

January 2010



Amble Community Action Week
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Competition Winner

In our last edition of Your News we asked residents to fill in and send us the "Your thoughts" survey. We offered a lucky winner a prize of £100 high street vouchers. The winner of this prize draw was Mrs Green from Alwick. We would like to thank all those people who returned the survey, your comments were very helpful.



Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

Regarding Homefinder can you let me know what help is available to people, particularly those who may need extra support?

Dear Reader,

We aim to ensure that all our customers can use our services regardless of age, race, sex, disability, religion or sexuality. We do this by training our staff to understand the different needs of customers, and we monitor our services to make sure they are provided fairly to everyone. Our staff can:

- Help you fill in Northumberland Homefinder forms
- Provide an interpretation service if your first language is not English

- Give you information, on request, in different formats such as large type, Braille, CD or audio tape
- Take account of any special needs you may have
- Provide a sign language service if you need one

We can record the type of property the customer is eligible for, and the area that they are interested in, the system will then place bids automatically on the customer's behalf.

Customers can contact their local office if they feel they require support and an assessment of those support needs will be made.

£10 for your views

Homes for Northumberland would like to receive your views on our magazine or on Homes for Northumberland in general. Do you have any interesting information which you would like to pass on to other readers, for example have you received good service from Homes for Northumberland or is there something which you would like to see improved?

The star letter which we publish will receive £10 of high street vouchers.

Please send your letter to:
Editor Your News
Homes for Northumberland
Dinsdale House
Blyth, NE24 2LN
 Or email : dawn.wright@hfn.uk.com

Six months on...

Welcome to the second edition of Your News.

On behalf of all the staff from Homes for Northumberland, I would like to wish all our residents a Happy New Year with health, wealth and happiness for 2010.

During our first six months our priority was to make sure that services in both Blyth Valley and Alnwick did not suffer. I sincerely hope this has been the case. We now want to build on this and improve services.

Area Boards in Blyth and Alnwick work very hard to ensure that we deliver on our promises and meet the needs of our tenants. In future editions of Your News we will publish reports from both Area Boards on their work and how they make a difference.

We want to be clear about what Homes for Northumberland stands for and have recently worked with our Board, staff and tenants to set out our long term vision for the future

Our Mission is:

- Working with residents to make choices about their homes and services
- Creating homes and neighbourhoods that people are proud of
- Making a difference to peoples quality of life

To achieve this we have set six long term goals:

- To provide excellent, cost effective services that are valued by all tenants
- Maintain and improve the standard of existing properties we manage
- Improve our tenants' quality of life through effective partnership working
- Increase the number of properties we own and manage
- Maintain and improve the reputation of Homes for Northumberland with other stakeholders
- Be a first choice employer



**Ray Boycott
Managing
Director**

In the last edition I asked for your thoughts on this newsletter and what you would like to see in future editions. This is what you said:

- 93% found Your News informative and useful
- 97% liked the layout of articles
- 93% found the magazine easy to read
- 92% are looking forward to the next edition

You also asked us for more articles about particular areas, so this edition includes the community clean up event in Hodgsons Road and our week of action in Amble.

See page 7 for news on our first development scheme.

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Improving quality of life



making ends meet

The Homes for Northumberland financial inclusion team now has two tenant engagement officers to help you with a financial makeover for the New Year.

Managing Debts

Today it is difficult not to be aware of the debt crisis. Many people borrow money from time to time and problems can arise when they start to find it difficult to meet repayments.

With our partners Citizens Advice Bureau and Debt Advice Within Northumberland (DAWN) we can help you prioritise your debts by sorting them in order of importance. You can find your local CAB office at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index Or telephone DAWN advice on 01670 785512.

Borrowing money

During the year ahead you may need to borrow some money. There are plenty of choices available but some are more expensive than others. You need to know:

- How much you are paying on a regular basis e.g. weekly or monthly
- How long you will be paying
- How much you will be paying in total.

The best deal may not be the one with the cheapest weekly amount to be repaid.

In deciding to borrow money the main thing to look out for is APR (Annual Percentage Rate). In general, the lower

the APR the better. It works out how much you will pay in total.

The use of credit unions has grown considerably over recent years and in Homes for Northumberland we are keen to promote their loans and their savings options.

For the Alnwick and Blyth areas there are two credit unions. CUSEN (Credit Union for North East Northumberland) Telephone **01670 522779** and Northumberland Credit Union **01670 503666** or on www.ncul.co.uk.

Finding the best deal from the energy companies

It is difficult to know if you are getting the best deal for your gas and electricity. Prices have varied but generally they are higher now than they used to be. Companies make their price changes at different times so it's difficult to know if you're looking at a 'level playing field'.



Tariffs

- The normal charge is called standard, but you will get lower prices if you use the same supplier for both gas and electricity. This is called dual fuel.
- You will get a cheaper price if you use a price from the internet. These are called on-line tariffs.
- Often the price is cheaper again if you pay by direct debit.

If you have a prepayment meter you will probably be paying more. Although they do help you budget costs.

You can compare the prices charged by various companies on the internet. For example:

www.uswitch.com

Freephone **0800 404 7908**

www.energyhelpline.com

Freephone **0800 074 0745**

You may qualify for a social tariff if you pay more than 10% of your household income towards your energy bills and/or are on benefits. Ring your energy company and ask them what social tariffs they might be able to offer you.



Good News on Housing and Benefit Change

Did you know that if you are aged 60 or over you may be able to claim housing and council tax benefit that you have not been able to claim in the past? This is because from 2 November 2009 there has been an increase in the amount of savings you can have in your bank at any time from £6,000 to £10,000.

Child benefit will not be taken into account as an income. So for some families with children, housing and council tax benefit could go up.

Our Income team knows that making sure our customers receive all the financial help that they are entitled to is an important part of their work. We continue to work closely with Northumberland County Council housing benefit section to identify additional benefits for our tenants. Since April 2009 over £25,000 in additional benefits have been received by our customers due to the involvement of the Income Team.

If you would like to talk to a member of our team to see if you are entitled to benefit or have any other queries about your rent account please contact us on **01670 542121**. Or do a self assessment on-line at: www.entitledto.co.uk

Making it easier to pay your rent

In March 2010 instead of the normal rent card that you may have used previously, you will be receiving a plastic payment card and detailed information about its use.

The new payment cards will offer more choice in paying your rent. You can use them in any PayPoint outlet, Post Office where you see the signs below, and at any Northumberland County Council Customer Information Centre.

Until later this year you should continue to pay your rent in the normal way using your rent card.

Tenants paying by direct debit won't be affected by the change as payments will come from your bank account as normal.

Some frequently asked questions answered...

Q. How do I pay with a Payment Card?

- A. There are four easy steps you need to take:
1. Present your card at a Post Office, Paypoint outlet or Northumberland County Council customer information centre with your payment
 2. Your card will be scanned and your payment processed.
 3. Your card is returned to you with your receipt.
 4. Keep your receipt as proof of payment.

Q. How will I know my balance?

- A. You will receive a quarterly rent statement. We can also supply you with an individual account statement for any period on request. In addition a 'rent calendar' will be provided for you to make your own record of payments if you would like.

Q. Will I still have a rent card?

- A. No. The payment card replaces your rent card.

Q. Will I be charged for using the card?

- A. No. There is no charge to customers.

Q. How will I know how much to pay?

- A. You will receive a letter at the beginning of March with your standard rent charge for the year ahead. If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit you will know what to pay by referring to the letter you also receive from the Housing Benefit section.

Q. What happens if there is any change to my payments?

- A. When there is a change, (for example if you are awarded Housing Benefit), you will be issued with a letter letting you know.

Q. Will you send me a new card every year?

- A. No. Your card should last several years.

Q. What if I lose my payment card?

- A. We can arrange for a replacement card to be issued. Please contact the Income Team on 01670 542121.



There are a number of other convenient ways to pay:

Direct Debit

Save time by signing up to our monthly (1st or 15th of the month) or weekly (every Friday) Direct Debit Scheme. Setting up a direct debit couldn't be easier. We now operate a paperless direct debit scheme. Just contact us by phone with your bank details and once they are verified the information is sent by electronic transfer straight to your bank who will set up the direct debit.



24 hour Telephone Payments

You can pay by using our telephone service on 0845 600 6400 and following the instructions given. You will need details of your rent account reference number and a debit or credit card. £20 is the minimum payment accepted.

Internet Payments

Pay your rent online by visiting Northumberland County Council's website at: www.northumberland.gov.uk then click 'pay for it'.

If you have any queries about your rent account please contact the Rents Team on **01670 542121**.

Our First new development scheme



Homes for Northumberland celebrate their first new development scheme since their launch in April this year. They have been successful in obtaining funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to build 22 new affordable homes in Allendale.

The land chosen for the development has been gifted to Homes for Northumberland from Northumberland County Council to deliver much needed affordable properties in the County.

The scheme will be for local people in housing need and will include a small

number of shared ownership houses to help local people who do not want social rented housing.

Jeff Reid, Leader of Northumberland County Council, said: "This development for 22 homes goes a long way to meeting the need for 75 affordable homes that the Council has identified. We will continue to work in partnership with the HCA and Homes for Northumberland, to ensure there is a suitable mix of affordable homes. The scheme is still subject to planning permission but I am pleased that we have taken the first steps to delivery."

Some of our Promises to You

A big thank you to everyone who attended the meetings held in Blyth Valley and Alnwick to find out what you thought about our vision and values for the future.

You told us you were happy with our vision to:

- Provide excellent, cost effective services that are valued by all tenants
- Increase the number of properties we own and manage
- Maintain and improve the standard of existing properties we manage
- Improve our tenant's quality of life through effective partnerships
- Maintain and improve the reputation of Homes for Northumberland with our stakeholders
- Be a first choice employer

And our values:

- We take pride in doing a good job and achieving results
- We take personal responsibility for getting the job done
- We care for each other and are friendly and helpful
- We care for customers

We welcome any comments you may have about our visions and values: Please ring us on 01670 542517 or email: pat.walker@hfn.uk.com.

Residents who came to our meetings made suggestions on what they wanted to see us do over the next year. Below are a few of the excellent ideas you suggested as well as our promises. A complete list will be sent to residents who attended the meetings or are available upon request.

You said... We Promise...

Improve the way you communicate with customers.	To set up a group of tenants and leaseholders to help us look at new ways of communicating with you.
Give us an opportunity to meet the senior management face to face.	We will host two 'question time' events per year and all tenants and leaseholders will be invited. They will have the opportunity to ask the Managing Director their questions.
Provide a one stop repair service.	We will work to develop a programme of annual repair visits to every property to carry out general repairs.
Provide one telephone number to ring to contact you.	We will work with you to investigate how we can introduce a single contact number that gets you straight through to Homes for Northumberland as soon as we can.
Build more homes.	We will aim to build 50 new homes every year.

How we did... during April to October 2009

	Blyth	Alnwick
Number of houses in each area	6,800	1,762
Rent arrears	£454,200	£195,400
Numbers of tenants evicted for rent arrears	4	0
Typical time taken to let an empty home	25.86 days	40.12 days
How many people are on the housing list	<i>Northumberland Homefinder list 7883</i>	
How many vacant properties have we had	272	96
Number of ASBO's	0	0
Number of possession notices served for breaking the tenancy agreement	1	0
Number of people who apply to us for a home as homeless	69	16
Number of people we accept are homeless	12	6

You said...

We did

A magnifying glass would be useful for people who preferred to read information in large print.	We have sent a magnifying sheet to all tenants who have requested large print. This sheet can be placed over any document to make it easier to read.
You were concerned that properties in Cowley Place had been targeted by opportunist thieves.	Working in partnership with tenants, Northumberland County Council Community Safety Team, Neighbourhood Policing Team and Groundworks Northumberland we have installed security lighting to all the bungalows, upgraded window furniture, extended the trellis fencing, and planted defensive foliage to the rear of the properties.
You want to be able to see officers from Homes for Northumberland in your local area so you can approach them with ease.	A community week of action has been held in Seaton Delaval and Amble with easy access to officers from Homes for Northumberland. We will continue to hold these events in Alnwick and Blyth.
You want easier ways to pay your rent.	We have introduced paperless direct debits which you can set up over the telephone.
Tenants in sheltered units and vulnerable tenants should be given extra help and support with tasks they are unable to carry out when works are done to their home.	We now look at all cases individually, and more help and support is given to tenants in sheltered units and vulnerable tenants. For example, when new upvc windows are installed blinds are taken down and then re-installed for the tenant.

Astley Park Community Partnership



Astley Park should be a lively place this winter after a grant of £500 was provided by Homes for Northumberland to buy children's outdoor play equipment and toys.

Homes for Northumberland are able to offer small grants to community groups whose work will help tenants and residents of Homes for Northumberland properties.

The grant comes from the Community Fund Committee and community groups can apply by contacting Julie Turner, Resident Participation Officer, on 01670 542239 or Julie.turner@hfn.uk.com

Val Ellis of Astley Park Community Association said: "We would like to thank Homes for Northumberland for the grant as this new equipment will make a really positive difference to youngsters and their parents and carers who use the park."

Sue Vaughan, Community Development Manager with Homes for Northumberland said: "The Community Fund is aimed at groups who often find it hard to access money, so this was a worthwhile cause to support. The committee should be very proud of themselves for making an outstanding contribution to their community."

Hartley Court Warden's house gets a makeover



Homes for Northumberland have created two new flats for older people in a popular residential block.

Work began last year to convert an existing wardens house into two flats as it was no longer in use. It was agreed that the best solution was to create more homes for older people and help increase the supply of affordable housing.

The actual building work started in March this year in partnership with CW Davis Limited of Seaton Delaval. They removed the existing staircase, internal walls, and re-wired the electrics as well as fitting new kitchens and bathrooms.

Ian Storey, job architect for the scheme, said: "We needed to provide extra soundproofing between the upper and lower flats to make sure that residents were not disturbed by people moving above them. A suspended ceiling had to be built to the ground floor flat. I hope the residents agree that these have been worthwhile improvements."

The project was completed in the summer and the new residents are very happy in their new homes.



Open Day at Alnwick Community Centre



Homes for Northumberland held an open day for their tenants on Wednesday 30th September 2009 in the Community Centre, Howling Lane, Alnwick.

The event was arranged to consult with tenants on Capital works and environmental improvements to some of the streets in the Alnwick North area. It also aimed to show tenants what is available in relation to tenants' choice for capital works in Homes for Northumberland houses.

Other agencies and organisations taking part in the open day in order to provide advice and information on a range of services were: The Northumberland Credit Union, Test the Region, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tenant Engagement, money made clear and Community Safety.

Real Food Works provided a rolling demonstration of healthy recipes on a budget as well as holding healthy eating workshops for children attending the event. There was face painting and games for children and refreshments were available throughout the afternoon.

Homes for Northumberland would like to thank all who helped to make the open day a success. The raffle prizes were won by Mrs G Jobson, Ms N Craven, Mrs I Rutherford and Mrs I. Anderson.

Estate Walkabout Dates

Please contact the Estates and Tenancy Services Team on **01670 542248** for further information.

Cramlington (10am start)

Eastfield Lea	Eastfield Community House	21 Jan, 19 Feb, 18 Mar, 22 Apr
Eastfield Grange	Entrance to Cairnglass	22 Jan, 18 Feb, 17 Mar, 21 Apr
Mayfield Dale	Entrance to Thirston Drive	28 April
East Cramlington	Lanercost Park Flats (3 storey)	9 February
Nelson Village/Sunnyside	Arcot Avenue Shop	5 February
Hall Close	Entrance to Adderstone Ave	16 February
Collingwood Grange	Car Park at estate entrance	6 April

Blyth North (9.30am start)

Bebside	Kitty Brewster Pub Car Park	23 March
Hodgson's Road	Netto Car Park	22 Feb, 23 Mar, 19 Apr
North Farm	Phone box at Junction of Temple/Walton	19 January
Cowpen Estate	Blyth North Office, Brierley Road	19 March
Cowpen Estate (Briardale Shops to Weardale)	Post office on Briardale Road	20 April
Cowpen Estate (Briardale Shops to Tynedale)	Post office on Briardale Road	2 March
Cowpen Farm	Isabella Community Centre	23 February

Blyth South (10am start)

Avenues	Entrance to 1st Avenue	10 February
New Delaval Estate	Newsham Coop	14 April
Cottingwood/Benridge Park	Entrance to Benridge Park	20 January, 21 April
Bowes Ct/Town Centre/Crofton	Beside Catholic Church , Bowes Court	27 January, 28 April
Solingen, Seafeld Area	Entrance Solingen	18 March
Poets Estate	Newsham Rd Coop	7 April

Improving quality of life

Seaton Delaval (10am start)

Hallington Drive Area	Outside 1 Mindrum Way	16 March
The Crescent	Outside 1 Stanley Gardens	26 Jan, 23 Feb, 30 Mar, 27 Apr
Holywell	Outside 1 Holywell Avenue	19 January
Woodside Avenue	Outside 1 Woodside Avenue	13 April
Deneside	Outside 1 Burnlea Gardens	9 February
Blyth Street	NCC Info Centre, Council offices	2 February
Seaton Sluice	Outside 1 Southward	9 March

Please contact the Estates and Tenancy Services Team on 01670 542248 for further information.

Alnwick

Alnwick North (Area 1)	10am	Entrance to Alwynside	4 Mar
Alnwick North (Area 2)	10am	Junction of Howling Lane/ Windsor Gardens	21 Jan, 11 Mar
Alnwick Town centre	10am	Pottergate Tower	28 January
Alnwick South (Area 1)	10am	CO-OP, Victoria Road	3 February
Alnwick South (Area 2)	1.30pm	Entrance to Cawledge View	11 February
Amble (Area 1)	10am	Junction of Ivy Street/Lesley Drive	18 March
Amble (Area 2)	10am	Car Park at Andrew Drive	25 March
Rothbury (Area 1)	10am	Entrance to Beechcroft	18 February
Rothbury (Area 2)	11am	Outside 1 Addycombe Gardens	18 February
Shilbottle	10am	Selby Road Garages	25 February

For further information for Walkabouts in the Alnwick area – or to find out which date your street will be covered please contact Shirley Young on 01665 511271.

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 08000 461 431 for further information.

Resident Association meetings

Newsham and New Delaval Residents Association Meeting, Bowling Pavilion, Newsham.

Thursday 11th February 2010, 7pm.
Thursday 11th March 2010, 7pm.

Solingen Residents Association, Meeting, Nye Bevan House, Blyth.

For more details please contact Joan on 01670 355697.

Community Forums

Open forum Meeting dates for the newly formed Seaton Valley community forum are **Monday 18 January** – Seaton Sluice Community Centre (small hall) from 2.30pm to 7.30pm

Tuesday 19 January – Seaton Delaval Pavilion from 2.30pm to 7.30pm

Wednesday 20 January – Seghill Community Centre from 2.30pm to 4.30pm (small hall) and 4.30pm to 7.30pm (meeting room)

Thursday 21 January – Holywell Community Centre from 2.30pm to 7.30pm

Thursday 21 January – New Hartley Memorial Hall from 3pm to 8pm

Wednesday 17 March – Seaton Delaval First School from 7pm to 9pm

For dates of the cramlington and Blyth forums please contact your locality officer using the numbers below.



Forums offer residents the chance to have their say

Northumberland County Council is supporting Community Forums across the county to give people an opportunity to have their say and discuss local issues.

What is a forum?

- It is a gathering of people and organisations who are willing to work together to improve the quality of life in their neighbourhood.
- Forum work is a link for local people to put their ideas into the decision-making processes of the local authority, parish and town councils and those involved in delivering services.

Getting involved

We want to engage with as many local residents, groups and businesses as we can to get an idea of local concerns and needs.

Community Forums are open to anyone who has an interest in the future of their community and everyone taking part will have the same rights to give their views and be heard.

To date, 20 forums have been established. If you would like to find out more about your nearest community forum you can ring our locality officer on 0845 600 6400, or email:

locality.development@northumberland.gov.uk

If you live in the Blyth Area please contact Susi Goncu Tel: 01670 534264 or e-mail: **susi.goncu@northumberland.gov.uk**

If you live in the Alnwick Area please contact John Cooper Tel: 01670 534279 or 01665 511216 or e-mail: **John.cooper@northumberland.gov.uk**

Get involved and make a difference in your community

Why it's good to get involved!

We want to involve our tenants, residents and leaseholders in helping us to improve the services we offer.

How can you help us to do this?

As a resident you can get involved in local decisions on housing matters that may affect you.

We are looking for tenants and residents who have some time to test our services

You can get involved in our many groups:

- 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.
- Help from your armchair.

What is mystery shopping?

Mystery shopping is a great way to test the services that Homes for Northumberland provide to its tenants. You can do this by making phone calls, face to face enquiries or visiting our website. We provide training to all our mystery shoppers, this will help you to understand what is expected from you as a shopper and also give you the confidence to do the mystery shop.

Attend one of the local tenant and resident groups

There are tenant and resident groups throughout the area. You can look at our website to see which one is closest to you. Tenant and resident groups can help you to learn more about your community and can offer you an opportunity to work with other tenants and residents who want to improve the area they live in.



Sit on one of our service panels

A service panel is a focus group, made up of tenants and residents. Its purpose is to ensure consultation has taken place before making changes to services which Homes for Northumberland delivers to its tenants and residents.



There are three service panels which cover:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Estate management
- Access to housing

Help with estate walkabouts

Estate walkabouts are planned inspections which are carried out by estate housing officers. The dates and times can be found in this magazine and on our website.

Tenants and residents are always welcome to join in the walkabouts. By joining in, you can increase your knowledge about estates or areas in which you live, and you can let the officers know what can be done to improve your estate or area.

Armchair involvement

Armchair involvement won't take up too much of your time, and you can still help to

shape the services you receive from Homes for Northumberland.

We will send you documents, publications and surveys and all we ask is that you read them and give your opinions to us. Training can be provided.

Our people pool

This is a list of people we can call on to get opinions from by either email, telephone or by sending a questionnaire.

Get Involved

If you would like to get involved in any of these groups, please fill in the slip on page 23 and post it back to us.



Maintaining and improving properties

Pensioners homes get renewable energy boost

Before the cold winter months start to bite, Homes for Northumberland has installed new, high efficiency central heating boilers and renewable energy measures into sheltered accommodation at Bob Elliot House in Blyth.

Homes for Northumberland and NaREC, the nationally recognised expert in renewable technologies, have joined forces to bring the building's central heating system into the 21st century.

The sheltered accommodation, which is home to over thirty pensioners, will have a 'Combined Heat and Power' (CHP) unit donated by NaREC and installed as part of the £100,000 heating upgrade. The unit uses a gas engine to generate electricity for the building's corridor lighting, while at the same time excess heat created by the engine helps run the central heating system. This combined heat and power generator will help reduce energy costs by up to 30%, compared with traditional heating and electricity bills.

Lee Grange, Architectural Assistant, Technical Services, Homes for Northumberland, said: "In these days of greenhouse gases, climate change and ever rising fuel costs, we have to look at innovative ways of reducing CO2 emissions and energy bills. This new CHP unit should provide the right solution for this building and we are



extremely grateful to NaREC for providing the unit free of charge."

Paul Mclean, BioEnergy Manager at NaREC said: "As a company we are a national centre for the UK, dedicated to accelerating the deployment of renewable energy and low carbon generation technologies across the nation and beyond. Over and above that though, we are a local company with a great desire to spread the message on renewable technologies within the region. As such, this scheme at Bob Elliot House has given us the perfect opportunity to help our neighbours solve their heating problems in a new and innovative way. We are proud to be involved in this scheme and are looking forward to working again with Homes for Northumberland in the future."





Hodgson's Road Community joins together for Clean Up

Residents on the Hodgsons Road Estate in Blyth have been tackling fly tipping and rubbish on their estate.

The two day event started on November 3. Homes for Northumberland, led by the Resident Participation Unit, organised skips to be dropped at key locations around the estate.

Ten full skips of rubbish, white goods and unwanted items were removed from the estate. Residents were assisted by officers from Estate Management, Repairs and Maintenance and Safer Neighbourhoods.

The initiative, part of the Big Tidy Campaign, is the start of a number of activities to support residents on the estate.

Anna Benbow, Homes for Northumberland Director of Property Services said: "We have been working with our tenants and home owners on the estate. Together we have formed a steering group who are working with Homes for Northumberland and

Northumberland County Council to identify opportunities to improve their environment and the quality of life on Hodgsons Road Estate."

Northumberland County Council Community Wardens and Environmental Enforcement Officers were on hand to lend practical support and fire prevention advice.

Blyth Neighbourhood Policing Team carried out a series of high visibility patrols as part of their commitment to the community.

Sargeant Garry Neill, Blyth Neighbourhood team said: "The community clean up day made a big difference to the local area. Unsightly rubbish and graffiti often seems to encourage more people to dump items which makes an area look run down and uncared for very quickly. This joint initiative has really improved the area and made it a more attractive place for the local community to enjoy."

Community Action Week

North Northumberland Local Multi-Agency Partnership (LMAP) held a week of action in Amble starting on Saturday 24 October (half term School holidays).

LMAP, made up of partners including Homes for Northumberland, Police and the County Council are committed to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

An average of 28 children attended each day with LMAP attendees.

The event began with 'The Big Tidy Up'. The Community Wardens organised a litter pick and estate clean-up on a large Amble estate, during which 18 tonnes of rubbish was collected.

Activities for all ages were held at the Roundabout including:
Dance mats, circus skills, family fitness sessions, potty planting, & spooky Halloween activities.

Health Trainers attended to provide mini MOT health checks. Northumbria Police invited the public to 'have a cuppa with a coppa' each day and carried out cycle marking during the week.

Every day there were multi agency patrols focusing on different parts of the estate, which enabled residents to share their concerns and views with all representatives.

Each of the organisations had information stands in the Roundabout to provide advice and information to the public.

Throughout the week about 250 people took part in the activities.

Thanks to all those who helped to organise and those who took part for making the Community Action week such a great success.



FREE computer courses to learn how to access the internet



A new IT Suite has been installed at the Isabella Centre in Blyth. It aims to help people of all ages to learn how to use a computer and get through the first stages of the internet.

In addition, there are free computer courses and tutorials available. All the courses are aimed at complete beginners so you don't need to have any experience to join.

Drop in sessions have been arranged so please feel free to come along to find out what it's all about. Doug, our onsite tutor, will help you to understand IT in a relaxed and unhurried manner without any pressure. The internet should be fun, and by the time you have visited our centre a number of times you should be surfing online or sending emails to your friends and family very easily.

The IT Suite will be open during the times below:

Monday	9:30am to 1:30pm
Tuesday	9:30am to 4:00pm
Wednesday	9:30am till 4:00pm

If you know how to use the internet and would like to look at courses available simply click on one of the UKOnline 30 minute courses that interests you, and away you go.



Capital Works in Alnwick District

Homes for Northumberland is committed to providing homes people want. Below is an update on how we are investing in homes in your area.

Lisburn House, Alnwick

Work to convert Lisburn House from 4 beds into two 2 bedroom flats is now completed.

St Michael's Square, Alnwick

A major refurbishment of properties in St Michael' Square is currently underway. Due to the scale of the work, tenants are being temporarily moved into alternative accommodation whilst the work is carried out in their homes. Works being carried out are electrical rewiring, boiler replacement, kitchen replacement, minor repairs and alterations and internal and external decoration. Once the work is complete, tenants will be able to return to updated, modern homes.

Links Avenue, Amble

Work is nearing completion at properties in Links Avenue in Amble. The properties are having boiler replacement and new kitchens fitted.



Lisburn House, Alnwick

Bungalows made bigger

We are working on extensions to two bungalows in the district, one in Amble and one in Rothbury. The work will extend these two one bedroom bungalows into 2 bedroom bungalows and has been made possible by single housing investment funding. Homes for Northumberland are pleased to announce an allocation of £100,000 has been used to build extensions on a total of 5 properties during this financial year, making homes more comfortable for tenants.

Major investment work

During the period April to September 2009, Homes for Northumberland have invested almost £400,000 on properties in the Alnwick district. This has included:

- Work to bring electrics up to date
- New kitchen refurbishments
- Heating replacements
- New external doors
- Re-roofing
- Work to extend or undertake structural repairs
- Internal decoration



Simple steps to keep safe

Please be watchful in 2010 about your personal safety and protecting your property.

Opportunist thieves are aware many people leave valuables at home and in their cars.

Homes for Northumberland are asking all residents to:

- lock all doors and windows;
- leave lights on; use timer switches when possible;
- hide valuables out of view;
- cancel milk and newspapers if going away.

Vehicle owners are advised to:

- lock all valuables in the boot or out of sight;
- do not leave anything on view in the car;
- remove sat navs and other expensive equipment and
- park in a well-lit area.

Last year, members of the Safer Neighbourhoods Unit and Northumbria police carried out a two day operation in Blyth and Cramlington. Officers were alarmed at the amount of car owners that left valuables in their cars for everyone to see. Items consisted of handbags, lap tops, presents and in one car there was a purse left on the front seat with over £250 in.

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** RSCH-RURJ-SGZS The Old Post Office, 1 Clayport Street, Alnwick NE66 1LA.

Name	Address
Telephone Number	Mobile Telephone Number
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
- People pool

Useful contacts

Homes for Northumberland (Registered Office Dinsdale House)

Blyth Office

75 Marine Terrace
Blyth
Northumberland
NE24 2LN

Open Monday to Thursday,
8.30am to 5.00pm and
Friday, 8.30am to 4.00pm.

Alnwick Office

The Old Post Office
1 Clayport Street
Alnwick
Northumberland, NE66 1LA

Open Monday to Thursday,
8.30am to 5.00pm and
Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Alnwick

Repairs and Maintenance
Gas Safety
Major Works to your home
Homefinder

For general housing enquiries telephone: 08000 461 431
or e-mail: housingalnwick@hfn.uk.com
call 08000 461 431 or e-mail: repairsalnwick@hfn.uk.com
call 08000 461 431 or e-mail: repairsalnwick@hfn.uk.com
call 0800 461 431 www.northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk

Blyth Valley

Safer Neighbourhoods Unit
Rents Team

01670 542060 or e-mail: snu@hfn.uk.com
01670 542121

Tenancy Services Team
Northumberland Homefinder
Housing Advice

or e-mail: hfn_incomemanagement@northumberland.gov.uk
01670 542248 or e-mail: hfn_estates@northumberland.gov.uk
01670 542242 or e-mail: homefinder@hfn.uk.com
01670 542095 or e-mail: homeless@hfn.uk.com

Resident Participation
Repairs and Maintenance
Gas Safety
Major Works to Your Home

01670 542093 or e-mail: residentparticipation@hfn.uk.com
01670 542424 or e-mail: repairsblyth@hfn.uk.com
01670 542479 or e-mail: repairsblyth@hfn.uk.com
01670 542430 or e-mail: hfn_technical@northumberland.gov.uk

Out of Hours Emergencies

If you have an emergency outside of office hours we are available to help:

Alnwick residents call **0845 600 640** **Blyth Valley** residents call **01670 540501**

We can provide this information in alternative formats and languages. If you would like information in another format or language, please contact one of our offices.

Arabic

يمكننا تقديم هذه المعلومات بتنسيقات ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بتنسيق أو لغة أخرى، برجاء الاتصال بمكاتبنا

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.

Bengali

আমরা এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফরম্যাট ও ভাষায় প্রদান করতে পারি। আপনি যদি এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফরম্যাট বা ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের যে কোনো একটি অফিসে যোগাযোগ করুন

Portugu

Podemos disponibilizar esta informação em formatos e línguas alternativas. Se gostasse de receber informação noutra formato ou língua, por favor contacte um dos nossos escritórios

Chinese

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。

Punjabi

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

Chinese

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。

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.

Hindi

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

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