

# Renting Matters in Falkirk

No.6



# Welcome

## to the 6th edition of Renting Matters in Falkirk, a newsletter for Private Sector Landlords and Letting Agents

This edition provides information on two events which took place in October 2024: the 2024 Landlord and Letting Agent Forum and the Under One Roof Webinar on Navigating Tenement Building Repairs. For those that missed these events, we have provided an overview of the presentations and contact details.

We also provide updates on key developments within the sector as well as providing information relevant to Falkirk. We have partnered with the Scottish Association of Landlords, Under One Roof and Novoville to provide updates on areas they specialise in.

We hope you find our newsletter informative and useful.

Our contact details can be found at the end of the newsletter.

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# Falkirk Council: Events Update

- ▶ Landlord and Letting Agent Forum: 2/10/24
- ▶ Navigating Tenement Building Repairs Webinar: 29/10/24

## Landlord & Letting Agent Forum: 2/10/24



On Wednesday 2 October 2024, the Private Sector Team held their 2024 Landlord and Letting Agent Forum. The forum took place between 4pm – 7pm, at The Westfield Café, Falkirk Stadium, with virtual attendance available for part of the meeting.

The Forum included presentations from Scottish Association of Landlords, Home Energy Scotland, the Private Sector Team as well as time to network and view a range of lettings related stalls.

We have included an overview of the presentations and information on the stall holders for your reference.



## **Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL) John Blackwood**

### **Article by Scottish Association of Landlords**

John Blackwood from the Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL) spoke at the landlord forum on 2 October 2024 and discussed the new Housing (Scotland) Bill in detail, focussing on proposed rent controls and how SAL continues to lobby the Scottish Government in the interests of their members.

Since presenting, SAL has been successful in lobbying for an amendment to the rent control proposals to provide certainty on how rents will be capped within rent control areas (RCAs). An amendment will be made to the Bill to set out that rents within RCAs would be capped at the level of the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) plus 1% up to a maximum increase of 6%.

The original Bill wording did not provide any clarity on this, leading to fears the legislation could be used to freeze rents by capping increases at 0%, SAL still has serious concerns about the impact that rent controls will have on the sector.

Published in March, the Bill passed the first stage of its progress through parliament on 28 November. The Bill seeks to not only introduce long-term rent controls in RCAs but also to introduce greater rights for tenants to personalise their home, obtain permission for a pet and end a joint tenancy where there is disagreement between the tenants about ending the lease.

During the debate, Housing Minister Paul McLellan stated that the principle of introducing rent controls has broad support in Scotland, with recent YouGov polling showing that 82 per cent of respondents supported their introduction.

The Bill has to go through two further stages of parliamentary scrutiny/voting before it becomes law. During these stages, amendments can be proposed to the wording of the Bill. SAL will continue to lobby for changes with a focus on raising concerns and proposing amendments to remove or relax between-tenancy rent controls.

If the Bill is approved by parliament, then further secondary legislation needs to be introduced to firm up the finer details of how the new requirements will operate in practice. It is unlikely that the new measures will come into force until around 2026-27.

### **Scottish Letting Day interview with Paul McLennan**

In an earlier interview with John Blackwood, SAL chief executive, at Scottish Letting Day on 19 November, Mr McLennan conveyed his support for private landlords and the Scottish Government's commitment to foster a new productive relationship with the private rented sector (PRS).

Referring to his commitment to reset the relationship with private landlords, the Minister stated that he has listened to members of SAL and wishes to propose amendments to the Housing Bill at stage 2.

On discussing what further steps can be taken to lessen the impact on landlords, the Minister acknowledged concerns expressed by SAL on controls on rent increases between tenancies and stressed his willingness to look at potential exemptions to be consulted upon in the new year. A consultation will be published in Spring 2025 to seek views from landlords and tenants on how the regulation making powers in the Bill, that

allow for certain types of property to be exempted from rent control and for rents to be increased above the level of the rent cap in some circumstances, may be used.

Much was said about the value landlords contribute towards providing much needed housing in Scotland. Key takeaways included:

- The Minister acknowledged that landlords need to see a return on their investment, and
- The Scottish Government does see landlords as working people!

However, the question remains: while the mood music from Ministers seems to have changed towards landlords, can the Scottish Government deliver on putting those words of optimism and encouragement into action?

As always, SAL will continue to represent the interests of our members and work to achieve a PRS that works for everyone.

### **SAL Membership**

SAL membership provides a comprehensive package of membership services including, advice, support and policy work for landlords and letting agents across Scotland.

- Telephone helpline - unlimited access to advice from our Scottish letting experts
- Documents and factsheets - proven templates and checklists to support your letting business
- Member online meetings - peer support from fellow landlords and agents
- SAL member enews - regular email bulletins to keep you informed
- Discounted training - access to discounted training from Landlord Accreditation Scotland
- Policy and parliamentary affairs - representation and lobbying at Holyrood and Westminster
- Landlord Focus magazine - the definitive publication for anyone letting property in Scotland
- Exclusive discounts on goods and services - enjoy great savings on a range of products and services
- Scottish Letting Day - reduced ticket fees for our flagship annual conference
- Use of SAL member logo - demonstrate your professionalism

## Home Energy Scotland: Landlord Support

Stephen McAlaney delivered the Landlord Support presentation for Home Energy Scotland, confirming that Home Energy Scotland was funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by the Energy Saving Trust. Home Energy Scotland (HES):

- is a one-stop shop for clear, free and impartial energy advice and support to make homes cheaper to heat
- helps homeowners to save energy, reduce fuel bills, keep homes warmer and reduce carbon emissions
- offers access to Government funded schemes

This includes private rented support to landlords and letting Agents which involves providing updates on the proposed minimum EPC standard, understanding EPC and more.

They offer differing levels of support from remote advice, bespoke remote report, property survey as well as ongoing support.

A tailored property report can be compiled which highlights the energy efficiency improvements and potential renewable technologies available. It can provide information on estimated costs, carbon savings as well as improved energy efficiency/ ratings for works. For Landlords and Letting Agent portfolio's, HES can suggest works to prioritise, illustrative timescales and potential exemptions.

Private Rented Landlord Loans can be accessed, by registered landlords, for works highlighted in an EPC or a HES report. Loans can be broken down to each recommended improvement, repayable over 8 years and are interest free for up to 5 years.

For advice, support and more information, please contact Stephen on 0808 808 2282 or at: [Stephen.mcalaney@sc.homeenergyscotland.org](mailto:Stephen.mcalaney@sc.homeenergyscotland.org).

## Private Sector Team Update

Jordan Reid, Senior Private Sector & Intervention Officer, provided an overview of the key 2024-25 private sector statistics, actions and an update on Prescribed Information Checks.

### Landlord Registration: 2024/25

No. of landlords registered	4,534
No. of registered properties	6,314
No. of expired landlords	25
No of unregistered landlords & properties	20 closed cases 8 ongoing
No. of issued Rent Penalty Notices	0

### Property Conditions – Action Plans: 2024/25

No. of completed cases	12
No of active cases	1
No. of cases referred to the First-Tier Tribunal	2
No of cases currently with First-Tier Tribunal	39

## Prescribed Information Checks

Background information about the Prescribed Information Checks is available in our [Renting Matters in Falkirk \(June 2024\) Newsletter](#). Findings up until the end of September 2024 showed that, since 1/3/23, 1,002 emails have been sent to landlords requesting property safety certificates. Of these:

- Current open cases: 29
- Completed enquiries: 973
- Certificate(s) not in place prior to enquiry: 398
- Moved to Action Plans/\*NOR letter: 183
- HPC enforcement applications made: 33

These figures show that 40% of landlords who advise they have valid safety certificates on their registrations, do not.

Falkirk Council remain the top Local Authority for the number of referrals to the HPC, with 43 cases referred in the past financial year 2023 -2024.

Key Statistics and Enforcement Information for 2023/24 can also be located in our [Renting Matters in Falkirk \(June 2024\) Newsletter](#).

## Forum Feedback

We asked attendees to feedback after the event. Of the responses received (5):

- 5 confirmed that the presentations were relevant
- 4 confirmed the forum was useful and informative
- 4 would recommend the forum to other landlords and letting agents
- 5 confirmed that they were happy with the steps taken to assist, monitor and enforce the private rented sector

## **A range of stalls were present during the Forum. We have provided an overview of what they do and links to further information.**

**i) Conflict Resolution, Falkirk Council**, offers specialist advice and assistance for people experiencing antisocial behaviour or neighbour disputes. Further information is available at: [Conflict Resolution](#)

**ii) Community Advice Services & Welfare Fund, Falkirk Council**, offers advice and assistance across a range of financial and practical issues. Further information is available at:

- [Benefits & support - Help with welfare benefits | Falkirk Council](#)
- [Benefits & support - Get help to manage your money | Falkirk Council](#)
- [Scottish Welfare Fund | Falkirk Council](#)

**iii) Empty Homes, Falkirk Council** works with property owners to help bring empty properties back into use. Further information is available at: [Empty Homes](#)

**iv) Homeless Prevention Team, Falkirk Council** aims to help prevent people becoming homeless, by helping them to sustain their current homes, or to move house in a planned way. The team provide a wide range of assistance. Further information is available at: [Housing Options and Homeless Prevention](#)

**v) Home Energy Scotland** offers free and impartial energy advice. They can help you save energy, money and make your home warmer. They provide information on available grants and loans for homeowners, financial support for private landlords and potential support for private tenants. Further information is available at: [Home Energy Scotland](#)

**vi) Rent Deposit Assistance Scheme, Falkirk Council**, may be able to help prospective tenants on a low income and, unable to raise a deposit, to secure a private rented property in the Falkirk Council area. This includes pre-approving people for assistance before they have identified a property, which they will be able to evidence to prospective landlords. Further information is available at: [Rent Deposit Assistance Scheme](#)

**vii) Revenue Services, Falkirk Council** manages Council Tax and associated discounts and exemptions including Unoccupied reductions. Further information is available at: [Council Tax](#)

**viii) Safe Deposit Scotland** is one of the three deposit schemes approved, by the Scottish Government to operate in Scotland. It is the only scheme operating on a not-for-profit basis: surplus monies are donated to the SafeDeposits Scotland Charitable Trust which is designed to promote education, training and best practice in Scotland's private rented sector. Further information is available at: [Safe Deposits Scotland](#)

**ix) Scottish Association of Landlords** is the only dedicated national organisation that represent landlords and letting agents throughout Scotland. They support and represent their members' interests through providing resources and assistance as well as delivering lobbying and campaigning work. Further information is available at: [Scottish Landlords](#)

**x) Wheatley Care** run the Tenancy Sustainment Service for Falkirk Council. It is available to anyone living in the Falkirk Council area and helps people stay in their own homes, prevents homelessness and provides housing options advice. Further information is available at: [Tenant support](#)

**xi) Under One Roof**, are a charity providing free and impartial, online and interactive information about common repairs and tenement maintenance: helping private flat owners understand their rights and responsibilities to manage their building. Further information is available at: [Under One Roof](#)



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# Navigating Tenement Building Repairs Webinar 29/10/24

Stephen Kelly, from Under One Roof, delivered the **Navigating Tenement Building Repairs Webinar** to Falkirk homeowners. The Webinar covered the following areas:

- An overview of the purpose of Under One Roof and the resources available
- What is a Tenement
- Relevant legislation including Factoring and the Factoring Code of Conduct
- Tenement Management Scheme and Development Management Scheme
- Proper Procedures, Finding Contractors & checks, Enforcing Repairs, Powers available to Councils, paying for repairs & non-payers, Legal Action, Notice of Potential Liability
- Proactive Steps

A [recording of the Webinar](#) and further information about [Under One Roof](#) is available online.



# Sector Information

- ▶ **Housing (Scotland) Bill progress**
- ▶ **Under One Roof Tenemental Repairs Legislation Update**
- ▶ **Under One Roof - Update on EPC and Heat in Buildings Legislation**

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## Housing (Scotland) Bill progress

The Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 26 March 2024 by the Scottish Government. This bill progresses plans originally set out in its [New Deal for Tenants](#) consultation (2021) and includes the following measures:

- Rent Control
- Changes to rent increase procedures
- Ending joint tenancies
- Personalisation of property
- Pets
- Greater protection during eviction
- Phasing out assured/ short assured tenancies

Details of the above measures were covered in [Renting Matters in Falkirk](#) (June 2024). The bill has now passed Stage 1 of the parliamentary process.

The Minister for Housing (Paul McLennan) provided a statement to Parliament on 31/10/24, confirming that the Scottish Government intends to log an amendment at Stage 2 on how rents will be capped in areas where rent controls are applied.

The [Ministerial statement](#) advises that “the cap that would apply to rent increases while rent control is in force would be set at the level of the consumer price index plus 1 per cent, up to a maximum increase of 6 per cent. That would mean that... in most cases rents would be able to increase by CPI plus 1 per cent of the existing rent. Where the relevant CPI figure exceeds 5 percent, the increase permitted would be capped at 6 per cent of the existing rent. The rent cap will apply to rent increases both during the term of a tenancy and between tenancies in the period where an area is designated for rent control”.

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# Under One Roof: Tenemental Repairs Legislation update

Article by Under One Roof Scotland

## Compulsory Owners' Associations

In 2019, the Scottish Parliament's Tenement Maintenance Cross-Party Working Group made three legislative proposals to Scottish Government: compulsory owners' associations, mandatory five-year building inspections, and mandatory building reserve funds. The Scottish Government agreed to these proposals, and it is recognised that these changes need to be implemented in order to tackle the issue of tenement building disrepair in Scotland.

The Scottish Law Commission released a discussion paper in April 2024, on compulsory owners' associations that explores how the legislation would work in practice and the potential legal issues.

Through our work with owner-occupiers, landlords, and related building professionals, we know that having a formally organised owners' association in a tenement building significantly increases the likelihood that owners will have:

- improved communication
- the ability to open a dedicated maintenance account
- increased satisfaction with how their building is managed
- faster and more efficient decision-making processes
- stronger leadership and a single point of contact for repairs

An owners' association can make it easier to carry out repairs and maintenance that can keep the home warm, dry, and structurally sound, and help to maintain the property's value.

By making owners' associations compulsory, we will be bringing Scotland in line with most other countries around the world and giving owners the tools to address not only repair and maintenance issues, but the need to retrofit tenement buildings over the next two decades.

You can read the full consultation response [here](#).

Under One Roof also requested comments from owners of tenement flats on key questions posed by the Law Commission. The responses, which were anonymised, were summarised and submitted to the Law Commission in a separate response. You can read the response from owners [here](#).

The Scottish Government has previously indicated that they will not be bringing forth legislation on these matters until after the next election, which means 2025-26 at the earliest.

To stay up to date on legislative issues related to tenements, [subscribe to the Under One Roof newsletter](#). For support with tenement maintenance and repair management, check out the [Under One Roof website](#).

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# Under One Roof: Update on EPC Reform & Heat in Buildings Legislation

Article by [Under one Roof Scotland](#)

In 2023, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on legislation to reform Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), for which the charity Under One Roof has been advocating. This is part of a much larger piece of anticipated legislation, the Heat in Buildings Bill. The drivers for reforming EPCs were based on the following recommendations from the Climate Change Committee:

- The ratings currently on EPCs are an important policy tool used to define standards and targets for reducing emissions from homes, but they are poorly suited to this role;
- The ratings do not appropriately incentivise the energy efficiency and heating solutions required to deliver net zero homes;
- The presentation of metrics and ratings should be improved, so that they are easier to understand, can be compared with actual performance, and enable policies to be better targeted;
- Reforms to EPC metrics should be applied alongside wider improvements to the EPC system to improve the quality of assessments and use of data.

In early February, the Scottish Government's acting Minister for Climate Action has announced a series of proposed reforms, addressing the Committee's recommendations. The proposed reforms include changes designed to make the EPC more accurate, and easier for property owners to understand.

The validity of EPCs would change, being reduced from 10 years to 5, to give owners more up-to-date information on the energy efficiency of their property. A new ratings system would replace the current scale, to give a more accurate picture of a building's true emissions, energy efficiency and running costs.

The proposed changes are causing some uncertainty amongst property owners and landlords, because nobody is sure yet about what changes property owners could be advised to make to improve their EPC rating. These recommendations should become clearer when the Scottish Government publicises the upcoming Heat in Buildings Bill.

To find out more about EPC reform and home energy efficiency more broadly, including information on improvements you can make to the energy efficiency of your flat, visit [Under One Roof's website](#).

# Falkirk Council: Private Sector Information

- ▶ **2025 Landlord Survey**
- ▶ **One Year Anniversary: Novoville Shared Repairs app in Falkirk**
- ▶ **Energy Efficient Properties**
- ▶ **Financial & Practical Support**
- ▶ **Local Housing Strategy**
- ▶ **Online Information**

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## 2025 Landlord Survey (now live - closes 31/3/25)

### Have Your Say

Our 2025 Landlord Survey is now live on Participate+. With only seven short questions – it will take five minutes to complete.

### We are looking to find out about:

- Private Rented Sector demand
- Rent setting
- Your five-year plans
- Topics you want to hear about this year

### We are also looking for your feedback about:

- the resources we provide
- what you would find supportive in future

This survey is aimed at all landlords letting properties across the Falkirk Council area and closes on Monday 31/3/25.

Your feedback will help our understanding of the Private Rented Sector in Falkirk and allow us to review the support we offer.

Please let us know if you have any issues accessing Participate+ or completing this survey.



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# One Year Anniversary: Novoville Shared Repairs app in Falkirk

## Article by Novoville

During the winter season, property maintenance becomes critical for ensuring homes remain safe and comfortable. We all recognise the importance of staying on top of communal and shared repairs, particularly during the colder months when issues like leaks, dampness, and boiler failures are more likely to arise. With the Novoville Shared Repairs app being live in Falkirk for just over a year, landlords and rental agents have a powerful tool to alleviate the stress that comes with managing these issues.

## Celebrating One Year of Novoville Shared Repairs in Falkirk

Since Falkirk Council introduced the Novoville Shared Repairs app, the way communal repairs can be managed has been transformed. The app streamlines the process of organising repairs in tenement properties, allowing multiple property owners to come together, obtain quotes from traders, agree on costs, open a dedicated account all in one place. For landlords and letting agents, this means less hassle, fewer disputes, and quicker resolutions.

## How the App Helps Landlords and Letting Agents

Managing shared repairs can often be frustrating, especially when coordinating with multiple property owners. Novoville Shared Repairs simplifies this by providing a transparent platform for handling repairs and costs. Here are some key benefits:

- **Automated workflows:** The app sends reminders and updates, helping landlords stay on top of tasks without the need for constant follow-up.
- **Voting feature:** Landlords can cast votes on repair proposals, ensuring that all parties have a say in the decision-making process. This democratic approach helps prevent disagreements and ensures consensus.
- **Transparency around funds:** The app also tracks payments and contributions from all involved parties, making it easier to see who has paid what and ensuring financial transparency throughout the process.

The Novoville Shared Repairs app can save time, reduce stress, and ensure that properties are well-maintained, especially during the challenging winter months.

## Winter Maintenance Tips for Common Repairs

Winter weather can take a toll on property infrastructure, especially for buildings with shared elements. Here are some key maintenance tips to keep in mind:

- Check roofs and gutters: Blocked gutters or damaged roofs can lead to water ingress, causing dampness and structural issues.
- Inspect windows and doors: Ensure that windows and door frames are properly sealed to prevent drafts and water leaks.
- Test heating systems: Boilers and communal heating systems should be checked ahead of winter to ensure they are functioning efficiently.
- Clear communal pathways: Regularly clearing pathways of snow and ice keeps them safe for residents and reduces the risk of accidents.
- Check insulation: Make sure shared spaces like lofts and hallways are adequately insulated to improve energy efficiency.

By addressing these areas proactively, landlords can avoid costly repairs and ensure a comfortable winter for their tenants.

Information and links to the Novoville Shared Repairs app can be found at: [www.falkirk.gov.uk/novoville](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/novoville)



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# Energy Efficient Properties

There is so much talk about making homes energy efficient but why is this and what's the benefit of improving the home?

The Scottish Government aims for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and the Heat in Buildings Strategy, published in 2021 sets out the pathway to achieve this.

There are also Fuel Poverty targets of no household to be in fuel poverty as far as is reasonably practicable by 2040.

These are ambitious targets, and landlords can do their part in helping to reach these goals.

Fuel Poverty is a complex issue and is affected by poor energy efficiency of the home, low income, high fuel price, household lifestyle and under occupancy. Some of these factors are out with your control however you can improve the energy efficiency of the home, making it a warm, comfortable and efficient home to heat and live in.

## What are the benefits of providing an energy efficient home?

The Scottish Government plan to introduce energy standards for homes in the Private Sector. Improving your properties now will help meet these forthcoming standards. An energy efficient home is easier to heat which can reduce problems such as dampness and condensation and Tenants will be less at risk of fuel poverty. A warmer, more efficient home makes the property more desirable to tenants, thus reducing lengthy void periods and will encourage tenants to stay longer in the tenancy.

## How can you improve your properties?

The best place to start is to look at your Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the properties you rent. If it has an EPC A, B or C that's great but if it is below this, e.g. a D, E, F or G then this is where the improvements can be made. Each EPC provides the 3 top actions you can make to improve the energy efficiency of the home, providing indicative costs to do this. Start with the roof space, walls and windows, ensuring that the fabric of the building is as energy efficient as it can be. It's like us putting on a jacket and hat before going out in the cold, these help to keep us warm! Many measures might qualify for grant funding from Home Energy Scotland or your energy provider, especially if your tenant is on benefits. See the links below for more information:

[Home Energy Scotland](#)

Apply for support from the Great British Insulation Scheme - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

If your tenants are struggling to pay their energy bills, help is at hand. Most energy companies have ways to help, offering different tariffs, payment methods and financial grants. Falkirk Council's Welfare Benefits and Debt Teams can offer advice too. For more information of the help available check out the advice on offer from the Council:

[Benefits & support - Energy grants | Falkirk Council](#)

Keeping warm shouldn't be a luxury it's a basic function of every home so make sure that your properties can keep your tenants warm this winter.

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# Financial & Practical Support

A range of services and assistance, which provide financial support, practical support, advice and information to increase or manage household income can be found on our [Financial & Practical Support](#) webpage.

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# Local Housing Strategy

Our Local Housing Strategy and the actions being taken to meet the outlined outcomes can be accessed online at [Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028](#).

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# Online Information

A range of information for Homeowners, Landlords, Letting Agents and Private Tenants can be accessed online at: [Private Housing](#)

## Privacy Statement

The council must comply with Data Protection Legislation as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018. If you supply personal information to us you can find out how we handle personal data at [www.falkirk.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/privacy)

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, LARGE PRINT or audio tape please contact the Private Sector Team.

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