



Tenant News

TOGETHER AGAIN

It didn't seem that a year had passed since staff came together under one roof to hear how Weslo had been performing as a business when, in September, everyone was invited to attend a half day session at The Houstoun House Hotel in Uphall.

In the current economic climate it was hardly surprising when Mike Bruce, Chief Executive identified that financial stability would be a key theme for the day. He went on to thank staff for their continued hard work to meet the Key Performance Indicators, making specific mention of the reduction in rent arrears which fell from £116,000 in 2009-2010 to £112,000 in the year 2010 -2011 and the consistent high number of repairs being carried out within our published timescales.

Mike reassured staff that he is confident in Weslo's ability to meet the challenges that the current economic climate is bringing about.



Mike Crozier, Weslo's Operations Director went on to tell staff of our progress to date in implementing the Improvement Plan that had been approved by the Scottish Housing Regulator in November 2010 following our regulatory inspection. Of the original 31 key objectives that were agreed we have already implemented 21 and the remaining 10 will be completed by December 2012. Mike stressed the importance of the standards being met to ensure that, as a company, we strive for continued improvement in the services that our tenants receive.

Douglas Drummond, Finance Director presented an overview of Weslo's Annual Accounts for the year - a copy of which is available at our offices or on the Weslo website at www.weslo-housing.org. He pointed out that despite the current economic climate and reducing levels of grants for development funding, Weslo was in a strong financial position and would continue to explore innovative development opportunities. In addition we would continue our involvement with the National Mortgage to Rent Scheme which offers assistance to homeowners who are under threat of having their homes repossessed.



Mike Stevenson, Director of Thinktastic, an Edinburgh media agency, has earned the reputation of being a sought after motivational speaker and creative thinker. He set staff a number of tasks to get them to think about why they do jobs in a specific way, and to question why? He encouraged everyone to see that change can be good; that they can and should take the lead on change, to go beyond themselves and find new ways of doing things, tackling the big issues and going for radical change and big ideas instead of reacting to change. He encouraged staff to think and act differently and challenged them to look at new possibilities to ensure that tenants receive the best possible service delivery.

What do you think about a rent increase? Do you have a view?

We would love to hear what you think about the Annual Rent Review for 2012.

The annual rent review forms part of Weslo's budget process where we aim to balance the cost of providing improved services with the rental income we receive.

It is appreciated that times are hard and that for most people household costs are increasing at a rate greater than incomes. With this in mind, Weslo's Board will seek to ensure that we maintain our strong financial position whilst ensuring our rents remain affordable.

As part of Weslo's continuing commitment to improving the quality of the services we provide to you, at our February 2012 Board Meeting we will be looking at various options when considering our annual rent review.

The Board will discuss a number of different options ranging from a 0% increase to an increase of RPI + 1% and will consider each option presented to them whilst being mindful of:

- The cost of meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard requirement by 2015.
- The commitment to achieve value for money in all areas of work we do.
- Ensuring that there are sufficient cash resources to meet our short term commitments and the necessary reserves are in place to meet the longer term commitments.

We would be interested to hear your thoughts on our rent review. If you wish to comment please email donna.henderson@weslohm.co.uk. Or alternatively contact Donna at our Bathgate office on 01506 634286.

Weslo wishes all our tenants a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Can we help someone you know who is in financial difficulty?

You may have read in the press back in October that we had announced the re-introduction of the Flexible Tenure Scheme. This is similar to the scheme we originally introduced in 1996 to assist homeowners who were experiencing financial difficulties. It ran successfully for seven years during which time 45 owners sold their house to Weslo and became a tenant. Many of those are still Weslo tenants today and a small number even repurchased their homes when their financial situation improved. The scheme was withdrawn in 2003 when the Scottish Government introduced the National Mortgage to Rent Scheme which aims to assist home owners threatened with repossession.

The current weak economy and rising inflation has impacted on society as a whole and an increasing number of people are struggling to meet their day to day living expenses. This could be due to a variety of reasons – ill health, unemployment, separation or divorce - to name but a few. With many home owners, mortgage repayments remain a priority but as money becomes tighter many are opting to sell their home. Not all of these people qualify for the Government's Mortgage to Rent Scheme and it is this category of owner we are trying to assist by providing a means to continue to live in the family home. It is this group of at risk home owners that we may be able to assist.



Under the scheme, we could purchase the home, normally for 85% of the market value less the cost of any immediate repairs required, and the owner would become a tenant with all the rights inherent in a Scottish Secure Tenancy. After two years tenancy, they would have the right to buy back their home at any time in the future for the same percentage of the prevailing market value. However, the monthly rent charged for a property purchased under the flexible tenure scheme will normally be higher than the 'social' rent for an equivalent property. This is because we have to charge a rental sum based on the amount we borrow to buy the house. For instance, a purchase price of £75,000 would result in a monthly rental charge of £480 at current rates.

Since publicising the scheme we have received a number of enquiries and are currently progressing two applications.

If you think our Flexible Tenure Scheme or the Government's Mortgage to Rent Scheme might be of interest to someone you know and you would like more information, please contact Margaret Walker at this office on 01506 639121 or email margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk.

Do you or your family need assistance from Weslo?

Weslo has an Equalities and Diversity Action Group which meets twice a year. The group includes tenants and members of Weslo's staff and is responsible for promoting Weslo's Equalities Plan and ensuring that the information we hold about our tenants is relevant and up to date. As part of this, we hold information on tenants or members of their families who may be vulnerable to ensure we are offering assistance where practical and are responding to these households in an appropriate manner. We have an explanatory leaflet available from our offices entitled "Support for tenants and their families" which explains the type of assistance we might be able to offer. If you or any members of the household require assistance, please contact your Housing Officer at Bathgate or Bo'ness on 01506 634060 or 01506 639100 respectively.



Older Persons Advice Service

In today's challenging financial environment, it is increasingly difficult to make our money go as far as we would like it to. This is why we were surprised when so many of you in a recent survey did not take advantage of the free financial health check offered by the Older Persons Advice Service (OPAS).

We provided OPAS with contact details of 60 tenants who would celebrate their 60th birthday before March 2012 and they wrote to those individuals offering advice on welfare benefits, information on and referral to other external agencies that may be of benefit.

As an indication of what may be available; in the past six months staff made four referrals to OPAS on behalf of tenants. These referrals resulted in those tenants receiving in excess of £12,000 in unclaimed benefits. Before the review, they all thought that they were already getting all the benefits they were entitled to. How wrong were they?

If you have already had a letter from OPAS and have not yet accepted their offer of a financial review or if you, or a member of your family, are aged 60 or over and would like to find out if you are entitled to more money that could help you meet the increasing cost of everyday essentials such as food, fuel and energy there could be no better time to take advantage of the service. The service is completely free and confidential.



You can contact OPAS directly on 0845 002 0941

or email them on opas@linkhalt.co.uk to arrange for one of their team to visit you at home. Alternatively, you can speak to Gillian McAllister, Assistant Housing Manager on 01506 639146 or your Housing Officer who can refer you directly to the service.



Welfare reform what are the changes?

The UK Government has already implemented some of the changes outlined in their planned reform of the Welfare system. Many of you with adult family members living at home who are not joint tenants or partners may have already experienced a reduction in the amount of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit you receive when changes were made to the non-dependant deduction rates in April this year. There will be staged increases in the rates of non-dependant deductions for both housing benefit and council tax benefit in April 2012 and April 2013. It is expected that by April 2014, these increases will bring the rates to the level they would have been had they been fully increased each year since 2001 when the rates were frozen. The actual increase for 2012 will not be announced until some time during January but it is anticipated that they will increase by a further 25%.

Changes have already been made to retirement age provisions. Those who want to work beyond their 65th birthday can now do so as the Default Retirement Age (DRA) was phased out in October 2011. The State Pension age for women has also started to increase from 60 to 65, to match that of men. There are new proposals to increase the State Pension age to 66 for everyone from April 2020 subject to Parliamentary approval.

Changes in the New Year that may affect you include:

January 2012

- Non-working lone parents whose youngest child is 5 or above will now be required to seek paid employment. They will be required to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) rather than Income Support.
- The shared accommodation rate for Housing Benefit payments is extended from under 25 to under 35. This will apply only to those in the private rented sector. However, this means that tenants of Weslo Initiatives will be affected. The amount of rent used for housing benefit calculation purposes for a single occupant under 35 will be the Local Housing Allowance which at November 2011 was £249.99 per calendar month.

April 2012

- Abolition of Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) "youth" for new claimants aged 16 - 20. After this date all claimants will have to satisfy the NI Contribution requirements and claims will be limited to 12 months. Existing claimants will have transitional protection for up to 12 months.
- Couples with children must work 24hrs a week between them, with one partner working at least 16 hrs to qualify for the Working Tax Credits. This will mean:
 - if you both work your joint weekly hours must be at least 24, with one of you working at least 16 hours a week
 - if only one of you works, that person must be working at least 24 hours a week
 - If neither of these apply, your Working Tax Credit will stop from 6 April 2012.

- The period when a tax credit claim and certain changes of circumstances can be backdated is reduced from 3 months to 1 month.

Further changes are contained in the Welfare Reform Bill. The Bill follows the November 2010 White Paper, 'Universal Credit: welfare that works', which set out the Government's proposals for reforming welfare to improve work incentives, simplify the benefits system and tackle administrative complexity. The Bill had its first reading in the House of Lords back in June, its second reading in September and went through its committee stage in the House of Lords on Tuesday 4 October. It provides for the introduction of a 'Universal Credit' to replace a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for people of working age, starting from 2013.

The Bill also makes provision for a new benefit, personal independence payment, which will replace disability living allowance.

Social Housing providers throughout the country, through the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), are raising their concerns and lobbying the Government to try and safeguard the interests of tenants and minimise any disruption during the transition from one system to the other.

There are two areas in the proposed Bill that we believe will impact on many of our tenants directly; some may find that they are unable to pay their rent on time while others may find that there is an increased financial cost to their present accommodation. These situations could be created because the Government are proposing:

- To abolish Housing Benefit and to pay housing costs through the new universal credit and pension credit, and
- to restrict the amount of housing costs payable where the claimant is of working age and deemed to be under occupying their home. There will be some transitional protection for existing claimants.

We will continue to bring you more information on the proposed changes in the June edition of Tenant News. However, if you have any questions about how the proposals being introduced in January and April 2012 might affect you, please contact your housing officer. See pages 10 and 11 for contact details.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to read this edition of Tenant News. You can ask for this to be provided in Braille, large print or on an audio cassette and we can provide translations into other languages. We had two requests for large print copies of the June edition and were happy to send these out. Both tenants told us that it made much easier reading for them. We have again sent large print copies to those tenants but if you think this would help you to enjoy reading the Tenant News, please get in touch with Margaret whose details are at the end of this article.

If you have access to the Internet, you can log on to our Browsealoud-enabled website at www.weslo-housing.org where we have speech-enabled our website to ensure that it is accessible to as many people as possible. Browsealoud makes websites more accessible to people who find it difficult to read text on websites or who prefer to listen to web content. You can also convert text on Browsealoud-enabled websites to MP3 files; this means you can listen to the content of web pages whenever and wherever it suits you.

If you would like more information please contact Margaret Walker on 01506 639121 or email margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk.

Can we help?

Weslo is always keen to assist tenants to lead independent lives in their own home. During 2010 -2011 we completed approximately 150 medical adaptations to improve independent living for tenants living in their homes at a cost of some £77,000, most of which came in the form of grants from the Scottish Government.

Many adaptations are relatively easy and inexpensive, for instance:

- External handrails and internal banisters can make such a difference to someone who has mobility problems, especially where steps and stairs are involved. Last year we installed 43 metal handrails at external doors and fitted 28 additional banisters to help tenants get up and down internal stairs.
- Installing a small grab rail in the bathroom allows the user to move safely about the bathroom without risking a fall or pulling a fitting, such as a radiator or wash hand basin, off the wall. Last year we installed 39 of these giving those tenants a better feeling of safety in their home.
- We have fitted several external lights for tenants who are partially sighted and in one instance fitted an external security camera for a visually impaired lady. This enables the tenant to see who is at the door on a large TV screen before allowing them entry to her home. This certainly gave this tenant peace of mind.
- There are a number of adaptations that can assist tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing. During last year we fitted a hard wired smoke detector with a vibrating pad that is placed under the tenant's pillow to alert them should there be a fire while they are asleep.
- We have fitted a number of lever taps for tenants with arthritis who find it very difficult to turn a normal tap. This is a simple job for our plumbers but an invaluable adaptation for those struggling to turn taps on and off.

There are of course other adaptations that are more costly to undertake. Increasingly we are being asked to install wet floor shower areas. This involves removing the bath and creating a waterproof shower area with controlled drainage outlet, generally in the middle of the floor. In the past year we have installed 17 of these whereas we have installed 2 ordinary shower cubicles. While these adaptations are expensive they have given greater independence and improved the lifestyle of those living in our homes, particularly for those tenants who live alone.

On completion of a medical adaptation, we like to make sure that the tenant is happy with the work that has been undertaken. Christine Wood in our Bathgate office and Mags Mochar in our Bo'ness office contact everyone to carry out a satisfaction survey. In all cases last year we received nothing but praise.

Jean Webster suffers from osteoarthritis and has lived in her Broxburn home with husband David since 1959. They have had a number of adaptations carried out to in their home to help Jean cope on a daily basis with this degenerative illness. Initially they had an additional banister fitted to their internal stairs in 2003 followed by a wet floor shower area in 2007 and more recently external hand rails fitted to the steps to their front door. Mrs Webster said, "Anybody who feels that they need help to do everyday things in their home should speak to their housing officer. They are aware of what help is available and can do all the necessary paperwork for you. Having the shower fitted means that we don't have to worry about falling getting in or out of the bath and the handrails give that added sense of security using the steps. It's brilliant."

Marina Shanks lives with and cares for her 89 year old mother in Bo'ness. She told us about the help her mother has received. "My mum had a shower fitted over the bath but as she deteriorated, she found it increasingly difficult to get into the bath. Social Work Department through Weslo arranged for a wet floor shower to be fitted and what a difference that has made. My mum is a lot more independent when it comes to bathing. They have also fitted a ramp to the front door; this allows her to get in and out of the house with her zimmer much more easily. She can now get to the transport that takes her to a variety of clubs where she meets up with her friends on a daily basis. Not only does this improve her quality of life it takes some of the pressures off me as her carer."

If you, or someone in your household, are experiencing problems in your home and think that you might benefit from an adaptation please call your housing officer to discuss your problems. They can make a referral to Social Work on your behalf.

You can also make a self referral by contacting West Lothian Council on 01506 775666 or Falkirk Council on 01506 778668.



Mrs Grant making use of the ramp.

FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS

All flatted properties are designed and built with fire safety in mind. The walls and doors between flats, stairs and corridors are specially designed to resist fire and stop the spread of smoke.

- When they are not in use these doors should be kept closed.
- Don't block your escape routes.
- Don't clutter the stairs and corridors of your building. As a resident of the building, you are responsible for ensuring that common stairs are kept clear of obstruction and flammable materials.
- Do report any obstructions or flammable materials immediately by contacting your housing officer.

Remember this is your escape route - **DO NOT OBSTRUCT IT.**

SMOKE ALARMS

Make sure you have at least one working smoke alarm on each level. If battery operated, change the battery at least once a year. Some alarms are now mains powered or fitted with long-life or sealed battery units. Check alarms regularly by pressing the test button.

WHAT TO DO IF FIRE BREAKS OUT IN YOUR FLAT

It is essential that everyone in your home knows how to escape if a fire starts

- Draw up a fire escape plan and follow it.
- Close the door of the room where the fire is and leave your flat immediately.
- Do not use balconies unless they are part of a recognised escape route.
- Once outside call the fire brigade by dialling 999. Tell them the address and what floor level the fire is on.

Remember: GET OUT, GET THE BRIGADE OUT, STAY OUT

Once clear of the building make sure you keep a safe distance to avoid being hit by falling debris.

IF A FIRE BREAKS OUT ELSEWHERE IN YOUR BUILDING

It will normally be safe to stay in your own home. Get to a window so you are seen. However, if your property is affected by heat or smoke leave by a safe route. **Remember** - always call the fire brigade.

IF YOUR ESCAPE ROUTE IS BLOCKED BY FIRE

Alert everyone and, if possible, gather everyone into one room (if possible one with a telephone).

- Don't open the door of a room if it feels warm when touched with the back of your hand.
- Once inside this "safe" room close the door and

pack towels, pillows, cushions or clothing around it to keep smoke out.

- Go to a window, open it and shout to attract attention until someone calls the fire brigade.

Stay at the open window.

• If you are on the first floor it may be possible to lower yourself from the windowsill to arm's length before dropping to the ground. First of all drop pillows or cushions to break your fall.

- If there are two adults one should go first to catch

children. Pass them down slowly, stretching to full length before letting go. No one should ever jump.

- If you are trapped in a higher storey, lean out of the open window for fresh air until the fire brigade arrives.

Regardless of whether or not you live in a flat, if you have any questions relating to your safety, please contact your local fire brigade for free advice. They can also offer you a home safety visit; this service is free, confidential and available to everyone.

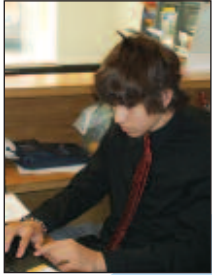
You can book your free home safety visit if you live in the Lothian & Borders area by calling 0800 169 0320 or if you are in the Central area contact 0800 012 1465.



Work Experience with Weslo

Weslo has a long association with Bathgate Academy providing one-week work experience placements for some of their 4th year students. It is very important that young people get the opportunity to experience what it is like in a work place environment and gain an insight into the skills and attitudes required by business before they leave school.

In June, we were able to provide one of their students Fraser Fairfield with an opportunity to



come work with us for a week. Fraser who was interested in experiencing an office based admin type job spent time working with staff and being shown practical examples of how things operate. Fraser who we see below while he was working in our reception said, "I learned a lot about

the working environment during my time with Weslo and enjoyed the variety of work I was able to do. I especially enjoyed my day out with Graeme Murray, Housing Inspector. Everyone made me feel so welcome; it was a good experience for me."

We were also approached by Prince's Trust Scotland to see if we could provide a two week work experience placement for one of their students who was taking part in a 12 week programme at Stevenson College in Edinburgh. The programme aims to re-engage with young people who might lack qualifications, work experience or confidence and help them to think positively about their futures.

Weslo agreed to provide a work placement for Kieran Taylor and he joined us for two weeks during July. He spent time accompanying one of our joiners Gordon Bell.



We hope that Kieran has been able to see for himself what workplace skills would benefit him in the future and that the experience will help him make an informed decision about the type of work that might suit him in the future.

We hope that students find their time spent with us both interesting and informative and we look forward to continuing to provide this worthwhile opportunity in the future.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS FOR SYLVIA

In these difficult economic times it is hard to get employment but it was quite surprising when Sylvia Okocha walked into our office asking if we would consider allowing her to work on a voluntary basis for a period of time to give her the opportunity to gain some experience of working in social housing.



After some discussion, it was agreed that Sylvia, who lives in Blackridge, would join us on a three month internship starting in October. An "internship" is quite common in industry and many students undertake an internship or work placement while they are studying, to see how their studies are applied in the "real world", and this type of work experience can be highly attractive to potential employers on a candidate's CV.

We asked Sylvia to tell us a little about her experience.

"My name is Sylvia Okocha; some time ago I attended a tenant participation meeting hosted by West Lothian Council and decided that housing might be a job that I would be interested in. After making some enquiries I decided to apply to the Chartered Institute of Housing to study for a Level Two Certificate in Housing. I finished my studies over two years ago but so far I haven't been successful in finding work in the sector.

In September, I was passing Weslo's office in Bathgate and took the bull by the horns – I came in to ask if they would give me an opportunity to gain experience in the housing sector as a volunteer. I was fortunate to be given just that by David McLaren, Housing Manager and Mike Crozier the Operations Director.

I started my internship with Weslo at the beginning of October and will finish in December. I have been introduced to the staff and been made welcome to the organisation by everyone. Each week I have worked with different members of staff, learning about each of their roles. I have experienced how an applicant on the common housing register is shortlisted and nominated for an empty house. I really enjoyed accompanying housing officers as they went about their job on a daily basis; carrying out nomination visits, mutual exchange visits, termination inspections and estate inspections. I have even learned some of the housing jargon that is used as a matter of course e.g. Notice of Proceeding (NOP), non right to buy (NRTB) and Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (SSTA), to name but a few.

I had the opportunity to work with Lesley Shade the Assistant Finance Manager who explained the processes of the finance department and gave me the opportunity to get involved in some of the day to day tasks of that department.

I chose Weslo because when I researched the organisation I learned that they knew how to look after their tenants, their properties and most of all their staff. From my time here I can honestly say that everything I read about the organisation is fact, they definitely practice what they preach. It has been brilliant to be part of this wonderful team as an Intern; it has given me a great learning experience. I now have more knowledge and a better understanding of the housing sector. This has given me the confidence to return to the work force and hopefully progress in housing.

I hope that this experience will give me a better chance to get into work and, what would be even better, the possibility of working for Weslo in the future.

I would like to thank everyone at Weslo for sharing with me their time, experience and knowledge."

Have you ever thought ... what would happen if you had a burst or frozen pipe or a burglary? How would you replace your precious possessions?

Home contents insurance – you know it makes sense

At this time of year it is especially important for you to be covered by contents insurance in case of damage to your personal possessions in your home. Over the festive season insurers receive up to 50% more claims as a result of the freezing weather. Most of these claims are for damage caused by burst pipes rather than for fire or theft but contents insurance does give peace of mind the whole year round.

It's an alarming thought, but unfortunately these things do happen. All of us believe they'll never happen to us. If they do, we wish we'd been prepared. Other, less alarming things happen too - freezers defrost, washing machines overflow. Dealing with the damage can cost a lot of money. That's where insurance comes in.

Help is at hand! As a Weslo tenant you can now arrange insurance cover for

your home contents at an affordable rate with premiums payable fortnightly, monthly, or annually by cash or direct debit. The cover, specially arranged by This Tenants Contents, has been designed to help tenants insure most of their belongings as easily as possible and also covers against theft, vandalism and fire. The minimum value of possessions that can be insured is £9,000, if aged under 60, or £6,000 if aged over 60. The fortnightly premiums start from as little as £1.53 depending on the sum insured and postcode.

You can also increase the level of cover for an additional premium to include extended accidental damage cover, cover for wheelchairs/scooters, hearing aids as well as personal effects outside your home.

So why not take out insurance now? We have leaflets and application forms available in our offices; give us a ring on 01506 634060 and we will send a pack to you. You can also download an application form from our web site at <http://www.weslo-housing.org/downloads.aspx>.

You can also contact This Tenants Contents direct on 0845 601 7007 or email: Tenantscontents@jltgroup.com. So go on – Get Covered!

Staff Changes

Since the last edition of Tenant News there have been some staff changes that you may like to know about.

In August Alison Barker took up her duties as Owners Liaison Officer. This is a new role within Weslo and while Alison is based in the Bathgate office she is responsible for engaging with owners within all our estates. This includes; organising and administering the landscape maintenance contracts, recovering common charges and charges for essential maintenance work carried out under contract. Alison has come from Shelter Scotland where she managed the online advice pages for the public and housing specialists. She also has experience of supporting young homeless people in Stirling and was a volunteer approved money adviser with Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau.



On a personal basis, Alison has had a busy time since joining Weslo; she married Gav, her partner of 9 years and they are looking forward to the safe delivery of their second child in February.

Also in August Gavin Wolfe who was Reactive and Routine Maintenance Manager moved to vacant post of Inspection & Quality Assurance Officer.



As there is an ongoing review of staff at the yard, the resulting vacancy has been filled temporarily by Stewart Whyte.



Jim Duncan joined us in October taking up the new post of Building Surveyor within the Technical Department. He will be involved in stock condition survey, managing the planned maintenance programme, technical inspections of existing and prospective Weslo assets and monitoring compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.



Victoria Clifford has been appointed on a 12 month fixed term contract to cover Alison's period of maternity leave. Vicki started on 28 November.

Another new post recently created was that of Information Communication & Technology (ICT) Officer to assist the ICT Manager develop and manage the information systems that we all take for granted on a daily basis such as telephones and computers. David Wilson joined us in August and brings 10 years experience in IT support to the company. He has previously worked with a local authority and private business. He lives locally with his partner and in his spare time enjoys water skiing - but only in the summer. In the winter he takes up a bit of snow boarding, cycling and military fitness. David said, "I am becoming increasingly familiar with Weslo's systems which are more up to date



than some I have used in the past. It is great that Weslo support their staff, enabling them to develop their skills which in IT change very quickly. I am currently undertaking night classes at the West of Scotland University with their support."

Jim has wide experience in property and construction, in both the public and private sectors and has been involved in the survey, alteration or refurbishment of property from Livingston to Liverpool, Stornoway to Stoke, Dundee to Dover, Lanark to London, Kelso to.....Kiev!



He lives in Carluke with his wife and two children. He loves music, is a keen photographer and, for his sins, is a lifelong supporter of Motherwell FC.

Helping Weslo maintain a first class technical service to its tenants is important to Jim and he very much looks forward to working with us.

The new post of Building Surveyor has been created as part of the Yard and Technical Department Review and replaces the position of Inspection and Programme Manager.



Mike Mitchell who held this post for the past six years retired recently. Mike tells us that his wife Grace has a list of jobs for him to do at home in the garden once he no longer has to come to work with Weslo.



Opposite we see Mike Crozier, Operations Director presenting Mike with a gift to commemorate his retirement. We wish Mike a long and happy retirement.

Staff Profile



Hi, my name is Margaret Walker and I am the Admin Officer in the Bathgate Office and report to Mike Bruce the Chief Executive. A few months ago I was out and about with a photographer taking some photographs to be used in the production of the latest set of Annual Accounts when I met up with Ronnie McMillan who lives in Fauldhouse.

When we got to talking, I suddenly realised that I had known Ronnie for over 30 years and that was scary. I got to thinking about what I had done in the years since starting work for Scottish Special Housing Association (SSHA) way back in 1974.

I started out working in the Housing Management Finance Department of SSHA and was based in their Head Office in Edinburgh. It was not the job that I had originally been offered but it involved my being in contact with all the area offices around Scotland, and it gave me an insight into the work that they did at a local level. I decided that I wanted to be involved at the ground level and be in contact with tenants and moved to Falkirk as a Housing Assistant delivering the housing management services. This was shortly after rent collections were stopped so tenants were used to seeing staff on their estates on a very regular basis. It was probably on a walk round of the estate that I first came into contact with Ronnie all those years ago. Above is a photograph of the staff responsible for West Lothian – I am the one on the right.



I moved to Bathgate in 1984 as Senior Housing Assistant; this was at the same time as Elaine, who is also mentioned elsewhere in this edition, started. This was an interesting time as we took over responsibility for estates on the east side of West Lothian which had previously been managed by staff in Edinburgh. Staff in the new office came from Falkirk and Edinburgh offices to oversee the completion of large modernisation programmes of the non traditional houses throughout West Lothian as well as dealing with the day to day management of all the estates.

However, as we all know too well, nothing stays the same for too long - SSHA became Scottish Homes, there was new housing legislation and the idea of Weslo was born. In 1991, on my return from maternity leave, I was asked if I would undertake a secondment to Housing Support Services in Edinburgh to learn more about the strategic processes in housing and in March 1994 I returned to Weslo in my new post of Admin Officer. This job has continued to evolve over time as circumstances change. I am involved in advising tenants on buying their homes and advising owners of their options to come back to social housing, I work with colleagues and tenants on the Tenant Participation Committee, I am responsible for preparing the annual statistical reports for the Scottish Housing Regulator and for procuring corporate items including corporate clothing for staff and tradesmen. This list of tasks is not exhaustive but I am also the person responsible for creating this publication since the first edition was published in February 1994 (see below).



This is a very time consuming task, producing two copies a year takes a lot of organising to make sure that you get the most up to date information about what is going on in Weslo. I try wherever possible to include photos that allow you to put a face to a name of staff who may have written to you but you have never met and, more importantly, I try to make the articles informative and interesting for you to read.

Over the years the layout of the Tenant News has changed, the most recent being to produce it in a smaller magazine format making it a bit more modern and hopefully easier for you to read.

I would love to hear what you think of the Tenant News? Are you interested in the articles that are featured? Are there other things that we should be telling you about? Why not give me a ring on 01506 639121, e-mail margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk or write to me at 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP.

Paperless repairs

In the summer edition of Tenant News we told you about the introduction of personal data assistants or PDA's. This is a type of handheld computer that you might have seen parcel delivery agents use; they often ask you to sign the PDA when they have delivered a parcel to you.

The initial roll out of system saw us use the PDA units to carry out surveys of Weslo houses, the information from these surveys has given us a clearer picture of the condition of the properties and will be used to assist us in developing programmes of work to ensure that we are Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compliant by 2015.

The next stage of the project is scheduled for the beginning of 2012 when our tradesmen will be able to receive and complete job lines for repairs, book out and assign materials for the specific job through the PDA unit - all over the mobile phone network.

Rob Tait , Technical Unit Manager said, "Introducing this new technology will allow us to cut down on the amount of paper used, jobs will be issued much quicker and orders for material will be sent directly to the supplier. The new process will also speed up the financial process for paying suppliers."



How do you like your new look Weslo News? Why not let Margaret know your thoughts on it. Write to her at 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate EH48 4PP or email margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk

New Office accommodation taking shape

Since August work has been underway to extend and upgrade our maintenance yard at 37 Glasgow Road Bathgate. The contractor is Flemings Buildings Limited and you can see the work in progress from the attached photographs. We still have a working area at the yard and tradesman and staff are there on a regular basis however the office based yard staff have been 'rehoused' in temporary premises at 31b North Bridge Street, opposite our main office.

The works are scheduled to complete before the end of the year and whilst staff have settled well into their temporary home, as we can see below, they are all looking forward to moving into their new offices early in the new year.

Rob Tait, Technical Unit Manager said, "There will be operational benefits when we move back to the yard and the move will allow us to fully adopt the new working practices we are developing at the moment".

Our summer 2012 newspaper will have an update on how things have gone – so watch this space!



Weslo Works

At the time of writing, the 2011/12 Planned Maintenance Programme is almost complete. As you are aware there have been a lot of changes in the past 10 months including the reorganisation of staff within the Maintenance Department and the temporary relocation of the office staff to allow the building works to be undertaken at our premises in Glasgow Road. As a result of this we have not yet been able to complete our review of the programme and are unable to bring you up to date at this time.

Rob Tait, Technical Unit Manager and Jim Duncan, Building Surveyor are currently working on feedback on this years programme and discussing proposals for the 2012/13 Planned Maintenance Programme. These reports will be put to Weslo's Board for consideration at their meeting on 1 February.

It is anticipated that we will continue to invest in excess of £1million annually, in accordance with our 30 year Business Plan and work will be prioritised to ensure, wherever possible, that your home complies with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015. Details of the proposed work programme will be included in the rent increase notification letter that will be sent to you in February 2012. However, we are able to say that the type of work being considered for the 2012/13 programme looks like this:

- Replacement of inefficient central heating systems
- Electrical upgrades and 10 year electrical checks
- Installation of mechanical ventilation to bathrooms and kitchens
- Roofing works
- Insulating render on the outside of buildings
- External painterwork
- Works to common closes/stairs
- Landscaping and fencing

What do you think of these proposals? Are we setting the right priorities? Why not drop us a line telling us what you think?

Write to Margaret Walker, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP or email margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk.

Who's who in Estates?

There have been a number of changes in the Estate Management Team in the last few months in Bathgate. We thought that it would be useful to provide you with a new list detailing Who's Who in the Estates sections in Bathgate and Bo'ness.

Bathgate Office

Below we see Gillian McAllister, Assistant Housing Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the eight staff and reports directly to David McLaren, Housing Manager.

Gillian can be contacted on 01506 639146 or gillian.mcallister@weslohm.co.uk



The Bathgate team consists of 4 Housing Officers - Gregor Colville, Janice Gray, June Harper and Jessie McCue, 3 Housing Support Officers - Linda Gibson, Linda Kesson and Pam Menzies and Admin Assistant Christine Wood.

Estate staff are already scheduling the 2012 estate inspections and for the first time they will be accompanied by Technical Officers who will be available to comment and offer advice on any issues that they identify. You will of course be written to nearer the time to let you know in more detail when these visits will take place and to invite you to raise any issues you may have directly with your housing officer. Provisional dates for these inspections have been included with the information below.

Who should you contact if you have an issue with your tenancy? Below is a list of the teams' areas, direct dial telephone numbers and e-mail details.



Estates

Addiebrownhill, Addiewell, Armadale, Dedridge, Kirkton, Race Road and Stoneyburn.

Housing Officer June Harper 01506 639124
june.harper@weslohm.co.uk

Housing Support Officer Linda Kesson 01506 639138
linda.kesson@weslohm.co.uk

Estate Inspections have been scheduled for May 2012.

Below we see June and Linda busy at work.



Blackburn, Broxburn, East Calder, Edinburgh, Kirknewton, Ladywell, Livingston Station, Mid Calder, Pumpherstons, Uphall, West Calder and Winchburgh

Housing Officer Jessie McCue 01506 639126
jessie.mccue@weslohm.co.uk

Housing Support Officer Linda Gibson 01506 639134
linda.gibson@weslohm.co.uk

Estate Inspections have been scheduled for March 2012.

Below we see Jessie and Linda discussing a case.



Falside, Fauldhouse, Polbeth and Whitburn

Housing Officer Gregor Colville 01506 639118
gregor.colville@weslohm.co.uk

Housing Support Officer Pam Menzies 01506 639125
pam.menzies@weslohm.co.uk

Estate Inspections have been scheduled for June 2012.

Below we see Gregor and Pam at work



Belvedere, South & North Lanarkshire

Housing Officer Janice Gray 01506 639133
janice.gray@weslohm.co.uk

Estate Inspections have been scheduled for April 2012.

Below we see Christine Wood and Janice as they discuss the findings of a recent report.

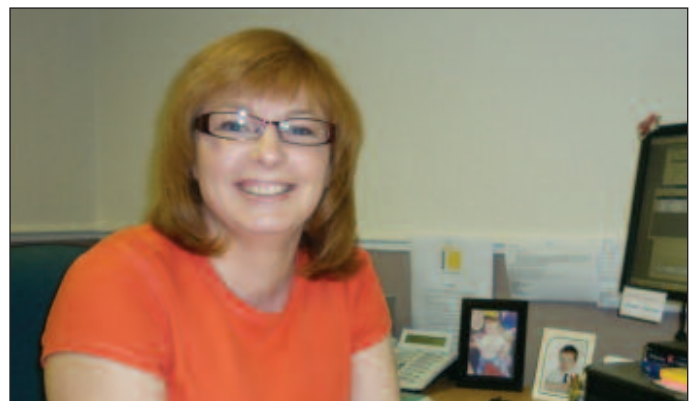


Bo'ness Office

The staff setup in Bo'ness is different to that in Bathgate. Susan Anderson, Estates Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of staff in the Bo'ness office and reports directly to David McLaren, Housing Manager but she also has responsibility to manage properties in Kinneil, Bo'mains and Linlithgow. Spring estate inspections have been scheduled for these estates in March 2012. Susan can be contacted on 01506 639104, susan.anderson@weslohm.co.uk.



Donna Jack, Housing Officer has responsibility for Maidenpark, Newtown, Grahamsdyke, Bo'ness Town Centre and Falkirk properties and she will be also be completing her Spring estate inspections during March 2012. She can be contacted on 01506 639103, donna.jack@weslohm.co.uk.



The Housing Support role is shared between Fiona McCulloch and Julie Cowan who job share. Fiona works Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning and Julie works Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday. They can both be contacted on 01506 639102 or fiona.mcculloch@weslohm.co.uk or julie.cowan@weslohm.co.uk

Below we see Julie and Fiona.



Improving on the Improvement Process

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that if you are planning to carry out any alterations or improvements to your home then you need to get our permission, in writing, before carrying out any work.

You must get our permission if you want to:

- alter, improve or enlarge your home
- add new fixtures or fittings (e.g. bathroom suite, driveway, laminate flooring*, satellite dish**)
- put up a garage, garden hut, or any other other structure.

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and The Scottish Secure Tenants (Compensation for Improvements) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 tenants have the right to undertake alterations and improvements to their home **provided their landlords consent in writing**. A landlord cannot unreasonably withhold consent and we will only refuse permission if there is good reason to do so. Although, where we grant permission, we reserve the right to add conditions.

Under certain circumstances, where a tenant has carried out certain qualifying works with our consent, and met all qualifying conditions, they, or other qualifying persons, are entitled to be compensated for these works when the tenancy ends. We may, even if you do not qualify in terms of the relevant regulations, make a discretionary payment.

If you make any alterations or improvements without our permission, we are entitled to restore the house to its previous condition during, or at the end of, your tenancy. If we do so, we are entitled to charge you for this work.

In the past we have identified unauthorised work that has been carried out by tenants without the proper skills which has created serious health and safety risks that could have put them, their families and their neighbours at risk. **For these reasons it is vitally important that you seek our permission before carrying out work in your home.**

You can download an application form at <http://www.weslo-housing.org>

or ring us on 01506 634060 and we will arrange to post out an application form to you. Our qualified technical staff will be happy to offer you advice that could save you unnecessary work and expense. Housing Manager, David McLaren said, "Always keep safety in mind before you do any DIY activity. Use caution, care and good judgement - if in doubt, don't!

* Permission will not be granted for an upper flat.

** This is for technical reasons relating to positioning and fixing the dish.

Satisfaction Survey Kiosks

We recently installed touch screen computers in our offices in Bo'ness and Bathgate to allow tenants and other callers to tell us what they feel about the service they have received. During the month of October, a total of 94 people completed the questionnaire. Of those 84 were tenants, 3 were owner occupiers and 7 were people making general enquiries. We try to ensure that callers are not kept waiting at the reception areas unreasonably so it is satisfying to know that 82 individuals during this period were able to have their enquiry dealt with immediately, 9 were kept waiting for less than three minutes and only 3 had to wait longer.

One caller felt that their wait was unreasonable and that their enquiry was not dealt with discreetly. In this situation we should have been able to offer the privacy of an interview room. Unfortunately we are unable to determine whether a room was available at that time. We would remind you that if your enquiry is of a sensitive nature and you would prefer to discuss the matter in private, we can arrange this but it may mean that you have to wait if the rooms are in use. Tenant satisfaction is something that Weslo consider paramount in conducting business and we are constantly striving to increase the levels of satisfaction that we provide and the sources of the information.

Tenant feedback is a crucial part of assessing the level of service that we provide, so the next time you are in the office please take 20 seconds to let us know your impressions and assist us in improving the level of service that we provide for you.



A fond farewell

There were quite a few tears shed in July when staff bid their farewell to Elaine Batty, Weslo's Finance Manager when she took early retirement.

Elaine had served 5 years in the Wrens, serving in Cornwall and Gibraltar. She left the service when she met and married her husband Frank, who was also in the Royal Navy. They relocated to Scotland and then she began her career in housing. She took up a job as a Counter Supervisor in the Rosyth office of Scottish Special Housing Association (SSHA) in May 1980; very



Above, we see Elaine with some of her staff.

convenient as she only lived a short distance away. She was appointed to the post of Senior Assistant – Finance for the new office in Bathgate that SSHA planned to open in 1984 as part of their restructuring. At that time she had to manage a staff complement of four, 1^{1/2} in the finance department and 2^{1/2} in the housing benefit department. When she left she was responsible for nine staff. When the stock transferred to Weslo in March 1994, Elaine was appointed Finance Manager reporting directly to Douglas Drummond the Finance Director. We asked Elaine to tell us what she recalls as being the highs and lows of her time in Bathgate.

"So much has happened in the 27 years since I took up the post in Bathgate, it is difficult to remember them all but I do have to say that the introduction of technology has played a big part in the work I was involved in. My role included responsibility for Information & Communication Technology (ICT) and when we moved to Bathgate initially we had two word processors and one personal computer. Now every member of staff has a computer on their desk without which they wouldn't be able to do their job. We used to correspond by memo, using what we referred to as ping pongs; getting responses could take ages. Today we send e-mails that arrive on the recipient's computer seconds after it is sent and if they have a mobile phone, it pops up on the phone - there is no escape. Thankfully, Weslo appointed an ICT Manager in 2008 and this added experience has benefitted the organisation.

Being involved in the stock transfer process was a memorable experience; to hear first hand from tenants how they appreciated what staff did for them and, more importantly, how they would support the move to Weslo was fantastic. I hope that we have done them proud.

I have loved every minute of the job but am looking forward to spending more time with Frank who has been retired for the last six years. We will have more time to visit our family in Essex and take holidays whenever we please. We are both keen golfers, so we plan to spend more time on the green but I will also be able to help out the treasurer when she needs it. I have one project in mind, which is to redesign the garden. I'm sure it will take up a lot of our time but it will be worth it. I am looking forward to having some me time, putting the Kindle that my colleagues presented to me on my retirement to good use."

Everyone at Weslo would like to wish Elaine a long and happy retirement.

Working together on your behalf

Over the past six months, the Tenant Participation Committee has spent time considering two consultation documents. The first was the Scottish Government's draft Social Housing Charter. The Charter is part of new arrangements to ensure that tenants and other customers of social landlords receive continually improving services. When it is introduced in April 2012, the Charter will set the outcomes and standards that all social landlords, such as Weslo and local authorities with responsibility to manage properties, should be achieving. The new Scottish Housing Regulator will monitor, assess and report on how well the landlords do. The views expressed by committee members were taken into consideration and incorporated into Weslo's formal response which was submitted on 1 November.



The second consultation under consideration was the new Scottish Housing Regulator's document outlining its approach to regulation of the sector when it takes over this role, again in April 2012. It was keen to hear the views of tenants, landlords and others with an interest in social housing.

Housing Officer Jessie McCue, Housing Support Officer Pamela Menzies and Tenant Participation Committee members Janette Wallace, Colin Torrie and Hugh Ruck were able to attend presentations by the Scottish Government and the new Scottish Housing Regulator on the consultations when they attended the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) annual conference in October.

Pamela, who was attending her first TPAS conference, was pleased to have the opportunity to get to know the tenants in a less formal setting, away from work. On the subject of the draft Tenants Charter she said, "I am confident that Weslo will meet the Charter outcomes as long as it is seen that we are seeking the tenants' views and encouraging consultation in the service delivery. While I appreciate we can take these views into account there are decisions that require to be made at a business level based on experience, knowledge and capability; this is where the Tenant Directors have direct influence on the decisions being made."

How's it going?

Each year we complete an Annual Performance and Statistical Report to the Scottish Housing Regulator. They use this data, along with other financial information, to produce performance tables of all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) for benchmarking purposes. Once the information is collated, RSLs are able to compare their performance against other similar type organisations.

In addition to this we choose to Benchmark our performance against a group of Registered Social Landlords who have similar collective interests to our own. Through this group we are able to see how well, or not, we might be doing in comparison to their performance. It also enables us to explore and share best practice within these organisations.

So how are we doing in the first six months of this year?

Last year, approximately 51% of our tenants claimed housing benefit to pay some, if not all of their rent. At the mid year point, approximately 54% of Weslo tenants were in receipt of housing benefit. We continue to work very closely with Local Authority Revenues Departments to ensure that benefit applications are processed as quickly as possible.

How are we doing against the Benchmark Group averages?

		August 2011	Group Average
Number of Properties		2194	1461
Arrears	Current Tenants	3.79%	3.67%
	Former Tenants	0.97%	1.26%
Annual Rent	Average Rent	£3,309.12	£3,355.92
	Rent Increase 2011	5%	5.15%
Void Properties	Number of relets	74	54
	Average number of days to relet property	43	26.7
Repair Response Times	%age of all repairs completed within target timescales	99.86%	96.71%
	%age of Gas Annual Services completed within 12 months of previous service	100%	99.60%

We are constantly looking at ways to obtain your feedback on the services and we would like to hear what you think of our performance this year. Why not contact Margaret Walker on 01506 639121 or email margaret.walker@weslohm.co.uk.

Colin, who has been a member of the committee for a long time said, "We have repeatedly discussed at committee meeting ways that we might encourage Weslo tenants to become more engaged but without success. I'm sure that there are other tenants who don't have issues with their landlord and who choose not to be actively involved but I don't feel that this is being recognised by either the Scottish Government or the Regulator."

Once again these views were incorporated into Weslo's submission at the end of November. Both responses can be viewed at www.weslo-housing.org. Above we see the Weslo delegates at the TPAS conference and once again they all reported that it had been a very interesting and stimulating conference.

We hope that if you had the opportunity to read the consultation documents while visiting our website at www.weslo-housing.org you were able to make your personal views known. We will of course update the website with developments as these become available.

In January Gregor Colville, Housing Officer and Linda Gibson, Housing Support Officer will take over from Jessie and Pam on the Tenant Participation Committee. We are keen to encourage tenants to be involved in the management of their homes and if you are interested in being consulted on changes or would like to come along to the Tenant Participation Committee meetings, please phone David McLaren, Housing Manager on 01506 639120 or write to him at 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP. If you can't spare the time but would like to keep involved in what we're doing and have an e-mail address, why not register with our electronic focus group? This is a group of tenants who we contact by email in order that they can comment on Weslo services, new policies and initiatives. If you have a current email address and you wish to be involved; please email your name and address to enquiries@weslohm.co.uk and we will arrange for a member of staff to contact you.

Weslo has four places reserved on its Board for Tenant Directors and at our AGM in July 2012 two of the current Tenant Directors will be retiring. Mike Crozier, Operations Director will be writing out to you in February to explain the process and asking if you are interested in being more involved in influencing how Weslo operates. In the meantime if you would like more information about being a Tenant Director please contact Anne Arnott on 01506 634286.

What do you think of our proposed changes to our Allocation Policy? Do you think you should be able to transfer to another Weslo property?

This is your opportunity to tell us what you think about how we will allocate our properties in the future.

As you may be aware Weslo has been a partner in the West Lothian Common Housing Register (CHR) with Almond Housing Association and West Lothian Council since it was established in 2007. The idea behind the CHR was to streamline the process of applying for housing, making it easier and simpler.

You may recall we told you of our intention in the June edition of Tenant News to introduce changes in the way that we allocate by using a group quota system and allocating 50% of vacancies ourselves. While this is in its early stages we still feel that the system operating in West Lothian is not creating mixed, balanced and sustainable communities as quickly as it could be and in an effort to achieve this aim we are considering a further change to our allocation policy. It is proposed to introduce a transfer led approach with the initial vacancy being offered to an existing Weslo transfer tenant and the resulting vacancy being offered to an applicant from the West Lothian CHR or from Falkirk Council waiting list.

Holding our own transfer waiting list would, we believe, help stabilise estates by satisfying local demand first, help us make the best use of the stock through our local knowledge, and most importantly give us more control and the ability to respond directly to local needs.

Having our own transfer waiting list would also give us more opportunity to offer our tenants the chance to secure accommodation more suited to the household's circumstances. This would benefit tenants who are overcrowded but more importantly tenants who are under occupying their home and who may be affected by the changes to Housing Benefit entitlement from April 2013.

The Scottish Government's March 2011 publication Social Housing Allocations: A Practice Guide states "Housing demand comes from both new applicants and existing tenants. There are a variety of ways you can manage these pressures. Some landlords use quotas and targets in their allocation policy or lettings plan. Others adopt a transfer led approach with the initial vacancy being offered to a transfer tenant and the resulting vacancy being offered to a direct applicant from the housing list or register". The guide goes on to say "You should consult with your tenants if you are considering such an approach".

Another change we wish to introduce is giving priority to ex-service men and women who may be struggling to find a home in West Lothian when they leave the armed forces. We propose adding this new category to our group quota system and commit 5% of our lets to those looking for a home. A consequence of this planned change would be to reduce our Homeless quota from 15 to 10% however we do not consider this compromises our commitment to the homeless.

We have already consulted on this with the Scottish Housing Regulator, West Lothian and Falkirk Councils and our Tenant Participation Committee. We have also written to Weslo tenants who are on the CHR. **We would like to hear what you think of our plans. This is your opportunity to tell us how you think we should be allocating homes in your area. Are we getting it right or wrong?**

Please forward any comments you wish to make to David McLaren, Housing Manager, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate EH48 4PP or email david.mclaren@weslohm.co.uk.

Free help to save energy and money this winter



At this time of year the cost of heating our homes can eat into our household budgets. If you would like to stay warm and spend less on gas and electricity the Home Energy Scotland Hotline may be able to help.

Funded by the Scottish Government, they can advise you on the best available fuel tariffs, benefit entitlements, free insulation and central heating.

You can call the hotline free on **0800 512 012** or text **WARM** to **81025** and they will call you back.

When you call the hotline, a trained advisor will give you tailored energy advice for your property. Your call could lead to other forms of support including:

- Referrals for tax credit or benefit checks to make sure you are receiving all the help you're entitled to. So far they have helped family households increase their income on average by £2,200 per year, and pensioner households by £1,300 per year.
- Signposting the cheapest tariff and payment method from your supplier.
- Referrals to further support from other local services.

Mrs I, a lone parent with two children under 16, was referred to Home Energy Scotland for advice. She worked full time but wanted to reduce her hours to spend more time with her youngest child, who has severe behavioural problems. She found that she was entitled to Disability Living Allowance for her youngest child which increased her Child Tax Credit. She was able to cut her working hours by one day a week yet her income increased by £80.18 a week.

Mrs B, who is over 80, was referred and given advice that will save her £150 this winter. She changed her gas and electricity suppliers and is now benefitting from cheaper fuel costs. As she gets Pension Credit she is also eligible for a rebate from her supplier.

To find out if you can make savings you can contact the hotline direct on 0800 512 012.

We have teamed up with Home Energy Scotland to offer you a FREE TV Powerdown Plug. This could help you cut the cost of using your TV, DVD, Freeview and consoles. Just hit the 'off' button on your TV remote and all your appliances will power down – no more standby! The plug can cut between £30 and £40 a year off your electricity bills.

To claim your FREE Powerdown Plug, cut out the attached slip and return it to **Weslo Housing Management, FREEPOST EH2783, EH48 8BR**. You will receive a free follow-up call from the Home Energy Hotline to see what else you can do to cut your bills and make your home warmer.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

The Energy Saving Trust is collecting your data for the purpose of providing you with a free TV Powerdown Plug. The Energy Saving Trust will retain your data as a record that this has been supplied. In future, the Energy Saving Trust may wish to contact you with further information including details of grants and special promotions which can help reduce your energy bills and your impact on the environment. If you do not want to receive this help, please cross here

Charity works in Weslo

In the June edition of Tenant News we told you that staff had chosen the ANSWER project which is based in Whitburn as their chosen Charity of the Year. This is a project that provides support to people in the community with or affected by dementia. ANSWER works closely in developing links with health and social services and raising the awareness of the needs of older people in the community. The project helps prevent unnecessary admissions to institutional care as well as educating older people in their rights to welfare benefits and how to access information technology.

At Halloween we held a fundraising event where staff could dress up; we did consider asking if you could identify who the member of staff is but as **we** found it almost impossible to tell, we didn't think that was too fair to ask you.



We wish him lots of luck in his 2012 campaign when he will be competing in the 85cc class.

On the right we see Alexander as he gets airborne off one of the jumps while in action in Italy and showing off that well travelled



Weslo flag. 2012. In the meantime, a bit closer to home, he organised a "spinning" fundraiser at Marks and Spencer in Princes Street over the September holiday weekend and raised a fantastic £1,095. Well done Gordon.

Mike Bruce, Chief Executive also had to decide who would win the best decorated entry. Below we see him deliberating over some decorated cakes as a ghoul looks over his shoulder.



Once again staff were fully supportive of the event and raised £135 bringing the total so far this year to over £1,000.

In addition to raising funds for the staff charity, our Community Budget Committee consider requests for assistance from a variety of local groups, some of those we have been able to help are featured below.

We recently donated £100 to Alexander Brown, an up and coming young motocross champion from Whitburn. Alexander had been invited to compete in the World Junior Motocross Championship in Cingoli in Italy. The event took place in August and Alexander finished 7th in the 65cc class. During 2011 he has finished 1st in the British Youth Championship and 1st in the Red Bull Elite Youth Championship – as he says himself, "Not bad for a 10 year old".

Weslo flag.

In August Vicky McIllduff asked staff and friends if they were interested in sponsoring her dad, Eddie, who was taking part in the Ben Nevis Challenge organised through his work at Royal Mail. Eddie, who we see below, is a well kent face in Fauldhouse where he is the postie in the West End. Vicky raised £82 from the sale of her home made birthday and celebration cards and Weslo's Community Budget committee donated an i-pod which was raffled at a local charity fund raising event in August. The total raised was £5,144.88 in aid of Eddie's chosen charity CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young).



Some of you may recall that we supported Gordon Smith in his 249 mile cycle challenge in the Canadian Rockies in July 2010 when he raised over £10,000 in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care. He continues to support this particular charity and plans to ride from Lands End to John O'Groats in July



We donated i-pods to Polbeth United FC to raffle to raise funds for new

kits and training equipment and to Fauldhouse Playgroup to raffle to raise funds for the childrens Christmas party.

With Christmas on the way we have also donated Kindles to Our Lady's Primary School, Stoneyburn, Shieldhill Primary School and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Blackburn as raffle prizes for their assorted Christmas events.

Do you know of any group or worthy cause that might benefit from our assistance? Please write to: Weslo Housing Management Community Budget Committee, 66 North Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 4PP.



