



## Operation Happy Christmas *... more on page 3*

**PLEASE NOTE...** *Our office and phone lines will be closed from 12 noon on Friday 24th December 2021 until 8.30am on Wednesday 5th January 2022. For emergencies during this time, please phone the out of hours number provided on page 4.*



## A message from **John...**

*Hi all... I hope this finds you well and you're continuing to stay safe. As we move towards the winter months, I hope that you are looking forward to a more normal festive period and the opportunity to spend time with friends and family.*



*In my last update I noted the very positive performance which colleagues have been achieving and I am pleased to report that we have further improved in recent months. Our data shows that we are now achieving target or are within tolerance across 86% of our Key Performance Indicators, which has increased from the 75% reported previously. Our indicators and targets are aligned with ensuring that we deliver the best service possible and therefore it is pleasing that we can report good performance in what continues to be a challenging environment.*

*With the impact of COVID and Brexit you will no doubt be aware of the difficulties regarding material and labour shortages within the construction industry. You have probably experienced some shortages at your local supermarket due to similar issues. Almond are experiencing some level of difficulty in our planned investment and maintenance work. We are working hard to ensure that there is minimal impact on our customers however there is the potential that there may be some disruption over the coming months.*

*Thank you again for participating in the recent survey about access to services. Based on your feedback, we are now opening the office for two drop-in sessions per week, alongside the option to book an appointment. Our next consultation will be based on rent levels for 2022/23 and we ask that you provide feedback on three options. With higher levels of inflation predicted, we are doing all we can to minimise the impact where possible. As ever, our team are here to provide advice and assistance to anyone experiencing difficulties.*

*To continue to improve our services, we are planning to spend a day with our Board to discuss how we make further improvements over the coming years. If you have any thoughts or ideas on how we can do better, please get in touch as we are keen that our services always meet your expectations.*

John Davidson, Chief Executive



## Shortage of labour & materials

You may have experienced yourself, seen or heard in the news and on social media about the current challenge the country faces with shortage of labour and materials. Almond unfortunately are also affected by the current economic climate and we have experienced issues of contactors no longer being able to fulfil improvement works due to labour shortages. Whilst these are challenging times we are working hard to continue to deliver services and improvements to your home. We are also doing our best to ensure that whilst doing so we continue to achieve value for money. Inevitably however we may well see an impact on the level of improvements that can be delivered over the coming year either as a result of excessive costs and/or a lack of contractor availability. We will of course keep you updated over the coming months and make every effort to minimise any negative impact on our service delivery. At the time of writing the impact has been relatively minimal however we want to be open and honest with you regarding the challenges that we face.

## Energy Saving Tips

With rising energy costs and winter almost upon us, we wanted to share some top tips for staying safe and warm this winter, while keeping your energy bills down. There are lots of free and low-cost things you can do that will help keep you warm and save you money on your gas and electricity.



Move furniture away from radiators so that heat can circulate.

Close your curtains when it's getting dark and tuck them behind your radiator.



When using the kettle, only boil the water you need.

Keep lids on saucepans when cooking so that you can turn the hob down and use less gas or electricity.



Press the "eco" button on your washing machine if you have one. It usually takes longer, but this is because it heats the water more slowly, using less electricity.

When drying clothes inside, use a clothes airer in a room near an open window and close the door (this stops your house getting damp or mouldy too!).

For more information on bespoke energy saving advice and services, see page 4.

## Nominate a Neighbour

In the run up to Christmas, we want to help make the festive season a positive experience for as many of our tenants as possible. We are bringing back our 'Nominate a Neighbour' initiative this year to say thank you to people in the community who go above and beyond to help make life easier for others.

To nominate your AHA neighbour, simply email us with their name, the first line of their address and your reasons for nominating them. You can also phone us and speak to one of the team. We'll consider all nominations, and those who are successful will receive a festive gift hamper.

If you know of any AHA tenants who might need a helping hand this festive season, please do let us know. We can arrange for a festive food hamper filled with essential items to help with the pressure of Christmas. Where possible, we'll also nominate families for help with Christmas gifts via the West Lothian Toy Appeal.



## Twelve days of community Christmas



This December we're celebrating **12 Days of Community Christmas** by sharing some fantastic activities and events hosted by local groups and organisations. Like our Facebook page and check our website to find out how you can support, and take part in, the events.

We are delighted to share the first event which will take place on **Friday 3rd December 2021**. Our community garden in Rowan Grove is hosting a Mickey Mouse themed festive special for the children involved in our Imagination Library.

**WHEN: Friday 3rd December at 11 am & again at 1pm.**

**WHERE: Rowan Grove Community Garden, EH54 5JA**

**SUITABLE FOR: Children aged 5 and under and their parents/guardians**

If you are interested in attending please email [enquiries@almondha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@almondha.org.uk) to find out more.



## Get your home ready for winter

This year, we are once again offering a Winter Check for tenants aged 65+ who live alone. The check will include the following:

- Stopcock identification
- Checking your property is secure
- Any outstanding repairs
- Any tripping hazards on access paths

All qualifying tenants will also receive a Winter Wellbeing Pack which includes some essentials for the winter months. Even if you do not qualify for a winter check, we would urge you to get your house winter ready by conducting the same checks yourself and advising us of any concerns you might have. We have more winter tips online at [www.almondha.org.uk](http://www.almondha.org.uk)



# We have a winner!

Congratulations to Mrs Wilma Robertson, who has won our Almond Award for this quarter! Wilma was delighted to be presented with **£250 worth of vouchers** for Almondvale Shopping Centre and Asda.



This draw is our way of thanking customers for keeping on top of their rent payments, taking care of their home and generally being a good tenant.

Our next **Almond Award** will be run in **Spring 2022**. To be entered for the draw to win **£250 worth of vouchers**, simply:

- 1 Maintain a clear rent account for a minimum period of three months immediately prior to the draw.
- 2 Don't be involved in any anti-social behaviour in your area.
- 3 Maintain your tenancy and any garden area to a satisfactory standard.
- 4 Allow our contractors to gain access to your home where appropriate.

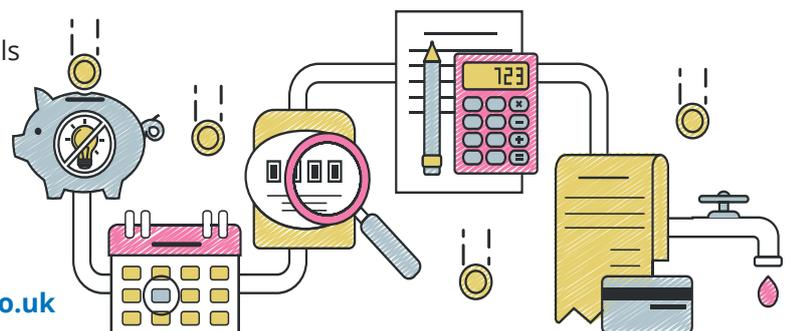
*Well done to Wilma and a big thanks to all our tenants!*

## GETTING HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS

With the rising cost of utility bills, we want our customers to be aware we are always here to offer help and advice. If you are worried about your energy bills but would like to speak to someone outside of Almond, Changeworks have a team of Affordable Warmth Advisors who can give you bespoke advice and help to:

- Access the Government's £140 Warm Home Discount
- Understand and reduce your heating and electricity bills
- Talk to your energy supplier for you
- Switch you to a different energy supplier
- Access emergency credit and funds, and help pay off energy debt

To find out more and get advice from Changeworks, call **0800 870 8800** or email [warmth@changeworks.co.uk](mailto:warmth@changeworks.co.uk)



## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**EMERGENCY "OUT OF HOURS" REPAIRS: 0845 038 0040** (Calls cost up to 7p per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Alternatively, you can call our office on 01506 439 291 and select option 3 to be redirected at your local rate).

Almond Housing Association	01506 439 291	Homeless Persons	0800 032 3450	Scottish Power (General)	0845 270 0700
Gas Leaks	0800 111 999	Howden Health Centre	01506 423 800	(Emergency)	0845 272 7999
Citizens Advice Bureau	01506 432 977	Litter Hotline	0800 616 446	St John's Hospital	01506 523 000
Craigshill Health Centre	01506 432 621	Police	101	Street Lighting	01506 280 000
Energy Advice	0808 808 2282	Refuse Collection	01506 280 000	West Lothian Council	01506 280 000