

North Belfast Housing Association

JULY EDITION 2014

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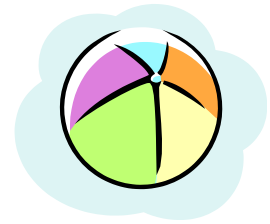


July Office Closure

North Belfast Housing Association will be closed on Monday 14th July and Tuesday 15th July. We will re-open again on Wednesday 16th July. Any tenant that needs to report an emergency repair out of hours should contact Fold Telecare on 0800 731 3081



**NORTH BELFAST HOUSING ASSOCIATION
2014**



“New North Belfast Housing Association established”

To be a premier housing association that exceeds customer expectation and capitalises growth and social capacity for the communities we serve

Two local housing associations in north Belfast have merged to create the tenth largest housing association in Northern Ireland.

Flax Housing Association located in the Ardoyne area of Belfast, and Filor Housing Association on the Crumlin Road in Belfast, have officially merged to form the new North Belfast Housing Association

The new organisation provides 900 homes to tenants in the local area and plans to develop further units of social housing for those in need.

The Boards of each of the legacy associations, with the support of their tenants, appreciated the strong similarities in terms of their values, vision and ambition and by combining resources could improve the quality of services to tenants, create a new better business equipped to meet the wide range of community needs and be better placed to respond to a changing and challenging business environment.

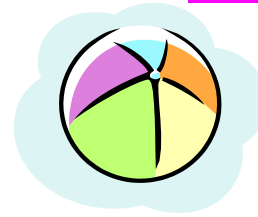
The merger has greater significance due the different community backgrounds they operated in prior to merging. The North Belfast Housing Association Ltd is committed to helping those in North Belfast and encourages respect, mutual understanding and reconciliation, reflecting the cross community profile.

Services will include supported accommodation for elderly tenants, accommodation and support for 16-24 year olds, jointly managed schemes for vulnerable groups, as well as general family accommodation across North Belfast. North Belfast Housing Association will employ a team of over thirty staff.

New Chairman of the Board, John Simpson, addressed staff and voluntary Board members of the new association recently saying:

“This is great news for our tenants and is an exciting time for both organisations to come together to continue to work towards the provision of excellent housing and supported services for our tenants. The merger will provide greater financial stability as one entity and will allow us to develop new accommodation for those in need in North Belfast.”

**NORTH BELFAST HOUSING ASSOCIATION
2014**



Chief Executive, Donal Conway, added:

“As the newly established North Belfast Housing Association we have greater opportunities to provide for the local community. As a community based housing association our vision is to ensure tenants receive good quality and affordable housing. Our new staff team, who have an excellent range of expertise and skill, will come together to meet tenants needs and move North Belfast Housing Association in to the future as the provider of choice”.

The new Board wishes to thank all those who have supported them in this exciting venture and in particular the Department for Social Development for facilitating the registration of the new association as a developing social housing provider. We look forward to working with the NI Federation of Housing Associations and the NI Housing Executive, in our goal to grow, expand and invest in North Belfast and to realise the full potential for our customers.

Our Office addresses will remain as:

Gatelodge

8 Flax Street

Belfast BT 14 7EQ

Tel: 028090592110

Email reception@flaxhousing.com

282-290 Crumlin Road

Belfast BT14 7EE

Tel: 02890351131

Email info@florhousing.org

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Association continues to seek suitable development sites and properties to buy in North Belfast where there is a high demand for more social housing.

All future new housing developments must be financially viable and are subject to support from the Department of Social Development, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Belfast City Council and the local community.

MEMBERS OF THE NBHA BOARD

<u>Members of the NBHA Board</u>	
Mr John Simpson	Chairman Vice Chair
Mr Bill Patterson	Member of Audit and Risk Committee Secretary
Ms Elizabeth Connolly	Member of Audit and Risk Sub-Committee Member of Development and Maintenance Sub-Committee
Mrs Elaine Burns	Member of Housing Management Sub-Committee
Rev Jack Drennan	Member of Audit and Risk Sub-Committee Member of Development and Maintenance Sub-Committee
Mr Will Chambre	Member of Finance Sub-Committee
Mr Jackie Hewitt	Member of Housing Management Sub-Committee Member of Development and Maintenance Sub-Committee
Mrs Betty Rice	Member of Housing Management Sub-Committee
Mr John Patterson	Member of Finance Sub-Committee





NBHA STAFF TEAM

<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Office</u>
Mr Donal Conway	Chief Executive Officer	Gatelodge
Mr Dermot Leonard	Director of Housing and Services	Crumlin Road
Mrs Caroline Keenan-Jackson	Director of Corporate Services	Gatelodge
Mrs Karen Quee	Foyer Manager	Foyer
Mrs Julie Edwards	Finance Manager	Crumlin Road
Mr Garfield Armstrong	Maintenance Manager	Crumlin Road
Mr Malachy Gunn	Senior Finance Officer	Gatelodge
Mrs Aine Latten	Housing Officer	Crumlin Road
Ms Sharon Keatley	Allocations & Tenancy Support Officer	Crumlin Road
Ms Sarah Green	Maintenance Officer	Crumlin Road
Ms Sheila Hannon	Development Officer	Gatelodge
Mrs Leanne Kelly	Development Officer	Gatelodge
Mr Matt Doyle	Finance Admin Officer	Gatelodge
Miss Amanda Smith	Receptionist	Gatelodge
Mrs Julie Dodds	Receptionist	Crumlin Road
Mrs Bernadette O'Kane	Resident Supervisor	HolyRood
Mr Kevin Kane	Caretaker	Gatelodge
Mr Terence Frame	Caretaker	Gatelodge
Mr James Saunders	Caretaker	Foyer
Mr Alistair Hamilton	Heating Engineer	Crumlin Road
Mr Paul Hamilton	Heating Engineer	Crumlin Road
Mr Joe Scullion	Clerk of Works	Gatelodge
Mrs Collette Dunn	Support Worker	Foyer
Miss Sheena Hall	Support Worker	Foyer
Ms Marie Campbell	Support Worker	Foyer
Ms Anne McHale	Support Worker	Foyer
Miss Jade Casement	Support Worker	Foyer
Mr Stephen Fitzgerald	Support Worker	Foyer
Mr Ian McAdam	Support Worker	Foyer
Mr Sean Osborne	Support Worker	Foyer
Mr Carl Maxwell	Student	Gatelodge
Miss Lauren Turner	Maintenance Officer (Temporary)	Gatelodge
Ms Lyn McLaren	Receptionist (Temporary)	Crumlin Road

SUMMER HOLIDAYS – AN EXPENSIVE TIME OF THE YEAR

During the summer months, it can be expensive with the kids off school and perhaps trying to get away for a summer break. However, if you currently pay your rent, you must continue to make payments over the summer months. If you fail to make a payment – you are putting your home at risk. So now is the time to get your priorities right so that you can enjoy a break & cover the costs.

Action you can take to avoid getting into arrears: -

- * Budget carefully – the temptation is there to overspend, but don't put off paying your rent as it will only lead to greater problems in the future
- * Ensure that you make your payments regularly - if you work and don't get paid weekly we are happy to accept fortnightly or monthly payments but these must be made in advance. Talk to the Housing Officer in your local office about your payment frequency
- * Check your rent account to make sure that your rent is being covered by either your payments or by help from Housing Benefit (or both).

If you have agreed a repayment plan and you think you may have difficulty making a payment, contact your local office immediately to avoid further action being taken

Seek independent financial advice about any debts you've got - contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau

What should I do if I have difficulty paying my rent?

Don't bury your head in the sand - Contact your local Housing Officer in complete confidence as soon as possible. We are here to help and the earlier you contact us the easier it will be for us to help. Ignoring your debt problems will only make them worse.

If you do get into arrears we will try to negotiate an agreement to help you pay off the arrears without incurring other debts. We can also refer you for specialist advice to make sure you are getting all the benefit and tax credits you are entitled to, or to help you if you have high levels of debt and just can't cope.

What will happen if I don't pay my rent?

If you don't pay your rent and fail to get in touch with us, we will make every attempt to contact you and help with any difficulties that might be stopping you from paying. However, if you won't work with us then we will serve a Notice of Seeking Possession on you. This is the first stage of legal proceedings, which may result in you losing your home. We will continue to try and help you but if you do not pay your rent, or continually fail to keep to a repayment plan to clear any arrears, you may end up being evicted from your home.

How can I pay my rent?

- * By Standing Order. This is the easiest way to pay and money can be transferred from your bank account to ours on a weekly/fortnightly/monthly basis.
- * At Paypoint outlets if you have a paypoint swipecard.
- * By calling into your local office and paying by cash or cheque and you will be issued with a receipt.

Remember, North Belfast Housing Association is here to help you, so if you're having trouble clearing your arrears, contact the Housing Officer at your local office to discuss.

TENANT FORUM

TENANT FORUM

North Belfast Housing Association aims to be an organisation where tenants can influence the decision making process through a range of involvement opportunities.

As the two Associations have now merged we wish to continue this positive practise of tenant participation. The legacy Associations both had tenant groups and we would now like to build on the experience of both groups to establish a new Tenant Forum representative of the new North Belfast Housing Association.

The purpose of the group is to provide tenants with the opportunity to influence the decision making process and to facilitate a platform for anyone interested in having a say about how the Association is managed.

We propose an introductory meeting for interested parties to elect the key positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary for the forum. Any other tenants wishing to become a Committee member are welcome to attend. Once established it is envisaged the Forum will meet on a quarterly basis, to review the Associations' performance, consult on setting targets and address issues of concern .

The next meeting is to be held on **Wednesday 6th August 2014 @ 4pm** in our office (*formerly Filor Offices*) **282-290 Crumlin Road**.

Should you be interested in being part of the Tenant Forum please contact the Gatelodge office on 028 90 592 110

We look forward to seeing you!



WASPS NESTS



WASPS NESTS

As the weather improves we sometimes get uninvited guests in the garden. Some pass through but others, like wasps, can take up residence.

There is little that can be done to prevent a queen wasp making her home in your garden.

Wasps make their nests from tiny pieces of pulped wood. They range about a one mile radius surrounding the nest area and eat greenfly, whitefly and other garden bugs.

Belfast City Council, Pest Control provides a service to deal with wasps nests. They have dealt with nests under loft insulation, in boiler houses, in bird boxes and even disused children's' toys.

In most cases wasp colonies will spend a season in our gardens and not cause too much disturbance. However, if you are concerned about a wasps nest in your garden or property you can contact the Association's office or BCC Pest Control directly on 02890 270431



A FOND FAREWELL



The Association would like to thank Maura Butler, Maintenance Officer and Martin Hamilton, Housing Officer who leave us to take up new positions. They have made a tremendous contribution to the Association by providing our tenants with excellent services over the years. We wish them every success in their new jobs! We would also like to wish our Student Carl Maxwell all the best in his final year at University of Ulster. Carl leaves us at the end of July following a one year placement..



Martin Hamilton



Maura Butler



Carl Maxwell

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Prize Draw

Congratulations to all who won the prizes for returning a completed questionnaire on time:

Mr James Mc Clure

Ms Anne Fitzpatrick

Mr Anthony Wilkinson

Ms Michelle Wilkinson

Many thanks to all those former Filor and Flax tenants who took the time to complete the survey.

The Association is grateful to receive your views on the services we deliver. This return will help establish a baseline for the new North Belfast Housing Association.