IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Housing Benefits (Landlords) 01952 383858
Benefits & Council Tax 01952 383838
Environmental Health 01952 381818 (including noisy neighbours)
Domestic violence helpline 0800 783 1359
Environmental Maintenance 01952 384384 (refuse, pest control, abandoned vehicles etc)
Environmental Maintenance 01952 384000 (Roads, signs, lighting, footpaths etc)
For Electricity suppliers 0845 603 0618
For Gas suppliers 0870 608 1524
Planning Enquiries 01952 380380
Private Landlords/Tenants 01952 381877 Kathy Hawley 01952 381875
Police 0300 333 3000 or (Emergency ) 999
Crimestoppers 0800 555111
Transco 0800111999 (if you smell Gas)
Princess Royal Hospital 01952 641222 or (Shropdoc in Emergencies) 08450 202131

Please advise us of any other important numbers you would like listed above.

All information and advice in this newsletter is given in good faith. Wrekin Landlords Association accept no liability for actions or damages arising from its content.

Future Meetings

Tuesday April 14th July 14th and October 6th will all be at The Oak Tree Centre, Lightmoor, see page 15
Annual Dinner May 15th 2015 see page 13

The A G M

Tuesday April 14th 7.00 p.m.
Come along , enjoy the new location and keep updated with the latest information.

The Oak Tree Centre.
Lightmoor Village, Telford.
See directions on page 15

IN THIS ISSUE...
NEW ACCREDITATION.
LANDLORD OBLIGATIONS
WELSH WATER WARNINGS
PROPERTY COMPARISONS
ANNUAL DINNER
COUNCIL TAX GUIDANCE
LATEST LHA RATES

Representatives of The Wrekin Landlords Association can be contacted on:

TENANT REFERENCING CHECK 07931311612 (Paul Spiers)
01952 727322 The Chairman, Mr. Bernie Lewis
E-mail Chairman@wrekinlandlords.com
07931311612 Treasurer, Mr. Paul Spiers
or write to WREKIN LANDLORDS ASSOCIATION,
The Cornerhouse, 57, High Street, Madeley TF7 5AT

My life in Property
Needs your stories. NOW!
Dear Members

We had a good exchange of views and information at our January meeting and a number of interesting points and opinions were raised, this is what I enjoy so much about our ‘local’ meetings on ‘local’ issues, despite the fact it sounds like something from the “League of Gentlemen”. It is vital for the continued improvement of standards of private renting in Telford and surrounding area.

We are also delighted to announce that after some renegotiating with the Telford and Wrekin Council we have been able to agree a deal on the Accreditation Scheme that is suitable for all our members, giving full membership of the scheme for just £30. There is just one stipulation for this and that is that you must get your application in before June 12th 2015.

We enjoyed a different sort of meeting on February 27th with a number of local council and political representatives at which a number of quite controversial issues were raised, including Universal Credit (see note on Page 8)

We also look forward to our 12th Annual Dinner May 15th (see details on page 13) which promises to be an all time best.

We have a number of new members, who promise to add to the success of our ‘local’ Association. See you at the AGM, don’t forget to get involved

Kind regards

Bernie Lewis.
Italian Farmhouse Home in Le Marche, Italy.

This newly renovated, detached, stone farmhouse, with its own gardens with patios and covered terrace, its own pizza oven, in the magic triangle of Le Marche. Just a short walk into Gualdo, with its weekly market, shops, bars and restaurant. This area is famous for its rolling green hills and valleys with beautiful stone houses, hill top towns, fabulous food and restaurants. Between sea (45 mins) and mountains with fresh water lake( 30 mins) there is something for everyone. Swimming pools are available locally nearest is open air public pool 4 miles away in a wooded park.

Ryanair do good value flights from Stansted to Ancona airport about 75 mins away

Why not try mixing a visit to Rome, Bologna, Pisa or Venice before or after your stay?

Special discount for fellow landlords (10% reduction off the online price) if you call us direct

Steve and Helen Williams on: 07966 650599

HOLIDAY APARTMENT, LOS ALCAZARES, COSTA CALIDA, SPAIN

2 Bedroom apartment on small complex with communal swimming pool. Walking distance to shops, restaurants and beach. Cheap flights to Murcia airport (10 mins from apartment) flying from Birmingham & East Midlands, Ryanair, BMI Baby, Jet2. Airport pickup available. For more info, pictures, and availability go to www.holiday-rentals.co.uk Ref: number 712535 or contact Barry & Linda Smith 01952 677174 or 07768 857785 e-mail barry.linda@blueyonder.co.uk Prices from £195 per week.

TURKEY

Euro exchange rate tough on your pocket? Try Turkey!

Need a quiet break away from it all? Then try our new 3 bed roomed ground floor, easy access, air conditioned apartment, just 40 minutes from Bodrum, Turkey. Situated on the outskirts of an unspoilt fishing village, only 100 metres from the beautiful turquoise Aegean Sea. With wonderful sunsets over the bay, it is ideal for families or friends just wanting to get away for a relaxing break.

With two bathrooms, three double beds and a sofa bed, it can sleep 6-8 comfortably. The well equipped kitchen and lounge complete the package for culture fans or Sun lovers.

A first class Golf Club Vita Park is just 15 minutes away.

FLIGHTS: Birmingham, Manchester, East Midlands to Bodrum Airport 20 minutes away.

Prices from £200 per week. Booking Spring, Summer and Autumn 2013 breaks NOW!

This apartment is owned by WLA members Ruth & Stephen Evans. Why not contact them on: 01952 677436 or mobile 07973446474 or E mail on struth8@hotmail.co.uk

**LHA RATES (Telford & Wrekin Area) 1st April 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Max. Weekly</th>
<th>Max. Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared Accommodation</td>
<td>£69.04</td>
<td>£299.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom</td>
<td>£87.41</td>
<td>£378.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bedrooms</td>
<td>£109.32</td>
<td>£473.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bedrooms</td>
<td>£129.47</td>
<td>£561.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bedrooms</td>
<td>£170.67</td>
<td>£739.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above are the maximum Local Housing Allowance rates used for calculating Local Housing Allowance. The number of bedrooms is based on the tenant’s family make-up and age and not on the number of actual bedrooms in a property. For more information please visit the LHA pages at www.telford.gov.uk/benefits or Telford and Wrekin Council’s Customer Services on 01952 383838.

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Or click the link on your website www.wrekinlandlords.com
Welsh Water Landlord responsibility.

ATTENTION: Landlords in Wales, Cheshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire! You could be liable for your tenants’ water debt from January 2015 as a legal obligation on private landlords with properties located in the Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) and Dee Valley Water areas (so most of Wales) to inform their water company of tenancy details at the start of each tenancy:

For any new tenancies starting after 1st January you must inform the water company 21 days from when the tenant is entitled to move in. It does not apply to those properties in the Severn Trent areas.

It is important that even if you are a landlord living in England with tenanted property in the affected areas - you MUST share your tenants’ information with the appropriate water board. Not for any properties you own outside of these areas. Check your suppliers to your area on the Ofwat website: [www.ofwat.gov.uk/consumerissues/watercompanies/map/](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/consumerissues/watercompanies/map/)

Under the new regulations you need to share the details of all occupants in the property where tenants are responsible for payment of the bills. If any new tenants move in you must also notify the water company. However, If you, as the Landlord and owner of the property pays the water bill as part of the tenancy agreement there is no need to notify the water company of the tenant’s details as you are liable for any water debt that may accrue anyway.

We recommend that you pass on the details to the Water Authority via the new online website [www.landlordtap.com](http://www.landlordtap.com) and follow the instructions, a simple process and once you submitted the portal automatically works out which water authority they fall under and notifies them of who to bill. You may also notify the water companies by phone, e-mail or post.

To contact Welsh Water, please click here.
To contact Dee Valley Water, please click here.

Your agent may make notification on your behalf if you make formal arrangements for the agent to provide the information on his/her behalf so we would advise that this arrangement is set up in writing with your agent so it is clear who the liability is with should the information not be shared.

Scenario Four: Same agreement as above to the 30th of June but at this point the landlord and tenant enter into a rolling tenancy. The tenancy agreement states that if the tenant vacates before the expiry date, the tenant will be liable to pay the council tax on the premises up until the date that the premises are re-let or the Expiry Date whichever is sooner. The tenant leaves the property on 1st September.

Who is liable to pay council tax? The landlord is liable from 1st September 2014. The tenant is no longer in a six month agreement and therefore the landlord is classed as the ‘owner’ for council tax purposes. The terms of the tenancy agreement are not relevant for council tax purposes.

COUNCIL ACCREDITATION SCHEME

After exhaustive negotiation with Telford and Wrekin Council we have been able to agree a deal on the Accreditation Scheme that is favourable for all our members, giving full membership of the scheme for just £30. There is just one stipulation for this and that is that you must get your application in either enclose or attach a copy of the application form for this purpose.

Benefits to WLA/ accredited members:
Discounted rate of £30 for annual membership if you join before June 12th 2015.
Access to online portal for housing benefit tenants to review information at an earlier date. Updates on new legislation. Three free skip passes. (Telford area)
Help with legal issues with tenants from the Telford Homefinders Team Properties advertised on Telford HomeFinder for £100.00
One annual course with information beneficial to landlords
Name on site as ‘accredited’ landlord (If you wish) Plus much more....

Send all forms and cheques to:
Telford Homefinder Team, Business & Development Planning, PO Box 457, Wellington Civic Offices, Wellington, Telford, TF2 2HF

Personally, I believe it is good for Landlords to be recognized as trying to adhere to a code of practice and upholding the standards of the Private Rented Sector. Certainly the TWC scheme does offer some value for money that is relevant to our local members. If it is only for the legal advice then that in itself saves a fortune in legal advice, or the free skip passes on their own will probably save you the entry fee. Certainly for those with tenants on benefits the online portal can save you a great many missed opportunities to ensure that payments are made on time. Your choice, your tenants, your property, your future, your Association.
COUNCIL TAX RULING

A change to Class A and C exemptions took place in April 2013, which means that empty property exemptions are no longer available in the Telford and Wrekin Council area. This can mean that the landlord/owner is responsible for payment of of Council tax when the property became vacant.

Our sub-committee has been in talks, with the Council, to try to clarify this confusing ruling, which seems to have had differing treatments in the many different circumstances experienced by our members.

The legislation for Council Tax stipulates that, generally, the person or persons who reside in a property are liable to pay any council tax which is due. Where there is no one resident, the owner then becomes liable to pay. An owner is not simply a person who has the freehold of the property. The legislation defines an owner as the person who has a ‘material interest’ in the property; as well as a freeholder, this can be a leaseholder (a tenant with a lease) who has a tenancy which has been granted for a term of six months or more.

However, to clarify this situation for a Landlords perspective we have been advised as follows:

**Scenario One:** A tenant takes out a six month AST from Jan 1st to June 30th but vacates the property on 13th of April. The tenant is liable for the Council Tax until the 30th of June or until a new tenant moves in to the property. If no one moves in to the property by June 30th then the landlord becomes liable from that date until a new tenant moves in.

**Scenario Two:** As above the tenant enters into a six month agreement which expires on 30th of June but stays in the property until the 1st of August without entering into a new Contract. In this situation the landlord is classed as being responsible for payment of Council Tax from the moment the tenant moves out.

**Scenario Three:** As above the tenant enters into a six month AST which expires on 30th of June. At the expiry date the Landlord and tenant enter into a new six month AST which is valid until 31st December. The tenant moves out on December 1st. The tenant is responsible for payment of Council tax up to and including the 30th of December. The responsibility then reverts to the Landlord from December 31st.

Landlords Repairing Obligations

There is a new Court case on landlords repairing obligations that you need to know about. Edwards v Kumarasamy. Mr Edwards was a tenant renting a flat from Mr Kumarasamy. This case is about his claim for compensation when he tripped on an uneven paving slab on the outside path to the parking and communal bins area.

The landlord did not own the block and defended on the basis that (1) he was not liable under the Landlords statutory repairing covenants (s11 of Landlord & Tenant Act 1985) and (2) the tenant had not given him notice of the disrepair. However the Court of Appeal held that:

1. As the landlord had a right to use the path under his lease from the freeholder, he had a sufficient 'estate or interest' in the area to satisfy section 11 - and so was liable for the repair
2. The case law regarding the need for a tenant to give notice of repair was in situations where the repair was within the rented property where the landlord did not have access. Section 11 does not actually require notice and for areas outside the property where the landlord had access, notice is not necessary.

This is a very important case for both landlords and tenants. It means that landlords (and agents when doing inspections) need to monitor the exterior areas of properties to ensure that they are safe and that any necessary repairs are done promptly.
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Tel: 01952 582007

Arleston outperforms Red Lake by 100%

Had a conversation with a landlord who lives in Red Lake, he took me up on the offer of an informal chat about the Telford property market the other week after reading the ‘Telford Property Blog’. We got talking about investing in property and how different areas of Telford performed against each other.

Investing in Telford property is a balancing act between capital growth and yield. On the one hand going for strong capital growth seems an obvious choice because of the potential to generate long term capital profit, especially with inflation eating away at our savings. However, rental yields on high capital growth properties tend to be lower meaning if you are taking a high percentage mortgage, the rent doesn’t pay the mortgage. s.

It became really interesting when we compared his area of Red Lake against Arleston, where he was brought up in the 1950’s. Property in Red Lake have an average value of £201,100 and rent for £630 per month. This would give our landlord a gross yield of 3.76% per year. Now consider those ex-local authority 3 bed semis in Arleston, which sell for around £86,700 and let, depending upon condition for around £543 per month, a gross yield of 7.51% per year, which is double the yield (i.e. 100% proportionally higher yield).

However, yields are not everything in property investment. Another point to consider is how the value of the property goes up over time. Better properties in better locations don’t have the best yields, but their property values tend to go up quicker over the long term. The average values of 3 bed semis in Arleston have grown from £43,300 in 1999 to £86,700 in 2014.

However, in the Red Lake, average values have risen by 123.1% since 1999. Percentages don’t tell the whole story though. An average homeowner in Arleston, selling their property today would make a gain of around £43,400, (assuming they owned it from 1999) a home owner in Red Lake would, on average, have made and impressive £106,100 gain.

Now, I know there aren’t many landlords that would consider a 4 bed in Red Lake to rent out, but it is important when purchasing a buy-to-let property that you choose one which will rent well, and for long periods of time.

The above article was submitted by WLA member Martin Burns of Signature lettings. We welcome relevant input from all sources. Thank you Martin, if you wish any additional information then please feel free to contact Martin I’m sure he will be pleased to hear from you. Or go and visit him at his office at Grays in Forgegate in Telford or email him on martin@letwithsignature.co.uk

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Future Meetings

Please note:
The next meeting April 14th is at:
The Oak Tree Centre, Lightmoor Village, TELFORD TF4 3EG
See directions below

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From Telford Town Centre
- From Telford Town Centre take the A442 south, signposted Bridgeport/ Kidderminster
- Merge onto the A4169 signposted Much Wenlock
- At Castlefields roundabout take the 2nd exit, continuing on the A4169
- At Jiggers Roundabout take the 3rd exit onto the A5223
- Take the 1st right into Lightmoor Village
- Follow the road branching to the right
- Oak Tree Centre is on your right

From The M54 Motorway
- Exit the motorway at junction 6
- Take the A5223 signposted Ironbridge Gorge
- At traffic signals continue forward on the A5223
- At Lawley Common Roundabout take the 2nd exit onto the A5223
- At Horsehay Roundabout take the 3rd exit continuing on the A5223
- Take the 1st left then right into Lightmoor Village
- Follow the road branching to the right
- Oak Tree Centre is on your right
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Landlords forced to improve Energy Efficiency of homes

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) says that from April 2018, landlords in England and Wales will be legally required to raise the energy efficiency of rental properties to at least "Band E" in energy efficiency standards. Currently, the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ranks a property's efficiency from A, the most well-insulated and energy-saving homes, to G for the worst, see Housing and energy grants guide to find free cash to improve your home's efficiency. However tenants won't have to wait till 2018 to get the energy efficiency measures installed. From April 2016, tenants will have the right to request consent from their landlord for improvements to make the homes more energy-efficient and a landlord cannot "unreasonably refuse".

Wrekin Housing trust

Since 2013, The Wrekin Housing Trust has been the largest developer of affordable rented homes across Telford & Wrekin, and by April 2017, will have completed 1135 new homes. This has been funded from the sale of 556 empty substandard houses that had become unaffordable for tenants to heat. The Trust is investing over £125 million in new homes in T & W, generating a quarter of a billion pounds to the economy and creating over 1700 jobs across various industries including 74 apprenticeships.

Universal Credit

For those of you who have picked up on the fact that Universal Credit is now being introduced into Telford on June 1st 2015. DON'T PANIC! At present it is a limited roll out affecting only a handful of people for the time being. However, we have been in touch with Lee Higgins, Benefits Manager at Telford and Wrekin, and he will be keeping us informed with a series of events for Landlords and of course as usual we will be keeping you all updated.

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**12th WLA ANNUAL DINNER**

DON'T MISS IT. FRIDAY MAY 15th

THE PARK INN (Radisson), FORGE GATE, TELFORD

www.parkinn.co.uk/hotel-telford

One person goes FREE in each paid up membership, an additional Guest/Partner pays only £20.00

Dinner includes:-

Choice of 3 course menus, see opposite, coffee, wine, and FREE prize Draw.

Free drinks reception 7.15 to 7.50

Demand is high, BOOK EARLY.

Ring Pat now on 01952 727322
**MENU FOR ANNUAL DINNER**

**STARTERS**
Light Spiced Carrot and honey soup with carrot crisp garnish (V)
Pork ‘n’ Apple Parfait with herb roast croutes and real ale chutney

**MAIN COURSE**
Steamed salmon fillet with herb lemon cream sauce.
Pan fried chicken breast with chorizo and red wine jus
Sliced topside of beef with Yorkshire pudding and gravy..
Spinach and mushroom roulade with garlic cream sauce.(V)

**DESSERTS**
Warm Apple Crumble with Crème anglaise.
Baked vanilla cheesecake with honeycomb & chocolate dipped tuile

1 Bottle of Red Wine & 1 of White. Complimentary to each Table.
Freshly brewed Coffee/ Pots of Tea plus After Dinner Mints.

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hugh sopwith@gmail.com
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They stock an impressive library of boiler spares and a diverse selection of plumbing Supplies. Call in today and see, Where those in the know Go!

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PH Boiler spares £75.60

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5 Meter head pump.
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Code: MIDPO008
Only £40.00

8" Opella Syphon
Code: CIST024
Only £4.99

3.012752 Alpha Beta side outlet valve
Code: MIDPO008
Only £109.90

Unit C2, Stafford Park 15
Telford, TF3 3BB
Tel: 01952 200446
Fax: 01952 200448
Email: sales@phboilerspares.com

All prices inc VAT and are valid till 1/1/2015
Comparison prices are taken from Parts Centre web site 27/09/14.
Members Say

Dear Sir
I will shortly cease to be a landlord and therefore will not renew my membership for 2015. I would like to thank the “Wrekin landlords Association” for the help I have received over the many years I have been a member. Yours sincerely. R.W. Kempster (Another satisfied customer)

We enjoyed the Wrekin landlords’ meeting on Jan 14th - I spoke about being ripped off by Wrekin Housing Trust for repairs (change 2 light bulbs..£350! Etc) for our leasehold flats. I'm meeting with Paul Spiers who will kindly give me some tips on taking my case to a tribunal. So thank you for that help. Regards Elaine Adams

As usual the informative meeting in January was excellent, always good to hear different peoples experiences. I apologise for my lack of confidence in speaking at the meetings as I always tend to feel out of my depth but I do enjoy attending and with reflection I take away more than I realize so thank you. Angie Seddon-Doyle.

With regret I will not be renewing my membership as I am now retired and no longer involved with property. Many thanks for all your help and advice etc over the years. Regards Wendy Tompson (Yet another satisfied customer)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for
P.H. Boiler Supplies. “They have a wealth of knowledge and their parts are very competitively priced, anything that was not in stock was quickly ordered for next day delivery. They have saved me a fortune”. (See advert Page 9)
Dave Smith - I have recently employed Dave to renovate a three bed Woodside house. The work involved creating a new bathroom with shower from two separate rooms, a number of repair jobs and decorating throughout, I found that he had a sound idea of what was needed, communicated exceptionally well and more importantly carried out the work efficiently to a high standard without fuss. I intend to use him again and you may call me, Tony Lane, on 07980 325578 as I am happy to recommend him to other Landlords. (See advert Page 11)
Make It Sparkle Cleaning Services. I personally recommend her as a brilliant cleaner, for all cleaning services plus carpets for Estate Agents and multi owned properties or individual homes. She is also very good at odd job/repairs for her elderly customers to save them paying a fortune. Elaine Adams (See page 7)

LAUGH IT OFF

Something strange in the neighbourhood.
A workman visited an unemployed tenants house. A very rude little girl approached him and said “You smell”. The workman, quite unperturbed replied “Yes it’s work, not an aroma you would be familiar with, I suspect”

Tenants Say:
“I did have the rent but the Avon Lady arrived before you” The Landlord takes one look at the Tenant and says “I think you’ve been ripped off lady”

In-tent to Marry.
An Apache brave wanted to marry a Cherokee squaw. They were quite optimistic about their proposal but their Parents had reservations..

Size does matter.
Overheard in a chip shop. “Your fish won’t be long love” “Well it had better be wide then” said the customer.

Barefaced Advert.
Must sell washer and dryer £100 as I’m joining a nudist colony.

Remember when?
A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower.

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