



CONNECT

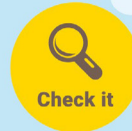
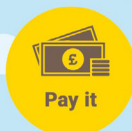
WITH EILDON HOUSING

Your Home

Your Food

Your Community

Your Money



In this issue

We continue to work with other organisations to bring you updated information and support. We hope you find this issue useful. Please check out the back page to offer any feedback.

YOUR HOME

YOUR FOOD

YOUR COMMUNITY

YOUR MONEY

Welcome

to your Connect Spring Edition

Foreword from Nile Istephan, Eildon CEO

We continue to share lots of help and support in this issue as well as information on what we have been working on to make improvements for you and your home.

We're always keen to know if this information is useful and helpful, so if you do have any feedback do let us know using the contact details on the back page. We'll have a new look for the next summer edition, so we'd be keen to hear your thoughts on what that should include and improvements we can make.

Remember to be kind

As a not-for-profit service delivery organisation, you, as our customers, have a right to express your views to us when we have made a mistake or fallen short in some way. We're all different. We have different styles, approaches and expectations, however, all of us deserve to be treated with respect. We're here to provide the best service we can. We take a zero-tolerance approach to verbal or physical abuse of any nature towards our staff whether that's in person, online or over the phone, so please remember to be kind. We're here to help.

Nile Istephan



Our Board strengthens as we welcome two new members

We are delighted to announce the appointment of two new board members Ross Kilshaw and Hannah MacLeod to our governing body. Ross Kilshaw is Managing Partner of Cullen Kilshaw LLP, a firm of Solicitors/Estate Agents which spans across the Scottish Borders. Ross's specialism is in residential property. Hannah MacLeod is a qualified solicitor and has spent a decade working in local government supporting the delivery of essential community services and professional regulation.

Our Chair, Cathie Fancy said, "We are delighted to welcome Ross Kilshaw and Hannah MacLeod on to the Board. They are two exceptional additions who bring a wealth of experience – especially from a legal perspective. Their expertise will give further strength to our already excellent Board."



Hannah MacLeod



Ross Kilshaw

Your Rent for 2024/25

You should have received a letter from us detailing your rent for 2024/25. It is always a difficult decision to increase rent charges and in reviewing our rents we always try to find a balance between the need for increasing rental income to cover our increased costs, and the affordability of that increase for customers.

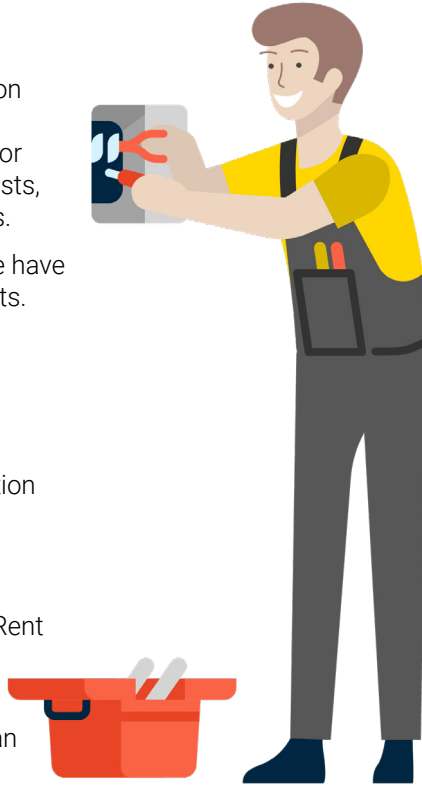
As a charity and non-profit making organisation we have to charge you a basic rent which will cover our costs.

Your rent covers:

- repairs and maintenance to your home
- cyclical maintenance e.g. external painting
- provision for future major repairs and modernisation
- loan charges for money we've borrowed
- housing services we provide

You can read more about how we set rents in our Rent Setting Policy - <https://bit.ly/rentsettingpolicy>.

We are committed to keeping our rents affordable. Nevertheless, we appreciate that rent payments can represent a substantial proportion of your income. Please contact your housing officer if you have concerns about paying your rent.



Help with your rent through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

It may be that you are entitled to help with your rent from Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or are on a modest income please ask for advice and an application form at Scottish Borders Council or contact us. Our Tenancy Sustainment team can provide advice on benefit entitlement and help you to claim benefits. This advice could help you to maximise your income, prevent you falling into rent arrears, and enable you to enjoy a better quality of life.

In addition to advising on benefits, our team also provide basic debt and budgeting advice, and help to reduce fuel bills. For further information, please contact us on **03000 200 217** or at TenancySustainment@eildon.org.uk.

Why do communal areas need to be kept clear?

As a landlord, we have a legal obligation under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 to manage the safety of communal areas and to make sure there are no obstructions that make it difficult for you to get out of the building in the event of an emergency.

Items stored or placed in communal areas (for example, pushchairs, bikes, mobility scooters, shopping trolleys, shelving, pots, ornaments, ladders, decorating/cleaning equipment, furniture, any electrical appliances) could:

- obstruct your exit and your neighbours' exit when evacuating the building in the event of a fire or emergency
- create a fire risk and a potential source of ignition, sustaining a fire, or give off toxic fumes and smoke when alight

Both can hinder the ability of emergency services.

Please make sure to keep communal corridors, landings, service and meter cupboards and stairwells completely clear.

If you're unsure on any of the above or would like storage advice, please do contact your housing officer. If you live in supported housing or extra care housing, speak to a member of the local team. We would also encourage you to book a free home fire safety visit with the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service by phoning **0800 0731 999**.

The common stair is your only means of escape in the event of a fire.



Have you ever thought what you would do if fire were to break out in your stair? It may not necessarily be in your flat! A fire started in a common stair could kill you and your family. Even a small bag of rubbish can create enough smoke to fill a whole stair. Items left in a common stair are often deliberately set on fire.

Keep it clear

- Get rubbish, old furniture, etc out of the building
- Make sure storage areas are kept locked
- For advice on uplifting items contact your local Council

If fire does start

- Keep doors closed to prevent smoke filling your house
- Dial 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service, giving as much information as you can

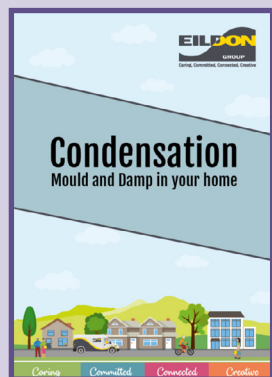
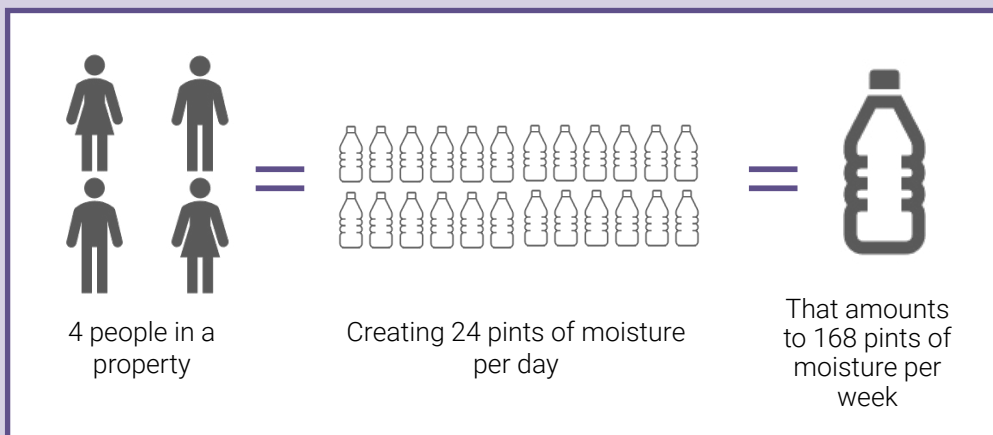
For free home fire safety advice
CALL 0800 0731 999
or visit our website at
www.firescotland.gov.uk



Mould, dampness and condensation in your home

If you are experiencing damp, mould or condensation in your home, it is important you let us know as soon as possible.

Damp can be an issue for many households as a result of our wetter, colder climate. It can be a serious problem as it can cause damage to a building's infrastructure as well as possible threat to health, especially for those with underlying health concerns, if left untreated. Condensation is the most common cause of damp. It's easily recognised by the black mould it causes which can appear near cold surfaces like window frames.



There are ways you can help prevent condensation in your home. We have created a leaflet now available on our website giving tips and information on condensation, damp and mould. Check out the link to find out more, <https://bit.ly/43GH9j3>.

The most important thing is to make sure any moist air you create can leave your home through vents, extractor fans and open windows. So, if you're cooking or showering use your extractor fan or open a window to help the moist air escape. If you're drying clothes, try to do this outside.

How to report a condensation related issue

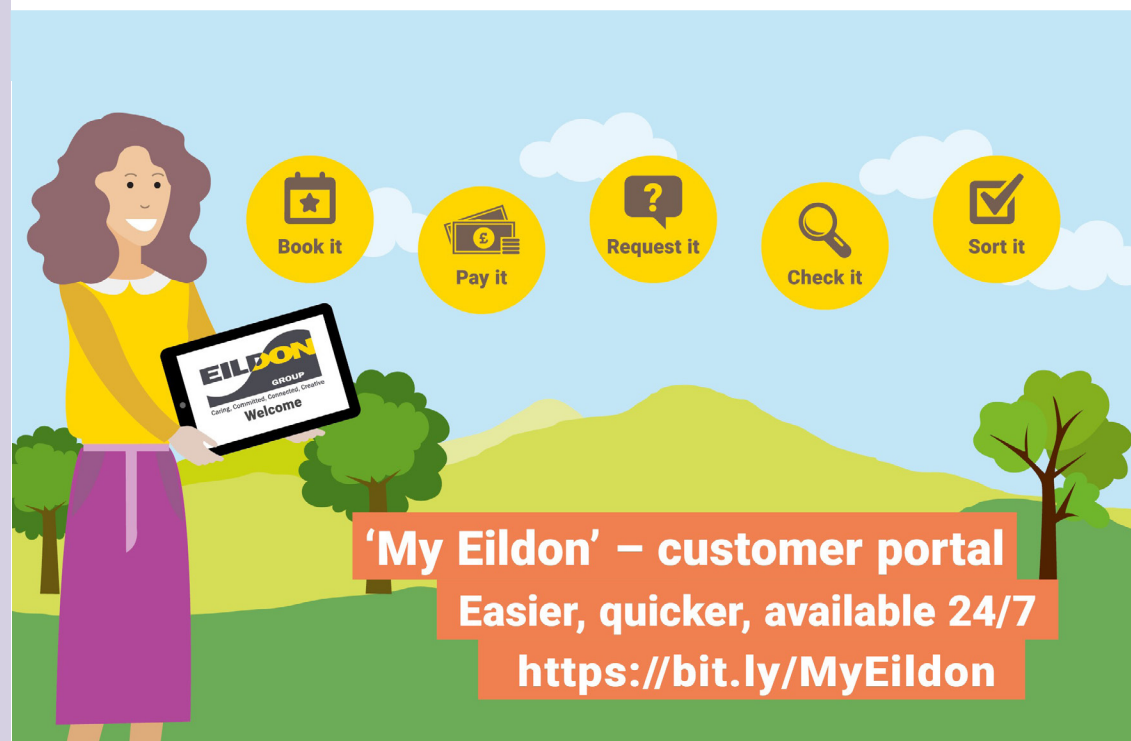
To report a damp, mould or condensation issue in your home you can do it quickly and easily with the My Eildon – customer portal:

<https://bit.ly/MyEildon>

It's available 24/7 so you don't need to wait until our office is open. You can attach photographs as well, and keep track of progress.

You can also call our office, during opening hours, on **03000 300 217**.

On receipt of an enquiry we will arrange for a maintenance officer to visit and carry out an inspection to determine the cause of problem, they will carry out a check of the property and work through a questionnaire with you. From this, we can determine what action is required to eliminate the problem and explain to you what these will be. These can range from cleaning and treating an area, checking for any leaks or checking for areas where insulation or ventilation is lacking. If the cause is difficult to determine we will arrange for a specialist surveyor to visit and recommend what is required.



'My Eildon' – customer portal
Easier, quicker, available 24/7
<https://bit.ly/MyEildon>

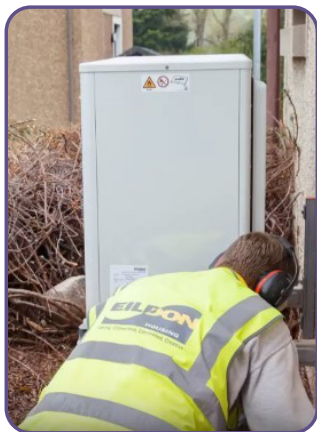
Developing industry wide training in the Borders

We're really pleased to have been able to input into an exciting training opportunity that will not only benefit us but other employees of social landlords and their subcontractors.

Borders College received funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to help deliver free retrofit training courses. These will cover heat pumps, renewables and much more. This initiative is a direct response to the pressing need for upskilling to decarbonise the housing stock within our region which is a target for us all.

The college worked in collaboration with ourselves and the other Borders housing associations to draw up the syllabus looking at the needs of our organisations.

It's great to have been involved in this and we now have the opportunity to put our managers and operatives from the Development Team, HIT squad and Maintenance and Repair teams through this training.



Improving your homes

Our Home Improvement Team have had a busy start to the year replacing kitchens in Clovenfords and Galashiels as well as bathrooms in Stow.

When we've had changeover in tenancies we've also had the opportunity to upgrade properties. All of this work is important to us to make sure we maintain your homes to a high standard.

Your annual update for your area is included alongside this issue of Connect. This includes information on your housing officer and maintenance officer, and who provides services in and around your home. Check out where the team will be next and what they will be working on.



Floor coverings in your home

We are always reflecting on the best way to help during challenging times, and moving home can be expensive.

Like other social landlords, most of our properties are let unfurnished, however we do try whenever possible to re-use carpets. When a tenant moves out, we inspect the property and if floor coverings have been left, and are in a reasonable/good condition, we offer to gift them to the new tenant. That means, you may not need to fund floor coverings immediately, or cope without them. All we ask is that a form is signed to accept and confirm that you are now responsible for the maintenance and replacement of the floor coverings which have been gifted.

If you're on a low income you may be able to get support with furnishing your home from a Community Care Grant - <https://bit.ly/SWFGrant>.

Quality, used and preloved affordable homeware is also available from Home Basics outlets in Walkerburn and Hawick - www.homebasics.org.uk. These shops are open to everyone and encourage a reuse society across local communities.

If you have any other thoughts or ideas about how we may be able to assist tenants with the cost of moving, please get in touch.



Planning a trip?

If you are planning on going away during the summer or anytime of the year, please remember when you return to run your hot and cold taps for a couple of minutes to reduce the risk of possible bacteria build-up. This is also important for any showers you have in your home.



Our Community Food Hub

Over the past three years, Eildon has been delivering the Borders Food Hub. In that time, we have brought more than 100 tonnes of food to communities in the Borders from FareShare (not to mention tonnes of pet food from the Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home too). It's a very successful project and sadly one that is still needed.

Our food hub coordinator, Colin Playfair, has been doing a sterling job, building relationships with the food banks, pantries and larders in the area and delivering a regular and reliable supply of food to them to support those who need it most.

Unfortunately for all of us (but not for him!), Colin retired in March this year. Colin will be a hard act to follow but our new food hub driver Keith Nairn is up to the challenge. If you would like to find out more about the Food Hub, or the wider Community Partnership Team, please get in touch using the contact information on the back page of this issue.



Consultation on food provision in the Scottish Borders



The purpose of the consultation is to identify people's current situation in relation to food poverty, with the aim of making access to food easier for people. Feedback provided will:

- Feed into subsequent food strategy and Good Food Nation plan.
- Identify the food needs of residents.
- Inform what food services are currently on offer and aims to avoid duplication of services.
- Use data to better signpost to services.

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for many people, and the cost-of-living crisis has had and continues to have a significant impact on lives.

We would be grateful if you could complete the survey to help us get a better picture of the current impact to residents throughout the Scottish Borders [Citizen Space](#).



Sustainability

For us, sustainability is about meeting people's needs now and in the future, whilst playing our part in the global response to climate change. As a social housing provider this can mean assessing a number of emerging issues and opportunities from; climate change, fuel poverty, biodiversity loss, low-carbon heating, green spaces and legislation – the list goes on! Against this backdrop, we felt it was appropriate to update our Sustainability Strategy (and develop a roadmap to Net Zero emissions).

The Scottish Government has set a target of Net Zero emissions by 2045. By prioritising energy efficient homes, we can help meet this target while also addressing fuel poverty.

At the heart of our sustainability journey is your wellbeing, comfort and safety which are paramount in everything we do. By prioritising your homes' thermal efficiency and reducing the number of polluting heating systems, we help to create healthier living environments.

We aim to incorporate your feedback into our sustainability efforts. Through surveys, consultations and focus groups, we seek to understand your needs and aspirations.

We also recognise the importance of affordability as the cost-of-living crisis persists. For many, energy costs represent a significant proportion of household expenses. By investing in energy efficiency technologies and renewable energy sources, we aim to minimise your exposure to fuel poverty.

We are firm believers that sustainability should be ingrained in our daily decision-making processes at every level. Through forging robust partnerships with you, our colleagues, and our partners, we aim to take forward positive change on the critical issues that impact us all.



Digital Lending Library



Have you been thinking about getting a laptop or a tablet but are not sure where to start? Would it help to borrow one to see if you would find it useful?

Eildon Housing is setting up a Digital Lending Library for tenants like you, in partnership with The General Store, Selkirk.

You can borrow a laptop, tablet or mobile wi-fi device for up to six months at no cost, and the technicians at the General Store will make sure you can get started and help sort out any teething troubles.

We will be trialling our project in Selkirk from April with a plan to widen out across the Borders shortly after.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact our Community Partnership Team:



03000 200 217



enquiries@eildon.org.uk

Our Free Computer Clinic

Maybe your laptop or tablet is running really slow, or you have annoying pop-ups, or you can't remember how to do something.

Maybe you'd like to learn how to make video calls to loved ones, play games, watch videos or listen to the radio on it?

Maybe you don't have a laptop or tablet but you'd like to try one.

Whatever it is – we can help at our **FREE** Computer Clinics, coming up at the locations below.



Computer clinic dates

You don't have to be a resident here to attend:

Oakwood Park, Galashiels: 1 May, 29 May and 26 June at 10.30am

Teviot Court, Hawick: 17 April, 15 May and 12 June at 3pm

Frank Scott Court, Hawick: 24 April, 22 May and 19 June at 3pm

Helping you with Fuel Debt

Eildon is part of the Borders Housing Network which consists of all the Borders housing associations. Together, over the last few years, we have received funding from the Scottish Government's Fuel Support Fund totalling over £1.4m. We have been able to reduce or clear fuel debts for our tenants. We have also been able to provide fuel vouchers to those having difficulty topping up their pre-payment meters.

If you are struggling to make payments towards a fuel debt or feel you are at crisis point with your pre-payment meter, please get in touch to see if we may be able to help. Evidence will be required to support any application. We can also work with you or refer you to independent sources of advice to help you reduce your energy use. All matters are treated confidentially. Our tenancy sustainment officers are happy to speak to you on the phone, in the office, email or visit you in your home. Check out all the ways you can contact us on the back page of this issue.



The UK government is upholding its 'triple lock' guarantee in 2024, which will see the State Pension increase by 8.5% in April in line with earnings. This guarantees that the State Pension will rise by the highest of September's inflation figure, earnings growth, or 2.5%. The full new State Pension rate will rise by £17.35 a week (£902.20 a year).

	Weekly Amount 2023/24	Weekly Amount 2024/25	Annual Amount Received
New State Pension	£203.85	£221.20	£11,502.40
Basic State Pension	£156.20	£169.50	£8,814.00

Key benefit uplifts from April 2024:

Government benefit rates change every year and 2024 will see the majority of benefits increase by 6.7%, with the exception of the State Retirement Pension which will rise by 8.5%.

What this could mean for you

An example, from April 2024:

The standard allowance element of Universal Credit will increase by 6.7% from April 2024:

	Monthly rate 2023/24	Monthly rate 2024/25
Single 25 or over	£368.74	£393.45
Couple – joint claimants, one or both 25 or over	£578.82	£617.60

There are also further increases in several other additional elements of Universal Credit, including payments for children, disabled children and work allowances.

Universal Credit Migration

The following benefits are ending and are being replaced by Universal Credit:

- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Other benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), will stay the same.

If you receive Income Support you will receive a letter from the DWP shortly inviting you to make a claim for Universal Credit. You must claim Universal Credit by the deadline date given in your letter. This is 3 months from the date the letter was sent out.

If you cannot claim Universal Credit by the deadline date, you should contact the [Universal Credit Migration Notice helpline](#) as soon as possible on 0800 169 0328 [Universal Credit if you receive a Migration Notice letter - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



Not feeling yourself?



If you are feeling that you haven't got it 'all together' – feeling lonely, stressed, worried or just not yourself, contact 'Togetherall' where you can get support and start to feel better.

You can share experiences in a safe, anonymous space.

<https://togetherall.com>

How to Contact Us

We welcome your feedback – there are many ways to let us know what you think.



The Weaving Shed, Ettrick Mill,
Dunsdale Road, Selkirk TD7 5EB



www.facebook.com/EildonHousing



Customer Service: 03000 200 217



[@eildonhousing](https://www.instagram.com/eildonhousing)



housing@eildon.org.uk



www.eildon.org.uk



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