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The committee and staff of Abertay Housing Association wish our tenants a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Abertay has joined the Common Housing Register!

We have joined the Common Housing Register along with Dundee City Council, Hillcrest and Caledonia Housing Associations. The applicants for housing on our waiting list have now been combined with theirs to have one register (or waiting list) of applicants.

The register is administered by Dundee City Council's Lettings Centre based in Pitkerro Road (tel: 01382 307400). However our Customer Service Team can still provide you with a housing application form if you need one, offer you housing option advice and

make amendments to your application if you wish. This is because we have direct access to the Council's lettings system. It also enables us to allocate our homes when they become available.

You now only need to complete one housing application form to be considered for mainstream or sheltered housing with any or all of the social landlords participating within the city.

For further information and advice please contact our Customer Service Team on tel: **01382 903545** or alternatively email us at **customerservice@abertayha.co.uk**.

We are currently updating our website.

We intend to provide more useful information, make information easier to find and make the site easier to use on tablets and mobiles. *The new site will go live in the near future.*

In the meantime, did you know you can now pay your rent or other bills online? Go to **www.abertay.co.uk** to find out more. This can be useful in the run up to Christmas, when we know people can be particularly busy. You can pay your rent at any time from the comfort of your own home.



Christmas and New year opening times:

Close Tuesday 23rd December at 4.30pm

Re-open Monday 29th December at 8.30am.

Close Tuesday 30th December at 4.30pm.

Re-open Monday 5th January 2015 at 8.30am.

If you have an emergency repair when the office is closed please phone Abertay on **01382 903545** and listen to the recorded message. You can then choose the option for transferring your call to our Contractors.





Resident Article –

I am an owner-occupier of a cottage in Greenlee Drive, Dundee. Abertay Housing Association (AHA) provide a factoring service to me and all the other home owners who live in my street. I think this is a very valuable service and I say this out of genuine life experience.

Many years ago I was the owner-occupier of a flat in Peddie Street, Dundee, where no factoring service existed. Any time a communal repair was required one of the owner occupiers had to take the lead, go around the neighbours in the close, hold a meeting to discuss the problem, then try to get consensus from at least a majority of the owner-occupiers in the close as to what work was going to be carried out and which tradesman or firm was going to carry out the work. Once the work had been carried out the person taking the lead then had to collect the money from the other owner-occupiers and pay the bill. This was all very difficult, time-consuming, and led to arguments, disputes and non-payment by some. In order to "save" money "cowboys" were sometimes given the work.

My favourite story about my old flat in Peddie Street was my next door neighbour held a meeting in his home to discuss roof repairs, as some slates were missing. It was quite a high building so the safest way to do the job would have been to use scaffolding. "Out of the question" roared one of my neighbours, adding, "We're no' made o' money!"

So a "cowboy" slater was used. I watched him turn up one autumn night about a week later. All he had was a small bag of tools. He wasn't carrying any slates and no scaffolding was used. He simply went to the communal loft, climbed onto the roof and then transferred some slates from the roof of the next close onto our roof. When the slater came down a short time later he said to my next door neighbour, "Job done! That'll be £160 please." He then received his payment in cash immediately; it was £20 each from all eight owner-occupiers.

The hard-necked cowboy slater took his payment from us, then immediately thereafter went into the next close up from mine and put his business card through all eight letter boxes in that close to advertise his services. Happy days!

Thankfully, AHA provides a high quality service and they take care of all essential communal repairs and maintenance in the place where I now live. AHA do not employ "cowboys" and we home-owners have peace of mind knowing we do not have to organise impromptu meetings with our neighbours about essential repairs - there are no arguments and no "cowboy" jobs. We simply receive a bill from AHA once-per-year which is never going to be excessive because they are a reputable organisation that is run on a not for profit basis.

Mr Kenneth Brannan

Christmas – Paying your rent is a priority

At this time of year everybody feels the excitement of the festive season creeping up on us and quite often there can be serious pressure to buy gifts and entertain friends and family over the festive period. So it can be quite easy to forego paying your rent. Whilst Christmas should be a fun time, it is absolutely no fun suffering the stress and worry that comes with mounting arrears if you can't catch up in the New Year. **Please remember to continue to pay your rent as you would normally do.** If you are having difficulties paying your rent we want to help. Contact us on tel: **01382 903545**.

YOU SAID, WE DID



Progress so far

We introduced estate walkabouts last April with the aim of giving tenants and owners the chance to work with Housing and Maintenance officers to highlight issues in their area and have a say in how they are resolved.

We have carried out a number of improvements to various estates. Some are quite small such as new signs and some on a larger scale, for example resurfacing of pavements in North East Fintry, which is being addressed by Dundee City Council. The 'before and after' pictures show some of the issues which were highlighted and resolved. The walkabouts will continue through the winter and early spring period so no doubt further issues will be identified and improvements made.

We hope to review the walkabout process, listen to your feedback, possibly make some changes to it and with the agreement of residents set a new timetable for the next financial year. **If you would like to be involved in the review of our estate walkabouts please contact the Customer Service Team on tel: 01382 903545 for details and venue.**



WELFARE UPDATE - Your Benefits Are Changing

The introduction of Universal Credit, which replaces many existing benefits, began in April 2013 around the country. The national rollout will start in February 2015.

When transferred over to Universal Credit you will be responsible for paying your rent as housing costs will be paid directly to you.

Abertay are preparing tenants for the change. Anna, our Welfare Reform Officer, is visiting tenants to have a chat about what they can expect and how Abertay can help. If you would like to speak to Anna about

***Remember**
The national
rollout will start
in February 2015.

Drop in Session
Every Tuesday
10am-12midday
@Family House

Every Thursday
11am-1pm
@Dura Street
Sheltered Complex

Universal Credit or any other benefit or financial issues you are welcome to come along to one of our drop in sessions which will be held:

Every Tuesday 10-12am in Family House, 20 Grampian Gardens

Every Thursday 11-1pm in Dura Street Sheltered Complex, 57 Dykehead Place

Alternatively you can contact Anna on Tel: **01382 513826** or email **anna.lieske@abertayha.co.uk**.



End of the Right to Buy

The Housing Scotland Act 2014, passed over the summer, signals an end to the Right to Buy Scheme. Those tenants who retain the Right to Buy have until 31 July 2016 to submit their application. Remember if you are considering buying your home, as well as the purchase price, you will also have to pay other ongoing costs such as buildings insurance, repairs and maintenance and factoring charges. For further information and guidance please go to the following link <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/11/8564>



Partnership project looks to improve energy efficiency



Abertay Housing Association and Robert Gordon University have teamed up in a bid to upgrade around 100 of Abertay's properties in Craigiebank and Kirkton to meet new energy efficiency requirements.

We recognised that these steel-framed homes require major investment, to improve insulation, tackle condensation problems, and control the deterioration of the steel walls. This is a specialised problem, and we quickly realised that finding the best outcome would need the involvement with experts who were not tied to selling a single solution. We therefore approached Robert Gordon University's Building Performance Team, and together we were successful in winning over £90,000 of funding to study the problems, research solutions, and monitor their effectiveness once in place.

Around 3,000 steel-framed homes were built in Scotland in the 1920's, so this project could help

with similar housing across Scotland. Little assessment of the likely life of the dwellings was made at the time they were built, so work is now required to ensure that any proposed thermal improvements do not ultimately damage the fabric, by accelerating any deterioration.

While it will take some time to identify the best solutions, and then 2 to 3 years to carry out the work needed to all the properties, residents living in our steel homes can look forward to improved comfort and reduced energy bills in the future!

Abertay and QAPM Partnership goes from Strength to Strength

We are happy to announce that Dundee company QAPM Limited have been re-appointed as the main contractor for reactive and void maintenance works.





Abertay receive further Green Cash

Given the rising cost of heating bills, Abertay were delighted to receive almost £250,000 from the Scottish Government's Green Homes Cashback scheme.

This money together with £150,000 of our own will allow 65 homes to be insulated to a modern standard by March 2015, reducing energy use by up to 35%.

This follows Abertay sourcing funding of some £880,000 from Scottish Power's ECO scheme to carry out similar work to 82 homes in Fintry and 81 homes in Dryburgh.

Whilst for many residents this work involved a huge upheaval we hope that the added warmth and reduced energy costs will all be worthwhile. *The photograph shows one of our satisfied tenants.*



Abertay HA – Winter Maintenance programme 2014-15

Abertay arranges for regular inspections of its Open Space areas located throughout its Dundee Housing Estates and Sheltered Complex areas. We also listen to what our customers are saying in relation to these areas. This helps us to collate a list of landscaping issues and devise a plan based upon priority and budget allowances for improvements as part of our Winter Maintenance Programme. These works are held back until the grass cutting season finishes and includes pruning of trees (in some cases removal of diseased or overgrown trees) and replanting of some shrub beds.

For further information and a detailed list of the works we plan to carry out between December 2014 and March 2015 please visit our website, www.abertayha.co.uk in the Owners section or contact the office on Tel: 01382 903545.



Helping Residents Switch Energy Supplier

Switching energy supplier can be one of the most effective ways to reduce household gas and electricity bills. The prices offered by various suppliers vary from time to time and it is recommended that options are reviewed every year or so.

Residents of Abertay Housing Association can now take advantage of a free advice helpline set up specifically to help simplify the process. The service is independent of the utility companies.



If you would like to take advantage of this, call the freephone number on **0800 410 1262** with the following information to hand :-

- A recent electricity bill
- A recent gas bill if applicable
- Your approximate annual spend in electricity / gas (if known)

Further details can be provided at www.switchmyenergy.co.uk

In our last newsletter we gave you some facts and figures on how Abertay last year. Since then, the Scottish Housing Regulator has published information on other local landlords, so we thought you would like to know how we compared.

	Abertay	Other Local Landlords	How we Compare
Weekly Rents including Service Charges			
2 Apartment homes	£82.55	£65.55	☹️
3 Apartment homes	£70.87	£71.71	😊
4 Apartment homes	£79.51	£81.12	😊
Satisfaction with our services			
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service	86.9%	85.0%	😊
Percentage of tenants who felt that Abertay was good at keeping them informed	88.0%	84.4%	😊
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlords decision making progress	75%	70.7%	😊
Housing Quality & Maintenance			
Percentage of our stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard	82.7%	86.9%	☹️
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	1.9 hours	5.3 hours	😊
Percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time	80.9%	78.3%	😊
Percentage of tenants who have had repairs & maintenance carried the out in last 12 months satisfied with the service	92.2%	84.3%	😊
Value for Money			
Percentage of total rent due collected in the year	99.2%	97.7%	😊
Average length of time taken to re-let properties	32.4 days	44.8 days	😊

Conclusions: Abertay performed very well compared with the other local landlords. The rents of our two apartment homes seem high, but this is because we have many sheltered homes of this size and the sheltered service charge is included. We had a lower percentage of homes meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard than the average, but we are still on course to have all homes meet this standard by next March!

Scottish Housing Quality Standard



Over the last 2 years, Abertay has been working hard to ensure that all our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by April 2015.

In that time we have moved from around 55% of our stock meeting the standard to our current position of around 96%, with all remaining works identified and scheduled to be complete before March 2015.

This has represented a large investment for Abertay both financially and in terms of workload and shows our commitment to continually improving the quality of the homes we own.

Focus Groups

Following feedback from tenants, Abertay felt it would be useful to set up a Register of interested residents/tenants to enable us to share ideas and information about our services and review our current publications, leaflets and handbooks etc.

The Abertay Focus Group was set up and consists of interested residents and staff from Abertay. A meeting took place in August at Dryburgh Gardens Sheltered Lounge. The purpose of the meeting was to review Abertay's Sheltered tenants and Dryburgh Gardens Handbooks with a view to producing more user friendly and informative guides. Whilst the old handbooks provided useful information for residents it was noted that contact information and some procedures were out of date and some tenants felt there was information missing on other housing management issues.

With thanks to the Group we have been able to produce Handbooks which will meet the needs

and expectations of Sheltered tenants and residents at Dryburgh Gardens.

A further Abertay Focus Group meeting is planned for **Tuesday 20th January 2015 at Caldram Street Sheltered Lounge** (light refreshments will be available). The Group will review progress with the remedial work identified at our Estate Walkabouts and agree a new timetable for next year. We will also be reviewing the main Tenant Handbook. If you would like to come along and get involved please contact the **Customer Services Team on Tel: 01382 903545** or alternatively email us at customerservice@abertayha.co.uk.



Next Focus Group Meeting Tuesday 20th January 2015 at Caldram Street Sheltered Lounge

Action for Children – “Soup” garden

Action for Children in partnership with Abertay, has opened a “soup garden” to give vulnerable young people in Dundee a space to grow their own fruit and vegetables. The garden is based at Action for Children Scotland’s Dundee Youth Housing service, which provides temporary accommodation for young people who have left care or are homeless. A big thank you to Melanie, Housing Officer at Abertay for successfully getting donations of equipment, top soil, paint, time and resources from various businesses in the city to help develop this very worthwhile project.



One Parent Families Scotland – Community garden

One Parent Families Scotland at 20 Grampian Gardens introduced a Community Garden for the neighbourhood to come along and help grow vegetables. They started off with a spade and a fork and it has grown into a very popular activity for families and children planting various vegetables some of which are fairly exotic.

They held an Open Day in August 2014 to show off their garden which was very popular with residents in the area.



JOB OPPORTUNITY

Quality Assured Property Maintenance (QAPM) are delighted to announce that as a direct result of the award of the Abertay Maintenance Contract for the next four years there is now a vacancy for a Joiner Apprentice.

The apprenticeship will be served over four years and the successful candidate will start a pre-apprenticeship course with QAPM late January with the full Apprenticeship starting in August with the Dundee College intake. The training will include working within the current Joiner team at Abertay and also include working at other QAPM sites outwith the Abertay Contract.

The ideal candidate will be a School Leaver (no upper age limit is set although candidates should ideally be under 20) with a minimum of four Standard Grades or National 4/5, two of these subjects must be in Maths and English.

Abertay tenants and members of their household are strongly encouraged to apply for this position. **Please apply in writing by Friday 19th December to:**

Steve Ward
Associate Director
Quality Assured Property Maintenance
40 North Ellen Street
Dundee DD3 7DH

Direct Debit Winner

We started a new initiative last summer that if you change to Direct Debit and make a minimum of 6 months consecutive payments then we will reward you with a £25 voucher for a store of your choice.

You will then be entered into our bi-annual draw of Direct Debit payers with a chance to win a £50 voucher. Our prize draw in August was won by Mr and Mrs McCluskey (pictured) and they chose a £50 voucher to be spent in B&Q. We will be having another Prize Draw this month. The winner will be announced on our website and in the Main Office.

If you are interested in changing to Direct Debit please contact the Rent Team on Tel: **01382 513809** who will be happy to help you. Alternatively you can download the application form at www.abertayha.co.uk under “paying your rent”.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

Getting In Touch

Telephone:

01382 903545

Fax:

01382 903575

Email:

queries@abertayha.co.uk