# ALMOND VIEW

ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

*SUMMER 2025*

# WELCOME FROM THE CEO

*"Hi all and welcome to the summer edition of Almond View.*

*Feedback on the format from the winter issue was positive, so we have chosen to do this same for summer. There is obviously a cost involved in producing and distributing Almond View and we want to ensure you consider it represents good value for money, so we will be asking your opinion.*

*As we enter a new business year, I am pleased to advise that the Scottish Housing Regulator has again assessed Almond as being Compliant, meaning we meet all regulatory requirements. We have also seen positive operational performance being sustained – more information on this will be available later in the year in our Charter Report.*

*We have very recently agreed our new Business Plan for 2025 to 2030. Thank you to all those tenants who contributed to the production of the plan. It very much aims to ensure that we continue to improve our service offer with a focus on delivering excellent customer service, empowering, developing and engaging our colleagues and our communities, creating homes and places to be proud of, and sustaining our strength as a business.*

*Information on the plan will soon be available on our website.*

*Later in the year we will be developing a longer-term Development and Regeneration Strategy aimed at ensuring we continue to provide homes into the future which meet modern day aspirations. It is crucial to get customer feedback, and we would love your input, so please get in touch if you would like to be a part of these discussions.*

*As always I can be contacted via email:* **john.davidson@almondha.org.uk**

*Have a great summer."*

# BECOME A MEMBER

Did you know that for a modest fee of £1 you can become a shareholding member of Almond Housing Association?

As a member, you will have the right to attend and vote at our Annual General Meeting, and you will have the right to nominate another member for election to our Board of Management. Being a member also gives you the right to stand for election to our Board yourself – giving you a say in all that we do at a strategic level.

To become a shareholding member of Almond, all you have to do is complete a short application form which you can obtain from our office or complete via our website: **www.almondha.org.uk/your-views/getting-involved/membership**

Applications for membership will be considered by the Board in accordance with our Membership Policy which you can read on our website.

If membership isn't right for you, there are other ways you can have your say and get involved in our work such as joining our tenant focus group, consultation group and / or taking part in tenant surveys. For more information or to discuss ways to get involved with our work, please contact our office or visit our website.

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## From community fridge to new beginnings

David started attending the Craigshill Community Fridge a little over two years ago. He was in a low place, an unemployed single man, trying to manage his finances; things had got on top of him.

*"The rising price of food, utility bills and general cost of living increases meant I couldn't make ends meet."* explained David.

*"I went along to the Community Fridge, initially a bit embarrassed about my situation, but the people were really helpful and friendly, I paid £4 and for that I was able to get cheese, meat, bread, milk, tinned items and fresh fruit and veg, it was great."*

The Community Fridge has been supported by the **West Lothian Youth Action Project (WLYAP)** for a number of years. After covid it was hoped that the need for an organisation to provide food for the community due to economic hardship would end. Sadly, demand has grown.

David found the facility to be welcoming, and the staff helpful and friendly. There is no stigma; it is a safe space. He actually found it was a place for people to socialise and meet new people.

Through attending the Community Fridge, David found out about the Craigshill Community Garden, run as part of the Growing Together project.

He realised that some of the vegetables appearing at the Community Fridge were freshly picked from the garden. His natural curiosity, along with encouragement from staff, led to David volunteering in the garden.

*"I have learned so much in the garden, I love the place. I even put rhubarb in my curry occasionally now to sweeten it!" he said. "I have built my own herb garden, attended a pruning class with the Woodland Trust, been on birdwatching walks, assisted staff with a workshop at Spark, and very recently helped redevelop the planters in Victoria Street, which was a great community project. I was also lucky enough to help teach a group of school kids from Beatlie School in the garden, they said it made their day, they were so excited. I'll always remember that session".*

One of the most exciting outcomes for David is that he is now self-employed with a new business called 'Food for Wood', producing bespoke signs and wooden furniture from locally fallen trees.

David concludes *"I feel really positive for the first time in many years. My life has improved so much by having these opportunities and connections, and it all started by going along to the Craigshill Community Fridge!"*

David has become one of the team of trusted volunteers, without whom the Growing Together project and community garden would struggle to survive.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact WLYAP, **email: office@wlyap.org.uk** or **phone: 01506 431430** (leave a message and someone will call you back).

## Growing Together (GT)

Following on from the double page spread in the last issue of Almond View, the GT team has continued with their fabulous community work.

During the cooler months they ran craft and horticulture workshops indoors at either Spark HQ or Almond's Big Living Room. More recently they have restarted the Thursday evening opening of the community garden which is for anyone to drop in, have a chat, do some gardening or just have cuppa.

Environmental science classes were offered to primary school pupils which evolved into collaborative working, with Riverside, Letham, St Andrews and Beatlie all coming together for lessons on the environment and growing plants and produce.

In partnership with Transform Craigshill, GT supported the refurbishment of the Victoria Street planters which have been met with high praise, many locals saying it has been transformative for the community.

Keep an eye on Facebook for future events and activities:

**www.facebook.com/growingtogetherlivi**

# COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

## Craigsfarm

The community café at Craigsfarm Hub, open Monday to Friday, 9am–2pm and serving a full menu, is a friendly place to meet and chat. The Hub also offers a free Wellbeing Programme, open to anyone over 18, featuring activities like Active Listening (also available in Polish), yoga, nature therapy, and meditation. Craigsfarm Hub is home to Andy's Man Club in Craigshill, and whether you want to join a session or just drop in, it's a welcoming space for everyone. For more information or to register, please email: **admin@craigsfarm.org.uk**

## Ladywell

The Ladywell Neighbourhood Network is based in a community house in the heart of the community at 28 Heatherbank, with larger groups using the Forestbank Community Centre.

They work with socially isolated adults in the community and offer activities every week day, from Woodland Walks and Board Buddies to Thingamyjig Tuesdays!
More details can be found here:
**www.ladywellnn.org.uk**

## Polbeth

Polbeth Community Hub offers services and activities that locals can access for free or at a low cost. The activities include toddlers, messy play, baby sensory, gaming clubs, tea & talk, gentle exercise, crafting groups, and volunteering groups who look after their Vinted project and small garden area.

Their services include a low cost community shop, a donation based counselling service, wellbeing activities, in person access to the Advice Shop, Social Security Scotland and Citizens Advice. You can keep up to date with everything at the Hub via their Facebook (PolbethCommunityHub) or **www.polbeth.com**

## Spark

Their vision is that those experiencing social isolation in our community have opportunities to spark their potential by joining in with their weekly timetable of activities such a quizzes, bingo, craft and more. Alongside this, Spark also supports positive employability programmes, family fun events and much more!

Based in the heart of Craigshill, Spark offers a friendly welcome to all and is always on the look out for new members and volunteers. Fancy a chat to find out more? Email: **Kirsty@sparkscot.com**

## Whitburn

The Community Development Trust works at the heart of the Whitburn community providing a great selection of support and advice. With a Community Garden and Fridge, a support hub (with public access computers free to use) and brunch club, plus weekly parkrun and a walking football. For more information email: **info@whitburncdt.org.uk**

## Carers of West Lothian

If you are a carer in West Lothian, this organisation can provide information, support and advice to unpaid carers, including young carers and disabled adults. Get in touch to find out more:

**www.carers-westlothian.com**
**support@carers-westlothian.com**
**01506 448000**

# TENANTS SERVICES

## Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)

We still have a few DPIL memberships available to give to tenants who have children under the age of 5yrs. Being a member of the Imagination Library gives your child one free book every month, up until they reach their 5th birthday.

If this is something of interest, just fill in the form on our website. It is listed under 'For Tenants'.

Alternatively email us and we'll send you the link:
imaginationlibrary@almondha.org.uk

## Changeworks ~ Energy Advice

Over the warmer months some tenants might not use their heating, and if it's a pre-payment meter, they may not top up during this time.

However, the utility companies continue to charge a Standing Daily Charge, this is approximately 0.30p a day for gas (and around 0.60p for electricity).

To prevent having a debt on the meter when heating is turned back on, it is worth topping up a little over the summer months if possible.

Almond is working with Changeworks, to provide tenants with free Energy Advice. They can help you understand your utility bills and deal with any queries you may have with your utility company.

Referrals can be made by either speaking to Susan, or self-referring using this link
https://www.changeworks.org.uk/referral

## Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Joss has been in post now for nearly three years. It was a brand new role when he started so we caught up with him to find out how it has been.

**WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE ENTAIL?**
Ultimately it's about making life a little bit easier for tenants and helping to make sure they can stay in their homes.

**WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE THINGS YOU DEAL WITH?**

1. Hoarding
2. Helping tenants to apply for grant funding
3. Signposting / facilitating meetings

**HOW DOES YOUR ROLE DIFFER FROM CATHERINE AT THE ACTION GROUP?**
I don't deal with benefits. I have an understanding but Catherine is the expert on this. I help with additional funding, so accessing money from places like the Children in Need Family Emergency Fund.

**WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR ROLE?**
It is the most rewarding job I have had. I genuinely feel that I am making a difference. I know I've supported many families over the last three years.

**ANY PARTICULARLY PROUD MOMENTS?**
I helped improve the circumstances of one tenant to enable them to gain custody of their children which was amazing. Another tenant was £3000 in rent arrears and had an issue with extreme hoarding. I helped them to sort their finances, clear the house and obtain new furniture.

**HOW DO PEOPLE GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU?**
Tenants can self refer, so email or phone the office and ask for me. Alternatively the referral can come from their housing officer.

## Financial Support for Tenants

The in-house advisor service from the Action Group, which provides financial guidance and benefits advice to tenants, has been back up and running for nearly 7 months and it has been a busy time for advisor Catherine. There have been over 83 referrals from a cross section of Almond's customer base, requesting support on topics such as adult disability payments, Universal Credit and benefit checks.

Catherine does have a long waiting list at the moment but if you do need support, contact your housing officer in the first instance and they can refer you on as appropriate.

Over the last year (from April '24 to March '25) the total amount that the Action Group enabled tenants to claim in benefits was in excess of £140,000!

## Final migration to Universal Credit

Please be aware that the migration of people from existing benefits across to Universal Credit is in its final stages. You will be asked to claim Universal Credit if you currently receive any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit; income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); Income Support; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

You will receive a letter from the Department for Work and Pension (DWP). This will tell you what you need to do and by when.

***If you ignore the letter, your existing benefits mentioned above will stop***

NB: You have to state that you want your rent paid to us directly, otherwise you will receive the rent amount and have to pay us yourself. Universal Credit is paid monthly (not fortnightly), but you can choose to receive 2 payments a month instead; you have to request this when you claim Universal Credit.

UC Universal Credit

# 30TH ANNIVERSARY

## Community Orchard

A blue sky day in March greeted the enthusiastic gardeners gathered on the land adjacent to Hobart Street in Craigshill. The concept of an orchard had been mooted for a while but only came to fruition as part of our 30 anniversary and the contractor community benefits scheme.

The Hobart Street Community Orchard involved five of our contractors. The trees (37 in total, a mix of predominantly apple with some pear and plum) were provided by **Krinkels** *(formerly Continental)*, **Response Building Maintenance Services (Scotland) Ltd** (who have both worked with Almond for many of their 30 years) and **Rodgers and Johnston. McTaggart Construction** came along on the day with a rather useful hole boring machine, tree stakes plus three members of staff to help out, and **Almond Enterprises Ltd** donated manpower.

In addition, there were colleagues from Almond including the Chief Executive, John Davidson and Director of Asset Management, Iona Taylor, who were both put to work. Children also came along from Letham & Riverside Primary School and Howden St Andrew Primary School. All under the watchful eye of the Growing Together project team, led by David Tatton.

Sadly a couple of weeks after the trees had been planted we experienced some vandalism. A number were uprooted and several of the tree stakes ripped out of the ground. Thanks to the quick work of the Growing Together team, a couple of the trees were saved, another two were replaced. Very soon all the trees will have had reinforced caging placed around them and with any luck the orchard will bear fruit next year.

## £30 Vouchers

For the remaining 3 months of our anniversary year, January, February and March, we randomly chose one tenant every day to receive a £30 voucher. Hopefully by the time you read this, all vouchers will have been distributed because we did have a number of unclaimed vouchers – we think people thought a random draw was too good to be true!

Thanks to the following contractors who supported this giveaway, **Response Building Maintenance** and **Big Fish.**

## Away Day

Having the opportunity to be all together as a team away from work is valuable & helps strengthen our focus on working together effectively. It's not something that we get to do as often as we would like, so as part of the 30 celebrations, we invited colleagues along to the Falkirk Wheel.

It was a little optimistic as the date was early March but the weather held for us. Staff were put into random teams to compete in mini golf, archery, water walking and a quiz. Disappointingly, due to a fault, the Wheel and the main boat were out of action so we had to entertain ourselves in little electric boats in the bay.

Overall however, it was a great day with lots of positive feedback, even for those who went home with the losers wooden spoon!

## The Squinty Tree Animation

We hope to have a lasting reminder of our 30th year anniversary with The Squinty Tree Animation.

The Squinty Tree sits just below the community garden at Hobart Street and is well loved in the area. It is a one-off and has grown and flourished despite everything that has happened to it. We wanted to celebrate its unwavering uniqueness and the special role it plays in the community.

We approached Spark storyteller Colin Williamson to write a story woven in mythology and folklore, then with the help of a Scottish artist and local videographer the animation was born. We hope it inspires future generations to tell stories, especially those who are less confident with the written word.

Colin explains that he didn't find his voice until he was 40yrs old which was after he'd graduated from university.

*"When I got my degree, I never wanted to write again. I am dyslexic, dysgraphic, dyspraxic, and at 47 I had late diagnosis of autism... I discovered that children who have hidden differences like myself respond to storytelling as a learning tool... I want to use it [storytelling] to help children unleash their potential."*

# ALMOND ENTERPRISES LTD ~ 20 years

Just as Almond leaves their 30th year, AEL enters their 20th.

It was back in March 2005 when AEL was first formed. The company started with a contract for stair cleaning and gradually introduced more and more services including office cleaning and landscaping. The team was initially based in a flat in Adelaide Street before moving to a space on the ground floor of New Almond House in 2011.

The current team consists of 12 operatives, 4 of whom have been with the company between 17 & 19 years and they have some stories to tell. Many of which can't be repeated!! But they have encountered all sorts of strangeness whilst cleaning, including finding a whole car in someone's loft, in bits, but ALL the components were there!

When asked why they have been with the company for so long, all four explained how great the team working is. The work can be tough but they enjoy what they do. Gail spoke of the fact that the job helped her on the road to recovery after her husband died. It got her out and about, and living again.

AEL is a social enterprise company which means all the surplus profits are donated to local organisations through Almond Housing's community team. The current manager Vicky Wilson has been in post since 2018 and during this time a total of £260,000 has been gifted to various local charities and community groups.

*Left to right: Iwona Solecka 19yrs, Janet Russell 18yrs, Gail McNicol 17yrs & Wiolleta Sieradzka 17yrs.*

# SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

## How Almond Housing and WLWA are making a difference

Domestic abuse affects far too many lives. Joint research by Scottish Women's Aid and Refuge reveals that 1 in 4 women in the UK will experience some form of domestic abuse in their lifetime, and tragically, 2 women lose their lives each year due to domestic abuse.

At Almond Housing, we believe no one should face these challenges alone. That's why we've partnered with West Lothian Women's Aid (WLWA) for the past seven years, working together to provide vital support and guidance.

WLWA hosts a drop-in session every fortnight at the Big Living Room in Almond HQ, where women can speak with a trained advisor in a safe and confidential space. In addition, WLWA has trained our housing officers in the dynamics of domestic abuse, ensuring they can provide the right support when needed.

Two of our team members, Linsey and Lesleyann, have gone even further, completing the Safe & Together training program. A child-centered, survivor-strengths approach designed to improve responses to domestic abuse, it focuses on keeping children safe and together with their non-offending parent, while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. This ground-breaking model equips our staff with the skills to recognise signs of abuse and guide survivors with the most appropriate advice and support. As qualified practitioners, they are accessible first points of contact for any tenant seeking help – just call our office and ask to speak with them.

Help is always available:

- West Lothian Women's Aid:
  Visit **www.wlwa.org.uk** for resources and support.
- Scottish Women's Aid Helpline: 24/7 service at **0800 027 1234**
  **helpline@sdafmh.org.uk**
- Support for Men: Domestic abuse can affect men too. Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS) provides confidential help:
  **03300 949 395 / support@amis.org.uk**

You are not alone; support is here when you need it.

# EARLY WARNING SIGNS
## OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

### FAST PACED

- INTENSE AMOUNT OF ATTENTION
- YOU BECOME A COUPLE VERY QUICKLY, EVEN MOVING IN TOGETHER
- THE RELATIONSHIP MOVES UNUSUALLY FAST TOWARDS A COMMITMENT

### BLAME SHIFTING

- REFUSAL TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY, BLAIMING EXTERNAL FACTORS
- SAYS HIS BEHAVIOUR IS CAUSED BY YOU, OR HIS 'LOVE' FOR YOU
- DOWN PLAYS OR DENIES ABUSE

### ISOLATES YOU

- MANIPULATES YOU INTO GIVING UP FRIENDS, ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES OUTSIDE OF THE RELATIONSHIP
- CONTROLS WHERE YOU GO AND WHO YOU SEE

### HARD TO PREDICT

- IRRATIONAL MISTRUST
- EXTREME REACTIONS TO REJECTION
- DOUBLE STANDARD: RULES APPLY TO YOU NOT HIM
- 'JEKYLL AND HYDE' TYPE MOOD SWINGS

### LACK OF BOUNDARIES

- WILL NOT TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER
- REFUSES TO ACCEPT YOUR RIGHT TO PRIVACY

### JEALOUS

- EXTREME, IRRATIONAL JEALOUSY
- CONSTANTLY SUSPICIOUS OF ANYONE YOU SPEND TIME WITH
- ACCUSATIONS OF CHEATING

WEST LOTHIAN WOMENS AID

# RECORD BREAKING RUNNERS!

Housing Officer Aaron and his fiancée Izzy recently took part in the London Marathon. Both are members of the Edinburgh Athletic Club (EAC) and marathon running isn't new to them, this was the 4th one for Aaron, although his first time in London.

For 7 years in a row Aaron had put his name in the ballot for London with no joy. This year the EAC ran a draw, and Aaron's name was plucked from the hat.

Izzy was running for the Friends of Anchor (Aberdeen and North Centre for Haematology, Oncology and Radiotherapy), a charity who cared for her mum last year and she raised over £1,400.

The 2025 London marathon was record breaking. Normally with only 37k participants, this year had over 56k because they wanted to get into the Guinness Book of World Records for the highest number of runners to cross the finish line in a marathon; and they achieved it (with 56,640, beating 55,646 set by the New York City marathon in November 2024) with Izzy and Aaron being part of that statistic.

Although they didn't run together (Izzy set off at 10am, whilst Aaron's group didn't start until 10.45am) they finished within 2 mins of one another... Izzy beat Aaron (4.30.36 was his time)!

*"The atmosphere was incredible" said Aaron. "We were cheered all the way round. At times the crowd was 6-8 people deep. It was a constant wall of noise. At one point we had a brass band playing 'eye of the tiger'. It was so hot though, around 26C, I tried to run in the shade whenever there was any. But what an inspiring event. A once in a lifetime experience."*

https://friendsofanchor.org

# WHAT HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT OUR PROPERTIES

He may not be the longest serving member of staff but he may well be the most knowledgeable when it comes to our housing stock.

Stevie Allardyce worked on his first Almond house before it even belonged to the Association! He remembers it was 29 Beech Grove and it was an uplift and relaying of a kitchen floor.

Born in Glasgow, Stevie moved to Livingston when just 3 years old and he's been here ever since. He started his working life with a company called Heggie and Waddell, initially as a general work hand before starting a 3 year apprentice with them as a joiner.

*"My uncle was a joiner" explains Stevie "And it's something I always wanted to do, so it was great to get the apprenticeship. I spent eight years working for Heggie and Waddell which was a solid foundation. We used to manufacture windows and doors from planks of wood; everything was made from scratch. And many of the customers were in the central Livingston area."*

From there Stevie went on to work for Response for almost fourteen years, and one of his customers was Almond Housing! When he saw Almond were advertising for the role of maintenance supervisor it was a natural progression from his current role. Now a Property Officer, Stevie has been with the Association for 18 years.

*"I really enjoy my job. It's a nice mix of desk work and getting out and about. I like the problem solving. I'm of the mindset that 'there must be a way'."*

When not at work, you might find Stevie riding Chance, the horse that he shares with his daughter, or planning his retirement to Gigha!

# ALMOND AWARD WINNERS

Normally we have one winner every quarter, therefore as this is a bi-annual issue, we are pleased to announce two winners. Congratulations to *Baillie Smith* and *Elizabeth Miller* who were both presented with £250 of vouchers.

The Almond Award 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. To ensure you are eligible for the draw simply:

1. Maintain a clear rent account for a minimum period of three months immediately prior to the draw
2. Ensure you have not been involved in causing 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
5. Be a member of our tenant consultation list

*Please get in touch to find out more and sign up!*

# E-SCOOTERS

As e-scooters and e-bikes become more popular we just wanted to share a few safety pointers particularly because most are powered by lithium-ion batteries and the Fire Service has seen a rise in these type of battery fires.

- Buy e-bikes, e-scooters, chargers and batteries from reputable retailers
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when charging and always unplug your charger when finished
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms
- Don't leave batteries to charge while you are asleep or away from home
- In the event of an e-bike, e-scooter or lithium-ion battery fire, don't attempt to extinguish the fire. Get out and call 999

# THE COST WHEN YOU AREN'T HOME

We know it can be frustrating to have to wait in for a contractor to call, especially if you have taken a day off work, but the cost to the Association for repeat 'no access' calls does mount up.

As a general rule, our figures for 'no access' visits are a lot lower than other housing associations but last year, with regard to gas servicing inspections, we still had 75 tenants who reached the fourth and final 'forced access' visit. This means that the gas contractor had already attended the property on three separate occasions.

The fourth visit is a potential forced access which means a housing officer must be in attendance with a joiner, as well as the gas service engineer.

Out of those 75 visits, thankfully only 1 required a forced access but it still meant everyone had to be on standby. We have estimated that the cost of these 74 visits (which includes all the administration that goes with organising it, the final letter the housing officer has to hand deliver etc.) is in the region of **£25,000!**

If you know you are unable to keep an appointment, please do get in touch with us ASAP.

# OPENING HOURS

We wanted to confirm that we are open 5 days a week but currently the office is only available for you to drop in on:

Tuesday morning, 10am – 12pm and

Thursday afternoons, 2.30pm – 5.00pm

*(This is what shows on Google.)*

You are very welcome to book an appointment to see us during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, or 9am to 3.30pm on Friday.

Give us a call: **01506 439 291**, or send an email: **enquiries@almondha.org.uk**

*(NB: on the second Wednesday of every month the phone lines close at 1pm for staff training.)*

Our opening hours are something we are looking to consult on as we have not done this for a number of years. We will be in touch.

# DEVELOPMENTS

## Katherine Street

Craigshill residents will have noticed the major progress made on restoring and upgrading the fire damaged block at Katherine Street by our contractor, McTaggart Construction, particularly now that all scaffolding is finally down revealing the new highly insulated walls and roof.

Although not so visible, plumbers, electricians and joiners have been busy within the flats to enable the installation of the new air source heat pump powered heating and hot water systems, and new kitchens, shower rooms and bathrooms.

We had hoped that all works would be complete by early summer but delays outwith our control relating to the restoration of mains electricity to the block, have had a knock-on effect on the remaining works. As a result, the properties are unlikely to be able to accept tenants until late summer at the earliest.

Whilst this is disappointing, we hope that over the next few weeks you will see a lot of activity around the block on the electrical connection, new bin stores, door canopies and fencing. Work will also be on-going within the common stairs.

Once we have mains electrical power again, we can connect and test everything, both internally and externally, and start to look forward to welcoming returning and new tenants to their homes.

## Rowan Terrace, Blackburn

Our new development at the former Mill Shopping Centre in Blackburn is also moving along with scaffolding down and a significant amount of external work completed in addition to internal work.

Kitchens are due for delivery and work has started on shower rooms and bathrooms. Joiners are also in the process of fitting all internal doors. This will continue over the next few weeks and there will be work on surrounding footpaths and roadways, including the installation of three electrical vehicle charging points.

Mains utility connections are scheduled and, hopefully, will happen as planned.

A few delays were encountered in the earlier stages of the project due to weather and other factors, and, despite best endeavours, our contractor G Dunbar & Sons is unable to recover this. As a result, we are now looking at a late, rather than early, summer completion.

# GREAT FEEDBACK!

We love to hear what you think, especially when you have received a good service from us (and our contractors) and have taken the time to tell us.

## EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION

*Can't fault the workmen in any way they have all done a great job and were all friendly and accommodating answering any questions etc.*

*The work was fantastic the guys couldn't do enough for you, superb Almond.*

*Was very pleased with work and chap was very courteous and kept me informed.*

✪✪✪✪

## BOILER & HEATING UPGRADES

*The 2 guys that completed the job were extremely nice, polite, and respectful. They kept me informed of the progress and tidied up after themselves fully. Very happy with the job they done.*

*The guys were great and done a nice job.*

✪✪✪✪

## WINDOWS AND DOORS

*The guys were lovely, did the job perfect, no problem at all.*

*What a super team I had, and they all worked really hard and were working together as a team. I love my windows ... my beloved house has been fully redecorated and flooring, gold stars all round to my housing association and the window team. I'm a very, very happy tenant.*

*The Installation chaps were very polite, helpful, and professional.*

✪✪✪✪

## BATHROOMS

*Excellent job, lovely friendly guys coming in and out my home. Very happy.*

*The workmen were superb and the quality of the finish is exceptional – thank you!*

✪✪✪✪

## COMPLIMENT, COMPLAINT OR COMMENT GET IN TOUCH!

**enquiries@almondha.org.uk / 01506 439 291**

# RAAC

The new RAAC team has been in place for a couple of months now. Mandy joined Frank, the project delivery manager, as a tenant liaison officer (TLO), closely followed by Joni who is seconded from the property repair team as the second TLO for the duration of the project.

The contractor, DBM Building Contractors, started at Easter, initially working in a number of our void properties. At the time of going to print, they will have just started on tenanted properties and will be working in a largely street-by-street basis. Logistically this is quite a complex project and reliant on tenants being ready to move on the day stipulated. Our team will work closely with customers to ensure the process is as smooth as possible because any delays will have a knock on effect down the line.

Should you need to contact the RAAC team, their email address is:
**RAACTeam@almondha.org.uk**

Mandy - TLO

Frank - Project Manager

Joni - TLO

# NEW RECRUITS

In addition to the RAAC team, we have had the following new staff join us in the last 6 months:

Graeme McKee – *Customer Care Manager*
Ashley Curtis – *Customer Care Assistant*
Jane Deary – *Community Engagement Officer (FTC)*
Holly Malcolmson – *Business Improvement Officer*
Taya Mozagba – *Property Assistant (FTC)*

# A NEW HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

During October we will be rolling out a new piece of software called HomeMaster to better manage our internal systems and processes. In advance of this, we are trying to get our data as accurate as possible, consequently you may be contacted by the team to confirm your contact details.

We do not anticipate that this software implementation will negatively impact our customers. One of the key positives is that once the system is up and running, we will be in touch to tell you about the new portal which you will be able to use to access your account more easily and pay your bills.

Talking of bills, if you currently pay your rent via standing order or online, the new system requires you to include your **tenancy reference number** with any payment. Don't worry if you don't know your number, we will share this with you before October.

# CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE

Kindness and Respect are two of our organisational values. We ask colleagues to instil these values throughout their working day with both one another and with you, our customers. We would like to take this opportunity to ask you to do the same.

Recently, we have noticed an increase in customers verbally abusing both our own staff and those contractors acting on our behalf.

We understand that there may be occasions where you are not happy with an aspect of the service we provide, or you wish to complain about something. We also recognise that with cost of living pressures, life can be challenging.

However, the behaviour displayed by some customers is unacceptable. Almond Housing has a duty of care to all its employees and those who provide services on our behalf.

When staff experience abusive behaviour, we are required to take action to protect them. This may include limiting contact methods or frequency. In serious cases, we may involve the police, and persistent issues could affect your tenancy.

We genuinely appreciate the vast majority of our customers who treat our teams with kindness and respect. Together, we can maintain a positive environment for everyone.

***Thank you.***

# JUST FOR FUN ~ *Find the Almond Roads*

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# USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

*To report an emergency repair when our office is closed, please call 01506 439 291 and select option 3 or contact the out of hours service directly on 0141 225 2842.*

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| Almond Housing Association | 01506 439 291 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | 01506 432 977 |
| Craigshill Health Centre | 01506 432 621 |
| Gas leaks / emergency | 0800 111 999 |
| Home Energy Scotland | 0808 808 2282 |
| Homeless Persons | 0800 032 3450 |
| Howden Health Centre | 01506 423 800 |
| Police | 101 |
| Refuse Collection | 01506 280 000 |
| Scottish Power | *(General)* 0345 270 0700 |
| | *(Emergency)* 0800 092 9290 |
| St John's Hospital | 01506 523 000 |
| Street Lighting | 01506 280 000 |
| West Lothian Council | 01506 280 000 |
| | *(Freephone)* 0800 616 446 |