

HomeNews



Written in partnership by customers and staff of North Devon Homes

Winter 2023



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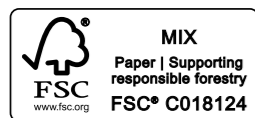
Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to Home News - I hope you find this update on all the things we are doing to support you and our community helpful and informative. We continue to work to try and deliver the best service we possibly can whilst keeping your rent as affordable as possible. This is increasingly challenging with the ever increasing cost of materials and labour. Like every business and household, we are constantly having to make difficult choices to make our resources go as far as we can.

We achieve this by having the right culture and by working as a team. This means working closely with customers and our suppliers (nearly all local businesses) to ensure that all our activity has the biggest and best impact for the local area.

It was so great to be able to see and speak to so many customers at our Customer Summer Fayre and hear how things are - most people value what we do and the way that we do it. They value the fact that we are a locally based business with people that care and can be contacted in person. We gathered lots of ideas and feedback to improve the way we work at the Fayre too and I will be working with the team to make sure we make this happen.

Martyn Gimber
Chief Executive



@northdevonhomes

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Christmas recycling



Christmas cards:

Cards without glitter (including eco/biodegradable glitter), embellishments or foil can be recycled in your brown cardboard bag.



Real Christmas trees:

Real Christmas trees should be cut up and put into your green wheelie bins (if you have a permit). Trunks must be less than 5cm in diameter otherwise they will be too large for crews to collect. For those who don't have a garden waste permit, please take your Christmas trees to one of Devon County Council's recycling centres.



Wrapping paper:

No wrapping paper (including brown paper) will be accepted for recycling.



Cardboard/Paper:

Clean, dry cardboard and paper can be recycled.



Glass:

Rinsed glass jars and bottles can be recycled (including lids).



Aluminium Foil:

Clean and dry foil can be recycled, including mince pie containers!

Seasonal Opening Hours

As the festive season approaches, we'd like to let you know what our opening hours will be. Our Head Office, telephone lines and repairs service will be open as follows:

Friday 22nd December: 8.30-13.00

Saturday 23rd to Tuesday 26th December: Office closed

Wednesday 27th to Friday 29th December: 8.30-16.00

Saturday 30th December - Monday 1st January: Office closed

From Tuesday 2nd January 2024 - 8.30-17.00 as normal

If you have an emergency outside our working hours, please call either **0800 9170619** or **01271 312 522**

Please note, due to our flexible working policy, members of the team may be working remotely during the festive period. Where possible, please contact the team member before visiting the office, to ensure they will be in to see you.

If you have something that is not an emergency, you can continue to log these via our website 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.ndh.ltd.co.uk including:

- Reporting repairs
- Reporting anti-social behaviour
- Logging complaints
- Giving feedback
- Making job applications
- Request tenancy changes
- Update occupant information
- General queries

01271 312 500

enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk

www.ndh-ltd.co.uk

Customer Involvement



Customer Board Partnership (CBP)

This panel of customers, Board Members and managers continues to meet every 6 to 8 weeks looking at business updates, service performance, reviewing all customer involvement activities and consultation results, communications/marketing, policies, service reviews and other agenda items that arise.

This group is keen to ensure that the messages from customers (through customer feedback and involvement activities) is listened to and actioned from front room to board room.

The group is currently looking at Corporate Plan priorities and has been talking to customers at local conversations and at the Customer Summer Fayre.

"As the Chairperson of the Customer Board Partnership, I can assure you customers' viewpoints are being listened to, especially in these difficult times we are facing. The friendly groups play a big role in informing the Board. The Fresh Ideas group have worked at improving the styles of communication, surveys and visiting different homes to see what is important to them.

The Scrutiny group have focused on an in-depth review into damp and condensation and ways to raise awareness to customers. They have also focused on empty homes and what improvements can be made.

The Health and Safety group have worked hard ensuring customers feel safe in their homes. The pop-up meetings have been a real success, enabling issues to be dealt with and has also involved Police Community Support Officers attending some of these events, offering advice to customers.

As my first year comes to an end, I am pleased to say that the customer representation groups have helped the Board to focus on what needs to be done in the best interest of the customers."

Jane – Chairperson



Jane,
Chair of CBP

Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel has been extremely busy and has completed two service reviews.

The members have carried out a deep dive review on the empty homes process at North Devon Homes. This involved inspecting 10 ready to let properties, shadowing staff during the process and inspecting everything from start to finish, telephoning customers, looking at behind the scenes processes with staff, reviewing current policy and leaflets comparing them with other sector examples and working directly with the team, asking them questions.

The Panel has put forward 20 recommendations which include increasing the number of inspections made just before homes are let (including involved customers inspecting these), producing useful documents and encouraging customers to let us know if there are any problems when they move in.

They have also completed a review of how North Devon Homes deals with damp, mould and condensation. As part of this review they met the

Senior Surveyor and learnt about the current procedures and types of mould/damp, carried out telephone surveys with customers who have experienced damp, and raised awareness of condensation causes at the Customer Summer Fayre and analysed the data. They have finalised the report and made some recommendations which include reaching out to more customers at events to raise awareness of damp issues and providing a leaflet on main causes of condensation.



Local Conversations

This summer, staff and involved customers have been out and about in our neighbourhoods chatting to customers on the doorstep to identify top priorities which will help feed into the Corporate Plan. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to chat to us. All staff have enjoyed speaking to customers face to face.

So far, we have visited 6 areas (see below) and spoken to a total of 133 customers –

Area of Forches

Area of Woodville

Areas of Barnstaple
(Heppenstall/Pathfield Lawn/Pilton Lawn)

Areas of Newport
(Jordan Close/Congrams Close)

Areas of South Molton
(Churchill Court, Churchill crescent, Thornes Terrace, The Gavel, Oakhays, West End Terrace, Gwythers and Fir Terrace)

We received feedback from these areas to include improving signage in car parks at Heppenstall, parking problems and improving permits/no parking signs, seagull issues and improvements to buildings.



What happens next?

All repairs, damp queries, health and safety issues and neighbourhood issues have been reported through to be actioned. General feedback and improvement suggestions have been added to an action plan and will be considered and discussed at patch team meetings. We will keep customers updated on any improvements made resulting from our local conversations.

More local conversations are planned in the future so look out for your invite through the post. If you would like us to visit your area, please contact Tracey Williams to discuss.

Health and Safety Customer Partnership



The group meets Will Bowden (Building Safety Manager) every quarter to ensure they are up to date with health and safety legislation and to see how they can help promote health and safety in the community.

The group has visited customers to listen to health and safety concerns or suggestions for improvement. Below are some of their recent events and findings.

The Candar, Ilfracombe – A follow up event was held. Customers told us about ongoing concerns about the car park gate being broken – and since this meeting the gate has been fixed. The H&S chair recommended that Police attend a coffee morning in future to talk about safety there were some concerns about people loitering around the public footpaths, etc.

Castle Quay, Barnstaple – The Group invited customers to chat to them at a pop-up gazebo event. This was well attended, and customers felt listened to and appreciated the event. Customers were consulted on the wheelie bin store area and

whether they would like these locked to prevent fly tipping. Members of the public cycling through the Court was also a big concern and partnership work continues with the council to find solutions for this problem.

Wrafton – The group invited customers to pop along and chat about any concerns. Feedback from this visit included improvements to remove moss on rear footpaths, remove weeds from garages and some items to be removed from outside the communal flats.

Jubilee Close and Wilder Park, Ilfracombe – The group visited customers and picked up some improvement ideas to the fencing, communal areas and bin store ideas at Wilder Park.

They will continue to visit our communities so if you get an invite please come along and join them. You will receive a warm welcome. Alternatively if you are interested in joining the Health and Safety Group please contact Kate (Chair of the group) via Tracey Williams – contact details are listed at end of this section.

Fresh Ideas

Fresh Ideas is an informal customer group open to everyone to join. This group allows customers to come together over a cup of tea or coffee, biscuits and even lunch! It is a great starting point for all new involved customers, and everyone is welcome.



Meeting dates and times can be flexible and mileage expenses are available for attendees. Anyone can join, no qualifications needed.

Working together with staff, the group co-design leaflets, letters and other communications, review customer policies and work on making visuals easier to understand and fully accessible.

Together with our managers, our Fresh Ideas volunteers have been busy reviewing a variety of policies and customer correspondence, making suggestions on what they would like to see changed and discussing new ideas.

Meeting	Outcomes/actions
Budget/finance update	Customers had an overview on budgets. They were made aware of budget pressures, what NDH has retained and reductions/savings for this year. Customers asked to be kept updated
Support & Charging Policies	Customers thoroughly reviewed these policies. This meeting was an opportunity to find out more information about the Specialist Support Service. Customers recommended seeing case studies of the impact this new team is having.
 Scooter Policy	Customers reviewed and approved the Scooter Policy
Annual report	Customers met and worked together with Managers to co-design the Annual Report, making sure it was displayed in an easy-to-follow format for all customers. They liked the new approach of having links to the website.
Customer Involvement Planning meeting	Involved customers met to review a planning timetable of customer involvement. Activities and ideas for the year to include adding training sessions on legislation and law updates, on the ground patch updates and action tracker update meetings.
Informal meeting with Income Team	Customers met the Income Team and were made aware of what the team can do to support customers. This will assist involved customers when advising others. The team recommended a leaflet and gave advice/contact details for other customers to access mobility aids.
Cleaning tender interviews	Three customers were part of the tender interviews for cleaning and asked potential contractors questions about cleaning issues.
Development Strategy	Customers were given an overview of development strategy plans. Customers had the opportunity to view some new build properties and were impressed with the standard of these new homes for customers.
Terms & Conditions of tenancy	Customers agreed that these should be included with the main tenancy agreement rather than in the initial handbook to make them easier to find.
Independent Living Services Handbook content ideas	As commissioned by the Scrutiny Panel and following on site customer meetings, the group met the Manager to scope out the handbook – the group identified specific categories required and the next step will be to put content together with staff and then hold follow up meetings and discuss with the customers who live in the sheltered homes.

Customer to Customer (C2C) – help with moving.

Did you know our customer volunteers can offer advice, guidance and support for other customers? The group is keen to help with right-sizing and can help give advice on how to register on Devon Home Choice or talk through moving options. You can contact C2C via Tracey Williams on 01271 312500 or email tracey.williams@ndh-ltd.co.uk, who will put you in contact with our volunteers.

Customer Complaints Review Group

Complaints welcome

The group meets every 3 months with the Head of Customer & Housing Services and Complaints Co-Ordinator to look in detail at complaints. These are anonymous, but the group shares ideas for improvements/learnings. The group also approved the self-assessment code and letter and reviewed these to ensure that NDH are meeting the criteria for reporting complaints.

"It has been really interesting discussing with managers a variety of complaints, the learnings that have emerged and the potential these offer for service improvements. The group is beginning to gain a greater understanding of the processes NDH follow when investigating complaints and seeking resolutions. Also, it's been great to see numerous compliments from customers too!"



The group encourage customers to contact NDH with any feedback, be it a complaint or a compliment, as it helps them identify where they are performing well or where they need to make improvements. The customer's voice is listened to and does have influence!"

Liz, Customer Complaints Group member.

Energy Efficiency Champion

Kate and other involved customers continue to work closely with the energy efficient projects.

In August, Glebeland Villas customers attended a meeting to hear the senior surveyor (James), staff and the Energy Efficiency Champion. James gave a presentation, explained reasons for delays, explained the cladding works and showed photos of Witheridge completed works. Customers asked questions and found the meeting very useful and informative. Kate and Involved Customers will continue to visit both to chat to and hear feedback from customers. Kate works closely with the Asset Team and shares comments and improvement ideas after the site visits and they are aware that there have been some delays with the works commencing.

Get Transfer ready

To help you get transfer ready we will be visiting you much sooner in the process to let you know the things you will need to do at your current home. We will also inform you of the rent requirements including that of any new home. You don't have to contact us, we will contact you once you register with Devon Home Choice.



Customer Involvement Events

We continue to hold monthly Customer Involvement events. The team and involved customers really enjoy talking to customers who attend these events, and all are welcome. Below is the list of monthly events:

- | | |
|--|--|
|  <p>3rd Wednesday of every month – 2.30-3.30pm
Coffee afternoon at Sellick Court, South Molton</p> |  <p>2nd Monday of every month – 10-11am
Coffee morning at The British Legion Hall near Poyers, Wrafton</p> |
|  <p>1st Thursday of every month – 10.30-11.30am
Coffee morning at Magdalene Lawn, Barnstaple</p> |  <p>Every Wednesday – 2-4.30pm
Cinema club at Medard £1 entry including tea/coffee and cake</p> |
|  <p>3rd Thursday of every month – 10.30-11.30am
Coffee morning at The Candar, Ilfracombe</p> |  <p>Every Wednesday – 6.30-7.30pm
Bingo at Medard £3 a book</p> |
|  <p>3rd Friday of every month – 2-3pm
Bingo at Medard, Barnstaple £50p entry, £2 for 5 games</p> |  <p>Every Thursday – 10.30am - 12.30pm
Coffee Morning at Medard £1 entry</p> |
- These are open for all customers so if you live nearby, please come along and join us.

Christmas Events

- | | |
|---|---|
|  <p>Friday 8th December – 2pm-3.30pm
Christmas Bingo at Medard (bingo price applies)</p> |  <p>Friday 16th December – 12.30-2.30pm
Christmas lunch at Sellick Court (will be a cost)</p> |
|  <p>Thursday 7th December – 10.30am-12noon
Christmas buffet at Magdalene/ Loverings (to include quiz and bingo with some festive prizes)</p> |  <p>Monday 11th December – 10am-11.30am
Wrafton Christmas Coffee morning (to include quiz and bingo with some festive prizes)</p> |
|  <p>Wednesday 20th December – 11.30am-2pm
Christmas buffet at The Candar, Ilfracombe (to include quiz and bingo with some festive prizes)</p> | <p>Please contact Tracey Williams or your Independent Living Support Officer for more information. Other events are free but donations are welcomed.</p> |

TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service)

Did you know that we are members of TPAS and any of our customers can join for free.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) are the country's biggest engagement experts for customers and provide lots of on-line events including meet ups with the Housing Ombudsman to discuss damp/mould and complaints, member events, networking with other customers and they also provide a lot of useful housing information available to read free online.

If you would like to take a look at the TPAS website and see for yourself what is available, please contact Tracey who will register you to receive emails directly from them.

If you are interested in joining any of our customer involvement groups or would like to speak direct to one of our customer volunteers please contact Tracey Williams on 01271 312500 or email tracey.williams@ndh-ltd.co.uk

Alternatively, just pop along to one of our coffee mornings/events.



Our Commitment to You: 48-Hour Call Back Promise



When you reach out to North Devon Homes, we want to assure you that your concerns are important to us. That's why we always try to get back to you within 48 hours because we want to provide you with the best possible service.

Every inquiry we receive is carefully logged into our system, and we're committed to

responding within our 48-hour timeframe. We kindly ask that you avoid making repeat calls about the same inquiry during this period. Rest assured, we're dedicated to addressing all your inquiries promptly, so there's no need to follow up with us.

Please feel free to call us anytime you need assistance. We're here to help!

Saving you money

Energy saving tips and support for our customers



At North Devon Homes we want our customers to feel happy, comfortable and warm in their homes, that's why our Money Matters Team is working hard to ensure that this is the case as we head into the colder weather and darker nights.

The current cost of living is high and energy bills can seem overwhelming. That's why we've put together some tips about little changes we can all make to help reduce energy consumption and save money.

We want you to enter the autumn and winter months feeling positive and equipped with information on ways to keep costs down.

The advice includes:

- Try to use LED energy saving lightbulbs in all rooms – they are much cheaper to run – and turn off lights when you leave a room.
- Don't leave the TV on standby and turn off plugs at the socket when not in use, this includes phone chargers.
- Ensure you have carpets or floor coverings, such as rugs on hard floors, in each room.
- Open curtains and blinds in the day to let sunlight and warmth in and close at dusk.

- Use an air fryer, slow cooker or microwave wherever possible when cooking as these are much cheaper options. If using a conventional oven, try batch cooking.

Our dedicated Energy and Wellbeing Officer can work with you to help reduce energy consumption and can support you on issues including ventilation and heating in the home.

All homes are at risk of condensation, particularly through the winter months. Excess condensation can lead to problems like mould. Anyone who is struggling to manage ventilation and moisture levels in their home should get in touch with us. We can also help anyone who has Economy 7 heating to fine-tune the settings so that they match your individual household's needs and lifestyle.

We encourage anyone who is struggling with their energy costs to contact their supplier in the first instance. If needed, we can help our customers to facilitate conversations with suppliers to ensure they are getting the best tariff.

If you have any worries regarding money or debt or if you want to talk to us about how to budget and make savings, please contact us.

Home contents insurance



As your landlord we do not cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement. Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen, so home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

To help you decide whether home contents insurance is right for you, North Devon Homes has teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks, and Great Lakes Insurance UK Limited who provide the Crystal Insurance Scheme, a specialist Tenants Contents Insurance policy.

The Crystal Insurance Scheme can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

If you would like an application form, please email our Customer Care Team: enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk or visit www.crystal-insurance.co.uk for more information.

You can also have a look at our website.

Annual Gas Safety Check

Please get in touch with us if you are struggling to put credit on your gas meter for the annual gas safety check.

Get temporary credit

If you've run out of gas or electricity, your energy supplier should give you temporary credit if you can't top up. Your supplier might add the temporary credit to your meter automatically – if they don't, you should ask for it as soon as you can. You can check your supplier's website to find out how to get temporary credit.

If you run out of temporary credit

Explain your situation to your supplier. They might give you extra temporary credit if they agree you're 'vulnerable'. You might be vulnerable if you're disabled or have a long-term health condition. This includes hearing, sight and mental health conditions. You might also be vulnerable if you're recovering from an injury.

Your supplier might also agree you're vulnerable if you:

- are over State Pension age – check your State Pension age on [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk)
- would struggle to answer the door or get help in an emergency
- are struggling with your living costs – for example, you're limiting the amount of gas or electricity you're using
- can't get to a shop to top up – for example, if you're ill
- are pregnant or have children under the age of 5
- need extra help with communication – for example, if you don't read or speak English very well
- have no sense of smell or you would struggle to smell gas

Joining the Priority Services Register

If you think you might be considered vulnerable, you could ask your supplier to add you to their Priority Services Register, this means you'll be able to get extra support. Contact your supplier to explain your situation.

You'll have to pay back any extra temporary credit you get. You can agree how to pay it back with your supplier.

Check if something is an energy scam

Some scammers are pretending to be from energy companies to get your personal information.

If you think something might be a scam:

- don't give out any personal information or bank details
- don't use any contact details from the possible scam



Every month, our contractor, Morgan Lambert, carries out a review of the previous month's gas safety checks to make sure the work was done to a high standard and that our gas processes are working well and keeping you safe in your home. They'll get in touch with you to set up a time to visit, and they'll have an ID from North Devon Homes to prove who they are so that you know they are legitimate.



Energy Saving & Efficiency

Reducing carbon emissions

We want to make all our homes as energy efficient as possible so your heating bills are more affordable.

Following our successful bid for funding from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), we have completed works to install external wall insulation, new windows and upgrade old heating systems at East Close in Witheridge. We have also started works at Glebeland Villas, Bishops Nympton.

Also under this scheme, works to upgrade 27 properties in Tewsley Close, Bickington have just been completed, including upgraded heating systems, new windows and doors where required, PV panels linked to hot water systems and the removal and refill of the cavity walls.

We also received funding from the Ofgem Energy Redress scheme which has been set up to

distribute payments from companies who may have breached Ofgem rules. Registered Charities, Community Interest Companies, Co-operative Societies and Community Benefit Societies can apply for funds to deliver energy related projects that meet the scheme priorities. We have used this funding to installed PV panels linked to heating and hot water systems for a variety of heating types. This is an innovative scheme where we are monitoring improvement to customers.

We understand that these works are disruptive and would like to thank all the customers that are working with us to ensure the success of these projects.



Keeping your home healthy this winter

Winter time always brings cold and damp weather which can have real negative effects on our homes.

We have put together a few ideas to help you avoid issues like damp, condensation and mould and improve illnesses such as asthma which are affected by them.

- Opening windows slightly when cooking, bathing, showering or drying clothes helps moist air escape.
- Turning on your extractor fan when cooking, showering and bathing removes excess water from the air. Leave the fan running until the visible steam or condensation has gone.
- Putting lids on pans when cooking prevents excess moisture in the air (and helps save on your energy bills!)
- Keeping your home heated wherever possible helps to prevent condensation from forming on walls, floors and ceilings.
- If you can, setting your thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature (between 18-21°C) will help to keep you and your home healthy while keeping your energy bills down.
- If you have access, drying clothes outside reduces moisture in your home.
- When using a drying rack indoors, opening a window slightly or turning on your extractor fan can help to reduce condensation.
- Moving sofas and furniture away from radiators and heaters helps heat travel more effectively around rooms in your house.
- Curtains and rugs help keep your home warm. Ideally curtains should stop between the windowsill and above radiators. Opening them in the morning and closing them at dusk lets warmth in and keeps cold out.
- Turning radiator valves clockwise to increase the heat in rooms you want warmer and anti-clockwise to reduce heat in rooms you don't use as often helps to save energy and keep your home healthy.
- Closing internal doors and using draft excluders keeps heat in the rooms you use most often, reducing the amount of heat moving into colder areas of your home.
- If you spot condensation on a surface, wipe it down with a dry, clean cloth or towel which should be wrung out afterwards.



Energy Saving & Efficiency

How to bleed a radiator:

1. Turn on the central heating

Switch on the central heating and turn all your radiators up fully. Wait until all the radiators have heated up.

2. Feel all the radiators in your home

Single out the radiators that need bleeding by touching them all over for cold spots. It's a good idea to wear gloves, so you don't burn yourself. Tell-tale signs your radiators need bleeding include gurgling noises, taking a long time to heat up, or the top section feeling colder than the bottom. In severe cases the radiator may even feel completely cold.

Check all the radiators at the same time, as you may find you need to bleed more than one. If this is the case, bleed the radiators on the ground floor first, starting with the one that's furthest away from the boiler, before moving on to the upper floors.

3. Switch off the heating

Keep your radiator intake valves open, but make sure you turn off your heating before attempting to bleed them. Some water pumps will suck more air into the heating system if they're turned on when you open up the bleed valve.

4. Wait for the radiators to cool

Feel all over your radiators for heat and don't bleed them if they're still warm.

You don't want hot water to spurt out when you open the valve and it's good to let your radiator's contents settle completely before you start, to make your bleeding really effective.

5. Grab your supplies

You'll need a radiator key, a cloth to hold, old towels to put down and a container to catch any drips.

Bleed valve keys are supplied with the radiator, but, you can buy one at a DIY shop for around £1.

Some radiators have a new style of valve that can be turned with a flathead screwdriver. However a radiator key will also work, and has the benefit of giving you more control over how you open and close the valve.

Sometimes, the water that comes out of an old radiator can be discoloured, so putting down old towels is a must if you have light coloured carpets.

6. Find the bleed valve

The bleed valve will be at the top of the radiator on one of its ends (it looks like a round hole with a square inside it). This is where you'll be releasing all the air and water, so put old towels down on the floor

underneath it, with the container on top of them to catch any spillages.



7. Loosen the bleed screw

Attach the radiator key to the square bit in the centre of the bleed valve or, if you're using a flathead screwdriver, put the blade into the groove.

Turn the bleed screw anti-clockwise. The cloth will help you get a good grip and is handy for catching drips. Just one quarter to a half turn is enough - never open the valve fully or water will pour out once the air is released. You should hear a hissing sound as the air escapes.

8. Wait for the hissing to stop

Once all the air has been released, the valve will start to trickle water which can be mopped up by the cloth you're holding. With modern, screwdriver operated valves, the water tends to come out in a small jet, rather than a dribble, so don't be alarmed.

Wait for a steady stream of water (not just a sputtering mix of air and liquid) to appear. This is the sign you're looking for that all the air has gone.

How long should it take to fully bleed a radiator? That can vary, depending on the amount of air that's trapped inside and on the size of your radiator. Sometimes it can take 20 to 30 seconds, but it might even take a full minute for larger radiators.

9. Re-tighten the valve

Using the radiator key or screwdriver, re-tighten the bleed screw in a clockwise direction. Don't be tempted to do it up too tightly, as this could damage the valve.

Using a towel, wipe down any water which may have spilled onto the radiator or its pipework to avoid any future rusting. Then move on to the next radiator.

10. Turn on the heating again

Once all your radiators have been bled, you can turn on the heating again to check your work's been successful. Make sure the radiator feels hot all over and that there are no leaks or drips from the bleed valve. You may need to bleed some radiators a second time.

You'll also need to check the boiler is still showing its recommended heating pressure level (normally 12 to 15 psi or 1-2 bars). By releasing excess air from the radiators, you'll have lowered the overall pressure of your heating system. If the pressure's fallen too low, heat may not be able to reach some of the radiators on the upper floors of your home.

If this is the case, top up the pressure by using the filling loop on your boiler. It looks like either a tap or a lever on the main water supply to your boiler.

Charity and Fundraising

Summer Fayre



We held our eleventh annual Customer Summer Fayre on Thursday 27th July at The Park Community School in Barnstaple and what a fantastic day we had.

The drizzly weather didn't stop more than 1,150 people enjoy this free, fun day out with Team NDH and our partners. The new location at Park School worked well, and on the main field customers were treated to lots of activities including donkey rides, a petting zoo, bingo, football games and line dancing along with panning for gold, a coconut shy, face painting, a treasure hunt, inflatables and many competitions and prize-winning games.

Our teams work tirelessly throughout the year to ensure the day is full of fun for all the family as well as informative, with stands,

giveaways and demonstrations from our partners and exhibitors. This year we had a record number of stalls including money managing advice, education services, recruitment support, Citizens Advice and information on protecting our planet. A highlight included what to do in the event of a fire and a real kitchen fire demonstration by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

Feedback from the event was positive and we loved seeing so many of our customers of all ages attending the Fayre and it was a pleasure to see so many smiling faces. Everyone who attended was treated to a free hot meal, ice lollies and hot and cold drinks in the food hall area.

This event couldn't have taken place without the incredible support from our headline sponsors Pearce Construction, James Electrics, Bowdens Cleaning Services and Aico, as well as many other contributions from local partners and businesses. We are incredibly grateful for their help.

Behind the scenes, plans are already underway for next year, so save the date in your diaries – **Wednesday 31st July 2024 at The Park Community School.**



This year at the Customer Summer Fayre, involved customers enjoyed talking to everyone. Richard became 'Captain Condensation' and gave advice to 59 customers showing them how much moisture is produced in homes. 34 customers completed a Corporate Plan survey giving valuable feedback on the Corporate Plan consultation and telling us what matters to them. Customers enjoyed playing hook a duck and winning sweets. Well done to Dave and Jenny who both won a hamper for completing our surveys and talking to us.



Charity and Fundraising

It's a knockout!

Well done to the three teams of staff who recently took part in a charity fundraising and team building event in Exeter.

Hosted by Taylor Lewis, their annual "It's a Knockout" competition is held with a number of partners in the building and housing industry from across the region with the aim of strengthening work connections and also injecting a massive dose of fun into the work culture.

For the second year running at the beautiful Winslade Park, 36 teams took part tackling inflatable obstacle courses, dressing up in silly costumes and participated in some fun, crazy challenges. All creating unforgettable memories and bonds, transforming a regular day into a team building adventure!

The three teams from NDH showed incredible team work and helped raise money towards The Brain Tumour Charity.



Macmillan coffee morning



Our recent coffee morning held at Sellick Court in South Molton in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support raised an incredible **£441,62**. A big thanks to all those who came along and supported the event with their donations.

North Devon Homes highly commended for customer support award

Our Community Services Team is proud to have been highly commended in the prestigious Best Supported Housing Landlord award by the Affordable Housing Awards.

The judges recognised the vital work we do in providing housing and support to customers who need extra support in areas like mental health, substance abuse and learning difficulties.

In response to the increasing level of additional needs and further cutbacks from partner agencies, the fact that we have brought together the Independent Living Services Team, Neighbourhood Services Team and a new team of dedicated and trained Specialist Support Workers has seen big improvements. Helping staff to work more closely with customers, so they can get the tailored support they need.

The Affordable Housing Awards are a platform to showcase and spread learning across the social housing sector in the UK.

Any North Devon Homes customer who is struggling or needs help and advice is encouraged to contact the team on 01271 312500 or email customercare@ndh-ltd.co.uk





Listening to our customers



Claire Cavalli, Customer Complaints Adviser

Our involved customers helped us come up with the idea of creating a regular column in Home News from Claire, our Customer Complaints Advisor. We hope that Claire's column will help inform customers about things they should be thinking about or be made aware of. If you have a question you would like answered in a future issue, please email marketing@ndh-ltd.co.uk or write to: FAO Marketing "Dear Claire", North Devon Homes, Westacott Road, Barnstaple EX38 8TA.

This regular column focuses on our complaints process. A complaint is different from a request for service. A request for service is when you need help with something, for example a repair that is needed in your home. A complaint is when you tell us that you are dissatisfied with the service that we, or the contractors working for us, have provided to you. When we receive a complaint, we have a set process that we follow, and you can find more information about it on our website. The Housing Ombudsman will also give customers advice on complaints and can be contacted via their website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or phone 0300 111 3000.

Accessing our services

In order to provide the best service to customers that we can, it's really helpful to understand any issues that affect how we need to provide our services. For example, understanding that it takes some customers a while to get to the door, or that letters need to be provided in large print or that repair visits need to be scheduled in advance as household members are nervous of having strangers come in to carry out repairs. It's always helpful to know about anything (whether it's temporary like a broken leg or permanent like a disability) that could affect how customers can access our

services. We will always do our best to make reasonable adjustments to deliver the best service we can – so please let us know of any issues affecting you or your household when you're talking to any of our staff.

Repairs

Unfortunately, customers continue to be contacted by solicitors claiming to be able to take us to court over unresolved repairs. They do this by advising you not to report repairs, but to make a claim for disrepair instead. Remember, it is part of your tenancy agreement to report all repairs to us. In some circumstances customers have signed disrepair claims that have been exaggerated by solicitors, they have not made it to court, and solicitors have tried to get their costs back directly from the customers.

Finally, as we head into winter, please let us know if you spot damp in your home. If it's due to a leak or similar, we can then identify and fix the problem. If it's not a simple fix like that, there are ways you can reduce moisture and condensation in your home and we're happy to work with you to manage this and ensure that your home is doing the hard work for you.

Until next time!
Claire

Gardening for all:

Maximum garden, minimum budget by Flora Gardiner

It's been a difficult year for many, so to encourage customers in the run-up to Christmas, we are running a competition with prizes for the winning categories! Gardening improves mental health, concentration, and memory. Your efforts will improve the lungs of the planet, increasing oxygen & decreasing carbon dioxide. What better way of enhancing our community, increasing knowledge, finding new interests or a new career. Encourage children to learn about plants and grow food instead of spending time on computers!

Prizes for 'best planted container' in the categories below. See images for examples. Use home-grown or bought flowers, dried flowers, dried fruits and herbs.

- 1. Best recycled indoor container** – a cracked egg cup, tin can, broken ornament or mug – recycle a suitable non-plastic container then fill it with plants, flowers, dried fruits and flowers, leaves or herbs.
- 2. Best recycled outdoor container** – a larger project for outdoors. You can add branches or other natural materials.
- 3. Most artistic container** – indoor or outdoor but must have features such as ceramics, stones, shells, moss, bark, branches. Items must be natural, no plastics!

BEST CONTAINER COMPETITION

Prizes for these age groups:

- Young children – Up to age 13
- Young adults – Ages 13-17
- Adults – Ages 18+

EXAMPLES



Email your entries to marketing@ndh-ltd.co.uk explaining which category you are entering by 31st December 2023.

Winners will be notified after Christmas and featured in the next issue.



From our partners



Tis the season to get organised!

With so much to think about and do, it's easy to lose track of your finances in the run-up to Christmas. However, planning your spending can help to reduce the strains and stresses of what can be a costly time of year, hopefully paving the way for you to still enjoy the festivities! The good news is that there's still plenty of time to get organised. Read on to find out how!

Make a budget

Draw up a detailed list of your planned spending, including gifts, food and drink, parties and decorations, making sure nothing's left out.

Shop ahead

That way, you'll be able to compare prices, take advantage of special deals, including Black Friday offers, and use any vouchers or coupons you've saved up.

Remember your routine commitments

Don't forget to budget for your standing orders, direct debits and everyday bills.

Agree on spending limits

Rising prices have taken their toll on many households this year. Don't be afraid to discuss setting spending limits on gifts or organising Secret Santas with other family members if this is a concern.

Pitch in for food

Higher food bills have left many worried about the cost of this year's Christmas meal. If you're hosting or visiting others, one idea is to share the expense by getting everyone to contribute in some way, such as ingredients, one course or drinks, for example.

Don't be afraid of a little DIY!

You can't beat a bit of home baking and crafting! Cooking seasonal treats and making decorations are great ways of reducing costs and keeping overexcited little ones occupied!

Borrow responsibly

If you're thinking of taking out a loan for seasonal purchases, it's important to look at both the repayments and the total costs that a lender is charging. A typical £400 Christmas loan from Westcountry Savings & Loans Credit Union can help make the festive season more manageable without the burden of expensive repayments. For more information, go to <https://www.westcountry.org.uk/Loans>.

Check your eligibility for pension credit



If you're 66 or over and your weekly income is less than £203.85 it's worth checking if you could top up your income with Pension Credit.

Pension credit is not paid out automatically, so you need to claim if you are eligible. Even if you are only entitled to a small amount, it can still be worth claiming as it can mean you qualify for other benefits such as:

- Cost of living payments
- Free TV license for over 75s
- Council tax reduction
- Warm home discount
- Housing benefit
- Cold weather payments
- Hospital travel expenses
- Free dental treatment
- A voucher towards glasses or contact lenses
- Discount on your water bill
- Discounted home broadband

We have a dedicated member of staff who can help you check if you're eligible for pension credit or check if you're getting the right amount. Please get in touch with our Money Matters service if you would like help with a free full benefit check.

Universal Credit Switchover

Tax credits are coming to an end and most people will need to apply for Universal Credit instead.

Look out for a letter arriving in the new year, called a Universal Credit Migration Notice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) explaining what you'll need to do, and by when.

If you are claiming tax credits and are aged 65 or over, DWP will write to you to ask you to apply for Universal Credit or Pension Credit, depending on your circumstances.

You won't be moved automatically, so it's important to act quickly and follow the instructions in the letter, otherwise your benefits will stop.

To continue to receive financial support, you will need to claim Universal Credit by the deadline stated in your Migration Notice letter, even if you have just renewed your tax credits claim.

There are plenty of things you can do to prepare. Find out more about the support available to help you switchover by visiting: www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/tax-credits-customers/tax-credits-are-ending/



Development and Regeneration

Work underway on first affordable housing in Ilfracombe for 17 years



Work has begun in Ilfracombe to deliver the first new affordable homes in the town since 2006.

North Devon Homes, in partnership with developers Elan Homes, began work on 'The Shields, Ilfracombe' earlier this year. The new homes will be handed over to us ready for occupancy from May 2024.

The development will deliver eight social rented homes for our customers along with three shared ownership properties, which offer a low-cost home opportunity for people in the community. This is a great benefit for the local area.

Work is already underway on the site at The Shields, and it will regenerate an area that has been derelict for a long time. We are delighted to be working alongside Elan Homes in a new working partnership to create these quality properties, and it's great to see the progress already made on the site. The first units are due to be completed by the end of the year with full completion by May 2024. The new homes will be available via Devon Home Choice.

Buckland Brewer development provides affordable housing



Work is currently underway in Buckland Brewer, near Bideford on Foxglove View, a modern development of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes is being built by Allison Homes.

This development acquisition is the first in Torrridge district and will hopefully lead into other opportunities in the area.

Our new partnership with Allison Homes will bring 12 social rent and 5 shared ownership properties to the Bideford area. Works are well underway onsite, and handover of our homes is expected to commence at the end of November 2023 with the project running until summer 2024.

VERSATILE VEGETABLE SOUP

If you need a quick way to warm up, this easy vegetable soup recipe will do the job. It's perfect for a quick lunch or light dinner, or to batch cook to see you through the week.

Once you've made the base of this vegetable soup, you can add anything you like. A mixture of root and green vegetables works well, added at different stages. You can even add leftover cooked or frozen vegetables.



Ingredients

- 2 tbsp oil (any cooking oil will do)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 vegetable or chicken stock cube
- 250g/9oz root vegetables, such as carrots or parsnips, peeled and thinly sliced or cut into roughly 1cm/½in chunks
- 250g/9oz green vegetables, such as 1 courgette, halved and sliced, and 125g/4½oz green beans, trimmed and cut into three

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and gently fry the onion for 5 minutes, or until softened and very lightly browned, stirring regularly. Add the garlic and cook for a few seconds more, stirring.
2. Tip the tomatoes into the pan, add the tomato purée and oregano and simmer for 2-3 minutes, stirring frequently.
3. Add 1.2 litres/2 pints of water (you can fill the empty can of tomatoes with cold water three times, so you don't have to use a measuring jug) and crumble over the stock cube.
4. Bring the soup to a simmer, then add any vegetables you like. Add root vegetables first and cook for 10 minutes, before adding the raw green vegetables such as beans or courgettes and cook for 5 minutes. Cooked or frozen vegetables should be added for the last 3 minutes of cooking. Stir regularly and add extra water if needed.
5. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve in deep bowls topped with grated cheese if you like.

Win a Soup Maker

We'd love to hear your best soup recipes so we can share them with other customers!

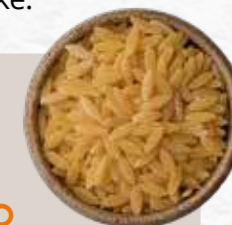
For your chance to win a soup maker, just email your favourite recipe, your name and address to marketing@ndh-ltd.co.uk

Or post it to:
FAO Marketing, North Devon Homes, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8TA

Competition entries must be received by 31 December 2023

Recipe Tip

You can also add tiny pasta shapes, such as orzo, to the soup while simmering, to make it even more filling.



Brain Teasers

For adults

Quiz

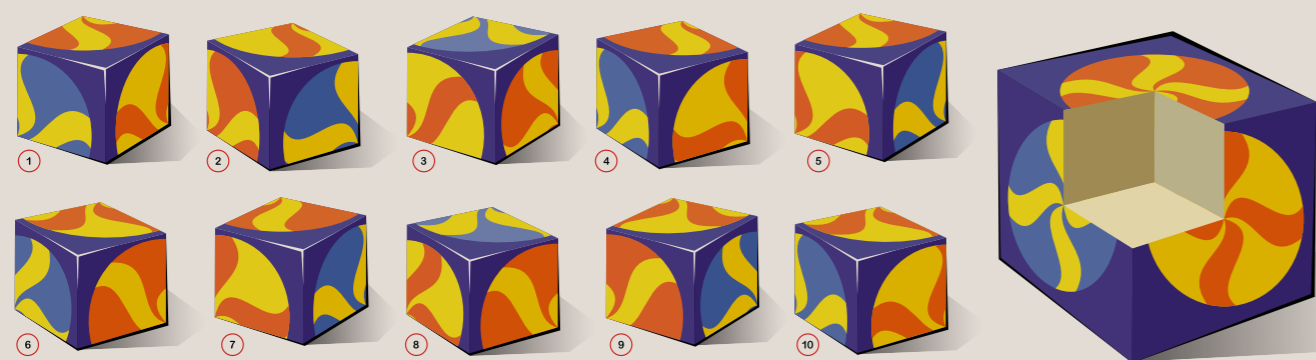
1. What geometric shape is generally used for stop signs?
2. What is "cynophobia"?
3. What is the name of the biggest technology company in South Korea?
4. Which animal can be seen on the Porsche logo?
5. Which monarch officially made Valentine's Day a holiday in 1537?
6. Who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize (in 1903)?
7. What is the name of the World's largest ocean?
8. Who was the first woman pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic?
9. What was the first soft drink in space?
10. What famous US festival hosted over 350,000 fans in 1969?

Sudoku Puzzle

Every square has to contain a single number
Only the numbers from 1 through to 9 can be used
Each 3x3 box can only contain each number from 1 to 9 once
Each vertical column can only contain each number from 1 to 9 once
Each horizontal row can only contain each number from 1 to 9 once
Once the puzzle is solved, this means that every row, column, and 3x3 box will contain every number from 1 to 9 exactly once.

9								2
		5	2					
7			1	3	8			
		2		8			5	1
	7						3	
5	3			7		6		
			7	4	1			5
					6	4		
3								7

Find the small cube that fell out of the big one:



ANSWERS TO QUIZ (1) Octagon, (2) Fear of dogs, (3) Samsung, (4) Horse, (5) Henry VIII, (6) Marie Curie, (7) A Pride, (8) The Cheetah, (9) The North Pole, (10) Robin.
ANSWERS TO QUIZ (1) Frozen, (2) Minnie Mouse, (3) The North Pole, (4) Eight, (5) Tinkerbell, (6) Egypt, (7) The Great Pyramid of Giza, (8) The Sphinx, (9) The Great Pyramids of Giza, (10) The Great Pyramids of Giza



Just for fun

Colour me in!

Can you add some colour to this festive picture?



Quiz

1. Which Disney movie is Elsa in?
2. Who is Mickey Mouse's girlfriend?
3. Where does Santa Claus live?
4. How many planets are in our solar system?
5. What is the name of the fairy in Peter Pan?
6. Where is the Great Pyramid of Giza?
7. What is a group of lions called?
8. Which is the fastest land animal?
9. Who built the pyramids?
10. Name Batman's crime-fighting partner?

Spot the difference

Can you spot the 10 differences between the 2 images?



ANSWERS TO QUIZ (1) Frozen, (2) Minnie Mouse, (3) The North Pole, (4) Eight, (5) Tinkerbell, (6) Egypt, (7) The Great Pyramid of Giza, (8) The Sphinx, (9) The Great Pyramids of Giza, (10) The Great Pyramids of Giza

Noticeboard



Did you know you can pay your rent online? All you need is your 19-digit payment reference which you can request from the Rents Team by emailing rents@ndh-ltd.co.uk or calling 01271 312500. www.allpayments.net/Allpayments

Please be aware of solicitor scams going around by text, email, post and even on your door. Always report your repairs to us so we can help get them sorted.

Did you know some brands offer social broadband tariffs that are available for low income households – just one of the ways you could lower your bills?

Did you know you can report a repair on our website? Just fill in our simple online form and a member of the team will be in touch.

We'd like to remind you of the importance of allowing us access to your home for your servicing and electrical tests. Not only is it part of your tenancy agreement (meaning you can be charged for any missed appointments) but these visits are vital to ensure that we can keep you and your family safe. Please let us know if you are unable to make a booked appointment.

Learn Devon offers a range of adult learning and skills courses in Digital Skills, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), Learning for Work, Wellbeing alongside essential Maths and English qualifications such as GCSEs and Functional Skills.

Contact their Bideford learning centre for details

Tel: 01237 472462

Email: bideford@learndevon.co.uk