

Little Mix Tickets Competition



We have an exciting new competition for the rescheduled Little Mix concert, now being held at the OVO Hydro in Glasgow on 27 April 2022. The lucky winners to join us at the concert to see this superb band. We will arrange for great front stalls tickets and we will transport you to and from the gig as our guest. Winners must be resident in Blochairn and aged between 12 and 15. To be in the draw just tell us the names of the six Little Mix studio albums. Get your answers to us by Friday 15 April. You can drop them into the office or email us at admin@blochairn.org. (NB Please do not submit an entry for someone else).

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
Scottish Water	0800 0778 778



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Scottish Charity No. SCO40816

Property Factor No. PF000257

8 April 2022

Blochairn Housing Association Newsletter

Annual General Meeting



As Scotland begins to emerge from the nightmare of the last two years we are trying to return to some kind of normality. Last week we held our first Management Committee meeting in our office since February 2020. Anyone who has used 'Zoom' will tell you it's just not the same as meeting in person. In 2020 and 2021 we delayed our AGM until September as we hoped, in vain, for the Covid lockdown to end. We'll return to the last Tuesday in June for this year's AGM. So, we'll begin our annual Committee recruitment drive now. Every year we try to introduce a couple of new Committee members. It provides a welcome boost to existing members. If you would like to know more about joining our Management Committee please give us a call or email michael@blochairn.org. Or we might just give you a call!

Cost of Living: Energy Crisis

We are in the midst of a perfect storm. Inflation is rising fast. The Cost of Living is out of control. And yet, on 1 April, the UK government increased the Energy Price Cap. The Cap was introduced by market regulator, Ofgem, in 2019. It sets the maximum amount that energy suppliers can charge for each unit of gas and electricity each year. It includes a maximum daily standing charge which is the cost of getting power to your home. This rise in energy costs will plunge even more households into 'fuel poverty' to add to the thousands already there. And more increases are forecast for October (see pages 4 & 5). Give us a call if you want to make an appointment to see the independent Welfare Benefits Advisor or Financial Capability Officer who operate from our office one day each week.



Help with Fuel Costs



A few weeks ago we became aware of a scheme to help tenants with fuel costs. It was run by a charity that supports the Social Housing Sector. We managed to obtain funding of more than £43,000, allowing us to provide every tenant with vouchers worth more than £100 to pay towards their fuel costs. The scheme has now closed but if it opens again we will submit another application for funding support.

Planned Maintenance Programme

Weather permitting, painters will begin painting the 2nd coat on railings at 19/27 Dunolly St & 3/7 Sandmill St from Monday 12 April. They will start work on 2/36 & 15/31 Sandmill Street after that. Residents should remove any personal items near to the railings until the work is complete. Close decoration will begin at 7, 16, 18 and 20 Blochairn Place within the next few weeks. Residents will receive a couple of days notice of the painters arriving.



Facebook & Web Site



Our Facebook page has serious stuff, general interest and humour too. You can join our 921 '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.

Glasgow crime: the Hitler of Garngad by Russell Leadbetter

To the residents of the poor, densely-packed tenements of the Garngad area of Glasgow, his nickname was 'Hitler'. And three of them had such a loathing of him that they tried, without success, to throw him over a bridge parapet into the Forth & Clyde canal. His name was James Robertson. He was a physically imposing figure, a former blacksmith who had served for two years as a constable in Dundee before joining the City of Glasgow Police in May 1933. He was just 23 when he was appointed as a beat constable in the Garngad, in the north-east of the city. A new paper by Dr Andrew Davies, an academic at the University of Liverpool, says that Robertson's arrival in the run-up to that year's Orange Walk was the catalyst for a significant increase in local hostility towards the police. Dr Davies, who has carefully studied the 'brutal conflicts' that took place between police and Garngad residents in the year after 'Hitler's' arrival, writes that his article demonstrates "that police violence was both pervasive and routine in the poorer working-class communities of interwar Britain." Politicians, the press and members of the judiciary sanctioned the use of violence to repress a community that had time and again been labelled as "lawless". Any attempts in Glasgow to challenge police methods and officers' court-room testimonies received a 'highly punitive' response from the city's legal establishment, he adds. Those few politicians who dared take up working people's complaints were marginalised; mainstream parties refused to accept that British police could be capable of inflicting 'terror' on civilians. Dr Davies, a reader in history whose main academic interest is the history of crime, published, six years ago, *City of Gangs*, a book about the Glasgow gangs of the 1920s and 1930s. He says the arrival of PC Robertson was in line with then-current force policy.

He writes: "The posting of such a physically intimidating recruit to the district during the build-up to the Orange Walk fitted with [Chief Constable Percy] Sillitoe's policy of meeting force with superior force. However, Robertson's intimidating manner, inflammatory language and undisguised disdain for Catholics [he was a Protestant] caused considerable disquiet. Within weeks of his arrival, local residents nicknamed him 'Hitler'."

Already by 1933, Hitler's name had become an oath: Dr Davies records that events in Germany had often made the front pages of Glasgow's evening newspapers, with one paper describing Hitler's domestic policies as 'brutal, oppressive and bellicose'. On August 22, two of the three men who allegedly tried to deposit Robertson in the canal were jailed, for 60 and 30 days. The men denied the charge, one of them declaring that it would "need a crane" to throw a huge figure like the constable into the canal. Other residents complained or testified about Robertson and the language he used towards them. One man on his way to chapel alleged that the constable had said, 'A bomb in that chapel would do no harm', though the man took it as a joke. One Labour councillor asked Sillitoe to transfer Robertson elsewhere, but the police were not minded to accede. Some Garngad residents supported Robertson, one asserting that 'half a dozen Hitlers' were required and that it was only a 'younger and irresponsible' element that objected to the constable's presence.

A police report detailed the dozens of cases of housebreaking, breaches of the peace, and assaults on civilians or police that had been brought to Northern Police Court, coinciding with Robertson's arrival in the Garngad.

In January 1934, two Garngad men were charged with assaulting Robertson and a second PC outside a fish supper shop. Robertson was off duty for 12 days. The two men denied the charges and eyewitness accounts backed them up, but they were convicted and imprisoned with hard labour. Sheriff Haldane referred to police difficulties in getting witnesses to support them in the Garngad, a place, he said, with a "rather notorious and unfortunate" reputation for lawlessness. His words prompted several letters of protest to the city's newspapers.

Two key turning-points in 'Hitler's' relationship with the Garngad came in large-scale outbreaks of disorder, on May 26 and June 9, 1934. They led to many arrests, writes Dr Davies, "but civilian witnesses at the trials that followed made repeated allegations of police brutality and falsification of evidence. PC Robertson featured prominently in their allegations." By this time, a local 'Vigilance Committee' was monitoring local arrests in the light of Robertson's conduct. In the first case, Robertson and another PC arrested labourer Patrick Kelly outside the fish shop. Newspapers reported that a mob surrounded police officers and looted shops. One police witness said Garngad Road resembled 'a village in France after a bombardment'. Police reinforcements were called. Robertson and other officers were injured, and seven men were sent for trial at the sheriff court.

On June 9, further disorder broke out after the arrest of one of the men who had tried to throw 'Hitler' into the canal the previous year. Nine arrests were made. Of the total of 16 arrests, all but two were Catholic. But a letter published on June 12, signed by 50 Garngad 'ratepayers and shopkeepers', protested the 'unwarranted assault' by police on residents on June 9, many of them elderly or disabled, and called for some tact on the part of the police. Dr Davies says the letter "effectively re-cast the latest outbreak of disorder in Garngad Road as a police riot." By the time Robertson testified at the trial of the first seven prisoners, he had, he said, been 'promoted' to the inquiry department at Northern Police Office. The force was adamant that he had not been transferred as a result of complaints, but needed a 'rest' after being injured more than once. Garngad witnesses strongly disputed police accounts at this first trial but, says Dr Davies, judicial sympathy - the sheriff was, again, Haldane - clearly lay with police. However, "Faced with the stark choice presented by Haldane - police tyranny or mob tyranny - the jury opted for the former". Not guilty verdicts were returned against all seven accused. "While 'Hitler' had been moved in part for his own safety ... it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his notoriety had become a problem for the procurator-fiscal," his paper says. "Transferring Robertson to desk duties promised both to help to pacify the district and to remove a difficult line of cross-examination for police witnesses at future trials." But the stakes were still high at the trial of the nine accused from June 9. Both the fiscal and Sheriff MacDiarmid, says Dr Davies, made little attempt to hide their contempt for defence witnesses. All nine were convicted, with sentences ranging from four months to 12 months. Later, three witnesses who had spoken of Robertson's actions during the second riot were convicted of perjury. Later still, eight people who had testified on the trio's behalf were themselves convicted of perjury and jailed for months. (Continued on page 6).

Tenant Bonus Scheme: Monthly Prize Draw

AND THE WINNER IS...

Winners in the January draw were Rosemary Cairns (Roystonhill) and David Nallararatnam (Blochairn Place). February Winners were Reo Harvie (Dunolly Street) Claire Hepburn (Sandmill Street). The draw for March was held at the Committee meeting using a computerised 'Random Picker'. Winners were Lorraine Wilson (Cloverbank Street) and Stacey Anna Cameron (Blochairn Place). Just like the Christmas Bonus, the Monthly Prize Draw helps us to provide a first class service and a pleasant living environment. It encourages residents to work together. It's all about co-operation and partnership. Every resident, young and old, has their part to play. Being in the draw is not a legal right. But we try to include as many tenants as we can. We take account of things like rent accounts, outstanding debts, condition of property, including bin stores and gardens. Are stairs and landings clean, neat and tidy with no prams, bikes, work boots, etc. lying around? Thank you to everyone, young and old, who help us to make Blochairn a place where people are happy to live in and are proud to say they come from.

Rosemount Development Trust

Satisfaction

THE ORCHARD PROJECT

FIND US HERE:

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FREE EVENT

ROYSTON COMMUNITY ORCHARD

TUESDAY 12TH APRIL 2022 **PLANTING DAY**

The Bowling Greens
Glenconner Park
Royston Rd, G21 2BS

10.30-3.30pm

- HELP Plant Fruit Trees & Raspberry Canes
- PAINT Fruit onto Street Planters with TCV
- ENJOY Free Drinks & Fruit With NGCFI

Family Friendly event,
come for a while or all day!

Supported by players of

PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

Awarded funds from

PEOPLE'S POSTCODE TRUST

TheOrchardProject.org.uk

ROSEMOUNT DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Look out for our Tenant Satisfaction Survey coming in early June. The last one was in 2017 and the 2020 one was delayed due to the Covid pandemic. We really want to know your views on our service.



Home Owners

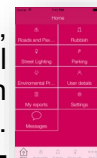
The Written Statement of Services 2022 will be sent to property owners before 30 April. This explains our Factoring Service, including costs for the year, and explains owners' rights and responsibilities.



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!



Victim Support Scotland



Victim Support Scotland provides a *Supporting Families Bereaved by Crime Service* (SFBC) offering support to families bereaved by crime. This is structured social and

practical support, liaising with justice and community organisations, supporting the family through the criminal justice system and supporting them after complex trauma:

- Making families aware of rights and standards of service in the Criminal Justice System
- Advising on practical concerns; providing support as and when its needed
- Assisting with immediate emotional and wellbeing needs
- Helping access accurate, timely and consistent information
- Helping navigate the Scottish Criminal Justice System and to know what to expect
- Ensuring access to support in court and to know what to expect during trial etc.
- Supporting access to financial assistance from benefits, compensation or grants
- Helping to get support for children and young people
- Providing help to access counselling or trauma therapy.

SFBC works with housing associations across Scotland to help families return home or have belongings returned. Families might experience returning to a blood stained home with crime scene markers, smashed glass, destroyed furniture/furnishings and fingerprint markings. Or they might find that family memories and belongings have been destroyed or cleared before the family had an opportunity to salvage them. This might be due to poor communication between the landlord and the family. SFBC can help families to resolve these issues. You can also reach the SFBC team at sfbc@victimsupportscot.org.uk. Or call 0800 160 1985 (Mon—Fri 08.00—20.00)

Glasgow crime: the Hitler of Garngad

(continued from page 2). Four of them were mothers with young children. These latter convictions prompted allegations of miscarriage of justice, accompanied by humanitarian appeals for a reduction of the women's sentences. Glasgow councillor Jean Mann and Independent Labour Party (ILP) MP John McGovern campaigned vigorously for the women to be freed, a campaign fuelled by sympathetic articles in the press. A petition in support of a call for an inquiry into police brutality attracted 9,000 signatures. One woman, Mary Kelly, was freed after completing half her sentence, but a child she carried in prison was later still-born. Violence between Garngad residents and police in the 1930s, writes Dr Davies, was reciprocal, but beat PCs, confident in the backing of Sillitoe, the fiscal and the judiciary, "meted out summary punishment with little fear of sanction"; and the beatings they received were nothing compared to the injuries inflicted by police batons. "PC Robertson was exceptional in his incivility and the ferocity of his violence," he said this week, "but he retired in 1965 with an unblemished record. In Glasgow police lore, his exploits were celebrated decades after his retirement. Police reminiscences, related years afterwards, lend substance to allegations that were strenuously denied in the 1930s. "The 'democratizing impulse' spoken about by historians of the interwar years in Britain," Dr Davies adds, "was barely evident in Garngad in the 1930s; and local people were not permitted to speak as victims of miscarriages of justice. "One thing that struck me as I did the research was that interviews with the families of the jailed mothers provided rare glimpses into the home lives of families living in the Garngad. This was a close-knit community – lots of the women's children were being looked after by relatives who lived very close by – but these were really tough times. Many of the men were long-term unemployed, and the on-going friction with the police made their already hard lives even tougher." He adds one final, revealing point: so tainted had the name 'Garngad' become, so damaged had its reputation become, that in 1942 it was renamed Royston.

('Police violence and judicial bias in the age of mass democracy: Glasgow, 1933–1935', can be read online, free of charge, via a link on Dr Davies' website: <https://glasgowgangs.com/>)

National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders (NASSO)



Freedom of Information requests are ongoing with Police Scotland, the Wheatley Group and the Housing and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

Police Scotland delayed providing statistics about post codes of houses occupied by sex offenders (e.g. G21 2- -) citing a technical issue with Vi-SOR, a system used store and share information. We pointed out that Vi-SOR has been in place since 2007 and we have received this information five times since 2012. The statistics arrived within 48 hours!

Police and Social Workers use 'Block Profiling' to check housing applicant details when a house becomes available near to a sex offender. If someone in the applicant's household would be at risk from the sex offender the applicant would not be allocated the house. (Maybe it should be called 'Applicant Profiling'). Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) (now called 'Wheatley Homes Glasgow') have used this since 2017. So, housing allocation decisions are made by Police and Social Workers rather than by housing officers. Someone might not be offered a house that they really want but are never told why.

We asked how often 'Block Profiling' had been used since 2017 but figures received from the HSCP and Wheatley are different so we'll check that again. No other housing association has used 'Block Profiling' other than GHA. The HSCP confirmed that housing associations can be asked to house a sex offender whether they have signed an agreement or not.

In 2020, HSCP told us about an 'engagement session' with 'a wider Glasgow RSL* group in June 2019. It was 'delivered by representatives from GCC Social Work, Police Scotland and Wheatley Group'. HSCP said, 'This event was well received and feedback from the RSLs who attended was that they would welcome the roll out of Block Profiling to assist them allocate void tenancies in line with public protection'. So we asked: How many RSL's attended this event? Which RSL's attended this event? The response was 'Glasgow City Council does not hold this information, nor does anyone hold it on our behalf. The event referred to was neither organised, nor hosted, by Glasgow City Council. We do not hold information in relation to attendance at this event or any feedback which may have been provided by attendees'. A mystery, eh? We'll follow this up.

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.

* RSL = Registered Social Landlord = housing association

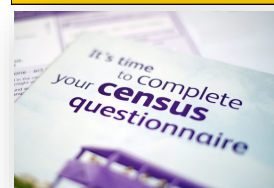
No Ball Games in the Toddlers' Play Area!



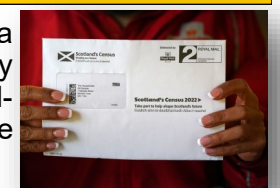
Please do not play Ball Games in the Toddlers' Play Area. We receive constant complaints about this being a nuisance and about cars being damaged. We urge parents to make sure that their children do not play ball games there. Remember, it's for children under 6. Let the Tiny Tots use their play area.



Scotland's Census 2022



Every household in Scotland must complete a census questionnaire. The householder is legally responsible for completing the form. Help is available online at census.gov.scot, or on the free helpline 0800 030 8308.



Why Can't the UK Government Reduce the Energy Price Cap?

Friday 1 April 2022 marked the start of a new, higher energy price cap. And it was anything but an April Fool's joke! What does it mean for your energy bills?

Q. What changes on 1 April?

A. The new energy price cap level was announced in February 2022 by energy regulator, Ofgem. The cap will now be £1,971 a year for a household with average energy consumption on a 'dual fuel' gas and electricity Standard Variable Rate tariff (SVT), paying by direct debit. That's a staggering 54% higher than the previous cap of £1,277. If you're on a prepayment meter, the cap rises from £1,309 to £2,017 a year (again, this is for households with typical usage – the amount of energy you use will always determine the amount you pay).

Q. I'm on a fixed rate deal – will the cap rise affect me?

A. If you're still on a fixed-rate energy tariff you won't be affected until your deal ends and you move on to your supplier's SVT. If you are offered a new fixed rate tariff with your current supplier (more on this below) you'll likely find it costs as much – if not more – than April's price cap, so your energy bills will still go up.

Q. What is the energy price cap exactly?

A. Introduced by market regulator, Ofgem, in 2019, the energy price cap sets the maximum amount that energy suppliers can charge per kWh of gas and electricity (known as the 'unit rate') each year. It includes a maximum daily standing charge (the cost of actually getting the power to your home).

Q. Aren't I paying more for my energy already?

A. If you feel as though your energy bills have already gone up, you're probably right. The cap is reviewed twice a year, in February and August, and takes effect in April and October, respectively. And it went up from £1,138 a year to £1,277 in October 2021. Energy suppliers adjust the cost of their SVTs to the same level or just a few pounds below the cap, so you'll be paying the cap rate if you're a SVT or 'default' tariff customer.

Q. Why are energy costs so high?

A. The price of gas on wholesale markets has been at painfully high levels for well over a year. As Russia is a major supplier to international markets, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has seen wholesale gas prices fluctuate wildly – rising as high as three times the level they were just at the start of the year.

Q. Will my energy bills be the same as the cap?

A. The price cap is the *maximum unit price* of energy charged to a SVT household consuming an average amount of energy. It's not the maximum amount every household will pay. So, if you burn a higher number of units than the average, your annual energy bills will be more than the cap.

In this case, limiting your energy use where possible, can help to reduce costs. The price cap can also vary depending where you live – particularly the standing charge element. This is due to varying costs for transporting energy across the energy network to the region you live in.

Q. What can we expect from the next price cap?

A. The next price cap announcement will be August, to take effect in October. Commentators think another increase of at least 25% is coming, taking typical energy costs towards £2,500 a year.

Some analysts have even suggested £3,000 or even £3,500 is not unrealistic. Many households are already in fuel poverty – defined as when paying for a energy leaves insufficient funds for other necessary expenses.

The latest report from debt charity Step-Change shows that, for those clients who were responsible for paying utility bills, 28% were in arrears on their electricity in February and 23% on their gas – a situation that the charity expects to get worse after the new price cap takes effect. This is coupled with the crippling rising costs of other household essentials.



Why Can't the UK Government Reduce the Energy Price Cap?

Q. Can I get a fixed rate energy tariff?

A. We have now reached a crisis point in terms of energy costs, and shopping around for a cheaper fixed rate tariff with a different supplier using a comparison website, is simply no longer possible. That said some energy firms, such as E.On, are allowing existing customers to fix their tariff for 12 months at the cost of the April cap. This will at least provide shelter from October's inevitable rise in energy costs.

Q. What can I do about my energy bills?

Making an effort to use less energy can help to reduce costs. If you haven't already got one, getting a smart meter installed, which is free from your energy supplier, may help you keep track of the energy you are using. Or a simple energy monitor could also do the trick. You can then at least identify the main culprits when it comes to seeing which appliances burn the most money and, hopefully, adjust accordingly. This October, all domestic electricity customers will automatically get £200 off their bills. But this is a loan (or essentially a levy) which must be repaid over five years, starting from the following April (2023) at £40 a year.

If you are finding yourself struggling to pay your energy bills, contact your energy supplier. Under Ofgem rules it must offer a payment plan that reflects what you can reasonably afford. If you are on a prepayment meter and can't top up, you can request emergency credit. If you are getting into debt with household bills or other costs, contact Home Energy Scotland on 0800 808 2282 or go to <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/where-to-turn-for-financial-support-during-these-difficult-times/>.

Q. Will I pay less if I don't send a meter reading?

A. No. Sooner or later you'll have to pay for all the gas and electricity you use. If your supplier doesn't get a reading from you, it may estimate your bills, which could end up with you paying too much anyway. And it will eventually send someone to do a reading, at which point you might find yourself having to make up a shortfall. And remember, if you have smart meters, they send readings automatically to your supplier, so your bill will always be accurate.

What about prepayment meters?

There is a separate cap for those on prepayment tariffs (an estimated four million households). The cap was introduced in April 2017 and, as with the default tariff price cap, it means suppliers cannot set their prices for units of energy above a stated level. The prepayment cap is also reviewed every six months, in April and October.

Q. How has the energy price cap changed until now?

Here is a timeline of previous annual energy price caps (for a typical default/SVT tariff customer – a dual fuel single rate customer paying by direct debit using a typical amount of energy):

- **1 January - 31 March 2019.** First cap level £1,137. Prepayment remained £1,136
- **1 April - 30 September 2019.** Cap increased to £1,254. Prepayment to £1,242
- **1 October 2019 - 31 March 2020.** Cap fell to £1,179. Prepayment to £1,217
- **1 April 2020 - 30 September 2020.** Cap fell further to £1,162. Prepayment to £1,200
- **1 October 2020 - 31 March 2021.** Cap fell further £1,042. Prepayment to £1,070 a year
- **1 April 2021 - 30 September 2021.** Cap increased to £1,138. Prepayment to £1,156
- **1 October 2021 - 31 March 2022.** Cap increased to £1,277. Prepayment to £1,309
- **1 April 2022 - 30 September 2022.** Cap increases further to £1,971. Prepayment to £2,017

Q. Anything else I should know?

A. Because of wholesale energy prices, Ofgem now has the power to update the price cap more frequently than once every six months in exceptional circumstances to ensure that it still reflects the true cost of supplying energy. However, in his recent Spring Statement, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, was careful to point out that the cap will remain in place at the current level until the autumn, easing any fears that it might be raised in the interim in response to soaring costs.

