

Lothian, Edinburgh & Midlothian) Regional Network of Registered Tenant Organisations has been in existence since May 2008.

This year's AGM and members meeting of your Regional Network will be held on **Saturday 4th June 2011. The venue will be the Apex City Hotel, 61 Grassmarket Edinburgh from 11.00am till 2:00pm.** Refreshments including a lunch will be provided.

The meeting will give RTO representatives the chance to;

- Meet the Regional Committee
- Receive a report from the Chairperson
- Find out about the activities of the Regional Network
- Fill vacancies on the Committee
- Hear about the pioneering work of Edinburgh Tenants Federation in relation to mental health awareness
- Discuss the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Meet other representatives from across our region.

Web site :regionalnetworks.org.uk

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard is a set of criteria which local authorities and registered social landlords must ensure they meet by 2015.

Is your landlord in the slow lane or the fast lane?

Some Landlords within Scotland are well on track to meeting the standard by 2015 but others have 70% – 80% of properties still not meeting the standard.

To meet the standard the house must be:

- compliant with the tolerable standard
- free from serious disrepair
- energy efficient
- provided with modern facilities and services
- Healthy, safe and secure.

The precise way in which these broad criteria are defined is set out in two letters to councils of May 2004 and July 2004.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/02/18860/32772

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www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/07/19725/40741

Most local authorities and registered social landlords have set their own milestones for progressing towards the 2015 target date in SHQS Standard Delivery Plans. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors progress towards meeting the standard through the annual performance and statistical return (for registered social landlords) and through annual returns (for councils). In March 2011, the Scottish Government published documents to provide additional guidance on SHQS and to clarify its definition. This includes a detailed description of each

element, a non-technical guide to the Standard, the policy on exemptions, and a guide to potential cost savings. Social landlords and anyone with responsibility for or interest in the Standard should read these documents, which you can access here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/16342/sqhs/guidance>

All Landlords are required to create a SQHS delivery plan which is available to tenant groups. BEEM regional network are keen that all tenant groups work with their landlord to ensure a comprehensive plan is in place and that every effort is made to complete the work involved. In some of the regions a very large amount of investment is required to meet the SQHS which in today's climate of cuts this money will come directly from Tenants rents. One of the issues that is of concern is that some Landlords have only carried out a partial stock condition survey and mirrored the results across all the stock, Although this may be quicker in the short term some landlords have gone back to the drawing board and aimed for a 100% stock survey which is proving more accurate. What level of survey has your landlord carried out? Is your landlord in the slow lane or fast lane?



For Tenants Week at the end of September 2010 MTF manned a stall at the Council Rent Office to meet with tenants and get their views. Out of the many we spoke to thirty one agreed to fill in our survey form and the results showed that the majority were aware of the forum and all had received the annual newsletter. Although some tenants indicated that they would be interested in joining a tenants group, subsequent invitations have not been taken up so far, but we will contact these again in the future.

Our Secretary was funded by the Council to attend the TPAS Conference at Dundee in October 2010.

Members attended the BEEM Tenants Talking to Tenants event in November, the purpose of which was to explain in laymen's language the Scottish Housing Charter and to find out what tenants wanted to be included in the Charter. The members reported that the event was enjoyable and that they now had a better understanding of the Charter.

We held our AGM at the end of November 2010 which was well attended despite the bad weather.

All Committee Members stood down and the AGM was chaired by an Independent Advisor. A new Chairman and Vice Chair were voted in

Alex Robertson Chairman
Ian Fleming vice Chair

The Secretary and Treasurer were returned unanimously

Lillias Reid Secretary
Ellen Robertson Treasurer

Six other Committee Members were approved. There were two speakers, the new Head of Housing and the new Senior Strategy Officer who explained their new roles.

Estate Walkabouts continue to be successful. This year sees some of the districts being revisited to check that issues reported have been dealt with. These walkabouts are important to both tenants and the council as they bring to notice things that might not otherwise be reported, such as rubbish, bad parking, untidy gardens and general outside building defects. The visits are attended by Committee Members, the Councillor responsible for housing matters and the Housing Officer responsible for the area being visited.

The members had a night out at the end of January 2011 in the Royal British Legion Scotland Club in

Dalkeith and a great time was had by all.

Midlothian Council's contract with TPAS ceased at the end of January 2011 and has not been renewed. The Council has employed a part time TP Officer, Lesley Bolan and she will support the group and promote our interests.

The Forum held open meetings in different districts, the latest one being in March 2011 at Penicuik. The attendance was poor but those who did attend enjoyed the evening.

Midlothian Council is being inspected by the Scottish Housing Regulator at the beginning of April 2011 and Midlothian Tenants Forum has been invited to meet with him on the 6th April to discuss our opinion of the Housing Department.



east lothian tenants and residents panel

Tenant Participation is flourishing in East Lothian, through the numerous communication processes that is the ELTRP quarterly newsletter, Homefront and Web Sites, communities are beginning to see the benefit of having a Tenants' and Residents' Association in their areas.

There are twenty Tenants' and Residents Association in East Lothian :

- 9 Musselburgh
- 1 North Berwick
- 4Tranent
- 1 Haddington
- 1 Ormiston
- 3 Dunbar
- 1 Cockenzie

To find out more about the groups contact:

TEL: 0131 665 9304

Email:

tenantspanel@hotmail.com

Since the last edition of the Beem Newsletter East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel have worked on the undernoted:

OCTOBER:

First Consultation on Rents

Response to Fresh Thinking and New Ideas Paper

Scottish Social Housing Charter.

NOVEMBER: Visit by Panel members to New Build sites:

Musselburgh, Tranent, Prestonpans, Tranent, Macmerry, Haddington and Dunbar

JANUARY: Review of the Panel Project – which was followed by a Burns Supper and entertainment by Pipers and dancers from Tranent.

If there are any issues you would like us to take forward to our other colleagues within Region 5 please contact [catherine mcarthur@hotmail.com](mailto:catherine.mcarthur@hotmail.com)



Influencing rents

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is the umbrella organisation for 60 tenants and residents groups in Edinburgh. Founded in 1990 and now in our 20th anniversary year, ETF is a successful campaigning organisation. Our main aims are to represent tenants and to ensure tenants can influence issues that affect them. ETF has been actively involved in rent setting for many years, particularly with the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC). Recently we've started looking at the ways that Registered Social Housing (RSL) tenants can get involved in rent setting with their landlord through our Housing Association Tenants Sub Committee (HATs).

Involving Council tenants

For City of Edinburgh Council tenants, ETF is involved at a strategic level with senior housing and finance managers to discuss the Council's Business Plan. This means

that every three months tenants quiz senior staff about the financial information the Council uses to plan its rents over a 30 year period. ETF continues to press the Council to make sure it is spending tenants' rent money wisely. Recently, the question of who should pay for new Council homes raised another issue for tenants. Overwhelmingly, tenants thought that new build houses should have the same rent as existing stock; tenants should not have to pay more for a home just because it was 'new'. New build housing that is charged at a higher rent. For many tenants, there were too many uncertainties about premium rents, and the concept of 'social housing' – everyone pays a share to make sure housing is available for all, seemed to still strike a chord. ETF took these points to senior elected members and successfully made the case not to charge premium rents. Council tenants can get involved by responding to surveys and through meetings with officers and councillors. ETF is discussing how these methods can be improved.

Involving RSL tenants

The HATs group currently meets every three months to bring together tenants from RSLs in Edinburgh. A hot topic over the last year has been rent setting. Tenants felt that landlords

were using a wide range of ways to involve tenants in decision making about rents. Some landlords seemed to be better than others at involving tenants, so the HATs group wrote to every RSL in the city asking for more information. Different landlords used different ways to involve tenants; ranging from tenants attending Board meetings with Chief Officers, to freepost surveys, information leaflets and local meetings. Some landlords said they found involving tenants difficult. The HATs group is currently considering these responses. The group is looking for areas of good practice so they can share information and help housing association tenants across the city influence how their landlords involves tenants in setting rents in the future.

Learning more

As part of the process of learning about rent setting, ETF is delivering a training and information programme for tenants in Edinburgh, including sessions on 'Understanding tenant participation' and 'What our rents pay for'. If you are interested in these sessions or would like to find out more about ETF, please contact the office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk. You can also check out our website at www.edinburghtenants.org.

[uk](#) or our Facebook page via www.facebook.com.

Scottish Housing Social Charter

Scotland's first Social Housing Charter will come into force next year. The Charter will set the outcomes and standards that all social landlords should achieve for the customers they serve: their tenants; homeless people; and others who use their housing services. The Scottish Government is working to make sure the Charter reflects the views and priorities of all customers. and began this exercise last autumn, when they held events across the country at which tenants, landlords and others started talking to each other – in a series of conversations about the type of outcomes the Charter might contain

The Charter will be an important document, defining what landlords should be doing, please take the time to help develop it.

Extract from : The Scottish Social Housing Charter Discussion Paper

You can download the full discussion paper from the following link:

<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/scottish-charter>

While every effort is made to check and validate data before a publication is made, The BEEM committee is not responsible for any errors in the data