

larkfield news

creating a better neighbourhood



Covid-19 service update

If you have a general enquiry, please continue to contact us on **01475 630 930**. Please be aware, staff working remotely may contact you using mobile numbers you may not recognise.

Essential home visits can still be carried out and a risk assessment process is in place to assess the potential risk for tenants, contractors and staff prior to any visit taking place. We will also ask you questions to ensure that neither you nor anyone in your household is showing Coronavirus symptoms on the day of your planned visit. Any personal information will be handled in line with GDPR.

The MyLarkfield App is an easy way to access our services. Pay your rent, make a complaint, update your details, report a repair, or send us an enquiry. Find out more by visiting www.larkfieldha.org.uk/mylarkfield.

Repairs – Following the Scottish Government's easing of lockdown restrictions in April, we can now resume our full repairs and maintenance service and have been working with our contractors to attend to the backlog of repairs.

If you have previously reported a repair to us, you should have now received a call from our contractor, Link Property, or a Larkfield staff member to discuss the repair and make an appointment to carry out works, if required.

As you can appreciate, it may us a bit of time to get through the outstanding repairs. Thanks for your patience and co-operation during this time.

Welcome to the latest edition of Larkfield News.

I'm delighted to have been appointed as Larkfield's new chairperson, after Sheralee Miller stepped down from the Management Committee in January.

On behalf of all the committee members and staff team, I would like to note our thanks to Sheralee for all her hard work and commitment to Larkfield and its tenants over the last six years. We wish her the best for the future.

Inside, you will find an update on our services, stock investment plan and rent consultation response, as well as information on ways to pay your rent, annual owners charge and our new Energy Activators project.

As we begin to look forward to the summer (and hopefully an end to some of the lockdown restrictions), I want to say thank you to you all for sticking with it and supporting each other and the staff team.

We want you to know that we are still here to support you while we continue to provide a remote housing service.

Suzanne Harris
Chairperson

£370k investment for Larkfield homes



In 2020, some of our planned programme of works had to be put on hold due to the Covid-19 and the restrictions that followed. We did, however, complete external lighting improvements to 347 homes and carried out smoke alarm and heat detector upgrade works to 122 properties.

32 adaptations were carried out and gas safety checks were completed across all our stock.

In 2021, we'll focus on compliance safety works within the home and external decoration and lighting works. More details of the planned improvement works for 2021 will be issued to those affected in the next few months.

- Energy efficiency/ improvements works - targeted properties/blocks
- Electrical safety testing – 25% of properties
- External decoration works – Auchmead Road, Cambridge Road, Devon Road, Dorset Road, Essex Road, Lincoln Road, Oxford Road, Pembroke Road, Suffolk Road and Warwick Road
- Internal fire detection upgrades – remaining properties
- Internal replacement doors (phase 1 – up to 30 properties)
- External lighting (phase 2)
- External roughcasting improvement works - Banff Road flats

Owner occupiers - annual charge due for 2020/21

Larkfield owners (former Scottish Homes properties) should expect to receive their annual invoice for all maintenance works carried out during the last 12 months by the end of June 2021.

The annual charge covers the shared owner costs for the maintenance of common areas (footpaths, walkways, and grassed areas) covered within the Larkfield Title Deed. The maintenance of these common areas is the collective responsibility of all Larkfield owners (of former Scottish Homes properties), including Larkfield Housing Association.

If you are a new owner or bought your house during the last year, please contact the staff team to let us know (if your solicitor has not already done so) and we can update your details and re-calculate the sum due to be paid by you.

Annual rent increase consultation results

In November of last year, we asked for your feedback on our proposed rent increase options of 1.5% and 2%, from April 2021. We received 77 responses – a 20% response rate.

- The highest response rate was from those aged 55-64.
- 8% of respondents said they were experiencing difficulties in paying their rent.
- 40% of respondents said they could just about afford their rent.
- 46% of respondents believed their rent was very easy or fairly easy to afford.
- 86% of respondents agreed they had received enough information to help them consider the rent increase proposal.
- From the two proposed rent increase choices:
 - 75% said their preferred option was a rent increase of 1.5%
 - 21% said their preferred choice was a 2% increase and
 - 4% did not respond to the question.

In January, the management committee agreed to implement a rent increase of 1.5% from April 2021, taking account of the:

- responses from tenants to the consultation and proposals;
- increase proposed by other housing associations operating in the local area; and
- budget requirements for the business including future investment to our stock.

In applying this rent increase, we can:

- assist our tenants who are experiencing financial hardship;
- apply a rent increase which will fall below several other housing associations operating within Inverclyde; and
- still make adequate budgetary provision for both short- and long-term needs of the business

Thanks to everyone who took the time to comment and respond to our rent increase consultation. The winners of the hampers were Mrs Mailley, Mr Hamilton and Ms Boyd.



Paying rent is not a choice

Rent is our main source of income.

We can't provide our service or maintain and improve our homes without it. It is a condition of your tenancy agreement that rent is paid in advance on or before the first day of every month.

Although nearly two-thirds of our tenants get help with their rent through Housing Benefit (or the housing element of Universal Credit), every tenant is responsible for making sure their rent is paid on time.

If you are struggling to pay your bills due to benefit cuts and rising household costs, we can help. If you don't pay, we may have to take legal action which could result in you losing your home.

Ways to pay your rent

By phone Pay by credit or debit card over the phone. Make sure you have your allpay reference number to hand. Call allpay free on **0330 041 6497** (24-hour automated service) or call us on **01474 630930**. To download the allpay app for your mobile phone, please refer to the **www.allpay.net/app**

Direct Debit Paying by direct debit is worry free and ensures your rent is paid each month. Payment is taken directly from your bank account. This is a paperless process and can be set up over the phone using your account number and sort code.

Text - Debit or credit card payments can be made using your mobile phone - register first at **www.allpayments.net/textpay/login.aspx**

Online Pay online using either a debit or credit card by visiting the allpay website at **www.allpayments.net**. Make sure you have a note of your allpay reference number.

Pay by cheque or postal order Please make the cheque payable to "Larkfield Housing Association", write your name and address on the back and then hand it in or post it to the office. We will issue with a receipt after each payment has been made. If a cheque is dishonoured, we reserve the right to make a charge against your account to cover bank charges plus handling costs.

Pay in person You can use your payment card to pay your rent at any shop or outlet where you see the "Paypoint" logo.

At the Post Office You can use payment card to pay your rent at any Post Office.

MyLarkfield app You can use the MyLarkfield app to make your rent payments too.



Have you followed us on social media yet?

 [Facebook.com/LarkfieldHousing](https://www.facebook.com/LarkfieldHousing)

Gas safety

Please allow us access to your home for your annual gas safety check and service.

This service keeps you safe, prevents breakdowns and maintains the efficiency of your boiler, saving you money.

Failure to allow access is a breach of your tenancy agreement and can result in us forcing entry to your home and disconnecting your gas supply as a safety precaution.



What to do if you smell gas

Do:

- Open doors and windows to allow fresh air in.
- Turn off the gas at the mains tap, which is usually near the meter. Move the handle a quarter turn until it's at 90 degrees from the pipe to shut off the gas supply.
- Leave the property.
- Phone the National Gas Emergencies number on **0800 111 999**. Only use a mobile phone from outside the property. The number is free and available 24 hours a day.
- Follow the advice given by the emergency adviser.
- Wait outside for a gas engineer to arrive.
- If you are feeling unwell, visit your GP or hospital immediately. Tell them you may have been exposed to a gas leak or carbon monoxide poisoning.



Don't:

- Smoke, light a match or use any other naked flame.
- Turn any electrical switches on or off.
- Use doorbells, mobile phones or any other electrical switches which could cause a spark.



Estate management

During the next few months, our housing management team will be stepping up its estate inspections and checking everyone's gardens and common areas. This helps us ensure your estate is clean and tidy and you're able to enjoy your garden.

Please ensure your garden and hedges are regularly maintained and free from litter and rubbish.

Larkfield Food Share

Larkfield Food Share runs on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 11am from Larkfield Community Hall on Lothian Road. Please bring your own bag, mask and remember to socially distance when queuing.

Food Share has been set up by the community to help tackle food waste.

Are you struggling with your energy bills?



If you're worried about your energy bills or are struggling with tariffs and/or prepayment metres, help is at hand!

We have teamed up with Wise Group's Energy Activators to help you, and Oaktree and Cloch Housing Association tenants.

Chris Auld and Jonathon Moore, who now work full time with the project, are experts on energy advice and dealing with energy debt.

They can also give you advice about the £75 affordable warmth grant, which is funded by the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme www.energyredress.org.uk.

If you need any advice or assistance, please call the office on **01475 630930**.



Are you an EU national living in the UK?

The UK has now left the European Union.

EU citizens and their families will now have to apply to the UK Government's EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021 to continue living, working and studying in the UK after that date.

Who is eligible/who should apply?

- EU citizens and any of their family members who are not UK citizens must apply.
- Those with permanent residence documents must apply.
- Citizens of Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Switzerland must apply.
- Irish citizens do not need to apply but can if they wish. There are separate arrangements for Irish citizens under the Common Travel Area. Non-Irish family members will need to apply.
- EU citizens with indefinite leave to remain or enter the UK (ILR) do not need to apply but can apply if they wish to do so.

To find out more, visit www.mygov.scot/brexit/eu-citizens-scotland

If in doubt, keep them out!

Police Scotland is committed to reducing the number of individuals affected by doorstep crime to keep vulnerable groups safe and empower local communities.

Doorstep crime affects some of the most vulnerable in society, mainly targeting victims due to perceived vulnerability (age/gender/disability), with many becoming repeat victims.



What can I do?

- Be on guard if someone turns up unexpectedly
- Be aware of methods used by criminals to distract you such as being asked to make a telephone call, asking to retrieve a ball or being asked to check water or gas supplies
- Don't keep large amounts of money at home
- Do your premises or garden really require work to be carried out
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is
- Keep an eye out for and be vigilant for vulnerable neighbours who may fall foul of these criminals
- Think about calling the police when you see anything suspicious

Never let an unknown person into your home. If you're not sure, don't answer the door.

Who should I call if I feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious of a caller?

- Contact the police immediately on **999**

If I see something suspicious in my area, or want more advice about doorstep crime?

- Contact the police on **101**
- Try and take a note of vehicle details or registration numbers and descriptions of anyone suspicious

If I want to contact the police anonymously?

- Contact the independent charity Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**. You can also visit www.crimestoppers-uk.org

To find out more about home safety services?

- Contact your local police station on **101** to arrange a free security survey



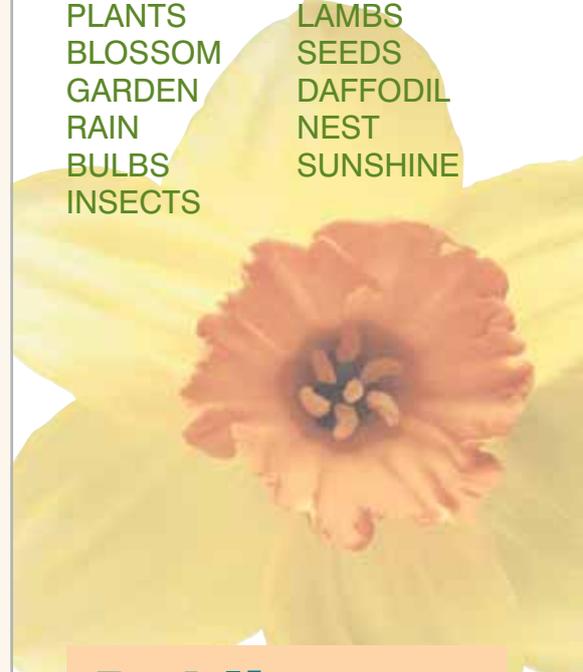
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To win a **£25 Amazon voucher**, send your completed entry to Larkfield Housing Association, 14 Lothian Road, Greenock, PA16 0PG



BLOOM
FLOWERS
PLANTS
BLOSSOM
GARDEN
RAIN
BULBS
INSECTS

SEASON
CHICK
LAMBS
SEEDS
DAFFODIL
NEST
SUNSHINE



Name.....
Address.....
.....
Contact number

Public holidays

Please note we will be closed on Friday 2 and Monday 5 July 2021.



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e: info@larkfieldha.org.uk
www.larkfieldha.org.uk

Office opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am – 4pm
Wednesday 9am – 12.30pm. Closed Wednesday afternoon.

Larkfield Housing Association will produce this information on request in Braille, Audio Tape, Large Print and Community Languages. Larkfield Housing Association Limited is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, Registered Number: 2509 R(S), Registered Office: 14 Lothian Road, Greenock PA16 0PG. It is a Charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number: SC032418; a Registered Social Landlord with the Scottish Housing Regulator, Registration Number: HCB 293; and registered as a Property Factor Id: PF000279. Part of the Link group © Link Group Ltd.