



# LANGSTANE *news*

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in this  
issue



The newsletter for Langstane and  
Next Step Homes tenants

ISSUE 31 • Winter 2016

## Merry Christmas

ADVICE ON  
TRUST DEEDS

WARM HOME  
DISCOUNTS

NEW ENERGY  
COMPANY FOR  
TENANTS

REVIEW OUR  
CUSTOMER CARE  
CHARTER

AVOID CYBER  
CRIME

SUMMER  
ROUNDUP



### Tenant Participation Champions 2016



Langstane and tenant  
**Ronnie Boyle** were  
winners at the TPAS  
Scotland Awards.

Read more on page 5



## Caley Building

A transformation is taking place at the historic Caley Building in Peterhead. The original building dates from 1820 and was last used as a net store for local fishing boats.

Over the past few months the internal timber structure has been replaced with a steel frame. This new structure will allow us to build in really good insulation that will mean low energy bills for tenants.

The completed scheme will provide 15 one bedroom flats on three floors. The flats will have open plan living areas with views out onto Peterhead Harbour.



## Planned maintenance update

Our contractors have been working hard on our programme of upgrades throughout the summer months. The works will be completed by April 2017.

So far we have replaced 140 kitchens and 60 bathrooms in schemes in Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire.

Mugiemoss Court in Aberdeen is undergoing a major refurbishment. Tenants will be enjoying the benefits of new kitchens, bathrooms and UPVC windows.

The summer programme of external decoration has been completed and the painters will be returning to decorate the internal common areas over the winter months.

We have upgraded electric storage heating systems to gas combi boilers in 7 schemes. We will be upgrading another 7 schemes after gas supplies are installed.

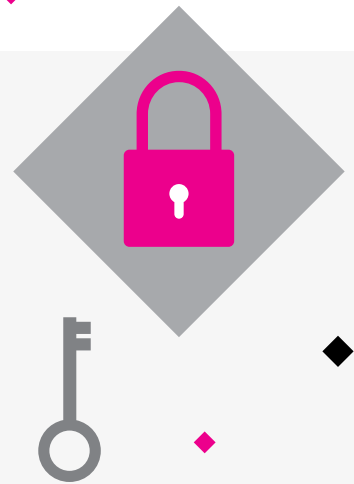
At Findhorn in Moray we are upgrading the electric storage heating to Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) as mains gas is not available. ASHP is a renewable technology that provides energy efficient heating and benefits the environment by reducing carbon dioxide emissions from properties.

**Look out for news** of our Major Repairs Programme 2017 - 2018 in the summer newsletter.



## Cyber Crime – Don't be a victim

We use the internet and smartphones every day, but as we rely more and more on technology, a different kind of criminal has emerged – the Cyber Criminal. Cyber crime is on the increase so it is very important to be armed with the right information.



### Top tips to stay secure online:

- Protect your personal information. **Do not reply** to texts or emails that ask for personal information such as your bank details or passwords.
- Your passwords should always be a mix of numbers and letters. Having the same password for all websites is just so easy but it is not safe! Have different passwords for different websites and keep changing them regularly.
- Make sure you have anti-virus software on your computer and keep it up-to-date.
- Shop only from secure websites. Do not be tempted by offers that are too good to be true.
- Stay safe on social media. Pay attention to privacy policy and settings while using social media websites.
- Review your bank and credit card statements regularly. If you are unsure of any transaction on your bank statement contact your bank immediately.

**Stay safe & enjoy the festive season!**

## Think before you sign...

**Trust Deeds or Debt Arrangement Schemes** have become popular with people worried about growing debts, but they may not be what they seem. Trust Deed companies say they will stop the debt, but this does not always happen.

**If you sign a Trust Deed**, the company **may charge you a very high fee (around £6000)**. This means that your monthly payment may go to paying that fee first, with very little or no money reaching your creditors (the people you owe money to).

Trust Deeds **do not stop court action**. You can still be taken to court if you do not make the minimum monthly payment to your creditors and you can be taken to court for rent arrears.

You may also find yourself unable to apply for certain jobs if you have had a Trust Deed.

**If you need help and advice** on debt management, don't hesitate!

Contact your Housing Officer or ask for our Tenancy Sustainment Team. We will be glad to help you get free and impartial advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau or SMART.



**Home Energy Scotland** tells us that well over half of what we spend on fuel bills goes on heating and hot water. As energy costs go up, it's even more important to get bills down.

**Here are some of Home Energy Scotland's quick wins to help you save:**

- **Turn your appliances off** standby mode to **save around £30 a year**
- **Only fill the kettle** with the amount of water you need to **save around £7 a year**
- **Turn down** your room thermostat by just one degree to **save around £85 a year**
- **Turn off** your lights when you're not using them to **save around £15 a year**
- **Use a bowl to wash up** rather than running the tap to **save around £30 a year**

**For more quick wins visit the Home Energy Scotland's website:**

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/home-energy-scotland>



**More ways to win:**

- **Contact the Home Energy Trust on 0808 808 2282** to arrange a free Home Energy check.
- Contact our Social Justice Team on **01224 423000** or email [wecanhelp@langstane-ha.co.uk](mailto:wecanhelp@langstane-ha.co.uk) for help and advice on how to reduce your bills and your energy use.

## Our Power



**Our Power** is a new energy supply company established by Scottish social housing providers who want to make the energy industry work better for their tenants. From next year we will be working in partnership with Our Power to offer tenants reduced fuel costs.

**All our empty properties will have new Our Power smart meters, so if you are a new tenant or a transfer tenant, you will be able to take advantage of Our Power's benefits:**

- Smart meters to help you manage fuel costs
- More flexible ways to top up (by phone, online or by an app)
- No extra charge for Pay As You Go
- Smart meter payment cards – you decide the top-up method which suits you best
- No penalties or exit fees if you leave



**Our Power's Priority Services Register gives you extra help to manage your account if you or a member of your household are:**

✓ Disabled

✓ Over 65 years

✓ Chronically sick

# Tenant participation champions 2016

## Langstane won an award...

at the **2016 TPAS Scotland awards** for the Tenant Participation Champion of the Year!

The award recognises how our Support Services Team has worked to increase tenant involvement at Langstane by offering flexible ways for tenants to take part. We are delighted to say that hundreds of you now join in consultations, discussion groups, panels and surveys.



### Three cheers for Ronnie

Langstane tenant Ronnie Boyle was also a winner. Ronnie won the runner up prize for Tenant Participation Champion: Tenant of the Year. Ronnie helped us to improve the way we communicate with our tenants, especially those who find written communication challenging.

#### Ronnie said:

'I never thought I would win an award for giving so little time. I did and was runner up for tenant of the year! If you can offer some time to take part in a Langstane group, it could be you next. Go on, give it a go.'

### Your Voice Counts

**If you want to get involved in a way that suits you, why not:**

- Join our register of interested tenants – you can take part in consultations, meetings and projects
- Join our Reader Panel – if you want to help us review our reports and leaflets to make sure we get them right
- Join our Tenant Panel – if you are short of time, this is the ideal option. We will contact you by phone, text or email with a few short questions

### Take part in something new

We want to involve tenants in reviewing our performance, and suggesting improvements to our services. Look out for the article on page 9.

**Tick the box** on our consultation special if you think this is for you.





# Summer Roundup

## Change for the Better at Tomintoul

Tomintoul tenants told us they could do better than 'dead plants and rocky earth' in their communal garden. They asked us to remove the gardening charge and help them get started. With funds from Change for the Better and a lot of hard work, they were able to make the transformation in time for the Tomintoul Highland Games parade to pass by!

**Mrs Herbert said:** "it has really brightened the area up and given us pride in our scheme".



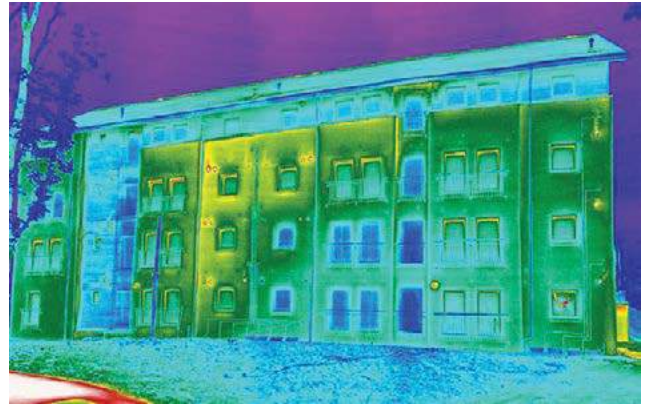
## The Great 40th Anniversary Bulb Giveaway

We can't wait for spring! An amazing 120 tenants volunteered to plant red tulip bulbs to brighten up their schemes and help celebrate our 40th Anniversary. You'll be able to see the results in your Summer 2017 newsletter.



## Copper Beech

Our latest scheme is Copper Beech Court, Auchinyell. New tenants can be assured of first class energy efficiency, as this hi-tech thermal image shows.



## Our Away Day

This summer we got active in the community and used our staff Away Day to get involved with local charities and organisations.

Our staff split into small teams, and went out to places all over Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Painting, gardening and baking were just some of the things we got up to. Glad to help!



## Our Summer Consultation Special was a winner!

**A special thank you** to everyone who took part in our biggest ever consultation special response. **245 tenants** gave us their feedback and every comment was noted in our Pet Policy and Parking Policy reviews. **85.7%** of those who responded agreed with the proposed changes to the Pet Policy and **78.3% agreed** with our proposals for the Parking Policy.

**4 lucky tenants won £20 shopping vouchers in the prize draw.**

Our summer winners came from Aberdeen and Kemnay.

### Viewpoint

We're always pleased to get your input on our services. We need your comments to keep us right so keep them coming!

#### Coming up Roses

##### Polinar Place

Thank you for the wonderful gardeners that we have had at Polinar Place this year. They do such a great job and have maintained this area to such a high standard.

##### Pennan Way

A huge thank you to the gardening contractors - they are the best we've ever had.

##### Fraser Court

Pass on my thanks to the gardeners who cleaned up the back of Fraser Court. I'm so pleased with the work done.

##### Could do better

Customer Services and other values need to be improved. To have to ask for value for money and complain several times is very poor customer service.

##### Online saves time

Wanted to say I found it very easy to log two repairs online, it only took minutes. As I work full time I liked this service. I can't access phone during normal working hours - this suited me.

Many thanks.

### NETRALT news

**We joined our NETRALT partners** to welcome members of the East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation to Aberdeen for a study visit. NETRALT put on a fantastic three days of tours and events including a dinner hosted by Aberdeen City Council at Aberdeen's famous Beach Ballroom. Our guests were full of praise for the variety of events and found many good ideas to take back to East Ayrshire. Every part of the experience was marvellous.

*Thank you for the hand of friendship!*





**WorkingRite** continues its successful partnership with Langstane. So far this year WorkingRite has placed 20 young people in work based training in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

The WorkingRite programme carefully matches 16-18 year olds, who are not in education, employment or training, to local businesses for a work placement lasting up to six months. Each young person receives on-the-job training by their placement mentor, ongoing support from their WorkingRite Project Co-ordinator, up to £95pw training allowance and the ability to boost their qualifications via the SQA Certificate of Work Readiness.



When local Project Co-ordinator Ewan visited Aberdeen Technical Services, he bumped into ex-trainee Chelsea.

**Chelsea has been employed for over a year and says she is now 'running the show' at ATS! ATS manager Richard added:**

*'Chelsea has grown and developed into an important part of the team and fulfils a very important role at ATS.'*

**KingsWellies Nursery** have continued their great support of the programme and now employ 4 of the trainees who have been placed with them over the past 2 years. They are training yet another young person who is making great progress.



**If you would like to find out more about how WorkingRite can help you achieve your goals, get in touch with local Project Co-ordinator Ewan Sinclair and set up an informal interview.**

**Email:** [ewan@workingrite.co.uk](mailto:ewan@workingrite.co.uk)

**Tel:** 07900 742 014

[www.workingrite.co.uk](http://www.workingrite.co.uk)



# Customer Care Policy

## What was our aim?

More than 8 out of 10 Langstane tenants say they are satisfied with the services we provide. We aim to do better and customer care is our starting point.

## As part of our Customer Care Policy, we are developing a Customer Care Charter so we can:

- Know what is most important to our customers
- Increase tenant satisfaction
- Provide a clear set of service standards

Our first task was to find out what excellent customer service means to our customers and one of our tenants suggested a simple way to find out. Why not go out into our communities and meet our customers face to face over coffee and cake?

## What happened next?

We arranged five Tea Room Chats across Aberdeen city, Aberdeenshire and Moray. We contacted all our tenants in the immediate area and invited them for morning coffee. We arranged postal and online surveys for those who were keen to come but could not make it.

## What was the outcome?

We found that many of our customers agree about what makes good customer service. They want us to

listen, they want us to tell them what we can do and when we can do it and they want to talk to the right person when they call.

## We used these simple requests as the basis for a set of Customer Service Standards which will tell you:

- What we will do
- What we expect from you
- How you will know we have met our commitment

## The Consultation Special

Please answer the questions in the Consultation Special. You will find the main points of the Customer Care Charter on one side and the questions on the other. If you would like to read the full draft policy, please visit the Consultations and Feedback page on our website or **contact us on 01224 423120** to ask for a copy.

## Your Choice

You can also take part by writing, by phone, by email, or on Facebook. Your opinion counts, so don't delay. Send back your Consultation Special by 31st January 2017 to help us deliver excellent customer services.

## Help us to be the best landlord we can be.

### Are you a problem solver? Do you have great ideas? Can you spot where things can be improved?

We are looking for tenants to join our brand new Tenant Service Review Group.

### What is tenant service review?

Tenant service review gives you the chance to form a group with other tenants to identify areas of our service that could be improved. The group can then carry out a review of that service. The group would gather their evidence in different ways such as:

- Looking at performance information
- Interviewing key staff members
- Visiting sites

The group would then make their recommendations to the Board of Management.

At every stage the group will be fully supported by Association staff and full training will be given.

### Want to find out more?

We will be holding informal events in early 2017 so come along for a chat and we'll answer any questions you have.

If you're interested in helping to make Langstane's services the best they can be, please tick the box on the Consultation Special and we'll be in touch.

Thanks to those of you who have already offered to take part. We'll see you soon!



# Quick Winter Warmer Recipes

## BBQ BAKED BEANS

SERVES **1**

COOKING **30 - 40 MINS**

PREP **10 MINS**

You don't need a barbecue to enjoy this tasty winter warmer.

### You will need:

4 slices bacon

2 cans baked beans

2 tablespoon brown sugar

1 chopped onion

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1 teaspoon prepared mustard

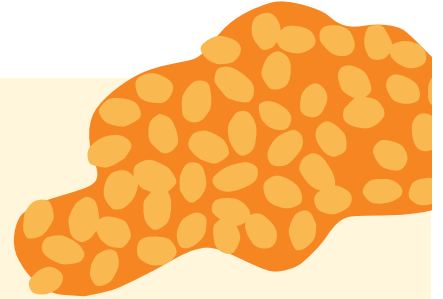
### What to do:

**First** - Heat your oven to 170C / 325F or gas mark 3.

**Next** - Fry the bacon till crisp then crumble the bacon. Keep the fat in the pan.

- Cook the onion in the bacon fat until softened.
- Mix all the ingredients in a casserole dish. Top with extra bacon if you like.
- Bake at 325 for 30 - 40 minutes.

It's easy to make a vegetarian version – just leave out the bacon and cook the onions in a little oil.



## CAKE IN A MUG

SERVES **2**

COOKING **2 MINS**

PREP **5 MINS**

Got a couple of minutes? You can bake this chocolaty treat with no mess or fuss.

### You will need:

2 tablespoons self raising flour

1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon cocoa  
or drinking chocolate powder

1 teaspoon instant coffee powder or  
granules (if you like)

1 egg

1 tablespoon milk

1 tablespoon oil

3 choc buttons (if you have them)

### What to do:

**First** - Spoon the dry ingredients into a large mug and mix. Add the egg, milk and oil and stir well with a fork.

### Next

- Drop in a few choc buttons
- Cook in the microwave for 2 minutes

**Finally** - serve with ice cream! This recipe makes 1 large serving or plenty for two.





## Warm Home

A **warming £140** from the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

Are you on a low income or getting benefits?

**You could get a £140 discount** off your winter electricity bill through the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The discount won't affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

**You can also qualify for the discount** if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter.

Your electricity supplier can tell you if you are eligible and how to apply, so don't delay.

**Full details and a printable guide can be found on:**

<https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/how-to-claim>

## Next Step Homes Consultation



Plans are in place for Next Step Homes to transfer ownership of all its properties to Langstane Housing. Before this can happen, a full consultation process must take place. This is underway, and the Tenant Information Service (TIS) is on hand to offer independent advice to the tenants affected. If you are a NSH tenant and want to know more, please call us on **01224 423120** or **contact TIS**.

### How to contact Tenant Information Service



T 0141 248 1242 or 07966 378 273

E [areid@tis.org.uk](mailto:areid@tis.org.uk)

[www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk)

## OFFICE CLOSURES

We would like to wish you a great festive season and remind you that both our offices will be closed on the following dates:

**Friday 23rd December 2016 closed from 12:30 pm**

**Offices are closed from Monday 26th December until Tuesday 3rd January**

**Our offices reopen at 9am Wednesday 4th January**

**Friday 14th April 2017 Good Friday**

**Monday 17th April 2017 Easter Monday**



**Emergency repair cover when our offices are closed:**

Aberdeen	<b>03000 200 292</b>
Aberdeenshire	<b>03456 081 203</b>
Moray	<b>08457 565 656</b>
Gas (Heatcare)	<b>01343 842 042</b>
Electricity – Power Cut	<b>0800 300 999</b>
Loss of Water Supply	<b>08000 778 778</b>



**Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.**



## WINTER TIPS

**Our last few winters have been very cold indeed.** Make sure you're ready should the cold set in again this year with a few helpful hints:

**Do not** use boiling water to clear ice and snow as it creates more of a hazard, always use salt or grit.

**Report** any overflows or leaking guttering if your pathway is getting wet, before it starts freezing over.

In an extra **cold spell**, **keep your heating on** constantly at a low temperature

If you have an **elderly neighbour**, **please look out for them** and help where you can.

## ELGIN OFFICE OPENING HOURS

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday**

9am -12noon & 1pm – 4pm  
(Closed for Lunch 12 noon – 1pm)

**Wednesday**

10am – 12 noon & 1pm – 4pm  
(Closed for Lunch 12 noon – 1pm)

**Please note:** Christmas office closures apply