

Tenants Voice

Issue 121 - June 2024



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Convenor's Report

It was with great sadness that I heard of the passing of Jimmy Galloway, former ETF member, and Neil McCallum, former ETF employee.

It has been a busy couple of months with several meetings across the city. I have met with residents in Moira Park over the number of rent and council tax letters they have been receiving. The council tax letter issues have been resolved and the North East Locality Office is going to sort out their rent issues. The North East Locality Office is going to hold a monthly surgery and open the hub for tenants to be able to use it for activities. I am due to meet with Libby Strong, Housing Operations Manager for the North East Locality, about improving communication between the council and residents of Moira Park.

I am still meeting Cllr Jane Meagher once a month on housing issues in general. We are due to do a walkabout in the Oxfgangs area soon with Graham Reid, Operations Manager.

I have been meeting with Nicky Brown, Head of Homeless and Household Support, regarding the homelessness situation. The empty homes are being dealt with at a faster rate, and there has been an increase in empty homes being offered to tenants.

I have met with the Repairs Direct Contact Centre in Waverley Court, where we decided that some of the EC will be listening into calls at the next meeting later in the year.

Thanks to all of the tenants and residents who have been attending our meetings and feeding back into our participation and scrutiny work.

Betty Stone, Convenor



CONTENTS

ETF News & Events	2
Health Agency Community Lunch	3
North Edinburgh Community Festival	3
Housing Scotland Bill	3
Owners Meeting	3
Federation Meeting	4
High Flats Meeting	4
Edinburgh Community Food Cash First Launch	4
Grass Grows Diversity Shows	5
Climate Ready Council Consultation	6
Parents Action Group Housing Event	6
Stair Cleaning Feedback	6
Get Growing	7
Climate Change and Your Home Engagement Toolkit	8
Housing Must Be A Priority	9
Locality Updates	10
Physical Activity & Sport Strategy for Edinburgh	11
Annual General Meeting	11

Next Edition

If you wish to contribute an article to the next edition of Tenants Voice please send us your articles by Friday 30th August 2024.



New Staff

ETF is very happy to introduce our newest staff member to the team, Rosanna Campbell, who is joining us as a Development Officer. Rosanna is a recent graduate and joins the team with experience in social policy and sustainability. Rosanna will be involved with the development and support of tenants' and residents' associations (TRAs) across Edinburgh, tenant scrutiny and participation, communications and more. You can get in touch with Rosanna by email at rosanna@edinburghtenants.org.uk or by calling the office on 0131 475 2509.

Thank You Maja

Maja Munivrana has been on placement with ETF since January 2024, as part of her Learning in Communities degree. Maja was able to attend a variety of different events, meet with tenants and residents and learn about some of the housing issues facing people living in Edinburgh. Maja's placement finished in mid-May and all of us at ETF would like to say goodbye and thank you for all of her hard work, and we wish her well in her future career.



James Galloway (Jimmy)

ETF was saddened by the recent passing of James Galloway (Jimmy) who was a tenant activist and volunteer in Edinburgh. Jimmy and his wife Caroline had been involved in Tenant Participation and ETF for many years.



Jimmy was particularly interested in the repairs service and asked Council officers many questions on the standard of repairs and took up issues on behalf of other tenants. He regularly invited housing officers on walkabouts in his local area to identify problems and help them come up with solutions.

Jimmy also became a Tenant Led Inspector with ETF and was involved in the inspection of CEC Rent Collection Communications. He was also a member of the ETF Rent Matters Working Group. Jimmy received an Inspiring Volunteer Award for his work with ETF, presented by the Lord Provost at a special ceremony in 2018.

Jimmy used to regularly pop into the ETF offices for a cup of tea and a chat about issues with staff and always had a story that made us laugh.

Jimmy will be very sadly missed by everyone at ETF and in his local community. We send our condolences to his family.

Neil McCallum (Mac)

ETF was also very saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Neil McCallum (Mac).



Neil worked for an organisation called Community Development Initiative, based in the Gilmerton area, before being 'encouraged' by the then Convenor George McKie to apply for the Outreach Worker position with ETF.

Neil got the position with ETF and worked with the Federation as an Outreach Worker in the early 2000s. He worked with a number of Tenants' and Residents' organisations under the banner of ETF for some years until he was forced to retire in 2007 due to ill health.

Neil was always cheerful and a bit of a prankster but was always very professional when it came to his work.

Neil will be sadly missed by all his friends and we send our condolences to them all.

Health Agency Community Lunch

Rosanna and Shona, ETF's Development Officers, were invited along on Thursday 18th April to the Health Agency Community Lunch, to meet local residents. The lunch is free to local people and runs every Thursday between 12.30pm and 1.30pm at Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre, 30 Harvesters Way, EH14 3JF. If you want to find out more about this then please contact The Health Agency by email at frontdesk@thehealthagency.org.uk or phone 0131 453 9400.



North Edinburgh Community Festival

The annual North Edinburgh Community Festival was held for the third time on Saturday 11th May 2024, and ETF was able to hold a stall at this event. The weather was great, the atmosphere was fantastic, and it was an extremely well-attended event. ETF staff were very busy talking to the attendees about what ETF does and how people can get involved. There were lots of brilliant partner organisations with stalls as well as small businesses selling their wares, free food, paid food stalls and more. This is hopefully one of many future North Edinburgh Community Festivals that ETF will attend.



Housing Scotland Bill

Tenants and residents were invited to a session led by ETF to complete the Housing (Scotland) Bill consultation, which is the first stage of the Bill. The key areas the Bill aims to address are Rent, Dealing with Evictions, Keeping Pets and Making Changes to Property, other matters related to Tenants, Homelessness Prevention, other Housing Matters and Final Provisions. The Bill has the purpose of strengthening both social and private tenant rights, introducing rent controls in relevant and appropriate areas of Scotland, and early intervention for people at risk of homelessness – up to six months in advance, improving rights for tenants to keep pets and make small changes to homes, and also to enhance the rights for people who are experiencing domestic abuse which might put them at risk of homelessness.

If you have any questions about the ETF response to the Housing (Scotland) Bill or would like a copy of the response submitted by ETF you can contact us at 0131 475 2509, email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or drop us a message on Facebook (facebook.com/EdinburghTenant) or X (formerly Twitter) [@EdinburghTenant](https://twitter.com/EdinburghTenant).

Owners Meeting

ETF hosted a meeting for owners living in mixed tenure (council and owned) buildings in Edinburgh on Tuesday 19th March 2024. The meeting was arranged to offer owners the chance to meet as a group and discuss issues previously raised around shared repairs of buildings, particularly around the retrofit/external improvements. Council policy and options for owners were discussed at the meeting, as well as ways in which owners would like communication around repairs to improve in future. If you would like any further information on this meeting, please contact Shona Agnew by email shona@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509.

Federation Meeting

ETF held their rescheduled Federation Meeting on Tuesday 30th April at Norton Park, where the topic was Climate Change and Your Home. There was an input from Hilary Blackman who works for the Local Heat Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) Team within the City of Edinburgh Council about ways in which the LHEES team would like to support tenants in terms of keeping homes warm. Sharon Donohoe (TIS) then spoke on the new TIS Climate Change and Your Home Toolkit. If you wish to get a copy of the toolkit please contact info@tis.org.uk.



The next meeting for Federation attendees will be the Round Table meeting on Tuesday 25th June, 6pm – 8pm in the City Chambers. If you wish to book a space please phone 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

High Flats Meeting

The ETF High Flats Group held their second meeting of the year on Monday 13th May 2024. Cllr Jane Meagher attended as a guest speaker and provided the group with an outline of what the council is spending rent money on. The infographic that Cllr Meagher shared broke down how every £1 of rent money is being spent by the council, with the main expenditures on Planned Investment and Repairs & Maintenance. The group have asked for this to be shared more widely with tenants. The next High Flats meeting will take place on Monday 26th August from 6pm-8pm at Birnies Court Community Room.

If you would like to attend the next meeting or want more information, please contact ETF at 0131 475 2509 or email us at info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



Edinburgh Community Food Cash First Launch

The Edinburgh Community Food Cash First Launch happened on 22nd March 2024 at Norton Park Conference Centre. They launched their toolkit, information, and resources called Cash First Toolkit. The toolkit offers people an approach that links them directly with money and vouchers, as an alternative to food bank referrals.

Here is the link to the Cash First Toolkit:
<https://www.edinburghcommunityfood.org.uk/cash-first-information-and-resources>

We want to talk to you about some changes to grassland management within our greenspaces. We are committed to enhancing biodiversity, supporting pollinators and tackling the nature crisis.

So, we are testing an adapted mowing routine in select areas: Sighthill/Gorgie, Forth, and part of Pentlands

What's Changing?

Our residential plots will now be mown once every 4-6 weeks instead of twice monthly. Edges to grass plots will still be cut twice a month.

How Can You Learn More?

Scan the QR code below or visit the dedicated page on Thringreenspaces.scot



Grass Grows Biodiversity Shows



Why Does It Matter?

Pollinators like bees and butterflies, help keep our environment healthy. When we support them, we're promoting nature to stay in balance.

More flowers provide more food for pollinators. This makes our greenspaces more interesting and helps nature thrive.

Using machines less often to cut grass means we are putting less pollution into the air. That's good news for everyone and for the planet.

This will also allow a reallocation of resources and staff time towards other biodiversity and maintenance tasks.



Climate Ready Council Consultation

ETF student Maja Munivrana conducted a session on the Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan being delivered by the City of Edinburgh Council.

"The plan explains why we need to adapt our city to the impacts of climate change including the most up-to-date projections of how Edinburgh's climate is likely to change in the future, the impacts of this and the implications this has for the city. It then sets out what we are already doing and planning to do to adapt the city through identifying the areas we need to prioritise and the actions we need to take under these priorities to do so."

The plan aims to allow Edinburgh to thrive and be more resilient, and to allow both nature and the community to grow.

If you wish to find out more you can email climatechange@edinburgh.gov.uk or look on the website for more information <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/bi/climate-ready-edinburgh/>.



Parents Action Group Housing Event

ETF were honoured to attend the North Edinburgh Parents Action Group housing event on Wednesday 1st May at Royston Wardieburn Community Centre. The event, and the compelling report that was launched alongside it, revealed the stories of families dealing with poor housing conditions in North Edinburgh.

The stories and images powerfully conveyed the detrimental impact that housing issues, including damp and mould, can have on families. The women who bravely shared their personal experiences, detailed how their housing was having a direct impact on their health and their children's health.

There was further discussion at the event on the intrinsic link between housing and health by Dr Olivia Swann from the University of Edinburgh, who effectively outlined the science, and the long-term impact that living in a damp home can have on a child's physical and mental health.

The report by North Edinburgh Parents Action Group outlines a clear set of demands that call for action by decision makers. They are aiming to hold a follow-up event in the coming weeks to gauge the response.



Stair Cleaning Feedback

The City of Edinburgh Council is seeking both positive and negative feedback from tenants and residents who are part of the Stair Cleaning programme in Edinburgh, currently delivered by ISS. Tenants and residents can contact the council to provide this feedback by emailing stair.cleaning2@edinburgh.gov.uk, phoning the contact centre at 0131 529 7827 or writing: Stair Cleaning, Waverley Court level 2.4, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BG.

Those who participate in providing positive or negative feedback regarding the ISS stair cleaning service will be entered into a prize draw and can win a shopping voucher worth £40.



Muirhouse Neighbourhood Garden

Get Growing!

Come along to our Community Gardening Sessions with Sylva. Everyone is welcome.

Grow fruit, veg & flowers, meet your neighbours and be a part of a local community project!
No experience necessary. Just come along!

Wednesdays (9.30am–12.30pm)

Sundays (1–4pm)

Find us next to Fidra Court
on Pennywell Medway
EH4 4SE

Contact:

sylva@edibleestates.scot

07549431528



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Climate Change and Your Home Engagement Toolkit

In order to better understand tenants' views and attitudes towards social housing and the climate emergency in Scotland, the **Tenants Information Service (TIS)** and **Scotland's Housing Network (SHN)** worked in partnership, to undertake a robust consultation with social housing tenants, across Scotland.

The consultation, which consisted of an online survey and series of focus groups, highlighted key findings, **that whilst tenants were concerned about the effects of climate change, the cost-of-living crisis was a priority for most tenants taking part.** With the cost of food, fuel and energy increasing, there were concerns amongst tenants that decarbonisation of social housing would exacerbate this both through driving up rents and potentially higher heating costs.



The study also found that **tenants felt that there had not been enough consultation on decarbonisation at both a national and a local level.** Whilst they recognised the challenges in getting people involved in consultation, they highlighted the importance of ensuring tenants' voices were heard on this matter. Tenants also highlighted the need for improved communication around decarbonisation of social housing to ensure tenants have the facts and would dispel any rumours, fears or worries.

The Scottish Government's vision for housing, **Housing to 2040**, sets out a commitment to adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency and decarbonise their heating. This includes a commitment for Scotland to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2045, with statutory interim targets to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030, and 90% by 2040. **Whilst tenants confirmed that they are aware of the Scottish Government's target to reach Net Zero emissions by 2045, they are not always fully aware of what this means to them and their homes.**

The study enabled TIS and SHN to develop a **good practice toolkit** to support housing organisations to **successfully plan and deliver an effective tenant engagement strategy surrounding climate change plans.** The toolkit provides contextual information about the legislative, policy, and regulatory requirements that will support organisations in developing effective tenant engagement. It also considers:

- Steps to effective tenant engagement.
- Tenant engagement strategy action plan.
- Climate change and your home tenant survey findings.
- Raising awareness of climate change and decarbonisation newsletter.

Sharon Donohoe – Development Director at TIS, presented the findings from the study and toolkit at the Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) meeting on Tuesday 30th April, and recommended housing organisations fully consult tenants in the process of developing an engagement strategy surrounding climate change plans.

For further information and to receive a copy of the Climate Change and Your Home **consultation findings and toolkit**, please contact the TIS office by email at info@tis.org.uk.

Housing Must Be A Priority For The Scottish Parliament In The Next Two Years

As we enter a period of minority Government, working together across the Chamber to tackle the housing emergency in Scotland needs to be a priority for every MSP. Edinburgh City Council, Glasgow Council, Argyll and Bute, Fife, and West Dunbartonshire Council have declared housing emergencies.

A housing emergency in Scotland means around 700,000 people in Scotland are in some form of housing need, nearly 10,000 children are in temporary accommodation and 28% of households are living in unfit properties, overcrowded accommodation or homes requiring specialist work. Rents are rising faster than elsewhere in the UK. There are over 100,000 overcrowded households and an estimated 60,000 homes are at risk of repossession.



The Scottish Government must set out clearly how it intends to reverse the declining housebuilding pipeline and ensure an adequate supply of warm, safe, and affordable homes for those in Edinburgh and Scotland who are in need. The most recent housebuilding statistics show that we do not have enough new homes being built to reach the Government's own housing targets, never mind satisfying the needs that exist.

The last ten years have seen rents spiral out of control while the atrocious quality of Scotland's private rented sector homes has subjected tenants to mould, damp, pests, and extortionate energy bills. We are at breaking point and cannot wait any longer for support for tenants.

We must make sure that the end of the Bute House Agreement does not derail plans to tackle Scotland's housing crisis. The Scottish Government's Housing Bill helps in places, but tenants need support now, not in two years when it comes into effect. Any new rent controls must be workable, and met with new housebuilding, to bring down rents as well as stopping them from rising.

We must acknowledge the scale of this crisis and the continued pressure from myself, other MSPs, Shelter and other housing organisations to act on it. While I welcome that the Scottish Government acknowledges there is a Housing Emergency in Scotland, we must now move to ensure there is a real plan to tackle it, including scrapping the brutal cut to the affordable housing budget, reforming planning to boost housebuilding and strengthening the Housing Bill to deliver a fair deal for tenants.

The Scottish Government must work with all political parties and housing groups, as we are nearly out of time to deliver solutions.

Foyso Choudhury, MSP

ETF can be contacted by:

Email: info@edinburghtenants.org.uk

X (Twitter): @EdinburghTenant

Facebook: EdinburghTenant

www.edinburghtenants.org.uk

Phone: 0131 475 2509



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Locality Updates

Oxgangs Community Association has been meeting regularly and is starting to plan for its AGM for June 2024 and the group is looking into applying for funding to carry out some community activities.

Dumbiedykes Working Group has continued to meet and has been involved in the planning of the Dumbiedykes "Week of Action" planned by the Waste and Cleansing department of the council which will work with partners to carry out a bulky item amnesty, litter picks and have work carried out on the overgrown embankment among other things. The group are happy to hear that the Braidwood Centre is hoping to reopen this year and that a supported bus service is in the works. The group are hoping to develop a tenants' and residents' association (TRA) once they have access to a regular meeting space in the Braidwood Centre, and ETF greatly appreciates the support of the University of Edinburgh which has provided a meeting space for the group in the meantime.

Parkgrove and St Kentigerns Group are still meeting every month and have been looking at tackling several local issues for their tenants and residents. ETF wishes to thank the Munro Centre for its hospitality in allowing the group to use the community centre to host its meetings. The council and other partners have been working to improve the communication with tenants and residents on the issues discussed at the meetings.

Hailesland Park Community Association has welcomed guest speakers to their open meetings, on the second last Thursday of every month. The group have heard updates from council officers about building improvements and also hope to get future inputs from Waste and Cleansing, the Fire Department and more. The group are very keen to start planning community activities and wishes to apply for funding at some point this year.

North Sighthill Residents Association is looking to start up a TRA again and will be holding a meeting to speak to tenants and residents in the area over the summer. There is some funding available for this group and ETF hopes to attract some new members to take the work within the community forward.

Willowbrae and Duddingston Residents Association has recently held their AGM and are planning some digital inclusion sessions for residents over the summer, with help from People Know How. There are 10 spaces available for these sessions and they will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Some devices are available for loan if residents do not have their own devices.

Willowbrae Residents' Association

We the tenants of Willowbrae Residents' Association would like to thank ETF, for all their help.

About 7 years ago now, we joined Edinburgh Tenant's Federation. We have never looked back; and have councillors and council managers attending our meetings due to ETF. We would like to encourage other tenants to do the same as you find out more and get things done. We had never done anything like this before, but Edinburgh Tenants Federation led us all the way and still do when we need help. The meetings that ETF hold at Norton Park are very informative as there is always a council employee there. You can join as an individual member and if you wanted to start a group, they will help you all the way. Keep up the good work guys.

Willowbrae and Duddingston Residents' Association

City of Edinburgh Council

A New Physical Activity and Sport Strategy for Edinburgh

Edinburgh Council's Sports Development team would like to invite you to help them improve access to physical activity and sport opportunities across Edinburgh, by completing their short questionnaire to share your thoughts and views. The questionnaire and consultation process will run until the 26 June 2024, and we would very much value your support and involvement in the process.

The draft strategy and questionnaire can be found here: <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/-physicalactivityandsportstrategy>.

The Sports team would like to create an Edinburgh where everyone enjoys the benefits of an active life, because we know that the more active we are, the healthier we become both physically and mentally, the stronger our communities and the more inclusive our city. We want to understand your experiences of physical activity and sport and hear your views on the draft strategy and whether you think our priorities are the right ones for the city.

Although Edinburgh already enjoys a wealth of opportunities to participate in physical activity and sport, there are still barriers which prevent people from taking part. We want to work together to break down those barriers and give equal access for all and make it easier for people to participate.

The feedback we receive will be used to shape the final version of the strategy, so we would ask that you get involved by sharing your experiences through completion of the online questionnaire (it should take approximately 15 minutes to complete), or by completing a paper questionnaire at the local library, or by coming along to one of our in-person consultation events (details to follow).

If you have any questions about the process or about the current service, then please contact us at PA&SportStrategy@edinburgh.gov.uk



Annual General Meeting

Here's advance notice of the important dates regarding our Annual General Meeting.

Mailing of invitation to submit Resolutions and Constitutional Amendments Week beginning 19th August 2024.

Deadline for return of Resolutions and Constitutional Amendments Friday 20th September 2024.

Mailing of invitation to become a member of ETF, Executive Committee Nominations week beginning 30th September 2024.

Deadline for return of Membership Applications and Executive Committee Nominations Friday 1st November 2024.

Deadline for booking to attend the Annual General Meeting Friday 8th November 2024.

Annual General Meeting Friday 15th November 2024.



Dates for your Diary

- **Round Table Meeting - Tuesday 25th June 2024, 6 - 8 p.m., City Chambers**
- **Introduction to Scrutiny Session - Tuesday 30th July, 6 - 8 p.m., Norton Park Conference Centre**
- **Federation Meeting - Tuesday 6th August 2024 (to be confirmed)**
- **High Flats Meeting - Monday 26th August 2024, 6 - 8 p.m., Birnies Court**
- **Annual General Meeting - Friday 15th November 2024 (to be confirmed)**

About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk for more information.

Tenants Voice is usually published three times a year and is distributed to nearly 3,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of ETF.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.



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