

Winter Update

December 2011

Delivering our services to you

Following a recent review on how we deliver our services to you we are making some changes.

Service in the Coldstream area

We have been providing a weekly Monday surgery at Gowanlea in Coldstream since we closed our office in April 2011 offering information and advice. We have been monitoring this service and on most Mondays we have had no tenants using this service. Taking this in to account we will be withdrawing this service and the last weekly surgery will be on Monday 5th December 2011.

After this date we will provide a monthly surgery on the second Tuesday of every month commencing 10th January 2012. This service will run initially from our office in Victoria Street, Coldstream.

Evening opening - Duns and Eyemouth

Since the end of July we have provided two late night opening sessions at both our Duns and Eyemouth offices. The idea behind this service was to provide an

opportunity, after normal working hours, for tenants to speak to staff about any issues they might have and who found it difficult to get in touch during the day. None of our tenants had been using this service and we have now withdrawn it. We will continue to carry out evening visits to homes if we cannot make contact with people during normal working hours for recovery of arrears.

Quarterly Rent Statements

We have decided to stop sending our quarterly rent statements with immediate effect. Tenants' feedback has told us that most tenants do not find these statements useful and some find them very confusing. If you would like a rent statement we can print one for you at anytime, on request, in any of our offices. Our arrears prevention team will continue to provide a statement to any tenant who is in arrears.

Also in this update:

- Money Saving Tips
- Improving your Homes
- Staying safe this Winter



Berwickshire Housing Association would like to take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Could you save some money?

BHA is committed to trying to reduce energy costs for all tenants by installing energy efficient heating systems and improving insulation. The Association has programmes in place to ensure all its houses meet the energy efficiency requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015. However there are some simple steps we can all take within our homes to reduce energy use and in turn energy costs. Here are a few simple tips that might just help you save some money -

- Only boil the amount of water you need in a kettle.
- If you have a shower, use this instead of a bath.
- Use the half load setting on washing machines/dishwashers etc if you don't have a full load.
- Close your curtains in the winter to retain heat.
- Keep doors and windows closed to prevent heat escaping when you have your heating running.
- If your heating system has thermostatic radiator valves set these to meet the requirements for the room. If you don't use a room very often set the valves at their lowest setting. Turn off radiators in rooms you don't use unless we experience severe cold spells.
- If you have an electric heating system try to make the best use of the tariff you are on.
- Put on an extra layer of clothing rather than turning up heating controls.
- Turn off electrical appliances when you're not using them even if they're on standby only.

The lighting within your home accounts for 8% of a typical household's energy bills and cutting your lighting bill is one of the easiest ways to save energy and money in the home.

- If you replace a traditional light bulb with a compact fluorescent bulb of the same brightness you will typically save around £3 per year or £55 over the life of the bulb. Compact fluorescents (CFLs) are what most people think of as a low-energy light bulb and are a cost-effective option for most general lighting purposes and are widely available. The easiest way to save on your lighting bill is simply to turn off the light when you're not using it. You will ALWAYS save energy if you turn the light out when you leave the room, even if it's only for a minute or two.
- Use the right light for the job in hand. If you're watching television you probably only want low level background lighting, but if you're reading a book you will want something brighter but close to you.
- The above tips are just some of the energy saving measures we can take to reduce our fuel bills. Further advice can be sought from the Energy Saving Trust.

website www.energysavingtrust.org.uk



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Housing Stock Surveys

BHA is committed to ensuring its properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) by 2015. To enable us to do this we regularly need to carry out surveys to all our houses. This work is continually ongoing and you may at any time receive a visit from an appointed independent surveyor. BHA will plan future upgrade works based on the results of the surveys. If the surveyor cannot get access to your home then you may miss out on important upgrades that your property requires. All surveyors will carry their own company ID and a copy of a letter of authority from BHA. Access shouldn't be granted to anyone who can't produce these documents. If you miss the surveyors on their first visit please contact them directly on the details identified on the card they will leave you.

Access for Repairs and Planned Works

It is a condition of your tenancy that access is provided to allow the association's approved contractors to carry out response repairs and major improvement work. On a number of occasions access isn't obtained to a property even when prior arrangements have been agreed. This costs the Association money and impacts on staff time trying to make alternative arrangements. In some instances BHA has to pursue legal action against some tenants who continue to deny access. These costs will then be recharged to the tenant. We would prefer to avoid having to take these steps and again ask that access is provided to any appointed personnel that require to visit your property.

Out of Hours Emergency Repairs

BHA operates an out of hour's repairs service for emergency repairs. The contact number for this is 0800 652 8104 the same as the daytime centralised repairs service. Out with normal office hours the call is redirected to our out of hours provider who will arrange for the required tradesman to visit your property. This service should only be used for genuine emergency repairs and details of qualifying work are contained within your tenant's handbook. On occasion some people phone this number trying to get non-emergency repairs carried out. If it is determined the system has been used for works that are not an emergency then the caller will be recharged for the contractor's visit.

If you have a gas heating system and you need an emergency repair carried out then you should call our appointed contractor Saltire. They can be reached on 0800 027 0995 and this number is available 24 hours a day. Once again you should consult your tenant's handbook to confirm a qualifying repair for out of hour's work.

Major Improvements

When BHA installs a new kitchen, bathroom or central heating system to your home there is a defects period for the following 12 months. If you have a problem with any of your major upgrade works during this time you should contact the company who carried out the work and they will send a tradesman to correct the fault. The contact details for the relevant contractor are contained within the notes of guidance we give to all tenants who are receiving this type of work.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service

As winter weather arrives firefighters in Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service are warning residents to be extra vigilant against fires in the home.

Group Commander Andrew Girrity from Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service, said:

“Cold weather brings about many different types of challenges for us but I would like to remind people to be extra vigilant to the dangers of fires in the home as we try to keep warm this winter.

Many accidental fires in the home are caused by cooking but we also see fires caused by clothing being placed too close to open fires or heaters or sparked by electrical appliances.

In the build up to Christmas, office parties will be taking place over the following weeks. We want people to enjoy themselves but remember the dangers of coming home and cooking after drinking alcohol. It

Fire and Rescue Service warning as cold weather continues

impairs your ability to concentrate properly and all too often fire crews have responded to calls about a pan of food alight, sometimes with devastating consequences for the occupier.

In freezing weather be aware of the dangers of being near ice covered stretches of water and travelling on the roads. Firefighters often deal with the consequences of people falling through ice or being involved in road traffic collisions. Please take care when outside, whether it be walking the dog or driving the car.

Firefighters carry out home safety visits all year round. This is a free service for people living in our area. We will give personalised home safety advice and fit a free smoke alarm. If you know someone living without a smoke detector in their home, particularly someone who might be elderly or vulnerable, please let them know about the service or contact us to discuss on 0800 169 0320.”

Useful Numbers

If a problem arises with your home within our normal business hours you can contact our dedicated Repairs Service.

Repairs Service: 0800 652 8104

If a serious problem arises with your home out with our normal business hours you can contact Bordercare.

Bordercare: 01896 752 111

Any problems with your gas fired heating system should be reported to Saltire Gas.

Saltire Gas: 0800 027 0995

If you smell gas in your home phone the number below straight away for help and advice.

Transco: 0800 111 999