded with a gold certificate. Thanks to the team work of our small gardening squad, including Stan Dunlop, Arthur Gawley, Christine Sadler, Eileen May, Andrew Nacion, Maureen Millar and Derek Hamilton. I must also mention the cooperation of the Council's Inch Nursery and the local Council Parks Department. Their help was much appreciated and the difficult part now lies ahead in trying to do the same next year.



George Anderson of the Beechgrove Garden presenting Eileen May and John Fairgrieve with the gold award for the Scotland in Bloom campaign

John Fairgrieve, Chair of Restalrig and Lochend House Residents Association

Moredun 4 Multis Residents' Association

Moredun 4 Multis Residents' Association has been rounding up residents to object to the proposed housing development on their much loved greenspace.

When a small, confusing card mentioning new houses popped through the doors of local people, most of us could make neither head nor tail of it and ignored it. Fortunately, as it turned out, we decided to do a bit of investigating.

It emerged that under the Council's second proposed Local Development Plan, it is proposed to deprive the community of its last significant area of green space by building 188 houses in four storey blocks. This area is effectively the "back garden" for the 550 families in the Moredun high rises, provides stunning views and is extensively used, particularly by children enjoying the play park that was recently installed following a residents' association campaign. The "Protect our Green Space" campaign was launched.

We initially decided to produce a petition. A local planning Councillor advised us that if 100 people sign a petition, the Council will consider it as one objection, but if those 100 people object individually, that's 100 objections. So whilst still running with the petition we focused on getting as many individual objections as possible.



The area of greenspace in Moredun which is currently under threat

A newsletter was delivered to hundreds of surrounding homes, detailing five key actions those objecting to the plan could take. People vary in how much effort they will put into voicing their objection; some will be prepared to write detailed letters, others just to lend their signature, so we tried to cater for all. For those who didn't want to write letters we provided pre-printed letters for them to sign and send, both to the local Councillor on the Planning Committee and to the Community Council, whose job it is to ensure the City Council is aware of local opinion.

We also used the newsletter to call a public meeting at the local community centre. We were stunned when nearly 50 people turned up. We took the names and addresses of everyone who attended and asked them to tell us their reasons for objecting. We then took advice on which of these were legally valid planning objections. We listed them in a document and within 48 hours of the meeting, delivered a copy to everyone who had attended to assist them with wording their objections.

We continued to talk to local people and it transpired there were those who wanted to object but either found official forms intimidating or had literacy problems. To try to ensure these people were not disadvantaged, we held an all-day "drop-in" session at our local Community Health Flat where we were on hand to offer advice or complete the forms for them. Invites were delivered to nearly 900 local homes.

If the public meeting was better than anticipated in terms of turnout, the drop-in was better than expected in ways we hadn't even considered. Not only did it enable us to help people with their objections, it meant we were able to have one-to-one chats, listening to people's concerns whilst telling them about the residents' association and the community health flat – and all in a relaxed atmosphere. Several people expressed interest in getting involved and one offered to design a website for the group. We lost count but must have spoken to 60-70 people that day.

By the end of the Council's consultation period, we had amassed over 100 formal objections and know that many others sent in theirs directly. We also produced a 1,200 word objection ourselves, based on the conversations we had held with locals and this has been sent to every Councillor.

The consultation period is over but the campaign is not; the petition and letter writing campaigns will continue until the Planning Committee votes on the matter in February.



We were overwhelmed with the amount of people that signed the petition

Niel Hansen, Acting Chair, Moredun 4 Multis Residents Association

Update from Tenants and Residents In Muirhouse

Tenants and Residents In Muirhouse (TRIM) is a registered Registered Tenant Organisation with a very active and vibrant board who have been very busy over recent months. Here is a snapshot of some of the activities we have been involved in.

Toys for Gaza

The community has once again shown its caring side when nearly half a ton of toys were donated via the community shop on Pennywell Road. Residents would be dropping off a car full of toys on a daily basis, which in turn were taken to Edinburgh Direct Aid.



Thanks to everyone who donated to our Toys for Gaza appeal

Shortlisted for National award

Last month our chairman Robert Pearson attended the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) awards ceremony in Nottingham with Cllr Cammy Day. We were sadly pipped at the post on the night, but to be shortlisted was amazing to say the least.



Our cheque for £3000 donated to the Towford Outdoor facility

Decision made on Mikaeel Kular Memorial

£3000 was gifted to Towford Outdoor facility in the Scottish Borders which is managed by Muirhouse Group My Adventure.

Another successful coffee morning

Over £400 was raised for Macmillan Cancer Support in September.

Social Media

We were exceptionally busy during September. Our posts reached over 105,000 people. These figures are absolutely

incredible. We now have three members looking after the social media on a full time basis.

Tenants and Residents In Muirhouse are encouraged to check out:

Website - www.muirhouserescidents.co.uk

Facebook.com/TRIMGROUP

Twitter @MuirhouseTRIM

Robert Pearson, Chair of TRIM

Hyvots Moredun Families enjoy Fun in the sun

Residents from the Hyvots Moredun area enjoyed a glorious day of sunshine when Dunedin Canmore tenants in the area attended a Family Fun Day in and around The Quarries development for older people.

The event was organised to celebrate the completion of the regeneration of the local area by Dunedin Canmore and Dunedin Canmore Housing (DCH)'s Chief Executive Ewan Fraser kicked off the event by sharing a story from the front page of Tenants Voice from May 2002, when the heading 'Hyvots tenants furious' was the cover story.

Ewan spoke of his memory of being interviewed by the original Hyvots area Residents Association as part of the competition to appoint a landlord to regenerate the area, and he spoke of his pride and



Ewan Fraser with a very early edition of Tenants Voice

satisfaction to witness the completion of the £70 million project. Ewan also spoke about the enormous contribution made by local residents, some of whom were present as part of the Hyvots Moredun Residents Association (HMRA), who took the opportunity to launch their very own website in the community room the same afternoon. Local Councillor Norma Austin Hart also acknowledged the great partnership working that had taken place between the Council, Dunedin Canmore and the local community and its representatives to bring all the work together. The HMRA Chair Bryan Pitbladdo also thanked everyone for their input over the years from HMRA and its predecessors, noting that the next phase in the area was to hopefully bring more younger people and families into the residents association's' activities.

Residents were treated to a wonderful spread of food provided by Derek Carlin, the local caterer from the nearby Gilmerton Community Centre and HMRA's website launch was supplemented by a very interesting local history exhibition organised by members of the HMRA Committee, which included pictures 'before and after' of the regeneration area as well as some from earlier times.

Residents who needed a 'chill out' were given the option of a Pilates class or a massage and children were looked after too – Magician Gary James did a wonderful magic 'walkabout' show for all ages while Mighty Mac and Louise provided fantastic balloon art and face painting that went down a storm with the kids and their parents.

Dunedin Canmore staff were also on hand to provide a range of advice and information and local radio Station Leith FM did a live outside broadcast from the Quarries Car Park area.

Tenants interested in 'TP' weren't left out either, 'BEEM' Regional Network member (and DCH Board member) Terry Kirby gave a brief presentation on the work of the Regional Network while some of the local people signed up for the HMRA website and got a chance to find out more about computer classes in the area. Council staff from the local libraries and local office also gave out information on the local Council services. Overall the event was a great example of 'team working' bringing great success, just like the regeneration programme that was being celebrated. It's hoped that this type of Fun day may become an Annual Event, but plans are at an early stage and discussion will involve more than just the local RTOs. Anyone from the area interested in getting involved should contact Harry Woodward at Dunedin Canmore, who also has a huge stock of brilliant pictures from the event.



Tenants and residents from the Hyvots and Moredun committee

Contact Harry at Dunedin Canmore on 0131 624 5629 or e-mail tenant.view@dunedincanmore.org.uk – check out DCH's Facebook - Dunedin Canmore - and twitter - @DunedinCanmore – pages too.

HMRA's website is also available at www.hmra.org.uk.

Harry Woodward, Tenant Participation Officer, Dunedin Canmore Housing

Tenant Participation...its advantages for you, the tenant.

Since its inception nearly 25 years ago, ETF in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council have taken the lead in tenant participation. ETF has raised awareness of the importance of regular communication between tenant and landlord. From rent levels, repairs, Kitchen and Bathroom Programmes to many other issues, you the tenant have an awards winning service admired by

many other social landlords throughout Scotland. ETF have won many awards for their efforts in supporting tenants.

What advantages can be gained by tenants participating?

Gaining more influence within your local housing department by raising awareness of the problems your group has. From repairs, stair cleaning, refuse collection to anti social behaviour, your 'working together'...participation helps resolve issues of concern. Lots of tenant groups throughout Edinburgh have worked with their local housing office to achieve a resolution to their issues of concern. You also have access to support and advice from ETF's staff and volunteers. Being a tenant led, tenant focused group, you will be part of a city wide tenants 'voice' to build on what has been achieved over the 25 years of work they have done on behalf of tenants within Edinburgh.

How do you find out more?

You can contact ETF by phone on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk. You can ask for more information, advice and ask for your contact details to be put on the mailing list.

Davie Thomson, ETF Executive Committee

ETF Student Placement



Hi all, I'm Euan Maclachlan, a Community Education student at Edinburgh University who is very excited to have joined the team at ETF for an eighteen week work placement. I've been asked if I would write a wee note for Tenants Voice to introduce myself and say a bit about the work I'm involved in during my time here.

Well, to introduce myself I'm originally from Glasgow but have moved over to the sunny east coast to study my course. The course I'm doing, Community Education, is all about learning and development work taking place in informal, social settings and working with groups of people with shared interests. Some of the values behind it are about local people having a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives, building solidarity between people and groups, using the wealth of knowledge in different people's experiences and meeting folk at a grassroots level.

My experience so far has mainly been as a youth worker in various clubs and projects around Glasgow and Edinburgh and while I love the challenge of working with young people (well, most of the time anyway) I am very much looking forward to the new experiences that working alongside tenants groups might offer. As an organisation with such a proud history, dedicated to help people organise, fight for their rights and have a voice, I hope ETF will be a model of what community work has the potential to achieve and I'm very excited to have the opportunity to get involved!

During my time here, as well as coming along to roadshows, meetings, helping in the office, and most importantly (as Betty has explained) making decent cups of tea!, my main piece of work is to try and help to get a new group off the ground in Broomhouse. As I say this is all quite a new role for me so while I'm very excited I am also a tad on the nervous side that I do a good job. However I'm very well aware that within the Federation, I am surrounded by lots of inspiring people and groups who have a vast wealth of knowledge and experience in working with their communities to organise around issues and fight for tenants rights. So I'm very confident that tapping in to all of your expertise and with the support of the ETF I can't go wrong.... can I?!!

Seriously though, I am very much looking forward to being here, meeting folk and learning about the Federation. If anyone has any tips, advice or ideas for me I would love to speak to you and if you see me about I hope you'll stop and say hello! Drop me an email at student@edinburghtenants.org.uk, or give me a ring on 0131 475 2509.

Update from Councillor Day

Vice Convenor Health, Social Care and Housing Committee,
City of Edinburgh Council



Warm Your Home this Winter



It's getting to that time of year again when the scarves and hats come out and we all have to switch our heating on.

The Council understands the difficulties tenants face at this time of year as money becomes tighter and gas and electricity costs are steep.

That's why we've launched our 'Warm Your Home' campaign, offering tenants helpful tips to prepare for winter weather, easy ways to reduce energy costs and details of how to get in touch with people who can help if you are struggling with the cold weather.

Please also remember to keep an eye out for your elderly neighbours, friends and relatives to make sure they stay safe and warm this winter.

You'll see details of the campaign on the Council website and in your neighbourhood office.

You can also get advice about heating energy tariffs/discounts and saving energy in your home by calling Home Energy Scotland on 0808 808 2282, free from landlines and mobiles.

Rent First

I know that these next few months can be an expensive time for everyone and that it can be difficult to juggle increased spending in the run up to Christmas and the New Year and the need to pay your rent.

Payment of rent is a priority and you risk losing your home if you don't keep up with rent payments or ask for help. If you are having problems, please talk to us before it's too late.

You can speak to us on 0800 028 2786, e-mail rentfirst@edinburgh.gov.uk or drop in to your local office if you're struggling.



Have your Say!

Tenants' Panel

You'll read about the Tenants' Panel, launched at the Tenants'

Conference, elsewhere in this issue but I just wanted to take the time to say thank you again to everyone who attended and contributed to what was a really successful event.

If you are interested in joining the Tenants' Panel or in finding out a bit more about it, please get in touch with the Council's Tenant Participation Team on 0131 529 7805 or email tenant.participation@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Community Benefits through 21st Century Homes

I was pleased to oversee the signing of an accord with Urban Union, our partner in the 21st Century Homes development at Pennywell, which will see the project deliver more than 60 new job opportunities for local people.

It was a great opportunity to see the good progress being made on Phase 1 and to reinforce the Housing service's commitment to creating more than just new homes through our house building programme. Being able to meet Courtney Rankine, one of the local apprentices who has benefitted from the development, really brought home the opportunities the programme is providing for local people.

We've had major success with 21st Century Homes so far and are exploring the possibilities of expanding the programme to build another 400 homes in the city, creating not just hundreds of new, quality affordable homes but an estimated 700 jobs into the bargain.



ETF Convenors' Report

I can't believe how quickly this year has flown in. It has been a very busy, but also a very productive year for Edinburgh Tenants Federation.

Let me first start by welcoming our student Euan Maclachlan to ETF. Euan is a 4th year Community Education student at Edinburgh University and has been on placement with the Federation since the beginning of October and will be here until March. We are enjoying working with Euan.

I, along with our Vice Convenor Maureen Jarvis, recently met John Bury who is the Acting Director of Services for Communities for the Council. It was a very productive meeting and John is keen to meet with ETF on a regular basis to ensure there is continued dialogue and to listen to tenants' issues.

I was part of an ETF study visit to Dundee to see their district heating project. It was a very worthwhile trip and there was plenty of information sharing between both parties from Edinburgh and Dundee. We hope to take senior Council staff to Dundee in the near future so they can see for themselves how the district heating system works. You can read more about the Dundee study visit elsewhere in Tenants Voice.

The recent Independence Referendum in September was a hugely exciting time for the people of Scotland with a record turnout casting their votes. It is very important that all the political parties work together as part of the Smith Commission and ETF has submitted a paper to the Commission. We would hope that housing will be high on the agenda of all political parties.

As you will read elsewhere in Tenants Voice, ETF asks for its membership support for its proposal to seek a rent freeze in the year 2015/16 for all City of Edinburgh Council homes. This is a highly important issue for tenants and we do hope you will support ETF on this matter.

We are very proud of the commitment our volunteers have shown in improving housing services. However we need to build on getting our members more involved and encourage other people to join with us so we can make tenants' influence even stronger.

Finally on behalf of all at ETF, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and all the best for 2015.

Betty Stevenson
Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants Federation



Christmas Jokes

What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney? *Claustrophobia!*

What do they sing at a snowman's birthday party? *Freeze a jolly good fellow*

Knock, knock *Who's there?* Arthur *Arthur who?* Arthur any mince pies left?

What do vampires sing on New Year's Eve? *Auld Fang Syne*

What happened to the man who stole an Advent Calendar? *He got 25 days!*

Why are Christmas trees so bad at sewing? *They always drop their needles!*



ETF Christmas Wordsearch

Why not try out this fun Christmas wordsearch? Just cut out your completed wordsearch and send it to the Federation office by Monday 5th January 2015 for the chance to win a mystery prize!

H	U	E	B	C	K	S	B	T	C	Q	W
H	D	C	H	E	A	B	R	A	R	K	U
O	R	H	L	S	L	E	I	G	H	E	C
L	O	R	W	Z	S	A	N	T	A	P	E
L	I	I	R	O	K	W	U	F	R	Z	M
Y	B	S	E	R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R
S	M	T	A	I	Y	Z	W	F	I	F	M
M	T	M	T	Y	P	A	F	Z	T	C	E
R	R	A	H	N	T	S	K	L	J	A	R
N	H	S	R	Q	C	A	R	O	L	A	R
V	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	I	Y	Y
B	O	P	U	D	D	I	N	G	Y	M	D

CAROL

MERRY

REINDEER

STAR

CHRISTMAS

PRESENTS

SANTA

TREE

HOLLY

PUDDING

SLEIGH

WREATH

Your Name:

Your Contact Details:

.....



Dates for your diary

The Federation Office closes on Friday 19th December 2014 at 12.00pm for the Christmas and New Year holidays. We reopen on Monday 5th January 2015 at 9.00am. We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and all the best for 2015.

ETF Registered Social Landlord Meeting

Saturday 17th January 2015, 11am-1pm, Southside Community Centre

Council Tenants' Conference, 'Fair Rents?'

Saturday 24th January 2015, 9.30am-1pm, Norton Park Conference Centre

ETF High Flats Safetalk Training

Monday 9th February 2015, 7pm, Birnies Court, Muirhouse View

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 for more information.

Thoughtful Quote

'Security is mostly a superstition...Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.'

Helen Keller

Copy Deadline



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

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Monday 19th January 2015



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Tel: 0131 475 2509 Email: info@edinburghtenants.org.uk

Print and Design by Graphic Impressions, Unit 27/2 Hardengreen Industrial Estate, Eskbank, Dalkeith EH22 3NX
Tel: 0131 654 0521 Fax: 0131 454 0301 Email: graphicimpressions@btconnect.com

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

