



## CELEBRATIONS DRAW TO AN END

The 10th anniversary celebrations of the stock transfer in Bo'ness have ended. It has been a tremendous year celebrating our 10-year presence in Bo'ness with our tenants. Let Susan Anderson pick up the story.

by Alexandra Findlayson, the 2007 Bo'ness Fair Queen. A 10th Anniversary celebration cake was presented to Kirsty-Louise Livingstone and we understand that all the family enjoyed it.

Children in particular enjoyed their visits to the office in North Street during

Throughout the spring, we worked hard designing and building the float that appeared in the Bo'ness Children's Fair at the end of June. The day was great fun for all those involved helped on by the good weather.

We mingled with the enthusiastic crowds handing out sweets to the children and chatting to many tenants as they enjoyed the parade. The icing on the cake was winning second prize in the lightweight float category.

We also placed a bench in Glebe Park. We hoped that this would allow anyone using the park facilities to have a sit down - perhaps to catch up with friends or while supervising their



Above we see Mrs Dorothy Sneddon, Mrs Dorothy Lamie, Craig Bennie with son Brooklyn enjoying a quiet moment on the Weslo bench.

children. We were delighted to see that during the activities in the park on Fair Day the bench was used to rest many weary feet.

**We hope that you have enjoyed this year as much as we have and look forward to serving tenants in Bo'ness for many years to come. Is it too early to make a date for 2022?**

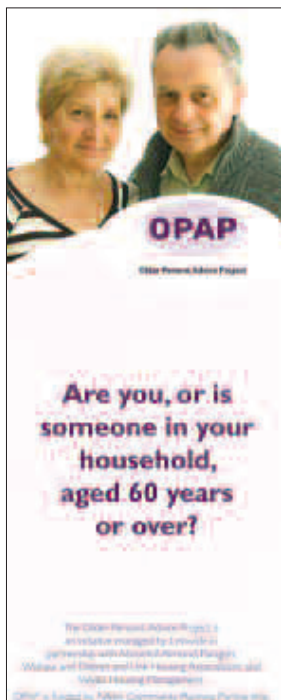


Above we see Fiona, Donna, Julie, Dorothy and Susan on Fair day.

The celebrations kicked off on 15 December 2007 with a prize draw where 10 lucky tenants, one for each year that Weslo has been operating in Bo'ness, were presented with a hamper

December and January where sweets and shortbread were on offer – however, we were less enthusiastic as we were feeling the excesses of Christmas and New Year.

## Benefit Advice for the over 60's



**In the summer edition of Tenant News we told you about the launch of the Older Persons Advice Project (OPAP) for Weslo tenants. Since then tenants, aged 60 and over, in Armadale, Bathgate, Livingston and Bo'ness have been given the opportunity to contact Linkwide who will carry out a free and independent benefit check. Where they identify an individual will qualify for other benefits, they will provide support to complete and submit any application forms.**

Progress to date has been slow; at the end of October they had dealt with 15 responses and identified unclaimed benefit entitlement amounting to £8,500. We would like the take up rate to increase and would encourage you to get in touch with Ruth or Audrey at OPAP if you get a letter. If you prefer, you can ask your Housing Officer to contact them on your behalf.

One recent success story involved a tenant from Bathgate who responded to the invitation to call OPAP and was surprised to find that he was entitled to claim backdated Housing Benefit. He was delighted to receive over £1,000 before Christmas.

Feedback from the service so far has been very positive;

**"Very good, with great follow up. The extra money has been fantastic"**

**"First class"**

**"Without the help and advice from OPAP I doubt we would have been successful in claiming our rebates"**

**"Excellent service, would recommend it to all pensioners"**

If you would like more information on this initiative, contact Gillian McAllister, Senior Housing Officer, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP – Tel 01506 639146

So as you can see it's entirely possible that the OPAP team will be able to help you. So, help them by responding to their letter.





As you may be aware, the Scottish Government set the Scottish Housing Quality Standard in 2004; this includes a list of minimum standards in relation to building structures, lighting, heating and energy efficiencies through double-glazing and insulation. The objective is that by 2015 all local authority and registered social landlord rented properties will meet these standards. Since then, we have prioritised our annual Planned Maintenance works to ensure that as many of our properties as possible comply with the standard – indeed, in a submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator, we were able to demonstrate that at the end of February 2008, 95% of all properties in Bo'ness and 96% in West Lothian met the standard.

We remain committed to meeting the Scottish Housing Quality standard for all our properties by 2015 and this year's investment of £1.5m is testament to this.

Adverse weather conditions hampered the £900,000 contract in Kirkton, Bathgate. The work which included re-roughcasting, renewal of roof coverings and renewal of fascia, gutters and downpipes was due to be completed in early December. The contractors, Forster Roofing and Mackie Robertson, engaged extra labour and are working to recover lost time. I am sure that all of you living in the area will agree that the delay has been worthwhile, both from the improved appearance of the properties and improved insulation and energy efficiency.

Over the summer months, we upgraded 109 central heating systems in homes throughout West Lothian. The contractor came across a problem in a few homes where tenants had installed laminate flooring without permission from Weslo. The flooring had to be uplifted to allow the contractor access to the pipework and some tenants were rather taken aback when the contractor asked them to arrange to have the flooring lifted. Your Tenancy Agreement allows you to make alterations & improvements to your home provided you obtain written permission from Weslo first. Some examples of alterations include replacement fixtures such as light fittings, internal doors, construction of a garden shed or pigeon loft and the installation of laminate flooring. We will consider your request and respond in writing within 28 days detailing any conditions that may apply to the consent. In the case of laminate flooring the conditions applied are: - "the laminate flooring is laid and maintained by you in a satisfactory manner and at no cost to Weslo. Should the laminate flooring at any time interfere with any repairs, you will be required to arrange for it to be uplifted and refitted at your own expense. If the flooring is removed at the end of your tenancy Weslo's property must be restored to its condition prior to the alteration. Alternatively, Weslo may allow the flooring to remain for use by the incoming tenant."

We will not refuse permission unless it is reasonable to do so, in which case we will tell you why. Unfortunately, the most common reason for refusing permission for laminate flooring is when the property is an upper flat; this is due to the lack of adequate soundproofing which can cause increased noise transmitting to the lower flat.

Weslo's Board will discuss the maintenance and improvement programme for 2009-2010 early in the new year and we'll let you know about the work involved in a letter shortly thereafter.

**Who would have imagined when we introduced our in house Repairs and Maintenance Department in 1994 that the number of staff employed there would increase from 4 in 1994 to 26 today?** Since then we have invested heavily in our premises in Glasgow Road, constructing new storage facilities and office accommodation to house our growing work force. When originally set up, we employed 2 joiners and 1 apprentice, today we have 6 joiners, 4 gas engineers, 3 electricians, 2 plumbers, 1 builder, 1 plasterer and 2 labourers along with 7 management and admin staff.

Processing and completing approximately 7,000 job lines a year, the department relies very heavily on the support staff, which includes Pamela Meehan and Marion Reynolds. They have the task of ensuring effective communications between the repairs staff and the tradesmen to ensure that the tradesmen get to you as arranged. We asked them to tell us about an average day.



Pam (left) and Marion checking the tradesmen's lines.

Marion said, "We each have to cover one another's jobs during holiday or absence so it is important that we are able to multi task. When you report a repair to staff at the offices, the fault is logged onto the computer system and this generates a repair line. We then have to print out the lines and ensure that the tradesmen get them each morning. During the day we will be in contact with the tradesmen to make arrangements for them to attend any emergency callouts or urgent repairs that are identified. The tradesmen complete time sheets and we have to check these and update the computer system with costs and if additional work has been identified, raise a follow up repair line. We are also responsible for administering the gas annual visits to ensure that we carry out visits within 12



months of the previous inspection and submit reports to management. The gas engineers complete a gas safety service record, which we keep for 3 years, and we update the computer with the service details.

Pam said, "There are a number of administrative jobs that we have to undertake on behalf of the Technical Manager such as preparing tender documentation for proposed contracts, preparing small works contract documentation and typing reports. The recent introduction of a vehicle management system has proved beneficial; in the event of an emergency we can now locate the tradesman working in the vicinity ensuring that we respond promptly. Marion and I are both working mums - Marion has a 7 year old son and I have a 9 year old daughter, so it is important that we understand each others personal needs. We have to be flexible with each other when it comes to juggling family situations. For instance, it suits me better to start earlier in the morning and finish at 4.30 - this allows me to help out with my daughters' out of school activities whereas Marion does the morning school run so starts and finishes a bit later.

**What do they do in their free time?** Pam said, " We need to be able to switch off from work and while I like to holiday abroad, tend my garden, experiment in the kitchen and go cycling with my daughter Marion likes to get away from it all in her caravan for weekends away, to cook and read autobiographies ".

Both agree that like all working parents, work is really only one of the shifts worked each day, and they have to find a balance between the demands of the workplace and home.

## TENANT SUCCESSES

Between May and July we arranged for Tenant Directors Janette Wallace and Eileen Stirling, Tenant Participation Committee member Colin Torrie and staff member Vicky McIluff to undertake the Chartered Institute of Housing Level 2 Certificate in Housing. It was with great pleasure that David McLaren Housing Manager presented them with their certificates at a recent Tenant Participation Meeting.

We would like to congratulate all of them on their awards and (right) we see Janette, Colin and Eileen with their certificates.

In October, Janette, Colin and fellow Tenant Participation Committee member Sybil Watt attended the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference at Dundee along with Housing Officer June Harper.

The conference provides the ideal opportunity for anyone involved in housing, especially tenants and residents, to talk to one another and exchange ideas.

Once again there were a number of informative and interesting workshops over the two days keeping everyone busy.

Janette was interested to hear from other tenants how tenant participation was delivered by their landlords. She acknowledges

that there is no right or wrong way to involve tenants; you just do whatever works for you.

June attended a workshop on tenant led inspections. This involves independent tenant assessors evaluating and inspecting a housing organisation's services to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service from a tenant or user's perspective.

All four delegates were enthusiastic about a one-woman play entitled "H is 4" performed by Naomi Breeze. This thought provoking play is a drama about one young woman's route into and out of homelessness. It explored the different circumstances that can result in homelessness and the real problems associated with the experience.

Sybil said, "The play demonstrated that homelessness can happen to anyone and can often be outwith a person's control."

Colin said, "The play investigates issues around childhood sexual abuse, homelessness and the emotions involved in seeking appropriate help and support. Working in a care background myself I understand the importance of getting this type of message out and it is good to see that many local authorities are using this play to highlight some of the problems to school children".

If you are are interested in becoming involved in the Tenant Participation Committee, please to contact David McLaren, Housing Manager on 01506 639120.

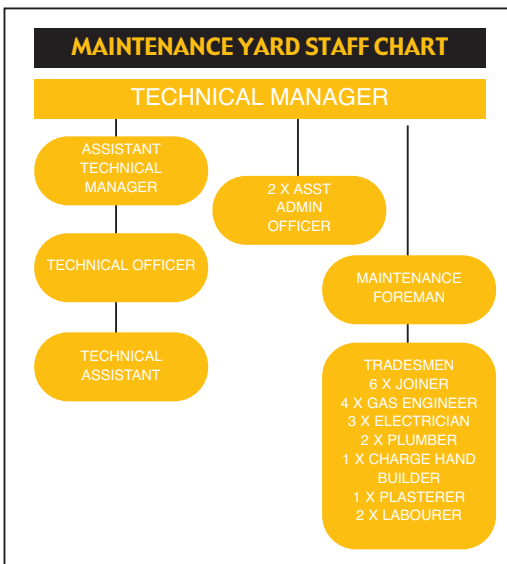


# Maintenance Yard Review

**Weslo's repairs service is consistently identified by tenants as the most important area of service delivery.**



We employ our own tradesmen to cover the core areas of joinery, electrical, plumbing, builderwork, plastering and the servicing of gas appliances. In addition we have an office based team of staff who not only oversee the day to day maintenance work but also monitor and control the Planned Maintenance and Improvement contracts. The Maintenance Yard is led by Mike Mitchell, Technical Manager, who has been reviewing operations over the past few months.



Two members of the Yard office team are due to retire early next year and Mike has been considering what will happen at that time. As a result there will be some re-evaluation of duties and also some changes to the staffing structure. Above we see Mike discussing some of the proposals with his assistant Gavin Wolfe. As part of this review we have been looking at how the tradesmen work and now have tradesmen working in specific geographical locations to optimise efficiency, whilst at the same time providing a better, more personal service to tenants.

**What do you think of the repairs service? How are we doing?**  
**Why not let us know by contacting Margaret Walker on 01506 639121 or e-mail her at [margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk](mailto:margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk).**

**In October, we sent out letters to all our tenants in West Lothian asking them to complete and return an equalities questionnaire. This information will be used to compile a database of information about our tenants including race, sex, age and disabilities.** This information will then be used to ensure that any future policy development is non-discriminatory.

**Help for the over 50's**

We would like to thank you if you have already returned a completed form and if you have not yet done so, we would ask that you do so as soon as possible. If you have misplaced the original form, please contact Gillian McAllister on 01506 639146 who will arrange to have a new form sent out to you.

There are a number of advisory groups operating in the community, catering for different special needs groups and in September, members of the Equalities and Diversity Group attended a very interesting presentation by Helena Scott of Age Concern Scotland.

Age Concern Scotland grew out of the Scottish Old People's Welfare Committees which were set up in 1943 and aimed to "study the needs of older people and to encourage and promote measures for their well-being". Age Concern Scotland today has almost 500 older

peoples groups providing social activities and services including day care, lunch clubs, exercise classes, social outings, educational activities, information and advice as well as having volunteers who visit older people in their homes. The group names reflect the diversity of the services they provide. They provide community support to older people, families and carers, and they employ advocacy workers to support older people in speaking up for themselves and offer volunteer handypersons to carry out small tasks in older people's own homes.

They also operate a national telephone helpline - the Scottish Helpline for Older People (SHOP), providing high quality information on issues such as how to get financial help with heating, home repairs, benefit entitlements and care in the community for older people and their carers through a team of trained advisors.

**You can call on 0845 125 9732 (local call rates apply) from 10 am - 4 pm, Monday to Friday.**

You can find out more about Age Concern Scotland by logging on to their web site at [www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk) or by writing to: Age Concern Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR. We also have a supply of information leaflets available in our offices.

If you would like to know more about what our Equalities and Diversity Group are getting up to, please contact June Harper on 01506 639124 or e-mail [june.harper@weslohm.co.uk](mailto:june.harper@weslohm.co.uk).

## Is your home going to be empty?

Make sure you have any leaks at taps, stopcocks or ball valves repaired.  
 Leave your heating on to maintain an adequate temperature to prevent freezing.

Leave a key with a neighbour or relative. Tell your neighbours who to contact in the event of an emergency.

If you are going away for a long-time, contact David Jordan on 01506 639128 or Isabel Flannigan on 01506 639127 who will arrange to have the water turned off and drained down.

## Are your pipes frozen?

Turn off water at the stopcocks - these are usually located in the kitchen or bathroom.

## Open all taps to sinks and baths

You can thaw frozen pipes by the gentle application of warm air (hair dryer or electric fan heater) or wrap heated cloths (soaked in hot water) round the pipe. Do not apply a direct flame.

Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to thaw out a hot water pipe or any part of a central heating system by lighting the central heating boiler or

coal fire or by switching on an immersion heater. If they are already lit, extinguish them immediately. Contact repairs, or if it is out of hours contact the emergency numbers. For details see back page.

If you don't know where your stopcocks are, please ring repairs on 01506 639127 or 639128.

## Do you have burst pipes?

Turn off water at the stopcocks  
 Open all taps to sinks and baths  
 Switch off the electricity at the mains  
 Switch off any water heaters  
 Switch off the central heating system. If you have solid fuel fire or system, let the fire die down. Do not attempt to drain the boiler unless the fire has gone out.  
 Contact repairs, or if it is out of hours contact the emergency numbers. See below.

Warn any neighbours who could also suffer damage.

## Has water penetrated electrical fittings?

Switch off the electricity at the mains and seek assistance.

## Frost Precautions to prevent frozen or burst pipes this winter

# Keeping families in their home

The national Mortgage to Rent (MTR) scheme allows owner-occupiers who are under threat of repossession to apply to the Scottish Government to seek a Registered Social Landlord, like Weslo, who is willing to purchase the property with a grant subsidy. This allows Weslo to buy the property, the owner becomes a tenant of Weslo, and the family remain in their home.

Weslo has participated in the MTR Scheme since its inception in 2004 - our own Flexible Tenure Scheme, a forerunner to this, was discontinued at that time. Since 2004, we have acquired a total of 24 properties throughout West Lothian and Bo'ness at a cost of just over £2m utilising nearly £1.5m of grant subsidy from the Scottish Government. In addition there are currently a further 5 cases under consideration.

The main aim of the MTR scheme is to remove the threat of repossession and homelessness and allow families to remain in their homes, an aim which is in line with Weslo's charitable status. Of course, the scheme has other benefits. Properties acquired help to replace those lost annually through Right to Buy and contribute significant financial benefits through rent to Weslo in the longer term.

For all of the above reasons Weslo is always prepared to consider any cases put to us and on occasions, we have gone further than others in our efforts to ensure a successful outcome. We're pleased to say that these cases have also worked out for the best and therefore justified our more open approach!

A review of the scheme has recently been carried out and the results are due to be published by the Scottish Government soon. In the current uncertain economic climate, with an increase in the threat of repossessions, we're hoping that this very worthwhile scheme continues.

# Shelter Scotland 40 years on



We were pleased recently to sponsor an event at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh to mark the 40th anniversary of Shelter Scotland. A fair collection of housing professionals in Scotland gathered to hear the Health Minister Nicola Sturgeon open the event by praising Shelter's ongoing commitment to the eradication of homelessness in Scotland and renew the Government's pledge to ensure that by 2012 all people who are unintentionally homeless will be entitled to a permanent home.

Weslo Chief Executive Mike Bruce is pictured below with Ms Sturgeon at the event.



(Image courtesy of Ian Jacobs and Shelter Scotland.)

# CALENDAR 2009

66 North Bridge Street  
Bathgate  
West Lothian  
EH48 4PP

Tel: 01506 634060  
Fax: 01506 639122

weslo

housing management

REMEMBER  
Weslo's Web Site at  
[www.weslo-housing.org](http://www.weslo-housing.org)  
FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS  
AND INFORMATION

January							February							March						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4							1							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30	31					
April							May							June						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					
July							August							September						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
							31													
October							November							December						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4							1	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31			
							30													

CUT OUT  
AND KEEP

Repairs during Office Hours

West Lothian Repairs

01506 639127 or 639128 or 634060

Bo'ness Repairs

01506 639101

Out of Hours Emergencies

Gas – All Areas

01506 630288 or 01506 631240

Other Emergencies – West Lothian

01506 630288 or 01506 631240

Bo'ness

01324 503050

Gas Leak / Smell Gas

0800 111 999

Scottish Power

0845 272 799

**Unscramble the words to find a Christmas Carol**

- NIYWAAMNARGEA - - - - -
- TCHBEASMLISUR - - - - -
- THSWNMFTYSEONROA - - - - -
- WTOTJORDYHOEL - - - - -
- IMBTLRMYORETLUED - - - - -
- GHOYOGTNIH - - - - -
- CHSDTEHALELK - - - - -
- SELGJLEBLNI - - - - -
- NELITOWTS - - - - -
- RMECARTESITHOS - - - - -
- HSNTTINLEGI - - - - -
- LSLIBVSREEL - - - - -
- LENEFROSHTTI - - - - -
- NEITEEGKWSHR - - - - -
- CSEHTMRIWISAHT - - - - -
- ETRANWDLWNINEDOR - - - - -
- RMYWCSTSSHUIWEYARRHAOEI - - - - -

Answers on right....

**Do you need help with your Housing Benefit?**

**REMEMBER**

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.



**Do you have an E-mail address?**

Would you like us to contact you by E-mail then e-mail

[enquiries@weslohm.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@weslohm.co.uk)

and we will amend our records.

**Christmas Carol Scramble Word Solutions**

Always in a Manger, Blue Christmas, Frosty the Snowman, Joy to the World, Little Drummer Boy, O Holy Night, Deck the Halls, Jingle Bells, Let It Snow, O Christmas Tree, Silent Night, Silver Bells, The First Noel, We Three Kings, White Christmas, Winter Wonderland, We wish you a Merry Christmas



**USEFUL CONTACTS -**

**West Lothian**

- Department for Work and Pensions 01506 772000
- Citizens Advice Bureau 01506 432977
- Fire Brigade (Fire Safety Department) 01506 435166
- Police - Livingston 01506 431200
- Women's Aid - Livingston 01506 413721
- West Lothian Council 01506 777000
- West Lothian Council (Building Control) 01506 775222
- West Lothian Council (Planning Applications) 01506 775365
- West Lothian Council (Dog Warden & Pest Control) 01506 775401
- West Lothian Council (Refuse Collection & Bulky Uplifts) 01506 777800
- Housing Benefit – Weslo 01506 639145

General Numbers –

- Income Support/ Job Seekers Allowance/ Incapacity Benefit
- Transco Gas (Emergencies)
- Scottish Power (Electrical)
- Domestic Abuse – Scottish Helpline Freephone (24 hrs)
- St John's Hospital

**Bo'ness**

- Department for Work and Pensions 01324 505000
- Citizens Advice Bureau 01324 483467
- Fire Brigade 01506 822872
- Police – Bo'ness 01506 822877
- Women's Aid - Falkirk 01324 635661
- Falkirk Council One Stop Shop 01506 778899
- Falkirk Council (Building Control & Planning Applications) 01324 504950
- Falkirk Council (Environmental Health & Pest Control) 01324 504981
- Falkirk Council (Refuse Collections & Bulky Uplifts) 01324 504411

- 0845 6088630
- 0800 111 999
- 0845 272 7999
- 0800 027 1234
- 01506 523000



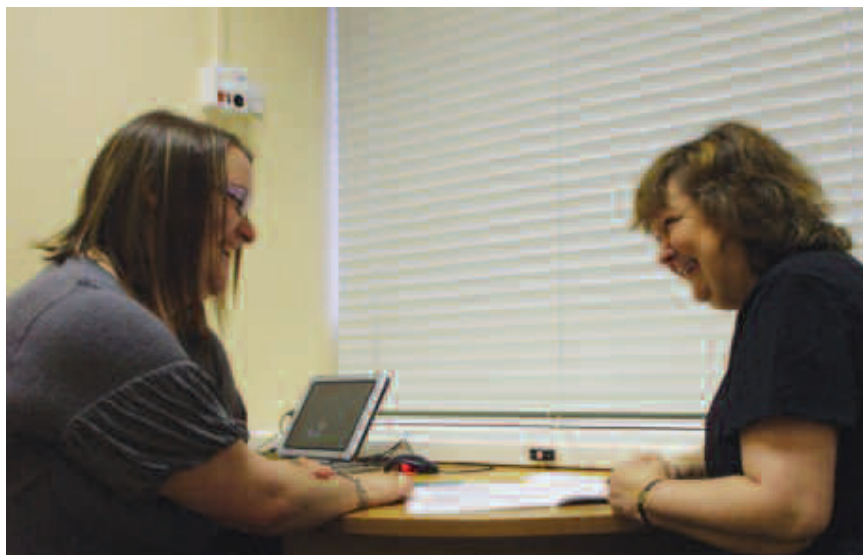
# Scottish Secure Tenancy Update

In February 2007 Weslo became a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). Since then over 998 tenants have signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) - leaving 1,123 outstanding.

For those of you who still have to sign a new tenancy agreement there is no need to worry as your rights are already protected under the legislation. Indeed, some of your rights have been strengthened to include:-

- granting a joint tenancy with a member of your household provided they are over the age of 16,
- you have the right to instruct repairs under "Right to Repair" if we fail to complete repairs within a specified period, and
- you may be eligible for compensation at the end of your tenancy for any approved alterations or improvements to the property.

Below we see Vicky McIluff the project co-ordinator, on the left, discussing the changes with Karen Forrest of Bathgate.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have already signed your SST for your co-operation and in the coming months we will be contacting everyone else by letter or telephone to make arrangements to complete this exercise. If we contact you and the date is unsuitable, please contact us to make another appointment. Alternatively, if you regularly come into the office to pay your rent or speak to a member of staff, let us know and we can arrange to have the papers available so that you can sign them at that time - it only takes a few minutes. If you prefer we can arrange to call at your home and you can sign your SST in the comfort of your own home.

With your co-operation and patience we anticipate concluding this exercise early next year.

## What are Winter Fuel Payments?

The Government pays Winter Fuel Payments to most people aged 60 or over to help with the costs of keeping warm in winter. You may qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment for the winter of 2008/2009 if:

- you are aged 60 or over on or before 21 September 2008; and
- you normally live in Great Britain or Northern Ireland on any day in the week of 15 to 21 September 2008.

This year the Winter Fuel Payment will be £250 for households with someone aged 60 to 79, and £400 for households with someone aged 80 or over. The exact amount you will get depends on your circumstances during the qualifying week (15 to 21 September 2008), such as your age, whether you live alone and whether you're getting Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

In most cases if you qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment, you will get:

- a full payment of £250 or a shared payment of £125 each, if you're aged 60-79; or
- full payment of £400 or a shared payment of £200 each, if you're aged 80 or over.

You can call the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline if you need:

- further information on Winter Fuel Payments;
- to tell them about a change in your circumstances; or
- to get a claim form for Winter Fuel Payments. (You can also download this claim form from the website - [www.thepensionservice.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk)).

The Winter Fuel Payment Helpline is on 08459 15 15 15 (0845 601 5613 for textphone users). Lines are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Charges are the same as for local calls.



## Anytime, anyplace, anywhere – it's the right time to pay your rent

Weslo is committed to offering you the widest range of convenient and accessible payment methods. Currently we are able to accept payments by cash, cheque and debit or credit card at our offices in Bathgate and Bo'ness and by standing order or bank credit transfer. We also work closely with allpay.net to provide you with rent swipecards, direct debits, telephone payments and on-line payments.

Allpay have a new service that is available to all Weslo tenants called allpayments.text, this will allow you to pay your rent by sending a secure SMS text message. You simply need a UK registered mobile phone, a valid allpay.net swipecard and a current debit or credit card. After a brief online registration, you will be able to pay your rent on the move anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

## Using the service – 3 easy steps

**Step 1** Register your phone and set up your account on allpay's web site

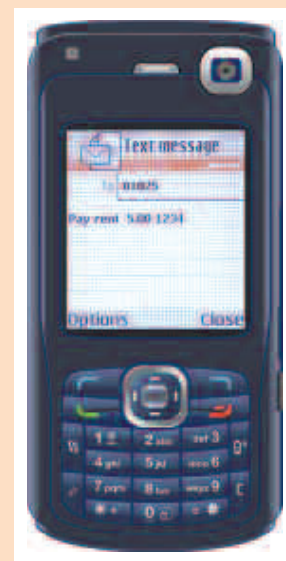
You only have to do this once and can amend your details whenever you want

**Step 2** Send a text with the amount you wish to pay

**Step 3** Receive a message back when your payment has been accepted

If you do not have internet access to register your account we can provide this for you at our offices in Bathgate or Bo'ness.

If you would like more information about this payment method please contact your Housing Officer.



## New Tenant Director Appointed

**Weslo has four places constitutionally reserved on its Board for tenants.** In July, Hugh Ruck completed his term on the Board. Hugh, who has been actively involved with the Tenant Participation Committee for a number of years, was invited to join the Board in September 2007 following a retirement. The Board would like to acknowledge its appreciation for his contribution during this time. Alex Bow of Bo'ness filled the vacancy and he was formally appointed at the Annual General Meeting in July. We asked Alex to tell us a little about himself.

I am 56 years of age and have lived in Bo'ness all my life. My wife Isabel and I have lived in social rented housing over 30 years. We moved into a Bo'ness Town Council house when we married and moved to our present home in 1988 when our son and daughter were quite young, to be nearer my wife's family. Since then we have seen a few changes including a new landlord and our children moving into their own homes.

I work full time as a team leader in the Asda Distribution Centre in Falkirk where we distribute frozen and chilled goods to the stores. In my spare time, I enjoy reading and travel, both in the UK and abroad. Our most memorable holiday to date has to be Tunisia where we were able to take a 3-day trip to the Sahara desert and up into the Atlas Mountains. It is definitely a country of contrasts and the whole experience was so different to how we live.

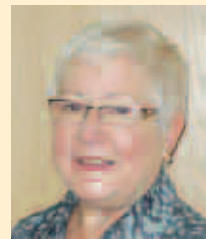
My job involves working constant back shift and I often have time on my hands during the day so, when I got a letter in March from Weslo asking tenants to join the Board, I decided to give it a try. I have no formal experience of Board meetings but am involved in staff meetings at work and in the past, while my children were at school, I was involved with the School Board.

I am looking forward to being part of the Board and being guided by the experienced and knowledgeable Executive Directors.



## Weslo Staff Changes

**Jacqueline Ferguson** was appointed to the vacant post of Payroll Officer in July. Prior to starting with Weslo as a Finance Assistant in 2000 she had previous experience working with Sage computer software packages similar to those used by Weslo. Over the past few months she has settled into the role and has rediscovered her liking for figure work and, much to the delight of staff, gets a great deal of satisfaction when the salaries are successfully processed through the bank.



**Margot Tait** our Cashier/Receptionist was delighted to take semi-retirement in September after 16 years service, twelve of which have been in Finance and four in the Lettings Department. Margot who will still be at reception 2 1/2 days a week hopes she will still see some regular faces and continue to enjoy a chat with many of you. She is looking forward to having more free time to pursue her hobbies that include gardening, reading, and crosswords.

She has also been known to enjoy a bit of walking around the Bathgate Hills.

**Iain Wilson** joined Weslo in September on a six month temporary contract as a joiner. He served his apprenticeship with Mansell Builders who specialise in refurbishments and shop fitting and since then has been employed by several other shop fitting companies. He is happy to join Weslo to gain experience as a jobbing joiner. Iain is single and in his free time he enjoys listening to music, his favourite Indie group being the Arctic Monkeys, and going to music festivals - he has been at T-in the Park every year for the past 6 years. He also finds time to snow board and is hoping to get out onto real snow soon, rather than use the artificial facilities at Hillend and Braehead Arena. When he is stuck for something to do, he enjoys watching football.



## Repairs Satisfaction

In the 6 months between May and October, 2824 repairs were carried out in tenanted properties. We would like to thank you if you were one of the 306 tenants who took the time to complete and return the repair response cards. We are pleased that many of you take time to comment on the level of customer care that the tradesmen take to minimise the disruption to you while they are carrying out their work.

The comments made included:-

- "Tradesman who called was very friendly and courteous and did an excellent job"
- "The problem was resolved within 2 hours of reporting it. Thank you."
- "The workman was very helpful. They never stopped working till they sorted the problem."
- "I was very pleased with the plumber putting covers over his shoes as it was a very wet morning."

Mr Dinning, Mr Stevenson and Mr Black of Bathgate, Miss Shellia of Winchburgh, Mrs Russell of Stoneyburn and Mr Robertson of West Calder have each received £10 gift vouchers for returning their completed cards.

As we advised in the June newspaper we are now having a quarterly prize draw and the first lucky winner of a £75 gift voucher is Mrs Dempster of Whitburn.

If you would like to be in the next draw in February, please make sure that you get a card from the tradesman and send it back. If you don't get a card then phone David Jordan on 01506 639128 and he will arrange for a card to be sent.

## Who is calling you and sending you mail?

Why does it always seem that the phone rings just as you are eating your evening meal or settling down with a cup of tea to watch your favourite soap? It's fine when it's someone that you want to speak to but, how often is it someone trying to sell you double glazing or a new kitchen?

Did you know that you can stop these unsolicited sales and marketing calls by registering with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS)? It is free to register and once your number has been registered, you should stop receiving these unwanted calls after 28 days.

There is a similar service for unsolicited mail or "junk mail"; this is called the Mailing Preference Service (MPS). Once again, this is a free service that has been running for over 20 years. If you register, the MPS can remove your name from up to 95% of Direct Mail lists. Unfortunately, it will not stop mail sent from overseas, un-addressed material or mail addressed to The Occupier. You will continue to receive mailings from companies with whom you have done business in the past and from small, local companies. If you wish these mailings to stop, you must notify these companies directly. It will take up to 4 months for this service to have full effect, although you should notice a reduction in the mail during this period. Just think of the trees that could be saved!

You can get full details on and register for both these services on line at:

[www.tponline.org.uk](http://www.tponline.org.uk) or by phoning the numbers below:

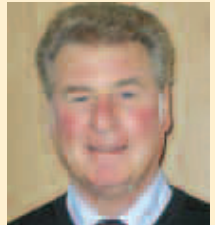
**TPS Registration line - 0845 070 0707, or the**

**MPS Registration line - 0845 703 4599**

**Billy Bowes** is another temporary employee. He is an electrician who has wide experience in construction and factory maintenance. This is the first time that Billy has worked in housing and is enjoying meeting tenants in their homes. He has also been involved in the annual safety testing of electrical equipment throughout Weslo. In his spare time he enjoys a round of golf at Polmont with his friends, escaping into the world of fiction - reading thrillers by Wilbur Smith and Robert Ludlum and enjoying caravanning weekends with his wife and grand daughter.



With a view to the imminent restructuring at the yard, **Frank Barker** joined the staff in early November as a part time Technical Officer / Clerk of Works. Frank has over 40 years experience in the construction industry. He originally trained as a cabinet maker and worked for over 15 years with a variety of shop fitting and construction companies before moving into management. Lately, he was the Operations Manager for Watson Stonecraft at West Calder where he was responsible for overseeing a number of high profile projects; he views this new post as less stressful but no less of a challenge. Frank and his wife Ella have lived in East Calder for over 30 years and often enjoy family holidays with their 2 married sons, their wives and 3 grandchildren. On the sporting front, Frank is a keen bowler, enjoys the occasional "social" game of golf, watching rugby and a supporter of Livingston Rugby Club and an armchair supporter of Hearts FC.



**Kevin Cairns** also joined Weslo during November in a newly created post of Information Communication Technology Manager. One of the main aims of his post will be to develop and maintain the communications infrastructure - for those less technically minded this includes the telephone and computer systems. Kevin is

looking forward to the challenge of reviewing and moving forward the technology being used and offering support for colleagues, and ultimately you as Weslo tenants by ensuring that the systems we use to record things such as your repairs and rental payments are operating effectively and efficiently. Originally from a banking background, Kevin moved into the IT field about 17 years ago and has worked in various industries including Finance, Manufacturing, Telecoms Construction and Medical. He sees moving into the world of housing management as another learning experience. He originates from Glasgow, but now lives in Dalgety Bay with his wife Jan. Outside of work he enjoys football, socialising with friends, going to restaurants and the theatre. He also enjoys playing golf and has recently joined Pitreavie Golf Club in Dunfermline where he says he has a handicap of 2... both his arms... !

# HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE FROM WESLO

# STEPPING OUT TO SUPPORT ALZHEIMER SCOTLAND SUPPORTING YOUR COMMUNITIES

In the first six months of this year, we have spent almost £4,000 supporting local community group fund raising events and charities.

Weslo staff have adopted Alzheimer Scotland as our "Charity of the Year" and on 21 September, a group of staff, family and friends took part in a memory walk over the Forth Road Bridge in support of the charity. This also happened to be "World Alzheimer's Day" when people from around the world focussed on raising awareness and the reality of life with dementia.



Alzheimer Scotland is Scotland's leading specialist dementia charity and works to improve the lives of everyone affected by dementia. Between 58,000 and 65,000 Scots have dementia and this number is increasing as people live longer. Almost everyone knows someone who is affected - it may be a relative, friend, neighbour or workmate who has the illness or who is caring for someone.

More than half of people with dementia live at home, either alone or with family or friends who care for them. Caring can be a 24 hour, seven day a week task, and is often emotionally, physically and financially draining.

Staff raised £1,000, which has been donated to Alzheimer Scotland to support setting up an Early Onset Service in West Lothian.

Our Community Budget Committee has been busy assessing the many varied requests for help we have received. Some of those we have been able to help are

- £50 donations to Fauldhouse Village Green Community Fair, Boghall Family Fun Day, Livingston FC Football Club (under 11's) and the Just Uz Team.
- £100 donation to the Open Door Accommodation Project to cover the cost of preparing their Annual Accounts.



- £1,000 donation to West Lothian Youth Theatre. WLYT aims to enhance and enrich the lives of young people through a range of drama and theatre related workshops and high quality performance projects of a professional standard.
- £100 donation to Seafield & District Junior Pipe Band to assist in their travel costs to the British Championships in June, where they came 5th and to the European Championships in July, unfortunately they were less successful there. They have had a very successful year in competitions winning 15 trophies including a 2nd place at the Scottish Championships and a 1st at Bathgate Highland Games. The highlight of the year has to have been when they were pronounced "Champion of Champions" in the Lothian and Borders Branch of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association.

Once again, we were delighted to sponsor the West Lothian Bowling Association Senior Open Singles competition. Below right we see Mike Bruce, Chief Executive presenting the trophy to Brian Holloran, from Pumpherston Bowling club who was the overall winner at Glenmavis Bowling Club in September.

In September, a team of medical staff from St John's Hospital gave up 2 weeks annual leave to travel to Peru where they used their skills to help the poor of this Amazonian region. The Amazon Hope project is based in Loreto in northern Peru, and is run by Scripture Union Peru in partnership with a Scottish Charity -The Vine Trust (Scotland), which was originally established in 1985 in Bo'ness to provide help in Africa.

The Amazon Hope project requires teams of eight health professionals to leave the comforts and sophistication of the health service in the UK and use their skills to help some of the world's poor for two weeks. While there, they provide medical assistance in a health clinic in Puerto Belen, Iquitos, and from two medical ships - called Amazon Hope 1 and 2 - which make monthly trips along the Amazon and other rivers in Loreto to rural riverside communities.

Janet Purdie an Auxiliary Nurse and Christine Hunter, a Staff Nurse at St John's were part of this team and we were happy to make a donation towards their fundraising efforts to enable them to take part in this very exciting and worthwhile journey.

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.

## All tenants now have the Right to Buy their home

Since registration, Weslo's solicitors have been seeking clarification with the Scottish Government about our obligations under the Modernised Right to Buy legislation. This matter has only recently been successfully concluded and we can now confirm that all Weslo tenants are now entitled to purchase their Weslo home.

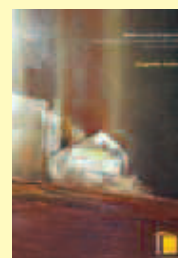
The terms of the sale will depend on when your Weslo tenancy started. If you transferred from Scottish Homes to Weslo then you have the right to buy your home under the pre-transfer Preserved Right to Buy. If however you became a Weslo tenant post transfer, you are now able to buy under the Modernised Right to Buy legislation.

There are a number of differences in how the schemes operate. One significant change is how the discount is calculated and the level of discount payable - for those buying under the Modernised Right to Buy, the discount is capped at £15,000.

Below is a table outlining the percentage discount you may enjoy.

Years spent as a tenant	Preserved RTB		Modernised RTB
	House	Flat	All properties
2 - 4	32% - 34%	44% - 48%	Cannot buy
5 - 9	35% - 39%	50% - 58%	20% - 24%
10 - 14	40% - 44%	60% - 68%	25% - 29%
15 - 19	45% - 49%	70%	30% - 34%
20 - 24	50% - 54%	70%	35%
25 - 29	55% - 59%	70%	35%
30 and over	60%	70%	35%

If you would like to discuss how this affects you or would like to make an application to buy your home, please contact Margaret Walker on 01506 639121, or alternatively e-mail her at [margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk](mailto:margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk)



The Directors Report and Financial Statements for 2007 - 2008 have been published and are available to view on-line at [www.weslo-housing.org](http://www.weslo-housing.org) or by contacting Margaret Walker on 01506 639121.

## 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:-

Thursday	25 December 2008
Friday	26 December 2008
Thursday	1 January 2009
Friday	2 January 2009
Friday	10 April 2009
Monday	13 April 2009
Monday	4 May 2009
Wednesday	18 May 2009

Please note that our offices will close at 3pm on Wednesday 24 and 31 December.