

Christmas Competitions

Congratulations to our Christmas competition winners.



Ashleigh McLeish won £50 in our movie competition.

Winners of a pair of tickets to see the fantastic Kevin Bridges were won by Melissa Allison, Jamie Lee Bradley and Samantha Meharry



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

Emergencies (Heating/Hot Water - James Frew Ltd)	01294 468 113/0870 242 5037
Emergencies - All Other Trades (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 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, Emergency 999)
CCTV Cameras - Street Watch	287 9999
Social Work Services Emergencies	0800 811 505
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)	945 6350 / 0800 80 70 60
THISTLE Tenants Risks House Insurance	0345 450 7286



Staff Contact Details

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Scottish Charity No. SCO40816

Property Factor No. PF000257

February 2022

Blochairn Housing Association Newsletter

Office Reopening



It's been a long, hard, stressful last two years. Frankly, the staff are pretty exhausted! Unlike many other housing associations they've worked from the office since the 1st lockdown in March 2020. The only time they worked from home was in November 2020, when they tested positive with Covid! The office has been closed to the public. Staff communicated by phone and email and carried out essential visits. Management Committee meetings and AGM's have been through 'Zoom'. Meeting by

'Zoom' is OK occasionally. But it's just not the same as meeting in person. The good news is that the office doors will open again on Monday 14 February, assuming that there are no further restrictions imposed by the Scottish Government. It is another step on the road to returning to normal operations. And it can't come soon enough.

Planned Maintenance Programme

The Covid 19 global pandemic has disrupted the planned maintenance programme for almost two years. Remember BREXIT?! It has caused problems too. Materials became harder to come by and prices have rocketed! But there is light at the end of this long, dark tunnel. We should be back on track in 2022. Fitting new bathrooms will begin this month at Contract 5 (2/36 & 15/31 Sandmill Street) and external painting will begin in March. The programme, between April 2022 and March 2023, will include new bathrooms at Contract 6 (Cloverbank Gardens/Cloverbank Street). External works at Contract 4 (19/27 Dunolly St & 3/7 Sandmill St) will include new gutters, fascia and downpipes, as well as, new close doors and door entry systems. New house doors are planned at Contract 1 (324/330 Roystonhill). We will keep residents informed as things progress. Close decoration of 7, 16, 18 and 20 Blochairn Place is long overdue. We will deal with these closes in March.



Rent Review 2022/2023 Consultation



Former American President, Benjamin Franklin, famously said: 'in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes'. Ben obviously wasn't a tenant. Because, every April, rents are reviewed - and they never come down! The proposal for the 2022/2023 rent increase is detailed inside. Your views and comments would be very welcome. Send an email to admin@blochairn.org or give us a call to have your say.

Facebook & Web Site



Our Facebook page has serious stuff, general interest and humour too. You can join our 916 'Followers' and "Like" and 'Follow' us. You can download the Blochairn App to your phone. Our web site has lots of useful information and you can access to your rent account and maintenance details.

Smoke Alarm Regulations

The new law requiring every home in Scotland to have interlinked smoke alarms came into force on 1 February 2022. These regulations were introduced following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in London in June 2017. The improved standards mean every home must have a smoke alarm fitted in the living room and in circulation spaces, such as, hallways. Every kitchen must have a heat alarm and these alarms must be interlinked. There must also be a carbon monoxide alarm near to your boiler. Blochairn managed to meet the 1 February deadline and every house meets the new standard (apart from one house/one livingroom). The fittings will be checked every year at the same time as the gas safety check.



Blochairn Place is a different design from traditional tenement buildings. Dry Risers and AOV's will be checked regularly.

- Dry Risers - a system of pipe work and valves that runs up through a building that allows fire fighters to easily access water from each individual floor of the building
- AOV's - Automatic Opening Vents that open automatically when fire is detected. Smoke is channelled out rather than building up in a confined space



Common areas in buildings should be kept clear. They are not for storage. Residents should not leave bikes, toys, etc on stairs and landings. In the event of a fire, people should have a clear escape from a smoke filled building. It's also, very often, unsightly and inconsiderate to neighbours.

Bags of refuse should not be left outside the door. Keep them inside until, you are ready to take them to the bin store.

And don't leave boots or shoes outside your door.

Please contact us if you have any concerns or queries. Phone 553 1601 or email admin@blochairn.org.



KEEP IT CLEAR

Help to avoid fire in your high rise building by following the actions below:

- Make sure stairs, landings and corridors are clear. Remove rubbish, prams and other objects that could burn or get in the way
- Smoke from a fire in a common stairway can kill
- Items left in the stair can make escape more difficult and stop firefighters from getting to a fire in the building
- Report issues and concerns to whoever is responsible for fire safety in your building

Tel/Email:

Fire Causes Real Damage and Harm



Visit www.firescotland.gov.uk, or talk to your local firefighters. You'll find contact details on our website, in your local library and in the phone book.

TO BOOK A FREE HOME SAFETY VISIT
Call 0800 0731 999, Text 'FIRE' to 80800
or visit www.firescotland.gov.uk



IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999

Tenant Bonus at Christmas 2021



In 2001 Blochairn became the first housing organisation in Glasgow to introduce a Bonus Scheme for tenants with a £52 cash Christmas Bonus. A Monthly Prize Draw began in 2004. In 2012, the Christmas Bonus was increased to £75.

The Tenant Bonus is a "thank you" to tenants who help to make Blochairn a place that people are happy to live in and proud to say they come from. It's about respect for neighbours and for our community. It helps us to provide a first class service and to create a pleasant living environment. It encourages residents to work together. Residents, working together with their neighbours, can make a real and lasting difference to their community.

The Bonus is not a legal right. And administration can be difficult. There's a subjective assessment about whether someone is keeping to the terms of the Tenancy Agreement and otherwise behaving reasonably. That isn't always easy. A property might look great but only one or two people are doing the work. Or, the property might look terrible but one or two are really trying and putting the effort in. Staff want everyone to receive a Christmas Bonus. Telling someone before Christmas that it can't be paid is distressing.

Since 2018 we asked tenants to tell us whether they had kept to the terms of their Tenancy Agreement; felt they had contributed to the wellbeing of their community and wanted to receive the Christmas Bonus. That might sound radical. But we trusted tenants to be honest. If there were doubts we would discuss them. We asked tenants to think about things like

- Is the rent account is clear or is an arrangement in place?
- Are other debts being paid?
- Are gardens and backcourts tidy and free of litter?
- Is the property being looked after?
- Are bin stores clean and tidy?
- Are prams, bikes, toys, boots, shoes, etc. left outside the door?
- Is the Gas Safety check done on time?
- Are pets are causing a nuisance. Are they fouling common areas?
- Are our staff treated reasonably. Are they threatened or abused?



This way of managing the Bonus is working well. At Christmas 2021, of 291 tenants, 211 (73%) returned the questionnaire. Only 7 were refused and 204 (70%) received a £75 bonus.

During the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic, rather than delivering a Christmas Gift, every pensioner and every Young Person under 16 years received a £10 cash payment.

Blochairn employs only 5 staff, fewer than other housing associations. It can do that because of the good working relationship with residents. The vast majority of residents are good tenants and good neighbours. They help to create a place where people want to live; a place that they are proud to say they come from.

Look out for the Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2022 when you can have your say about the Tenant Bonus Scheme. Tenants have been asked several times over the years whether the Bonus provides good value for money. The answer has always been a resounding -

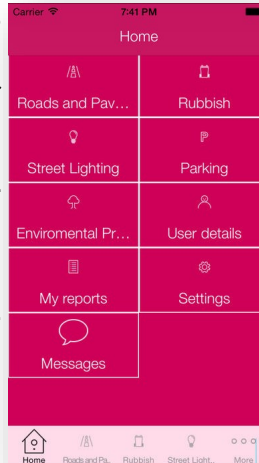
My Glasgow App



Have you downloaded "My Glasgow" App yet? Use it to report problems, like "Environmental" (graffiti and dog fouling) or "Rubbish" (litter and illegal dumping). You can order a bulk uplift or report that your bins have not been emptied. You can even report overgrown weeds or a fault in street lighting.

The App recognises your location. You can take a photo and send it instantly. A message confirms that your report has been received and you get a report when it has been dealt with.

It's brilliant! Give it a try!



Rosa Parks (1913 - 2005)

Rosa Parks was born on 4 February 1913. In December 1955 she was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, USA, for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man. Her arrest launched the Montgomery Bus Boycott by black citizens, which lasted for 381 days. Buses stood idle for months, severely damaging the bus company's finances. Eventually, the city repealed its law requiring segregation on public buses.

Rosa became known as "the mother of the civil rights movement" and invigorated the struggle for racial equality. In her autobiography, she said: People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in'. When Rosa refused to give up her seat, as the police officer arrested her, she asked, "Why do you push us around?" She remembered him saying, "I don't know, but the law's the law, and you're under arrest." She later said, "I only knew that, as I was being arrested, that it was the very last time that I would ever ride in humiliation of this kind..."

As well as African ancestry, one of Parks' great-grandfathers was Scots-Irish. One of her great-grandmothers was part Native American slave. She grew up on a farm with her maternal grandparents, mother, and younger brother Sylvester. They all were members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded by free blacks in Philadelphia, in the early nineteenth century.



"You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right."

Rosa Parks died, aged 92, in Detroit in 2005. City officials in Montgomery and Detroit announced that the front seats of their city buses would be reserved with black ribbons in her honour until her funeral. Her coffin was flown to Montgomery and taken in a horse-drawn hearse to the church. At the memorial service, Condoleezza Rice said that, if it had not been for Rosa, she would probably have never become the Secretary of State. Rosa's casket was transported to Washington, and transported by a bus similar to the one in which she made her protest, to lie in honour in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.



National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders (NASSO)



What happens when a house becomes available near to where a sex offender currently lives? How is it allocated? What is 'Block Profiling'?

Blochairn is a member of the NASSO Awareness Group (NAG), a group of housing associations who challenge Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council policy and procedures on housing sex offenders in their communities.

In 2012, many associations refused to sign the City Council's Information Sharing Protocol (ISP). They did not want to be part of the system. Errors and mistaken assumptions about how community owned housing associations operate were never corrected.

The City Council is now asking associations to house sex offenders whether they signed the ISP or not. Other associations report that sex offenders have been referred through homelessness procedure without relevant information being shared. A legal dispute has begun between the City Council and an association over this.

When a sex offender is being housed, Police carry out a check on who lives nearby before a house is allocated. The process has been known as 'Environmental Scanning' and, more recently, 'Block Profiling'. The theory is that the allocation won't happen if there is someone living nearby who is in the sex offender's risk category. There are clear and obvious flaws in this theory. But that's another story.

But what happens when a house becomes available near to where a sex offender currently lives? Blochairn asked that question when Mark Cummings was murdered by sex offender, Stuart Leggate, in Royston in 2004. The question was not answered.

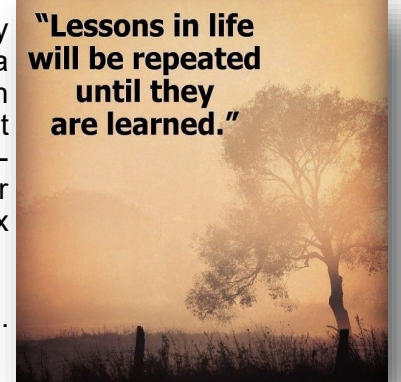
In 2012, GHA tenant, George Cameron, was 68 when he seriously sexually assaulted his neighbour's 4 year old son. In 2013, a Serious Case Review found there had been no checks, no communication between Police, social work and housing before Cameron's victim's family moved in. There was no system in place. Recommendations included a review of how houses are allocated. **All** housing associations were to be consulted. But that never happened. Only some associations were consulted. Which ones? Who knows?

In 2017, a version of 'Block Profiling' was introduced by GHA to deal with an allocation of a house that becomes available near to the sex offender. GHA consult Police and Social Work about the risk the sex offender poses. They will look at housing applicants being considered. If a member of the applicant's family is within the sex offender's risk category (e.g. teenage girl, under 5, etc.) the applicant will not be considered for the allocation.

It means that allocations are decided by Police and Social Workers rather than housing officers. Someone might not be offered a house that they really want. Perhaps worst of all is that the applicant can't be told why they were not offered the house.

Some associations do not tell a housing applicant where they are on a list or what their chances are of being offered a house. Applicants 'bid' for a house, sometimes along with hundreds of others. When they don't get an offer they don't know why. That type of system can't work for small, community owned housing associations, who are at the heart of their community. And they cannot operate a secret system for sex offenders.

The NAG will be investigating the 'Block Profiling' process. Look out for more information to follow.



Rents 2022/2023 - Consultation

Every year the Association prepares a budget to

- manage and maintain houses
- run the organisation
- pay bank loans
- put aside money for future maintenance
- look after the area and environment



The aim is to provide a first class service; doing more than traditional housing management and maintenance, and to provide:

- intensive, hands on estate management
- a 1st class repairs service, with most repairs carried out within 24 hours
- a member of staff on call 24/7 to speak to tenants in an emergency
- an extensive landscape maintenance service
- strong links with local schools and with Royston Youth Action
- a £75 Christmas Bonus and a Monthly Prize Draw for tenants
- additional tenancy support and advice (GEMAP and the Simon Community)

Blochairn's rents compare well with other housing associations but direct comparison is difficult:

- House sizes and room sizes differ
- Government grant levels when houses were built or modernised affects rents
- Some associations employ more staff and pay higher salaries
- Services are often different
- Few, if any, other associations offer a £75 cash Christmas Bonus to its tenants

From 2004 to 2021, Blochairn's rents increased only slightly above inflation. Some increases were less than inflation and the 2014 rent freeze was a effort to help tenants through painful changes in the UK government's Welfare Benefits system. Support services were bought in from GEMAP and the Simon Community; that continue to this day.

Major Repairs and planned maintenance keep buildings to a high standard. The global pandemic interrupted the programme but it will be on track in 2022. Fitting new bathrooms in Sandmill Street begins this month and Cloverbank Gardens is next in line. External painting in Sandmill Street begins in March and external work in Dunolly Street will include new close doors and door entry systems.

Size	Date Improved/ Built	Monthly Rent	New Monthly Rent 2022/2023	Monthly Increase	Weekly Increase	
2apt	Pre 2000	268.36	279.09	10.73	2.48	less £1.44
	2002	281.39	292.65	11.26	2.60	1.04
3apt	Pre 2000	309.68	322.07	12.39	2.86	1.16
	2002	335.25	348.66	13.41	3.09	1.42
	2011	392.01	407.69	15.68	3.62	1.65
4apt	Pre 2000	330.57	343.79	13.22	3.05	2.18
	2002	443.66	461.41	17.75	4.10	1.61
	2011	432.55	449.85	17.30	3.99	2.66
5apt	2011	527.18	548.27	21.09	4.87	2.55
						3.43
						£75 Bonus

Rents 2022/2023 - Consultation

A Treasury Management plan in 2017 included a £5.5 million loan to clear loans (mortgages) for development work (1992-2011) and to fund the £1.7m Major Repairs programme for buildings modernised in 1990's.

Rent increases were set at RPI+1.5% for 4 years; then RPI+1% for 4 years. RPI increased from 1.2% in December 2020 to 7.5% in December 2021. It is predicted to continue to rise in 2022. CPI is a different measure of inflation and sits at 5.4%. Even using CPI, the Association is reluctant to increase rents by 6.4%.

An independent assessment of Blochairn's rents, in 2020, found they were affordable and compared well against other similar associations. Blochairn Place rents are higher. It was built in 2011, with low government grant. But space standards are better. Blochairn Place rents pull the Blochairn average rent figures up.

The proposed increase for 2022/2023 is 4%, which is 1.4% lower than inflation. It's worth remembering that the £75 Christmas Bonus is worth £1.44 per week.

Proposed increases for local associations are NG Homes 2.7%; Hawthorn 3.2%; Copperworks 4.2%; Spire View 5%.

You can visit the Scottish Housing Regulator's web site for more information on the finances, rent levels, staff salaries, etc. of housing associations or to compare Blochairn's performance with other housing associations. Give us a call if you need help to do this.

Looking at Blochairn's rent increases over the years; how the area is managed; what has been done to improve the area and what is planned for 2022/2023, what do you think?

Is the proposed rent increase reasonable? Are Blochairn's standards too high or too low? Should more be done? Or less?

Please let us know. Email admin@blochairn.org or give us a call if you want to discuss any of these issues. Please do this before 21 February 2022.

Year	% RPI	% incr	Diff
2022/2023	5.4	4.0	-1.4
2021/2022	1.2	2.7	1.5
2020/2021	2.2	3.7	1.5
2019/2020	2.7	4.2	1.5
2018/2019	4.1	5.6	1.5
2017/2018	2.5	3.5	1.0
2016/2017	1.2	2.0	0.8
2015/2016	1.6	2.0	0.4
2014/2015	2.7	0.0	-2.7
2013/2014	3.1	3.0	-0.1
2012/2013	4.8	4.0	-0.8
2011/2012	4.8	4.0	-0.8
2010/2011	2.4	1.0	-1.4
2009/2010	0.9	3.0	2.1
2008/2009	4.0	4.0	0.0
2007/2008	4.4	5.0	0.6
2006/2007	2.2	3.5	1.3
2005/2006	3.5	3.5	0.0
2004/2005	2.8	4.0	1.2
Total	56.5	62.7	6.2
Average	3.0	3.3	0.3

Proposed Spending 2022/2023

	£	
Management Expenses	405,000	Cost of running the organisation
Property Maintenance	181,000	Routine repairs, landscaping, etc.
Gas Service Contract	50,500	Incl Annual Gas Safety Checks
Planned Maintenance	265,000	Kitchens, boilers, bathrooms, etc.
Community Fund	18,000	E.g. Tenants' Christmas Bonuses
Buildings Insurance	28,000	Property Insurance (not contents)
Loan Repayments	326,000	Bank loans (mortgages)
TOTAL	1,273,500	