



New Chairman for Jersey Homes Trust

Philip Le Cornu (left) is the new Chairman of the Jersey Homes Trust. He was appointed in January to take over from the founder of the Trust, Michael Van Neste.
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Rent to rise by cost of living

Following a two-year freeze, rents for Jersey Homes Trust properties will rise by 3.8% on 1st April this year. In 2020 Trustees voted unanimously not to increase rents for that year due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We were the first of the Island's independent housing associations to do so and we implemented our rent freeze before the Government passed emergency laws banning all Island landlords from putting up rents during the first lockdown.

A further one-year rent freeze was agreed at the beginning of 2021. Had Trustees not taken that decision, rents over the two-year period would have risen by over 6%. The JHT will not be back-dating rental increases so tenants will continue to benefit from the two years in which rents did not go up. The 3.8% percent rise for the period 1st April 2022 to 1st April 2023 is based on the most recent Retail Price Index.

Meanwhile, up until recently the maximum rents for all social rented properties in Jersey was based on

90% of market value – that is to say, the minimum rent you could expect to pay in the private sector where there are no controls on the amount landlords can charge. You may have read or heard in the media recently that Jersey's Government has now reduced that figure to 80% of market value. However, a recent survey of rents charged by the Jersey Homes Trust for its properties, which has been independently verified, shows that all of our rents are already below 80% of market rent and in fact our average rents are 70% of those charged on the open market in Jersey.

As reported in an earlier Home Front newsletter, all Jersey Homes Trust rent reviews will now take place on 1st April each year.

- Meanwhile, we would urge anyone who is struggling with their rent to contact Customer and Local Services (formerly Social Security) at your earliest opportunity. Their telephone number is 01534 444444 and their email address is customerservice@gov.je

New Chairman for the Jersey Homes Trust

Philip Le Cornu is the new Chairman of the Jersey Homes Trust. He was appointed in January to take over from the founder of the Trust, Michael Van Neste, who retired in January.

In 1994, Mr Van Neste was invited by the then President of the States' Housing Committee, the late Len Norman, to set up an organisation to increase the number of social rented homes in the Island. At that time, Jersey was desperately short of social rented accommodation and many of the existing Housing Committee properties were in a bad state of repair. The JHT was established the following year and is now the largest independent housing association in Jersey, owning and managing 839 homes spread over 24 estates.

Mr Le Cornu, who is a lawyer, has been a Trustee of the Jersey Homes Trust for over ten years. 'I am delighted to have been asked to take over from Michael as Chairman of the Jersey Homes Trust,' he said. 'The work already achieved by the Trust under his leadership has been phenomenal.'

'As we all know, the need for more housing in Jersey is ongoing and, as Jersey's largest

independent provider of social rented housing, our aim is to continue to do our best to meet that need. The Government is working hard to identify suitable sites and we are in consultation with developers and others and hope to be able to continue to provide much-needed homes for Island.

'Meanwhile, of course, we will continue to maintain and upgrade our existing properties to the high standards you expect of us.'

In congratulating Mr Le Cornu on his appointment, Mr Van Neste said: 'I am sure that under Philip's leadership the JHT will continue to fulfil the aims and objectives for which it was set up.

'The continued provision of social rented housing stock is needed now more than ever. Over the years I have enjoyed rising to the challenge that was set for me by the late Len Norman. It has been my pleasure to meet many of you over the years since the JHT was established and I wish you all well for the future.'

New look for Berkshire Court

Berkshire Court, the JHT's La Motte Street apartment block for seniors, is undergoing a major refurbishment as part of the Trust's rolling programme of works.

Each of the 113 one-bedroomed apartments will be fitted with new front doors constructed of a hard-wearing material which will replace the wooden doors which have been there since the estate was constructed. The initial plan was to paint the original doors but due to their age Trustees decided to replace them with new ones which will have enhanced locking systems and which have been designed to minimise heat loss. The new doors will be maroon in colour.

Meanwhile, all interior walls within the estate are being painted in bright, cheerful colours and exterior decoration is scheduled for 2023.

There is great community spirit at Berkshire Court and comments were made in last year's tenants' survey that the open courtyard space would benefit from the addition of tubs of plants and trees to make it a more attractive area for tenants to sit out.

Our managers would be happy to fund this if any residents would be prepared to join together with arranging the planting. Anyone interested in this initiative is asked to contact the estate manager.

Meanwhile, other imminent refurbishment projects include:

- St Paul's Gate: The installation of new kitchens is almost complete.
- Belle Vue: The installation of new kitchens is underway.
- Victoria Place: This estate is next on the list for major external refurbishment as soon as post-Covid delivery issues can be overcome and a contractor appointed. We are aiming for later this year but if not, early in 2023.



Following requests by Berkshire Court residents, a Christmas tree was erected in the courtyard for the Festive Season

Fuel savers

The price of everything is rising and apparently it's all down to the Covid-19 pandemic. But there are steps we can take to limit spending on essentials – electricity usage, for instance. We have compiled this list of tips that are easy to introduce around the home to cut down on the amount of electricity used – they may not seem like much but they really can make a difference.

- Laundry: Experiment with lower temperature settings and shorter wash programmes. Use the correct setting for the size of the load.
- Fridge/freezer: De-frost before the ice builds up to more than ¼ inch thick to ensure the appliances are running efficiently.
- Keep both fridge and freezer as full as possible as they work more efficiently that way. Also, set their temperature to the manufacturer's recommendation to avoid excessive cooling.
- Turn off any lights when they are not in use.
- Don't leave mobiles and tablets on charge overnight.
- If you have an outside laundry drying space, use it.
- Regularly clean the filters on electrical devices (such as vacuum cleaners and extractor fans). Dirty filters make the appliance work harder, using more electricity.
- On sunny winter days, open the curtains and blinds to allow the sun to warm your home.
- When using an electric kettle, only heat the amount of water you need for each task.

The My JE app is a useful way to track your electricity usage. It's free and available from the App Store.

In Brief

Parking

As inconsiderate parking continues to cause ongoing problems on some estates, it has been decided to engage the services of a local security firm to monitor the smooth operation of our car parking arrangements. Appropriate signage will be displayed.

Fire risk assessments

Fire risk assessments are currently being undertaken in the corridors and hallway areas of all JHT apartment blocks. Over the coming months independent consultants will be checking escape routes, fire doors and signage to ensure that these meet with current best practise. Any areas of concern will be attended to.

Corridor clearance

In the event of fire or other emergency anything left along corridors or in stairwells is dangerous. Corridors and communal areas must not be used to store prams, bicycles, cupboards, furniture, shoes and the like. They could hinder escape from the building and also access by emergency services. As reported in previous issues of Home Front, our managers have systems in place for the removal of clutter. We would ask all tenants to respect this rule. It could save lives.

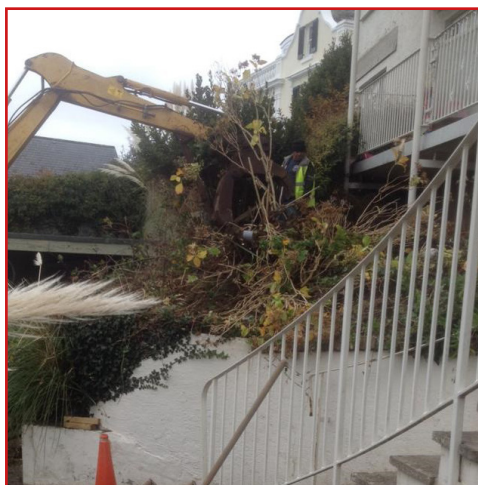
Down-sizing

The Island's Housing Minister, Deputy Russell Labey, has launched a 'right-size' initiative to encourage people whose current homes are too large for their needs to down-size to smaller accommodation. If any of our tenants feel that their homes are too big for them – maybe because your families have grown up and left home – you should contact the Affordable Housing Gateway for advice. They can be contacted via the gov.je website.

New estates manager

Jane Doris has joined the JHT team at Brunel Management as an estates manager. The estates for which she is responsible are Berkshire Court, Garrett Anderson House, Hameau de la Mer, Kent Lodge, St Clement's Road and Victoria Road.

Out with the old



Work to upgrade a section of the garden at Warren Court, part of La Folie Estate at Mont Felard, was completed recently.

An old planter had become choked with undergrowth and weeds and the wall was in danger of collapse so it was stripped out and re-planted.

in with the new



Fire escape plan

The Fire Service recommends that everyone should have an emergency escape plan in place should a fire break out in your home. Everyone living in the home, including children, should know what that plan is and what they should do.

How do you make an escape plan?

Having an escape plan in place is simple and can save your life:

- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape; the best escape route is the normal way in and out of your home.
- Choose a second escape route in case the first one is blocked by fire.
- Keep both escape routes clear of obstructions.
- Make sure everyone knows where the door and window keys are kept and always keep them there.
- Make sure your children know what to do if the alarm goes off and how to call 999. Keep your address by the phone for them to read.
- Make sure your smoke alarm will go off if there is a fire by testing it every week.
- Have at least two family fire drills every year, where every member of the household practices

your escape plan. Hold one during the day and another at night and start the drill by pushing the test button on one of your smoke alarms.

What do you do if both planned escape routes are blocked and you cannot get out?

Things don't always go to plan so we always need a 'Plan B'. Your escape plan is no different:

- Get everyone into one room - ideally one that has a window that opens and a phone.
- Put bedding or cushions around the bottom of the door to block the gap and stop the smoke coming in.
- Open the window to shout and attract help.
- Phone 999 and tell them your address and which room you are in.
- When the fire crews arrive, shout and wave clothing to let them know where you are.
- If you're on the ground or first floor, you may be able to escape through a window. Use bedding to cushion your fall and lower yourself - don't jump. Remember to lower children first.

For further information on this subject, go to the Fire Service web pages at www.gov.je