

Larkfield service update



Since our last newsletter, life has been a challenge and although some restrictions have been lifted, Covid-19 has not disappeared.

Lockdown and the impact of not getting to see family and friends has affected everyone. We would like to thank you for the community spirit you've shown by supporting your neighbours during this crisis.

Our team continues to work from home to provide the best possible service while following Scottish Government guidelines to help limit the spread of the virus.

We've provided an update on our services in this newsletter.

Office public holidays closure

Please note our office will be closed on **Friday 4** and **Monday 7 September 2020**.

If you have an emergency repair when the office is closed, please contact the appropriate number below:

General emergency repairs: **0800 783 7937**

Emergency gas repairs: **01294 468 113**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our annual general meeting is due to take place on 16 September 2020. All shareholding members will receive further information shortly regarding the arrangements for this year's meeting in light of Covid-19 restrictions.

GAS SERVICING

The maintenance of gas boilers is a critical service. This is a legal requirement placed on landlords and we need to do this to safeguard you, your family and neighbours.

Unless you are showing signs of the virus, we will need access to service your boiler and keep you safe. We are following strict health and safety guidance and will have appropriate protective clothing, including masks and gloves.

You can stay in another room away from where staff are working, and any surfaces touched will be disinfected once the work is finished. We cannot stress enough how important it is to provide access, even during these trying times.

Housing team

Our housing team continues to respond to incoming queries and make welfare calls to as many tenants as possible. We want to check in with you, offer support and help where we can.

Sometimes we are the only people a tenant has spoken to in days, so feel this service is important. We appreciate your patience while we carry out this work and wanted to let you know it may take us longer to respond to your phone calls or emails at this time.

Like you, our staff must practice social distancing and cannot visit you in your home unless there is an emergency. We do have some staff and contractors who are carrying out essential services and would ask you to respect their right to social distance.



Allocations and mutual exchange requests

The Scottish Government eased restrictions on house moves on 29 June 2020.

Through Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR), we have restarted allocating our vacant properties. We are also working with local authorities to identify where we can assist with the prevention of homelessness and other priority groups.

Staff and customer safety is still a priority. We have adopted a new allocations procedure which aims to remove or reduce the amount of face-to-face contact staff have with potential tenants.

Repairs

In line with Scottish Government's guidelines, Link Property is now able to ease some restrictions on routine repairs and maintenance works.

Until now, Link Property and its sub-contractors have been carrying out emergency and urgent repairs only. Link Property is now able to work through the backlog of routine repairs.

If you reported a routine repair, we will contact you to arrange an appointment. If you have a new routine repair, please contact the office to report this. You can also report a repair by visiting www.larkfieldha.org.uk/reportrepair or downloading the MyLarkfield app from the Apple App or Google Play stores.



WHEN REPORTING ANY REPAIR

If you have previously reported a repair, or if you are reporting a repair for the first time, you will be asked by the repairs administrators to confirm:

- no one in your home is isolating due to Covid-19 symptoms, is shielding or is in any of the vulnerable categories. Your response will determine if/when your repair can take place and the staff will explain this to you during the call; and
- you agree to have our operatives working in your home. If you don't agree, we will ask you to call back when you are happy for the repair to take place.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

When our operatives are working in your home, everyone in the household must:

- stay in another room from the operative for the duration of the visit; or
- if this is not possible, for example if you and the operative need to discuss the purpose of the visit, this must be done from a minimum of 2m distance and for as short a time as possible.

WHAT WE WILL DO

While our operatives are in your property, they will:

- practice good hand hygiene and wear appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) if required;
- always maintain appropriate social distance; and
- clean down all areas where they have been working.

PLANNED INVESTMENT WORKS

As a result of the Covid-19 restrictions on our planned maintenance projects, we are reviewing a new programme of works and further details will be issued to those affected in the coming months.

Unfortunately, because of lockdown, we also had to suspend our external decoration contract and hope to be in touch with new dates once they are agreed. Those affected by this will receive information separately.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

We have seen a slight increase in the level of minor anti-social behaviour during the past few months.

We appreciate it is difficult being stuck indoors, but we ask you be mindful that noise travels very easily and many essential care workers are working shifts and need rest both day and night.

We also ask you show tolerance for general household noise that may be amplified at the moment due to children spending so much time at home. Please contact our housing team for further advice and information.

OPENING HOURS

Our opening hours remain unchanged; Monday to Friday, 9am - 4pm except Wednesdays, where we close at 12.30pm.

We ask you to be patient if your call is not answered straight away, calls are being diverted to staff working from home and we will call you back.

You can also email us at info@larkfieldha.org.uk or download the MyLarkfield app from the Apple App or Google Play stores.



OPEN LETTER FROM SCOTTISH HOUSING MINISTER, KEVIN STEWART

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning has released an open letter to tenants to provide information and advice as we move forward out of the Covid-19 crisis.

You can read the full letter on our website: www.larkfieldha.org.uk/openletter

Wellbeing

While staying at home due to coronavirus, it's important to take care of your mind as well as your body.

Support is also available from the following organisations:

- Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87
- MIND: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing
- Samaritans: 116 123 or www.samaritans.org
- SHOUT: Text SHOUT to 85258 or visit www.giveusashout.org



BBQ safety



BBQs should be a safe and enjoyable experience, but it's all too easy to be distracted when you have friends and family around you while cooking.

To avoid injuries or damage to property, follow these simple precautions:

General safety

- Make sure your barbecue is in good working order
- Ensure the barbecue is on a flat surface and away from sheds, trees and shrubs
- Keep children, garden games and pets away from the cooking area
- Never leave the barbecue unattended
- Keep a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies
- Ensure the barbecue is cool before attempting to move it

Charcoal BBQs

- Use only enough charcoal to cover the base to a depth of about 50mm (2 inches)
- Only use recognised fire lighters or starter fuel and only on cold coals – use the minimum necessary and never use petrol
- Never put hot ashes straight into a dustbin or wheelie bin – they could melt the plastic and cause a fire

Gas BBQs

- Make sure the tap is turned off before changing the gas cylinder
- Change cylinders outdoors if possible or in a well-ventilated area
- If you suspect a leak to the cylinder or pipe work, brush soapy water around the joints and watch for bubbles – tighten to fix but do not over tighten
- After cooking, turn off the gas cylinder before turning off at the controls to ensure any residual gas in the pipes is used up

Please don't feed the birds!

It's that time of year again when our feathered friends will be visiting our gardens, and although it is tempting to throw bread and other food into the garden for them to feed on, doing so can attract vermin such as rats and mice.

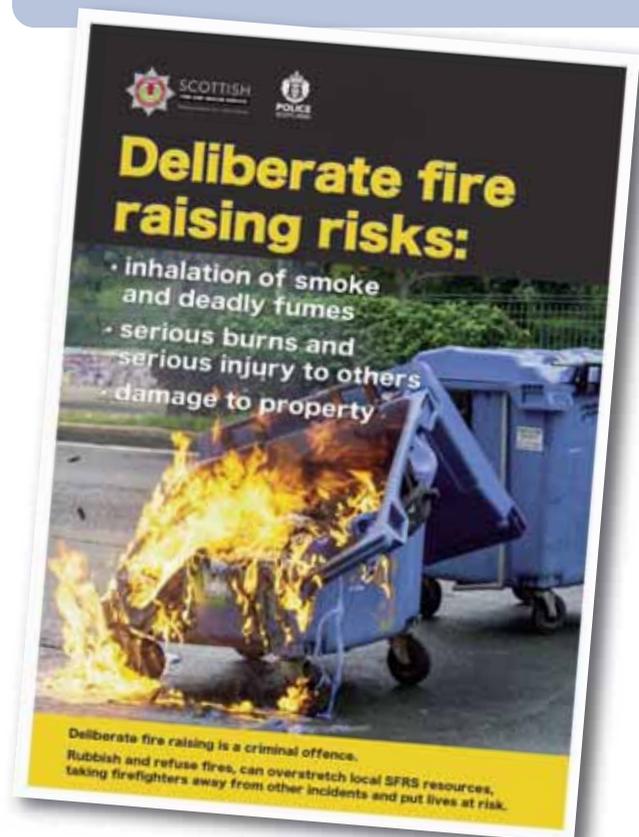
Discovering a rat infestation can be distressing - rodents can carry a wide range of diseases and parasites such as fleas, ticks, lice and mites.

They can also cause a great deal of damage to your home by chewing on the eaves of roofs, destroying electrical wires and damaging waste and water pipes, which is why it's important to do everything possible to prevent an infestation.



RODENT PREVENTION TOP TIPS

- Store rubbish appropriately by avoiding a build-up, placing bags in bins with the lid secured and place food waste in sealed containers
- Avoid letting your garden become overgrown or cluttered which could provide rodents with shelter and areas to hide
- Do not throw food into your garden
- If feeding the birds, make sure all food is on a bird table, bird feeders or off the ground and clear up any spillages
- Dog fouling can attract pests including rats, so it is important to pick up after your dog and keep your garden clear of it
- Doors should be free from any gaps and any holes in walls/around pipes should be sealed to prevent entry
- If you have a compost heap, don't include organic food



Owners annual landscaping maintenance charge 2019/20

We'd like to thank owners for their patience this year regarding the issuing of the annual charge.

The charge covers the shared cost for the maintenance of common areas (footpaths, walkways and grassed areas) within the area, which is the collective responsibility of Larkfield owners (including Larkfield Housing Association).

If you are a new owner and bought your house during 2019, please contact us on 01475 630 930 to let us know (if your solicitor has not already done so) and we can re-calculate the sum due. You can use your Allpay card to pay your bill which can be used at any outlet displaying the Pay Point symbol. Payment should be made using your existing Allpay swipe card. If your card has been lost or stolen, please contact the office to arrange for a new card to be ordered.

Involving our customers

We are keen to hear your views and suggestions on how we can involve our customers in what we do. Our Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan details the ways we will keep you informed and how you can get involved.

Our current plan includes:

- Publish our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) by 31 October
- Establish a tenant led scrutiny panel
- Carry out telephone and other ad hoc surveys to gather tenant feedback

- Carry out annual tenancy visits
- Explore customer portal (self-serve digital option) for tenants
- Hold community events throughout the year
- Develop a new tenancy handbook

You can comment on our strategy or make suggestions to help us improve our tenant involvement by contacting **01475 630 930** or **info@larkfield.org.uk**.

Speak up. Stop crime.

If you're concerned about crime in your area, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111** or visit **crimestoppers-uk.org**

They won't ask for your name; they will just listen to what you know and pass it on for you. When you hang up the phone or send online, you're done.

photo: The Orcadian





Youth Connections summer events

Youth Connections is running a series of summer events for families using Zoom, including arts and crafts, guitar lessons, cooking classes, youth work activities and storytelling.

For details of times and Zoom codes, call Youth Connections on **01475 795 727** or visit their Facebook page @YouthConnections.

- BARBECUE
- BUCKET
- CAMPING
- FLOWERS
- GARDEN
- ICECREAM
- OUTDOORS
- PICNIC
- SANDALS
- SEASIDE
- SUNHAT
- SUNTAN
- SWIMMING
- TRAVEL
- WEATHER

Summer wordsearch

Complete our word search to win a £25 Amazon voucher!

To be in with the chance to win, complete and return your word search with your name, address and contact details.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Contact number

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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 2020.