

July 2011



New Allendale Tenants Move In

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Community Awards

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Key Contacts

Customer Services Centre
01670 542424

For information on Dog Wardens call
0845 6006400

Northumbria Police
Blyth Neighbourhood Inspector;
Trevor Oakley
03456 043 043 or
blyth.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

Cramlington Neighbourhood Inspector;
Dave Fitzgerald
03456 043 043 or
cramlington.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

Alnwick Neighbourhood Inspector;
Sue Peart
03456 043 043 or
alnwick.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau
0844 4111309

This information is also available in Braille and audio. Magnifying sheets are also available on request. If you would like to receive Your News in another format or language, please contact **Melanie Armstrong at melanie.armstrong@hfn.uk.com or telephone 01670 542424.**

Arabic يمكننا تقديم هذه المعلومات بترجمات ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بتنسيق أو لغة أخرى، يرجى الاتصال بمكتبنا

Bengali আমরা এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফর্ম্যাট ও অন্যান্য প্রদান করতে পারি। আপনি যদি এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফর্ম্যাট বা অন্যর পথে চান, আরও অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের কে কোনো একটি অফিস ফোনযোগ্য করুন

Chinese (simplified) 我们可以提供此资料的其它格式和语言版本。如果您希望获取其它格式或语言版本，请与我们的任一办事处联系。

Chinese (traditional) 我們備有此資訊的其它格式和語言版本。若您需要其它格式或語言版本，請聯絡我們的辦事處。

Hindi हम यह जानकारी वैकल्पिक फॉर्मेटों और भाषाओं में मुहैया करा सकते हैं। अगर आप अन्य फॉर्मेट या भाषा में जानकारी चाहते हैं तो कृपया हमारे कार्यालयों में से किसी एक में संपर्क करें

Polish Możemy udostępnić Państwu te informacje na różnych nośnikach i w różnych językach. Gdyby chcieli Państwo otrzymać informacje na innym nośniku lub w innym języku prosimy skontaktować się z jednym z naszych biur.

Portuguese Podemos disponibilizar esta informação em formatos e linguas alternativas. Se gostasse de receber informação noutro formato ou lingua, por favor contacte um dos nossos escritórios

Punjabi ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਦਲਦੇ ਢਾਂਚਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਢਾਂਚੇ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਾਸ ਕਰੋਗੇ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਦਫਤਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਇੱਕ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ

Slovak Môžeme poskytnúť tieto informácie v ďalších formátoch a jazykoch. Ak budete chcieť informácie v iných formátoch a jazykoch, prosím, kontaktujte jednu z našich kancelárií.

Turkish Bu bilgileri başka formatlarda ve dillerde sağlayabilmekteyiz. Bilgiyi başka bir formatta veya dilde almak isterseniz, lütfen ofislerimizden biriyle irtibat kurunuz.

Urdu ہم یہ معلومات متبادل شکلوں اور زبانوں میں فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر شکل یا زبان میں مطلوب ہو تو، براہ کرم ہمارے کسی دفتر سے رابطہ کریں

If you have any comments or suggestions for Your News, please contact Melanie Armstrong, Communications, Homes for Northumberland, Civic Centre, Renwick Road, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 2BX or call 01670 542424.

Front cover: New tenants in Allendale receive the keys to their new home.

www.hfn.uk.com

Welcome to the Summer edition of Your News

We've had another busy few months at Homes for Northumberland and I hope you enjoy reading about it in this edition of the magazine.

Some of the highlights in recent months include:

- **The launch of the Spirit of the Community Awards**
- **19 young people received John Muir Awards and Homes for Northumberland became an accredited provider**
- **A Breath of Fresh Air in Alnwick was a great success**
- **Our brand new Facebook page is now available**

In June we launched Denefields, a brand new housing development providing affordable homes for families in Allendale. This is our first new build scheme and is something we are very proud of.

Denefields is a site of 22 brand new, eco friendly homes in rural Allendale. Homes for Northumberland hosted a launch event with partners to mark the opening of the site. Denefields was officially opened by Councillor Tom

Brechany, who handed keys to new tenants Sheryl Henderson and Robert Hawkes.

The development would not have been possible without the support of our partners and particularly Northumberland County Council who donated this piece of land to us.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new tenants in Allendale. All of the best in your new home!

Best Wishes,
Ray




Ray Boycott – Managing Director

Providing excellent services

Blyth Area Board Update

The Blyth Area Board met in April and discussed the importance of showing tenant engagement in all board reports and requested reports from Service Panels. It was agreed that listening to tenant feedback is key to everything at Homes for Northumberland and this needs to be considered in all decision making.

The Board suggested that estate walkabouts with tenants should be avoided in winter months – this will be raised at the next Neighbourhood Service Panel for comment before a final decision is made.

The group was very pleased with the performance on rent arrears and voids. They were keen to praise staff for their hard work in these areas.

The Board welcomed the reports from mystery shoppers as this is an important part of our efforts to involve tenants in improving services. They looked forward to future reports from the shoppers and acknowledged the work and dedication of the Panel.

Alnwick Area Board Update

The Alnwick Area Board met on 22 June. Amongst items under discussion, the Board decided to set up a sub-group to hear complaints from customers that couldn't be resolved at an earlier stage. They considered how we are dealing with accommodation for our staff and the options we have available to us in the future.

The Board heard reports on progress with the exciting development at Allendale. More good news was revealed about 42 apartments becoming available for rent in Alnwick.

The Board considered our latest information which shows positive news about how we are performing, including looking at customer satisfaction and our response to customer complaints in detail. They also heard how we are dealing with anti-social behaviour and the innovative ways we are trying to improve the quality of life of our tenants.

Performance to 31st March 2011

Indicator	Blyth	Alnwick
Amount of rent outstanding	£249,401	£187,540
Tenants evicted for rent arrears	19	2
Average time taken to let an empty home	28.63 Days	13.90 Days
Total number of repairs jobs completed	33,606	8,789
Total number of complaints received	130	11
Total number of compliments received	14	12
Number of tenants involved in Homes for Northumberland service panels and meetings	2,400	

Enter into the Spirit

Homes for Northumberland is launching a new awards scheme to recognise the achievements of our tenants who are going the extra mile.

The Spirit of the Community Awards will look to find the people who have helped residents enjoy life more or made a difference to others.

Winners will be presented with an award at an event in November 2011.

The deadline for nominations is 28 October 2011. All entries will be judged by our tenants – if you would like to be a judge please give us a call.

The awards have five categories. You can either nominate another tenant or nominate yourself:



Good neighbour award

Having a good neighbour can make a huge difference to your life.

Is there someone who has made a difference to you or other people in your community by giving up their time to help out?

This is your chance to show someone that their work hasn't gone unnoticed.

Young Person of the year award

Do you know a young person who uses their time to help their local community?

It could be a young person who is involved with a local group or who gives up their free time to go the extra mile to help others in the community.

The individual must be aged between 10 and 24 years old.

Let them know that they are valued by putting them forward for this award.

Getting involved award

Is there an individual who actively gets involved with Homes for Northumberland to improve things for everyone?

Help to recognise their achievements and the value of their input with this award.

Best community group award

This award recognises community groups which have helped to improve their local area.

Do you know a community group that has helped to ensure everyone is involved in improving your community?

Garden of the year award

This category is open to all residents who are proud of their garden.

Simply take a picture of your garden and submit it to us. All pictures must have been taken this year.

If you would like to enter, but do not have a camera speak with us on 01670 542424.

Improving quality of life

How to Enter

Simply cut out and return the entry slip below to:

Melanie Armstrong

**Communications Manager
Homes for Northumberland Ltd
Blyth Civic Centre
Renwick Road
Blyth NE24 2BX**

Nomination forms are also available by calling 01670 542424

Please note, you must be a Homes for Northumberland tenant or living in a Homes for Northumberland property to apply.

We look forward to seeing your applications!

If you have any queries on the Spirit of the Community, please call 01670 542424.

Application Form

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

I would like to nominate the following group/ individual for the following category:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good neighbour award | <input type="checkbox"/> Young person of the year award |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting involved award | <input type="checkbox"/> Best community group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden of the year award | |

Please give brief details of why you think the particular person or group should be nominated. If we need to we will contact you for more information before we contact your nominated person or group. Please attach further sheets or information if needed

Name of person/ group you would like to nominate

Why you think they should be nominated

Continue on a separate sheet if required



Walking Your Way to Health

Homes for Northumberland is piloting a new project called Walking Your Way to Health, in association with the Department of Health and Natural England.

Come along to one of our weekly walks to meet new people, catch up with old friends, learn a thing or two about your local area and chat to staff, either during the walk or over a cup of tea when we finish.

The walks last around one hour and are at an easy pace - they are tailored very much for the beginner or those wishing to start on a gentle exercise programme. Staff from Homes for Northumberland will lead the walks.

Health professionals agree that regular exercise can have a big impact on an individual's fitness and wellbeing. Walking is an excellent form of exercise, suitable for all age ranges and abilities.

A scheme has been set up in Alnwick Town with one due to start in Amble. We are keen to open this opportunity to all interested tenants, of whatever age, across the whole of the Blyth Valley and Alnwick District areas.

Please contact our Resident Involvement Team on 01670 542424 if you would be interested in taking part in a walk in your local area.



Alnwick Residents Enjoy a Breath of Fresh Air

We joined forces with a number of partners to deliver a health event at Alnwick North Community Centre.

A Breath of Fresh Air was a free health event designed to help show Homes for Northumberland residents and those living in the local community how they can live healthy lifestyles. Local people flocked on the day to enjoy a range of activities, from Nordic walking and bulb planting to sports coaching, cookery demonstrations and zumba.

The event was opened by the Mayor of Alnwick, Eileen Blakey. She said: "I am delighted that the Breath of Fresh Air event was such a great success and it was fantastic to be part of such a great day. The event invited members of the local community to take part in a variety of activities - from bird box activities to individual health checks and it gave everyone the opportunity to think about ways in which they can adopt healthier lifestyles."

The next Breath of Fresh Air is in Seghill on August 13th. **For more information, please give us a call on 01670 542424.**

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Top Ten Tips on Dealing with Debt

- 1** Don't ignore the problem – the sooner you get advice about your debts, the easier it will be to deal with the situation.
- 2** **Get some free advice – think carefully before going to a fee-charging adviser when free, independent help is available.**
- 3** Don't borrow money to pay off your debts without thinking carefully – always take advice before making this step.
- 4** **If you have lost your job, or are off work because of illness, check whether your payments are covered by payment protection insurance – and always read the small print of these policies.**
- 5** Check that you are claiming all the benefits you can – go to direct.gov.uk and look at the money, tax and benefits section. Citizens Advice Bureau can also help with benefit checks and help you through the claim process if needed.
- 6** **Make sure you tackle priority debts first – some debts are more important than others – for example if you fall behind on rent payments you could lose your home or risk bailiff action if your council tax is not paid.**
- 7** Work out a budget to help decide how much you can put towards repaying debts – a money adviser can help construct a budget.
- 8** **Decide on your best option for dealing with your debts – a money adviser can identify the range of options you have and their various implications.**
- 9** Take action – after you have decided your route back to financial health, don't delay.
- 10** **Remember, you don't have to struggle on your own – free, independent advice is available from a range of charitable organisations. You can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau for advice or support with your financial difficulties.**

Join your local credit union for borrowing and saving. You could be wasting a lot of money paying back door step lenders.

For more information, contact our Money Advisor on 01670 542424



The Welfare Reform Bill and You

The Government's recent Welfare Reform Bill includes a number of possible changes to the current benefit system.

This may affect you and your family in the following ways:

Non Dependent Deductions and Housing Benefit

The Government increased deductions from April 2011. This means you that you may have had your housing benefit reduced, if for example if you have adult children still living at home.

Under-Occupation

From April 2013, all working age tenants who are under occupying (this means having more bedrooms than you need) will have their benefit reduced.

This proposal aims to limit the amount of housing benefit payable where a property is larger than someone of working age is judged to need. For example, if you are a single person living on housing benefit in a two or three bedroom property, then under the proposals you may have your housing benefit reduced (this will depend on your personal circumstances).

Universal Credit

Universal Credit will bring together a range of existing benefits and tax credits, including housing benefit. This is designed to make the benefit system simpler.

It will be phased in over 4 years, starting from October 2013.

More information will be issued shortly and we will keep you up to date when this is available to us.

Household Benefit Cap

In 2013, a cap on the maximum amount of benefits households can claim will be introduced. This will be targeted at households in which the adults are out of work. The cap has been set at approximately £500 per week (£26k per annum) for couples and lone parents, and £350 per week for singles.

This will mainly affect large families who are out of work (generally those with 3 or more children) or households in high rent areas receiving large benefit payments.

We are committed to supporting our tenants through the proposed changes as they occur. We will stay in regular contact and will provide you with updates as the reforms progress.

The changing benefit system and tough economic climate makes it more important than ever that you claim what you are entitled to.

Please call 01670 542424 if you would like further information on benefits.

Information correct at the time of print.



Providing excellent services

Free Garden Tool Hire for Local Tenants

You can benefit from free garden tool hire from Homes for Northumberland until October to help keep your garden neat and tidy.

Homes for Northumberland's Garden Tool Hire scheme allows tenants to borrow free, tool packs for up to one week. The packs are suitable for most gardening jobs and consist of a lawn mower, strimmer, circuit breaker and extension, spade, hoe, rake, fork and shears.

For more information on the Garden Tool Hire scheme, please call 01670 542424.



Do you have a Facebook Account?

We are using the internet to make it easy for you to get the information you want from us.

Our new Facebook page is an easy way for you to read about our latest news and events.

If you have a Facebook account, search for Homes for Northumberland and click to like our page to keep you up to date with what is going on.

400 Homes Will Capture the Sun

Northumberland County Council will be fitting solar panels on a large number of properties in Northumberland over the next few months.

A major new investment and programme of work has been agreed with GB Renewable Energy, the renewables arm of a national construction company, to install solar PV panels, which will generate environmentally friendly 'green' electricity to around 400 domestic homes, as well as to 130 other Council owned education, sports, recreation and community buildings. And that's not all – we are already looking for the next batch of 400 homes to form a second project, which could follow hot on the heels of this one.

A Northumberland County Council spokesperson indicated that if suitable funding for this type of renewables work could be secured, then further projects of similar scale and scope would follow.

So far over 400 tenants have received letters letting them know that their homes have been identified as "most suitable" for solar PV panels. But, as not every home can practically have solar panels fitted, (eg. if the roof is an irregular shape; if the roof direction is not south facing - toward the mid-day sun, or is shaded by other buildings or trees), further detailed surveys will still need to be carried out to ensure that solar PV is fitted only to the right properties.

How do solar PV panels work and what are the benefits?

Solar panels fitted to the roof of a property capture the sun's energy and convert it into electricity that can be used to run household appliances and lighting. The panels don't need direct sunlight to work – they can still generate some electricity on a cloudy day – although the panels work most effectively when they are fitted on a south facing roof.

With gas and electricity bills going up all the time, which can put a massive strain on a typical household income, we are always looking at ways of reducing our residents' energy costs as much as possible. One of the main advantages of this scheme is that it will help reduce residents' electricity bills by providing an amount of free electricity to the home when it is being generated by the solar panels.

If you are one of the lucky few to have received a letter so far, or if your letter might be just over the horizon you may have a few questions. Here's some information which may help:

When will the work be done?

The scheme will be starting from July onwards. You will be contacted to arrange for a detailed survey of your home and to confirm details of when the solar panels will be fitted to your property.



How long will the work take?

Typically it takes around 4 days to complete the work.

Will I have to pay anything?

No. As a tenant of Northumberland County Council all of the work will be carried out free of charge. You will also benefit from the use of free electricity generated by the solar panels, helping to reduce your electricity bill.

Will there be any disruption or damage to my property?

Most of the work will be carried out on the roof and in the loft of your home, although some new electric metering equipment and wiring connections will be required at your electricity meter. There will be a short period (usually around 2 hours) when your electricity supply will be turned off to allow connection of the new system, but the contractor will give you advance notice of this minor disruption.

Will I be able to use electricity from the solar panels straight away?

Yes. As soon as the solar panels are connected you will benefit from the solar electricity generated. The contractor will give you full guidance on how the panels work, but the system is very easy to understand and operates virtually on its own.

Who will be responsible for the future maintenance and repair of the PV panels?

Northumberland County Council, through Homes for Northumberland, will be responsible for the long-term maintenance and repair of the solar panels.

If you have any other queries, please contact 01670 542424.

Improving our existing properties

New Affordable Homes Open

Homes for Northumberland has launched a brand new housing development providing affordable homes for families in Allendale.

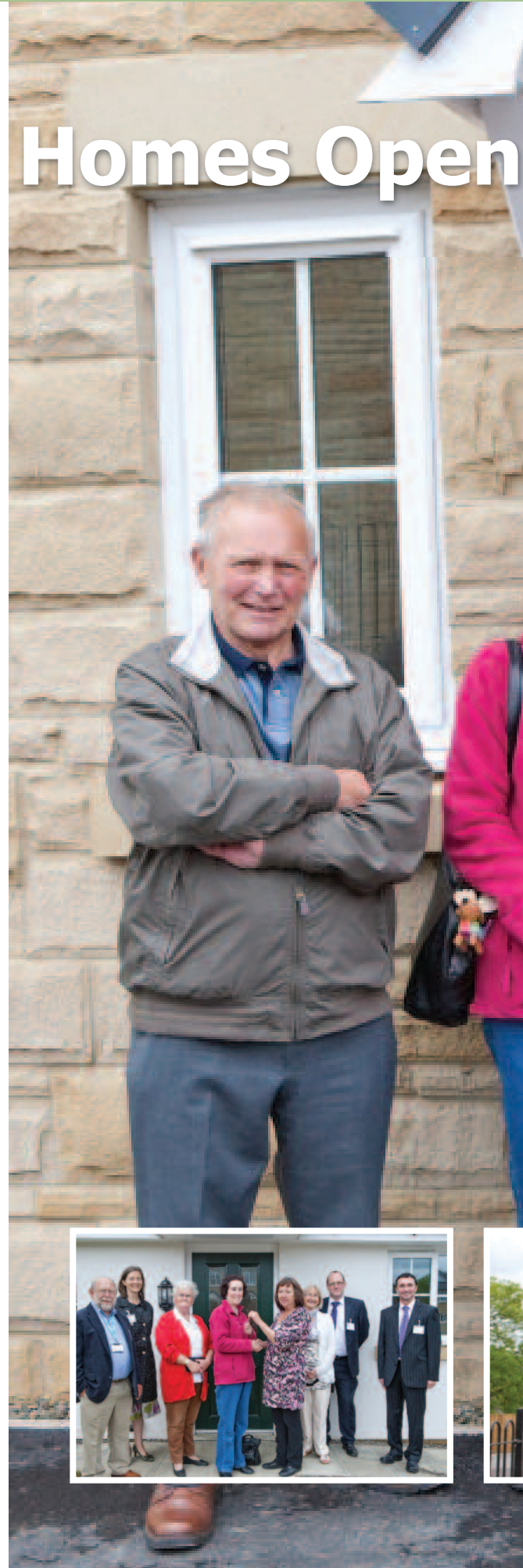
We hosted a launch event with partners to mark the opening of Denefields – a site of 22 brand new, eco friendly homes in rural Allendale. The development is Homes for Northumberland’s first new build scheme and was officially opened by Councillor Tom Brechany, who handed keys to new tenants Sheryl Henderson and Mr Hawkes.

Denefields offers something for everyone as it combines 18 homes available for rent with four shared ownership properties. There is also a range of house types, including bungalows, flats and family sized houses.

All of the properties are built to Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and boast a number of outstanding eco friendly features, which help to cut fuel bills and save the environment, including wood burning stoves.

New tenant Sheryl Henderson said: “I’m over the moon to have been offered a property at Denefields and very much look forward to moving into my new home. I currently live in the Allendale area where my current property is not suitable for my disabled son. The home I have been allocated is ideal for my needs and the needs of my family, it also means that my disabled son will have a new lease of life.”

Homes for Northumberland and Northumberland County Council worked closely with Allendale Parish Council and the local community to develop a scheme that fits into the village, and also meets the needs of the families and young people who need housing in the area. There will be a play area in the middle of the development which will be open to everyone.



in Allendale



Councillor Brechany said: “I was proud to open this new site of much needed affordable homes in Allendale. I was extremely impressed with the high standard of housing for local people at Denefields – infact this is by far the best site of affordable housing I have seen throughout my career. I’d like to commend Homes for Northumberland and their partners for their work on this fantastic scheme.”



Providing excellent services

New Service for Mutual Exchange

HomeSwapper is our brand new mutual exchange scheme.

This new service will hold details of mutual exchanges in Northumberland as well as details of those wishing to move here from outside the County.

Tenants can register for HomeSwapper FREE of charge – simply visit www.homeswapper.co.uk and register your details.

Once you have registered, you will be able to view matches online and HomeSwapper will send you emails with details of suitable exchange partners. If you do not have access to the internet, HomeSwapper will send you details of suitable exchange partners via your mobile phone.

For more information about this service, please speak with Jill Sanderson on 01670 542424.



Community Fund Update

The Homes for Northumberland community fund is available to Resident Associations who would like to set up a project that would help their local community.

Some of our residents have already benefited from the fund:

- New Hartley Community Association organised two workshops for children at New Hartley Village Fair. The workshops were facilitated by local writer Barry Stone who also judged a creative writing competition.
- Concorde House Residents Association used the funding to buy a Carpet Bowls and Wedge Set, as well as a day trip for the residents. This project will improve the quality of life for residents living in the unit on both a physical and emotional level.
- Alnwick Community Centre organised a summer play scheme during the school holidays. The project aims to provide safe affordable play schemes which will improve quality of life for tenants and go towards alleviating anti social behaviour in the local area.

If any Homes for Northumberland Resident Association has a project which they can demonstrate would benefit their community, you can apply for community funding of up to £500 from **Homes for Northumberland** by telephoning **01670 542424**.

Leaseholder Matters

Homes for Northumberland manages around 250 leasehold properties, where residents have bought the long lease of their home in a Council owned building.

Leaseholder service standards

We have produced the following service standards so that every leaseholder is clear about the level of service they can expect from us:

- We will make sure that it is easy for you to contact our staff.
- Our staff will be friendly, polite, helpful and will listen to your concerns.
- We will keep the structure of your building insured against fire, flood, lightning, explosion and any other reasonable risks. You will continue to be responsible for insuring your home contents.
- We will give you an invoice for your service charges every March. Your service charge invoice will be clear and explain the individual charges.
- We will tell you about your responsibility to pay for all the services we provide.
- We will give you reasonable notice if we need to get into your home to do any repairs. This will be 7 days unless there's an emergency.
- You can pay your service charge in one payment or in monthly installments. We will offer you a range of ways to pay.
- We will consult you on any major repairs or improvements we plan to do to your building.
- We will consult you about your payment options for any major repairs or improvements.
- We will consult with you while we do any work on your building.
- We will provide an appointment system when we need to do repairs to your home.
- We will continue to maintain the structure and outside of your building.
- We will always try to provide the best services that we can. If, however, you are not satisfied with our service, please let us know and we will try to sort out your complaint immediately. If you are still not satisfied, please ask for our complaint leaflet, which tells you how to complain.



Maintaining and improving properties



Small Scale Estate Improvements

Do you ever notice things on your estate which could be improved?

Perhaps a communal wall or fencing needs repairing, a landscaped area requires tidying up, or a bollard would help traffic management issues.

Do you know that your local Neighbourhood Housing Officer has a small budget to carry out these kind of improvements?

If you have any ideas for spending this budget please attend your next estate walkabout where you can show your Housing Officer the issue in person or contact them direct on 01670 542424

You asked us to review the tenant incentive scheme for leaving your property in good condition.

Following consultation with tenants and leaseholders we ceased the scheme.

You asked us to extend the painting programme from 5 years to 7 years.

Officers are now working on putting together a scheme that achieves this but maintains properties in higher risk areas i.e. next to the coast.

You asked us to inform tenants of their responsibilities in relation to repairs.

We have included an article in this edition of Your News.

You asked if we can retain tenants improvements when they leave their property rather than us replacing them.

Officers are currently working on a schedule of what can be safely left and what must be replaced.

You asked us to service electric storage heaters in the Alnwick area.

We have arranged for every property to be visited this summer and have the heaters serviced.

You asked us to review the decoration voucher scheme.

We have agreed with tenants to trial paint packs for 6 months to examine cost savings and services to tenants.

Improvements in your Home

Repairs you Must do Yourself

Homes for Northumberland is responsible for doing a number of repairs on your home — for example on the structure of the property, on gas, electricity, plumbing or heating installations. These repairs are free.

But there are other, smaller jobs that you must do yourself. We consulted with our tenants to agree a list of repairs that tenants are responsible for, they are:

- Repairing minor plaster cracks
- Internal decoration
- TV Ariel's (except communal aerials)
- Loose screws on cupboards windows doors or gate furniture
- Washing machine installation
- Curtain Rails
- Gaining entry to the property
- External door locks
- Additional household keys
- Re glazing windows
- Shower curtains and poles
- Laminate flooring
- Loose floor coverings and carpets
- Bolts or locks to outhouses or garden gates
- Plugs and fuses for electrical appliances
- Light bulbs fluorescent tubes and starters
- Batteries for smoke detectors
- Clothes posts
- Safety chains
- Door Bells
- Blocked Gullies
- Sink and bathplugs and chains
- Toilet seats

If everyone in your household is elderly or disabled, please let us know as we may be able to offer extra support.

Permission for Improvements

If you are planning to make changes in your home, please be aware that you will need written permission from Homes for Northumberland if you want to build any of the following:

- Garden shed
- Greenhouse
- Car port
- Driveway or Patio
- Fences

Tenants can claim compensation from Homes for Northumberland (when they move home) for the cost of making the following repairs or alterations:

- Bath or shower, wash hand basin and toilets
- Kitchen sink and work surfaces for preparing food
- Storage cupboards in bathrooms and kitchens
- Central heating, hot water boilers and other types of heating
- Thermostatic radiator valves
- Pipe water tank and cylinder insulation
- Loft and cavity wall insulation
- Draught proofing of external doors and windows
- Double glazing or other window replacement or secondary glazing
- Rewiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)
- Security measures (excluding burglar alarms)

Compensation can only be claimed when you move to another property. You must have had written permission from us before you carried out the repairs to claim compensation.

For more information on our repairs service, please call 01670 542424

Providing excellent services

A Friendly Voice at the End of the Phone

Our housing experts in the Customer Services Centre are ready to take your calls on any of the following:

Repairs - Logging repairs. Dealing with repair enquiries.

Rent Arrears - Taking rent payments. Setting up Direct Debits. Giving general advice on rent accounts both current and former.

Neighbourhood Services - General enquires.

Homes for Northumberland is keen to listen to its tenants and respond to any feedback we receive. Please contact the customer services team if you have a compliment or a complaint.

If you have any of the following queries, you will need to speak with Northumberland County Council on 0845 600 6400.

- **Homefinder** • **Council Tax** • **Housing Benefit Applications**
- **Refuse Collection** • **Pest Control** • **All Council Services**

To speak with the Homes for Northumberland customer services team, call 01670 542424



Modern New Apartments in Alnwick

Homes for Northumberland will manage and maintain 42 new apartments at Ropery Court in Alnwick on behalf of Northumberland County Council.

The apartment block is located next to Morrison's supermarket and will provide much needed, modern accommodation in Alnwick town centre. These properties are comprised of 42 high specification apartments – 39 with two bedrooms and three with one bedroom.

Anyone interested in these new properties can get further information by calling 01670 542424.



Alnwick Homes get a Facelift

Homes for Northumberland has been involved in a range of capital schemes which help improve the quality of life for our residents. Here is an update on just some of the work we have been doing in the Alnwick area:

- **83 homes on Beech Grove and Cedar Grove now have brand new kitchens.**
- **Four bungalows at Barns Road, Felton are being extended from one to two bedroom homes.**
- **Two homes on Dodds Lane in Alnwick now have new roofs, external doors and will be getting new windows, full rewires, new kitchens and bathrooms later in the year.**
- **Eleven homes at Lisburn Court in Alnwick, which previously relied on two inefficient communal boilers, have had their own central heating systems installed. This will benefit tenants by allowing them to control their own central heating through the use of their own timers and thermostats. Highly efficient combi-boilers and radiators with individual control valves have also been installed which will help to keep future gas bills down.**
- **Six tenants at Augur Place in Alnwick now have brand new French doors, complete with level access platforms and ramps. Previously, these properties only had a front door, so these alterations will allow tenants to have better access to the communal grass area at the rear of their home.**



Providing excellent services

A Message from Northumbria Police

Northumbria Police is asking residents in Blyth and Alnwick to help them tackle crime this summer.

Officers are urging residents to take simple steps to help deter chance thieves who prey on easy opportunities to commit crimes.

Alnwick Neighbourhood Inspector Sue Peart said: "Thieves and burglars are looking for the easy way to commit crimes.

"It only takes a thief minutes to break into a car and make off with what ever has been left inside. Or for a burglar to sneak into an unlocked door and help themselves to whatever has been left out on show."

Blyth Neighbourhood Inspector Trevor Oakley said: "That's why we need the public's help in tackling crime and beating the burglars this summer."

"There are lots of things resident's can do to help us put a stop to these types of offences."

"Over the summer months I'd ask that while you enjoy your holidays that you help us by taking a few simple measures that could be all the difference when it comes to becoming the victim of crime."

Residents are asked to ensure their doors and windows are secure at all times, especially over night, as there has been a number of house burglaries across Northumberland recently.

Motorists are advised to lock their vehicles whenever they leave them unattended, even for just a short time. Remove any valuables that are on show and avoid leaving anything of value in an unattended car.

Be smart with your possessions such as bikes, tools and garden equipment. Lock them away somewhere secure like a garage or shed. Fit good solid locks to your shed and don't leave expensive items out on show.

Help police by reporting any suspicious vehicles, people or behaviour to officers straight away by ringing 03456 043 043 or 999 in an emergency.

For more crime prevention information or to speak to your local Neighbourhood Policing Team (Alnwick and Blyth) ring 03456 043 043 ext 69191 or visit www.northumbria.police.uk



Protecting You from Anti Social Behaviour

Your Safer Neighbourhoods Unit works closely with communities and partner organisations to identify and address local concerns.

The team has handled almost 600 cases of anti social behaviour in the last 12 months, helping you to feel safe and secure in your neighbourhood and home. This has included reports of noise nuisance, criminal damage, harassment and domestic violence.



If you would like to report an incident of anti social behaviour or would like advice on feeling safe and secure in your home, please speak with your Safer Neighbourhoods Team on 01670 542424.

Homes for Northumberland works closely with Northumbria Police to help reduce anti social behaviour in a number of ways. In the last 12 months the team achieved the following:

- **20 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements were entered into. These are an effective way of clearly setting out boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.**
- **32 notices were served – resulting in 2 evictions**
- **Installed CCTV in 22 locations, helping to prevent further incidents and to capture images of any anti social or criminal behaviour.**
- **Installed noise nuisance equipment on 20 occasions. This equipment enables the unit to prove or disprove a claim of noise nuisance. Recordings can be used as evidence to issue warnings against tenants.**
- **Improved security and target hardening of 20 properties. Target hardening includes lock changes, window catches, chains and locks fitted to doors, security lighting and installing of fire proof letter boxes.**
- **Provided individuals with personal attack alarms, wall mounted alarms, segment timers and arson fire boxes.**

Improving quality of life

Residents Give their Meadow a Spring Clean

Homes for Northumberland tenants in Blyth have been mucking in at a Big Tidy Up event.

Twenty Homes for Northumberland tenants attended the Big Tidy Up to clean up the meadow at Isabella Heap in Blyth, which in recent years has been littered with rubbish as well as fly tipping and overgrown bushes. The team shifted 30 bags of rubbish and also spent time trimming back the bushes on the pathway leading up to the field.

Homes for Northumberland organised the Big Tidy Up event alongside partners Keep Britain Tidy, Northumberland County Council, Blyth Youth Service Cluster, Northumbria Police and Northumberland Wildlife Trust, who all attended on the day to give a helping hand.



Young People get John Muir Awards

Nineteen young people aged between 7 and 14 years were presented with a John Muir Award at an awards ceremony.

The John Muir Awards project is a way of teaching young people about their environment and why they should look after their local area, including how to explore and conserve it.

The group has been involved in a number of activities, including learning why you should conserve your environment and clean up rubbish. They were also involved in a Big Tidy Up at the Isabella Heap.

Thanks to the work the group has undertaken, Homes for Northumberland is now an official John Muir provider and more John Muir projects are being planned for the future.

For more information on how you can get involved in the John Muir Awards project, speak with Aileen Barrass on 01670 542424



Estate Walkabouts

Street/s	Meeting Place	Dates
Cramlington Area Start time 10.00am		
Eastfield Lea	Eastfield Community House	28 July 2011
Eastfield Lea	Eastfield Community House	24 Nov, 15 Mar 2012
Eastfield Grange	Entrance of Cairnglass Close	10 Aug, 22 Feb 2012
East Cramlington	Lanercost Park flats (3 storeys)	20 October 2011
Nelson Village/Sunnyside	Arcot Ave shops	17 August 2011
Collingwood Grange	Car park at estate entrance	27 July 2011
Mayfield Dale	Entrance to Thirston Drive	13 July 2011
Mayfield Grange	Entrance to Ave. op Village Road	15 Sept 2011
East Hartford	Entrance between Stephen/Ormston/Wrightson	31 August 2011
Mayfield Glade	Barrasford Road next to car park	28 October 2011
Seghill, Seaton Sluice Start time 10.00am		
The Crescent	Outside 1 Stanley Gardens	11 August 2011, 14 February 2012
Deneside	Outside 1 Burnlea Gardens	11 October 2011
Seaton Sluice	Outside 1 Southward	24 August 2011
Seaton Delaval Start time 10.00am		
Holywell Estate	Outside 1 Holywell Avenue	14 April 2011
Woodside Avenue	Outside 1 Woodside Ave	14 July 2011
Blyth Street Estate	NCC info Centre, Council Offices	15 September 2011
New Hartley	Hartley Court	13 October 2011
Blyth South Area Start time 10.00am		
Solingen Est, Seafield Area	Entrance to Solingen Est	13 July 2011
Avenues 1st – 14th	Entrance to 1st Avenue	17 August 2011
Avenues 15th – 26th and South View	Outside 1 x 15th Avenue	14 September 2011
Blyth Town Centre	Beside St. Wilfreds Catholic Church, Bowes Court	14 July 2011
New Delaval Estate	Newsham Co-op	24 August 2011
Benridge/Cottingwood	Entrance to Benridge	1 November 2011
Blyth North Area Start time 10.00 am (except Hodgson's Road on 13 July 2011 is at 5.30 pm)		
Hodgson's Road Estate (5.30 pm start on 13 July)	Netto Car Park	13 July, 17 Nov 2011
Hodgson's Road Estate	Netto Car Park	28 March 2012
Cowpen Farm Estate	Isabella Community Centre	24 August 2011
North Farm Estate	Phone box at junction of Temple/Walton Avenue	7 September 2011
Hodgson's Road Estate	Netto Car Park	28 March 2012
Beaside Estate	Kitty Brewster Pub Car Park	28 September 2011
Brierley (Hallside)	Blyth North Office Brierley Road	21 July 2011
Edendale	Junction of Edendale Ave/Deneview drive	19 May 2011
Briardale (Dales)	The Old Post Office on Briardale Road	7 September 2011

Smaller villages and settlements will be inspected on a periodic basis and tenants in these locations will be notified separately of the date/s of inspections in their area. Please contact the Estates and Tenancy Services Team on 01670 542424 for further information.

Dates for Residents/Community Association Meetings

Seaton Delaval and Holywell Residents Association

Mustard Seed, Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval

- Thursday 15th September 2011 - 7pm
- Thursday 20th October 2011 - 7pm

Tenant Board Member Vacancy in Alnwick

If you are passionate about social housing and keen to take on a challenging new role – you can now apply for the post of Tenant Board Member in Alnwick.

By being part of our Board you can help us to improve Homes for Northumberland and influence decision making. If you have a real commitment and enthusiasm for making a difference in Alnwick, then we would love to hear from you.

For more information and an application pack please contact Jeanette Wilkinson at Homes for Northumberland on 01670 542424 or email jeanette.wilkinson01@hfn.uk.com

Involvement Questionnaire

If you are interested in being involved, please complete the following questionnaire and return it **FREE OF CHARGE** to Homes for Northumberland, **FREEPOST RLYG-CCTU-THB2**, Blyth Civic Centre, Renwick Road, Blyth NE24 2BX.

Name _____ Address _____

Telephone No _____ Mobile Telephone No _____

E-mail address _____

How would you like us to involve you?

Face to face (meetings etc)

Postal questionnaire

Telephone

E-mail

Please tick all you are interested in

Join our mystery shopping panel

Attend one of the local tenant and residents groups

Sit on one of our service panels

Help with estate walkabouts

Armchair involvement

Join our editorial panel

Be part of a community fund panel

