

## Weslo staff away day - listening to staff

After a very enjoyable lunch, Mike Bruce, Chief Executive (pictured right) congratulated staff on their collective achievement in meeting operational targets over the past 12 months. These will be reported fully in the forthcoming Annual Report. He went on to outline the objective and aims of the day and to introduce Mike Beniston of Abacus Caledonia Ltd who reported the findings of the survey.

Mike reported that, in his experience, the results were exemplary. The findings concluded that:-

- 85% of staff agreed with the comments made in the questionnaires.
- 86% of staff are happy to work for Weslo.
- 85% of staff are satisfied with their Managers.
- 85% of staff feel valued as employees.
- 87% of staff feel that their work is valued.
- 89% of staff feel that Weslo is a family friendly organisation that enables staff to balance their work and home life.



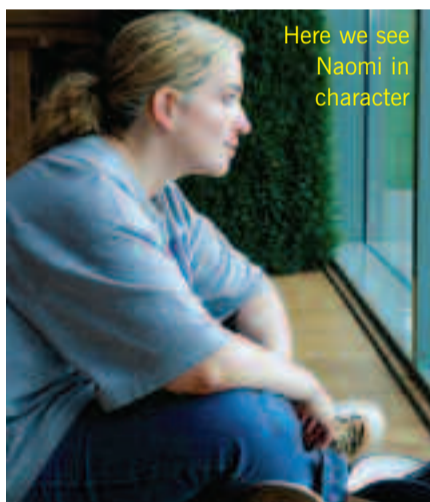
Above: Mike Beniston presents his findings to the staff

While the overall findings were positive, there were a number of slightly less so in comparison regarding the communication of organisational goals and objectives, staff motivation and staff involvement in business planning. In order to discuss how these might be better addressed staff split into groups. The suggestions proposed during these sessions were collated and later fed back to the audience; these will be considered further in due course by Weslo's Management Team.



Mike Crozier, Operations Director facilitating the discussions at one of the work groups

*It is not often that all Weslo staff have the opportunity to come together under the same roof but on May 28th that is exactly what happened when everyone met at The Vu in Bathgate to hear the results of a Staff Attitude Survey that had recently been conducted by Abacus Caledonia Ltd.*



Here we see Naomi in character

Local performer Naomi Breeze of professional touring theatre company, Breeze Productions, went onto produce a dramatic and moving performance of her production 'H is 4', a short play investigating issues around teenage homelessness and the emotions involved in seeking appropriate help and support. It is a very dramatic portrayal of one young woman's route into and out of homelessness.

Naomi trained at The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and is a member of British Actors Equity. She has produced a number of plays drawing on real life experiences of people; her subjects include children growing up in the care system, violence against women and anti social behaviour. She tours with these plays to highlight some of the stigma that exists in society and to raise awareness amongst professionals and the public. She often works with educators throughout Scotland, going into schools and talking to children.

Elaine Batty, Finance Manager had this to say about the presentation. "H is 4' was brilliant! It got the message across about different circumstances of homelessness. It is interesting that Naomi takes this play into schools - it is very hard hitting and I'm sure that some children will benefit from hearing about the reality of homelessness."

Maureen Vidler, only recently joined Weslo, said, "In the past I have not given much thought as to how people become homeless but this play makes you think about it. It was outstanding and really emotional to watch".

The day was brought to a close by an inspirational and characteristically witty presentation by Jim Leishman MBE. Jim is well



Mike Bruce  
Chief Executive  
addressing staff.

known as a former professional footballer and current Director of Football at Dunfermline FC. He has been a successful manager with a number of clubs including Inverness Thistle and more locally Livingston FC. He has built himself a reputation as an inspirational business speaker, delivering his motivational and team building programme with a unique blend of great sporting stories, hilarious jokes and of course his poems.

Staff were engrossed during his 45 minute presentation, where he told of how he managed to pick himself up on many occasions during his football career; on one occasion his playing career ended after he broke his leg and he had to forge a new career in coaching and management. He told how he constantly works hard to develop a culture of teambuilding based on honesty and trust.

As Jim quite rightly says we all have to "Remember that everyone has talent and we have work together to achieve more".



Teamwork is a formula for success and above we see that Kate Hedges might have a future as a top goalscorer when ably assisted by Alison Dunsmore and John Rankine!

Gillian McAllister, Senior Housing Officer said, "The day was thought provoking and it was really interesting to hear different perspectives on team building and homelessness. Both are topics I have to deal with on a daily basis at work".

Gavin Wolfe, Assistant Technical Manager said, "This is the first Away Day I have attended since joining Weslo in 2008 and I found it to be a well organised, well presented, positive experience. It was good to see everyone getting together to discuss common issues and I am looking forward to getting the feedback from management, in due course, on the many suggestions put forward".

In February, Weslo's Board approved the **Planned Maintenance Programme for 2009/2010**. Once again the work being instructed this year will focus primarily on ensuring that we meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015.

In broad terms, to meet the SHQS, a house must be:

- free from serious disrepair such as major roof, dampness or structural problems,
- energy efficient so it must have effective insulation and central heating,
- provided with kitchen and bathroom fittings that are in a good and safe condition,
- safe and secure, for example it must have a smoke detector, secure doors and safe electrical and gas systems.

In order to meet the Energy Efficiency criteria detailed in the SHQS, we will be installing replacement high efficiency gas boilers and upgrading the heating systems to 114 homes where the existing systems are obsolete or no longer operating efficiently. These homes are located in Armadale, Addiewell, Addiebrownhill, Bathgate, Blackburn, Broxburn, Fauldhouse, Kirknewton, Stoneyburn, Whitburn and Uphall.

Homes lose heat through external doors. In recent years we have installed UPVC composite doors to the majority of our properties; this has increased the energy efficiency of the properties and made them more secure. This year we identified 68 properties in Armadale, Bathgate, Broxburn, Stoneyburn and West Calder where we will be installing double glazed UPVC composite doors in the coming months. Those tenants affected have been contacted and given the opportunity to choose the style of door they want installed.

Weslo operates a cycle of planned maintenance painter work to ensure that the component parts of properties such as clothes poles, handrails, gates, bin stores and gutters are preserved. This serves to extend the life of each component, keeping it free from serious disrepair. During this coming year we will be undertaking external painter work in Grahamsdyke estate in Bo'ness, Belvedere in Bathgate, Blackburn and Kirkhill in Broxburn. As part of this contract we will also be:

- Cleaning the gutters and applying external preservative to the timber properties in Newtown, Bo'ness.
- Replacing existing cast iron gutters and down pipes in Belvedere, Bathgate with UPVC.
- Cleaning and undertaking minor repairs to gutters and down pipes in Addiewell, Addiebrownhill, East Calder, Whiteside (Bathgate), Kirknewton and Mid Calder.

In order to keep properties free from serious disrepair we will be renewing lead flashings, where identified, in the corner block flats in Murraysgate, Whitburn and undertaking some internal rewiring. In addition, we will also be repairing some unadopted footpaths in many of our estates to ensure that they are safe for pedestrian use.

The total cost of the work this year is around £1m.

If your home is included in any of the work detailed above, you will already have received a letter advising you of the work. If you would like to comment on this year's programme, please write to Margaret Walker, Admin Officer, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate EH48 4PP.

David McLaren, Ann Marie Carr and Tony Paterson.



**Since September 2007 Weslo, West Lothian Council and Almond Housing Association, the three largest providers of social rented housing in West Lothian, have been working together as partners of The West Lothian Housing Register. This is a list of all those applying for housing with the partner landlords. Applicants only need to complete one housing application form which allows them to register with any of or all the three landlords.**

David McLaren, Weslo's Housing Manager said, "I am pleased at the progress made so far by the partners to bring about The West Lothian Housing Register; a project that could only have been achieved through joint working. I am confident that a principal aim of the partnership in allowing applicants a single route to apply for housing has been achieved.

The other partners are also happy with the progress so far.

Tony Paterson, Head of Housing Management, at Almond Housing Association had the following to say about progress to date. "As a founder member of the Register, Almond Housing Association is delighted with the early performance of this new initiative. The fact that local people can now access the three leading housing providers by completing a single form is great news for those looking for quality rented homes in West Lothian. The ability of each landlord still to operate their own allocation policy means that there is a greater opportunity and choice for applicants. It is hoped that other housing providers in West Lothian will join the Register and extend that choice to more applicants."

Ann Marie Carr, Customer Services Manager (Housing Need) at West Lothian Council said, "The West Lothian Housing Register has made significant progress in its first year and this could not have been possible without the joint working relationship of all 3 partners. I am very pleased that the introduction of a single application has helped promote choice and increase access to other housing providers. I look forward to continuing this partnership approach and further improve housing options for applicants in West Lothian."

All partner landlords are hopeful that other social registered landlords in West Lothian will be invited to join the register. This would streamline the application process for those seeking housing in West Lothian.

If you wish to apply for housing in West Lothian please contact our Bathgate Office on 01506 634060 and ask to speak to a Housing Officer or check out our website at [www.weslo-housing.org](http://www.weslo-housing.org) where you can download an application form.



## Staff uniform gets updated

As part of Weslo's 10th Anniversary in 2004 we introduced a new staff uniform. This has recently been revised to include an updated choice of jackets, trousers and skirts along with a much wider range of blouses and shirts – all of which are supplied by Slaters Menswear in Glasgow.

I am sure you will agree that the staff, seen left, look very professional in the new range of clothing.

# WESLO INVESTS IN NEW HOUSES IN FALKIRK

**Weslo has taken advantage of additional Scottish Government funding to buy 5 two bedroom apartments at Thornbridge Court in Falkirk.**

The Scottish Government has increased the affordable housing budget in an effort to ease the challenges facing the house building industry and increase the supply of affordable housing in Scotland. The purchase was made possible with a combination of Weslo's own investment and grant assistance

Mike Crozier, Operations Director said, "We have been aware for some time that Housing Developers have been experiencing difficulties with the downturn in house sales in the current economic climate. In recent months we have been exploring, with a number of developers, how we might be able to work together. In this instance we have been working closely with McKernan Homes and are delighted to be able to provide additional much needed affordable rented properties in Falkirk. We are confident that we will be able to add to these in the coming months."

Mike, Carol and Andrew in the kitchen of their new home.



The properties, which will be managed by our staff in Bo'ness, were recently allocated to applicants who were nominated by Falkirk Council. Andrew Nimmo and his partner Carol Byrne were the first tenants to be signed up. Andrew said, "Prior to getting this tenancy we were in privately rented accommodation. And since getting the keys we have been busy shopping for furnishings. We have been pleasantly surprised at the size of the rooms in the property and with 2 women in the house, having 2 bathrooms is going to be great!"

## Are you entitled to help with your rent? Getting the benefit - Keeping it right

**Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit are national welfare benefits which are administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).**

Housing benefit helps people on low incomes with their rent while Council Tax Benefit helps people on low incomes to pay their Council Tax. There are a number of ways that you can make a claim for housing benefit.

- If you are 60 or over and are making a claim for Pension Credit from the Pension Service, you can make your claim for housing benefit at the same time. The Pension Service will take all your details and pass them to the council as a claim for housing benefit. The council's Benefit Team may have to contact you for further information. If you need further information or help with claiming Pension Credits you should contact the Pension Service direct on their helpline: 0845 60 60 265.
- If you are not a Pensioner and are making a new claim for Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, or Employment Seekers Allowance (Incapacity Benefit) to JobCentre Plus you can also claim housing benefit at the same time. JobCentre Plus will gather information and evidence for your housing benefit claim and will send it direct to the council's Benefit Team. The council may have to contact you to gather further evidence and details of your tenancy. The phone number for this service is: 0845 600 4250
- If you do not fall into either of the above categories then you should make your claim direct to the council using a housing benefit claim form.

The council will need to see proof of your identity, proof of all your income, your savings and your national insurance number. You will be asked for detailed information and original documents (like payslips, benefit book, pension slip etc) which they will check and return to you.

These are the types of documents the council will need to see:

- Bank statements (all accounts)
- Self employed accounts
- Investments or shares
- Pension Credits award letter
- Non dependant income or earnings
- Working Tax Credit award letter
- Details of any property owned
- Child Tax Credit award letter
- Wage Slips
- Savings
- Private Pensions
- State Benefits
- Maintenance Payments

If you are in receipt of housing benefit and your circumstances change in any way, you must tell the Benefits Team at the council in writing straight away. Your benefit award has been worked out on the information you gave on your last claim form. If your circumstances have changed since then, your benefit award might be wrong.

Some of the main changes you must tell them about are:

- Changes in your earnings or other income
- Changes to your Pension credits
- The amount or type of Benefit you get changes
- Someone else moves into your home
- Family members stop living with you
- Your non-dependant's income goes up or down
- Changes in your savings
- Changes to your Tax credits
- Someone in your house starts or stops working
- Someone leaves your home
- Your family increases

This list is not exhaustive. If you have a change of circumstances and you are unsure if you need to tell the council, then contact your local Council Information Office (CIS) or One Stop Shop to discuss it.

You don't have to be unemployed or retired to claim - anyone on a low income can claim. You can pick up a claim form from Weslo or any CIS Office or One Stop Shop. If you need help with your housing benefit claim, are experiencing financial difficulties or would like more information on housing benefit, you should contact your housing officer who will be able to advise you of any entitlement you may have.

**We have a West Lothian Council Revenues Officer available in our Bathgate Office each day. No appointment is necessary if you want to call in person, or you can phone 01506 634060 and you will be put through or alternatively you can speak to your housing officer.**

**In Bo'ness you can contact the Falkirk Council One Stop Shop at 24 East Pier Street in person or by telephoning them on 01506 778778.**

# Bathgate Office Refurbishment

As many of you may know, our office accommodation at North Bridge Street, Bathgate was extended in 2008 to create a new Boardroom, training room and toilets. The building was originally part of a well known local traders shop premises that were converted to offices in 1984 and have not altered much since Weslo opened here in 1994. The Board recently approved plans to upgrade the office accommodation to include new staff room/kitchen and toilet facilities, improved lighting, ventilation, heating and storage.

The work is likely to commence late summer and take approximately 12 weeks. This will invariably cause some inconvenience to staff and to those of you who call at the reception area. We will do our best to ensure that disruption to our services is kept to a minimum during the course of the work being carried out.

Below is the Architects impression of the new office layout. We are confident that this will make the building work better and achieve a standard of accommodation that reflects our commitment to our staff.

Figure 1 New Reception and Finance Office

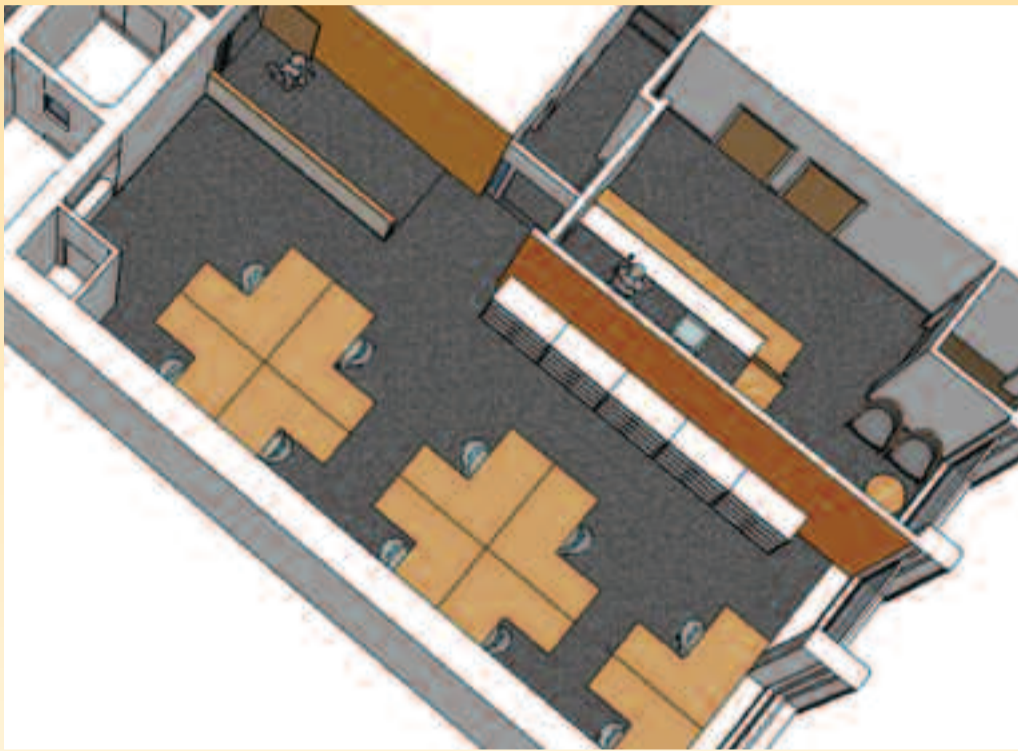


Figure 2 New Estates Department and Housing Managers Office

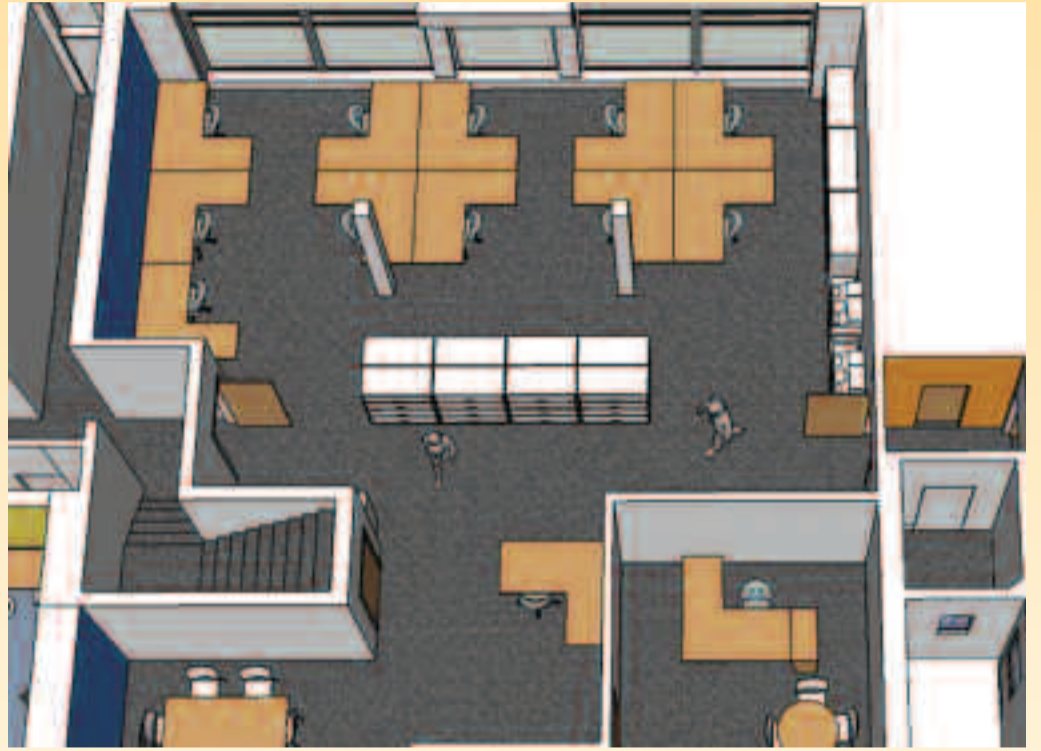
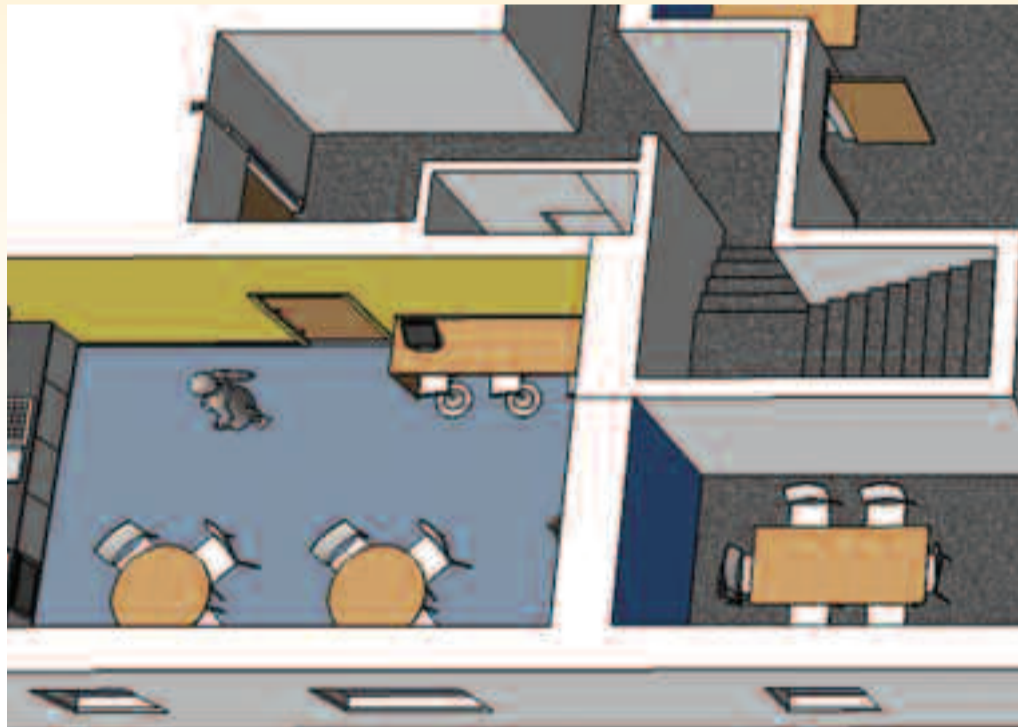


Figure 3 New access to modernised Staff/ Kitchen



## New look, same great service

Allpay have recently unveiled a new company branding which has been created to give allpay a fresh modern look which will be phased in over the next few months. Watch out for it on correspondence if you pay your rent by direct debit or by payment card.



They have also changed their phone numbers making calls cheaper for you. If you use allpay's automated telephone payment service the new number to call is 0844 557 8321

Remember you can also make a payment on-line at [www.allpay.net](http://www.allpay.net) or use your payment card at any Post Office or PayPoint outlet. You can even make payments by text.

For further information on any of the above, or other payment options, please contact your Housing Officer.

## Scottish Secure Tenancy Update – over 68% complete

Since Weslo became a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) in 2007, all new tenants have signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (SST). If you were already a Weslo tenant at that time your assured tenancy automatically converted to a SST. Staff have been working hard contacting tenants and arranging for new tenancy agreements to be signed but there is still some way to go.

The exercise has taken longer than originally anticipated and may not be completed until 2010 - Bo'ness is complete but there are still 681 households in West Lothian to sign new agreements.

Don't worry if you have not yet signed your tenancy agreement; your rights are protected under legislation. We will be in touch soon inviting you to the office where we will explain your new rights, including Right to Repair, Alterations and Improvements and Right to Buy, before signing your new Tenancy Agreement.

If you are coming into the office for any other reason, why not give us a ring in advance and we can arrange to have the paperwork completed at the same time - it only takes a few minutes.

# New Director joins Weslo Board

**Margaret McIntyre joined the Weslo Board in February as a Community Representative. We asked Margaret to tell us a little bit about herself and her interest in housing.**

Shortly after graduating with an honours degree in geography from Aberdeen University I applied for a job with Edinburgh Council housing department. I wanted a job where I hoped that I could make a positive difference to people's lives and the post sounded interesting. It proved to be both interesting and challenging and it wasn't long before I decided on a career in housing.

Since working with the council I have worked with a number of housing associations including Link, Edinvar and Methodist Homes. I also had a career break to raise my family. I continued my studies, as a mature student, on the 2 year post graduate diploma housing course at Heriot-Watt University, graduating in 2000 – where I was pleased to note that I wasn't the oldest student on the course! This led on to membership of the Chartered Institute of Housing in 2003.

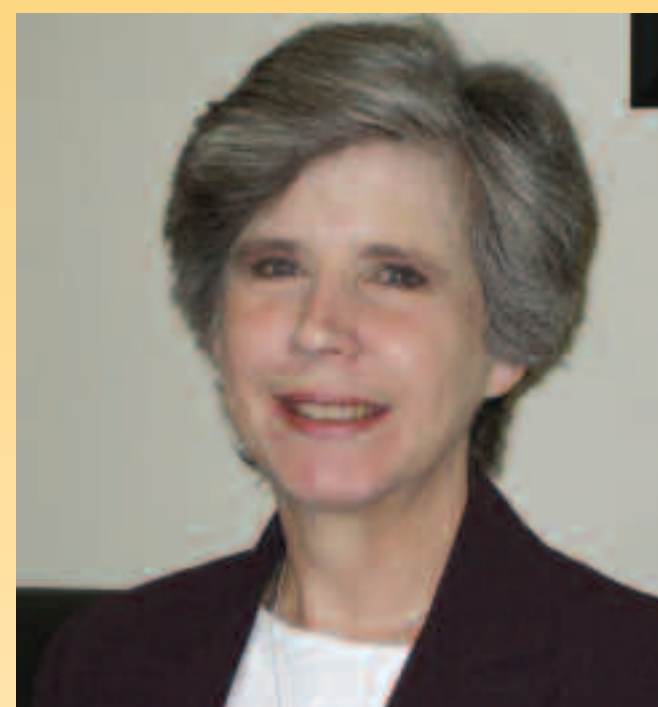
By the time I went back to university I had developed a strong interest in special needs housing and after completing the course I took up a position with Alzheimer Scotland Action on Dementia as Housing Development Officer. As part of a partnership which included City of Glasgow Council Social Work Department and Cube Housing Association I was instrumental in developing a model of supported housing for people with dementia as an alternative to care home provision. Currently I work for Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association at their head office in Edinburgh as a Housing Services Manager.

Margaret considers that her main areas of expertise lie in housing management, the development of policies and procedures (well someone has to do it!) and housing for people with special needs, particularly older people and people with dementia. She was initially attracted to Weslo because of its unique business model. The organisation has a 'can do' enthusiastic approach with the needs of its tenants at the centre of its activities and Margaret feels that her skills will be useful to Weslo.

Margaret enjoys being involved in her local community and is an active member of her local church. She likes to try to keep fit, but doesn't always succeed. She swims and goes to the gym whenever time allows, is a keen skier and a member of Bathgate Ski Club and has recently taken up dingy sailing,

## Board Induction Training

Margaret had no sooner joined the Board when she was asked to take part in an induction training programme along with Tenant Directors Andrew Sneddon, Eileen Stirling and Janette Wallace along with Executive Assistant Kate Hedges. The training was delivered by Lynne Carr of Lynne Carr Consulting Ltd. who delivered a similar



training programme for Board members in 2007. Lynne who has a wide range of expertise gained from over 25 years working in the social housing sector is providing training on a variety of topics including “The Role of the Housing Regulator”, “Responsibilities of a Director” and “What it means to be a Registered Social Landlord”.

Kate, pictured left, who joined Weslo in December 2007 as Executive Assistant, provides support at a senior level to Weslo's Chief Executive, Finance Director and

Operations Director. She is also responsible for providing full secretarial and admin support for the Board. We asked her to tell us what she thought of the training: “It was interesting to learn just how much responsibility Board members have to the company and the legal requirements they have to fulfil in order to achieve good governance. I deal with a lot of documentation when a new Board member joins us and it was useful to see just where it fits in with fulfilling regulatory requirements.”



## A dedicated service for the over 60s

**Weslo is pleased to be working in partnership with The Older Persons' Advice Project (OPAP). This is an initiative, managed by Linkwide, a subsidiary of Link Housing Association, which aims to provide money advice for tenants aged 60 and over.**



The confidential service provided by OPAP is free of charge and has three main aims:

- To ensure that older tenants are receiving all benefits and tax credits which they are entitled to.
- To provide advice, information and if necessary, a referral to other agencies in the local area.
- To gather information on older peoples' specific needs and issues through a questionnaire.

Between its introduction in July 2008 and the end of May, 52 tenants have responded to the offer to participate in the project and £93,880.06 unclaimed benefit identified

Collectively, the project has secured:

Attendance Allowance	£26,600.80
Severe Disability Premium	£9,113.35
Housing Benefits	£11,801.78
Council Tax	£2,609.50
Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	£8,722.50
Guarantee-Pension Credit	£26,166.34
Savings-Pension Credit	£871.52

This is a phenomenal achievement by OPAP advisors which has greatly improved the quality of life of many Weslo tenants.

As the scheme is confidential we do not know who responds or the outcome of their review. We only get advised of the number of responses and the financial benefits. Tenants benefit in many different ways and OPAP produce an anonymous case study report. Examples include the success of one elderly couple who received £12,000 in backdated lump sums and annualised awards due to Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance awards and an increase in Guaranteed Pension Credit. Another claimant was concerned about her high fuel costs. After investigation, OPAP's Welfare Rights Officer contacted British Gas who reset the meter to their Social tariff – saving the householder money right away.

If you hear from OPAP, please take the time to respond and meet with them even if you do not think they can help. You have nothing to lose and you may have much to gain. The team of advisors who are the point of contact for you are Ruth McIntosh, Audrey Anderson and Gail McKenzie.

If you would like more information on OPAP, contact Gillian McAllister, Senior Housing Officer, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP. Telephone 01506 639146

# Staff profile

**Name:** Christine Wood

**Job title:** Admin Assistant

**Department:**

**Estates Department**

**How long have you worked at Weslo?**

I initially joined Scottish Special Housing Association in 1987 as a Receptionist/Typist and transferred to Weslo on completion of the stock transfer in February 1994.



Christine working hard at her desk

**What does your job involve?**

I continued working as Receptionist / Typist in the Bathgate office until 2006 when, following a reorganisation, I was seconded to the Estates Department. Initially I was involved in ensuring that all the filing, typing and reports were up to date. Once the backlog was cleared, I was able to deal with the daily work generated within the department and take over the administration of the Medical Adaptations and the Direct Debit systems. Having additional admin support has meant that the Housing Officers and the Housing Support Officers can spend more time managing the estates and dealing with tenant issues delivering a cohesive service.

**What is your favourite part of your job?**

It's great when we are able to provide medical adaptations to a property which enables tenants and their families cope with a disability or incapacity in their home and improve their quality of life. However, overall the whole job can be challenging but very rewarding.

**And the least favourite?**

The annual updating of the Direct Debits, when the rents are reviewed, is a laborious but necessary task. However, my least favourite job has to be filing. As part of the upcoming office refurbishments though, Weslo is looking at introducing an electronic storage system. This will mean that we will not have to file as much paperwork and the information will be more secure.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

While my sons were growing up we lived in a flat with a small garden which was generally used as a playground with footballs and rugby balls regularly flying all over the place. I had no inclination to spend too much time looking after the garden except to keep the grass and hedges trimmed. Since moving in the 1990's to a house with a large garden, I have learned a lot about plants and how to love gardening which I find very relaxing. It is good exercise and allows me to spend time outdoors when the weather is good. On the weekends that we can't get into the garden my husband and I can often be found visiting garden centres. I also enjoy reading novels - especially anything with a good fast moving story line.

I like to get away every now and again. In the past we have holidayed abroad but in recent years we have stayed in the UK, visiting places such as Orkney, Mull, Yorkshire and Cornwall. We often take the scenery in our own country for granted yet one of the most memorable trips I have experienced was a day out on the Jacobite Steam Train from Fort William to Mallaig. It was a fantastic trip past Britain's highest mountain, deepest loch, shortest river and most westerly railway station. Quite a journey indeed! It even stopped at Glenfinnan where the viaduct featured in the Harry Potter films can be found.



## Exchange of Views

During the last 4 weeks Gosia Figurska has been shadowing staff in the Bathgate office as part of a Student Placement Programme.

As a current Weslo tenant she has been interested in seeing how the business operates but more importantly she has found it interesting working in an office environment in Scotland. Gosia and her two children came to Scotland from Poland in May 2005 to join her husband Tomasz who had already found employment and accommodation here. Before moving to Scotland Tomasz had his own distribution company and Gosia provided admin and accountancy support for the business. Unfortunately, the difficult economic climate in Poland meant that there was not enough work and the business closed. Gosia is interested in finding work in the financial sector and over the past two years she has been attending Stevenson College where she has been studying English for Work and Training to improve her language skills and Computer Literacy. In September she will start a course in Agency Accountancy.

## Making the right decisions in Weslo

*Weslo is committed to its tenants and wants to ensure that tenants receive the best service possible. In order to do this Weslo believes that tenant participation and involvement is vital in delivering responsive, efficient and effective services which can lead to individuals valuing their communities and the environment where they live.*

*Since our inception Weslo has regularly sought the opinion of tenants through tenant surveys and through the Tenant Participation Committee. The committee is made up of tenant directors, tenants and staff and meets 4 times a year to discuss proposed changes to services and seek their view on future plans.*

*Recently, two committee members retired from the Tenant Participation Committee and we would like to take this opportunity thank Margaret Colquhoun and Margaret Paterson for their contribution to the committee. Weslo is keen to listen to a wide range of opinions and are therefore seeking to recruit new members to the committee. If you are interested in expressing your opinion about the services you receive from Weslo in an informal, relaxed atmosphere, we would like to invite you to come along to the next committee meeting to see how the committee works and hopefully you will want to join.*

*If you are interested in becoming involved in the Tenant Participation Committee please write to David McLaren, Housing Manager at 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate or e-mail him on david.mclaren@weslohm.co.uk or phone him on 01506 639120.*

*We also maintain an electronic focus group. This is a list of tenants who have provided their e-mail addresses to Weslo; this enables us to contact these tenants direct to seek their views on proposed changes. If you have a new e-mail address, or have recently changed your e-mail address, please e-mail your details to enquiries@weslohm.co.uk or contact your Housing Officer who will arrange to update your details.*

## Have you visited our new website?

*Did you know that, amongst many other facilities, you can now pay your rent and report repairs on line? Our website address is*

*[www.weslo-housing.org.uk](http://www.weslo-housing.org.uk)*

*We want to give our tenants the best service possible and feedback from you is very important if we are to get better at what we do. If you have already used it we would appreciate your comments – positive or negative. Please don't be shy – just click on the contact page and tell us what you think. You can also contact Kevin Cairns on 01506 639157 or write to him at 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, West Lothian, EH48 4PP.*

# Weslo helps Gary "Get Ready for Work"

**Get Ready for Work provides skills training and work placements for people aged 16 – 19 who may need additional support after leaving school to get into training, learning and jobs. By taking part in a work based placement they learn: what it is to be a conscientious member of the work force, team work, employability skills, transferable skills, timekeeping, reliability and responsibility. The idea is that by learning new skills trainees gain self confidence; this helps them focus on what they want to do and move on to further training, learning or into work.**

Sixteen year old Gary Mitchell started his placement under this scheme with Weslo in February. He showed great promise and enthusiasm as a trainee and fitted in well with the tradesmen that we were keen to explore whether we could offer him an apprenticeship. After negotiations with the Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT) Weslo were able to take him on. But, how did this all come about?

Gary told us that he left school at Christmas to pursue an electrical apprenticeship but soon found out that there were no apprenticeships available. Careers Scotland was able to get a training position with Sibbald Training in Armadale who in turn secured the placement with Weslo. Gary said, "I was with Brian Angell (one of Weslo's electricians) on a day to day basis for 3 months working in occupied and empty houses and he taught me so much. This experience made me more determined to train as an electrician".

Brian said, "Gary was such an enthusiastic trainee, keen to learn and to do a good job. He had recently passed the Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT) admissions exam for training apprentices but at that time Weslo was unable to offer him an apprenticeship. It looked as if he was going to have to try to get an apprenticeship with an electrical contractor. I am glad that we were able to get things sorted out and am confident that Gary will prove to be an asset to the company."



**Above, we see Gary checking out an electrical socket.**

Sibbald Training Ltd of Armadale works in partnership with Skills Development Scotland (West Lothian) to support and guide young people taking part in the "Get Ready for Work" Programme. Joe Gibson of Sibbald Training Ltd said, "Gary was one of our first trainees to come through in the Get Ready for Work programme here at Sibbald Training Ltd. He has been an excellent trainee and has initiative and potential to have a bright future ahead of him. "

Mike Mitchell (no relation), Weslo's Technical Manager said, "We were very happy to participate in the Get Ready for Work programme and give a local school leaver an opportunity to gain work experience to help them move towards full time employment. In Gary we have found a truly keen young man who has worked hard since commencing with Weslo and who has demonstrated a willingness to learn and move forward. He has also shown that there are some very bright young people leaving school who deserve a little help to start their working career."

**If you know of any young person who would like take part in the Get Ready for Work Programme then contact Careers Scotland (0845 8 502 502) for details. An adviser will discuss their goals and offer information on local training opportunities. The adviser will also make sure that Get Ready for Work is the right programme for the trainee.**

## Weslo Staff Changes



Following Margot Tait's semi-retirement in September 2008, we required a part time Cashier/Receptionist in the Bathgate Office. Evelyn Hope, who joined us in December, is delighted at having the opportunity to work part time hours as this allows her to balance a busy home life looking after her 3 children.

Evelyn enjoys dealing with the public and previously worked in a number of Post Offices within West Lothian.

In January, we saw the retirement of 2 long standing Weslo members of staff – Tom Walker and Sam Duffy.

Tom joined Weslo as Works Foreman in 1994 when we introduced our repairs and maintenance staff. He had previously operated his own joinery business for 27 years and brought a wealth of experience to the job. During his time with Weslo he oversaw many changes including the construction of the office accommodation and storage unit at our Glasgow Road yard, an increase in the workforce from the original 3 tradesmen to the current 18 and the introduction of a computerised stock control system. Tom is not packing up the tools - with a new grandchild on the way his daughter is going to be making good use of his services - building a new extension to her home.

Sam Duffy joined Weslo in 1999 as a Technical Officer after many years working as a Manager with SSHA Building Department. Sam was also a time served joiner whose job involved carrying out inspections to establish what work was needed and post inspecting work that had been done to make sure that the work met both his and, equally important, the tenants' expectations. Before retiring Sam was not really sure how he would fill his days but we hear that his wife Anne has been keeping him occupied with doing jobs around the house and helping with the grandchildren. He is hoping that he will be able to make time to get some bowling in during the summer months.



Above we see Sam (left) and Tom (right) during their retirement presentation. We would like to thank Tom and Sam for their contributions to the company and wish them both a long and happy retirement.

Lisa Marie Tocher recently left her job as part time Finance Assistant in the Bathgate office and in April Maureen Vidler took over the vacant post. Maureen, who lives locally, has previously worked in various finance and office admin posts. In her spare time she enjoys walking and spending time with her family - she has a son and daughter and one grandchild. She also enjoys holidaying abroad whenever she can and last year she and her family travelled to Beijing in China to support her future daughter in law, Michelle Rodgers, who was part of the Team GB Judo squad. As yet she has no holiday plans for this summer as she is busy preparing for her son's forthcoming wedding and the birth of her second grandchild.



Vicky McIluff, Receptionist in the Bathgate Office recently started a period of maternity leave and is excitedly awaiting the delivery of her baby which is due in mid July. Linda Gibson has joined Weslo to cover Vicky's job while she is on maternity leave. Linda lives locally with her husband and four sons. In the past she has worked with children and young adults with autism and learning



difficulties and more recently worked as an administrator in an Estate Agency. Linda has had a keen interest over the years in Bathgate's annual John Newland Day celebrations; her family taking part in the annual procession and last year her youngest son Luke was Captain of the Guard. In her spare time Linda enjoys flower arranging, playing piano and accordion. She has even found time to train for the Annual Moon Walk taking place in Edinburgh on 20 June. We wish her luck in this 26.2 mile power walk. And her aim to raise money for vital breast cancer causes.

# ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE

We are delighted to continue our support of the Meerkat enclosure at the Five Sisters Zoo Park in Polbeth. The zoo has been open for five years and has a wide variety of mammals, birds and reptiles from all over the world on show. So why not take the kids to visit the Meerkats, it's sure to be a fun and educational day out.



Above we see Brian Curran, the zoo owner, presenting Pamela Menzies and Jacqueline Ferguson of Weslo with a sponsorship certificate; all being watched by a few of the Meerkats themselves.

We have also negotiated a deal with Five Sisters Zoo where you can take 1 child free with a full paying adult if you take along the voucher printed below.



We have also continued to sponsor a show entitled "In Conversation" that airs each Thursday at 10pm and Sunday at 3pm on Radio Grapevine; the hospital radio station serving St Johns Hospital in Livingston.

Radio Grapevine has recently been presented with two commended awards in two categories - Best Station Promotion and Specialist Music Show at the National Hospital Radio Awards 2009.



No one could have missed the press reports back in March when a team of celebrities successfully climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa and the highest free-standing mountain in the world, to raise money for Comic Relief. There was a bit less coverage when Scott Fleming of Armadale scaled the mountain the month before. He was part of a group raising funds for Scope, a disability organisation whose focus is people with cerebral palsy and Weslo had the privilege of sponsoring him.

As you can see from the photo on the right Scott got to the top and even had a Weslo flag with him - just to record the moment. He said, "The climb went well, only 7 out of 25 of us made it to the top though; thankfully I was one of them. I even managed



to get one picture on top with a Weslo flag but it was too cold and there was no air to hang around for long. With the support I had from everyone, including Weslo, I have everlasting memories of one of the most magical places on earth while raising £3200 for a worthwhile charity."

In addition to making donations through the Community budget, Weslo staff have chosen to support SiMBA (Simpson Memorial Box Appeal) as their chosen charity of the year.

SiMBA aims to support families affected by the loss of a baby during pregnancy or close to the time of birth and provides precious Memory Boxes to maternity units who wish to have them.

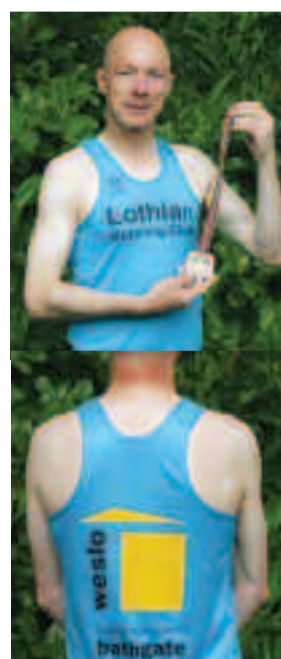
Staff are holding a series of monthly fundraisers over the coming year in support of SiMBA and since March have raised £134 from the sale of home baking and hot filled rolls. In addition to monthly events ten staff, accompanied by family and friends, took part in a sponsored walk around Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh on Sunday 24 May 2009. Fortunately it was a lovely day although a bit blustery at the top. Well done to the staff pictured below who raised £744.



We are also hoping to organise a staff family day at Beecraigs in September. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us and help us raise even more money for this worthy cause.

Other local groups to have benefited in recent months include Armadale Pre-school Play Group, Livingston Kuk Sool Won Club, BFC Linlithgow Athletic and Lothian Running Club.

Harry Mulholland, a gas engineer with Weslo and a member of the Lothian Running Club, took part in the 2009 Flora London Marathon. Harry, who was running in support of The Sick Kids Foundation, finished the event in 3hrs 27mins. He was a little disappointed in his time but is putting this down to having the cold. He was still happy to collect his finishers' medal. As you can see from Harry's vest in the photo right he was also representing Weslo during the event and his colleagues collected a fantastic £350 in sponsorship which Weslo matched from the Community Budget.



If you know of any group or worthy cause that might benefit from our assistance then please write to Weslo Housing Management, Community Budget Committee, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP with full details.

## REPAIRS SATISFACTION UPDATE

Between November and April our tradesmen and contractors responded to 3453 repairs and repair satisfaction cards were left with tenants asking for feedback. 410 completed cards were returned representing a return of 11.8%. We are happy to report that 99% of those tenants who took time to complete and return the survey forms are satisfied with the quality of the work carried out and the majority commented favourably on the service provided.

Where tenants express a negative view we will always follow up the matter to explore a satisfactory solution.

We are committed to providing the highest possible customer service. If you are not satisfied with any of the services we provide please let us know and give us the opportunity to put it right.

We would like to thank all of you who have returned repair satisfaction cards and to offer congratulations to Ms McFarlane of Bo'ness and Mrs Rankine of West Calder whose cards were drawn out of the hat and each received a £75 gift voucher. We would also like to thank Mrs Dempster of Whitburn for her letter of thanks after she received a £75 voucher in November 2008. She was so surprised at her good fortune she wrote in telling us about her unexpected shopping trip.

If you would like to be in the next draw in August, please make sure that you get a card from the tradesman when you have work carried out, fill it in and send it back – it couldn't be simpler! If you don't get a card then phone David Jordan on 01506 639128 and he will arrange for one to be sent to you.

### OUT OF HOURS REPAIR SERVICE

**GAS - ALL AREAS** 01506 630288  
**OTHER EMERGENCIES -**  
**WEST LOTHIAN** 01506 630288  
**BO'NESS** 01324 503050  
**GAS LEAKS/SMELL GAS** 0800 111 999

### Dates for your diary

The Bathgate and Bo'ness Offices will be closed on the following dates:-

Friday	18 September 2009 (Open A.M. only)
Monday	21 September 2009
Friday	25 December 2009
Monday	28 December 2009
Friday	1 January 2010
Monday	4 January 2010
Please note that our offices will close at 3pm on Thursday 24 and 31 December.	