

Connect

with Eildon Housing *Summer 2024*



**Welcoming our new
Learning Disability
Service in Kelso**



Caring, Committed, Connected, Creative



YOUR HOME



YOUR COMMUNITY



YOUR MONEY

www.eildon.org.uk

Welcome

Foreward from Nile Istephan, Eildon CEO



Connect Summer Edition

The last three months have flown by and we're now meant to be in Summer, although it definitely doesn't feel like it yet.

It's been a busy time but also extremely sad, as we mourned the passing of our former Chair, Bill Wilkie MBE.



Bill joined Eildon in 1978 and quickly became Chairman, remaining in this position until 2009 – an amazing 27 years. Bill was also a founding member of Eildon Enterprise. Bill said Eildon was in his DNA, and when he retired in 2019, he knew the housing association he was leaving was in a healthy position going forward - a very different picture from the struggling organisation he had joined back in 1978.

For those that didn't have the privilege of getting to know him, I think it is safe to say he is the single most important person in making Eildon Housing the organisation it is today – and he did this entirely through voluntary effort.

Bill gave a total of 41 years of



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Analogue to digital switchover

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win a £50 voucher

Remembering Mr Bill Wilkie MBE



service to Eildon - a truly amazing accomplishment that represents the very best of the voluntary spirit. His expertise and commitment are irreplaceable, and the contribution he made is the reason Eildon is in a strong position to continue to deliver for the communities of the Scottish Borders.

Back in November 2021, Bill officially opened Wilkie Gardens our extra care service in Galashiels which was named after him in recognition of the unique contribution he gave to Eildon. I also had the pleasure of talking to Bill and hearing about his amazing Eildon journey. We recorded this meeting, and it is now something we can look back on in admiration of a thoroughly good man.

Bill Wilkie Interview 50 Years of Eildon



Walkabouts - we've been in your area

Your Housing and Maintenance Officers have been out and about doing their regular checks of all our developments across the Borders.

Thanks to those of you who came and spoke to us and raised any concerns you had. Your Housing Officer will let you know shortly of any planned actions in your area.



Remember if you have registered with My Eildon, our customer portal, you can log any issues 24/7 and get updates online:

<https://bit.ly/MyEildon>

Your phone service is changing

Analogue to digital switchover - what you need to know

Landlines in the UK are going digital. The existing analogue technology which has supported phone and broadband services for decades is being retired and switched off by the end of January 2027. The vast majority of us will be provided with a broadband line to make phone calls using 'Voice over IP' technology that uses an internet connection, so phone landlines are here to stay, just provided differently.



When will this happen?

BT and other providers are rolling out the switchover programme out on a region-by-region basis, however in general they aren't switching certain vulnerable groups, as long as they are aware of their circumstances. The groups who aren't currently being invited to switch are:

- People aged 75 and over
- People who only have a landline (and not broadband)
- People with telecare alarms
- People with no mobile signal at home.

BT will start contacting their customers, except those in these groups, offering them the chance to switch to a digital landline provided over full fibre broadband. Customers can choose not to move to FTTP and will still be moved to Digital Voice from October 2024 onwards.

What does this mean for you?

What will happen if you are moved to a digital voice service?

For most people, if you have a home phone (and no broadband) the switch to Digital Phone lines will have no impact on how you use your home phone going forward. While some phones might require an adaptor, many (99% of current phones) will continue working (particularly DECT cordless phones) – you will just have to plug the phone into a router or a new socket. Older phones may need to be replaced and if you are a BT customer they are offering digital phones at a discounted rate.

Can you keep your existing number?

Yes. In the majority of cases you will be able to keep the same phone number when the service is migrated. Exceptions can be if you change providers before taking a digital phone service, or if you move home.

Will you be charged to move to digital voice?

No - you should never be charged simply to move to Digital Voice. Be cautious of scammers.

Do you have to have a digital phone line?

No – you will be able to choose not to have a line at all. Providers offer 'broadband-only' deals so you can select a service that doesn't have a landline included and use a mobile phone for phone calls.

What if you don't have or want broadband?

If you only have a landline you won't be forced to pay for broadband services that you don't want or need. BT's digital phone service will work using a special dedicated broadband connection and shouldn't cost any more than what you pay now. BT has made a specific commitment to telecoms regulator Ofcom that its customers will pay the same amount, and Virgin Media says its voice-only customers will also get the hub necessary for its digital phone services at no additional cost. Please make contact with your provider for more details.

Find out more about BT's switchover:

<https://www.bt.com/about/all-ip>

Homes for life

What do you think your housing needs will be in the future?




Scottish Housing Day is back this year on 18 September with a focus on 'Homes for Life' and we need you to get involved as your opinions matter. We have an ageing population in the Scottish Borders, and we all need to think ahead about how our housing needs might change and how we can better support you to live well. This survey is being managed by the Chartered Institute of Housing and is aimed at people up to the age of 60. Your views could help to change future housing policy.

Link to survey: <https://bit.ly/4cYHtx3>

Gas safety

We are required by law to carry out an annual safety check to all gas pipework, boilers and appliances installed within our homes. These checks are important to provide assurance that they are safe and that we remove any risk of any gas or carbon monoxide poisoning.

We aim to carry out these checks on a 10-month cycle so that we can ensure the service is carried out in your home before the anniversary date. **However, in order for the service to take place you must have some credit in both your gas and electric meters.** If the engineer attends your property and you don't have credit, the engineer may need to close off your gas meter to make sure that you and your neighbours are safe.

Planning a trip away?  If you are planning on going away throughout the year, when you return please remember to run your hot and cold taps for a couple of minutes to reduce the risk of bacteria built up.

This is also important for any showers you have in your home.

Our annual care consultation

We recently surveyed all our supported and extra care developments on the care service we provide. The outcome of the care survey when we asked for feedback on the overall quality of our services provided across care developments was 87% satisfaction. This is a high level of satisfaction however we know there is always room for improvement and have reflected on feedback in the survey to focus on what we need to do better.

95% of tenants said they felt well cared for and also felt supported to be as independent as possible and their choices respected. Tenants also told us staff are helpful and friendly and that they receive a good service.

The survey highlighted the need for more meaningful involvement to co-produce new activities.

To understand better what tenants wanted us to do differently, we conducted a separate survey to gather more focused feedback covering the social activities provided. 100 tenants in total participated.



Meal service - For our extra care services with meal provision, tenants told us they wanted more food choices. We are now working with an external catering consultant to develop and improve our meals provision.

Let's Talk sessions - We recognise that a formal response, communicated to meet individual needs in the format of minutes issued quickly after each meeting along with updates on progress would be helpful. We are working on improvements and ensuring consistency across our care developments.

Digital learning and social activities. We are actively involved with the General Store in Selkirk, offering a digital lending library with free devices available for up to 6 months - see following page for more details.

We'll work together to make improvements



Our digital lending library and free computer clinics



With funding from the Connecting Scotland fund, we have set up a digital lending library in partnership with The General Store, Selkirk for our tenants.

This means you can borrow a laptop, tablet or mobile wi-fi device for up to 6 months for free. The technicians at the General Store will help you get started with the device.

Diana Murray and Nan Black, from Oakwood Park joined in with our free digital sessions. Here is what they had to say about their experiences. Diana, 'I came along to get a better

Diana with Sofia at one of the digital clinics



understanding of how to use my tablet, as I wanted to see if I could make a video call to my son in New Zealand. I have found the classes to be really helpful and I now know a lot more about all its applications. My sister who lives locally also attended a session to find out more about her mobile phone. It was really helpful for her too.'

Nan Black added, 'I came to the sessions to get a better understanding of my mobile phone and my tablet. The volunteers who run the sessions are really helpful and good at explaining things at a pace I could easily follow. I have really benefited from the sessions, and I feel more confident now using both devices.'

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact your housing officer using the contact details on the back page or get in touch with The General Store direct. It's too good an opportunity to miss!

Our new Learning Disability Service is 'Coming Home' to Kelso

We are expanding our current care services in the Borders, with a much-needed new learning disability service at Poynder Gardens in Kelso.

The service will contribute to the key aims of the Scottish Government's Coming Home Programme by transforming the lives of people with complex learning disabilities by reducing delayed discharge from hospitals and other care settings, as well as reducing the need for people to be offered care placements out with their communities because of a lack of specialist housing and care near to their family and support networks.

Our new service at Poynder Gardens is a significant expansion of our learning disability service, adding to our current service in Duns which has been operating since 1988. From September 2024 we will provide supported living to four adults with a learning disability living in high quality housing adapted to meet their needs.



Amanda Miller, our Director of Community Services commented, 'I am absolutely delighted to share this exciting news and the positive impact this new service will bring to greatly enhance the lives of our new tenants and their families. Our Poynder Gardens service will enable individuals to live as independently as possible, supported in their own homes and to be included within their community. This is another example of great partnership working between Eildon and the Health and Social Care Partnership, providing people with a learning disability and complex care needs to be able to live in their own home in the Scottish Borders, supported by our specialist staff team'.

Thanks to our volunteers

Between 3 - 9 June we celebrated Volunteers Week, recognising the fabulous work of our volunteers. We caught up with one of our volunteers, Jen Burrows, to ask her a few questions about her experience over the last two years with the OPAL Borders project.

OPAL Borders offers opportunities for older people to come together at groups for some gentle exercise, games, a cuppa and a lot of laughter and chat!

Why did you decide to begin volunteering?

I first joined OPAL as a requirement for my vocational training. However, it was something I had wanted to be a part of beforehand and I enjoy my role within the community so much I have continued it on.



What benefits have you experienced personally?

The afternoons that I spend volunteering can be the highlight of my week. It is a dedicated time that I get to meet new people, as well as catch-up with now established friends; it is time that is an escape from the busyness of both personal and work pressures.

Do you have any stories you could share about your time volunteering?

Going with the group on a day trip to the alpacas experience was great fun, it was something new for everyone and we had a great time.

If you want to get involved,
contact us at:

enquiries@eildon.org.uk or
03000 200 217.

For more information visit:
<https://bit.ly/3S8w7P2>.



64 new homes for Earlston and 'joyful' mosaics



We hosted an open day for our latest development built on the site of the former High School in Earlston. The new development of 64 high quality, sustainable and affordable homes, is a mix of family homes, lower and upper colony and cottage flats.

Our investment brought benefits to the people of Earlston with an upgrade by Scottish Water serving the whole of the town. There were also many community benefits delivered through the building contractor Cruden's, working with the town's community council and local primary school.

One of the projects included two magnificent mosaics created by local artist Joy Parker with the assistance of the children from Earlston Primary School.

Joy said, 'It was a delight working with the children of Earlston Primary School – everyone played a part and placed their own mosaic tiles into the design, based on pictures drawn by the children of the local fable 'Thomas the Rhymer of Earlston'. In years to come, it is nice to think that these children will be able to visit this site and remember the part they played in this fantastic art project.'

Introducing Liam McGuckin, our Sustainability Co-ordinator



Liam recently travelled to Amsterdam as part of the The GEM Programme to see first-hand some of the latest sustainability practices.

Liam said, 'I learned a lot from my experience in Amsterdam where there is a strong commitment to social regeneration, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting active travel. I gained invaluable insights and forged meaningful connections with like-minded professionals passionate about driving change in the housing sector.' To demonstrate his commitment, for his travel Liam took the ferry and his own bike to reduce his carbon footprint rather than flying!



Sustainability

Sustainability is a key theme of our 5-year strategy, demonstrating our commitment to reducing carbon emissions. A full copy of our strategy is available on our website:
<https://bit.ly/4f67qfX>

Scotland declared a climate emergency in 2019. Since then, the Scottish Government has introduced legislation and policy to ensure the social housing sector achieves long-term sustainability goals – as housing alone contributes up to 14% of the national greenhouse gas emissions.

For us, sustainability means improving the thermal efficiency of your homes, looking after greenspaces, reducing waste, and supporting sustainable travel options (amongst many other things!) Our strategy aims to ensure we have quality, affordable, and environmentally low-impact homes for future generations.

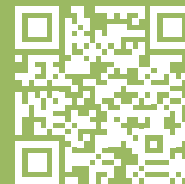
**Scottish Borders Council
have a toolkit giving guidance
on how to recycle more and
reduce waste:**

<https://bit.ly/4f7mzNQ>



We know we cannot achieve these ambitious goals without your help and input, as you our customers are at the forefront of this pathway towards net zero. To help start this process, we would really like to find out more about your thoughts and feelings on this subject. If you could take just a couple of minutes to complete our quick questionnaire, that would be of great help to us.

**Scan the QR code to take part
in our sustainability survey
and you could win one of three
£50 High Street Vouchers!:**



Sustainability is a major issue, and will be a regular feature of the Connect, so look out for more information and helpful tips in future editions.

If you have any questions in the meantime, or would like to get involved in some way, please get in touch with
Liam our Sustainability Co-ordinator -
LiamM@eildon.org.uk.

Love of books

We were delighted to continue our sponsorship of the Borders Book Festival this year and supported it by organising a series of lively book sessions at our supported and extra care developments.

Each session was dedicated to the enjoyment of books and storytelling promoting inter-generational access to books and learning. Jan Wilson, a teacher from Drumlanrig nursery in Hawick said, 'The children absolutely loved their time at Frank Scott Court and spoke about it all the way back to nursery!'



School clothing grant and help with free school meals



If you are on qualifying benefits, the award of clothing grants is there to assist with the cost of school clothing for families and have a child attending P1-S6.

The award for a school clothing grant for 2024-25 is £120 per child for a primary school pupil and £150 per child for a secondary school pupil. This is paid once per qualifying child, per academic year from July to 31 March the following year.

The summer holidays can be a struggle financially, especially when it comes to keeping everyone fed!

But if you get free school meals you may also be able to get help during the school holidays to help feed your family. To qualify you need to receive one of the benefits in the eligibility section.

For more information on qualifying benefits and how to apply, scan the QR code:



Cheaper broadband and phone packages

Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Some providers call them 'essential' or 'basic' broadband.

Social Tariffs are delivered in the same way as normal packages, just at a lower price. Amid rising living costs, Ofcom is encouraging companies to offer social tariffs to help customers on low incomes. Take a look at the Ofcom website for more information and how to apply. It could cost nothing to switch. If your provider offers a social tariff, you can switch to it at any time, free of charge.

Social tariffs: www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/saving-money/social-tariffs

Worried about your finances? Support is available from Scottish Borders Council:
<https://bit.ly/4d62eab>



Migration from Universal Credit

If you receive a letter from the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) asking you to move from legacy benefits, please act on this advice and don't ignore it – as it will affect your future payments. You will need to make a new claim for Universal Credit within the timescales shown in your letter.

If you have any concerns about this, please get in touch with our Tenancy Sustainment Team on 03000 200 217 who are on hand to help you.



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.

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

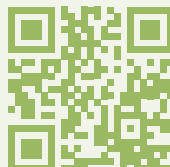
 Customer Service: 03000 200 217

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