

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING NEWS

APRIL 2009



News for Tenants and Leaseholders

SOUTH LAKES ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO BE A TENANT



Independent research has shown that Council tenants living in South Lakes are amongst the best satisfied in the country with their neighbourhoods, homes and services.

TENANT SATISFACTION ON THE RISE

South Lakes Housing (SLH) is celebrating the results of a recent survey which shows that customer satisfaction has been improving in key service areas.

The survey, called STATUS, is carried out over the whole of the country every few years by independent research companies and asks social housing tenants how they feel about a whole range of services they receive.

Since 2006/07, when the last survey of council tenants in South Lakeland was carried out, there has been an improvement in 15 out of the 16 service landlord satisfaction measures covered by the survey. Satisfaction with the overall service provided by South Lakes Housing (SLH) has risen from 85% to 87% with less than 4% dissatisfied. These results show SLH is a top performer compared to most other councils and housing associations, with their national average at 69%.

Chairman of the SLH Board, Mary Dowling, commented "I am delighted with the results of this survey. Last year it was great to be ranked in the top 10% of inspection results by the Audit Commission but to be one of the best rated landlord services by tenants themselves is even more important."

Margaret Pritchard, who is Chairman of the Tenants' Committee said " Tenants' Committee work closely with SLH staff to find ways to improve the service we tenants get. The results of the survey now clearly show that, by working together, we have produced one of the best landlord services in the country. Well done everyone!"

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO RESIDENTS?

In the STATUS survey residents were presented with 7 aspects of being a tenant and asked to highlight the 3 most important.

Unsurprisingly the majority indicated that repairs and maintenance is most important to them, followed by the overall quality of their home and thirdly keeping tenants informed – which 90% thought SLH was very good at.

When it came to neighbourhood issues tenants were provided with a list of 13 possible problems, including litter and rubbish, anti-social behaviour and car parking and were asked to indicate how much of a problem, if at all, they are in their neighbourhood.

For 8 of the 13 potential issues the majority highlighted that they are not a problem at all. Rubbish and litter, highlighted by 26% of tenants, and car parking, highlighted by 52% of tenants are seen to be the biggest problems. Car parking is the biggest problem reported nationally.

Significantly, anti-social behaviour and crime are not seen as major issues here on South Lakeland estates and 9 out of 10 tenants were satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood.

If you would like to find out any more information about the survey contact Peter Thomas, Chief Executive, South Lakes Housing on 01539 717717 or email p.thomas@southlakeshousing.co.uk

South Lakes Housing is a Limited Company that exists to manage the council homes owned by South Lakeland District Council.

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DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO MIGHT NEED THIS NEWSLETTER ON TAPE?

★★★ CONTACT JOHN STIRLING ON 01539 717717 ★★★



Positive Action against Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

How we're doing October - December 2008

New Cases Reported	22
Cases resolved and closed	18
Cases ongoing	25

Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)

South Lakes Housing takes all complaints of ASB very seriously and wherever possible we will take positive action to tackle ASB and its causes. We understand how much ASB can impact on people. If you report anti-social behaviour we will investigate, collect evidence and do all we can to help you resolve it.

The majority of complaints we receive are resolved through informal action ranging from home visits, warning letters, acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) and mediation. We will, however, act robustly where the community requires protection.

Our message is clear: *anti-social behaviour will be tackled and not tolerated in South Lakeland.*

TOGETHER WE CAN
Stamp It Out



Action	Oct-Dec 2008	Year to Date
Referred to mediation	0	5
Referred to Multi Agency ASB Group	1	2
ABCs Signed	0	2
ASB Injunctions	0	1
Demoted Tenancies	0	0
ASB Orders	0	0
Notice of Seeking Possession Served	2	5
Possession Order Granted	0	0
Evicted	1	1



Give respect Get respect

FOCUS ON!



Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

What is an ABC?

An ABC is a voluntary agreement between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and one or more local agencies whose role it is to prevent such behaviour. ABCs are most commonly used for young people but may also be used for adults.

The contract is agreed and signed at a meeting with the individual and the lead agencies. Where the person whose behaviour is an issue is a child or young person, their parents or guardians should also attend.

The contract specifies a list of anti-social acts in which the person has been involved and which they agree not to continue. Where possible the individual should be involved in drawing up the contract. This may encourage them to recognise the impact of their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions.

Support to address the underlying causes of the behaviour should be offered in parallel to the contract. This may include diversionary activities (such as attendance at a youth project), counselling or support for the family.

Legal action that will be taken should be stated on the contract where this is the potential consequence of a breach. The threat of legal action provides an incentive to ensure that the contract is adhered to.

Types of behaviour ABCs have been used for

ABCs have been used to address a wide range of anti-social behaviour including:

- Harassment of residents or passers-by
- Verbal abuse
- Criminal damage
- Vandalism
- Noise nuisance
- Writing graffiti
- Engaging in threatening behaviour in large groups
- Racial abuse

Multi-agency working

The flexible nature of ABCs allows for various agencies to take the lead according to the circumstances in each case.

Agencies involved with ABCs - either as signatories on the contract or in providing support to the individual and family include: landlords such as South Lakes Housing, registered social landlords, social services, schools, environmental health and health services.

Identifying individuals for ABCs

People for whom a contract may be beneficial can be identified using a wide variety of evidence sources:

- Complaints to housing staff or police officers
- Police stops or arrests or intelligence
- Self admission
- Discussions with residents
- Information from and about the victims of anti-social behaviour
- Referrals from other schemes and agencies, for example youth services

It is vital that consideration is given to whether an individual is really suitable for the scheme. Where there is offending behaviour which is serious and persistent an ASBO or other legal action is likely to be more effective.

The ABC meeting

Once the appropriate agencies have been consulted the individual involved should be formally invited to take part in a meeting with all the relevant parties.

The ABC meeting should be used as an opportunity for the individual involved in the anti-social behaviour and his or her family, where appropriate, to discuss the meaning of the term 'anti-social behaviour' and the impact it has on others.

The meeting can be used as an early intervention process to stop the inappropriate behaviour becoming worse and to outline possible repercussions should the behaviour be repeated. It can also be used as an opportunity to provide support to address underlying causes such as family problems.

Parents or guardians, housing or local police officers and any other interested party such as a social worker or family friend may be present if it is considered appropriate.

The Contract

An ABC normally lasts for six months, though since it is not a statutory document any reasonable period may be specified.

The terms of the contract should reflect the behaviour to be addressed and should be written in language that the individual can easily understand.

Examples of terms agreed in ABCs:

"I will not:

- Damage property
- Verbally abuse passers-by
- Write graffiti
- Throw stones or other objects
- Set fire to things
- Physically harass people
- Damage the environment
- Smash glass
- Damage cars"

Monitoring

If the contract is breached there must always be a response. Agencies and organisations involved will need to consider the circumstances and decide upon the best course of action.

Dealing with breaches

The action taken should be determined by the nature of the breach. A structured approach can be taken to breaches, leading to legal action if the behaviour does not cease.

Concerned about DOMESTIC ABUSE?



Help is available from:

Independent Domestic Violence
Advisors (IDVAs) tel 01229 834532
Cumbria Police tel 0845 3300247
In an emergency dial 999



Reporting Anti-Social Behaviour

You can contact us in the following ways:

- In person
- By telephone
- By email
- By letter
- Outside office hours - leave a message on the answer phone
- Anonymously

South Lakes Housing
Little Aynam House
Little Aynam
Kendal
LA9 7AH
☎ 01539 717717

South Lakes Housing
Town Hall
Queen Street
Ulverston
LA12 7AR
☎ 01229 584424

Email: info@southlakeshousing.co.uk

Ulverston MUGA Gets Thumbs Up

Honeypot and Croftlands will get their own Multi Use Games Areas

SLH are to build another Multi Use Games area (MUGA), this time on the Honeypot estate in Ulverston. SLH have carried out consultation about the MUGA with local residents and groups such as the Police, Ulverston East Task Group, Honeypot Community Group, Young Cumbria and Ulverston Town Council.

Despite concerns raised by some residents there was overwhelming support from the community and the MUGA should be built by the end of March. SLDC gave the final green light for the project to go ahead.

It is hoped to install another MUGA on Croftlands, near Ulverston, and consultation has already commenced with the local residents there.

The MUGAs will be funded from the Decent Homes money for high performing ALMOs, and cost around £50,000 each.

Roadshows & Estate Walkabouts 2009

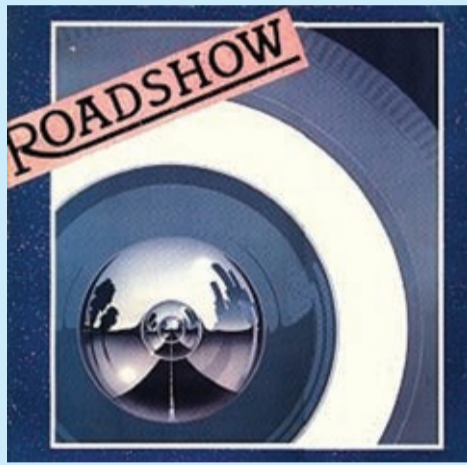
South Lakes Housing has put together the list of locations for roadshows and walkabouts for the coming financial year. So watch out for publicity in your area. If you would like to have a walkabout in your area, call your Housing Officer and ask!

Roadshows

Windermere Droomer
Grasmere
School Knott
Ulverston Park
Ulverston Croftlands
Tyson Sq
Kirkby in Furness
Swarthmoor
Mill Dam
Ulverston Honeypot
Great Urswick
Fell Close
Kendal Hallgarth
Burneside
Edgecombe Court
Arnside
Binfold Croft,
Kirkby Lonsdale

Walkabouts

Kendal Sandylands
Kendal Rinkfield
Kendal Kirkbarrow
Sedbergh Maryfell/Castlegarth
Milnthorpe Owlet Ash



SLH Staff Raise Funds for Charity

South Lakes Housing staff have been fund raising again!

Look at how much has been raised:

- £42 For Children in Need from sale of cakes and other goodies
- £109 for the Rainbow Trust from the Christmas Raffle
- £57 for the Salvation Army from donations for not sending Christmas cards

Well done, everyone!

If you or your neighbours have raised money for good causes, let us know - we would love to publicise it in South Lakes Housing News!

South Lakes Housing - ONE OF THE BEST



South Lakes Housing was recently re-inspected for the Investors in People (IIP) standard and passed with flying colours. The IIP standard judges an organisation on its ability to improve its business through good people management and development. The inspector also found that there was a definite ethos of team working. In conclusion he commented that SLH was **"probably one of the best organisations I have seen in this area"**.

In his verbal feedback the inspector said everyone knew what they were working towards. He noted that SLH was adaptable and changed things where necessary to work better, like introducing the new voids teams to speed up the letting of empty homes.

Communication throughout the business was good and staff were trusted by managers to make decisions.

STARS IN YOUR EYES

Star ratings can often be confusing, can't they? Rating scales differ between the services and organisations being assessed and top star ratings can be 3, 4 or even 5 stars. There is even a 7 star hotel in Dubai. So let's put South Lakes Housing's '2 stars and excellent prospects' into its proper context.

If we were to compare our 2 star rating to that given to local authority housing services, **SLH would rank in the top 5% performers in England**. Likewise our performance compared to Housing Associations would put us **in the top 7%**. Compared to the top performing sector of ALMO's we feature in the top 25%. So put into the right context our achievements to date are exceptional.

As an organisation we want to find new ways to enhance services and to improve levels of investment in the housing stock. We are also committed to respond to local housing need by providing more affordable homes. In the current economic climate the challenges we face are bigger than ever - but if we succeed in our aims, working together with our tenants an SLDC, the benefits we can deliver to our community will be significant and long lasting.

You Say the Nicest things!

Repairs service praised by you

Just think.... When was the last time you took the trouble to put your thanks in writing about a great service that you received? Well, with a fantastic 99% satisfaction rating for our repairs service that's just what a lot of our customers take the time to do.

Here are just a few of those compliments about the high standard of customer care tenants received:

"The people that came couldn't have been nicer and polite. Nice to see".

"Explained how my hot water worked - very patient - nothing but kindness".

"The quick response was fantastic - job done within 2 hours of reporting it".

"This chap was very courteous and pleasant and a pleasure to have in your home".

"Many thanks as I am disabled the prompt and excellent service provided by SLH is much appreciated".

"I am very happy with the results. The men were very sociable and helpful, they did an excellent job and I am a very satisfied customer".

"The work people are always excellent, courteous and efficient. Clean and tidy as always."

"Great set of lads, good workmanship, pleasant and helpful and nothing is a bother to them".

Are you ready ?????? ARE YOU READY TO GO DIGITAL?



The digital switchover for our area is programmed to take place in **Summer 2009 and January 2010**.

How will I receive a digital signal?

First you need to choose how you want to receive your digital signal:

- Through an aerial, using a digital box or digital TV
- Through a satellite dish

Will I need a new TV?

You do not need to replace your existing TV unless you want too. You will need to buy a digital box, however, if you are thinking of upgrading your current set, consider getting a TV with a digital box built in. Look for 'Freeview' on the description.

Will I need a new aerial?

Most households won't. As a rule of thumb, if you get a good picture now, you should get a good digital signal after the switchover. If in doubt, get your aerial checked by a registered Digital Installer, look for RSI or CAI registration, and always look for the digital tick.

What if I live in a flat and share my aerial with others?

South Lakes Housing has been upgrading all homes that have communal aerial systems. If you are concerned that your block has not been included, please contact Carl Ballantyne here at South Lakes Housing on 01229 584424 for confirmation.

Will there be assistance for those in need of help?

The Digital Switchover Help Scheme has been set up to provide eligible households with help to convert **one** TV to digital.

You may be eligible for the scheme if **you** are, your **partner** or **dependent child** are:

- Aged 75 years old or over

Entitled to one of the following allowances:

- Disability living allowance,
- Attendance allowance,
- Registered Blind or
- Partially Sighted

The scheme will cost eligible households a subsidised amount of **£40** for the basic equipment unless you are eligible and receive either

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income based jobseekers Allowance

In which case the help is **FREE**.

If you want any more information go to www.digitaluk.co.uk, put in your postcode and it will give you an accurate date for when your digital transmission will go live.

Still confused? Don't worry, if you need further advice, please ring the **FREE Switchover Help Line** on 0800 40 85 901

Conservatory Opening



Decent Homes funding helps local people

Residents of Gallowbarrow enjoyed a buffet and a glass of sherry at the opening of their new conservatory, which was funded from the Decent Homes Sustainability Fund. The addition of the conservatory means much needed extra space to allow all residents to get together socially.

Mary Dowling, Chairman of the South Lakes Housing Board, and James Cropper were there to help celebrate the official opening and cut the red ribbon. James Cropper is the Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria.

Pictured: James Cropper cutting the ribbon at Gallowbarrow



GAS SAFETY UPDATE

Calling Gas Appliance Owners

Do you have a gas fire or other gas heating appliances in your home that are owned by you rather than SLH ?



If you have, did you know you are responsible for having your appliances serviced each year? And that you must provide your landlord (SLH) with a copy of the CP12 certificate that your service contractor will provide you as proof of service? Please let us have a copy of your CP12 certificate as soon as possible; post a copy of your certificate to Dave Peek, Contracts Officer, Little Aynam House, Little Aynam, Kendal LA9 7AH. Certainly, in the case of a fault or incident on any of your appliances, you will be asked to provide proof that your appliance has been serviced and your CP12 certificate is evidence of that service.

SLH services all its own gas appliances such as gas fires and central heating boilers and we provide a safety check to any tenant owned gas appliances. Please note a safety check is not the same as a gas service.

BE SAFE, GET YOUR GAS APPLIANCES SERVICED WITHOUT DELAY IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS. You should use a 'GAS safe' registered contractor to do your service.



Top Score for Sheltered Housing

Hot on the heels of the excellent, improved Status Survey results we have just got great results for the annual survey of sheltered housing tenants. The survey, which is conducted independently by Age Concern, shows improving satisfaction with the SLH Scheme Manager service. This is fantastic news and a credit to all our caring and professional staff who help to support many of our older tenants.

Satisfaction Rises with Sheltered Service

Satisfaction levels with services provided to our sheltered schemes have never been higher. In this year's survey of sheltered tenants conducted by Age Concern, everyone surveyed, 100%, found the SLH Scheme Managers friendly, approachable and helpful.

There has also been an improvement in how happy tenants are with their home, now 98.7%, and their area, now up to 98%. When it comes to satisfaction with the alarm response time this has also improved from 89% to 94.5%.

When residents were asked if they would recommend SLH sheltered housing to others 98.7% said they would.

Well done to all those involved for proving the Audit Commission inspectors right when they said SLH had excellent prospects for improvement!

Sheltered Housing Agreement Signed!

Revamped agreement (compact) published



The Sheltered Housing Service Improvement Group has been working hard on completely reworking the Sheltered Housing Agreement. The Agreement now includes all sorts of details about the services tenants can expect to receive. The Agreement was signed by, left to right, John Short, Vice Chairman of the South Lakes Housing Board, Cllr Brenda Gray, Housing Portfolio Holder, SLDC, and Margaret Pritchard, Chairman of Tenants' Committee, who signed on behalf of South Lakes Housing tenants.

SLH can provide a gas service at a cost when we next call to service landlord owned appliances. For further information, to book a service for your appliance, or to confirm ownership of your appliances, please contact Dave Peek on Kendal 01539 717260.

Solid Fuel Fire

Free sweep for your solid fuel fire available now!

South Lakes Housing is arranging to have all flues swept. To get yours done FREE call Dave Peek on 01539 7177260.

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

Boiler pressure warning for tenants

If you have a problem with the water pressure on your boiler, please do not attempt to refill the system yourself - you could cause damage to the boiler! Any problems, call our hotline on 0845 057 0080 and we will get an engineer out to you as soon as possible.

Sheltered Tenants are Saving Money! Energy saving items for FREE!

South Lakes Housing and South Lakeland District Council have joined forces to help sheltered tenants save money on fuel bills, not just for winter, but all year round! Residents at sheltered schemes all around the district are being treated to the freebies. Items being given away include low energy light bulbs, water saving devices, power down units for computers and tvs, and radiator panels.

Pictured below at the Edgcombe Court Energy Saving Event are: Mr Tony Ball (in chair) Mr Brian Atkinson (on window seat), Mrs Edith Rigg (in chair) and Mrs Carrie Taylor (on window seat behind)



Have You Got Contents Insurance?

How would you replace your possessions if you had a fire, a burglary or a leak from the flat above?

You could take advantage of the contents insurance South Lakes Housing has arranged especially designed to suit tenants' needs. The insurance is easy to set up and good value for money, with premiums payable weekly, monthly or annually.

Of course, you should always shop around, but if you want to find out more, ask your Housing Officer for a prospectus or call our hotline number 0845 057 0080.



Congratulations!

Congratulations to Tina Armitage, Scheme Manager at Birthwaite, Windermere, who has just passed the National Certificate of Professional Practice in Sheltered/Supported Housing. *Well done, Tina!*



Garden Competition 2008

After the success of the garden competition in 2008, South Lakes Housing will be running it again in 2009. There will be three categories this year: -
Overall Winner, Most Improved Garden, and Best Small Garden/Flats/Hanging Baskets.

Judging will take place between June and July when gardens are looking their best, and winners will be presented with gardening vouchers.

If you would like to enter this year or nominate your neighbour please contact Simon Hughes, Senior Housing Officer on 01229 584424 or email him at s.hughes@southlakeshousing.co.uk

2008 Competition Winners

Here are some photos of this year's prize winning gardens. Haven't they done well!



▲
Highly Recommended - Diane Bowe
 Dale Street, Ulverston



▲
Winner - Best Hanging Baskets -
 Mrs Burke
 High Ridge, Kendal



▲
Above Overall Winner of Best Garden-
 Irene Bradley
 Coniston



▲
Highly Recommended - Mrs Waller
 Thirby Court, Kirkby Lonsdale



◀ Left
Most Improved Winner-
 Mrs Wearing
 Manorside, Flookburgh



◀ Left
Highly Recommended - Carol Finch
 Brockbeck, Kendal

Right ▶
Most Improved Highly Recommended
 - Katie Earl
 Well Ing, Kendal



£20,000 UP FOR GRABS

Have you got a brilliant idea?

You can apply for a grant to improve YOUR estate or street. Apply now for this year's money – quick – before it all goes! Contact your Housing Officer to talk it over and ask for an application form for the Estate Improvement Grant from the Grant Applications Panel, on **0845 057 0080**

STOP PRESS!! See the next issue of South Lakes Housing news for the round-up of last year's Estate Improvements!

Can you help?

Your chance to have your say about standards in social housing



The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the new regulator for homes owned by housing associations and co-ops. From spring 2010, they are likely to be responsible for local council and arm's-length management organisation (ALMO) landlords like South Lakes Housing, too.

The first thing the TSA needs to do is draw up a brand new set of standards for all social landlords. These standards are very important, as the TSA will be monitoring how landlords do in achieving them - and taking action against any who don't.

The Tenant Services Authority is going to listen to tenants across England to help them understand what you want to see in the new standards. You can help set the standards and make sure that services for tenants continue to improve.

Further information is available on the Tenant Services Authority's website www.tenantservicesauthority.org, or call John Stirling or Suzy Duffy on 01539 717717 for an update.

PRIZE DRAW AND COMPETITION WINNERS

DIRECT DEBIT PRIZE DRAW

The latest Direct Debit £250 free prize draw winners are Mr & Mrs Croft from Kendal. If you would like to pay by Direct Debit contact Pauline Keeley on 01539 717717.

CONGRATULATIONS!

CHRISTMAS COLOURING COMPETITION

Winners of our children's Christmas colouring competition for 2008 were Miss Bethany McKenzie of Bishops Court, Kendal and Miss Emily Olsen of Park Avenue, Windermere. Tenants' Committee judged the entries, which were displayed in the Tenant Resource Centre over Christmas. Bethany chose an MP3 player, and Emily a shopping voucher. Well done, and thanks to all the entrants for sending some superbly crafted entries.

DECENT HOMES SATISFACTION SURVEY DRAW LATEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Everyone who returns their satisfaction survey form following the Decent Homes works is entered into our FREE prize draw. Winners receive £50.

Mrs Boardman won the £50 cheque for Ulverston Rural
Mrs Hollywood - Ulverston North
Mrs Graham - Grange
Mrs Knipe - Lakes Rural
Marian Thomson - Ulverston South



Pictured: Mrs Graham, Grange

Comments from Customers of Decent Homes

What YOU have said about when Decent Homes came to call.....

"All liaison people and workmen were informative, helpful and considerate throughout the work. The electricians were particularly attentive to detail. They worked quickly and efficiently to get the job finished with as little discomfort to ourselves. We found them to be cheerful whilst working and very well mannered."

"My wife and I were very pleased with the manner the staff, tradesmen and all personnel performed during this project. Quality was first class. Plus schedules were maintained from day one. Many thanks."

"Every one of the workmen and inspectors were helpful and more than polite, leaving no untidiness or problems. I am more than well satisfied."

"The electricians were first class well mannered and very polite and excellent at their level of work."

LEASEHOLDER NEWS

LEASEHOLDERS SET MEETING DATES FOR 2009

Leaseholder Service Improvement Group (LESIG) agreed all of this year's events at their latest meeting. Leaseholders decided to hold a special event this year which will be open to all leaseholders to come along, meet like-minded people and hear all the latest news. The event will be held in Kendal on 29 September. If you have any ideas about what should be arranged for this special event, call Suzy Duffy or Sue Mallinson at South Lakes Housing on 01539 717717.

- Tuesday 12 May 2009 Leaseholder SIG
- 29 September 2009 Special event for all Leaseholders
- Tuesday 8 December 2009 Leaseholder SIG



LESIG CHALLENGING SERVICE CHARGES

Members of LESIG heard at their last meeting that, following criticism by the Audit Commission Inspectors, SLDC had agreed to review service charges. All leaseholders will know that the service charges are for services to communal areas such as lighting in entrance hallways, and grounds maintenance. The review will look at 'unpooling' the charges, which will mean that tenants and leaseholders would only pay for the services they receive. Leaseholder Dorothy Dixon, who is a member of Tenants' Committee, said, 'We are already paying for the grounds maintenance in our Council tax, so we are paying for some services twice. This does not seem fair'.



Leasehold Manager Sue Mallinson said, 'This is a really big review, and we have already had consultants to do a lot of the analysis that we need on the bills etc. The next step is to have discussions with South Lakeland District Council and present the information to them as the Council must make any decision regarding the change to "unpooled" charges across their estates.'

If you would like to be involved in the review, or the LESIG, call Sue or Suzy Duffy on 01539 717717.

SCOOP FOR LEASEHOLDER EVENT

'LEASE' COMING TO TALK TO LEASEHOLDERS

'LEASE', the national advisory service for leaseholders, have agreed to come along to meet with South Lakes leaseholders at their event on 29 September. This is the first time the prominent organisation has come to talk to South Lakes leaseholders. Leaseholder representatives on LESIG will be deciding what to ask LEASE to talk about, so if you have any ideas, call Suzy Duffy on 01539 717717.

RETURN THAT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Sue Mallinson, South Lakes Housing's Leasehold Manager, has appealed for leaseholders to complete and return the satisfaction surveys that come along with their notification for repairs to be carried out on their block. Leaseholders are billed for these works at the end of the financial year, around March. Sue said, 'the surveys help South Lakes Housing to improve their service. And don't forget there is a free prize draw for all returned surveys!'

LESIG CALLS FOR CLARITY ON WINTER ROADS

Tim Keegan of LESIG asked for clarification in South Lakes Housing news about contacting the right people if there were local problems with snow and ice. 'The comments showed that people don't know whom to contact' said Tim. Have a look at the article below...

GRITTING SLIPPERY ROAD AND PAVEMENTS

Councils working together in icy weather

Residents who contact South Lakeland District Council to report gritting issues will only have to make one phone call in future.

Responsibility for gritting slippery roads and pavements is that of Cumbria County Council but many residents automatically ring SLDC believing it to be a service it provides.

Now SLDC has changed its policy so it will pass on any calls about gritting directly to the County Council.

SLDC is also working more closely with the County Council to improve the gritting during cold spells and arranging for the grit bins in all SLDC car parks to be filled.

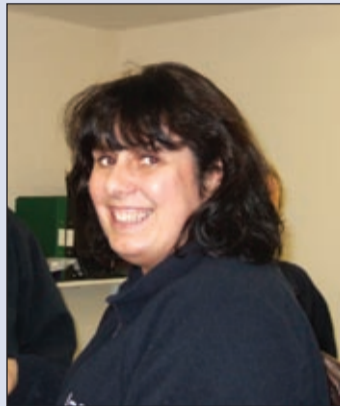
During extreme weather, you can check for information about services by going onto the council's website at www.southlakeland.gov.uk or calling the Customer Contact Centre - 0845 050 4434.

TENANTS' COMMITTEE NEWS

Another Successful Event for Tenants' Committee

Tenants' Committee were delighted to welcome about 50 visitors to their Open Afternoon held at the Resource Centre at Little Aynam on 15 December. Staff from SLDC, Bramall Construction and South Lakes Housing dropped in for a chat, as well as the Housing Portfolio Holder, Brenda Gray, and other Councillors. Guests enjoyed a glass of wine and a seasonal buffet. The Committee holds the event each year to thank staff and Councillors for their help.

Pictured below are: L to R Cllr Sylvia Emmott, Sheralyn Clement, Cllr Brenda Gray. Right: Amanda Lester, Bramall Construction



Tenants' Committee Elections

Every year, one third of the members of Tenants' Committee up to a maximum of 6 must retire from office. Any tenant including the retiring committee members may stand for election. Last year, you will remember reading that all the retiring members who stood for re-election were returned unopposed.

We are always looking for new members, and are particularly looking for tenants under 40 and from remote rural areas, who are currently under represented on the Committee. If you fit the bill, and are interested in becoming a member of Tenants' Committee, all you have to do to find out more is call the Tenant Participation team on 01539 717717.

Tenants' Committee 'Original' Retires

Don Brookes calls it a day

Don Brookes, former Chairman of Tenants' Committee, of West Ing, Ambleside, has decided to retire from Tenants' Committee. Don was one of the first tenants involved in the setting up of the Committee in 1999, and was Chairman from 2003 to 2007. Don led the Committee through a period of enormous change, including the time leading up to the tenant vote to set up the ALMO, and the creation of South Lakes Housing. Don was also one of the first tenants to sit on the old Housing Committee, and the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee at SLDC. Since resigning as Tenants' Committee Chairman, Don has remained on the Committee, and has done a lot of hard work on working groups like the Housing Provision Advisory Group, which helps the Council to identify opportunities for affordable housing development. Don's great passion recently has been the provision of affordable housing in South Lakeland.



Look what we've done!

This year we have been involved in:

- Deciding how tenants' rent money will be spent
- Agreeing and attending the roadshows and walkabouts
- Monitoring the Decent Homes Programme
- Agreeing the Decent Homes mop up programme
- Helping decide spending on more than £800,000 worth of Decent Homes Estate Improvements
- Setting up the Anti Social Behaviour policy
- The Gas Servicing Monitoring group
- Considering the new scheme for the issue of decoration vouchers

And we:

- Nominated a Member to attend a seminar on the Policing Green Paper
- Agreed the Sheltered Housing Agreement
- Nominated a Member to attend a seminar on Neighbourhood Development
- Nominated tenant representatives on to SLDC's Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Decided the spending on the £20,000 Estate Improvement budget
- Attended a seminar in Lancaster dealing with 'Democracy within the Community'

In the next year we will be:

- Helping to set up a 'Pet Policy' for tenants
- Appointing an Independent Advisor to help all tenants decide on the future of South Lakes Housing
- Reviewing the service charges we all pay in our rents for gardening services, estate lighting and so on
- Encouraging new members to consider standing for election

Come along and help us! We are friendly and welcoming, and will help you every step of the way!

If you don't feel sure about joining us on Tenants' Committee, why not join Tenant Involvement Club (TIC)? You could do mystery shopping from home, go on estate walkabouts in your area, or choose lots of other ways to be involved. Remember, we are particularly looking for younger people and those from rural areas.

Tenants happy with district wide tenant participation agreement

Tenants' Committee recently had a special session to review the District wide Tenant Participation Agreement (sometimes called a Compact in other areas) and decided that we are quite happy with the current Agreement. We looked at what other ALMOs were doing, and what the Government requires, and decided 'no change' was needed. We are very keen to try to consult and involve all tenants, and will soon be agreeing an action plan for next year. Margaret Pritchard, Chairman of Tenants' Committee, said, 'once again it looks as though tenants are pleased with the way South Lakes Housing is managing our homes and the level of service they are providing. I am sure things can only get better!'

It's good to talk

Tenants' Committee representatives recently met with SLDC and SLH to examine budgets and the big questions we face together in the near future. We are delighted to have been invited to attend this important meeting, and it is yet another positive example of improving our partnership working and better communication.

We were able to help South Lakes Housing bid for adequate funding from the account your rent is paid into to meet next year's repairs and management costs. Next year's budget is not so clear, now Decent Homes is drawing to a close, but we will be making sure you get to hear about what is going to happen next.

Cumbria Tenants Forum Event Success

An event was hosted by the Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants and Residents Forum, in Ulverston on 29 October 2008. In excess of 50 tenants enjoyed presentations from Cumbria Rural Housing Trust, Shelter, Impact Housing, Cumbria County Council, Citizens Advice Bureau, and South Lakeland District Council. The event was voted a resounding success by tenants, as it raised their awareness of homeless legislation, how South Lakes Housing and other providers work together, the lack of affordable housing particularly within the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks.



The picture shows from L to R Kevin Earl (Principal Housing Advisor SLDC), Linda Weldon (Homeless Prevention Officer SLDC) Ron Pritchard (Chair Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants Forum) Jeanette Jenkinson (Ulverston Town Mayor) John Stirling, Tenant Participation Officer, South Lakes Housing.