

# Community Action!

The Newsletter of the Glasgow Residents Network

Issue 2 - *Glasgow residents in the news*

**Homeowners across the city have united in anger at being charged grossly inflated bills, for poor quality work, that is often unnecessary.**

**We must have more time to pay off our bills**



**HOMEOWNERS DEMONSTRATE**

“SCORES of homeowners are expected to attend a meeting tonight as part of a campaign to demand more time to pay massive home improvement fees.

Glasgow Housing Association is being urged to let owner occupiers pay for cladding and roof work over five years.

Dozens of owners in

Knightswood have been ordered to pay around £6000 each over a year after contractors pushed ahead with upgrades.

GHA solicitors have issued open decrees - giving it the power to arrest wages and ultimately repossess a house - to a number of owners over the last few months.

The residents in Dyke Road four in-the-blocks face bills of £6000 .

A campaign spokesman said: "The owners are in open revolt and are facing financial meltdown.

"It is grossly unfair to expect working families to pay up to £600 a month to cover these repairs." "

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[Evening Times 22/02/07]

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**Join the discussion, send an email to the address below and be added to our discussion lists:-**

[agahst2003@hotmail.com](mailto:agahst2003@hotmail.com)

The storm of protest has continued on the internet where you can add your comments:-

“what do we expect, RESPECT! my only crime was to buy my council house which for years I payed rent the morgage was cheaper and the GHA wouldn't do any repairs. I cant believe peoples attitude towards homeowners - we work hard to pay our mortgage and yet we are being taking to court for work we didn't want but were forced to take because we were out voted and now we find ourselves in thousands of pounds of debt and the threat of being homeless. GHA should hang their head in shame for what they are doing to hard working people of glasgow! ”

[julia mcalaney, from knightswood]

**You can contribute to the debate online at:-**

<http://tinyurl.com/2pcaqd>

<http://gha-users.org.uk/>

Support for Homeowners and Tenants.

<http://glasgowresidents.wordpress.com/>

the Home of the Residents Movement.

## The Victories!

### *Nurse wins more time to pay GHA bill*

**Campaigners battling Scotland's biggest landlord over crippling home-improvement fees have won a major breakthrough.**

A sheriff has told Glasgow Housing Association it must allow a nurse who faced paying a £6000 bill in a year to pay it off at £100 a month.

The ruling at Glasgow Sheriff Court has been hailed as a victory for common sense.

Owner-occupier Frances Schooler, a nurse at Stobhill Hospital, was taken to court because she couldn't afford to pay £525 a month for work carried out by GHA at her home.

Several homeowners face legal action and have been issued with open decrees - a move which gives the association the power to arrest wages at any time and ultimately repossess a house.

But campaigners claim Frances' case now sets an important precedent for other owners struggling to pay such bills.

The 49-year-old, from Germiston, said: "I was paying £100 a month to the GHA but they didn't accept it. That's why I was taken to court.

"The only other option I would have had was to remortgage my house or sell my car.

"I am very relieved."

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[Evening Times 19/02/07]

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### **Pensioner wins case against GHA**

**A sheriff has ruled in favour of an 86-year-old woman who refused to pay a £277 repair bill to Glasgow Housing Association (GHA).**



Homeowner Mary McDonald has won her case against GHA

It took Mary McDonald to court to retrieve the cost of repairs after the home she owns in the Knightwood area of the city was targeted by vandals.

Mrs McDonald accused GHA, which owns the tenement block, of failing in its duty of care by delaying repairs.

Sheriff Martin Jones QC ruled GHA had breached its contract with the OAP.

Mrs McDonald, who suffers from hearing difficulties and

osteoporosis, began receiving repair bills from Scotland's largest housing association in 2003 after vandals began targeting the property.

[...]

### **Let down**

Sheriff Jones QC brought mass cheers from the pensioner's supporters in the public gallery as he found in her favour.

He said: "I preferred the evidence from the defence about the vandalism and the time it took for repairs."

Speaking outside the court on Friday, Mrs McDonald said: "I like staying where I do and it came to the stage with the vandals, and having to always pay for repairs, that I thought I could take no more. I am delighted that the sheriff found in my favour."

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[BBC Website, 24/11/06]

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### **GHA to cut Concierge Fees After Protests**

"Scotland's biggest factoring firm looks set to slash concierge fees for home owners. GHA Management, the commercial wing of Glasgow Housing Association, last night said it hoped to introduce new and fairer payments after complaints from residents."

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[The Herald, 27/11/06]

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## Judge's ruling guarantees tenants better protection from eviction

"A CHANGE in eviction law has resulted in a housing association tenant winning a court case to keep a roof over her head.

Elizabeth Brown's victory could have implications for landlords throughout the country in their attempts to remove tenants with rent arrears."

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[Scotsman 14/02/07]

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**Commenting on the Scotsman article on their website Lisa writes:**

"People with no income receive benefit in the form of the full rent and all the council tax except water charges (around £120 a year still to be paid by the tenant). Such people get into arrears for not returning forms in time or making errors in forms. The public purse loses nothing and such debts should be written off as technical accidents.

Many councils do this but some are unscrupulous and harass the poor for money, and some people who depend on benefits are bullied into paying more than the law allows as a deduction from their benefit (shame on you South Lanarkshire)

With this attitude from our councils, encouraged by Holyrood and Audit Scotland, it is not surprising that our kids are some of the worst off in Europe."

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## Successful National Community Campaign Forces Major Victory On Glasgow Pitches



*On the 15<sup>th</sup> February the Scotsman Reported...*

"The protest was organised by the United Clubs Forum Edinburgh which has brought together sports clubs from across the city and Scotland to protest against dilapidated facilities. [...] teams from Glasgow also took part and the plan is to continue the protest around the country until the need for improved sports facilities is taken more seriously.

[...] Charlie Gray, education spokesman for Cosla, admitted sport has been "de-prioritised" in the last few decades. He said cash-strapped councils have not put money into maintaining

facilities and many have been forced into selling off open spaces for the money."

*By 6/03/07 the Evening Times could report:-*

"The city council has promised to replace its 230 pitches as part of a package of upgraded sports facilities throughout Glasgow.

The pitches, many of which have lain unused and overgrown in recent years, are to be replaced by grass and parks with artificial surfaces, such as Astroturf."

## Partick – the fight is on - S.T.O.P.

Residents in Partick are battling to stop a supermarket from being built in their neighbourhood.

The Evening Times which has covered the campaign, has been flooded with comments from locals debating the issue. From the campaigners in their own words:-

"Tesco railroad the planning process [...] with alleged bribes of Councillors to stay quiet with objections. Glasgow City Council are also united with Tesco on this Development. The Student Accommodation is typical of Tesco's ploys [...] to paint a glossy picture to Planners. But the reality of the situation is more

congestion, pollution, noise (from articulated re Fridgeration units deliveries) disruption to the whole infrastructure of Partick, local shop closures, leading to more charity shops (exempt from tax), Estate Agents, or Bookmakers/ Pawnbrokers. Partick's Diversity of shops along its main road will ultimately suffer. I am not prepared to sit back and

watch this happen. By all means raise objections with the Planning Department, but we must also be seen to engage with the local Community and S.T.O.P. this Tesco together."

on to comment about the event:-

"I was impressed by the number of people who attended, and the fact they were all interested in what we had to say. If they want to be heard and have something changed then campaigning is the only way it will happen."

**However the fight for justice for our neighbours continues..**

"Over a hundred Glaswegian asylum seekers and supporters, most of African origin, held a lively protest outside the Home Office Reporting Centre at Brand Street yesterday (Wednesday). They were

**A message from the Vice-Chair of the Scottish Tenants Organisation**

**Tenants Should not be led by Government Officials**



"Tenants should not be fooled by what they are told by the Government's servants in Community's Scotland, and should not allow officials to run and dominate tenant gatherings.

Tenants should make being 'tenant led' a reality. Only tenants acting collectively, independent of government can make this happen, then genuine dialogue with Government can take place.

Any exercise aimed at tenants must be run democratically with all tenants having access to meetings and not just chosen by Communities Scotland or even the landlords.

Tenants must be allowed to set their own agenda, and not be coached on one set by the Government.

We need to have a real dialogue with the Scottish Executive on national housing policy now to ensure the mistakes of the past are not repeated."

**Why not contact the Glasgow Residents Network, and have your views published in the next Community Action?**



See the following for details:-

<http://tinyurl.com/38ldoj>  
<http://www.stoptesco.info>



protesting against the detention and attempted removal of Eddie Ngienga, Angelique Lukombo and their children, here since 1999."

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 Indymedia, 22/02/7



**17 Year Old Campaigner Gives Keynote Speech**

"A 17 YEAR OLD Glasgow girl

will deliver a keynote speech at Holyrood tomorrow."

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 [Evening Times, 01/03/07]

Amal Azzudin, pictured, went

**Your local residents group is:**  
**Tel:**  
**Email:**

**Call us at Glasgow Residents Network today on :-**

**07976 718 111**