

PLANNING AND INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

ONE of the most important tasks we face at Prospect is ensuring that the housing we provide is maintained at a high standard and this is becoming ever more of a challenge as our properties get older.

In addition to ordinary day to day repairs, we have to make sure all the main components of the buildings are kept in good condition and renewed where necessary. This is what is called Planned Maintenance which is an annual programme of works designed to kick in before any significant deterioration has taken place.



These programmes are based on an assessment of how regularly certain parts of the building will need maintenance work carried out (for example painting of window frames and doors and cleaning out of gutters) or when they are likely to be replaced because they will have reached the end of their natural lives (for example kitchen units and boilers).



In addition, we carry out regular inspections to spot signs of any problems which might require earlier intervention. When that is the case, we have to readjust the priorities within the programme and bring forward work to an earlier date than had been planned and spend more money than had been anticipated in that year. It also sometimes happens that inspections show that we do not need to undertake work as soon as had been expected and then we are able to postpone expenditure on that item.

Being careful with the money we spend on planned maintenance and trying to get best value for money is extremely important for all our tenants. We get no grant aid from the Government or the Council to carry out this work and, thus, every single pound spent on Planned Maintenance has to come out of the money we receive in rents. The higher the Planned Maintenance budget, the more pressure there is on rent levels.

Therefore, what we try to do is strike the best balance possible between what we spend annually and the rent levels set each year. But that doesn't mean we're not going to be doing much – the investment in Planned Maintenance over the next five years is projected to top £2 million and will include the following:

KITCHENS: We have begun a kitchen replacement programme which is currently ongoing at Walkers and will be completed later this year. Following that, we will begin replacements in Westburn and, in addition, we expect to start an additional project in Barn Park Crescent. We anticipate replacing kitchens as a whole every 20 years and door fronts every 10 years but will also be carrying out regular surveys to monitor conditions within the stock.

SHOWERS: Prospect have begun a pilot project in Barn Park Crescent where we are offering existing tenants the opportunity to have a shower installed by Prospect in return for a small increase in rent. We hope to be able to offer this to tenants in other areas in the coming years.

BOILER REPLACEMENT: We are in the process of setting up a boiler replacement programme for our older boilers and hope to have this ready to roll in the first half of 2012. This will continue over the coming years until all homes have had their boiler replaced.

EXTERNAL PAINTER WORK: External painterwork is a rolling programme of work that will continue on annual basis across the whole of our stock according to priorities identified by stock condition surveys. A painterwork programme at Walkers is nearing completion and we will be moving onto Clovenstone Park next.

BATHROOM REPLACEMENT: At present we do not have any plans to start a programme for this. Most bathrooms have had single components replaced and we consider that the best use of resources at this time is to continue with the replacement of individual items as and when required.

If you have any questions regarding the planned maintenance programme, please contact Alan McNicol, Maintenance Officer.

Laminate Flooring

AN increasing number of tenants are putting down laminate flooring, often without permission.

If you wish to lay laminate flooring in your property, you must have written permission from Prospect to do so. In order to obtain this, you should make a written application to the Property Services department giving exact details of what you propose to do.

If you have laminate flooring in your property (with or without permission) you need to be aware of the following:

- ✦ Maintenance work in your property sometimes requires the flooring to be lifted – Prospect are not responsible for any damage to the laminate flooring if it is lifted by us
- ✦ If you live in a flat above ground floor level, laminate flooring can result in increased noise levels for those living below you. To minimise this, good quality flooring with cushioning should be used.

If you require any further information concerning this then please contact our Property Services department.



USE OF SHOWERS

WE HAVE had an increased number of cases recently where tenants have been causing damage to their property through installing showers over their bath without first making sure that adequate tiling or wallboards are in place. This has resulted in the tenant being charged for the cost of the damage caused. The cost of this can be very high, especially when the damage has taken place over a period of time.

If you are using a shower over a bath or have attached a shower hose to your bath taps, you must make sure that the tiling or wallboards are of an adequate height and are properly sealed to prevent water damage. There must also be a shower curtain or screen to prevent water escaping out of the bath and causing damage to the floor. Permission must be sought from Prospect before any alterations are carried out to the bathroom. You must also make sure that the way that you are using the bath does not result in water coming out of the bath either onto the floor or unprotected walls.

REMEMBER:
THE COST OF ANY DAMAGE CAUSED TO YOUR PROPERTY DUE TO MISUSE OF YOUR BATH OR SHOWER WILL BE RECHARGED TO YOU. IF YOU WANT ANY FURTHER ADVICE ABOUT THIS ISSUE, PLEASE CONTACT ALAN MCNICOL, MAINTENANCE OFFICER.

NEW TEXT MESSAGING SERVICE

PROSPECT will soon be introducing a new text messaging service, as we look to further improve our communication with tenants. We are hoping to introduce this before the end of the year. The benefits for tenants of the system include:

- ✦ a text message to confirm a repairs appointment, and a further text reminder closer to the appointment date.
- ✦ tenants will be able to request the balance on their rent account which will be automatically texted back – this will be available 24 x 7.
- ✦ Tenants will be able to receive a text to remind them when their rent payments are due.
- ✦ It will also allow us to communicate other information by text message



For this new service to work, we need to make sure that the mobile phone numbers that we hold for tenants are up to date. We will be confirming the contact details that we hold whenever you report a repair or contact a member of staff. If you do change your mobile number, please let us know.

If you have any questions on this new service, please contact Brendan Fowler on 0131 272 5018.



Gas Heating – Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms

A **CO ALARM** is a safety device which is fitted near to the gas boiler in your home. It is there to detect CO before it gets to dangerous levels which could affect your health. As carbon monoxide cannot be seen, tasted or smelt it is important that the units are in good working order. Prospect Community Housing are presently undertaking a replacement contract for alarms with expiry dates of 2011 and 2012.

The CO Alarm will also be checked at the time of your annual gas safety check service. Alarms should not be painted over as this could affect their safe operation. If they have been painted they will require to be replaced which will result in a recharge to tenants.

We would draw your attention to the following should the alarm activate (these instructions are also detailed within the cover of the new alarms we will be fitting shortly).

In the event of an Alarm activating (Red Light flashing + continuous chirps):

- ✦ Open doors and windows to ventilate.
- ✦ Turn off the gas at the Emergency Control Valve situated beside your gas meter and stop using all your gas appliances including the boiler and cooker if you have one.
- ✦ Evacuate property and do not re-enter.
- ✦ Immediately contact the Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.
- ✦ Get medical help immediately for anyone suffering headaches or nausea.
- ✦ Do not use appliance until checked by a Gas Safe Register engineer.

In the event of a faulty alarm (Yellow Light flashing + chirps once per minute)

- ✦ During working hours contact Prospect Community Housing or if out of hours contact Prospect's Service Gas Contractor.
- ✦ If you are unsure whether the activation is due to CO presence or an alarm fault contact the Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.

If you have any questions about this article please contact Alan McNicol, who will be happy to assist.



THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR WANTS TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

SCOTLAND has a new, independent housing regulator. From next April its role will be to safeguard and promote the interests of tenants and others who receive housing services from local authorities and housing associations. It will replace the existing regulator.

Before taking on its role, the new Scottish Housing Regulator is consulting on its approach. It wants to hear the views of tenants, landlords and others with an interest in social housing.

The new Regulator would like to get wide feedback on its proposed approach. You can respond until late November.

There will also be events across the country, open to tenants and others, to discuss the proposals. You can get a copy of the proposals and find out more about the events by visiting the new Regulator's website, following the consultation on Twitter or contacting its office. You can find the details below.

website: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/newregulator

phone: 0141 271 3810

e-mail: consultation@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk

twitter: www.twitter.com/SHRconsultation



WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH!



THE cost to Prospect to dispose of dumped rubbish and other large items has increased substantially over recent years.

If Prospect can identify the people responsible for dumping items, the individuals will be required to pay the full cost of disposal. The costs can range from £50 to £500.

PLEASE NOTE IT IS ILLEGAL TO DUMP RUBBISH OR OTHER ITEMS IN THE STREET OR OTHER AREAS.

To dispose of large items contact the SPECIAL UPLIFT service on **0131 529 3030**.

The Council provides charges £19.99 for up to six items to be uplifted. Alternatively, you can dispose of items at the Council's recycling centres free of charge – the nearest one to Wester Hailes is at Bankhead Avenue, Sighthill.

Want Advice On Using Your Heating System?

Want To Change Supplier But Don't Know How?



PROSPECT have been successful in getting funding for an Energy Advice Project called Heatsave. As part of this project, we will be offering our tenants a home appointment with an energy advisor. The purpose of this appointment is to show tenants how best to use their heating system, as well as other tips to reduce gas and electricity bills. All tenants who take part in this project will also be offered a free energy saving product.

If you want to make an appointment, please contact Caroline Muir on **0131 272 5025**.

DOG FOULING

ANY dogs that you own or visit your property must not be allowed to foul any of our common areas.

Dog fouling in common areas is a serious health risk to children and others, and is extremely unpleasant for our staff who deal with landscaping.

