



THE NEWSLETTER FOR LANGSTANE HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANTS

# LANGSTANE *news*

ISSUE 21 • WINTER 2011

**In this issue...**

- Design Award
- Joint Conference
- New Developments
- Condensation Advice
- Gas Service Audit
- Award Winning DVD
- Benefit Changes
- Text and Email Service

## Langstane Wants YOU



**We need your complaints, feedback and idea's!**

To provide YOU with a better service

If you have the time we are looking for people to participate in a tenant's forum?

Could this be YOU?

please contact us with your views, we are always happy to talk and we greatly appreciate your feedback.

Building a better system together!

*Langstane providing quality housing to promote social inclusion and generate sustainable communities.*

Seasons Greeting



from  
*Langstane*



## Design Award

Our development on Denmark Street, Fraserburgh, completed in October 2010, has received two awards for the quality of design. It has been awarded a commendation by the Aberdeen Society of Architects and was Runner Up in The Herald Property Awards in the category of Social Development of the Year.




**RUNNER UP**  
RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE YEAR

Langstane Housing Association  
Denmark Street, Fraserburgh



If you know of anyone wanting to apply for a Langstane home or Langstane updates, we have two computer kiosks available to use for ANY of our Langstane applications.

## Grampian and Langstane Tenants Enjoy Conference

**The annual tenants and customer conference held by Langstane and Grampian Housing Associations is now in its third year and has become very much a fixture of the autumn calendar. This year the event was held on Saturday 12th November in the Double Tree Hotel Beach Boulevard Aberdeen. Just over fifty tenants from both landlords attended.**

The day was taken up with presentations and workshops on a variety of topics including "Manage Your Tenancy" and "Housing Options" while throughout the day, the two associations ran advice clinics where a tenant could raise any matter they chose.

In addition, the event was well supported by a variety of partner organisations who displayed to tenants the services which they can offer to them and others. The organisations represented there covered a wide range from Grampian Fire and Rescue Service through the Credit Unions, CFine the local food co-op, recycling organisations, energy advisors and the Racial Equality Council. There was even the opportunity for an indian head massage and a medical check up.

The two associations are still in the process of analysing the feedback but it is very clear from the initial information that the tenants enjoyed it as much as the staff did and we look forward to another similar event next year.

During the event, Langstane's Chief Executive Alan Grant made a brief presentation on where we are with the formation of the Sirius Housing Group with Grampian Housing Association. Alan indicated that although there had been a certain amount of delay, we still hope to persuade the Scottish Housing Regulator to approve the application for registration some time in early 2012.



## New Developments

**We also completed twenty-two 2 and 3 bedroom houses on a difficult site at Nelson Brae, Keith.**

This site was on a steep hill and a lot of work was required to level the site out to make it suitable for housebuilding. Designed by Archial and built by Springfield Properties, the houses are an excellent example of how good design can make even the most difficult site developable.

The houses were handed over to Langstane in October.



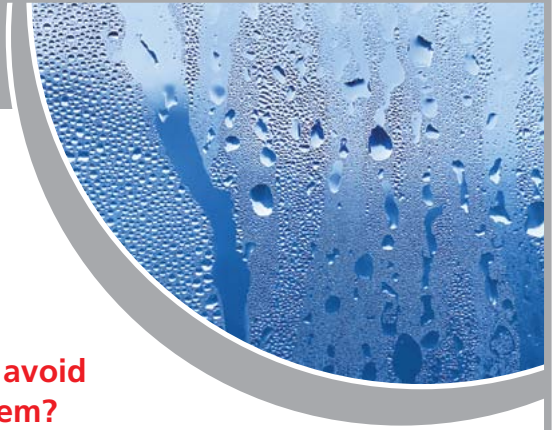
## Recently completed developments

**We are pleased to have added 44 new properties to our housing stock in the Moray area in recent months.**

Forbes Court, Elgin is a development of twenty-two 1 and 2 bedroom flats which was completed in July. The flats were designed and built by local housebuilder Tullochs of Cummingston to a high standard and we are very pleased with the end result.



# Problems with Condensation



Tenants often call the Association to report problems with dampness in their homes. When our staff go to investigate the problem it is often found that the problems are caused by condensation.

## What is Condensation?

- It is caused when warm moist air comes into contact with a cold surface

## What are the effects of condensation?

- Water running down cold surfaces, ie windows, bathroom fittings, tiles, paintwork, etc
- Black, brown, or green spots appear on walls, ceilings, skirting boards, along window sills and tile grout
- Mould growth on clothing and furnishings

## What are the causes of condensation?

- Drying laundry in the property
- Not using the extractor fans where provided in kitchens or bathrooms
- The use of portable gas or paraffin heaters
- Keeping windows and window vents closed so that there is no air circulation in the property
- Not dealing with the mould as soon as it appears
- Stacking belongings against external walls for prolonged periods

## How do I avoid the problem?

- Open windows and window vents whenever you can to allow air to move around your home
- Always use extractor fans
- Keep your home reasonably warm in cold weather
- Vent tumble driers to the outside, or use condensing tumble driers
- Wipe condensation off cold surfaces such as window sills, tiles and sanitary ware
- Avoid drying washing on your radiators or hot water tanks

## What do I do if I have mould in my home?

- Wash the mould off as soon as you see it, preferably with a fungicidal cleaner, and adopt the preventative measures described above

If you continue to have problems with mould in your home for a prolonged period, please contact our Customer Services Team for assistance on **01224 423000**.



# AUDITING OF GAS SERVICING



**The Association has appointed Energy Technical to carry out auditing of our gas servicing contract with Heatcare Oil and Gas Ltd.**

The company will be checking the quality of the servicing provided by Heatcare. They will carry out these checks to a sample number of properties and therefore may require access to your home. The work is not disruptive and should not take much time.

This work will be carried out quarterly commencing in December this year, then at three month intervals.

Please note that this is not to be confused with the gas servicing work itself carried out by Heatcare. If Energy Technical does call at your home, I would be obliged if you can offer them access, after you have requested proof of identification. The company will also be carrying a letter of introduction from Langstane Housing Association.

# MAKE SURE YOU ARE COVERED

With the especially cold winters over the last couple of years our tenants are being urged now to take preventative measures to avoid burst pipes this coming winter and make sure if the worst happens they have adequate insurance.

In recent years Christmas and New Year has seen insurers receiving up to 50% more claims than expected for the time of year as a result of the freezing weather. More of these claims are for damage caused by escape of water than for fire or theft.

**Remember, Langstane Housing Association are only responsible for the property that your rent and not for your personal possessions or furniture. Therefore these are your responsibility should they be damaged in any way.**

During 2009 claims for burst pipes cost insurers £800 million with the average burst pipe claim being about £15,000.

Most insurance policies will cover damage caused by freezing water and leaking water from tanks, pipes and heating systems.

A burst pipe is a massive inconvenience for any tenant especially over the festive period and even worse if they have no insurance.

Langstane Housing Association do not sell insurance policies nor do we recommend any particular company, however there are plenty of low cost schemes around that our tenants can take advantage of and it is in your own interest to ensure you have sufficient cover.

## Best Practice Award for New Tenant DVD



The success of our new tenancy DVD 'Welcome to your new Home' has been officially recognised with a Best Practice Award from the Tenant Participatory Advice Service Scotland (TPAS). Langstane developed the DVD along with 6 other landlords (Angus, Castlehill, Dunedin Canmore, Grampian, Link and Tenants First) with the aim of giving every new tenant all the information they need for a long and happy tenancy in the most easy to use format. To request a copy, contact the Association on 01224 423000.



## COMMENTS FORM - WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

We would like to hear what you think about the information contained in this edition of the tenant newsletter. We would also welcome any comments you want to make about Langstane Housing Association or any of the services provided by the Association. Please complete this form, cut out and return it to the Association at the FREEPOST address below.

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Contact Details (e.g. phone number / email):

.....

Please tick the box if you are interested in becoming a member of the Association. We will send you more information and an application form.

Please tick the box if you are interested in joining the Langstane Register of Interested Tenants. We will send you more information and a registration form.

Have you ever viewed or used the Langstane housing association website available at [www.langstane-ha.co.uk](http://www.langstane-ha.co.uk)

Comments:

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Return to: Langstane Housing Association Ltd, FREEPOST AB264, 680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1ZQ.

# Are your benefits about to change?

## If you currently get benefits including Housing Benefit you should read on.

As you may have seen on the news the Government is planning to make substantial changes to benefits and allowances including Housing Benefit. If the changes go ahead, they would mean that some tenants may find themselves receiving less money to help with their housing.

Some benefit changes have already happened and these include:

- a reduction in Housing Benefit where a family member is working (non-dependant deduction)
- review of Incapacity Benefit to get more claimants onto Employment Support Allowance
- Child Benefit stopped for higher earners
- Removal of the 'Baby Element' from tax credit entitlement

The remaining plans need to be approved in government but if the plans do go ahead it will be important to work out as soon as possible whether you are likely to be affected, and if so, how you might be able to manage your budgets to cover your costs.

We can offer advice and support to help you manage your money in the event that you face a reduction in your benefit payment.

One proposal is that Housing Benefit will be reduced for working age tenants to reflect the number of people living in the property. This means that if you have a spare bedroom(s) you may get less Housing Benefit.

If you think this situation may affect you should contact us to discuss your options and for further advice. It may be that a move to a smaller property may help you if the changes do go ahead.

Another proposal is that all benefits will be paid directly to tenants (including Housing Benefit) and it is up to the tenant to pay rent from this. This would mean that the council Housing Benefit office would no longer pay us, you would have budget for your rent and pay this yourself.

These proposals are not yet law and may change, and we will keep you up-to-date on these proposals and provide further information if/when they become law.

If you would like further information on the proposed changes the following website may help alternatively you can us on 01224 423000.



## Don't Forget your Rent

**With Christmas almost upon us once again it is important to remember to pay your bills over the Christmas Period.**

It is too easy to forget or delay payment but this can be costly to you.

Our Rent Arrears Team work hard to collect unpaid rent and we are active in chasing up on unpaid debts.

If you do fall into rent arrears it is difficult to catch up again, you risk: -

- having less money in future,
- your credit rating can be adversely affected,
- having additional charges against you,
- losing your home.

If you are evicted for rent arrears, you may not be housed by any other council or housing association whilst the debt is outstanding.

**We are here to help you.**

If you feel you are getting into debt we can offer practical advice and assistance to help you.

We work closely with a money Advise project and an Income Maximisation Officer to ensure you can get the best information and advise about managing your money and getting out of debt (and staying out of debt).

For more information please contact our Customer Services Team on 01224 423000.

**Make 2012 the year you get out of debt for good.**



# Office Opening Hours

## Our forth coming Public Holidays

Friday 6th April - Good Friday

Monday 9th April - Easter Monday

Monday 16th April - Spring Holiday

Monday 7th May - May

Tuesday 5th June (Queens Golden Jubilee)

Monday 9th July - Summer Holiday

We at Langstane would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for this festive season.

We would also like to remind you that during the holiday season our opening hours are changing temporarily.

Here are the HOLIDAY HOURS  
(please cut this off and keep somewhere safe)

**We will be CLOSED from  
12.30pm Friday 23rd December 2011  
Until 9.00 am Wednesday 4th January 2012**

### Please if you have an emergency repairs contact the following:

<b>GAS (heat care)</b>	<b>01343 545005</b>
<b>Electricity (power cut)</b>	<b>0800 300 999</b>
<b>Loss of Water Supply:</b>	<b>0845 601 8855</b>
	<b>01224 480 281 Aberdeen</b>
	<b>08457 565 656 Moray</b>
	<b>08456 08 12 03 Aberdeenshire</b>



If you require this newsletter in a different format or language please contact first response on 01224 423000

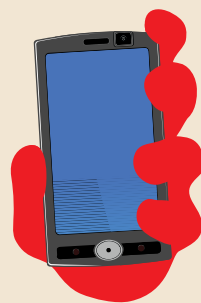
If you have any complaints about our service, please contact us. We have a formal complaints policy, details of which can be found on our website [www.langstane-ha.co.uk](http://www.langstane-ha.co.uk) or a leaflet is available at our offices.

## New Text And Email Service Coming Soon!

Langstane is introducing a new way for tenants to keep in touch and access services. Over the coming weeks, tenants who have provided Langstane with their mobile phone number will receive a text asking them if they would like to sign up to use our texting service. If you reply with 'yes' you will receive a confirmation letter with details of the services available.

The first part of the project will provide services to help you manage your rent account more easily. You will be able to make a balance enquiry, check last payment we received or request a call back with a member of our Arrears Team to discuss your account or make a payment. In future, the Association hopes to extend this service to our Repairs and Neighbourhood Services teams.

If you have not given the Association your current mobile phone number and would like to use this service, contact us on 01224 423000 to update your details.



**Langstane Housing Association**  
680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1SL  
Tel: 01224 423000  
Website: [www.langstane-ha.co.uk](http://www.langstane-ha.co.uk)  
E-mail: [info@langstane-ha.co.uk](mailto:info@langstane-ha.co.uk)

**Langstane Housing Association**  
7 North Guildry street  
Elgin  
IV30 1JR

**Association's Out-of-Hours  
Emergency Repair Cover:**  
**01224 480281 (Aberdeen)**  
**08457 565 656 (Moray)**  
**08456 08 12 03 (Aberdeenshire)**