

## JERSEY HOMES TRUST NEWSLETTER

### ***Pleased to meet you!***

Hello, I'm Rose. Pleased to meet you.

I've started working with the Jersey Homes Trust (JHT), and I'm going to be writing the **Home Front** newsletter. This is my first one... so I hope you like it?!

As I will be getting to know the Trust, I'd also like to find out a bit more about you; so that what we put in the newsletter is about topics that are interesting and relevant to you.

This newsletter goes to every tenant in every property, twice a year - so there's a lot to cover as you can imagine!

Most of the issues are important to everyone, wherever you live, and I always think that sharing information about what's significant to us, can also help others keep up to date.

We will carry on putting together information that you need to know and that we think is helpful.

This publication is also an opportunity for you to have a voice. If there's something you're particularly worried about, but don't want to talk to neighbours about it - noise or litter for example - then you can speak with one of the Managers.

If it's an issue that people need to know about, then we can put together a general article about the subject and publish it here.

Equally, if you've got something you want to celebrate and share with people - just let us know. Good news is also important to talk about!!

Thank you and Happy Reading..!

*Rose*

### ***An eye on Government***

We'd like to introduce a regular Home Front update on what Government is up to that's relevant to us.

With a new Council of Ministers in place since the end of January, it's all change at the top. We also welcome back Deputy Sam Mézec as Minister for Housing, a role he has championed before in Government.

We know that one of the Council of Ministers' key priorities is housing, in all its forms and for all Islanders. Deputy Mézec took an early opportunity just after his appointment to meet with the JHT and other housing associations. He spoke with our Chairman Phil Le Cornu and set out his priorities to look at tackling the Island's pressured property market through a 'Crisis Emergency Taskforce' he's set up.

The previous Government has been criticised for 'inaction' but from what the new Chief Minister is

saying - he is intending to work with his Ministers and other States Members to bring about some real changes in support of the community.

We wish them well; and look forward to giving you an update in the next Newsletter about what difference Government is making to our sector.



Deputy Sam Mézec the new Minister for Housing

## Hard Talk - Money and Rent

**Talking about money is always a tricky subject**

Whichever way you look at it, money is important to all of us and we need it to support us in everything we do. A walk in the fresh air seems to be just about the only thing we can get for nothing.

And all the ‘noise’ around us constantly reminds us about needing more money. Cost of living, GDP, GVA, GST, RPI - how many more terms and acronyms are there?! The one thing we do know is they are all telling us that life is more expensive now than it was last year.

**The price of Island living**

We know that, living on an Island, we rely almost entirely upon imported goods - whether that’s food, household items, cars, fuel or building materials - it all has to be imported. That’s a fact of life of Island living and it’s something that neither us nor Government can control.

Since Brexit (another minefield) we know that it’s more difficult to get industrial goods into the Island because of the changing rules in relation to imports from Europe. Common sense tells me that: **Living on an Island = imported goods = cost.**

**Facts and figures**

I’ve also checked on the government website which tells me that **the retail prices index (RPI) is the main measure of inflation in Jersey. It measures the average change in prices of goods and services purchased by households and is sometimes referred to as the ‘cost of living’.**

Inflation is therefore the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time.

So that gives us the basis to work from. Jersey’s current RPI (as at December 2023) stands at 7.5%. So, in real terms, this means that everything is 7.5% more expensive than it was last year.

The RPI figure is also supposed to lead to annual increases in wages, financial support schemes, and pensions. However, in reality, this is not always the case, and the team at JHT are very aware of that.

**Jersey Homes Trust policy**

Over the last few years our rental increases have fallen well below the rate of inflation. Rental increases come into effect in July each year.

The Trust is also a ‘not for profit’ organisation, which means the income from rental is put back into the Trust and is geared towards reinvesting in, renovating and refurbishing homes.

**What’s happening this year - and what does it mean in terms of your rent?**

**The 2024 increase has been set at 4%, which is almost half the December 2023 rate of inflation.**

The policy is that rental on JHT properties does not exceed a maximum of 80% of market rate. This means that JHT rentals are designed to be lower than for privately rented homes. The increase will mean that no-one will go above 80% of market rate and some people will not get an increase. This also puts us in line with Andium Homes. As normal, you’ll you get a letter in the post about your own arrangements.

Being faced with the increasing cost of external supply of goods and labour, the JHT Board of Trustees have nevertheless held the increase back to the bare minimum to cover those external expenses.

**Since the Trust’s establishment in 1995 our aim has been to provide decent affordable social rented housing for the people of Jersey and we continually aspire to do that, even in the face of rising costs.**

## NEWS

### Mopping up after Storm Ciarán

As if the Island hasn’t been through enough over the last few years...

No sooner were we coming out of Covid than, in the space of a short few months, our Island home witnessed multiple shockwaves.

**Three fishermen lost at sea - gas explosion takes 10 lives - 100 dairy cows lost to a lethal toxin - Grands Vaux floods - gas outage affects 4,500 Island homes. Followed by...**

1 Nov 2023 - Storm Ciarán - tornado and winds of more than 100mph ripped through the Island - families forced from their homes - fallen trees, flooded roads and roofs ripped apart.

We were relieved that people did not have to be evacuated from Jersey Homes Trust properties and most of the damage caused by Storm Ciarán was from debris, roof tiles and slates being blown off and fences coming down. The damage was extensive but relatively minor compared with many other Islanders’ homes.

Putting tenant safety first, we worked quickly on making homes watertight and to ensure everyone could remain in their homes and get on with daily life.

But widespread damage to homes and properties in the Island means that, unfortunately, repairs to homes are taking longer than we’d all like, due to the inability to get hold of parts and labour, let alone scaffolding.

JHT homes are relatively modern, so survived pretty well. Nevertheless, the last four months have seen a comprehensive and ongoing programme of post-storm restoration and repair, which is being done as quickly as possible.

Only this month we’ve spent £28,000 on replacing fencing - which is uninsurable - on one estate.

We’ve fixed roof tiles on John Wesley apartments and at Parkside. There are more to be done and we’re waiting for the roof tiles at La Roseraie - which are special order. These are just some examples.

We know some satellite dishes are still out - and there are fallen trees, fences and hedges down in various locations. We’re working on it but it’s going to take several months’ work yet.

Incidents of this scale and magnitude affect us, our loved ones and the community as a whole. The legacy of the storm will last for months and years to come. We’re fully committed to getting JHT homes back to normal after the storm - but it’s taking some time, so please bear with us.

**Investing in your homes**

In addition to all the remedial work following Storm Ciarán, JHT Chief Executive Steve Van Neste has an update on what else has been happening since the last Home Front. There’s a lot going on!

<b>Berkshire Court</b>	New kitchens are about to be installed in the majority of flats and enhanced fire detection has been fitted in all flats.
<b>Grand Close</b>	Fire Audit complete and Fire Alarm upgrades completed.
<b>La Folie Estate</b>	<b>La Folie House</b> Fire Audit complete and improvement works done.  <b>Warren Court</b> Fire Audit complete, improvement works done, and thermal upgrade has been approved by Planning and is with Building Control for consent.
<b>Le Coie</b>	Fire Audit complete and Fire Alarm upgrades completed. Garden walls are being decorated. New stair ‘nosings’ (the area at the end of a stair tread, where most people put their feet) are in the process of being fitted to all staircases, so improving safety on the staircase.
<b>Parkside</b>	Fire Audit complete and improvement works completed.
<b>Clement Court</b>	Fire Audit complete and Fire Alarm upgrades work has begun.
<b>St Paul’s Gate</b>	Planning Approval has been granted for its refurbishment and is now with Building Control for consent.
<b>Victoria Place</b>	Fire Audit complete and works are set to begin shortly.

## *Meet the experts - new Fire Safety initiative for 'tall buildings'*



Ryan Hall 'Fire Safety Protection' with Steve Van Neste (JHT)

I was lucky enough to visit Berkshire Court with Steve, where I saw some of the refurbishment work, and also met some representatives from the States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service (SJFRS).

The Service are undertaking a comprehensive review of 'tall buildings' (defined as 5 stories or more, or 11 metres high) to improve fire safety across these types of homes and buildings in the Island. It's based on changes to UK fire safety legislation last October, which Jersey is also adopting.

There's nothing for residents to do, but don't be alarmed if you see a Fire Service representative on site. The Trust, as well as other social housing providers and managing agents, are involved with this project from the outset, as this is an important issue.

In practical terms, an initial inspection will be done - involving gathering information from premises to recognise any specific hazards and risks to improve the general fire safety standards for each tall building. It will look at the layout and design of buildings, location of fire doors, smoke detection systems, and materials used on external walls.

The information will be held in a **Secure Information Box** at each location and will be regularly updated. Only accessible by the Fire Service and managing agent, it gives the Service critical information in the early stages of an emergency, for example the geography of a block of flats, to help assist in bringing the incident under control.



New Fire Alarms

**Ryan Hall, Fire Safety Protection Lead at the SJFRS said:**

"We're working with local social housing providers and others to ensure that critical information is gathered for tall buildings. Jersey will be up to date with current legislation and be following best practice."

"This initiative will help us prioritise the best solutions and resources efficiently in case of an incident, as well as improve general fire safety standards for each tall building."

### ***In Brief - Gas outage***

We wanted to let you know that we're in touch with the Jersey Consumer Council who are looking into compensation for people affected by the Island-wide gas outage in October last year.

Over 100 JHT homes were affected by the software failure at Island Energy's gas plant at La Collette, and we're working hard on your behalf to see what can be done.

In circumstances where you receive your gas bill from the JHT, if we get a rebate, it will be passed directly back to you.

Watch this space...

**YOUR MANAGERS** - For maintenance requests, call or email the office t: 01534 750200 e: [jht@brunel.je](mailto:jht@brunel.je) or email your appropriate Manager direct as per the following list of properties:

**Sue Farrar** email: [s.farrar@brunel.je](mailto:s.farrar@brunel.je)

Brooklands, Le Jardin Fleuri, Le Coie, Jardin de la Mare, John Wesley Apts., Clos du Ruisseau, St Saviours Court, Clement Court

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