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# Merry Christmas!

**On behalf of the Staff Team and Management Board at Shire, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**

A new year is a time for looking back and looking forwards. At the end of last year we were all feeling the impact of a huge rise in inflation, pushing up the cost of living, the price of fuel, and the cost of carrying out repairs and building work. We haven't seen the same level of increase this year, but last year's costs have been "baked in" to permanently higher prices, and we can see the impact of this in our communities.

Shire's vision is to deliver Great Homes, Great People, and Vibrant Communities. We want to make a difference. That has guided what we have done this year and what we plan to do going forward.

In the last five years we have invested £6.8 million in Shire homes, to keep them in good condition and improve their energy efficiency. We plan to spend another £9.2 million in the next five years. All of that will go into existing houses, and in addition we will be starting ambitious projects to build new homes and a new office that will also provide a community hub. In November we had a Board planning day, to set out an ambition beyond that, starting now to think about how we invest and develop Shire further.

It's not just houses. I am really proud of the work that the Shire management and staff have done to build communities, through tenant engagement and financial advice and support. Among other things we have a dedicated Community Engagement Officer, and he's very active in going out and supporting community events by taking part or working to get funds and resources. It's important to us that Shire is not just providing buildings to live in but also helping to support and build vibrant communities.



In all this we've been supported by a strong board, all volunteers, who give their time and talent to Shire. We've got some new members this year. Sadly, we also lost one of our longest serving members, Willie Paterson, I am sure all of you who knew him were saddened to hear of his death, and I am sure I am not alone in valuing his sense of humour and his commitment. He was an example to us all how we can make a difference.

I look forward to seeing us make that difference as we go forward. I hope you all have a great Christmas and New Year.

**Simon Roberts**  
Chairperson



# Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Board Update

We were delighted to welcome Members to our AGM at Cumnock's Creative Arts Hub on Wednesday 17 September.

Our guests enjoyed fantastic performances from CAMPS and tucked into a chippy tea from Joanna's Chippy Van. As well as the formal election of Board members, guests were able to hear about the activities of the Association during the past year and our plans for the future.

The current Management Board is as follows:



Simon Roberts -  
Chairperson



Liam Gallacher -  
Vice-chair



Hugh Carr



Nick Allan



Bruce Cuthbertson



Lynsay Logan



Isabel McKnight



Michael Youd



Alison Sutherland



Anne-Marie  
McGrath



Jayden McWilliam

Our thanks go to our outgoing Board Members, Ruth Patterson and Wendy White-Finnigan, for their services to Shire over a number of years.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of long-serving management board member Willie Paterson.



Willie passed away on Thursday, 21 August 2025.

Willie joined the management board in August 2015, and working with fellow board members, played a key role in strengthening the Association's governance. His contributions led to meaningful improvements in the lives of all Shire tenants, and he was one of the strongest advocates of its wider community activities.

We are always keen to attract tenants to join our Management Board, and if you are interested in finding out more please contact us at [info@shirehousing.com](mailto:info@shirehousing.com)







# RENT CONSULTATION 2026/27 - *Have your Say*

Each year we consult tenants on the proposed level of rent increase. As well as influencing the decision on the rent increase, your feedback will also impact on our budget and the funds we have available to spend on improving our housing stock and the services we provide.

We are very conscious of rent affordability and take great care to balance this with the finances of Shire and the improvements we can make to your homes.

Consultation packs issued in December include details of how you can make your voice heard. The pack includes the options proposed for the rental increase for 2026/27 as well as a briefing on the service benefits they bring to our ongoing program of improvements to homes. The

consultation will run until mid-January 2026.

Your feedback is really important to us and it could not be easier to have your say:

- Complete the free online survey – details will be contained within the consultation pack
- Return the questionnaire at the back of the consultation pack
- Email us at [info@shirehousing.com](mailto:info@shirehousing.com)
- Telephone or visit the office and speaking to our staff

Please remember that our Financial Inclusion team are here to provide support – please see our financial inclusion update within this newsletter for more information.



# Garden Competition

Our 2025 garden competition ran well, we had a good few entries from tenants who have never entered before, which was happily welcomed.

We had two new winners this year – one garden from Logan and another from Newmilns, two completely different styles of gardens, both demonstrating a great deal of creativity and love for the garden spaces – not to mention the time spent creating them.





# Shire's Tenant Panel

Our enthusiastic Tenant Panel met in Netherthird Community Centre on 21<sup>st</sup> October to discuss and give feedback on our Annual Assurance Statement and review our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. A few of our staff members were also there on the day to listen to our tenants' feedback over a cup of tea and a breakfast roll.

It is always nice to meet with the tenant panel and this time we welcomed two new members to the group. If you are interested in something new,

please think about joining. It doesn't matter where you live, as we arrange transport to and from our events, just get in touch with Ann Black, Housing Manager, if you want to know more.

We would also like to express our thanks to all the tenants and community partners who took the time to respond to our on-line policy consultation. This feedback lets us know if we are still meeting you and your community's needs.

## New Phone System

As part of our continued commitment to delivering service improvements for our tenants and customers, we are in the process of implementing a new phone system. Our new system will allow you to speak to the right person, first time to improve our customer service.



- Repairs and Assets
- Housing Management and Allocations
- Care and Repair

Once this has been implemented, we will send out a survey and would be grateful for your feedback.

## My Home – Tenant Portal

Our exciting portal is available to all tenants. Once you have registered you can view your rent account balance, report non-emergency repairs and notify us about certain changes online.

We will be adding documents and functionality as we develop the portal.

Use the qr code to register and sign in.





# Community

Over the past few months we've been actively engaged across a variety of community-facing projects, helping to build stronger connections and support wellbeing in our estates. Alan has been facilitating regular yoga sessions at Netherthird Community Centre, Catrine Games Hall and the Boswell Centre in Auchinleck, forging a friendly space for tenants to move, breathe and connect. We've also supported tenant engagement events—bringing together residents to hear about services, investment plans and community priorities across Scotland.

We ran two competitions for children of our tenants: a sunflower growing competition and also a Halloween fancy dress competition.

Our community Cinema nights continue, as do our community trips – taking groups from across the area on day trips in a minibus hired from Coalfields Community Transport.

We have also been making donations to various groups: Rankinston Community Centre, Townhead Strollers Walking Football, Patna Playgroup, Galson ECC and Auchinleck ECC – to name a few.

We were lucky enough to secure funding through the National Lottery recently to take local kids from 4 different primary schools on adventure days. The days could consist of canoeing, abseiling, wall climbing, archery etc. Unfortunately due to the recent weather there has only been indoor activities so far, hopefully this will change soon!

Through these efforts we're not just delivering services — we're also facilitating connection, laughter, dialogue and positive momentum across our communities.





# Engagement





# Frost & Fire

## Keeping safe this Winter

Do you know where your main stop valve is to turn off the water if you have a burst? If you don't, call us and we'll arrange for someone to pop in and show you where it is.

### Protect Your Home

- Keep your home as warm as you can.
- Try not to leave taps dripping as this can lead to frozen waste pipes.
- If you notice any un-lagged pipes, let us know and we'll get them lagged.
- If you are going away over the winter, tell us. We will come and drain your heating and water system free of charge while you're away.

### Frozen Pipes

- Usually people become aware they have frozen pipes when heating systems don't come on. Usually this is because a water pipe or an external condenser pipe is frozen.
- Damage to pipes happens when they freeze and start to thaw. If a pipe is frozen isolate it and turn off the stop valve.
- Don't try to thaw pipes using a naked flame or boiling water. It's more likely to burst when direct heat is applied. A hairdryer can be used to heat up frozen pipes, but take care, the pipe may burst as it thaws and spray water. Thaw the pipe at the end nearest the tap first.
- Don't switch on water filled heating appliances including boilers and immersion heaters until you're sure the system has thawed out.
- Protect your possessions - If you think a pipe might burst move everything around it to protect your contents or belongings from water damage.

### Prevent Fire

- Check your Christmas lights carry the British Safety Standard sign 
- Test your smoke alarms monthly
- Never leave cookers unattended
- Make an evacuation plan for your family in case of emergency
- Never place candles near your Christmas tree
- Don't place decorations near heat sources like fires or lights
- Never overload electrical sockets
- Turn off and unplug Christmas lights when you go to bed or leave the house
- Close all doors to prevent any fire spreading





# Planned Maintenance Update

**We're delighted to share the latest progress on our planned improvement works across our communities. These projects are helping us create warmer, safer, and more energy-efficient homes for all our tenants.**

## **Kitchen Replacements**

Bell Group has successfully completed 34 new kitchen installations this year. We've received valuable feedback from tenants, which helps us continue improving how we deliver these works.

The new kitchens feature high-quality units manufactured by Howdens, known for their durable materials and modern designs that combine practicality with style.

## **Re-Roofing and Wall Insulation**

Our contractor Sureserve is delivering a range of wall insulation upgrades to improve the energy efficiency of homes that currently fall short of modern energy standards. In addition, 23 roof replacements are underway.

We're on track to complete this major programme by January 2026, helping reduce heat loss and lower energy bills for our tenants.

## **Energy Efficiency Upgrades**

At Westgate House, Newmilns, we're working with Green Home Systems on an exciting project to help the building meet modern energy standards. This includes internal wall insulation, solar PV panels, improved ventilation, high heat-retention heating systems, and reduced-capacity water heaters for greater efficiency. The project is expected to complete by November 2025.

In Rankinston, Green Home Systems have also successfully installed solar PV and battery storage systems across five homes in Ravenscroft Place, helping tenants reduce energy costs and reliance on the grid.

## **Smart Homes Monitoring**

We're embracing technology to help our tenants live more comfortably. James Frew Ltd has installed Smart Homes Technology in 33 properties, allowing residents to monitor conditions in their homes through the new Resident App.

This innovative system helps identify potential damp and mould risks early and provides practical advice on how to prevent them, supporting healthier and more sustainable living environments.

## **Boiler Replacement Programme**

City Technical Services has successfully fitted 41 new energy-efficient boilers as part of our ongoing replacement programme. Tenants have given excellent feedback on both the performance of the new systems and the quality of service provided.

The boilers installed — Vokera Vibe Max 30C and Vokera Easi Heat models — come with a 7-year warranty, ensuring any repairs are carried out by Vokera's specialist engineers during this time.

## **Façade Cleaning Programme**

We've also completed external cleaning works to help maintain the appearance and condition of our properties. Flamingo Exterior Cleaning recently completed façade cleaning at John Law Close, Newmilns, and at three further addresses in Patna, leaving the buildings looking fresh and well cared for.

## **External Painting Works**

Following the completion of cavity wall insulation across 17 of our properties, our contractor Bell Group has now started the external painting programme to refresh and protect affected properties.

While progress is well underway, recent weather conditions have caused some unavoidable delays. As painting work is highly dependent on dry and stable conditions, our teams are carefully planning around the forecast to ensure the best possible finish.

We sincerely appreciate our tenants' patience and understanding during this time. Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to complete the works swiftly and to a high standard, ensuring your homes look their best for years to come.

## **Thank You**

We'd like to thank all tenants for their patience and cooperation while these improvement works take place. Together, we're building stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.



# Recruitment Update

We are very pleased to welcome three new members of staff to the Shire team



**Sharon Neely**

Sharon has joined our Care and Repair team as our Digital Inclusion Assistant. Sharon can assist with setting up devices such as phones, tablets and smart home devices like plugs as well as help with accessing digital services.



**Keir McClounie**

Keir has joined Shire as our Modern Apprentice. He will support the whole organisation at the same time as undertaking a qualification in digital skills.



**Gemma Balfour**

Gemma has joined Shire as our Governance Assistant. She supports the Board and corporate functions and is a friendly voice at the end of the phone.

## Care & Repair Update

**It's been a busy and exciting few months for the Care & Repair team as we continue supporting older and disabled residents across East Ayrshire to live safely and independently at home.**

We are delighted to share that Care & Repair East Ayrshire has secured a brand-new contract with East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership. This gives us long-term stability and allows us to plan ahead, grow the service and continue delivering high-quality support for our communities.

From December, we are also launching a new Electrical Safety Fund, running 1st December to 31st March. This fund will allow us to help eligible residents with essential electrical safety works over the winter period, reducing risks and supporting

people to remain safe and warm at home.

Over the past year we have:

- Delivered a wide range of repairs and adaptations across East Ayrshire
- Delivered home safety checks, minor adaptations and practical support
- Continued to expand our Smart Home & Digital Inclusion work — helping residents use technology to stay connected, confident and safe

We look forward to building on this progress under our new contract and working closely with our partners throughout 2026.

From all of us at Care & Repair East Ayrshire, thank you for your continued support, and we hope everyone stays safe and warm this winter.



# Pension Age Winter Heating Payment 2025

**Pension Age Winter Heating Payment replaces Winter Fuel Payment in Scotland. This is an annual payment paid automatically to people above State Pension age. So, if you were born on or before 21 September 1959, you will receive a payment of between £101.70 and £305.10 this winter. How much you will get depends on your circumstances during the qualifying week. This year's qualifying week is 15 to 21 September 2025.**

If your annual taxable income is over £35,000, HMRC will take back the payment through your 2026/27 tax code.

Most people do not need to apply. If you are getting your State Pension, you will receive Pension Age Winter Heating Payment automatically during winter

2025/2026 and it will be paid into the same account as your State Pension.

If you have deferred your State Pension and your annual taxable income will be less than £35,000, you can still get Pension Age Winter Heating Payment, but you will need to apply.

## Winter Heating Payment

The Winter Heating Payment will be payable if you are in receipt of certain benefits. It's a one-off payment of £59.75 and will be paid from December 2025. To qualify you must have received the following benefits during the qualifying week 3 to 9 November 2025:-

### Universal Credit

**Employed or self-employed** and receiving a child or young person disability element

**OR**

**Not employed or self-employed and you have either:**

- a limited capability for work element

- a limited capability for work element with a work related activity element
- a child or young person disability element
- a child under 5

**OR**

### Receiving Pension Credit

For further information or if you have any other benefit/financial enquiries, please contact our Financial Inclusion Officer on **01290 421130**.



## Christmas Charitable Donation

This Christmas, we've chosen to support East Ayrshire Young Carers by sending them £500. Our donation will help them to share a little bit of Christmas magic with their young carers and also support them to continue the excellent work they do all year round. If you watched this year's Children In Need, you will have seen how the support they provide can help a young carer and their family.





# Tenant and Owner Satisfaction Survey Results

We value your views about the services you receive, and this helps us to identify where services can improve. An independent company, Knowledge Partnership, were commissioned to carry out our three-year Satisfaction Survey of Tenants and Owners.

A face to face or telephone survey of 385 (41% of tenants) and 252 owners (29% of owners took place between 1 September and 24 October 2025 and we would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who provided the surveyors with their views.

The results show high levels of satisfaction with our services, with nearly 91% of tenants and 48% of owners satisfied overall. More importantly, the results provide valuable feedback on where services need to develop and improve.

A summary of the headline results are noted below.

We use the tenant results to report to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). The Regulator uses the results to monitor and compare performance of all Registered Social Landlords in Scotland.

The full survey results are available on our website.





# Headline Results – Tenant

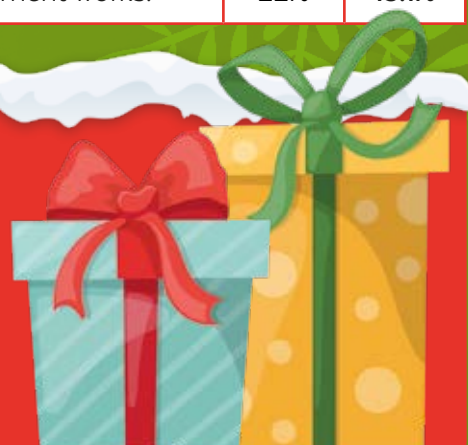
Scottish Housing Regulator Indicators	2022	2025	Scottish Average Aug 2025
Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the overall service provided by Shire Housing Association?	89.1%	<b>90.9%</b>	88.1%
How good or poor do you feel Shire is at keeping you informed about their services and decisions?	96%	<b>94.5%</b>	91.9%
How satisfied are you with the opportunities given to you to participate in Shire's decision making process?	99%	<b>93.8%</b>	88.5%
How satisfied were you with the repairs and maintenance service provided by Shire? Those who have reported a repair in the last 12 months	82%	<b>87.9%</b>	87.1%
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of your home?	88%	<b>88.3%</b>	85.9%
To what extent do you think your rent represents value for money?	81%	<b>82.9%</b>	82.0%

# Headline Results – Owner

Satisfaction indicators from owners	2022	2025
Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the overall service provided by Shire Housing Association?	66%	<b>48%</b>
Overall, how satisfied are you with Shire's customer service in terms of staff helpfulness?	86%	<b>67.6%</b>
Overall, how satisfied are you with Shire's customer service in terms of ease of contact?	89%	<b>80.1%</b>
Overall, how satisfied are you with Shire's maintenance of the neighbourhood you live in?	69%	<b>47.2%</b>
Billing information clearly shows how bills are calculated?	94%	<b>51.6%</b>
Taking into account the management fee and other service-related charges, do you think the factoring fee represents good value for money?	68%	<b>30.6%</b>
Are you willing, subject to grant funding, to be involved in common investment works.	22%	<b>15.1%</b>

Our Tenant Panel will be involved in reviewing these results with the Shire Team and will help us create a plan that takes forward the areas for future development and improvement.

We welcome the involvement and participation of our tenants, owners and stakeholders so if you have any questions about the survey or would like to be involved, this please get in touch with Alan Thomas, Community Co-Ordinator or Ann Black, Housing Manager.





Colour me in!





# SHIRE CHRISTMAS QUIZ – GOOD LUCK!

Win a  
**£50**  
voucher!

1.	IN "A CHRISTMAS CAROL," WHAT IS THE NAME OF SCROOGE'S DECEASED BUSINESS PARTNER?	ANSWER:
2.	IN "THE POLAR EXPRESS," WHAT GIFT DOES THE BOY RECEIVE FROM SANTA?	ANSWER:
3.	WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE MAIN VILLAIN IN THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS?	ANSWER:
4.	WHAT FRUIT IS OFTEN FOUND IN CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS?	ANSWER:
5.	WHICH REINDEER'S NAME IS ALSO THE NAME OF A ROMAN GOD?	ANSWER:
6.	WHAT IS THE MOST RECORDED CHRISTMAS SONG?	ANSWER:
7.	HOW MANY GIFTS IN TOTAL ARE GIVEN IN "THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"?	ANSWER:
8.	WHAT WAS THE FIRST COMPANY TO USE SANTA CLAUS IN ADVERTISING?	ANSWER:
9.	HOW MANY GHOSTS VISIT SCROOGE IN A CHRISTMAS CAROL?	ANSWER:
10.	WHAT IS FROSTY THE SNOWMAN'S NOSE MADE OF?	ANSWER:
11.	IN WHAT DECADE DID COCA-COLA POPULARIZE THE MODERN IMAGE OF SANTA CLAUS?	ANSWER:
12.	WHAT WAS FROSTY THE SNOWMAN'S LAST WORDS BEFORE HE MELTED?	ANSWER:
13.	WHICH COUNTRY STARTED THE TRADITION OF SENDING CHRISTMAS CARDS?	ANSWER:
14.	WHICH COUNTRY IS CREDITED WITH STARTING THE TRADITION OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE?	ANSWER:
15.	WHAT IS THE HIGHEST-GROSSING CHRISTMAS MOVIE OF ALL TIME?	ANSWER:
16.	WHAT SONG FEATURES FIGGY PUDDING ?	ANSWER:
17.	WHICH COUNTRY DONATES THE CHRISTMAS TREE THAT STANDS IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON, EVERY YEAR?	ANSWER:
18.	WHAT WAS THE FIRST CHRISTMAS SONG BROADCAST FROM SPACE?	ANSWER:
19.	WHAT DO AUSTRALIANS OFTEN EAT FOR CHRISTMAS INSTEAD OF TURKEY?	ANSWER:
20.	WHICH CHRISTMAS DECORATION WAS ORIGINALLY MADE WITH STRANDS OF SILVER?	ANSWER:

Name:  Contact No:

Address:

**TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING A £50 VOUCHER, PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED ENTRY FORM BY 12 NOON ON MONDAY 22ND DECEMBER 2025.**



# Rent Payments Over the Christmas Period

Christmas is a time for family and celebration, but it's also important to keep your rent payments on track.

Paying your rent on time and keeping your account up to date helps make sure your home stays secure for you and your loved ones.

We know the festive season can bring extra financial pressures, and many households face tough choices. If you're worried about making your rent payment, please don't wait, get in touch with us as soon as possible. Our team is here to help and can offer advice and support to prevent arrears from building up. There are several easy ways to pay your rent, including online and by phone.

**WAYS TO PAY YOUR RENT**

	<b>CALL US ON 01290 421130 TO SET UP A DIRECT DEBIT</b>		<b>USE THE ALLPAY APP, WEBSITE OR CALL 0330 041 6497</b> <b>YOU CAN ALSO USE YOUR ALLPAY CARD AT A PAYPOINT OR POST OFFICE</b>
	<b>CALL THE OFFICE AND WE CAN EMAIL OR TEXT A LINK TO PAY USING YOUR DEBIT CARD</b>		<b>BY STANDING ORDER OR BANK TRANSFER TO SORT CODE 80-06-24 ACCOUNT NUMBER 00123707 USING YOUR TENANCY REFERENCE</b>

If you're struggling to make ends meet, speak to your Housing Officer or our Financial Inclusion Officer.

We'll do everything we can to support you and help you manage your finances during this busy season.

**From all of us, we wish you a happy and safe festive season.**

## Office Closure over Christmas and New Year

The office will close at 4.45 pm on Tuesday 23 December and reopens on Tuesday 6 January.

If you have an emergency repair during this time, please contact **01290 421130** and follow the instructions on the recorded message.

The following numbers may also be of use during the festive period.

Rent payments:	Allpay: <b>0330 041 6497</b>
For gas escapes:	Transco: <b>0800 111 999</b>
Electrical supply faults:	Scottish Power: <b>0800 0929290</b>
Burst water mains:	Scottish Water: <b>0800 7310840</b>

