

the tenants' VOICE

CONTACT US

If you need to contact us or need information please call our **Contact Centre on 0300 1234566** or visit our website **www.moray.gov.uk** Alternatively you can visit one of our access points.

BUCKIE

Buckie Access Point,
13 Cluny Square, Buckie, AB56 1AJ.

ELGIN

Elgin Access Point,
Council Office, High Street, Elgin,
IV30 1BX.

FORRES

Forres Access Point, Auchernack,
High Street, Forres,
IV36 1DX.

KEITH

Keith Community Hub, Mid Street,
Keith, AB55 5AH

WINTER 2017

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ARRANGEMENTS

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DOWNSIZING
SCHEME

We've made some
changes to your
newsletter
based on your
feedback



OUR OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED FROM 3PM ON FRIDAY 22 DECEMBER 2017
AND WILL REOPEN AT 8.45AM ON WEDNESDAY 3 JANUARY 2018

EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS: **03457 565656**

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EUROPEAN
PIPE BAND
CHAMPIONSHIPS

A WORLD CLASS EVENT ON YOUR DOORSTEP

EUROPEAN PIPE BAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

On Saturday 30th June 2018 Grant Park, in Forres, will be alive with the sound of 3,000 pipers and drummers from all over the world competing in the European Pipe Band Championships.

It is a day out not to be missed: in addition to the world class musical talent on display there will be more than 100 stalls and fun and entertainment for all ages. Bring the family along for a **spectacular day out!**



**COME AND
JOIN US!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
www.pipingatforres.com

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Dear readers,



Welcome to the winter edition of the Tenants' Voice

Your feedback is always welcome and it is pleasing to hear from you no matter what the circumstances as you know best what is happening in your communities and ways we can improve things. Even though some Moray Council services do well compared to other Local Authorities there is always room for improvement.

Being the Chair of Communities Committee I have now been appointed the Moray representative on the 'Wellbeing Board' for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). It was fortunate that I could attend the initial meeting which coincided with a trip to the Alzheimers' Scotland Awards ceremony. This worked in well with train travel between Edinburgh and Glasgow and I could meet fellow Councillors from across Scotland and people working on projects that support carers and those affected by dementia.

After hearing about the effects across Scotland on families already experiencing delayed payments with the rollout of Universal Credit, I had grave concerns for Moray. I was pleased to hear everyone on the 'Wellbeing Board' was supportive of the need to 'pause' it. To learn that the full Moray rollout has now been rescheduled for June 2018 was heartening and it gives a little more time to put support in place for those going through benefit changes and shows that working collectively can work!

The role of Credit Unions was mentioned in light of benefit changes so I am hopeful that, even though our local Credit Union is based in Forres, people from Moray and Nairn can now join the savings and loans co-operative. Employees of Moray Council can also join the workforce savings scheme and have regular deductions from wages to build up a 'pot' for that rainy day and as we all know any day can be rainy!

Linking strategy with operational roles is a huge challenge for me with my background in Community Development. Community engagement is the key to any changes and those living in communities know best and therefore are best placed to move things forward and already work together to support each other.

May I wish you a restful festive season and all the very best for 2018.

Should you wish to get in touch, I can be contacted by e-mail on lorna.creswell@moray.gov.uk or via the Members Support Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorna Creswell".

Councillor Lorna Creswell
Chair of Communities Committee

Gas Recharges



When gas appliances are not properly maintained they can be dangerous. By law, we must make sure that all gas appliances and flues are checked regularly and issue a gas safety certificate. This is to make sure that you, your family and your neighbours are safe.

Despite our efforts to gain access, a small number of tenants do not allow our engineers to carry out these checks. In such cases, our only option is to arrange a forced entry. Sometimes when we have to force entry, we may decide to fit a servicing monitor. This safety device reminds you to arrange an annual safety check. If the message is ignored the monitor will eventually switch off the gas supply to your boiler so that your heating system does not work.

On 17 October 2017 our Communities Committee agreed that all costs associated with forced entry should be passed to the tenant with immediate effect.

If we have planned a forced entry and you are there to let us in on the day, there will still be costs to pay. This is because we still have to cover the costs of having extra staff visit your home. If we have to carry out a forced entry the full costs will be passed to the tenant.

The costs are as follows:

| | No monitor fitted | Monitor fitted |
|---|-------------------|----------------|
| You let us into your home | £89.17 | £150.90 |
| You do not let us into your home | £108.07 | £169.80 |

If you are not going to be in when the gas engineer is coming then please let us know on 0300 123 4566. If you give us enough notice, we can rearrange the appointment and you won't be asked to pay these avoidable costs.

Free Energy Advice This Winter



Worried about your energy costs?

Not sure where to get advice on heating controls, switching supplier, getting the best tariff or accessing grants and payments?

REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project) is working in partnership with the Moray Council to give free and impartial advice to households on energy saving and energy efficiency measures. You can contact REAP for advice suitable to your property and circumstances.

Home energy advice visits are also available – these may be particularly valuable to those who are older or are facing other challenges by offering hands-on, personal support to deal with all energy related issues.

REAP also run an Energy Champions project to help skill up individuals and groups about energy efficiency, with fun training, information and advice.

Contact us and start tackling your bills today!

T/F 01542 888070

E. info@reapscotland.org.uk

www.reapscotland.org.uk

177 Mid Street, Keith, Banffshire AB55 5BL

REAP is a company limited by guarantee (No: 316989) and a registered charity (No: SC037988).

Downsizing incentive scheme

- Do you have extra rooms you don't need?
- Do you have any disabled adaptations that no-one in your household needs?
- There is no pressure to move if you don't want to and you don't have to accept the first offer.

To be eligible for the scheme you must:

- be a Council tenant living in a three bedroom or larger property, which is now too big for your needs
- or**
- be a Council tenant or qualifying occupier who lives in an adapted property and you no longer need the adapted or specialist feature of the house
- and**
- have a satisfactory tenancy report that shows that:
 - your home meets our standards;
 - we are not taking antisocial behaviour action against you; and
 - you do not have unmanageable housing related debt;
- and**
- your current home is a Council property and is in an area of demand and we can easily re-let it.

What's in it for you?

We will always try and give you practical help. However, funding for this scheme is limited.

If you qualify for the scheme and there is funding left you will get a basic payment of **£1500**. In addition we will also give you a disruption payment of **£400** and **£400** for each bedroom that you give up. For example, if you move from a 4 bedroom property to a 2 bedroom property you will be entitled to:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Basic payment | £1,500 |
| Plus disruption allowance | £400 |
| Plus (£400 per bedroom given up) | £800 |
| Total awarded | £2,700 |

Depending on your circumstances and needs, we can help you with the following:

- filling in forms
- viewings and removal arrangements
- arranging to disconnect or reconnect utilities
- notifying agencies of your change of address, GP, Bank
- helping you to arrange and dispose of unwanted furniture
- giving you information about housing benefit/universal credit, money advice and making the most of your income.



More information

You can find out more about the scheme, including how to apply:

- on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/housing
- by phoning us on **0300 123 4566**
- by emailing us at housing@moray.gov.uk

Feedback from one of our tenants

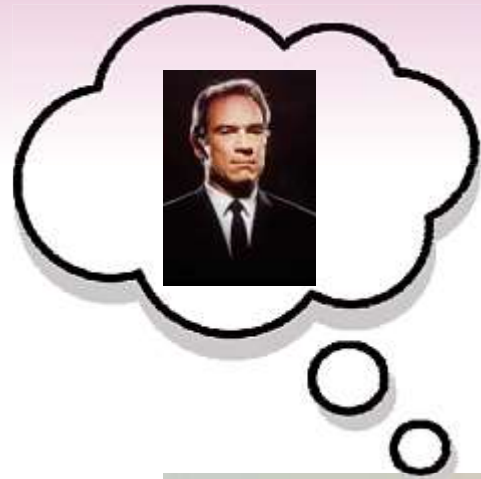
“The house was too big for me on my own and after Councillors encouraged me to consider the Downsizing Scheme I decided to go for it.

It was a straightforward process and everything went through nae bather at a. The financial help offered went to good use as I was going from gas and electric to all electric so needed to buy a new cooker and I had re-flooring done. Still things to do but I haven't looked back.”



It's all change for housing management

Gus Dobney retired from the West team in August after 25 years in housing. Alistair McQuaker retires in December after working in local government for 38 years (the past 23 in the housing service). We asked them a few questions about their experiences over the years and found out a bit more about them.



How did you get started in housing, and get to where you are now?

Alistair: I started working in 1974 as a joiner. I then worked for Glasgow Council from 1979 as a joiner and made my way up to foreman and building assessor. I first came to Moray as a maintenance inspector responsible for managing planned contracts and then became an area housing officer in 1994 working in Buckie, Forres and then Lhanbryde. I returned to Buckie in April 2000 as area housing manager where I remained until retirement.

Gus: I left the military after 18 years' service due to medical reasons. Being married with 2 small children meant I had to find a job. I started work at the Council as a housing inspector but was ambitious and wanted to climb the career ladder. I studied by distance learning for 6 years to get my qualifications so I could advance to become area housing manager. I would not have been able to achieve what I have without the support from my wife.

Tell us about how things have changed over the years

Alistair: When I started in housing there were no computers. The housing service has also been restructured every few years to keep up with legal changes and Council priorities. This has kept the service fresh and focused.

Gus: The biggest change since I started in housing is the introduction of information technology. There was only one computer in Keith used by building control and now it is an integral part of our work day.

What challenges have you faced over the years, and what are some of the positive outcomes from issues you have dealt with?

Alistair: There have been many positives throughout my time in housing. The main thing for me has been being able to help tenants sustain their tenancies and seeing my staff develop over the years through difficult changes to law, the floods and other challenges.

Gus: The floods and the reduction of resources has impacted on staffing and materials. There have also been many positives – I really enjoy what I call the 'Hannibal Smith' moments – I love it when a plan comes together! My team perform well which is a huge positive to me. Some of the successful outcomes involved families who were living in very basic conditions, neglected properties with outside toilets and rooms which were unusable. With our help, these families were re-housed. It is a great feeling when you can make a difference to people's lives.

What are you most proud of and what will you miss the most?

Alistair: I tend not to focus on reflection of any achievements, but setting up and running the Lhanbryde Challenge, and seeing the difference it made



Gus Dobney

to residents gives me satisfaction. I will miss the close working relationship I have enjoyed with my staff and getting to know and help many tenants over the years.



Gus: I am most proud of my part in the recruitment of staff and in being able to influence, nurture and lead a good team. I am happy to now hand the baton over as I know that good standards will be maintained and I am confident in my team. The team is also without doubt what I will miss the most – the socialising and camaraderie of my colleagues and the buzz of securing a good outcome for our customers.

What are your plans for retirement?

Alistair: I am looking forward to driving about in my motorhome and am involved in setting up a branch of a charity where the main thrust is to help people to manage their finances. The charity is called C.A.P. (Christians Against Poverty). I have always been interested in charity work – in 2008 I went to work for a charity in Tanzania for the summer and was offered a job there on my return. If I had not met my second wife, I would be living and working in Africa.

Gus: I have a passion for horses and nothing compares to galloping across a field on a horse. I will be doing more horse riding, playing golf, gardening, cycling and coastal walking. Bea (my wife) and I are also downsizing and moving to Dunbar in East Lothian so I am looking forward to relocating and spending more time with my grandchildren – I have one already and 2 due.

If you were stuck on a desert island, what 3 things would you take with you?

Alistair: My memory foam pillow for a good sleep under the stars, a bottle of my favourite aftershave so I can smell nice for the natives, and my bible to give me strength and guidance in my new adventure.

Gus: A horse, a cat and a very large bottle of malt whisky – my passions in life.

If Hollywood were to make a movie about your life, who would play you?

Alistair: That's easy, it would be Shrek as ogres are made up of layers like onions. On reflecting over my life there have been many things that have happened which have all layered me into what I am today.

Gus: It would have to be Tommy Lee Jones – he is a bit craggy and well-worn just like me.

Finally, what message would you pass on to your team now that you are leaving the service?

Alistair: Always remember to show compassion to those you come into contact with as you may be in their position one day. Treat others the way you would want to be treated yourself and remember that you are not there as an enforcer, you are there to help people live as fulfilling a life as they possibly can.

Gus: That's simple – I would tell them to “get it right first time”.



Alistair McQuaker

Cath McGowan (East Team) and Kim Duffy (West Team) are your new area housing managers.

We'll catch up with them once they have settled into their new posts.

A day in the life

This is a new regular feature we are introducing to your newsletter.

In each edition we will be interviewing a member of the Housing and Property section to find out a bit more about them and learn what a typical day looks like for them.

Brian Fraser started in his new role as 'supported accommodation manager' early in the year. We caught up with him to ask him a few questions.

Can you tell us about your working background and what brought you to the Council?

I started off in the construction industry as a joiner so it was a bit of a leap to start working in social care. I previously worked in Aberdeen with 'Action for Children' which consisted of intensive family support. I have worked in residential care for 10 years but as I was based in Aberdeen and live in Elgin, the travelling was a bit of an issue so when the job came up with the Council I applied and was successful.

How are you adjusting to the new role and the responsibilities it brings? What has been the biggest change for you?

The biggest adjustment for me has been working within local government which is an entirely different way of working. It is an advantage to have everyone that you need under one roof working for the Council – in my previous role all the various departments such as legal, payroll etc were spread round the country. Terms and conditions are also far better with the Council.

What are your main areas of responsibility as supported accommodation manager?

My main responsibility is to ensure that tenants who are within temporary accommodation experience a satisfactory service at a difficult time in their lives and to make sure my staff are working well and provide an effective service.

What does your average day entail? Is there such a thing as an average day in supported accommodation?

Managing a reactive service such as supported accommodation means that my daily plans may be interrupted to deal with crisis management. It is a case of prioritising what each day brings. In the rare quiet periods time is spent on the everyday duties of the job. No two days are the same.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have to deal with on a weekly basis?

Staffing is one of the biggest challenges as we are looking at a service review. The 'out of hours' service is under review and I am looking at our procedures to find ways of working smarter. We will be moving most of our staff team from a dispersed office, down to the main Council building which may be a culture change for staff. This will bring many benefits as it will allow closer working with other teams such as housing options, benefits and homelessness. I am reviewing job descriptions and looking at training for staff to ensure registration with the SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council). Making sure that we are in line with legislative change is an important part of my role.

Out of work, how do you spend your free time and what do you do to relax and unwind?

I enjoy hillwalking and walking with my dog, Maisie. I enjoy the outdoor life and used to enjoy fishing. I also like to read and enjoy political thrillers.

Finally, if you could change one thing about your service, what would you change and why?

My vision would be to have more staff and have a team who work well together to give tenants what they want and deserve. I would like more quality homes and would like more engagement with tenants to get their feedback and make sure they have a good experience whilst they are in temporary accommodation.





Waste Management Arrangements Xmas/Hogmanay Period 2017/2018



Household Refuse and Recycling Collections

Household collections of residual waste (green bin) and garden/food waste (brown bin) will continue to alternate weekly and recycling containers will continue to be serviced fortnightly over the festive period.

ONLY MONDAY AND TUESDAY COLLECTIONS ARE AFFECTED

Collections may be carried out earlier than usual, please present your containers for 7.30am.

| If your normal collection day is Monday | Your collection day will be: |
|--|---|
| on Monday 25 th December 2017 | Saturday 23 rd December 2017 |
| on Monday 1 st January 2018 | Saturday 30 th December 2017 |

| If your normal collection day is Tuesday | Your collection day will be: |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| on Tuesday 26 th December 2017 | Sunday 24 th December 2017 |
| on Tuesday 2 nd January 2018 | Sunday 31 st December 2017 |

Recycling Centres and Public Conveniences will be CLOSED:

24th, 25th, 26th, & 31st December 2017

& 1st, 2nd January 2018

**The Special Collections and Waste Hotline will be closed from
3pm Friday 22nd December 2017 to re-open 9am Wednesday 3rd January 2018**

**Excess waste, recycling and old Christmas trees can be taken to the
following Recycling Centres:**

**Gollachy, Buckie
Chanonry, Elgin**

**Waterford, Forres
Balloch Road, Keith**

**For further information please contact the
Waste Hotline on 0300 1234565 or waste@moray.gov.uk**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all at Environmental Services

Recycle your Christmas waste



Christmas – what a waste!

No, not the celebrations, but all the rubbish that goes with it! There's the leftover food, whatever's not made it into the turkey curry on Boxing Day, or the turkey risotto the day after! From vegetable peelings to plate scrapings and reindeer-chewed carrots – it can all be recycled and the best thing is it's so easy!

It's not just food waste that we're hoping to see you recycle more of this festive period – here's a quick guide to what can be recycled in which bin:



- Food, glorious food! All your leftovers, plate scrapings, turkey bones, coffee grinds and out of date food
- Your 'real' Christmas tree, if it fits. If not, leave it out beside your brown bin on collection day and we'll do the rest.



- Drinks cans and food tins
- Plastic bottles and trays marked PET1 or HDPE2 – give them a little rinse first!
- Shampoo and shower gel bottles, shaving foam tins and aerosols. We know you'll be getting glammed up so any empties can be recycled.



- Glass bottles – there will be many a festive tipple across Moray!
- Glass jars
- No broken glass please!



- Wrapping paper – not the foil type though!
- Christmas cards and gift tags
- Cardboard boxes
- Card and paper gift bags
- Newspapers and magazines
- Packaging from kids' toys – remember to remove any plastic first!



- Everything else that can't be recycled!

If you fill up your bins before collection day, you can take excess waste to our recycling centres and points across Moray – find these and check out Christmas opening hours on our website <http://bit.ly/2iitAOL>

Rent free weeks

The rent free weeks over the festive period are the weeks beginning 18 and 25 December 2017. **Please remember that if you have rent arrears you must continue to make payments over the festive period.**

If you have any questions about paying your rent then get in touch with your housing officer or the money advice team. If you are worried about falling behind with your rent this Christmas, get in touch with us on 0300 123 4566.

You can check your balance and make payments at any time using the online tool.

Sign up to **myaccount** at www.moray.gov.uk/myaccount. The service is secure and available at any time.

You will find more information about how to pay your rent with links to relevant forms on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_41538.html



New housing payment cards

You will have now received the new style payment card, which has a brightly coloured purple band across the top. Please make sure that you are using your new card and destroy the old one. This will make sure your payments are processed.



Our new bank account

If you use Standing Orders or are a Faster Payment customer you will have received a letter informing you that our bank account has changed.

On 25 October 2017, our old bank account was closed. If you are still using our old bank account then your payments may have been rejected. Contact your bank immediately and update to the new details.



Our new bank account details

Sort code: 80 - 06 - 66

Account number: 00111513



Your Contact Details

Are your contact details up to date?

It is very important that we have all your correct contact details.

We may need to get in touch with you about appointments or to pass on important information to you. You may notice that we have changed some of our appointment letters to request up to date details from you. Please give these details so we can update our systems with the correct information.

If your contact details have changed recently or if you just want to confirm we have the correct details then please get in touch:

Phone **0300 123 4566**
housing@moray.gov.uk



Universal Credit is the new payment that is being phased in to replace benefits for working aged people. In Moray, it is currently available to single jobseekers and from June 2018 it is due to be rolled out to all claimants.

Universal Credit is paid in one single monthly payment, in arrears, and makes you responsible for all your household budgeting. This includes paying your rent as your payment will include money towards housing costs.

To apply for Universal Credit, you need a bank account and an email address as an application should be made online. You will then manage your online account, which is known as your journal, on an ongoing basis. If you are unable to go online you may be able to make a claim by telephone or in a Jobcentre.

You have the choice to get the housing part of your claim paid directly to your landlord or pay this yourself. You also have the choice of receiving your claim across two payments during the month.

It takes around 6 weeks for a new Universal Credit claim to be assessed and the first payment to arrive. If you are likely to struggle financially while waiting for your first payment, then you might be entitled to an advice payment while your claim is being assessed. Ask your work coach if you have one and don't leave it too late.

Let us know if you are experiencing any difficulties as it is your responsibility to pay your rent on time. Contact your housing officer who will talk over the problem with you and give you practical advice. They can also agree to repayments by instalments so please do not stop paying without telling us.

Phone **0300 123 4566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk

You can find more information on Universal Credit and some helpful links on our website at <http://bit.ly/2v1N3uN>

New Developments at Forres Area Credit Union



Jane Bartecki, one of our tenants, attended an event at the Credit Union

Forres Area Credit Union (FACU), moved into larger High Street premises in August so that it could expand its services. The new catchment area for Forres Area Credit Union is now Moray and Nairn. This means that people who either live or work in those two areas can join the Credit Union. It is ironic that as more and more High Street banks close because of the increase in internet banking, that the membership of the Credit Union continues to grow. Over 70 new members have joined since its move and there are now almost 2000 adult savers.

Credit Unions are financial cooperatives and are becoming more widely recognised. A recent documentary which ran on the BBC in the mornings, 'A Matter of Life and Debt', showed the work of Credit Unions. The topics of the programme, dealing with people and their finances, were typical of Credit Unions as they put 'people before profit' and put the interests of their members first.

A Credit Union encourages regular saving and is happy to accept deposits of all sizes, mainly the importance of developing a savings habit. Every £1 saved with the Credit Union is a share in the Credit Union.

A Credit Union provides access to low cost borrowing with maximum interest rates set by law with no hidden costs. Loans are tailored to suit individual needs and members are encouraged to continue building up savings whilst repaying their loan.

The Credit Union are also aiming to further develop schools' savings clubs out-with the Forres area to encourage youngsters to get into an early savings habit that we feel helps them with their school work. An improved interest in numeracy, literacy and understanding money better is reported by schools.

Currently volunteers work with 6 primary schools and are keen to introduce savings schemes in more schools so the Credit Union were pleased to be successful at a recent funding event in Lhanbryde to be able to offer to introduce schemes in the Milne's and Speyside areas should families be interested. No amount is too small to save, more important to start this to teach the youngsters the benefits of saving at an early age.

We all know how hard it is to save money, so we are now proposing to engage with Moray and employers to offer workplace savings schemes like the Moray Council one where the Payroll Deduction scheme enables employees to have money deducted from their wages and straight into an account with us. It doesn't cost the employer anything and in fact evidence shows the benefits that there are less absences from work due to financial pressures that leads to a more effective performance at work.

For further information on Forres Area Credit Union contact Joanne Taylor, Development Manager on 01309 676735 Or Johanna Quinney, Schools Savings Coordinator on 01309 676735





The damage burst pipes can cause

Winter Tips

Be ready for winter in your home and if you are going out and about. Check that your neighbours are ok during the winter period.

In the home

Nobody wants burst pipes and the disruption this can bring. Make sure that you know where the stop valve is in your home if the worst happens.

If you are not going to be home over the festive period keep your heating on low and if possible ask a friend or neighbour to check on your home. If this is not an option we offer a free drain down service, phone us on **0300 123 4566**.

Make sure that you keep yourself warm. It is recommended that your heating be set between 18 and 22 degrees.

If you suffer a burst pipe or find frozen pipes:

- Find the stop valve and turn the water off straight away.
- For a burst pipe, if there is any chance of the water coming into contact with any electrics turn off the electrics at the mains at once.
- Turn on your taps to drain away any excess water and minimise potential damage.
- Turn off your electric boiler or immersion heater and let fuel fires die down.
- Call us immediately and let your neighbours know if it is likely to affect them.

Call us on **0300 123 4566** or call into your local access point during office hours, or call our emergency out of hours number **03457 565656** if out of office hours.

Out and about

Make sure that you are safe when you are out and about. During winter, check the weather and road conditions before you go out. During severe weather conditions consider if you need to go out at all and if so make sure that buses and trains are running.

If you are travelling by car make sure that you remove all snow and ice from the windscreen, roof and lights before you set off. Take precautions before you go out such as making sure your mobile phone is fully charged. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back and keep some essential items in your car:

- Snow shovel
- Torch and spare batteries
- Spare warm clothes and/or blanket
- Food and water
- First aid kit

From October until April our roads maintenance team monitor road and weather conditions using roadside weather stations. As it can be challenging covering an area the size of Moray, roads are categorised by priority so that major routes are treated first. The main trunk roads (A96, A95) are managed by BEAR (Scotland) Ltd rather than our roads maintenance team.

You can find more information on winter road maintenance on our website:

www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_40814.html



Priority Services with SSE

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSE) look after the wires and cables that bring electricity to communities throughout the North of Scotland. They don't send out electricity bills – their job is to keep the lights on for their 750,000 customers.

Julie Walker, Priority Service Manager at SSE, explains Priority Services:

“A lot of customers don't know who to contact during a power cut, and so it's important that everyone knows that we are the people responsible for delivering the power to their meter. Our teams cover from Perth and Dundee all the way up to the Highlands and Islands.”

Julie's top tips on being prepared for a power cut start with this little-known fact:

“It's worth remembering that a cordless landline phone needs electric for the base unit, and won't work if there is a power cut. I'd recommend getting a plug-in analogue phone as a back-up, and that way, on the rare occasions there is a power cut, you'll still be able to keep in touch with friends and family. The phones are relatively inexpensive, with basic models available for around £5-£10”.

Julie added that if you know bad weather is on the way, you should:

- Fill flasks with hot water and hot water bottles – so you can still keep warm and get a hot drink.
- If you're restricted or not very mobile, try and make sure everything's in the room with you so you don't have to use a stair lift.
- Charge up your mobile phone and keep it near you at all times.
- Keep warm – have blankets and extra layers ready to pop on if the temperature drops.
- Keep loved ones' and emergency numbers handy.
- If you know there's going to be bad weather avoid using a bathroom hoist or a stair lift.

Anyone who needs medical assistance (for example is on oxygen or uses telecare) is known to Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks as a 'Priority 1' customer. This means that the company will try their best to ring round these customers to warn them of upcoming storms

or planned outages (when they need to turn the power off for essential network maintenance).

In advance of a power cut, Scottish and Southern Electricity Network advise you to:

- Keep at least one torch with fresh batteries in a place where you can reach it easily.
- If you have a stair lift, check that it has a handle so that it can be operated manually. Your stair lift may also work with batteries. Check with the company who installed it to see if this is possible.
- If you rely on specialist, electricity-powered medical equipment, check to see if it can work with a battery. If not, have a plan in place so that you know what to do in the event of a power cut. You can call the **NHS** on **111** who will be able to advise you.
- If you rely on oxygen, make sure that you have back up cylinders and you have the number for your healthcare professional or oxygen supplier handy to call if you need more.

Now that you've prepped for a power cut, here's what to do if the lights go out:

- If possible, check if your neighbours have electricity. If they don't, it is likely that the fault is with the electricity network and not something in your house.
- If everyone else has power and your home does not, it could be an issue with your own fuses or trip switches, but only check these if you are able to. If they are in an awkward location, please ask a friend, relative or neighbour or **call 105** to speak with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks' Emergency Service Centre for help and advice.

And remember:

- Make sure any essential medical equipment can work with a battery.
- Discard freezer food if the power's been off for longer than 8 hours.
- Turn off all your electrical appliances during a power cut.
- Leave on a light switch so you know when the power's been restored.
- Look out for one another – if possible, check on your neighbours and any vulnerable people in your community.

Moray Tenants' Forum

The Moray Tenants' Forum is a group of Council tenants whose aim is to improve housing services and conditions for tenants.

Earlier this year Lesley Baird, Chief Executive of TPAS Scotland (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) visited to talk to the group about what tenant participation means and how they can influence decisions and effect real change for tenants.

Since her visit, the Forum has made some changes and is now welcoming guest speakers for question and answer sessions. They hope this will encourage more tenants to come along. So far there have been several guest speakers including Richard Anderson (Head of Housing and Property), Mike Neary (Waste Team), John MacDonald (Capital Programmes) and Mike Rollo (Repairs).

Steven Christie, treasurer of the Tenants' Forum, recently resigned from tenant participation activities. We would like to take the opportunity to thank him for his involvement over the years and we wish him well for his future.

The Forum will get together again on **27 February 2017**.

If you would like more information on the Moray Tenants' Forum then please contact us.

Phone: **0300 123 4566**
Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk



Buckpool New Build Tenant Group

On 8 November 2017, Moray Council and Langstane Housing Association tenants got together to come up with ideas on how to improve their estate.

The group discussed some of the areas that mattered to them, including the removal of damaged trees, progress on the sustainable drainage system (SUDS), options for fencing of the play area and hope to work on a new project to develop a community garden.

The group plan to get together near the end of January 2018.

If you would like to get involved with this group please contact us on 0300 123 4566.



Join our service improvement panel

We want **you**, our tenants, to join an exciting new panel called the 'Service Improvement Panel' (SIP) and have your say in housing services and how they are delivered. We are looking for tenants of all ages and backgrounds – everyone is welcome!

The SIP will be made up of tenants who will assess our performance and help us to make improvements. The panel will choose which areas of the service they would like to review and which method they would like to use.

Mystery Shopping

Panel members may be trained as mystery shoppers and record their experiences after contacting various housing services. Posing as customers, they can test the contact centre and access points by visiting or ringing in with a query, or by looking for information on the website. Feedback on customer care will be passed on to senior council officers who will address any issues highlighted.



Inspection

The panel may carry out an inspection of a specific service or area of interest. As a member of the panel you will be able to challenge performance and add your ideas about how we can



improve the way things are done. The panel will then make recommendations for service improvements and senior council officers will listen to their feedback and consider their views. Inspections can include interviewing staff or visiting our offices or empty properties.

What's in it for you?

If you have never been involved in tenant participation before, this is an ideal opportunity for you to become a part of something new. You will receive relevant training, information and support from our staff, and we will not make unreasonable demands – the panel is a voluntary group.

Joining the panel will help you to gain personal confidence and increase your skills if you are hoping to return to work. You may be able to work towards a qualification if you wish and you will become part of a team, have fun, and make new friends.

By joining the panel and getting involved in tenant scrutiny you will help us to understand **your** priorities and needs and you can make sure that **your** views are taken into account before decisions are made and policies are set.

Tenant scrutiny gives you a greater influence and allows you to hold us to account. It means that staff and tenants can work in partnership to achieve better performance and improved outcomes.



Still unsure and want a chat to find out more?

The Moray Tenants Partnership is hosting an event in Inverness in February where tenants can talk to tenants and their landlords about this exciting opportunity. There are only a small number of places available to each landlord so please get in touch with us as soon as possible – there is a free light lunch and we will also arrange travel.

Interested and want to sign up right away?

Phone us on **0300 123 4566** and ask for the housing information team

Email tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

Our newsletter review group

We'd like to thank those who recently helped us by reviewing our tenant newsletter, The Tenants' Voice.

We asked you to look at our newsletter and some from other housing providers, and tell us what you like and what you don't like. Overall, your feedback was mostly positive but we gathered some ideas about how to improve future newsletters. We have taken your ideas on board and hopefully you will notice some changes in this edition of The Tenants' Voice.

Some of your suggestions on how we can improve



Ron, Frankie and May came along to our newsletter review group.

We also used our new Facebook group 'Moray Council Tenants' for the first time to gather feedback from tenants who couldn't make it to our event or preferred not to attend in person.

As a thank you, we had a prize draw for a £25 voucher for those who took part either in person or online. The winner was Alayne Marshall from Elgin who took part through our Facebook group.

TPAS Conference 2017

Members of the Moray Tenants Forum recently attended this years' TPAS Conference at the Fairmont Hotel in St Andrews. TPAS is the Tenant Participation Advisory Service for Scotland and their aim is to promote good practice in tenant participation. Over 400 delegates attended the conference including tenants, staff and board members.

The theme of this years' conference was The Charter, Welfare Reform and Housing and Health and Wellbeing. The weekend included 3 keynote sessions and 33 interesting, fun and varied workshops to choose from.

Friday evening saw the annual awards ceremony taking place hosted by Jane McCarry and Mark Cox who play the roles of Isa and Tam from comedy series 'Still Game'. This was an exciting evening and saw over 13 awards being handed out to celebrate good practice and innovation in tenant participation throughout Scotland.

Steven Christie, a member of our Tenants' Forum, was nominated for an award but sadly missed out this time.

After a packed programme of workshops on Saturday, a glittering gala dinner was held with a Broadway theme. The Band 'Hey Big Spender' provided excellent entertainment and the evening was enjoyed by all those present.

Sunday morning consisted of a keynote session on Welfare Reform, a further workshop and a closing session on housing rights in practice. Everyone then headed home full of new ideas to reflect on what was a fun and learning weekend.





To mark Scottish Housing Day on 21 September 2017, we launched a new Facebook group.

We wanted to give you another way to participate in our decision making processes and share your ideas on how to improve housing services. The new group is also about sharing news and information that may be of interest to you such as consultations or projects.

We hope that you will join our new group at www.facebook.com/groups/MorayCouncilTenants.

Regional networks - tenant involvement at a national level

The regional networks were initially set up to help registered tenant organisations work more closely with the Scottish Government on issues of national policy. Some examples of the national policies that the regional networks have influenced to date include bus concessions, fire alarms, freedom of information and factoring (property managers who carry out services for homeowners such as repairs, maintenance, cleaning or gardening).

Each network covers a number of local authority areas. The Government support the regional networks with grant funding to cover costs such as transport. However, the regional network structure has recently changed and they will be considering other options such as video conferencing.



The regional networks are now seeking new members to work with them and there are two places available for Moray Council tenants.

For more information please contact us:

Phone: 0300 123 4566

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

Visit their website at www.regionalnetworks.org.uk

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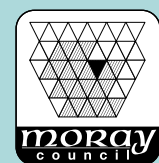
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www.moray.gov.uk/myaccount





Council new build update

We are continuing with our programme to build 500 new council houses over the next 10 years. Since the programme started in 2011/12 we have completed 469 new build Council homes for rent.

During 2017 we completed:

- 16 bungalows and flats in Forres
- 15 bungalows and houses in Buckie

Our future build programme is at an early stage but will probably look like this:

| Location | Elgin | Forres | Forres |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Linkwood Steadings | Strathcona Road | Grantown Road |
| estimated completion | Feb 2018 | June 2018 | July 2018 |
| 1 bed, 2 person flat | 8 | 12 | 12 |
| 2 bed, 3 person bungalow | | | 4 |
| 2 bed, 4 person wheelchair accessible bungalow | | | 2 |
| 3 bed, 6 person 2-storey house | 4 | | |
| 4 bed, 7 person 2-storey house | 4 | | 2 |
| Total | 16 | 12 | 20 |

All our new homes are built to the highest standard of energy efficiency to save tenants money on fuel costs. The houses are bright and spacious. Most have dining kitchens and their own car parking spaces. Most kitchens have space for a washing machine, dishwasher, fridge freezer and tumble drier. All our bungalows and ground floor flats are step free, have level access showers and are designed to be accessible for older people or people with disabilities.

We use a New Build Lettings Plan to allocate the first tenant in a new build home. You can apply for Council housing via the Apply4Homes website at www.apply4homes.org.uk or phone us on **0300 123 4566**.

Up to date details of our new build developments are available on our website at <http://bit.ly/2gO96kc>.

Housing investment – external wall insulation

The latest phase of external wall insulation works has now been completed which was part funded by the Scottish Government. During this phase 44 properties in Milton Drive, Buckie now have external wall insulation.

There are 50 houses still to be completed in the area. There are a further 34 in Milton Drive and 16 in Brodie Drive. We are consulting with Scottish and Southern Energy to complete a further 20 properties within the financial year under our Housing Investment Budget.

We have also committed funding for 12 properties in Forres to have insulation installed. These works will allow us to progress towards meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by 2020, as required by the Scottish Government.



Do you have mobility problems or a disability?

Are you or someone you know having problems:

- Managing steps
- Getting in and out of the bath.

We may be able to adapt your home to help, this may include:

- Fitting hand rails or grab rails
- Installing a ramp
- Installing a stair lift
- Removing a bath and fitting a level access shower.

You can get more information on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/communitycare or

Contact the Access Care Team on **01343 563999** or email accesscareteam@moray.gov.uk.





Do you have Home Contents Insurance?

Isn't it better to be safe than sorry?

If you are a Moray Council tenant, we may be able to help.

Are you aware that Moray Council is not responsible for insuring the contents of your home? To help you protect yourself financially against the risk of damage to your possessions, Moray Council offers a home contents insurance scheme that is payable by monthly instalments.

The policy insures your possessions against fire, flood, theft, storm and other perils. There is no excess to pay in the event of a claim, no minimum security requirements* and the application process is simple.

With premiums payable by monthly instalments, can you really afford not to be insured?

For an application pack or for more information call us on 01343 563899.

*This means that you do not have to have a specified security alarm system or insurance industry approved locks to qualify for the policy.

Your right to repair



You have a right to repair under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This means that where we fail to carry out certain repairs (known as qualifying repairs) within a given timescale, you can arrange for one of our approved contractors to carry out the work within the same time period, and be entitled to compensation.

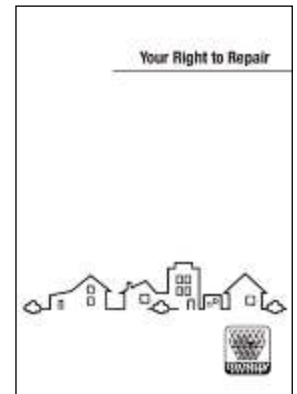
Some examples of qualifying repairs include a blocked sink, a loss of all electric power and a loss of the gas or water supply.

Under the scheme we maintain a list of contractors to back up the existing repairs service. However, if you wrongly call out a contractor or misuse this service, the repair will become rechargeable.

More information, including the list of qualifying repairs, their timescales and our approved contractors can be found online at: www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_54660.html or you can ask us for a copy of our leaflet 'Your Right to Repair'.

Phone: **0300 123 4566**

Email: housing@moray.gov.uk



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0300 123 4566

<http://bit.ly/2ABVwuA>

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YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!



You said: Our tenant participation strategy should have an easy read summary

We did: In partnership with our tenant representatives we developed an easy read summary

You said: You want to receive email alerts

We did: You can now sign up for email alerts through myaccount

You said: You wanted more ways to get involved and be informed

We did: We set up a Moray Council Tenants facebook group where we have already completed our first review

Christmas Puzzle



E U
 H K
 C I C T
 D M B B
 K B D M Z K
 W P A C Y R
 P J N F U E L L
 B G H O T K N C
 D E W Q M F R B T H
 L F L M Z X U L N R
 S Z E B A C M T K A E W
 J O A P E N R Q B J T R
 U N U F B R N F B K T T H F
 V B U T R C V E Z I I I U P
 L L W S R K U L Y N Z V L E R M
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 S H B B K Q S T E S L H G W V W W I
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 O V J A M O V Y J Y K N Q P A T K O Q M A P W M J G O Y W M

BAUBLES ★ LIGHTS ★ SNOW ★ ANGELS ★ TREE ★ STAR ★ TINSEL ★ GLITTER ★ REINDEER ★ RUDOLPH
 CRACKER ★ TURKEY ★ MINCE PIE ★ PUDDING ★ TRIFLE ★ BRANDY CREAM ★ SLEIGH BELLS ★ CAROLS
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You can post it to us at: Winter Competition, Housing & Property, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 1BX, or hand it in to your local area office.

Congratulations

To Mr Ricky Martin from Keith who was the winner of
 the £20 gift card for successfully completing the Tenants'
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Moray Waste Busters

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