

# HOME FRONT



**JERSEY  
HOMES  
TRUST**

*'housing people'*

## JERSEY HOMES TRUST NEWSLETTER

### *Jersey Homes Trust to hold back on rent increases*

The Jersey Homes Trust will not be increasing rents during the rest of 2020.

This follows a decision taken earlier in the Spring, when we decided to halt annual rental increases during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. At a recent board meeting it was unanimously agreed by JHT Trustees that the rent freeze will continue for the rest of this year.

Commenting on the decision, Trust Chairman Michael Van Neste said: 'Many people have suffered, and continue to suffer, financial hardship due to this pandemic. We would not wish to add to the burden of our tenants by increasing rents at this time.'

He continued: 'I would, however, like to repeat my earlier request to any of our tenants who may be struggling financially due to the Covid-19 pandemic to seek advice, at the earliest opportunity, from our managers regarding any problems they may have in paying their rent.'

We are here to offer advice and assistance and will deal with people's concerns sympathetically.'

Tenants wishing to speak to our managers about issues with paying their rent due to Covid-19 should, in the first instance, contact them by phone on 720500 or by email to [jht@brunel.je](mailto:jht@brunel.je)

In accordance with Government guidelines you will be asked to provide the following evidence in support of the financial hardship you are suffering:

1. Loss of job; or
2. Covid-19 related ill-health causing a suspension or termination of employment; or
3. significant reduction in working hours; or
4. suspension of employment and/or payment of salary; or
5. a reduction in salary; or
6. the extent (if any) that the employer concerned is obliged to pay sickness benefit under the contract of employment.

### *Corridor clutter to be removed*

During recent inspections of apartment blocks our managers were concerned to find increasing amounts of clutter accumulating in corridors, stairwells and other communal areas. While this may be due in part to families spending more time at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it nevertheless poses a serious safety hazard.

It has been agreed, therefore, that our managers have no alternative other than to clear it away. **Any items found in communal areas will, therefore, be removed.** They will be stored in a secure, dry facility for a period of two weeks. Tenants wishing to reclaim items should contact our managers within that time. Items not claimed will be disposed of or donated to charity.

Rules about storing things in communal spaces are not made lightly. There are good reasons – fire risk being the main one. Items such as buggies, bikes, toys and plants can block fire escape routes for the people living

in the property and/or prevent firefighters reaching a fire and rescuing people trapped by fire and smoke.

A spokesman for the Jersey Fire and Rescue Service said: 'To enable safe evacuation at all hours in the day and night, the communal areas need to be especially well managed and this includes indoor and outdoor communal areas, specifically escape routes in corridors. Items stored in these areas create a major hazard in the event of a fire and subsequently these areas are classed as sterile and must be completely clear of any obstruction.'

'The two main reasons are, firstly, in the event of a fire in your building, the means of escape must be kept clear and free from any hazards to allow all occupants of the premises to exit the building safely of their own accord. Secondly, if the Fire and Rescue Service ever need to attend to a fire in your building, they need to be able to get to the fire quickly, without anything preventing them from doing so.'

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## *Bag it, bin it - don't just chuck it!*



This photograph is just one small example of the litter problems that occur on JHT estates on a daily basis. It was sent to us by a tenant who is fed up with having to walk through other people's rubbish to dispose of their own.

Added to the careless disposal of household waste as shown in this photograph, our managers are also faced with:

- Unbagged household rubbish being dumped in bins which, as well as becoming smelly, could cause health problems.
- Bagged rubbish left outside of bin stores, which can attract vermin as well as looking unsightly.
- Furniture, appliances, baby buggies & other items dumped in or near bin stores or else simply left lying around.

This is clearly in breach of tenancy agreements and will result in a charge being levied against offenders.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all our tenants of their responsibilities regarding the disposal of rubbish. These responsibilities are clearly outlined in your Tenancy Agreement, your Tenants' Handbook and on the Jersey Homes Trust's website, as follows:

- It is your responsibility to ensure that your rubbish is bagged and binned neatly inside the refuse areas or bin stores.
- Ensure that the bins are closed otherwise insects, vermin and other animals may be attracted, creating a health hazard.
- Do not leave rubbish in corridors, on pathways or near doorways.
- Glass must be disposed of in accordance with the requirements of the parish in which you live.
- Tenants are responsible for the dumping of large items such as furniture, fridges, prams etc. On no account should these be left in the bin stores or other communal areas.

Commenting on the problem, the Chairman of the JHT, Michael Van Neste, said: 'When people have to share spaces and facilities with others, it is important to be respectful of those shared areas and aware that you have neighbours who have a right to be able to fully enjoy their home environment.'

## *JHT performs well*

The annual benchmarking exercise carried out to monitor the performance of the Jersey Homes Trust in comparison to similar independent housing associations in the UK shows that the JHT continues to perform well.

The comparison shows that the JHT's overall annual spend per unit of accommodation is £3,341 compared to £3,124 by UK providers. The costs include maintenance and repairs as well as management costs. Trust Chairman

Michael Van Neste pointed out that the reason the JHT spend is higher than that of similar providers in the UK was largely due to the higher cost of labour and building materials in Jersey. As a percentage of turnover, the JHT's costs remain very much lower than those in the UK.

## *Telephone List:*

Jersey Homes  
Trust Managers:  
01534 750200

Jersey Water  
01534 707300

Jersey Water (24 hour emergency):  
707302

Government of Jersey Customer  
& Local Services + Income Support  
01534 444444

Government of  
Community Servi  
01534 442000

Jersey Gas (main  
01534 755500

## Upgrades planned for older estates



A major project to replace the kitchens at some of the Jersey Homes Trust's older estates is due to begin soon. The first estate to benefit will be Brooklands on Old Trinity Hill followed by Cherry Grove in Roussel Street.

JHT managers have been liaising with their contractor to determine the best way to carry out

the work with the minimum of disruption and in the shortest timeframe achievable. 'Although there will inevitably be some upheaval, our aim is to complete the work as quickly as possible,' said JHT Chairman Michael Van Neste. 'We anticipate that the work in each property can be achieved within seven days and that tenants can remain in their homes during that time.'

It is anticipated that tenants will have a choice of colour schemes with the new kitchens. Tenants who feel that they would prefer to keep their existing kitchens rather than be disrupted by the work, can do so. Individual letters will be sent out nearer the time.

### *In Brief*

#### **EICR inspections**

Due to Covid-19, work to inspect and certificate all electrical installations in Jersey Homes Trust properties was put on hold. That work has now re-started and will hopefully be completed by the end of 2020. Under the terms of the legislation, tenants must be offered the opportunity to receive a copy of the certificate relating to their property. Should you require a certificate once your property has been inspected, please email our managers at [jht@brunel.je](mailto:jht@brunel.je) and we will email it to you. If you don't have an email address, please telephone 750200 and the certificate will be posted to you.

#### **Le Coie roof garden**

The Covid-19 pandemic was also responsible for delaying work on the re-surfacing of the roof garden at Le Coie. Work has now re-started, the site has been cleared and it is hoped that the laying of the new weather-proof surface should be completed by the end of the year.

## *New arrangement for contacting our managers*

At the outbreak of Covid-19 our managers, Brunel, took the decision to close their offices in Dumaresq Street to the public. This was to protect both their staff and members of the public from the virus.

A new way of working has been developed whereby the Brunel staff have split into two bubbles, each taking it in turn to work one week in the office and one week

from home. This means that management cover is provided for all tenants at all times in a way that is safe and effective for everyone.

However, should a tenant wish to arrange a face-to-face appointment with a member of the Brunel Management team, they should first either telephone 750200 or email [jht@brunel.je](mailto:jht@brunel.je). Commenting on the new

procedures, JHT Chairman Michael Van Neste said: 'These arrangements have now been in place for some time and are working well. They are sensible precautions which mitigate risk to both our tenants and our staff, whilst ensuring that the normal work of the office can continue. We anticipate this arrangement continuing for the foreseeable future.'

of Jersey Health &  
Services:  
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Jersey Gas  
(emergency 24 hour service):  
01534 755555

Jersey Electricity  
(main switchboard):  
01534 505460

Jersey Electricity  
(emergency 24 hour service):  
01534 505050

main switchboard):  
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Citizen's Advice Bureau:  
0800 735 0249 (Freephone)

Fire Service:  
01534 445951

Crimestoppers (Freephone):  
0800 555 111





### *Working from home? Some tips and guidance*

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic many of you will have been working from home and may have continued to do so in either a full or part-time capacity.

Here is some advice which should be followed to ensure that your home environment is a safe place to work in.

**Electricity:** Although JHT properties are well provided for in terms of the number of electrical sockets, you may have more computer kit than usual to plug in, especially if there is more than one of you working from home. Please ensure that you don't overload sockets or adaptors with too many devices. If you have to use extension leads, ensure that they are not trailing across space where they might cause a trip hazard.



**Insurance:** We issue regular advice to tenants about ensuring that you have a household insurance policy adequate to cover damage to your belongings. As landlord, the JHT insures the main structure of all its properties. However, it is not responsible for insuring the contents of your home – that is down to you. Working from home may mean that you have more equipment (such as computers and printers) than you would normally have. If this is the case contact your insurer to check that you are covered. If the equipment belongs to your employer, they may cover the cost of any increased premiums. It's worth checking.

Finally, remember that even if you are not working from home, your neighbours might be. So please be mindful of that.

### *Charitable status of housing trusts resolved*

Charities in Jersey have been always been free of taxation, once having satisfied the Comptroller of Taxes of their charitable status. The new Charities Law changed all that. Charities now have to register with the Charities Commissioner in order to maintain their tax-free status. All the Island's housing trusts duly submitted applications to the Commissioner.

The Charities Law sets out which activities are recognised as charitable. It turned out that the law was not clear about the work of housing trusts. The applications by the trusts were put on hold, pending review.

We are delighted to report that the uncertainty has been sorted out. New laws have been passed to maintain the tax-free position of housing trusts in Jersey. The trusts are happy to rely on the new arrangements and have now withdrawn their applications for registration with the Charities Commissioner.

Commenting on the decision, JHT chairman Michael Van Neste said: 'We are grateful to the Housing Minister and the Strategic Housing Unit for their assistance in resolving this issue and for the confidence they displayed in supporting the work of the housing trusts.'