

inspire

issue 2

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for tenants and leaseholders of Rutland

We keep our promises

In the last issue of Inspire we told you that our planned improvements programme would start on 9th November. The first day of being a Spire Homes tenant – and it did!

We're investing over £20 million into improving properties across Rutland. We started in Oakham, fitting new gutters, soffits and fascias and then moved to Uppingham, where new central heating systems were installed.

In January, our contractors started to install new kitchens and bathrooms – much to your delight.

Sheltered schemes haven't missed out. Decorating has started in Carver Court and

Manor View in Ketton along with The Lodge in Oakham. All individual flats and bungalows are having their old kitchens and bathrooms replaced.

Mrs Kennedy from Cottesmore is one of the first people to have a new bathroom. "We've got a new toilet, washbasin and bath as well as flooring and tiling. The whole room has been transformed," she said. "Thanks to Spire Homes and the contractors I have a bathroom to be proud of."

Mr and Mrs McMullen have just had new fencing erected at their home in Ryhall. "We were really pleased with the work which was



Contractors erecting new fencing

completed to a very high standard. Hopefully all the works will be as good in the future," Mr McMullen said.

A close shave for charity

Spire Homes' Chairman, John Farrar, had a really close shave at the start of 2010 as he raised money for charity.

For three years John wore a well-tended and presentable beard but when he heard of our efforts to raise money for Homeless International he cut to the chase and opted for a clean shave. With sponsorship secured, John let Georgina from Sarah's Salon in Rushden get to work (above).

While John was in the barbers chair two other Spire Homes' Directors were thousands of miles away in Western Ghats in Kerala, India, undertaking a ten-day trek for charity, which raised some £60,000!

Julie Doyle, Managing Director, and Lynn Stubbs, Director of Business Services, joined

14 other people (pictured to the right) for the trek to the top of Western Ghats, Kerala as part of our efforts to raise money.

Monsoon conditions, leeches, torrential rain, gusting wind and eight hour treks up the world's highest tea plantation in up to 40 degree heat meant the hike was almost unbearable.

However, visiting Homeless International projects in Bangalore and meeting the dedicated people working for the charity more than made up for the blisters and sore feet.

"It was a very humbling experience and a real lesson in how people can overcome



incredible challenges with a strong spirit and a little extra support," said Julie.

The money raised will be used by Homeless International to build better lives for the people of Kerala, by providing emergency medical care, school uniforms for children, building toilets and other such things that we take for granted.

Tenant Content Insurance Scheme leaflet enclosed.

Can we fix it? Yes, we can!

If something needs fixing then don't delay, make that call today!

All you need to do to report a repair is:

- Call us on **01572 755465**
- Email **spirehomes@longhurst-group.org.uk**
- visit **www.spirehomes.org.uk**
- text **447797 800 062**.

Whichever way you decide to contact us you are guaranteed a high quality service and that your repair will be carried out by qualified contractors within 24 hours (for Priority 1 repairs), 7 calendar days (for Priority 2 repairs) or 30 calendar days (for Priority 3 repairs).



IT'S FIXED – YOU WIN £25!

You know that we want you to tell us about our repairs service. Well, we want more feedback, so as well as the freepost envelope that comes with our survey, we're now entering everyone who replies into a monthly free prize draw to win £25 worth of shopping vouchers!

If you've got internet access you can also enter our monthly draw by completing the repairs survey online at **www.spirehomes.org.uk** (please go to the quick link).



Text to win!

To celebrate the introduction of our new text service we're running a competition for you to win a £30 high street voucher.

If you have a question about any of our services or wish to report an issue, simply text **447797 800 062** and we'll get in touch.

It's quick and easy and what's more if your text is the 20th we receive we'll give you the voucher! GR8!



It's a gas

Kinetics. That's the name you need to remember when it comes to heating repairs and servicing from now on.

We've recently changed contractors and now Kinetics, which have an excellent reputation for providing services, are our partner.

To keep you and your family safe, it is really important that you allow access so your gas appliances can be serviced. By law, Spire Homes is responsible for making sure that gas appliances, fittings and flues are maintained in good order and are checked every 12 months by a Gas Safe Registered engineer. We have a legal obligation to do this, so we will have no choice but to take action against you if you do not allow access.

And, if you have solid fuel appliances then they too need an annual service and your chimney needs sweeping every year.



Don't move - Exchange

Spire Homes joined House Exchange over a year ago for people in Northamptonshire, but now you can enjoy it too!

Since we introduced it, over 150 people have found a new home by using the service.

Simply visit our website at **www.spirehomes.org.uk** and select Find a Home and then Mutual Exchange. You can then choose between houses and flats. Select the number of bedrooms you need, the location - either Rutland or further a field, and we'll do the rest.

If you'd like more information about House Exchange visit our website or call us on 01572 755465.



Free Seeds...

... CASH PRIZES FOR GREAT GARDENS

Now the snow has gone and spring is here it's time to get busy in the garden and enter our 'Gardens In Bloom' competition.

You have a choice of four categories and we're offering £30, £25 and £15 to the best three entries in each.

New for this year is the 'Best Vegetable Garden', which joins the Best Individual Garden Display, Best Hanging Basket, Tubs or Balcony Display and Best Sheltered Scheme Display categories.

We're also giving away packets of vegetable seeds so there's no reason why you shouldn't have a go at growing your own. To claim your free seeds, just give **Charlotte Holley** a call on **01572 725680**.

Don't worry, there's plenty of time before the closing date at the end of August and entering is easy – just take a photograph of your finished garden, tub or hanging basket and send it to us with a completed entry form (to be published in the next Inspire newsletter).



Jargon Busters Needed

Do you like the way our newsletters and leaflets are written? Could the style or content be improved? Let us know - become a Jargon Buster!

Jargon Busters will sit on our Editorial Panel, with staff which helps write our newsletter, but will also start to look at leaflets and other publications to make sure information is in a clear and easy to understand style – that's why we've nicknamed them Jargon Busters.

For more details please contact Charlotte Holley, on **01572 725680**.



An Inspector's Diary

Improving the standards of the properties we re-let has been a challenge for our Resident Inspectors, but great progress is being made – as you can see from this Inspector's diary.

November - The project started with a two day training session. Patrick Clarke from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) taught us the techniques we'll need to carry out a successful inspection.

December - We spent time meeting Spire Homes' staff and contractors who will be helping us with the project. We gained an insight into their role in the re-let standard process. We were also introduced to managers from FWA West and Jeakins Weir.

Mid December - Out on inspection! We spent a day shadowing the Repairs and Housing Department, looking at soon to be vacant properties and visiting houses about to be repaired.

January - We interviewed staff to get their opinions and to find out how they think the re-let standard could be improved. We spent time talking to FWA West and Jeakins Weir staff as well as the Directors of Spire Homes. I don't know who was the most nervous, the staff or the inspectors!

Mid January - Today we spoke to some tenants who have been in their homes for a year or less, finding out what was good when they moved in and what they thought could be improved.

February - We met up to look at how we are going to use the information we have been collecting and started writing up our findings to pass onto staff.

What comes next? Lots. We'll be working with staff to make sure our suggestions are taken forward.

Andy and Sally interviewing Lynn Stubbs



Garages available

Queens Road, Uppingham
Beech Road, Oakham

Branston Road, Uppingham
Normanton Road, Edith Weston

Rent for garages is currently between £9.25 & £10.87 per week. The number to contact if you are interested is **01572 755465** or email spirehomes@longhurst-group.org.uk. You can also go to our website at www.spirehomes.org.uk/find_a_home/rent_a_garage/garage_application_form.aspx to fill in our online form.



Time to go Walkabout

It's amazing what you notice when you take a walk around your neighbourhood and we'd like you to join Brian, our Estates Officer, and point out the things you think need improving.

We have a programme of walkabouts, so there's bound to be one near you soon. Why not join Brian – all walks start at 2pm.

Wednesday 31 March
19-53 Derwent Drive, Oakham

Wednesday 14 April
30-70 West Road, Oakham

Wednesday 28 April
Dolphin Court and Gerard Court, Uppingham

Wednesday 12 May
40-110 Derwent Drive, Oakham

Wednesday 26 May
80-126 West Road, Oakham

Wednesday 9 June
Branston Road, Uppingham



Performance Focus

When it comes to completing emergency, urgent and routine repairs Jeakins Weir has produced practically perfect service recently.

They exceeded all our targets between October and December last year, with just 2 of the 737 jobs undertaken being completed outside the target time.

All of the emergency repairs, 99.7% of urgent repairs and 99.5% of routine repairs were completed on time, beating every target we agreed with them.

You also say you're happy with the service Jeakins Weir provided, reporting a 95% satisfaction rating.



The winner for the Winter issue of Inspire is: Mr Chapman from South Luffenham. The answer was Glitter.

Send entry to **Inspire, Spire Homes, 1 Cold Overton Road, Oakham LE15 6NT** for a chance to win a £20 Argos voucher by 30 April 2010.



providing homes, improving lives

Waste not, want not

It's amazing what some people will leave behind! Furniture, electrical appliances, toys and kitchenware are just some of the things we find in empty homes.

Recently, we came into possession of some good quality furniture. Rather than send it to the tip we took it to auction and raised £175, which we donated to the Citizen's Advice Bureau in Oakham. They'll use the money wisely and, hopefully help Spire tenants on the way.

This is typical of the way Spire Homes tries to make the most of things. Normally, if we come across anything we think can be reused, we offer it to Childrens' Services. Helping them, after we've gone through all the correct checks, helps us too. We don't have to pay for things to be collected or disposed of and it reduces waste – which is good for our environment!

A Christmas Cracker

Christmas in Rutland was simply wonderful for residents of Francis Court in Ryhall. A delicious Christmas meal at the Milestone pub topped off a series of seasonal events in style.

One resident, Brenda White, said: "This was just one of several events arranged by the residents, including festive entertainment and tea, a visit from Rutland County Council's chairman and councillors, as well as a visit by the Eight Bells singers, who performed a charity carol concert for us."



Cool Calendar

People tell us they like it and hopefully you're using it every day, but what do you really think to this year's calendar?

Please help us to make 2011's calendar our best ever by visiting www.spirehomes.org.uk/tenants/calendar/questionnaire 2010 and completing the short survey. What's more, everyone who helps us out will be entered into a prize draw to win a £25 High Street Voucher!

Your 2010 Calendar



inbrief



Inspire formats

Your Inspire newsletter is now available in different formats. If you require a version on tape, in braille, in a different language or large print, please contact us on 01572 755465 and we will be happy to help you.



Getting in touch

You can now contact us by email at : spirehomes@longhurst-group.org.uk

Our main office number is:

01572 755465

Our text number is:

447797 800 062

Log onto: www.spirehomes.org.uk

Opening Hours

Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm

Friday 9am - 4.30pm

The office will be closed on **2nd and 5th April for Easter** and on **23rd April for a staff training day**

COMPETITION Easter Wordsearch

Find the hidden words running forward, backward, upward, downward or diagonally.

Which one is missing?

B	O	U	P	A	R	A	D	E
U	A	I	B	O	N	N	E	T
N	I	S	V	T	H	O	G	A
N	C	A	K	E	S	P	G	L
Y	R	P	I	E	C	O	L	O
T	I	X	B	H	T	M	N	C
T	U	L	I	P	S	O	A	O
S	I	C	K	D	T	N	U	H
O	K	F	E	G	A	H	O	C
S	L	I	D	O	F	F	A	D

EGG BUNNY CHICKS
DAFFODILS HOLIDAY HUNT
CHOCOLATE BASKET CAKES
BONNET TULIPS PARADE

Name:
Address:
.....
Age:

The missing word is: