

HOMEfromHOMES

A magazine from Newark and Sherwood Homes

Autumn 2009 Issue 17



Success
in New Homes
funding bid

See page 3 for details

Best Garden Winners

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Focus on our Responsive Repairs service

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Going Digital



TV in the UK is going digital. The existing analogue transmitter for this area will be switched off in 2011.

Newark and Sherwood Homes is responsible for making sure all communal TV systems are upgraded to receive digital signals. We are doing this work now so that our properties will be ready in plenty of time for the switchover.

Over the next few months, new communal aerials will be fitted to all our blocks of flats. We are fitting an Integrated Reception System (IRS) which carries both a satellite signal and a signal through the aerial. Tenants who have satellite dishes will be able to continue watching satellite television stations but will not need a separate dish. Individual dishes will be removed.

The installer will need to get into your home to fit the new dual aerial socket.

Tenants will be given as much notice as possible when the work is due in your area. If you have any questions about the TV aerial installations please call 01636 655644.

You don't need to buy a new television to receive the digital signal, but if you are replacing an old set make sure it has the "digital tick" logo. If you already have more than the 5 standard TV channels on all your TV sets, then you are probably ready for the switchover.

Most TV's (including black and white sets) can be converted with a digital box. Extra practical help with converting to digital is available for older and disabled people who need it – if you are eligible you will be contacted by post by the Switchover Help Scheme. You will need to reply to that letter to get any help.

You can find out more about the switchover on Digital UK's website www.digitaluk.co.uk

TRA Contact Numbers

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Bilsthorpe

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Bilsthorpe Youth

Stefan Prest
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Blidworth

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BOTRA

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01636 684343

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Federation of TRAs

Karen Willis
01636 684343

Teamwork secures £1.25M for new council house building

All four bids to build new council housing on sites in the district have been successful as a result of great teamwork by Newark and Sherwood Homes and Newark & Sherwood District Council.

This means the Government will be funding 27 new homes to be built in the district, equating to 9% of the 314 units funded throughout the East Midlands. The four sites located in Bleasby, Balderton, Clipstone and Boughton will provide affordable homes for the community.

The proposal is to build:

- 2 bungalows and 1 house at Orchard Close, Bleasby
- 8 apartments in Balderton
- 8 houses and 2 bungalows at Vicars Court, Clipstone
- 6 houses at Newark Road, Boughton.

The schemes are in the design stages at present, and construction works will be phased over the next 18 months, with completion by March 2011.

Ginette Hughes, Chairman of Newark and Sherwood Homes said,

“We are delighted to be supporting Newark & Sherwood District Council with the development of the 27 homes. An impressive 100% success rate in the bids is excellent news and gives a strong message for the future success of our organisations to contribute towards the high demand for affordable housing in the district, and make a positive impact in the community.”



Peter Harley and Liz Mullany

The bid was one of the first tasks for Peter Harley, who has joined the team at Newark and Sherwood Homes as the new Business Development Manager.

He previously worked as Development Manager at Derwent Living in Derby.

Peter and Business Development Officer, Liz Mullany, will be looking at other possible new developments.

They will also be looking at new services which Newark and Sherwood Homes can offer, and at ways of attracting inward investment in social housing in the District.

Your Homes, Your Future, Your Choice



This year there are important decisions to be made about the future management of your homes. Newark and Sherwood District Council is studying the options for the housing stock, and a new regulator will soon take responsibility for making sure tenants' voices are heard.

The Federation of Tenants and Residents Association, in partnership with Newark and Sherwood Homes are giving you a chance to hear the latest news about

Your Homes, Your Future, Your Choice

The annual Tenants Conference will be held at Kelham Hall on Saturday 7th November from 9am to 3.15pm.

There will be four workshops:

- Paul Harvard from the Tenant Services Authority will be looking at the choices facing tenants.
- Rob Main, Community Housing Manager at Newark and Sherwood District Council will be giving the latest information on the housing

stock options consultation and the future of Newark and Sherwood Homes.

- Our Tenant Inspection Team will be talking about the work they are doing to make sure our services are up to standard.
- The Senior Management Team of Newark and Sherwood Homes will be holding a Question Time where tenants can ask questions about the choices ahead.

A light buffet lunch will be available.

This is a very important year for the future of social housing. We want to encourage as many tenants as possible to take part in this conference and have your say in the future of your homes.

You could be a National Voice

The National Tenant Voice is a new independent organisation for tenants of housing associations, housing co-ops and local authorities, including ALMO's like Newark and Sherwood Homes.

It is being set up to give tenants a voice, influence and expertise at a national level.

It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to get the voice of tenants heard and to influence national policies that affect social housing tenants. Why not consider applying to be on the new National Tenant Council – to find out more go to <http://www.hays.com/jobs/ntv> or call 0800 917 7396



Made to Measure

One size doesn't always fit all. For some people to carry on enjoying living independently, they may need special adaptations to their home.



Kath now finds it easier to get in and out of the bath

Kath Pitchford was born with Achondroplasia, one of the most common forms of short limb restricted growth. Kath has lived in De Lacy Court for 34 years, and until she retired, Kath worked in Personnel. Kath is only about 4' tall and was finding it difficult to get in and out of the bath. She had a set of steps made but these were slippery, and a better solution had to be found.

As part of the Decent Homes upgrade, Kath's home was due to get a new bath, but needed some major changes so that she could use the bath safely.

Lorna James, Nottinghamshire County Council Occupational Therapist, visited to advise on equipment that would help.

Kath and Lorna went to try out several bath hoists and soon realised that the bathroom wasn't going to be big enough.

Enter Lee Powell, Architectural Technician with Newark and Sherwood Homes.

Lee and Kath worked out a scheme to take out the airing cupboard and extend the bathroom which would give the space she needed to install a hoist. The team from Carmalor, who Kath describes as a "great bunch of lads", fitted a new low sink and toilet as well as the electricity supply needed for Kath's chosen hoist.

Now, Kath is full of praise for Lee Powell and the people who made it possible.

"I'm very pleased with the way I was able to participate at every stage. Lee put my needs to the fore. He was very caring and when he's doing a job he makes sure it is 100%."

Independence means a lot to her. Until 17 years ago Kath had a full-size kitchen and used a step to get herself to the height of the worktops.

"When I first had a specially adapted kitchen fitted, I hated it because it made me feel that I was different. But the adaptations have really made life a bit easier and I love my kitchen and new bathroom now."

If you or a relative have a permanent and substantial impairment, or are caring for an adult or child with a permanent or substantial impairment, contact Newark and Sherwood Homes on 0845 258 5550 or the Occupational Therapy Service on 08449 80 80 80 to arrange a home visit.



Kath's kitchen

Pay Direct – Win £100

If you pay your rent by Direct Debit you could win £100 worth of shopping vouchers.

All those who have a direct debit mandate running at the end of October will have the chance to win. If you would like more information and an application form, call in at one of our local offices or telephone **0845 258 5550**



Help review our Tenancy Agreement

The Tenancy Agreement is a very important document for all tenants because it sets out your responsibilities while you are a tenant. It also tells you what you can expect from our services.

Since the Tenancy Agreement was drawn up there have been many changes, and it is time for a thorough review. As this document will affect your tenancy, it is important that as many tenants as possible take part in the consultation process.

If you would like to be involved in helping to review this important document, please call the Tenancy and Estates Team on **0845 258 5550**

Five facts about phones



Did you know that when you ring Newark and Sherwood Homes on 0845 258 5550.....

- Our busiest times for callers are Monday mornings between 9.00am and 12.00, but most mornings are busy.
- In July the average time to answer a call was 15 seconds. Even though we try our best unfortunately 143 people decided not to wait and continue with the call.
- You can leave a message and we will ring you back
- Even though 0845 is low cost, if you have a BT landline it will be free!
- 3945 people have called this number to speak to us in July
- Of those callers surveyed 97% were satisfied overall with our service

Save yourself time – make an appointment

If you need to see one of our Housing Officers please make an appointment.

If you just arrive at Kelham Hall the chances are they will be out and about and you will have had a wasted journey. If you need to make an appointment please call 0845 258 5550.

Best Gardens Winners announced

Green fingered tenants were rewarded at a presentation in August.

The winners were:

- **Best communal garden**

Howes Court, Newark

- **Best front garden**

Mrs Ann Higgins, Southwell



Best Front Garden

- **Best patio or balcony garden**

Mr Foster, Boughton

- **Best rear garden**

Mr Pembrington, Clipstone



Best Rear Garden

- **Most improved garden**

Federation of Tenants and Residents Association, Newark

- **Special Judges Award**

Mrs Forster, Boughton



Howes Court – winner of the Best Communal Garden

Karen Willis, Chair of the Federation of Tenants and Residents Association said, “Our office garden was a weed-filled boring patch of grass. We decided to lead by example and with help from the Community Investment Fund, have brought some colour and order to the garden. It was hard work but we were very pleased to win this award.” The Federation’s Garden is pictured on the front cover.

The small gardening group at Howes Court have also achieved a remarkable transformation over the six years they have been taking care of the garden. Christine Dickenson, founder member, said, “We started out just trying to improve the small area around the Community Centre, but when we saw how much better it looked, we just carried on.” Now the group hold coffee mornings to raise money and also recently held an Open Gardens event which raised £200 for the local hospital scanner appeal.

Focus on... Responsive

In a recent consultation you told us that repairs and maintenance were very important to you. Over the last twelve months 22,332 repairs were ordered. 96% of our customers said they were satisfied with our responsive repairs service. This was a huge improvement. We continue to work with our craftsmen and tenant representatives to improve the quality of our work, the materials we use and the way we make appointments.

98% of our repairs are completed right first time

Setting priorities

All repairs work is given a priority which decides the timescales for completion. We currently work with the following priorities:

- 1. Emergency works to make safe only** – these should be made safe within 4 hours
- 2. Urgent works.**
Work which is not classed as emergency work but does need urgent repair – should be completed within 3 days
- 3. Routine repairs -**
should be completed within 20 days
- 4. Non-urgent repairs -**
should be completed within 90 days

In addition to these priorities we also provide a 24 hour emergency callout service. If you have an emergency repair when the office is closed you can call our emergency repairs number **0800 561 0100**. This is for emergencies only.

An emergency includes things like a burst water pipe or loss of electricity supply.

Please do not use this service for any repairs that can wait until the office is open again.

Improving our service

One of the changes we have made is to improve the way we manage appointments. Newark and Sherwood Homes has invested in handheld technology which links to our call centre.

Each morning, the first job will be allocated to the craft workers then work for the rest of the day is sent by the call centre. They take into consideration where the worker is and what materials they have in their van.

We believe this will:

- Help us to get to appointments on time
- Help us get a job right first time by having the right craftsman with the right materials
- Make us more efficient
- Reduce the amount of paper we use
- Reduce fuel consumption
- Improve communication between our call centre and our operatives

Please make sure that you do not block ventilation grates. These grates are needed to stop the build up of gases, and you may be putting your health at risk if you do not allow air to flow freely.

Repairs



Training for the future



Nathan Eakins, Andrew Ceriati and Angie Hill

Three years ago Newark and Sherwood Homes held a recruitment event for apprentice craftsmen.

Nathan Eakins and Andrew Ceriati were two of the successful applicants, who are now trained as plumbers after studying part-time at Grantham College. Other successful applicants went to work for our Decent Homes partners, Connaught and Bullock Construction.

They are now doing gas training and will be fully qualified by the end of the year.

Our third apprentice, Angie Hill recently had the honour of showing HRH Prince Charles around West Nottinghamshire College.



Do you need a man about the house?

Did you know that there is a Handyperson Scheme which assists with small repairs and home maintenance for people over 60, or those who are disabled and in receipt of certain benefits?

This is a joint scheme with the Staying Put Agency at Newark and Sherwood District Council, but the work is done by our staff.

The type of jobs include fitting new locks and door chains, unblocking sinks, fitting curtain tracks and changing light bulbs or fuses.

There is a charge for materials for some types of work, and there is a limit of 6 jobs a year for each household.

We can't do decorating or gardening or major gas and electrical installation work, but for those small jobs that need a man about the house, call 01636 655620 to see if you are eligible.

The average time to complete necessary repairs on empty properties is just over 4 days

Successful bid brings green funding

Newark and Sherwood Homes and Newark and Sherwood District Council are working in partnership with the Hockerton Housing Project to bid for funding to bring energy efficiency to an older property.



A typical 'no fines' home on Hawtonville

The Hockerton Housing Project (HHP) is the UK's first earth-sheltered, self-sufficient ecological housing development. The residents of the five houses generate their own clean energy, harvest their own water and recycle waste materials causing no pollution or carbon dioxide emissions. Their houses are among the most energy efficient purpose built homes in Europe.

We have been awarded £19,500 to do further research and make a bid for the next stage of the competition. If the bid is successful, this will bring about £150,000 of investment. We should know if we have been successful by the end of December.

The style of house chosen for the project is a solid-walled post-war property. These are very difficult to insulate because they do not have a cavity wall. There are 585 houses like this managed by Newark and Sherwood Homes. Our bid includes super insulation to the outside walls, ground floor and loft and triple glazing.

Other possible improvements include a sun space to harvest solar energy so there will be no need for a central heating system. A utility area in the sun

space would keep humidity out of the house (and provide somewhere to dry the washing no matter what the weather!)

Other environmental improvements include rainwater harvesting for watering the garden, energy-efficient lighting and appliances, but the reduced electricity demand would be met by the wind turbine scheme at the Hockerton Housing project.

After the work is completed the house would first be used as a show home to show other social landlords, builders and members of the public what can be achieved. After this, one lucky Newark and Sherwood Homes tenant would be able to move into their greener, cleaner home.



Copyright of the Hockerton Housing Project

Keep Fit

Not being so quick on your pins is no reason for not keeping fit. Every week about a dozen keep fit enthusiasts gather at the William Ghent House Community centre in Balderton for an exercise class, followed by a cuppa and a game of dominoes or bingo.

Led by a very enthusiastic Vanessa, the group warm up with some seated exercise to music, some toe-tapping and clapping, then some strength exercises and a few games with soft foam footballs which involve turning and throwing and catching (or not).

There is a real benefit to these exercises though. The group learn how to stand up safely from a chair which helps prevent painful falls. The hand-eye co-ordination games keep up skills which can help in daily living. And apart from all that it's a chance to get out of the house, do a bit of exercise and have a good laugh.

In Balderton the group meets at 2 o'clock on Tuesday. It's all ladies at the moment, though gentlemen would be very welcome! Vanessa also holds a class at Collingham on a Thursday afternoon. Go along to either of these classes and your laugh muscles will certainly get a good workout.



Keeping Fit in Balderton

Help available to prevent homelessness

Did you know you can get advice from the Newark and Sherwood District Council Housing Options Team if you're struggling with your mortgage or rent payments? Getting advice early is crucial to helping households avoid repossession or home loss.

For those in financial difficulty the following may be of interest;

- Newark and Sherwood District Council, Framework and the Citizen's Advice Bureau have jointly set up a court desk at Newark County Court to give more protection to residents
- If you rent your property you may be able to get help by claiming Housing Benefit, if you own your property you may be able to get help to pay your council tax by claiming Council Tax Benefit.
- The Governments Mortgage Rescue Scheme is designed to support individuals to remain in their home with help and interventions from the Local Authorities and Housing Association.

The council's cabinet member for health and homes, Cllr David Payne, said: "Considering we're in a recession, it is likely more people will be approaching the council for help with housing.

"Both mortgage and landlord repossession claims have increased nationally.

"Homelessness is a sensitive issue and some people may be reluctant to seek help, but I would urge anyone in difficulty to contact us because financial support could be available."

Further information on these schemes is available from the council's housing options team on (01636) 655546, or by e-mailing housingoptions@nsdc.info. Alternatively, go www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/recession for more advice.

VALUING YOUR VIEWS YOU SAID, WE DID....

Actions we have taken as a result of the customer feedback we receive from complaints and suggestions:

YOU SAID...

Can I have a decorating allowance following the improvement work to my home?

WE DID

Newark and Sherwood Homes will always try to help and will assess if you are eligible for a decorating allowance. However, if you have rent arrears, any money that you are entitled to will be credited to your account to repay some of the debt you owe.

YOU SAID...

Why is it taking me so long to get a property?

WE DID

We told you that you had been bidding for properties that you were not eligible for, but asked you to tell us if your circumstances had now changed. We also let you know what type of properties you should be bidding for to have the best chance of being successful.

YOU SAID...

I would like some pipe work moving in my kitchen.

WE DID

Unfortunately, as this is a personal request and not a repair, we cannot carry out this work. However, we told you that you can arrange to have this carried out by someone else at your own expense, as long as you get our permission.

YOU SAID..

I have been without a recycling bin for a very a long time.

WE DID

We spoke to Newark and Sherwood District Council and were able to arrange for a recycling bin to be delivered within two hours.

Keeping Blidworth Tidy



The Blidworth Litter Pick team

Blidworth residents recently joined together to collect litter.

The event was organised by the Blidworth Tenants and Residents Association, working in partnership with Newark and Sherwood Homes, Nottinghamshire County Council and the Keep Britain Tidy organisation. Encouraged by Roger the Squirrel, the teams went out armed with litter pickers and hoops. The day was a great success and a big thank you to all the volunteers and for the kind donations to provide goody bags for the children taking part.



Roger The Squirrel

On The Beat

Newark and Sherwood Homes, in partnership with Police on the Magnus and Devon Beat, are holding a Safer Neighbourhood Group meeting on 9th November 2009 at Cleveland Square Community Centre at 7pm.

These meetings are for anyone living in and around the Hawtonville area. Everyone is welcome. This is a chance to meet Newark and Sherwood Homes' Housing Officers, the Police beat team, local councillors, and members of the Tenants and Residents Association.

Tea on the Beat

The local police, Housing Officers and tenant representatives from Newark and Sherwood Homes are holding walkabouts which are a chance to come along and talk about policing and any community problems. In partnership with the Co-op and NSH, you can come and discuss policing and community issues.

The next meetings are:

- Friday 16th October 10.30am Outside the Federation Office, Bailey Road
- Friday 27th November 10.30am Chatham Court

Police and Community Support Officers are now able to pop into Co-op stores in Sutton-on-Trent, Collingham, Balderton, and Newark to have a cuppa during their breaks.



Left to right - Housing Officer Terry Bailey, PCSO Amanda Wheatcroft, PC Lisa Mortimore and Duty Manager at Churchill Drive Co-op store, Becky King.

This makes it easier for the officers to take breaks without travelling to a police station. The scheme also aims to build relationships between store staff, customers and the police.

Tenants Value for Money Group

My name is Graham Tomlinson and I am the new elected chair of the Tenant Value For Money Group. The aim of the group is to look at the services that Newark and Sherwood Homes provide to you and to see if you are getting Value for Money for those services. This is a small group at present, but we are looking to extend it further, so if you are interested and would like further information please contact me on the following telephone number.

**Federation of Tenants and Residents Association
01636 684343**

Thank You, Graham Tomlinson

Would you like somewhere more secure to park your car?

We now have garages available to rent throughout the district.

Please ask a member of the local office staff for details. Call 0845 258 5550 and ask for the local office for your area.

New Award for Customer Service

Newark and Sherwood Homes has been recognised as giving excellent service to our customers – again! Following a thorough examination by an independent assessor, we have been awarded the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

This is the Government's new national standard for excellence in customer service which recognises those organisations who put their customers at the heart of all they do.

The assessor found that throughout Newark and Sherwood Homes there is a culture of providing customer-focussed services and that you, our customers, are generally happy with the services we provide.

He said that we have a good understanding of our customers which helps us to communicate with you in the way that best meets your needs.

He also found that we have many ways for you to be involved in shaping our services, and that we are good at measuring our performance and telling you how well we are doing.

If you live in an upstairs flat or maisonette and have a communal balcony, please do not leave bags of rubbish outside your door. The bags are a trip hazard as well as causing smells and possible insect or vermin infestation.

White Ribbon Day - 25th November 2009

Each year, men and boys are encouraged to wear a ribbon for one or two weeks, starting on November 25, the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women.

Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. Women may also wear the ribbon as a sign of support for this cause. The WRC is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men's violence against women. It relies on volunteer support and financial contributions from individuals and organisations.

Newark and Sherwood Homes will be asking staff to wear a ribbon during the campaign. The ribbons will be available for a small donation at all our offices. There will also be a stand in Newark Market Square on Wednesday 25th November 2009 run by Women's Aid where information on this campaign will be available. Any money raised will be donated to Nottinghamshire Women's Aid.



Forthcoming Events

All tenants are invited to come and listen to what is discussed - most of which affects you. Public questions are invited prior to the Board meeting. Please telephone Karen on 01636 655992.

BOARD MEETINGS

Annual General Meeting
12th November 2009 at 3pm
Carriage Court, Kelham Hall

Board Meeting
12th November 2009 at 5.15pm
Lady Chapel, Kelham Hall

Job Vacancies

Do you want to join an organisation that really cares about its employees and offers an excellent remuneration and benefits package?

We advertise our vacancies on our website and in local papers. Alternatively you can contact Human Resources via email: human.resources@nshomes.co.uk or by telephone on **01636 655447**.

Newark and Sherwood Homes welcomes applications from all sections of the community irrespective of race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

Contact Us

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD HOMES

Kelham Hall, Newark on Trent, Kelham, Notts NG23 5QX
Tel: 0845 258 5550 (Local call rate) - Fax: (01636) 655514
Minicom: (01636) 655651. Opening times - 8.30am - 5.15pm Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 4.45pm Friday

HAWTONVILLE OFFICE

77c Eton Avenue, Newark on Trent, NG24 4JH
Tel: (01636) 655503 - Fax: (01636) 655504 - Minicom: (01636) 655583. Opening times - 9.00am - 4.30pm Monday - Friday

OLLERTON OFFICE

Sycamore Road, Ollerton, NG22 9PS. Tel: (01623) 860740 - Fax: (01623) 860729 - Minicom: (01623) 837819. Opening times - 9.00am - 4.30pm Monday - Friday

REPAIRS FREEPHONE
0800 561 0010

EMERGENCIES OUT OF HOURS FREEPHONE
0800 561 0010

COMMENT ON THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE 0845 258 5550

Our website address is: www.nshomes.co.uk - Email us at: housing@nshomes.co.uk

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.

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(Polish)

(Mandarin)

(Portuguese)



Signing



The Big Word Translation Services



Audio Tape

Annual Tenant Conference 2009

Kelham Hall,
Saturday
7th November
2009

Your Homes, Your Future,
Your Choice.

Double Bonus for Gas Access

An annual gas service check could be a lifesaver. And if you let our engineers in to carry out these essential checks the first time an appointment is made you could win £200 worth of shopping vouchers in our quarterly prize draw.

The winner this quarter was Mrs Faulkner of Tithe Barn Court, Newark pictured here receiving her vouchers from John Smith, Powerminster Gas Service Contractor Supervisor.



Easier Access at Ollerton



Paul Mathie and his son, Ben, try out the new automatic doors at the Ollerton Office of Newark and Sherwood Homes on Sycamore Road.

Customers at Newark and Sherwood Homes' Ollerton office on Sycamore Road have found it easier to visit, thanks to a series of improvements to disabled access.

New automatic doors for wheelchair access have been fitted. Handrails have also been painted to improve visibility for partially sighted visitors.

A minicom telephone has also been installed which will help customers with hearing or speech difficulties to get in touch. The minicom number is 01623 837819.

These improvements are part of an ongoing programme to make sure that Newark and Sherwood Homes' services are accessible to all.

