

Spring 2012

THE JOURNAL



Comprehensive Residential & Commercial property services

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the property people

ROSS LIDDELL

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Second Year for Community Bursary

Following the success of last year's Community Bursary Programme, Ross and Liddell has launched the scheme for a second year.



The fund was established to support organisations that make a vital difference to the local community, by helping to pay for materials and services they might otherwise be unable to afford.

In 2011, hundreds of applications were received from groups all over Scotland looking for financial assistance. From those who applied, 22 groups were chosen to receive funding.

Some of the groups picked included football teams, a

gardening club, a cheerleading squad, war veterans and a care home.

It was so successful Ross and Liddell has decided to make it an annual scheme, and hope this year's programme will prove to be even more popular.

A pot of £5,000 has again been set aside and applications opened on Thursday, April 26.

In their submissions, community groups and organisations are

encouraged to demonstrate how their organisation benefits the local community and how the extra funding would support their work.

Irene Devenny, Ross and Liddell managing director, said: "The launch of our community bursary was very successful and the funding awarded has enabled a number of groups to continue doing valuable work in their respective communities.

"We remain committed to helping community groups in Scotland, and

we are proud to launch our second community bursary programme.

"We now look forward to receiving applications and providing much needed funding to a range of deserving community groups across Scotland."

Groups wishing to apply for funding from Ross and Liddell's Community Bursary 2012 should visit www.ross-liddell.com to download an application form. The closing date for applications is Friday, June 29.

02. ■■

Gracemount Development

Ross and Liddell has been awarded the contract to deliver full property management factoring services within the new Gracemount residential development in Edinburgh.



Construction of the first phase is already complete, with further works underway by the Cruden Group on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council.

At least half of the development will be affordable housing with the first phase seeing 99 homes being built - a mixture of one/two/three bedroom flats and colony style apartments. Of those, 67 will be for social rent, 20 mid rent and the rest shared equity.

The second phase will consist of 116 homes - 70 flats and 46 houses for sale including eight shared equity flats. Ross and Liddell will provide a full range of property management and maintenance services within the housing development, which is a key site in the City of Edinburgh Council's 21st Century Homes Programme.

The contract with the local authority is a first for Ross and Liddell. Irene Devenny, managing director, said: "We are very pleased to bring the Gracemount development under our expanding client portfolio within the region. We have sustained growth aspirations and this new contract is a result of a focused business

development strategy and our continued investment in the training and development of our people. I believe this new appointment reflects a rising demand for a professional, efficient and responsive property management service. We are dedicated to providing the highest standard of service to our clients, offering a comprehensive management service tailored to meet their requirements. We now look forward to establishing a strong working relationship with the City of Edinburgh Council and all other stakeholders within the development."

Councillor Paul Edie, housing leader for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "The 21st Century Homes programme is an important part of our ongoing long term regeneration plans for Edinburgh. The development at Gracemount and our partnership with Crudens is delivering much-needed homes for market sale and for rent. I am sure the continued regeneration of the area will benefit from the services provided by Ross and Liddell."

Property Awards

Ross and Liddell is supporting two of the top property award schemes in 2012.



SCOTTISH HOME AWARDS 2012



We are sponsoring the Apartment of the Year category at the 2012 Scottish Home Awards. Founded in 2007, the awards recognise excellence in the Scottish house building industry.

The awards are open to house builders, housing associations, architects and supply companies, and are run with the objective of helping house builders and housing associations sell and market their properties more effectively.

We are also continuing to support the Herald Property Awards, which

rewards excellence in the new build housing market. We have been involved with the awards for past three years and we will again be sponsoring the Best Apartment category.

Director, Brian Fulton, will join the judging panels of both awards to offer his industry expertise, which spans more than 34 years in the effective management of all types of residential property.

Further information can be found at www.scottishhomeawards.com and www.heraldsotland.com

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Instruct an ARLA Licensed Member because:

- Your tenancy deposit and rent are protected as they are required to have client money protection*
- They hold professional indemnity insurance
- They are admitted to membership by a recognised qualification.
- They follow highly professional standards
- They are members of an ombudsman scheme and offer a complaints process should things go wrong.

*within scheme rules



Always ask your agent if they are a Licensed ARLA Member visit www.ross-liddell.com



The Property Professionals

03. ::

Property Factors Act



By Brian Fulton, Ross and Liddell Director



At Ross and Liddell we pride ourselves on providing a quality property management service. We are great believers in communicating with our clients at every stage of our business - but not all companies share our work ethic.

It is not unusual in our line of work to hear about factors that allegedly overcharge, carry out work that is of a poor standard or is just unnecessary. However this is all set to change when the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011 comes into force on October 1, this year. By this date, all property managers are required to be registered with the Scottish Government.

Since the early stages of this bill, we have been very vocal in our support of it. We consider that the registration will be viewed as a badge of honour and will offer clients, and future clients, peace of mind, knowing that the company is operating in compliance with the Government requirements. An integral part of the act is the Code of Conduct, which will set out what the public can expect from their property manager.

The Scottish Government has put in a great deal of time and effort to consult with interested parties about

what should be included in this piece of literature. We are grateful that through our involvement with the Property Managers' Association Scotland we have also been able to have our say. Although the final version has still to be signed off, we hope that it will bring clarity to many aspects of the Property Management profession.

As well as regulating the profession, the bill will also require a Homeowners Panel to be established. It is likely to consist of representatives from the legal, surveying, property management professions as well as members of the public. The role of this panel is to act as a mediator when the property management company complaints procedure has been exhausted and a client believes their complaint remains unresolved.

Clients are set to receive full terms of business, which will include

relevant insurance information, client service level agreements and any other relevant data specific to individual proprietors or their property. Whilst many of Ross and Liddell's clients are already in possession of this information, it is required that all clients receive an updated package of information within a period of 12 months from the implementation of the Act.

When it comes to the property management profession the appropriate phrase is 'everyone is tarred with the same brush'. There are many misconceptions about the work we carry out but the implementation of this act will bring everyone into line with the high standards being delivered throughout the industry.

At Ross and Liddell we are looking forward to the bill being implemented in October.

Property Factors: The Facts

- Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011 aims to regulate the property management profession.
- The act will come into force on October 1, 2012.
- All property managers are required to be registered with the Scottish Government by this date and meet the criteria set out by the Code of Conduct.
- The Code of Conduct will outline what the public can expect from their property manager. After extensive consultation the final version is awaiting sign off. Part of the remit is to take up a Property Management clients complaint where the Company Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and a client believes their complaint remains unresolved.
- Changes have been made to the way client funds are dealt with.
- A Homeowners Panel will be established to help resolve disputes between clients and factors.
- Clients will be entitled to full terms of business, which include relevant insurance information, client service level agreement and any other relevant data specific to proprietors or their property.

Handyperson Service

Practical support for people aged 60 and over is provided by local authorities across the country.

The Handyperson Service team carries out small jobs around the home, which may be difficult or unsafe for an elderly person to do themselves.

The jobs include installing new batteries in smoke alarms, fixing dripping taps, hanging curtains,

cleaning internal windows, pension and prescription collection, spring cleaning and room re-organisation and any other minor household repairs. To take advantage of this service, please contact your local authority for more information.

Please note this service doesn't include jobs such as carpet fitting, gardening or painting and decorating whole rooms.

Fire Safety

It is important to be prepared in event of a fire in your home. The Fire and Rescue service has a range of helpful tips and advice to help you keep you and your family safe. It is recommended that a smoke and carbon monoxide alarm should be fitted in your home and that both are checked regularly.

A fire action plan should also be put in place so that everyone knows how to escape if a fire was to break out. Some other safety tips include taking care when cooking with hot oil and never leave lit candles unattended. Ensure cigarettes are stubbed out and disposed of, and never smoke in bed.

Keep matches and lighters away from children and clothing should be kept away from heating appliances.



04. ■■

The Winter Blues

Scotland is renowned for its bad weather. The sun never shines in summer and the winter months are just bleak. And the last two winters have certainly thrown up some challenges for Ross and Liddell.

In 2010 into 2011, Scotland saw one of the coldest winters for a long time. From the first snow fall in late November until the leaves started to appear in March, it was a long, dark winter.

Like any property management company, we have contingency plans in place for severe weather but even we couldn't envisage the number of calls we received with clients, landlords and agents reporting burst pipes, flooded kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and unsafe, ice-coated pathways.

We went to work and our contractors carried out repair works in very tough weather conditions.

As we battled the cold and snow, we did face issues which required all of our retained expertise to resolve – however the experience only made us even more prepared for the following winter.

As November 2011 approached we prepared ourselves for whatever Mother Nature was planning on sending our way.

But instead of widespread frost and snow, it was un-seasonally mild for the time of year. The harsh, cold winter we prepared for, never came.

Instead what we did see was the arrival of the high winds and rain. In December, a storm hit that sent the country into lock down. Offices

shut, employees were sent home and the police warned everyone to stay indoors. It was affectionately nicknamed 'Hurricane Bawbag' by locals and it wreaked havoc across the country, damaging everything that came in its way.

In the days that followed we were inundated with calls with people reporting damaged buildings, fences, outbuildings and fallen trees. Again we sprung into action.

Our contractors implemented our disaster procedures, and buildings that were rendered dangerous were quickly made safe and wind and watertight. And then just three days after New Year, 'Hurricane Bawbag The Second' arrived.

Reportedly more powerful than the December storm, this caused even more chaos. The extent of the damage across the country was such that three months on some buildings still require final reinstatement. We faced challenges such as the continued bad weather, the need for traditional materials, access, under insurance and, in some cases, no insurance.

With winter now firmly behind us, we have reflected on the challenges of two, very different, winters and incorporated both experiences into our winter and disaster strategies.

We wait to find out what this winter has in store for us – but rest assured we will be prepared.

Our Heroes

Ross and Liddell is proud to be one of the 2012 sponsors of the Daily Record Our Heroes Awards.

The awards were set up to reward extraordinary people, who go beyond the call of duty and put the needs of others before their own. We recognise the importance of celebrating special acts of bravery and selflessness, and we are delighted to be involved in this year's awards.

By carrying out property services throughout Scotland, we are in the heart of many local communities and we believe in supporting important causes.

By getting involved with Our Heroes 2012, we have continued our commitment to supporting people and communities across Scotland.



Our Services



At Ross and Liddell we aim to provide a responsive property management service.

As well as property management and maintenance services, we provide a comprehensive range of residential and commercial services, including letting, building surveying and insurance.

However we realise that at times, services may not go as intended or

someone receiving the service is not satisfied with it.

We would ask that you report any concerns you may have to your appointed property manager.

Should you still feel that your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily, please follow our complaints procedure.

By doing so, we hope to learn lessons from these issues and

concerns and apply solutions to these going forward.

We take great pride in development of our staff. Continued training is provided to enhance their knowledge which ensures they are equipped with skills needed to deliver a first class service.

Please feel free to contact us should you require any of our services or assistance please visit our website www.ross-liddell.com

Premium Rates

On behalf of our clients we insure a substantial £2.2billion portfolio of property. This year Willis, our brokers carried out an extensive marketing exercise by approaching all the main insurers, including Royal Sun Alliance, Brit, Zurich, Aviva and Allianz. Unfortunately, because of the recent severe storms and the effect this had on our claims the feedback was not as favourable as we would like. However, we are pleased to advise that the current Insurers Allianz, offered the best terms and we have agreed to renew with an overall increase of 7.5 per cent.

Claims

A comprehensive review of the claims experience has revealed that the vast majority of claims relate to "escape of water". Most of the incidents which lead to such claims could have been avoided if the seals around showers and baths had been regularly checked. This would prevent water damage to floors and the property below.

We recommend that inspections are carried out on a frequent basis, either personally or by your tenants where appropriate.

Should a claim need to be made, our insurers have nominated Cunningham Lindsay UK, as our dedicated loss adjuster to act on your behalf. They will ensure that the claim is dealt with promptly and efficiently. They can be contacted on 0141 240 2626 at any time of the day or night.

Alternative Quotes

It may appear that a cheaper quote for building insurance can be obtained at rates which are less than those applying to the block policy.

PLEASE BE AWARE, there are usually two main reasons why this is the case. Firstly, the cover provided could only be for the one flat and does not include the additional cover, which is automatically provided in a policy specifically written for a block of flats.

Secondly, the claims experience that is provided to the insurer is usually in respect of one flat only as opposed to the claims experience for the whole development which often is substantially greater. Both these factors will lead to difficulties if a claim has to be made.

Amendments to Cover

All policy excess' will remain the same as last year's premium. If you require a copy of the policy wording please request this from our insurance department or view on our website at www.ross-liddell.com

Under-Insurance

Home owners are urged to verify the accuracy of the reinstatement value. If a home is under insured then problems may be encountered, should a claim be made.

At Ross and Liddell we continue to find clients who experience difficulty with this.

Reinstatement valuations should be carried out on a regular basis and this has been recognised by the Scottish Government team which is working on the Property Factors Act. It is expected that the Code of Conduct will call for valuations to take place every three years, however this decision will remain with the co-proprietors.

We recommend a review be arranged if one has not been carried out recently.

Index Linking

Index linking is applied to the sum insured which is linked to the house cost index published by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and is adjusted annually in line with figures advised to us by Allianz. The insurance company is recommending an increase of three per cent, this increase is comparable with that being applied by other insurers.

Common Insurance Policy

It is not until an incident occurs that proprietors appreciate the benefit of having a common insurance policy with the managing agents. Dealings are then with only one insurer and loss adjuster so the individual owners don't have to make contact with various insurers. There is also the added benefit that immediate steps can be taken to arrange temporary accommodation when an incident occurs. In addition it speeds up the processes including intimation of a claim, organising a meeting with all co-proprietors or obtaining insurers agreement with regards to re-insatement.

And most importantly the co-proprietors then have the assurance that all dwellings have building insurance in place.

Emergency Contact Numbers



It is important that we have emergency contact details for you.

The extreme weather of the last two winters has highlighted the need for a current phone number, postal address and/or email to contact you in the event of an emergency.

In a number of instances it was necessary to force entry into homes due to burst pipes or storm damage. This could have been avoided if we had current contact details.

Please log on to our website at www.ross-liddell.com and complete the questionnaire.

Alternatively, you can write to us at any of our offices or contact the office by telephone if more convenient.

Top Tips to Keep Your Home and Close Safe



Keep it shut

Please ensure the front door is firmly closed when entering and exiting the close. This will help keep intruders from gaining access to the building. A sign on the back of the door could also be useful to ask visitors and guests to do the same.

Check who is at the door

Please check the identity of anyone wishing to gain access to the building. If in doubt refuse to let them in and contact the police if they are insistent.

Keep it locked

Don't leave windows open when you leave your house. Also keep sheds and garages secure with a quality padlock.

Neighbourhood watch

If there is a neighbourhood watch scheme be sure to join and play an active role when you are at home.

Keep it lived In

If you are going away for several days please unplug electrical items. If away between October and

March it is advised to leave the central heating on a low setting to prevent pipes from freezing.

Keep it bright

Lighting is invaluable – if you are going to be away from home, place some lights on a timed system to make the house appear occupied.

Valuables and possessions

Don't make it easy for thieves to steal your valuables. Keep important personal possessions in a safe place, hidden from view.

New Regulations

In March 2011, the Scottish Parliament passed regulations to introduce tenancy deposit protection, which will change the way in which payments are dealt with.

Just prior to Easter 2012, the Scottish Government confirmed that the Minister for Housing and Transport has approved the scheme proposed by the Letting Protection Scotland.

This will have an operational start date of July 2, 2012, which will hopefully coincide with the start of Safedeposits Scotland and Mydeposits Scotland. These two additional schemes are currently in the process of public and government scrutiny and, assuming approval is granted, all three will start on the same day.

The legal duties on landlords, who receive a deposit in connection with a relevant tenancy, will also be triggered from this date. Landlords have legal duties to pay deposits to an approved tenancy deposit scheme and to provide the tenant with key information about the tenancy and deposit.

To allow landlords and letting agents time to adjust to the new way of dealing with tenancy deposits, the Tenancy Deposit Schemes (Scotland) Regulations 2011 has set out the

transitional arrangements for when landlords must comply.

HERE ARE 10 TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU FAMILIARISE WITH THIS NEW REGIME.

1. Understand the regulations

Ensure the regulations are fully understood. The deposit is the tenant's money so in the event that a landlord can't prove their case, the default path is for the money be returned to the tenant.

2. Inventory and schedule of condition documents are key

Without these key documents, it may not be possible for a landlord to prove that the property has deteriorated during the tenancy and if the deterioration is the tenants' responsibility. Ideally photographs will accompany the check-in and check-out documents, signed by the tenant if possible.

3. Be able to access tenancy deposits

There is a strict time limit from the start of the scheme to transfer existing deposits. New deposits

taken after the launch have to be transferred within 30 working days. There is a legal penalty of up to three times the deposit value if they are not transferred on time.

4. Review your tenancy agreement

The tenancy agreement should be updated to comply with scheme rules. Tenancy obligations need to be made clear so that any breaches can be remedied through a deposit deduction.

5. End of tenancy procedures

As the scheme will now hold the deposit there won't be any funds to help with any necessary end of tenancy repairs. Letting Agents may need to agree with their landlords that they can hold back some rent monies or extending credit terms with contractors. The longer it takes to arrange repairs, the longer the property remains empty.

6. Review terms of business

Letting Agents will need to review the terms of business and the fees to be charged for handling the deposit registration and recovery process as well as dealing with end of tenancy repairs.

7. Audit trails

An audit trail is necessary in case of any dispute. Review filing and email procedures to ensure evidence can be quickly provided to deal with any dispute.

8. Contractor invoicing

In a dispute, invoices and estimates from contractors need to be detailed. It may need to be communicated to contractors the level of detail required.

9. Educate

Staff, landlords, agents and tenants need to be briefed on the changes of these new regulations.

10. Tenancy Deposit Protection options

Landlords have the option to do this new work themselves or enlist the services of an agent to do this for them. Call us today on **0845 673 7270** or email **lettings@ross-liddell.com**, our ARLA qualified staff would be more than happy to discuss or arrange an appointment at your convenience.



Property Floats



During the second half of 2011 we have conducted an exercise into property floats, as intimated in our previous newsletter.

We were keen to determine if the level of float held on behalf of clients (where applicable) was enough to ensure that the Property Manager had access to sufficient funds during the course of accounting periods to meet expenditure on behalf of the co-proprietors.

In November we included an additional payment in respect of float funds. The vast majority agreed that it was appropriate to review the float charge in advance of the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011. It will be a requirement for Property Managers to have access to funds for outgoings when the act comes into force in October.

An example of this at work has been the need to access funds to pay for emergency repairs following the storm damage.

Staff Training

Staff training is a key priority for Ross and Liddell and is an integral part of the career development of our employees.

We now employ 100 staff and each has a progressive training and development programme, to ensure we continue to deliver a responsive and fully-compliant property service to our clients.

Recently a number of staff attended a course presented by Ann Laird, of Friends of the West End (Glasgow), and architect, David Martin.

This was entitled 'Taking Care of Older Buildings' and all staff members benefitted from the increased knowledge of maintaining older sandstone tenement properties.

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