



ABRONHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



We are Open!

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Since mid-March we have re-opened our office to the public. Please wear a mask and respect our social distancing measures. They are in place for your safety as well as for our staff. Only 2 persons max at a time please!

We don't accept rent payments at our office. Please continue to make payments by phone 01236 457948 Or online www.allpay.net

Out of Hours Repairs

If you need to report an emergency during this time please contact the following contractors:

All emergency repairs (non gas central heating related)
RODGERS AND JOHNSTON
0800 999 2520

Gas central heating breakdown
GasSure (James Frew Ltd) 01294 468113.
Please contact our office on 01236 457948 during normal working hours to report any faults.

Gas escapes should be reported **IMMEDIATELY** TO 0800 111 999
Our answer machine also details the above numbers. Please keep them handy.



HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Rent Consultation 2022/23

We received 10 responses to our recent consultation on rent levels for 2022/23. A big thank you to all tenants who responded. We entered the names of all tenants who replied into a prize draw for £50 of Shopping Vouchers, this was won by a tenant in Rowan Road – **congratulations!**

This response rate was disappointingly low and it means that over 200 tenants did not respond to the consultation, so we do not know their views on the proposed rent increase. We will therefore look to change the way we consult with tenants in order to maximise feedback, opinions and views from tenants.

You can read more about our consultation on rent increases on our website www.abronhillha.org.uk

The Association's rent increase for 22/23 was 4.2%



The Management Committee thought long and hard over the results of the consultation. Many commented that they found this one of the toughest decisions they had taken on the Ab Bronhill Committee. They also looked at the financial plans that seek to ensure that the Association remains in sound financial health over the longer term and can continue to invest in its homes and services. It is critical that the Association has enough rental income to be able to repay the loans it took out to significantly improve or replace the housing stock when the Association was set up.

The current economic situation is extremely challenging both for individuals and for businesses. Inflation is at a rate not seen for a generation. The rent consultation was based on an inflation rate of 4.2%, but inflation is now even higher at over 6% and looks set to remain high for the remainder of the year. That means that the price the Association pays for materials, goods and services may well increase at that rate. We need to have the ability to pay for those things in order to continue to deliver high quality services to our tenants.

Based on this the Management Committee of the Association made the decision that rents would go up by 4.2% in the coming financial year. Individual letters were issued to all tenants before the end of February 2022 providing exact details of the new charge from 28 March 2022 for their property.

We are aware that the UK & Scottish Governments are putting in place measures to seek to ease the burden of increased costs for households and we support these efforts. We will also actively seek opportunities to bid for funding to help support the Ab Bronhill community. For example, we were awarded £11,000 from the Scottish Government's Social Housing Fuel Support Fund which we have distributed to a large number of our tenants to help support them manage increasing energy costs.

A big thank you again to all those tenants who took the time to talk to us, comment on Facebook or complete the consultation document either on paper or online.

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE NEWS

How to deal with ants

We are again coming to the time of year when garden ants become a real nuisance and difficult to get rid of. We remind tenants that Abrohill Housing Association does not carry out treatments for garden ants. Here is some information which may assist you to deal with the problem:

- Although they live outdoors, they can find their way into homes in large numbers through small gaps in brickwork, at windows and doors in their search for food.
- They search for sweet foods so your first control measure must be to ensure that you are not accidentally encouraging them - even a small spill of a soft drink would be a feast to a horde of ants.

Treatment:

You should carry out treatment against ants yourself and need to be thorough.

- Apply a residual insecticide for crawling insects. You will be able to buy these at many DIY supermarkets and garden centres.
- Apply it to the entrance to the nest and wherever ants can enter your home.
- Inside your house you should apply the insecticide around the sink unit, skirting boards, around doors and window frames.
- You are trying to create a band of insecticide which ants must cross to get into your home.



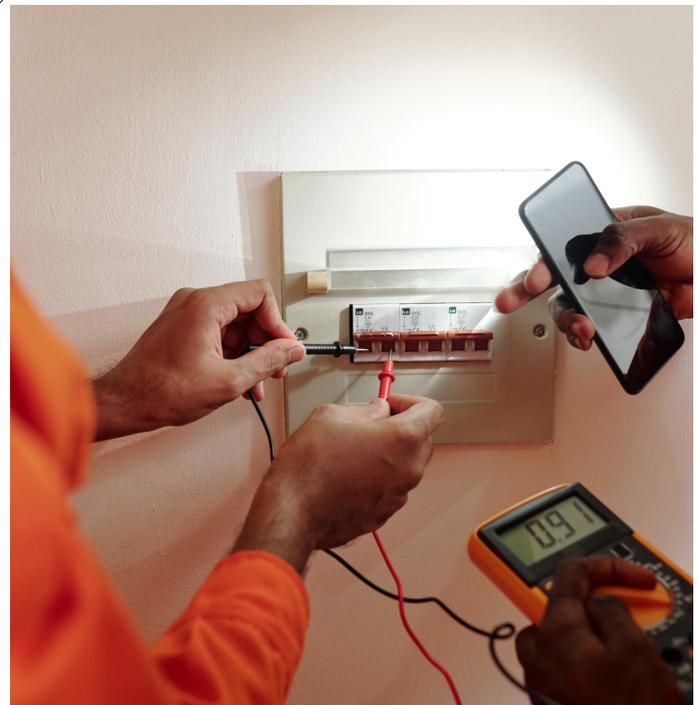
To ensure you get rid of the problem you will need to find their nest. Follow any ant trails and look for small entrance holes in the ground surrounded by small piles of fine earth. Once you have found the nest follow the instructions that come with the pesticide about dealing with ants' nests. Please read the label and follow the instructions on the pesticide you chose.

Electrical Testing

We're continuing essential electrical safety testing in our homes and tenants will soon receive a letter with an appointment for our contractor AC Gold to carry out a Periodic Electrical Test.

The safety of our tenants and residents is paramount and these checks allow us to examine the condition of the wiring against safety standards. Some wiring can deteriorate or become damaged over time, with the result of electric shock, fire and burns.

This forms part of our legal duty to carry out inspections, and tenants are required to allow these to take place. We would urge tenants to keep their appointment, or if it's not convenient, phone our Maintenance Officer to arrange a new appointment "These safety checks are vitally important for keeping our tenants and residents safe, this type of testing takes place every five years and is carried out with the minimal of disruption to tenants. So, if you receive an appointment, please keep this, and ensure access is provided. We're asking tenants to work with us and provide access to allow us to protect them and their homes from fire and give them the peace of mind that their home remains safe.



We are also reassuring tenants that staff will continue to wear face masks, maintain social distancing and carry out these checks with tenant safety in mind. If, on the day of an appointment, a tenant displays symptoms of coronavirus they should cancel and reschedule.

If a tenant refuses to provide access and seems unaware of their, and our obligations to maintain and keep them and their properties safe, as a last resort Abrohill Housing Association does have legal powers to enforce access if all attempts of co-operation are exhausted.

Tips to make sure the water in your home is safe

Setting the right temperature

Legionella bacteria is more likely to grow between 20C and 50C, so where possible set hot water cylinders at 60C or above. Our properties are fitted with a thermostatic mixer valve at the bath, which would then reduce the temperature of the water going into the bath. Always carefully test the temperature of hot water to avoid scalding and of course keep children away from hot water. Regular use of cold water should also ensure temperatures stay below 20C.

De-scale taps and showers

Legionella bacteria can grow and multiply on scale or rust. So de-scale taps and showers every three months or when there is an obvious build-up of scale.

The harder the water in your area, the more frequently you should de-scale.

Clean the taps in your bath, basin, and sink by brushing the scale off with a nylon brush or wiping them with a diluted bleach solution. You can also use any de-scaling solution that you can buy from hardware shops.

If you have a shower that has a flexible hose, fit it with a "hose retaining ring". This will stop it falling into bath water and so decrease the risk of contamination.

Use water taps once a week

This helps to make sure you don't have water standing still in pipes. If you've been away for more than a week, you should run all your taps for a few minutes before using the water.

You'll also need to run the water in the shower. Make sure you remove the shower head before doing this so the water doesn't spray and create water droplets. If you can't remove the shower head, cover it with a towel or a plastic bag while you run the water.

Flush away those bacteria

The water in your home is more likely to have legionella if you haven't used it for a while. So if you have been away for more than a week, you should:

- Heat up your water system to the normal temperature
- Run every tap for at least five minutes
- Slowly flush the cold taps until the water runs cold

Remember that when flushing taps or other outlets open slowly so you don't splash water or release droplets in the air.



Energy Saving Tips

With longer days and (hopefully) better weather just around the corner, spring is a great time to be looking at ways you could save some pennies. Have a look at these top tips, from Home Energy Scotland, to help you prepare for warmer months ahead and see what you could save over a whole year.

- 1. Reset your thermostats** During the winter, you probably set your temperature at a high level so be sure to reset your thermostats to reflect the warmer weather. Dropping the heat by just 1°C can save you on average £80 per year. And don't forget to reset any thermostat timers – more sunlight means your house will naturally be warmer and lighter, so you'll not need the heating on as much, if at all.
- 2. Change the way you pay** Contact your supplier directly to find out if there is a better way for you to pay your bill that might save you money. For example, most suppliers offer a discount for paying your bill by direct debit. You may also get discounts for receiving bills online, as this cuts down on paper and reduces costs for the supplier and is good for the environment
- 3. Embrace the great outdoors** Take full advantage of the warmer weather by linedrying your clothes instead of using the tumble dryer. This could save on average £35 a year on your electricity bill. Less time spent indoors also means less money spent on your energy bills, so why not head outdoors for a bike ride or take a stroll around the park if you can?
- 4. Switch off** If you're planning any day trips away, remember to switch appliances off at the wall. Turning off appliances rather than leaving them on standby could save you around £30 a year on your bills each year.

For more energy saving tips and free advice to help you reduce your bills and keep warm at home, contact Home Energy Scotland on freephone 0808 808 2282, visit homeenergyscotland.org or follow 'HomeEnergyScotSC' on Facebook and @HomeEnergyScot on Twitter.

Test It Tuesday

We provide smoke alarms in all our houses, and they are also subjected to annual checks. However, you should test these weekly to make sure that they are always working. (TEST IT TUESDAY) If there appears to be a fault, you should report this to our Maintenance Officer.

Remember it is important to keep the smoke alarm in working order – it could save your life. Please make sure that you do not cover up your smoke detectors at any time. If there is a fire and your detector is covered then the alarm will not always be effective.

By 1 Feb 2022, all homes in Scotland were required to have a minimum number of smoke alarms under changes made to the Housing (Scotland) Act in the wake of the Grenfell Tower blaze and Abronhill Housing welcomes this initiative to improve fire safety for our tenants.

The new requirements means that Abronhill Housing have now installed a smoke alarm in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes (living room), a smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings and a heat alarm in every kitchen. However, we have taken steps to ensure that there is minimum disruption to existing decoration in properties by insisting that all alarms are ceiling mounted and interlinked using RF (radio frequency) and therefore, there will be no need to expose electric cables or damage to papering or painting. The sealed long-life battery in these units should last for a minimum of 10 years.

If you feel your home is not up to the new standard or want advice on how to test the alarms, please contact the office for advice or to arrange an inspection.

It's Test It Tuesday! Making sure you have working smoke & heat alarms could save your life. Test them weekly to make sure if fire does break out everyone in your home has time to get out safely. More: www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/at-home/alarms





Reporting Repairs

*If you require to report a repair, you are able to do this by telephoning the office on **01236 457948** or by visiting our office during our Opening Hours. Or you can email us admin@abronhillha.org.uk (non emergency repairs only)*

Outwith office hours and during public holidays, emergency repairs only should be reported the following numbers:

RODGERS & JOHNSON 0800 999 2520

JAMES FREW (Gas Sure) 01294 468113
(for gas heating repairs)

Gas escapes should be reported immediately to National Grid (formerly Transco) on 0800 111 999.

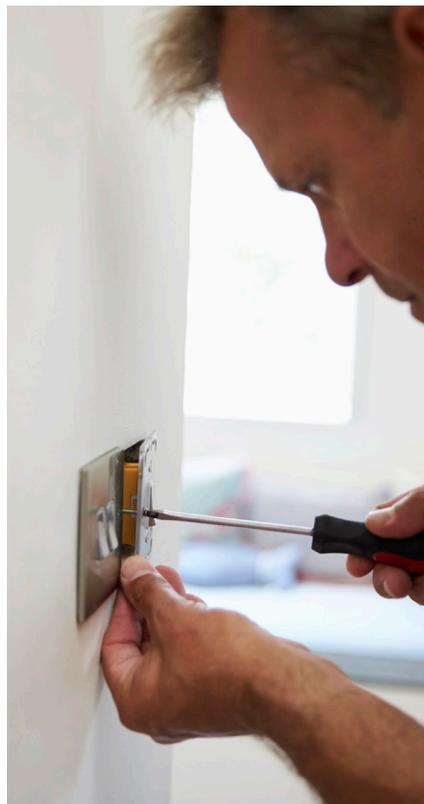
Please note that **ONLY** emergency repairs should be called out of hours, any abuse of this service may result in you being recharged. If your repair is not an emergency please contact the office during office hours.

The timescale for carrying out repairs is as follows:

Emergency - 6 hours

Urgent - 3 days

Routine - 10 days



HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

As your landlord, Abronhill Housing Association insures your property/building, however it does not insure any of your contents. This includes things like your furniture, personal belongings or decoration. If any of these are destroyed or damaged in a fire, burst pipes or by accident you will need to pay for them to be replaced if you have no contents insurance.

It is important that you take out your own Home Contents Insurance to protect your belongings and replace them if need be. It not only covers your household goods but it can cover things like replacing keys if they are lost or stolen.

If you would like a leaflet sent out or you would like more information regarding contents insurance, please contact the office.

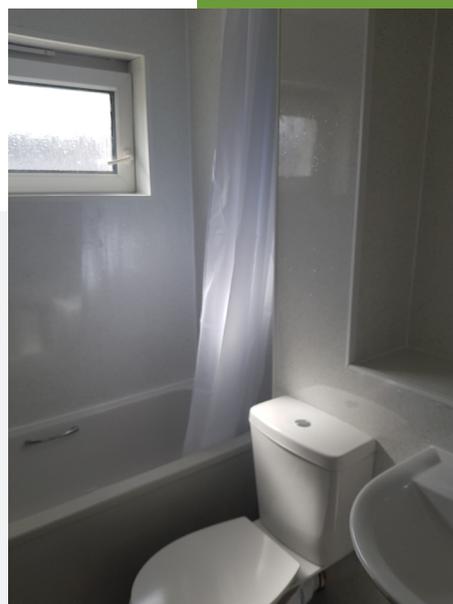
Planned Maintenance News

The Association currently has a major repairs programme underway to replace 10 bathroom suites and replace 19 of our least efficient gas heating boilers with new high energy efficient systems at a cost of just under £100,000. Given the ever increasing costs of energy prices we hope that our tenants see savings in their monthly bills. This project has been undertaken by Thomas Meade Plumbing and Drainage and our tenants have been delighted with the work that has been carried out.

The Association plan on carrying out the following major repairs programmes within this financial year:

28 electric boiler replacements with new high efficient gas boilers	20 replacement gas heating boilers
5 bathroom suites	20 new front entrance doors

We are hopeful of starting these programmes from July onwards. We will be in contact with tenants before any work commences.



Woodcutter Site

Our new build at the old Woodcutter site, now renamed Aspen Place, will be handed over at the end of July 2022. We are now receiving applications from anyone who is interested in being considered for one of these new homes. You must have some form of housing need to be eligible.

The homes are a mix of flats and cottage flats.



16 flats and 20 cottage flats of a variety of sizes

-	-	Number	APT Size	Person Size	Monthly Rent
Flats	-	4	2 APT	2 Person	£353.58*
Flats	-	12	3 APT	4 Person	£366.27*
Cottage Flats	Wheelchair	2	4 APT	6 Person	£418.70
Cottage Flats	Upper	4	3 APT	3 Person	£391.16
Cottage Flats	Upper	4	3 APT	4 Person	£391.16
Cottage Flats	Ground	4	3 APT	4 Person	£391.16
Cottage Flats	Upper	3	2 APT	2 Person	£359.23
Cottage Flats	Ground	3	2 APT	2 Person	£359.23

*A monthly service charge for common services (including stair lighting, close cleaning) will apply to the flats.

The development is a partnership with Clyde Valley Housing Association (CVHA) and David Wilson Homes Ltd. The homes will be purchased from CVHA by Abronhill HA. If you would like to be considered for one of these new homes please contact Alex Bell Housing Officer by phone 01236 457948 or by email to admin@abronhillha.org.uk

Post Office Feasibility Study

In May we appointed Ahead Business Consultancy (ABC) to undertake a feasibility study into a community run post office service. We secured National Lottery funding to pay for this study.

Many of you might be aware that following the closure last autumn of the Post Office a new commercial operator was found with a commitment to re-open a Post office from a new shop in the Shopping Centre. As yet this has not happened so we have decided to continue with the Study.

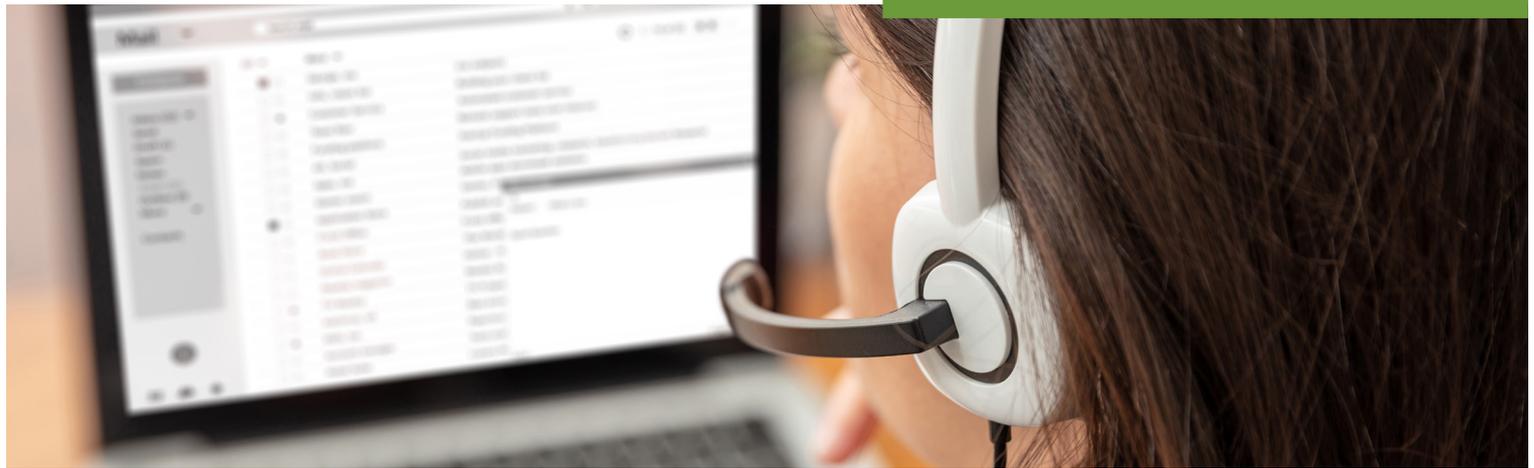
The consultants will be carrying out a community engagement exercise as part of their brief, so please keep an eye out for updates on local social media.



Abronhill Community Hub

Abronhill Housing Association has expressed an interest in relocating to the proposed community HUB. We are working with the Council and its other partners as part of the feasibility of this exciting new development for Abronhill.

We'll keep you updated as the plans develop.



AFTAR

What we offer you?

Helping Tenants and Residents through the Cost of Living Crisis

The Association has committed funding to ensure our tenants can access welfare rights advice along with advice on debt, energy bills and support with digital and computer skills.

During the last year AFTAR assisted our tenants in a wide range of ways and ensured additional financial gains for many households.

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Reason for contact	21/22
Benefit Advice	258
Energy Advice	48
Online Benefit Claims	36
Employability Support	10
Client Financial Gains	£75,932.63

Performance

How well we are doing?

The tables below let you see how we are performing against some key activities during the period 31 March 2022

Remember, we always want to hear from you, whether it is good or bad. We can only improve our service if we hear from you.



Key Housing Management & Maintenance Performance Statistics

Area of Performance	Association performance at 31 Mar 2020	Association performance to 31 Mar 2021	Association performance to 31 Mar 2022
% of rent lost through properties being empty in the year	0.68%	2.5%	1.12%
Average length of time taken to relet properties in the year	28.3 Days	89.29 Days	73.23 Days
Anti social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets in the year	100%	100%	100%
Average length of time for emergency repairs	1.88 Hours	3.41 Hours	2 Hours
Average length of time for non-emergency repairs	4 Days	6.83 Days	3.3 Days
Percentage of repairs completed right first time	94.79%	89.98%	94.05%

Equal Opportunities Statement

This statement is the basis on which we build and provide all our services. It helps us make sure we try to meet the needs of those from all walks of life, and show respect, fairness and understanding in everything we do.

In practice, it means as a landlord and service provider we try to treat everyone fairly regardless of their personal characteristics - including for example, their age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief; or their marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, or pregnancy and maternity status.

We also firmly oppose all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. We do this not only because of our legal responsibilities, but because it is a vital part of who we are and what we are trying to achieve as an organisation. It also helps us become better at what we do.

As part of this commitment we will be contacting tenants and applicants with a request to complete and return a survey form which shall be anonymous. This will enable the Association to ensure that no one group or individual is being discriminated against.

Useful Numbers

Below are some useful numbers which may be of use:

Police Scotland	-	101	Scottish Water	-	0845 601 8855
Crimestoppers	-	0800 555 111	Council Tax &	-	01698 403 210
Citizens Advice	-	01236 723 201	Housing Benefit		
Benefits Agency	-	0345 604 3719	North Line	-	01698 403 110

Call North Line for all your bulk uplifts, pest control, abandoned vehicles, road and lighting, graffiti removal, Animal Welfare Officer and Environmental Protection Officer.

If you can think of any numbers that would be useful to list in this section, please let us know.



Get in touch

Tel: 01236 457948 | Email: admin@abronhillha.org.uk | Web: www.abronhillha.org.uk

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