

keynews



Summer 2008

Better Homes • Stronger Communities



New, streamlined caretaker service launched

In this issue...

- Steaming ahead with improvement programme
- Action Week success
- Browse your tenant involvement menu
- Win a barbecue with our wordsearch



How to contact us

Our repairs hotline number remains the same 0800 0326363. Please use this number to report your day to day repairs or in the event of an emergency.

For all other enquiries call our main switchboard on (01724) 279900 and our friendly, professional staff will transfer your call to the team or person you wish to speak to.

Our Local Housing Offices are located at:

19-23 Broadway, Ashby, Scunthorpe
Tel: 01724 298771

**The Willows, Willow Drive,
Barton-upon-Humber**
Tel: 01724 298772

53 Henderson Avenue, Scunthorpe
Tel: 01724 298773

65 Enderby Road, Scunthorpe
Tel: 01724 298774

**The opening hours for all
housing offices are:**

Monday 9am to 5pm

Tuesday 9am to 5pm

Wednesday 9am to 4pm

Thursday 9am to 5pm

Friday 9am to 4.30pm

We can make an appointment for a member of staff to visit you at home, or meet with you at one of our offices – just call our main number 279900 to arrange a home visit or appointment.

You can also visit our website www.nlhomes.org.uk, where you can give us feedback on our services.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the summer edition of Key News. It has been a busy time for North Lincolnshire Homes over the last few months, as the improvements works continue to progress. To highlight this we have increased the number of pages in the magazine to a bumper 12 pages.

In this edition we feature Action Week, where staff have been ditching their suits to join tenants and our housing officers in helping to clean up their neighbourhoods. There is also a focus on the launch of a new caretaker service, which has been well received by the public so far. Finally, there's a chance to win a barbecue, by simply filling in the wordsearch at the back of the magazine. On behalf of myself and the organisation, I wish you a pleasant summer.

Andy Bond



NEW PR TEAM

Hi, we are the new PR and Communications Team at North Lincolnshire Homes, and we want our readers to have a say on future editions of Key News.

Our team includes Communication Manager Lisa Fleming and Senior Communications Officer Andy Bond, who will largely be responsible for editing Key News.

Our aim is to make the magazine as user friendly, informative and interesting as possible to our readers, and your input is crucial in this.

If you have any bright ideas for future editions of Key News please email Andy Bond on andy.bond@nlhomes.org.uk, or contact him on: (01724) 298635.

North Lincolnshire Homes' improvement programme steams ahead

North Lincolnshire Homes' successful first year of improvement works looks set to continue into its second year, as its multi million pound scheme gathers pace.

Year Two's programme is steaming ahead, with hundreds of tenants' properties already being refurbished.

NLH hopes to deliver £30 million this year on homes, as it continues to exceed targets.

Since April, contractors Anglian have put in more than 2,700 windows in 381 properties. There have been more than 400 new doors replaced. The total expenditure by Anglian this year is more than £800,000.

Due to the exceptional performance of Anglian with the window, door and roofline programme in its first year, it has already been possible to complete most of the original year two works and some from year three. The remaining work will now be completed over the next two years, which will result in a saving on preliminary costs and inflation of rates.

Meanwhile, so far this year, Mears Group has spent £430,000. It has carried out rewiring on 27 properties, with 21 new bathrooms, 12 kitchens, 27 heating systems.

Bullock Construction, North Lincolnshire Homes' third main contractors, has spent £1.7 million, with 122 rewires, 108 bathrooms, 49 kitchens, 105 heating systems.

Neil Webster, head of investment at North Lincolnshire Homes, has hailed the association's achievements so far.

He said: "The improvement works continue to proceed at a fast rate, above our predictions. When we took over the housing stock from North Lincolnshire Council, forming a constructive, proactive plan for improvement works was top of our agenda. It is satisfying to be not only reaching targets, but exceeding them. It does of course mean that tenants are having to wait less and

also shows that the system as a whole is fluent and effective."

North Lincolnshire Homes' Chief Executive, Jane Duncan, meanwhile said: "The success of the improvement works is top on our agenda and it is very satisfying to see the progress. As each week goes by, more houses are being modernised, which is having a direct, positive effect on our tenants' lives. This is pleasing both for us as an organisation, but also on a human level. But we are not finished yet and there is a long way to go. We are determined to complete the job we pledged when we took over in February 2007."

More than 9,000 properties are set to be improved under North Lincolnshire Homes' five year £100 million programme of work. Around 1,780 properties had new windows put in the first year. There were 1118 bathroom replacements, and 1,286 electrical rewires and upgrades.

The total expenditure on year one improvement work was estimated to be £24 million. This included work undertaken by the three main contractors, Mears, Bullock and Anglian; and a range of smaller contractors and North Lincolnshire Homes internal workforce.

The total expenditure on disabled adaptation work totalled around £600,000, which provided 45 completed stair lifts and 75 properties with level access showers or ramps. A further £600,000 will be spent in year two.

IMPROVEMENT WORKS CASE STUDY



NAME: Julia White

AGE: 40

**OCCUPATION:
Checkout operator**

Details: lives in a property on Plymouth Road, Scunthorpe. She has had improvement

works carried out by Bullocks, which includes a new kitchen, bathroom, part rewire; and new radiators. The work was completed at the beginning of June.

She said: "I am really pleased with the work that has been done and it is great to have a new look in my home. There was a lot of work to be done and I'm pleased with how things have gone."

New first class service leads the way for positive action in neighbourhoods

Many of you will be pleased to hear that we've re-launched our caretaker service, bringing a visible presence into our neighbourhoods.

The move comes after a review of services offered by North Lincolnshire Homes.

The review highlighted the importance of a street-based service and so an 18-strong caretaking team is back on the streets with an updated and clear remit to manage communal entrances, targeting sheltered housing areas in particular, and keeping communities clean and tidy.

North Lincolnshire Homes hopes it will not only improve the look of its neighbourhoods, but also inspire tenants to take positive action.

The caretakers will be out on their patches from 8am to 4pm each day (8am to 3.30pm Friday) following the launch of the scheme last month.

Empty Homes Manager Linder Melbourne, said: "Following a review, we found there is a vital need for caretakers to be brought back on to the streets of North Lincolnshire Homes. Their role is clearly defined and we feel their presence and action will form another cog in making communal areas look smarter and promoting positive action. The caretakers will form an integral part for North Lincolnshire Homes with its focus clearly on improving the quality of life for its tenants."

However, she stressed: "We hope that by leading the way, the caretakers will set an example which will inspire tenants to take positive action themselves – this is one of our main objectives."



Chief Executive Jane Duncan, said: "The caretaker service is vital and has been lacking. It is important to our tenants that they can rely on a service in their communities which will be looking at work outside their properties. Living in a smarter area improves the feel good factor for the tenants and in the long run makes a big difference to the tenants."

Tenant Christine Kirk, of Tansley Court, said the new service will bring much needed, positive affects to her neighbourhood.

She said: "We want to bring the estates back to the standards that they used to be and make the area look better."

"I think the caretaker service will be excellent as someone will be keeping an eye on the estate."

"Since North Lincolnshire Homes took over the homes, a lot of work has been done and there is a good team working for us. It is all about getting the community spirit back."

Gardening competition blooms

As flowers bloom in the early summer sun, the judging has begun in North Lincolnshire Homes' first ever gardening competition. In the last edition of Key News people were asked to put forward their gardens for a host of categories including Best Community Garden, Best Container/Window Box/Hanging Basket; and Best Kept Garden. Many tenants and leaseholders put a lot of effort into keeping their gardens in trim which benefits communities as a whole. Their incentives for entering were the prizes

on offer which included £75 for first, £50 for second prize; and £25 for third. Since the last edition we have had more than 40 entrants. The closing date has now passed and judging has begun. Winners will be notified in writing in July. Results will be shown in the next edition of Key News.



Lakeside Development Homes

North Lincolnshire Homes has staked a claim in a top housing development earmarked for Scunthorpe.

The housing association beat off competition from two other social housing bodies to secure a total of ten homes on the Lakeside development, currently being built by a consortium of developers.

Chief Executive Jane Duncan said: "We are delighted that North Lincolnshire Council enabled us to bid for these properties and obviously we are thrilled to have won as these will be the first new homes for North Lincolnshire Homes.

"We hope this is the start of a successful partnership between us and North Lincolnshire Council.

"Eight of the new homes will be for rent and will become part of North Lincolnshire Homes' property portfolio.

"Two homes will be available for discounted sale, which is our contribution to helping local people onto the home-owning ladder by providing affordable homes for sale."

Andy Orrey, Director of Finance, said: "Building new homes is a good thing for North Lincolnshire Homes. It gives more option to tenants and also mitigates the affects of homes that are being bought out as part of our right to buy policy. It is exciting for us to have made our mark on one of the major developments being built in our region."

The properties are being built by a number of companies including Barratt Properties and Stanford as part of a larger development of up to 800 homes for sale in a £150 million development.

North Lincolnshire Mayor, Cllr Ishaq Jawaid MBE said: "I am overjoyed the council was able to play a role in securing the properties for North Lincolnshire Homes.

"Having affordable housing in North Lincolnshire is extremely important. The two houses that will be sold at a discounted price are a great asset. It can be difficult to get on the property ladder so having the opportunity to buy a house that has a third off the market value will really help.

"I would like to congratulate North Lincolnshire Homes on securing the ten properties."

The two homes for discounted sale will be sold for around a third off the market value. There will be a covenant in the sale, that if the occupier chooses to sell the property, they too will have to sell at a third off the current market value. North Lincolnshire Homes will be working with the Council to develop the criteria for the sale of these two homes.



With Jane are Mayor of North Lincolnshire Councillor Ishaq Jawaid, and Barratt Homes' Site Manager Simon Reynolds



Massive clean-up week proves a big success

An army of North Lincolnshire Homes' staff joined forces with its tenants to spark a massive clean-up operation and promote positive neighbourhood action.

During 'Action Week' at the beginning of June, a whopping 60 skips were filled with rubbish – around 400 tonnes in total.

Staff focused on 14 areas across the region, from Haxey to the banks of the Humber at Barton, which housing officers felt were most in need of a bit of work.

Skips were placed at the sites to dispose of rubbish, whether it be bed settees, to general rubbish and litter, and were filled and taken away to local tips. The week also included a makeover of sheltered housing area Tattershall Close, where North Lincolnshire Homes' office-based staff got involved to install 12 new flowering window boxes to replace old ones. Help was also given in that area on gardens and litter picking.



On hand to manage the clean-up were North Lincolnshire Homes' dedicated housing officers, caretakers and staff.

Resident of Tattershall Close, Jean Jacobs (65), who received a new flower box, which was put outside her first floor window, hailed the Action Week.

She said: "I think it is brilliant. The work was much needed. Rubbish and mess does build up a bit around this area and it is good for it to be cleared up.

"I think it is great that I have received a flower box. I am really going to enjoy it – it will look great filled with some French marigolds and trailing lobelia. The old flower boxes I had were looking a bit dated, so it is all good news."



Linder Melbourne, Empty Homes Manager, who led her team into action during the week, said: "The Action Week was about joining with the tenants and making a concerted effort to make a difference to their neighbourhoods. It was not just about getting rid of rubbish, but we have also been giving advice to the residents so that they can kick start their own action in the future. The roads were chosen by our housing officers as areas most in need of a bit of work."



Chief Executive Jane Duncan, said: "At North Lincolnshire Homes we want to make a big difference to tenants' lives, not just through our improvement programme, but also on a wider scale, out onto the streets and neighbourhoods. An Action Week was a good way for residents to get together and show their community spirit."



Action week began on Monday, 9 June and skips were placed at the locations throughout each day, from 8am until each clean-up was completed. Due to its success, more such weeks are expected in the future.



ISLE OF AXHOLME SURVEY SUCCESS

Successful tenant consultations could pave the way for more than £800,000 spending on new heating systems.

Some of this could be spent on creating new, eco friendly, renewable fuel systems which would not only benefit the environment, but also combat rising fuel costs.

A North Lincolnshire Homes survey, which covered questions on the availability of gas alternatives, was sent out to 167 residents in the Isle of Axholme and garnered an impressive 102 replies – more than a 60 per cent return rate.

Many tenants' properties in that area are not connected to gas supplies, and the survey sought to give them a chance to put forward their preferred choices of fuel for the future.

As part of Government guidelines, housing associations and councils must renew heating systems on their stock every 15 years.

From results taken, an overwhelming majority of those responding wished to remain with the heating type they currently have, which are solid fuel systems, or electric storage heaters.

Of those consulted, 34 residents wanted new electric storage heaters, 44 wanted solid fuel – coal power, six wanted a new electric wet system using off peak energy; and 18 wanted air source heat pumps – an eco friendly, renewable fuel alternative.

The latter draw thermal energy from the air rather than underground. They release up to four times more heat energy than they consume in powering their various components and so offer an energy efficient, sustainable heating solution.

North Lincolnshire Homes' head of investment, Neil Webster, said: "It was essential for us to get an understanding of what type of heating residents wanted in this area, which is off gas. We do promote eco alternatives, but these may not be viable in certain situations. The air source heating pumps would be a good starting point for North Lincolnshire Homes to embrace renewable technologies in the face of rising fuel costs. We hope to have the new systems installed by the end of this financial year."

Mr Webster said there is another possibility of ground source heat pumps. These work on the same principle to air source heat pumps but extract heat from the ground. The cost of installation is being assessed and, if equally efficient to air source heat pumps, could be offered as an alternative to those tenants expressing a preference for air source heat pumps.

Tenants to shape the future of NLH

A questionnaire is to be sent out in September to tenants which will be crucial in forming the basis of future action by the housing association.

The Status Survey is a compulsory satisfaction questionnaire which is complied by the National Housing Federation.

It features questions which range from how satisfied tenants are with a service, to highlighting problems in their neighbourhoods.

It covers main important issues for any housing association and its tenants, covering repairs and maintenance, communication and information; and anti social behaviour.

Michelle Slater, North Lincolnshire Homes' Head of Business Improvement, expressed how crucial it is that tenants fill out the survey, which is set to be delivered to households by the early autumn.

She said: "The questionnaire is going to be the first of its type to be sent out to tenants since North Lincolnshire Homes took over the homes in 2007.

"It is a crucial survey, not only for us so that we know what we need to work on, but also more importantly for our tenants, so we can make our service better for them.

"The survey is a way for the tenants to get their views across on a wide scale and shape our future. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for people to fill one in. Without their input, we do not know what we are falling short on, or what changes need to be made. My message is to any tenant - when the survey drops through your letter box, please fill it in."

Chief Executive Jane Duncan said: "With the survey being the first comprehensive one since our induction, I am eager to see its results. Since we took over in February 2007 we have strived to be transparent to our tenants and listening to what they want, whether it is through action groups, or taking suggestive advice out in our estates. It is crucial that tenants take a few minutes to fill the survey in."

New Minicom Service for

A new computer programme has been set up to streamline communication between call centre staff and deaf and hearing impaired residents.

The programme, Sensory Coms, has recently been installed onto all the computers in the call centre department at North Lincolnshire Homes' Meridian House.

It aims to speed up the fluency of dealing with a certain nature of call. Previously when staff answered calls from North Lincolnshire Homes' deaf or hearing impaired tenants, which total more than 20, the residents would type their queries into a special telephone which would relayed to a centre in Liverpool. It would then read back the message to North Lincolnshire Homes staff, and vice versa. Hence, there would be a third party involved in every phone call.

However, the new system eliminates the third party, making it a one to one conversation between residents and the call centre. When a call is made or received, staff simply communicate with the tenants by writing the dialogue on their screens which is then transmitted through a server in to the residents' homes in a manner which they can understand.

Call Centre Supervisor, Jenny Wells, who has worked in the department since 1995, has hailed the new programme, claiming it makes the calls not only more streamlined, but importantly, more personal too.

She said: "There were many limitations in speaking to someone through a third party, but particularly when the calls are more complicated or on more sensitive matters.

North Lincolnshire Homes' nine call centre staff are already up to speed with the new programme, and have given their thumbs up to it.

Head of Business Improvement, Michelle Slater said: "It is an excellent new programme which really was needed in the call centre. We are always looking to move forward and this is another step on the ladder. Improving the fluency of answering calls improves our services not only to our hearing impaired or deaf tenants, but to the rest of the tenants as well."

Minicom 01724 298 649

CUSTOMER ACCESS REVIEW

How do you access the services of North Lincolnshire Homes and can we make it easier for you?

These are the questions that will be asked as part of a review of customer access by North Lincolnshire Homes.

The review is due to begin soon and will seek to identify how tenants, leaseholders and applicants contact North Lincolnshire Homes, what they expect and how they prefer to make contact, whether it be in person, over the telephone, through the website or by another method.

Leading the review, Director of Housing Services Steve Hepworth said: "Communication is vital to our business. We want to make sure that all of our tenants, leaseholders and applicants can access our services and contact us in a way that is easy for them. We have set up a project team to review how customers currently access North Lincolnshire Homes and come up with achievable and affordable ways of how we can continue to improve the way we deliver services to residents."

Progress on the Customer Access Review will feature in future editions of Key News.

STAFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

NAME: Jennifer Williams

AGE: 27

JOB TITLE: Organisational Learning Officer

ROLE: Jennifer was assigned to this position at the beginning of June. She looks at and records comments and feedback from the public and looks at how we can use that to positively impact on the service provided by North Lincolnshire Homes.

WORK/STUDY HISTORY: Jennifer, a graduate in geography, is currently studying for a Masters in Housing Policy and Practice at Sheffield Hallam University.

INTERESTING FACT: Besides being busy studying, Jennifer enjoys being active and socialising.



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Win a barbecue



Please return the coupon below with your completed wordsearch to: PR and Communications Department, North Lincolnshire Homes, Meridian House, Normanby Road, Scunthorpe, North Lincs, DN15 8QZ.

Entries must be in by Friday, August 1st 2008, and the winner will be drawn from all the correct entries. The editor's decision is final.

- SEASIDE
- SAND CASTLES
- BUCKET AND SPADE
- PADDLING POOL
- SUMMERTIME
- BLUE SKY
- SUNSHINE
- SUN HAT
- SUMMER HOLIDAYS
- PICNICS
- ICE-CREAM
- SUN CREAM
- BEACH
- BEACH BALL
- SUNGLASSES
- LOLLIPOP

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Daytime telephone number: _____

North Lincolnshire Homes – to talk to us in:

08000 193530 (Arabic) للحصول على المزيد من المعلومات اتصل بـ:

তথ্যগুলি বাংলায় জানতে হলে এই নম্বরে ফোন করুন: 08000 193531 (Bengali)

欲知粵語版的信息, 請致電: 08000 193532 (Cantonese)

हिन्दी में जानकारी के लिये 08000 193533 पर फोन करें (Hindi)

بە کۆرەیی سۆزانی تەلەفۆن بۆ ژمارە 08000 193537 (Kurdish Sorani)

Para mais informação em português contacte-nos através do telefone 08000 193538 (Portuguese)

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ 08000 193539 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ (Punjabi)

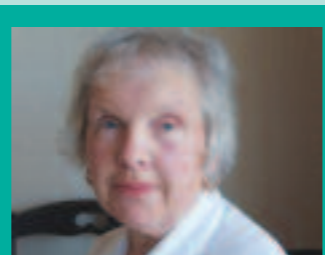
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Nie mówisz po angielsku? Po informacji zadzwoń pod numer 08000 195587 (Polish)

Не знаете английский? Для информации звоните 08000 195586 (Russian)

For information in large print, audio, Braille or to request a signer to speak to us please contact 01724 296296



Congratulations to Joan Duce who was our lucky word search winner from the last issue of Key News. She said: "I'm so pleased to have won. It is the first time I have won something, so it was a big surprise."