

Emergency Cover over the Holidays

The Association's office will be closed on Tuesday 25, Wednesday 26 & Thursday 27 December and Tuesday 1, Wednesday 2 & Thursday 3 January. Tradesmen will be on holiday until 7 January and an emergency repairs service will be operating. **In an emergency**, tenants can call: James Frew Ltd (heating/hot water) or City Building (all other repairs). An "Emergency Repair" is a repair needed to prevent risk to health and safety or to prevent serious damage, e.g. burst pipes or loss of water supply. Our target is to respond within 4 hours. When the emergency has been dealt with, other work might be attended to after 7 January. Having no heating or hot water is **not an emergency**. However, James Frew will respond, within reason. If you call before 19.00 they will try to come out. Otherwise, they will come the following day. Our staff are on call if you need to speak to us in an emergency. Phone numbers are noted below. Hopefully, you won't need them!



Bulk Uplift at Christmas



Glasgow City Council's Bulk Uplift will continue as normal over the holidays. **Please put bulk items out to be collected on a Thursday. If you put out bulk items it's your responsibility to make sure they remain neat & tidy until they're collected.** If you put something out and it's not collected call 287 9700 or 0300 343 7027. If you put something at the bin store make sure it stays neat and tidy until you put it out for collection. *It only takes a few minutes to flatten cardboard boxes! Check regularly! Don't dump stuff at the statue in Cloverbank Street! Wardens will be out to catch fly tippers! To report dumping call Clean*

Glasgow on 0300 343 7027. (You don't have to give your name). Or use the brilliant **My Glasgow** App on your phone.

LifeLink (www.lifelink.org.uk) (Tel: 552 4434)

Self harming and thoughts of suicide are more common than you think.

You are not alone.
Contact LifeLink. Phone 552 4434



Useful Phone Numbers

Heating/Hot Water Emergencies (James Frew Ltd)	01294 468 113 or 0870 242 5037
All Other Emergencies (City Building)	0800 595 595
Blochairn Housing Association (Staff on Call)	07976 569 939
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Revenue Centre	287 5050
Scottish Power	0800 027 0072
Scottish Power Emergencies	0800 092 92 90
Scottish Gas Emergencies	0800 111 999
Clean Glasgow	0300 343 7027
City Council - Pest Control and Cleansing	287 9700
City Council - Council Tax	0845 600 8040
Police SCOTLAND	101 (or, in an Emergency, dial 999)
CCTV Cameras - StreetWatch	287 9999
Social Work Services Emergencies	0800 811 505
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)	945 6350 or 0800 80 70 60
THISTLE Tenants Risks Insurance	0845 601 7007

Blochairn Housing Association Newsletter



As we celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth the Committee and Staff of Blochairn Housing Association wish you a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year in 2019

Happy Holiday!



We gave a small Christmas gift to residents over 60 and under 16 years and we will deliver a 2019 calendar to every house. These are just small tokens to wish folk a happy time over the holidays.



Humanity Endures



On 11 November 2018 we commemorated the 100 year anniversary of the end of World War 1, one of the deadliest conflicts in the history of the human race. At Christmas Day 1914, the sounds of rifles firing and shells exploding faded along the Western Front in favour of holiday celebrations in the trenches and gestures of goodwill between enemies. On Christmas Eve, many German and British troops sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines. At certain points Allied soldiers heard brass bands joining the Germans in their joyous singing. At dawn on Christmas

Day, some German soldiers emerged from their trenches and approached the Allied lines across no-man's-land, calling out "Merry Christmas" in French and English. At first, the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick, but seeing the Germans unarmed they climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the enemy soldiers. Men exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings and sang carols and songs. Soldiers from opposing sides played a good-natured game of football. The so-called Christmas Truce of 1914 came five months after the outbreak of war in Europe and was one of the last examples of the outdated notion of chivalry between enemies in warfare. It was never repeated. Future holiday ceasefire attempts were quashed by officers' threats of disciplinary action. But it served as heartening proof, however brief, that beneath the brutal clash of weapons, the soldiers' essential humanity endured.



Our Facebook page has 692 "Likes" so far! Posts are a mix of serious stuff and some humour as well. Please check it out.



See inside for our Christmas Competition

Tenant Bonus Scheme: Christmas Bonus



You'll know by now that Blochairn was the first housing organisation in Glasgow to offer a cash bonus to its tenants. In 2000 a group of Glasgow housing associations visited Irwell Valley Housing Association (IVHA) in Manchester. IVHA wanted to tackle high rent arrears and high voids and wanted to be more connected to its tenants. So, it introduced an improved management and maintenance "Gold Service", plus additional benefits, for tenants who kept a clear rent account, kept their properties clean and tidy, etc.



The Glasgow group decided to form a Working Party to consider how to introduce the "Gold Service" to their own associations, using IVHA as a consultant. That seemed a bit of a palaver to Blochairn. The idea was pretty straightforward. IVHA was offering to do repairs within 5 days on the "improved" service. Most of Blochairn's repairs are done on the day they are reported or the next day. And Blochairn didn't have the high rent arrears or voids that IVHA had. But Blochairn wanted to recognise how important it is that tenants play their part in making the area a place where people want to live and that they can be proud to say they come from. It's not "Us v Them". Blochairn is owned by its members, who live in the community, and it is managed by local people who employ the staff.



It was originally called the "Tenant Incentive Scheme" but people didn't connect to that name. When it became the "Good Neighbour Fund" it upset those who didn't get the Bonus because they felt they were being called "bad" neighbours. So, "Tenant Bonus Scheme" was adopted. It does what it says on the tin! The Bonus Scheme helps the Association to provide a first class service and a pleasant living environment because it encourages residents to work together. The major issue for the Association is co-operation. We know that some people will struggle to pay rent. If they work with us and keep to a payment plan, that's fine. If there is a problem with nuisance to neighbours or with the stairs/close/garden/bin store and we need to visit and write over and over again, that is a problem.



Major Repairs Programme

The Major Repairs Programme began in January at Contract 1 (324/330 Roystonhill) to renew external insulation; facia, gutters, downpipes, close doors and house windows. Additional work was added to the slabbing to create a nice, neat finish at the base of buildings. Work to Contract 2 (20/30 Dunolly St & 227/231 Millburn St) began in September and will be completed in February. Even before Contract 2 is completed, work will begin at Contract 3 (14/18 Blochairn Rd & 2/6 Cloverbank St). As weather becomes milder closes and railings will be painted at Contract 1. As Major Repairs finish at Contracts 2 and 3 the decorators will move in to finish the job. Total works costs are in the region of £1.6 million which is around £16,000 per house - a lot of money but, we hope you agree, the results are worth it!



A Spaceman Came Travelling

A spaceman came travelling on his ship from afar, 'Twas light years of time since his mission did start,
And over a village he halted his craft, And it hung in the sky like a star, just like a star
He followed a light and came down to a shed, Where a mother and child were lying there on a bed,
A bright light of silver shone round his head, And he had the face of an angel, and they were afraid
Then the stranger spoke, he said "Do not fear. I come from a planet a long way from here,
And I bring a message for mankind to hear"
And suddenly the sweetest music filled the air And it went La La. Peace and goodwill to all men, and love for the child.
This lovely music went trembling through the ground, And many were wakened on hearing that sound, And travellers on the road, the village they found, By the light of that ship in the sky, which shone all round
And just before dawn at the paling of the sky, The stranger returned and said "Now I must fly. When two thousand years of your time has gone by, This song will begin once again, to a baby's cry". And it went La La. This song will begin once again, To a baby's cry
And it goes La La, Peace and goodwill to all men, and Love for the child
Oh the whole world is waiting, waiting to hear the song again,
There are thousands standing on the edge of the world,
And a star is moving somewhere, the time is nearly here,
This song will begin once again, to a baby's cry

Christmas Word Search

Can you find the 14 Christmas related words in the puzzle?

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



Winter Solstice



Although most Christians celebrate December 25 as the birthday of Jesus Christ, few in the first two Christian centuries claimed any knowledge of the exact day or year in which he was born. The oldest existing record of a Christmas celebration is found in a Roman almanac that tells of a Christ's Nativity festival led by the church of Rome in 336 A.D. The precise reason why Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25 remains obscure, but most researchers believe that Christmas originated as a Christian substitute for pagan celebrations of

the winter solstice. To early Christians (and to many Christians today), the most important holiday on the Christian calendar was Easter, which commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, as Christianity began to take hold in the Roman world, in the early fourth century, church leaders had to contend with a popular Roman pagan holiday commemorating the "birthday of the unconquered sun" (*natalis solis invicti*) – the Roman name for the winter solstice. Every winter, Romans honoured the pagan god Saturn, the god of agriculture, with a festival that began on December 17 and usually ended on or around December 25 with a winter-solstice celebration in honour of the beginning of the new solar cycle. This festival was a time of merrymaking, and families and friends would exchange gifts. At the same time, Mithraism – worship of the ancient Persian god of light – was popular in the Roman army, and the cult held some of its most important rituals on the winter solstice.

After the Roman Emperor Constantine I converted to Christianity in 312 and sanctioned Christianity, church leaders made efforts to appropriate the winter-solstice holidays and thereby achieve a more seamless conversion to Christianity for the emperor's subjects. In rationalising the celebration of Jesus' birthday in late December, church leaders may have argued that since the world was allegedly created on the spring equinox (late March), so too would Jesus have been conceived by God on that date. The Virgin Mary, pregnant with the son of God, would hence have given birth to Jesus nine months later on the winter solstice.

From Rome, the Christ's Nativity celebration spread to other Christian churches to the west and east, and soon most Christians were celebrating Christ's birth on December 25. To the Roman celebration was later added other winter-solstice rituals observed by various pagan groups, such as the lighting of the Yule log and decorations with evergreens by Germanic tribes. The word *Christmas* entered the English language originally as *Christes maesse*, meaning "Christ's mass" or "festival of Christ" in Old English. A popular medieval feast was that of St. Nicholas of Myra, a saint said to visit children with gifts and admonitions just before Christmas. This story evolved into the modern practice of leaving gifts for children said to be brought by "Santa Claus," a derivative of the Dutch name for St. Nicholas—*Sinterklaas*.

Facts About the Origin of Christmas

- ✓ Christmas began in the 4th century
- ✓ Localized feast days observing the birth and baptism of Christ had begun earlier
- ✓ The "church" did not make December 25 the day for celebrating Jesus birth until 345 A.D.



Tenant Bonus Scheme: Christmas Bonus

The Bonus is not a legal right. Administering the system can be difficult. There has to be subjective assessment, which isn't easy. A property might look great but only one or two people in the close are doing the work. Or, the property might look terrible but one or two are really trying and putting the effort in. When staff want everyone to receive a Christmas Bonus, telling someone a few weeks before Christmas that it can't be paid can be very upsetting – for both the staff and the tenant!



We wanted residents to be more involved in the decision and to tell us 1) had they kept to the terms of their Tenancy Agreement? 2) did they feel they had contributed to the wellbeing of their community? And 3) did they want to receive the Christmas Bonus? We were confident that folk would be honest. We asked tenants to ask themselves things like:

- * Is my home kept in reasonable condition with a reasonable standard of hygiene and cleanliness? Is there paint on radiators, fans, light fittings or kitchen units?
- * Is my rent account clear? Am I keeping to an arrangement and co-operating to deal with problems?
- * Do I have outstanding debts (e.g. rechargeable repairs) or am I keeping to an arrangement?
- * Is my front garden and back court tidy and free of litter?
- * Is my bin store clean and tidy? Refuse bagged and placed into the bins? Bulk refuse dealt with properly?
- * Are my stairs and close clean, tidy and free of litter? Brushed and washed regularly? Are walls, banisters and windows clean? Are bags of rubbish, boots, shoes, etc. outside the door? Are prams, bikes, scooters, etc. lying around?
- * Do I report repairs when they are needed. Do I give reasonable access to workmen? Is my Gas Safety Service done on time?
- * Do I report graffiti or clean it myself?
- * Are my children causing a problem for other residents? Are they helpful, thoughtful and considerate towards their neighbours? Do they drop litter?
- * Do my pets cause a nuisance? Do I allow them to foul any common area?
- * Do I treat the Association's staff reasonably? Am I ever threatening or abusive?



We invited tenants to complete and return a Christmas Bonus questionnaire. And, as we expected, they were honest! Of the 191 tenants who returned the questionnaire, only 3 were refused the Christmas Bonus. We hope that they can be successful next year. So, 66% tenants received a £75 Christmas Bonus with the Association's thanks for the important contribution they made to making Blochairn a place where people want to live and are proud to say they come from.



Christmas Competition

Here's a Christmas Competition that you can't just google the answers for! Can you identify these 75 British actors from their pictures? There's a £50 prize to someone who can name them all. To be in the draw get your entry to us by Friday 4 January.



Christmas Competition

