

USEFUL NUMBERS

REPAIRS (Freephone) 0800 3898083

SWITCHBOARD 0115 875 5355

EMERGENCIES - Out of Hours 0115 939 0808

Abandoned Vehicles	968 4054/55	Press and Public Relations	968 4031
Allocation of Tenancies	968 4033/35	Reception	875 5355
Carelink	939 2110	Regeneration Hopewell Farm	968 4924
Care Services	939 1491	Rent Arrears	968 4923/ 4958/4967/4962
Cleaning of Communal areas	968 4055	Rent Account enquiries	968 4915/4916
Complaints about services	968 4073	Resident's Insurance Scheme	0845 733 7788
Disabled Adaptations	968 4963	Resident Involvement	968 4010/4079
Garages	968 4040	Right to Buy	968 4071

GAS APPLIANCES

(Servicing)	968 4969
Gas Maintenance	931 6849
Grass Cutting	968 4020/4075
Housing Application Enquiries	968 4040
Improvement Programme	968 4925/26
Job Applications	968 4023
Mutual Exchanges	968 4040
Neighbour Nuisance	968 4054/55
Permits for Alterations	968 4054/55

Erewash Borough Council
0115 907 2244

Derbyshire County Council
0845 605 8058

www.threevalleyshousing.com



business for neighbourhoods

The Newsletter for Residents and Leaseholders of Three Valleys Housing



Making a Difference

A Week in the Life of....

June 2006



Editorial

Thank you to everyone who gave us feedback following the re-launch of Contact in its new compact format. The vast majority of the comments were very positive so it looks like we made the right decision.



Our front cover this issue showcases some of the work we are doing in the local community, in this case giving a donation to Longmoor Primary School.

The School has used the money to buy a safety grid for their new sensory garden; a place where pupils can relax and study in peace. We want the best for the people who live and work

in the area where we work, so we were only too glad to help.

We are in the business of trying to make a difference to the communities which we serve.

Have you got a project you think we could help you with? Why not drop us a line and let us know.

Phil Campbell
Communications Manager

If you need this information in another format (e.g. audio cassette or large-type) or in another language, please telephone 0115 875 5355 and we will do what we can to arrange this for you.

Equality and Diversity

*"I can't read this letter because I can't read English."
"I'm deaf. How will I know when the plumber arrives?"
"Please do not call on Friday evening. It is the Sabbath."*

Although we often refer to "the residents" at Three Valleys Housing we know that the people that make up this group are all very different. We look different, we have different ideals and beliefs, we have different abilities and talents and we speak in different accents and languages.

That is why we are currently doing a lot of work to make sure that our services meet the needs of all of our residents. To help us with this we are producing an Equality and Diversity strategy. This sounds complicated but it really isn't. It simply sets out the actions we will take to make sure that we treat everyone fairly, and deliver accessible services to different people in an appropriate way that meets their individual needs. It also sets out our position on any form of discrimination

or harassment, on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, belief, age or disability.

To do that, we would like your help. We are setting up an Equality and Diversity Forum, made up of residents who will help us with this work. The Forum will challenge our services and help us to plan ways in which we can make them more accessible to everyone.

Following an initial information session, we have recruited 12 members, but we need more. If you have an interest in any of these issues and would like to know more about the Equality and Diversity Forum, please telephone Dena Cole on **0115 875 5355** or e-mail her on denac@threevalleyshousing.com

آپ کے ویسٹ کے لیے (format) میں، میں نے آئیڈیو کے لیے شکریہ ادا کی ہے۔

تعمیراتی 0115 875 5355 پر آپ کے لیے پیمائش کے ساتھ ساتھ

如果你需要這套訊息以另一種格式說明（例如錄音帶或大字體印刷）或者另一種的語言，請致電 0115 875 5355 提出要求，我們很樂意儘量給你安排。

अपके वेस्ट के लिए (format) में, मैंने आइड्यू के लिए शकरीये अदा की है।

आपके लिए 0115 875 5355 पर आप के लिए पैमाइश के साथ साथ

अगर आपको इस सूचना को किसी अन्य रूप में (जैसे कि ऑडियो कसेट या बड़े अक्षरों में) या किसी अन्य भाषा में चाहिए, तो कृपया 0115 875 5355 पर हमें सूचना दें। हम आपको संभव होतے-होते मदद कर सकेंगे।

Housing Corporation

Housing Corporation announces appointments to association board

On 25th April, the Housing Corporation, the government agency that oversees housing associations, made the following announcement:

“The Housing Corporation has announced that it has made three statutory appointments to the Board of Three Valleys Housing, a registered social landlord which manages around 5,500 homes in the Erewash area of Derbyshire.

The appointees are:

Chan Kataria, Group Chief Executive, East Midlands Housing;

Ian Smith, Finance Director, Derwent Living;

Bob Hingston, Housing and Regeneration Consultant”.

The Corporation has placed Three Valleys Housing under supervision as it believes we can do better in governance and be in a stronger financial position. The appointees will provide the Board with additional skills and expertise in addressing these concerns. The Corporation also announced that it will not approve any new public funding for Three Valleys Housing.

All three appointees have considerable experience of housing issues, having worked at a senior level in housing for many years. They have been appointed for an initial period of six months.

We can reassure you that we are doing everything we can to resolve the situation and return to our three ‘green lights’. In addition to the work outlined in the last issue of Contact, we are taking further action to address the Housing Corporation’s concerns. We can announce that we have appointed Rodney Dykes as our Interim Chief Executive. Rodney has many years experience in housing, having worked at Liverpool Housing Action Trust and Walsall Housing Group. He runs his own consultancy business and has experience of dealing with the issues we are facing.

We also welcome Paul Horleston, who joins us as Interim Finance Director. Both Rodney and Paul will be with us until the permanent Chief Executive and Finance Director are appointed.

We have re-drafted our business plan to take account of the issues highlighted by the Housing

Supervision

Corporation. This was approved by our funders (the Royal Bank of Scotland, the Derbyshire and Newcastle building societies) at the end of April.

We are currently in talks with Savills, the property services company, about carrying out a new Stock Condition survey. This will tell us



how much more we need to do to meet the Government’s Decent Homes standard, as well as provide an up to date valuation of our housing stock for funders.

In the meantime we will continue to carry out our core activities, letting houses, carrying out repairs and

collecting rent. The Housing Corporation have noted our improved performance in repairs; our performance on rent arrears and re-letting empty properties are improving steadily and we are doing better than the national average.



They also noted increased levels of satisfaction with our services overall and the opportunities you have to let us know what you think.

We can also reassure you that all this

does not mean any unexpected rent rises! Rent increases are closely tied to the Government’s plans that all rents for the same type of property in an area are broadly the same. The “public funding” referred to above is money for developing new homes and has no impact on paying for day-to-day services.

How are

Here are the latest figures for our performance in repairing residents' homes, collecting rent and re-letting empty properties. We also tell you how well we are doing in dealing with gas servicing.

We'll bring you the most up to date information possible, bearing in the mind the time it takes to put 'Contact' together.

Repairs

Our targets for repairs this year is to complete a set percentage of repairs within the time allowed.

We're pleased to report that we are hitting all our repair targets for the first time this year. It has been a difficult year for everyone in the repairs service as we have had to adjust to different ways of working but the results are starting to show.

Using the Zone meetings, we consulted residents about the targets for a number of services we deliver. One of the changes they asked for can be seen above, where we have increased the

target for completing routine repairs from 90% to 94% within 31 days.

Collecting Rent

At the end of March, we had collected 96.6% of all rent due, beating our target of 95%. Our Area Rent Officers now prepare their own arrears cases for Court, saving us time and money. A quicker legal process also means that we are tackle arrears more quickly and effectively. The Orchard computer system we installed in 2004 has also helped us to keep track of rent accounts more easily.

We are working hard to collect as much rent as possible but we are still aware that some residents are missing out with help with their rent. Some are not claiming all the benefits they are entitled to, housing benefit in particular.

we doing?

If you think that you may qualify for housing benefit, please give Erewash Borough Council's housing benefit team on 0115 907 1010 or speak to one of our area rents officers. The numbers are listed under rent arrears in the useful numbers section on the back page.

Gas Servicing

We are unable to bring you up to date information on gas servicing due to staff illness. We will update you next time. If you have any concerns about when your gas appliances are due to be

checked, please call our Improvements and Servicing Co-ordinator on 0115 968 4969.

Re-Letting Empty Properties

At the end of March 2006, we were re-letting empty properties within 3.3 weeks. This was within our 2005/06 target of 3.5 weeks.

Overall last year, we re-let empty homes in an average of 2.4%. Having comfortably beaten last year's target, we've set a more challenging target of 3 weeks this year.

Category	Time Allowed	Target to be completed in time	2006/07 (to end of March 2006)	Change since last issue
Emergency Repairs	24 hours	98%	98.0%	-2.0%
Urgent Repairs	7 Days	95%	95.6%	-2.1%
Routine Repairs	31 Days	94%*	98.0%	-1.7%
TOTAL	-	92%	-	-

**Target has been increased from 90% in 2004/05*

THE INSPECTOR CALLS

We've now been told that the Audit Commission will be inspecting us in October this year.

There's a flurry of activity already as the inspection process starts many months before they arrive at Mark Street. We have a small team preparing for inspection, gathering all the evidence we need for the inspectors. They will want to see all of our policies and procedures and will want to see evidence that we are following them in the work that we do.

We have to prepare a Self Assessment where we take a critical look at what we do and tell the

Commission how well we think we're doing. To make sure we aren't looking at ourselves through rose-tinted glasses, nor doing ourselves a disservice, we will be consulting some of our stakeholders (including residents) to make sure it is an accurate picture of Three Valleys Housing.

The inspectors will use the Self Assessment to highlight any areas where they have concerns. These are the areas they will want to look into in greater detail.

Prior to the inspectors arriving, they will look at our website to check the information is up to date. They may call and ask for a copy of Contract

translated into Chinese or ask about an exchange to a Three Valleys Housing property. They will check we can deliver the services we say we can, in the way we way they say will be delivered.

Once they arrive on-site, the inspectors will want to talk to stakeholders, residents and employees to see what they think of the service. They will go through everything we do so it will be a nervous time for everyone involved with Three Valleys Housing. On the positive side, we will have our services thoroughly check out so it can only help us to improve the services we provide.

A **WEEK** in the

Katie Gregory is our Antisocial Behaviour Assistant. She's been working in her current role since January 2006.

Katie works alongside Nick Lees, dealing with serious neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour. She offers witness support to residents suffering from antisocial behaviour and keeps our records up to date.

Monday

It's a bank holiday so I have the day off. I spend it wakeboarding with my

The only trouble is the water's freezing cold at this time of year!

boyfriend at the British Disabled Water Skiing centre at Holme Pierrepont. Wakeboarding is a cross between water-skiing and surfing, is great fun and anyone can have a go. The only trouble is the water's freezing cold at this time of year!

Tuesday

I was due to take a witness to Nottingham Court. Unfortunately she had an accident and was unable to attend. It can be an uncomfortable experience the first time you have to go to Court, so I had taken her for a look around the week before, so she could talk to me about any concerns she had.

In the afternoon I was called by another witness in Long Eaton who

asked me to visit to hear the noise coming from her neighbour's flat. I went round straight away to hear it for myself. I decided it would be appropriate to visit the person causing the problem; a polite word can often help but it is a judgement call. I will

I will only speak to the person responsible if I feel it won't provoke the situation.

only speak to the person responsible if I feel it won't provoke the situation. The witness provided me with the diary sheets she had filled in. I can't stress enough how important these sheets are to us. They provide the main evidence we need to tackle the problems you report to us.

Wednesday

I took a call from a witness in Ilkeston who had suffered problems over the weekend. I visited her and advised what action we are taking. Her neighbour had also suffered and they had both written a brief description of what happened. Diaries don't have to be on special forms, they can be on

Life of.....



notes of paper as long as they are clear and includes dates and times.

I decide not to visit the perpetrator. There have been past complaints of aggressive behaviour and I feel a lone visit is inappropriate. I reassure the witness that we will do everything we can to resolve the problems as soon as possible.

In the afternoon I took a statement from a resident who came into the office, it was a case we had to re-open due to renewed complaints.

Thursday

I visited a witness who had been

We work very closely with the local Police

moved due to threats and abuse from a neighbour. The neighbour had been served with an injunction but has continued to contact the witness, breaching the injunction. I collected

the evidence from the witness and took a copy of it to the Police, along with the injunction.

We work very closely with the local Police. The legal powers we have compliment each other; they can sometimes take action when we can't and vice versa. We have a good partnership and are able to achieve a lot more by working together.

Friday

I sit down with Nick (Lees, Antisocial Behaviour Officer) so we can update each other on what is happening with the cases we are dealing with, which

We have a good partnership and are able to achieve a lot more by working together

have gone quiet, which are going to Court and so on. On Friday afternoon, if there are any updates I will ring our witnesses (we currently have eight on the go), make sure they are ok and tell them the latest news about their case.

By 4.30pm I'm ready to go home. The bruises from Monday have just about cleared up so if the weather's good, I may just find the time to go back out on the water!



Decent Homes

What is the Decent Homes Standard?

A Government target to ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010.

What is a decent home?

In order to be decent a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities.

Your home needs to meet all four of the decent homes criteria listed below to be classed as decent:

- It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- It is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (your home must have both effective insulation and efficient heating).

The minimum standard for housing was replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System in April 2006. This will assess the risks to health and safety, with the requirement for homes to be free of category 1 hazards (such as falls and fires) as defined in the legislation.

What are we doing to meet the standard?

In the four years since transfer £43 million has been spent on major improvements, which have gone a

long way to meeting the standard, with further significant investment planned up to 2010.

It is our intention to work closely with residents and we will be setting up an asset management focus group to assist this process.

Regular monitoring of our progress against the standard will take place which will allow us to ensure all our properties meet the target by 2010.

We are in negotiations with property services company, Savills, who have tendered to carry out a stock condition survey for us. The survey will give us an accurate picture of what work is left for us to carry out to bring us up to the Decent Homes Standard.

We will be surveying about half of all our homes to make sure our information is accurate. Please help us to make sure you get the work you need by allowing the Savill's surveyors to check your home. All the surveyor's will be carrying identity badges so don't forget to ask for them before you let them in. If you are not sure, always give us a call to first before letting anyone into your home.

by 2010



The results will be analysed by a new computer system which allows us to measure ourselves against the

standard. This will help us to target what investment is required and to which properties.

Should you require any further information about Decent Homes please contact:

Phil Brailsford

Asset Manager on 0115 9316848 or email philb@threevalleyshousing.com.

Download Decent Homes:

A Tenant's Guide from:

www.lha.org.uk/downloads/odpm_ho_use_025660.pdf

PARKING UP



One of the talking points raised by the editorial team this issue is parking on estate roads. Obviously, when our homes were built, there wasn't as much traffic on the roads and the roads were not built to cope with the amount of cars people now own.

We appreciate that this means it is not always easy to find somewhere to park, but we would ask you to park with care and consideration for other road users and pedestrians. Please don't park on paved or grassed areas because of the damage this causes. We have taken legal action in the past to recover costs from people who persistently ignore our advice and ruin grass verges by parking on them.

If you have a problem with people parking near your home, have a polite word with them first. If that doesn't work, and the people concerned are residents of Three Valleys Housing, call the Estate Management Team (the number is on the back page). We can take action but we need your help, so please keep a record of any problems you have experienced.

If the people parking are not residents of Three Valleys Housing, we have limited legal powers to tackle the problem. In that case, we suggest that you speak to the local Police or the Highways Department of Derbyshire County Council who may be able to help.

Tenant Board Members

Three Valleys is one of the largest housing associations in Derbyshire. The association was formed in 2002 following the transfer of the housing stock from Erewash Borough Council. We manage over 5,000 properties across the Erewash area and provide homes and services capable of sustaining communities and making a difference to the quality of people's lives.

We have successfully achieved 4 years of a 5 year improvement plan and have surmounted a challenging regeneration project, Hopewell Farm, which is now progressing well. We have also entered a development partnership with Eastern Shires.

The challenges that we face in the future include working towards achieving Green Lights in all areas from the Housing Corporation, preparing ourselves for Audit Commission inspection in October 2006 and planning for our move to new headquarters in 2007.

Tenant Board Members

Have you got the commitment and enthusiasm to make a difference to the community where you live?

We are looking for tenants to join the Board of Three Valleys Housing, to bring a tenant's perspective to the decisions we make. We want your help to ensure that our residents get the best possible services.

We want our Board to represent the diversity of the community we serve. We welcome applications from across the community but all applications will be treated on their merits.

To ask for an application pack, please contact Tony Robinson, Acting Company Secretary, Three Valleys Housing, Mark Street, Sandiacre, Derbyshire, NG10 5BJ or telephone 0115 968 4003 or email tonyr@threevalleyshousing.com.



How it works

Election of Tenant Board Members

As you can see from the advert opposite, we are currently looking for tenants to join the Board. We've been asked by the editorial team to explain how we appoint Board members, to take some of the mystery out of the process.

they will be expected to make.

If there are more successful candidates than there are vacancies on the Board, we will hold an election so that you can vote for the people you think are most

suitable to join our Board. If we have the same number or less candidates, there will be no need to hold an election and the selection panel will recommend the candidates to the Board for membership.



Anyone who applies will be asked to fill in an application form, stating why they want to join and what skills they think they will bring to the Board. All the applications received by 23rd June 2006 will be looked at by the Board selection panel. The panel is made up of Board members who are not up for re-election this year.

If we have an election, we will send a profile of the candidates, along with a photo, to every household and ask them to vote for the people they think most appropriate. The votes will need to be returned by 18th August 2006. The votes will be counted and the results sent to the Board for them to make their final decision at the Annual General Meeting on 11 September 2006.

In early July, the selection panel will arrange to interview any tenants who have applied. We will also be holding a 'mock' Board meeting, so tenants can find out what it is like to be at a Board meeting and to see the sort of decisions

One thing to bear in mind is that the Board has the final say about who they accept for membership so be nice to the selection panel if you get the chance.

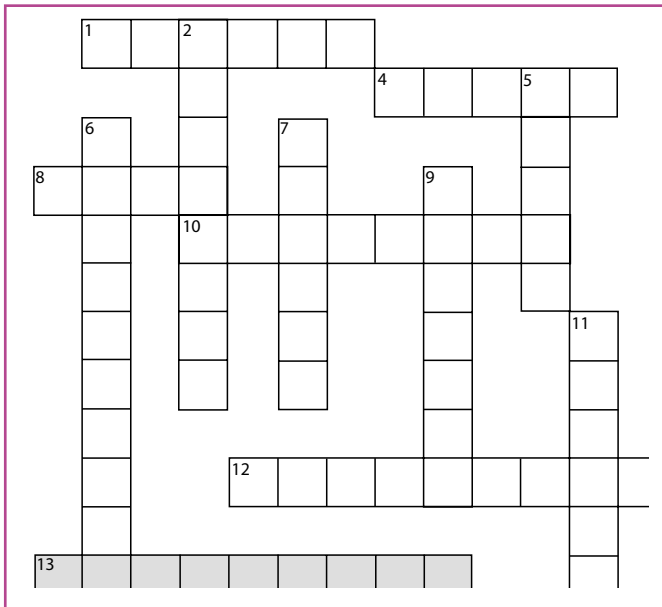


£25

Prize Draw Crossword

Created by Phil Campbell with EclipseCrossword - www.eclipsecrossword.com

A crossword is what you asked for, so here you go. To win the prize, work out the word in the shaded boxes. Send your answer on a postcard to Phil Campbell at the address on the back page or email philc@threevalleyshousing.com with 'Crossword' in the subject line. The winner of our sudoku puzzle was Mrs Marshall of Borrowwash.



Across

1. What type of homes?
4. The number of valleys in our name
8. Have your say at the meetings
10. Which school have we helped recently?
12. Viability, Governance and?
13. We'll be here on Wednesday 5th July

Down

2. Our 24 hour call centre
3. Join us on the bus
5. More than 9 out of 10 residents read "Contact" issue
6. Our interim Chief Executive
7. What type of Board members are we advertising for?
9. The Corporation
11. We are regenerating homes at..... Farm

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 1st June - 7.00pm
Ock-Ash Group meeting - Nottingham Road Methodist Church Hall, Borrowwash

Tuesday 6th June - 6:30pm -
Hopewell Farm Residents Group - venue to be confirmed

Wednesday 7th June
Participation Bus Roadshow - Kirk Hallam*

Wednesday 14th June
Participation Bus Roadshow - Ilkeston*

Tuesday 20th June - 7:00pm -
Draycott & Breaston Tenants & Residents Action Group meeting, Scout HQ, Garfield Avenue, Draycott

Wednesday 21st June
Participation Bus Roadshow - Breaston and Draycott*

Wednesday 28th June
Participation Bus Roadshow - Ilkeston*

Tuesday 4th July - 6.30pm -
Hopewell Farm Residents Group - venue to be confirmed

Wednesday 5th July
Participation Bus Roadshow - Petersham Estate, Long Eaton*

Thursday 6th July - 7:00pm -
Ock-ash Group meeting - Nottingham Road Methodist Church Hall, Borrowwash

Wednesday 12th July
Participation Bus Roadshow - Sandiacre*

Wednesday 19th July
Participation Bus Roadshow - Ilkeston Twon Centre*

Wednesday 26th July
Participation Bus Roadshow - Stanley Common, West Hallam*

Don't forget, we hold regular surgeries at the SureStart centre on Kenilworth Drive, Kirk Hallam every Wednesday. They run from 9.25am to 12.25pm and there is a different department each week.

Call **0115 909 8195** to book an appointment if you would like to see someone.

*The Participation Bus will be at various locations throughout the day. Look out for the letter that tells you where to find us when we're in your area. For more information, call Ian Marsden on **0115 968 4010**.

