



Bluebells in Hamstreet by Anastasis Olymbios

Hello and Welcome to the Summer Edition of The Bulletin...

This edition is packed full of helpful and handy tips, including a large update from English Rural's Maintenance Team.

I need your help and participation for future issues. This newsletter is for the Residents and your input is important.

- Do you have a burning issue that you would like everyone to know about?
- Are you green-fingered and able to pass your gardening tips onto others?
- Are you a whizz in the kitchen, and have quick and thrifty recipes that you would like to share?

DO YOU HAVE ANY NEWS, VIEWS OR IDEAS FOR FUTURE ISSUES ???

if so please contact me by emailing:
Melanie.Olymbios@englishrural.org.uk



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THE RESIDENTS SCRUTINY PANEL NEEDS YOU.....

Do you want to help influence and improve the services English Rural offer to residents?

We are looking for residents to join our **Resident Scrutiny Panel** who have some time to spare and can offer ideas and input into what we are doing well and what we could improve.

English Rural's Resident Scrutiny Panel is the driving force to continually improve services delivered across the Housing Association, based on the experiences of the residents. It was set up by residents, for residents, and continues to go from strength to strength. The Residents Scrutiny Panel plays an important role and is an essential tool to ensure that residents remain part of the decision making process.

As a panel Member you will:

- Attend one central meeting a year and two local visits around English Rural homes
- Scrutinise resident services, ensuring performance targets are being achieved and services are meeting the needs of residents
- Influence and assist in the development and review of policies and procedures
- Represent the views of other residents

If you are interested in getting involved and would like further details, please contact us on:

Tel: 020 7820 7930

Email: kathryn.harrison@englishrural.org.uk

PETS CORNER



NOT EXACTLY PETS IN THIS EDITION BUT... A gentle reminder that in harsh dry conditions our wildlife may

need a bit of help too. If like myself, you get a lot of wildlife visiting your garden, it's important to remember that the summer months can be just as difficult for them as the winter:



BIRDS: When the ground is dry and solid, the birds find it very difficult to find food, so consider buying some bird feeders and filling them everyday. Also, a birdbath is a welcome addition to any garden as it allows them to drink and to bathe, which is important for their feathers.

HEDGEHOGS: Other garden visitors such as hedgehogs, also appreciate a bowl of water left out for them when it is extremely dry. Please leave only water as it is a common myth that hedgehogs like milk but they are in fact lactose intolerant.

BEES: A summer garden can become a haven for insects and bees alike. Plant lavender or honeysuckle for a beautiful fragrance and you will be providing a good source of food for the bees too. For a guide on how to make your garden bee friendly go to:

https://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/gardening_for_bees



GETTING TO KNOW...

In the second of our feature 'Meet the Staff', Luke Versteeg has answered the ten questions to help everyone get to know him a little more.

Introducing Luke Versteeg...

Regional Housing Manager



Luke is a Regional Housing Manager at English Rural who joined the team in 2012, covering Kent, Sussex and parts of Surrey.

Luke graduated from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand with a Master's Degree in Geography and is pursuing qualifications in housing through the Chartered Institute of Housing.

- In 10 words sum up your role at English Rural**
Property and tenancy management. Allocations and rent accounts.
- What part of the job do you like best?**
Visiting developments and meeting people.
- What part of the job do you dislike?**
Car parking problems.
- If you had an extra day at work each week, what would you do?**
Clear my to-do-list and paint the office.
- Tell us something interesting about you that people won't know.**
My grandma was the first female Kiwi (New Zealander) to own and ride a motorcycle (allegedly).
- What did you do before you came to English Rural?**
I ran my own gardening business.
- Do you have any hobbies?**
I play in a squash and football league (both socially and not at the same time!).
- What does your perfect day look like?**
On the beach with the family, a football and a beer.
- Do you have any pets?**
One little border terrier cross poodle called Oli.
- What has been your biggest accomplishment to date?**
2nd place in a stag do go kart race.



MAINTENANCE UPDATE

THE MAINTENANCE TEAM HAVE ASKED THAT THE FOLLOWING REMINDERS ARE GIVEN:



Maintenance



RECHARGE POLICY

English Rural has seen a huge increase in the need to recharge tenants for maintenance work that is not the Association's responsibility. To avoid being recharged for a repair, please refer to the Residents' Handbook to double check that it is the responsibility of English Rural before you report it.

The recharge policy can be viewed at: http://www.englishrural.org.uk/uploads/policies_pdfs/Rechargeable_Repairs_Policy.pdf

TELEPHONE SURVEYS

English Rural have instructed an independent market research company called Acuity to conduct a telephone survey of the repairs reported by each resident. English Rural would like to ask for the cooperation of all residents when Acuity representatives call. English Rural do value the feedback, and welcome any comments regarding the repairs and maintenance service that we provide. Feedback from the survey will be used to better understand how our repairs service is performing and what changes can be made to make it better.



UNWANTED HOUSE GUESTS: HELP KEEP PESTS & DAMP AT BAY...

RAT AND MICE INFESTATIONS

With the mild winter we have experienced, many residents are facing problems with rat and mice infestations. English Rural has produced a helpful leaflet about how to deal with a rat and mice infestation. Please contact Janette Spence on janette.spence@englishrural.org.uk for a copy or download it from the website.

There are three main reasons rodents must be controlled:

- Transmission of many diseases to humans, including salmonella (food poisoning) and Weils disease
- Contamination of food and food preparation surfaces
- Damage by gnawing woodwork, water pipes, and electric cables which in turn can cause house fires

You have a legal responsibility to ensure your property is free from vermin. Householders can assist in preventing an infestation by taking a number of simple precautions:

- keep your home in good repair
- remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and gardens clean and tidy
- ensure drain covers are in place and in good repair

- seal gaps around heating and water pipes
- ventilation bricks and slots should already have a fine wire mesh protection. If this is worn, replace it externally with 3.15mm insect mesh.
- do not leave household waste where rats can get to it; close dustbin and composter lids
- if you have a compost heap, positioning it on a hard surface such as on open jointed bricks, paving slabs or a fine steel mesh will allow the liquids to drain away.
- secure any gaps beneath your external buildings such as sheds and garages with galvanised wire mesh
- care needs to be taken when feeding wild birds, as seed scattered on the ground can attract vermin.

Rats and mice are adaptable, highly mobile and breed rapidly to produce large infestations. This can make their control difficult for the untrained individual. We recommend you employ the services of a reputable pest control contractor, approved by the British Pest Control Association - www.bpca.org.uk, or call your local council as some councils offer a free service.

BEES AND WASPS

At this time of year wasps and bees are quite common in rural areas. Pest Control is resident responsibility, and English Rural suggests that residents contact their local authority pest control department for advice and assistance if a nest has become a nuisance, or source a local pest control operative to assist. If the nest is actually a bees nest, then the resident could source a local beekeeper, who will be more than happy to attend and remove the nest.

DAMP PREVENTION

Bushes that grow close against property walls or climbing plants can cause damp penetration, so good pruning is needed. When summer has ended, it may be a good idea to cut the bushes back whilst there are no leaves on them; this also promotes a good healthy shape the following year.



HEATING

During and towards the end of the summer months, check all of your heating and hot water appliances are in good working order, to ensure that you are not inconvenienced as the colder weather descends. It is important that any appliance service appointments are made when required, so that any possible faults are identified before the winter months; this will also ensure your appliance is already in good working order when the heating is next needed.

Care of MVHR (Mechanical heat ventilation)

For tenants who have MVHR fitted, it is essential to ensure the filters are cleaned. There are two filters, that can be accessed from the front of the unit, that will require some routine cleaning.

A dirty, saturated filter is not only bad for your health, but also for your heat recovery system as it will have to work harder to manage the required airflow.

Check your filters every month to see how dirty they are. **If they are dirty, you can vacuum them and/or replace them.** Keep your indoor climate clean. A clean heat recovery system offers optimal comfort, a healthy indoor climate and lower power consumption.

In summary, regularly replacing the filters of your ventilation system is important for:

- Minimizing the amount of dust, fungi and bacteria in your home
- Maintaining the highest possible return on your heat recovery system (MVHR)
- Noise reduction
- Functionality of the air ducts (if filters become blocked with dirt, the dirt will eventually collect in the air ducts)

If when you are checking the filters, they appear to be in broken or in disrepair, it is time for them to be replaced.

Residents can call the repairs team on 0800 121 4422 and we can arrange for replacement filters to be sent out to you by post.

JUST A REMINDER... PLEASE DON'T FLUSH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING...



- ✗ *Cigarette Butts*
- ✗ *Dental Floss*
- ✗ *Tights*
- ✗ *Medicines*
- ✗ *Syringes and needles*
- ✗ *Plasters*
- ✗ *Used Bandages*
- ✗ *Sanitary items*
- ✗ *Disposable nappies*
- ✗ *Liners*
- ✗ *Baby Wipes*
- ✗ *Cleaning Wipes*
- ✗ *Contraception*
- ✗ *Cotton Buds*
- ✗ *Cotton Wool*
- ✗ *Razors*
- ✗ *Toothbrushes*
- ✗ *Contact Lenses*
- ✗ *Incontinence Pads*
- ✗ *Colostomy Bags*

LIGHT BULB REPLACEMENT

Light bulb replacement, including fluorescent tube and starter motor in strip lights, is a tenant responsibility.

When a tube light is flickering it is often either the tube or starter motor. Both of these are available from local DIY stores (starter motor approx. 82p). We are receiving more calls regarding this issue.

We also receive a lot of calls from residents requesting where they can buy energy bulbs from, if these bulbs are not easily available at your local DIY store they can usually be ordered online at:

www.energybulbs.co.uk/Energy/Bulbs

Directions to change starter motor:

- Shut off the light-switch.
- Remove the tube.
- Give the starter a quarter turn in a clockwise direction, and pull it out.
- Plug in a new starter, giving it a quarter turn counter-clockwise.
- Replace the tube.
- Turn the light-switch on.

If an elderly tenant is unable to do this, there are charitable organisations that may be able to assist, for example AgeUK, who will be able to help direct you to more local support and provide contact telephone numbers.

AgeUK advice line 0800 678 1174



CONTENTS INSURANCE

As a tenant, we know that the building we live in is insured by English Rural. However, insurance cover for all personal items within the building and in any sheds etc. is our responsibility. We would all like to think that a burglary, fire or flood will never happen to us, and in all probability it won't. But if it did, without any insurance to replace fixtures and fittings plus personal belongings, it would leave any family in severe difficulty. A reasonable contents insurance can be purchased fairly cheaply, and websites such as www.comparethemarket.com can help find one that is reasonably priced and meets all your needs. On almost every occasion fire or flood has struck an English Rural property the tenant has not held contents insurance, adding greatly to the distress and burden that they then face. Don't get caught out by thinking it will never happen to you.

ENERGY TARIFFS

We all have energy bills to pay, be it gas, electricity or both. But how do we know if we are getting the best deal for us, and how do we go about switching providers if we want to? Sometimes it can feel 'safer' to stay with a provider that we know, as switching can seem a complex process, but this could be costing money and invariably there will be better deals out there.

From May 2017, all of the energy providers are having a major IT upgrade that allows for streamlining within the industry as a whole. For consumers, this means that comparing tariffs, switching providers and changing onto a smart meter will be much easier. The energy watchdog OFGEM and the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) believe that many households could save hundreds of pounds by switching providers whilst ensuring protection from future price rises by switching to a competitive fixed rate tariff.

The best place to start the process is to use websites such as www.moneysupermarket.com or www.uswitch.com. These will help find the cheapest deals and guide you through the process of switching should you choose to do so.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

About Universal Credit: Universal Credit is a benefit for people of working age. It will eventually replace a number of other benefits.

You can make a claim if you are working or if you are out of work. There is a Housing Element which helps those eligible if you are in rented accommodation or if you have a mortgage, you may be entitled to help with the interest payments.

Universal credit will replace the following benefits: housing benefit, income support, income-based jobseekers allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, child tax credit, working tax credit. Other benefits will continue to exist.

How to Apply

Universal credit is being introduced in stages across the different local authorities areas. In some areas only single people without children can apply. In other areas, couples or people with children can also apply. To apply you are required to complete the online application in one go (you are not able to save changes and come back to it later). Call the Universal Credit helpline on 0345 600 0723 if you need help making your claim online. If you are entitled to universal credit you are usually asked to attend an interview at your local job centre.

For Help & Advice including information about how to apply, please visit:

Citizen Advice Bureau
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/>
 Telephone 03444 111 444
(Calls to this service cost the same as calling 01 and 02 numbers)

The Money Advice Service
<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/universal-credit-an-introduction>
 Telephone 0800 138 7777
(Calls are free)



HOME APPLIANCES

Over the last few years we have heard more and more stories of appliances such as tumble driers that have caused dreadful fires. These should have been recalled by the manufacturers, but for varying reasons many were not. One of the main reasons is that the owners of the appliances did not get the information that there was a problem with the model that they have.

A new initiative has been set up, where all your household appliances can be registered for free. Once registered, should any recalls or warnings be made by the manufacturer, you will be notified immediately so that any action can be taken.



Register my appliance

This online initiative is supported by the Home Office's Fire Kills Campaign, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, as well as most safety and consumer groups.

For more information and to register your appliances, visit:
registermyappliance.org.uk

WHAT'S NEW @ HQ



STAFF UPDATES:

Kay Forrest has returned from maternity to take up the NFVHA Housing Manager role once again. Katie Maclean is leaving English Rural, we would like to wish her well in her future ventures. Jade Clark, has been promoted to Katie's role following her successful employment to date.

The housing administration team has been strengthened, with Terri Browning joining us as Services Assistant and Claire Bates as Housing Services Administrator.

AGM: SAVE THE DATE



This year's AGM will be held on 19th September in the Somerset area: If you are interested in attending please contact **Karen**. eagles@englishrural.org for more information. (venue tbc)

BE WATER WISE It has already been reported that the Winter of 2016/17 and the Spring of 2017 have been one of the driest since records began.

This means that even with persistent rainfall in the upcoming months, there is a likelihood that some water companies will be seeking drought orders as the Summer approaches.

However, we can all do things to help reduce our water consumption:

SUMMER FUN:

<i>Why not take 5 in the sun with our Summer teaser...</i>	J Z X S M X U Y V V E Q M M D B V B G V Y M B A U N S A A I T V E O D U M H T B X D E N W N H V D G P S I S I C V A V Z V R E P K M G P G X X U W Q Y K H I D D C H Z J D P M L Y J D M F U B E X T F Y S F K V W O D V A X V L P I N T L M A W G K O A F R D N M S Y K W T K O G O K U T A I H X C H P M D S D P O N L N L I P
BEACH	S J M M S T L I D M S E A S Z H I S X S
BUCKET	F H T E Y E N R Q O C L S T O F P H O M
CAMPING	A F H D S Y L E I N D H K L G J M I C S
CREAM	O Z A R J P M Q B T Q D U S T C C J X Q
FISHING	L J Y P J B L R X E A P V A T V A G S X
GAMES	S P T W Y S C Y R Y P Z G X Q E Y E A W M O E M H G B I S N M T L A P D U J B I
HAT	T H D H F B U X W X R Z I Z Q A U G H S
HOLIDAYS	Z O B R I Y W N G N A T N U S P F F H T M N G L U M X D Y N I O H P O S X A L C
ICE	C E B K Y S N A G K N O Q R U W Y O B Q
MOSQUITOS	B D T N Y C D O F F I Q C G H Z V F F Y
PEBBLES	Z W G F J I H B A B G X L C J F E M T L
POOL	L A M O H B Q L W Y Q V T G Z I Z P B U
RAIN	V R J V F E U R G P L I U R H U S L N P
SAND	A N U W J S G H Y C Z S Z V S J I P N X V V Q E H N I M L U Q N U A J I E Q V I
SHORTS	K R X O I Y J P W W L L R M X G E A L G S A R H Q D X A G Y X I Q Y M R W V I X
SPADE	I T S C P B G P P Q U I Q X C E K V O V
SUMMER	S I I T X Y Y I G N I M M I W S R N C P
SUN	F F B X P J G G S Q W P P Q E Z S U N A X Q D I V O K N N C E M G G Z U L S Q K
SUNBURN	B J C M M J M J W D N J S H F B P E I T
SUNGLASSES	T Z B H E B G W L M K H L W M N R O K F
SUNTAN	M T G U Y G J O I G C W A T E R G U K I
SUNTAN	S E D Q T I S U N B U R N S D L O O P N
SWIMMING	M F L X S U H I C E X O A V L W Q A Y P
TENT	A I T Y V V Z L W I D N N R Q N J E T K
WATER	X C S N V R X L X F D M L X L H W J E W Y C I S V F U B W J C L A A W B U L V U

- Ensure that you have no water leaks, dripping taps or running cisterns.
- Consider using a water saving device such as a hippo in your cistern. This can save a massive amount of water in a year alone. Hippo's can be purchased from <http://www.hippo-the-watersaver.co.uk/>
- Have a short shower if you can, but if not have a shallow bath. Remember that bath water can be a handy way to water plants in times of drought.
- Don't leave the tap running when cleaning your teeth. Turn it off between rinses.
- Ensure that you only use your washing machine for full loads, the same applies to your dish washer.
- If washing up by hand, use a washing up bowl rather than letting the water run.
- Consider getting a properly fitted water butt, so that any rain can be caught, and you can water your garden from this.
- Ensure that you follow your specific water company's policies should a drought order be put in place; there can be hefty fines for ignoring them.
- One thing you should never cut back on is drinking water, ensure that you and any pets in your care, have enough to drink at all times.

CONTACT US



info@englishrural.org.uk
www.englishrural.org.uk

REPAIRS LINE

Tenants should report repairs and required property maintenance on the number below:

0800 121 4422
(9am to 5pm Mon - Fri)

In case of emergencies:

0808 168 6246
(out of hours)

OFFICE

Accounts, lettings, sales, rents, standing orders, permissions and other general enquiries:

English Rural Housing Association

Astolat
Coniers Way
New Inn Lane
Burpham
Guildford
Surrey
GU4 7HL

Tel: 020 7820 7930

HOUSING MANAGERS

Steven Bland
Mobile: 07552 126678

Jade Clark
Tel: 020 3542 0321
Mobile: 07552126686

Luke Versteeg
Tel: 020 3542 0318
Mobile: 07552 126679

Kay Forrest (NFVHA)
Tel: 020 7820 7930