

Ref: IR2302

7 April 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002 – RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information received 27 March 2023 which requested:

1. Details of the tenant consultation process, including the dates, methods, and any materials used to inform tenants about the proposed rent increases.
2. The number of tenants you have in the Scottish Borders.
3. The number of tenants who responded to the consultation on rent increases.
4. Any analysis or summary of the responses received, including any feedback or comments made by tenants.
5. Any changes or adjustments made to the proposed rent increases as a result of the consultation.

Your information has been processed under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The information requested is provided below, this information is correct as of 27 March 2023:

1. Details of the tenant consultation process, including the dates, methods, and any materials used to inform tenants about the proposed rent increases.

A range of methods were used across both our social rented tenancies (covering mainstream and supported housing) and non-social rented housing (covering mid-market housing).

- For tenants living in our mainstream housing, we issued information on our options for a 5% or 7% rent increase and invited feedback through an online survey. In addition, we asked a customer research company, Research Resource, to telephone a sample of 200 mainstream tenants to seek feedback on our proposals.
- For tenants living in our supported housing for older people we issued information on our options for a 5% or 7% rent increase, and service charge increases based on local services, and invited feedback through a paper survey. Tenants were also invited to meet with senior staff to discuss the proposed increases and to provide feedback at the meeting, in addition to returning the survey form.
- For tenants living in our mid-market tenancies, we issued information on our options for a 3% rent increase and invited feedback through an online survey.

- Consultation with mainstream tenants and tenants living in supported housing took place over January 2023. This was later than when we normally consult (Mid December – mid January) as we were awaiting further guidance from Scottish Government, aligned to emergency cost of living legislation, on what approaches social landlord could take with regard to rent uplifts. This was clarified on 21 December 2022.
- Consultation with mid-market rent tenants took place between 25 January -7 February 2023. This is the first year we have consulted on proposed rent increases with our mid-market tenants. We are not legally required to do so however our Board agreed last year we should consult with this group of tenants in the same way as we consult with social housing tenants. As with social housing we were awaiting further guidance from Scottish Government aligned to emergency cost of living legislation on what approaches we could take. This was clarified on 19 January 2023.
- The materials used varied depending on the services provided. However, attached are two letters which formed the template 1) for consultation with social rented tenants on rent increase, 2) the template letter used for consultation with mid-market tenants.

2. The number of tenants you have in the Scottish Borders.

- The total number of tenants included in the process set out in 1 above was 2,775.

3. The number of tenants who responded to the consultation on rent increases.

- 592 including 65 tenants who attended local meetings in supported housing.

4. Any analysis or summary of the responses received, including any feedback or comments made by tenants.

Breakdown of responses from our mainstream and supported housing tenants who returned a survey form (503)

Preferred Rent Increase - Mainstream and Supported Housing	5%		7%		No Preference	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Totals (No.)	390		101		12	
Totals (%)	78%		20%		2%	

Breakdown of responses from our mid-market tenants

Feedback on 3% Option	Very Easy/Easy to Afford		Just About Afford		Very Difficult/Fairly Difficult to Afford	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Totals (No.)	7		13		4	
Totals (%)	29%		54%		17%	

Alongside the choice of options for a rent increase, tenants were also asked to share additional comments on the proposals. While 'no comment' was the largest response to this, we did receive 338 comments which were then split into themes. There was a large spread of responses to the question, with the top three themes being:

- Cost of Living pressures
- Increase proposals are too high
- Properties need upgraded / maintained

5. Any changes or adjustments made to the proposed rent increases as a result of the consultation.

Our Board considered a detailed report on the rent consultation process carried out across our social rented tenancies. Although the majority of tenants expressed a preference for an increase in rent of 5%, the Board agreed a 7% increase in rents which is still below inflation at around 10%. The Board reached this decision being aware of the above inflation increases Eildon would be experiencing across several areas of expenditure as a result of high inflation including higher insurance and service compliance costs, utility costs increasing by 95%, and existing contracts with suppliers of services, including repair and maintenance, increasing by the consumer price index (CPI) or retail price index (RPI). An increase 7% also helps us to increase investment in current Eildon properties of around £1m during 2023/24.

Please note that this response constitutes full release under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Your Right to Seek a Review

If you have made a request and are unhappy with the response from us (or have not had a response), you have the right to request a review from us. You can do this by writing to:

Date Protection & Information Officer
Eildon Housing
Dunsdale Road
Selkirk
TD7 5EB

or email: InfoRequests@Eildon.org.uk

Please note:

- Your request must be in writing
- You have 40 working days upon receipt of this letter to ask for a review
- You will receive a full response to your review request within 20 working days of its receipt
- Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Appealing to the Commissioner

If you have already been through the two steps of making your request and requesting a review and are still not happy, you can appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC). You must submit your complaint to the SIC within 6 months of receiving our review response.

You can request an appeal by accessing the **Online Appeal Service** on the SIC's website. This is the best way to make an appeal, it provides help in real time and collects exactly what the SIC needs so they can investigate your case quickly. The SIC's website is:

www.itspublicknowledge.info/appeal

If you don't wish to appeal online, you can contact the SIC. Your appeal must be in a format that can be kept for future use e.g., in writing, by email, or a recording on an audio or video tape.

Send your appeal by email

You should send your email to: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info

Send your appeal by post

Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner
Kinburn Castle
Doubledykes Road
St Andrews
Fife
KY16 9DS

If you need help making an appeal, you can contact the Commissioner's Office:

E-mail: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info

Telephone: 01334 464610

You can find further information on making an appeal on the Commissioner's website:

www.itspublicknowledge.info

Further information about your rights and accessing information is available on our website here

[Access to Information - Eildon Group](#)

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Little

Kerry Little

Data Protection & Information Officer

<Name>
<Address Line 1>
<Address Line 2>
<Address Line 3>
<Post Code>

January 2023

Dear

RENT INCREASE 2023/24 – LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

This is a chance to share your views on our rent increase from July 2023. The difficult circumstances this year around the cost of living mean that we want to hear your views on the affordability of rent and how you are coping with increased energy costs.

As a tenant of a mid-market home, your rent is set lower than those in private market rented homes but generally higher than those for social rented homes. The rent levels for mid-market rents are produced each year by the Scottish Government and landlords must set rents in line with these figures.

What does rental income pay for?

We provide almost 3,000 high quality affordable homes for people across the Scottish Borders, delivering services like repairs and maintenance and tenancy advice and support, while also having ambitious plans to build at least 800 more new homes over the next few years.

What's more, we have kitchens and bathroom replacements, along with a number of heating, windows and door replacements, planned next year as part of our long-term commitment to investing to improve the essential components in our homes for our customers.

Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) Act

In October 2022, the Scottish Government passed legislation that means it now has powers to limit the level of rent increases that landlords can apply to private sector tenants. As a mid-market rent tenant on either a Short-Assured Tenancy or a Private Residential Tenancy, the Scottish Government class your tenancy with us as a private sector tenancy.

This January, the Scottish Government made the decision to cap private sector rent increase at 3% until at least 30 September 2023.

This means that your monthly rent will increase by **XXXX**, to **XXX** per month.

Complete our survey

We want to hear what you think of this increase. Your feedback will be included in a report to the Board of Eildon Enterprise Ltd in February.

Here is a link to our survey on Microsoft Forms:

INSERT LINK

Let us know what you think before 7 February 2023, and you could win one of two £50 shopping vouchers.

Thanks

Thanks for taking the time to read through the proposal and supporting information – and remember, having your say in the rent consultation is just one of the ways to get involved in decision making with us through our customer engagement options.

If you would like to find out more, please have a look on our website www.eildon.org.uk, or email enquiries@eildon.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



Jan Turnbull
Private Residential Tenancies Officer

<Name>
<Address Line 1>
<Address Line 2>
<Address Line 3>
<Post Code>

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

January 2023

Dear

RENT INCREASE PROPOSAL 2023/24 – LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

This is a chance to share your views on our proposal for rents from 1 April 2023. The difficult circumstances this year around the cost of living mean that we are consulting with you a little bit later than we normally would.

In October 2022 the Scottish Government passed legislation that means it now has powers to limit the level of rent increases that social landlords like us can apply to our rents if Scottish Ministers consider these restrictions are required.

Following discussions between the Scottish Government and social landlord representatives, agreement was reached in December 2022 that the Scottish Government would not use their new powers to restrict rents, recognising that to do so could impact on service delivery including improvement programmes for existing homes, and building new homes.

However, in reaching this agreement, it was also recognised that the current cost of living crisis is placing considerable pressures on tenants and that these should be considered when social landlords review their rents and spending plans from April 2023.

What does rental income pay for?

We provide almost 3,000 high quality affordable homes for people across the Scottish Borders, delivering services like repairs and maintenance and tenancy advice and support, while also having ambitious plans to build at least 800 more new homes over the next few years.

What's more, we have kitchens and bathroom replacements, along with a number of heating, windows and door replacements, planned next year as part of our long-term commitment to investing to improve the essential components in our homes for our customers.

We expect to collect £14.7 million in rental income this year and this is how we use it:

Things we spend rental income on	% of spend
Housing Management Covers staffing costs associated with managing our developments.	35%
Planned and Routine Repairs / Maintenance Covers the costs of everyday repairs reported by customers and planned repairs like roof work and external painting.	19%
Funding Charges Covers the payment of interest on loans made to cover investment in our housing stock.	16%
Depreciation This is an accounting adjustment representing the cost of building homes spread over their economic life.	10%
Current and Future Stock Investment Covers improvement works like replacement bathrooms, windows, kitchens, heating and rewiring, and the building of new homes with support from Scottish Government through Housing Association Grant.	19%
Voids and Bad Debts We make a provision each year to cover the costs of debts due to us (like former tenant rent arrears and rechargeable repairs) that we need to write off, and lost income due to empty properties	1%

If you would like to find out more about rent and money matters, or have a look at our annual accounts, you'll find lots of helpful information on our website www.eildon.org.uk

What we are consulting on

We are trying to reach a balance between increasing rents to meet our increased costs and increasing rents to a level we think is fair and will not significantly impact on our core service delivery,

A rent increase in line with inflation would be 10%. This would generate around £1.47m which would allow us to meet increased costs due to the rise in fuel, goods and services costs, and to meet our current investment programmes within existing homes and continue building new homes. We know that 10% is not affordable to many tenants, so have worked hard to offer what we think are realistic alternatives for you to consider.

Our Board has agreed that we consult customers on two options – both of which propose to increase rents well below the level of inflation. Both options will allow us to meet our core costs and maintain the same level of service, but they will limit the number of new things we can do and the improvements we can make.

What are we proposing?

The below tables are just examples of what these increases would mean per month; the increase you see may be different, but they should give you an idea of what the proposal will mean:

Option 1 – 7%

Property Size	1 person, 1 bedroom flat	2 person, 2 bedroom flat	5 person, 3 bedroom terraced house
Proposed Monthly Increase	£21.38	£24.58	£30.57

An increase of 7% would mean that we collect £441,000 less income than we require for our investment plans. We would need to review the plan and delay some investment in new homes as well as investment in current homes; for example, the rough cost of replacing a kitchen is £2,500 and a bathroom is £2,000 in material costs alone.

Option 2 – 5%

Property Size	1 person, 1 bedroom flat	2 person, 2 bedroom flat	5 person, 3 bedroom terraced house
Proposed Monthly Increase	£15.27	£17.56	£21.83

An increase of 5% would mean we collect £735,000 less income than we require for our investment plans. As in Option 1 above, we would need to review the plan and delay further our investment in our new homes and also delay more home improvements to current homes.

What happens next?

Your views on the above proposals will be shared with our Board, and they will make a decision on the rent increase in February 2023. Once the decision has been made, you will receive a letter in March confirming the exact amount you will be charged from 1 April 2023.

Complete our survey

Let us know what you think before 27 January 2023, and you could win one of two £50 shopping vouchers. This year we have again asked Research Resource to help us with the rent consultation.

- The survey will go online on by 13 January 2023, and you'll be able to find it at www.eildon.org.uk or by scanning the QR code below:



- Research Resource may give you a call between 16-27 January 2023 to hear your views.

Thanks

Thanks for taking the time to read through the proposal and supporting information – and remember, having your say in the rent consultation is just one of the ways to get involved in decision making with us through our customer engagement options.

If you would like to find out more, please have a look on our website www.eildon.org.uk, or email enquiries@eildon.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Scott
Housing Services Manager