

Lighthouse

Combating Homelessness, Creating Opportunities, Promoting Change

Meet the latest Housing Services staff

BHT Sussex in Bloom – Meet the winners!

Read about the BHT Sussex Environmental Strategy

Set up your own Tenants' Association

Latest COVID-19 update from David Chaffey, Director of Housing Services



Editor's Note from Alasdair Tenquist, BHT Sussex Involvement Officer

As you may be aware, I was unfortunately not able to be around for the summer edition of your newsletter, but it's good to be back!

I'm feeling particularly rested right now as I have just returned from a week on the Norfolk Broads, steering a wonderful 40-foot cruiser up and down the Rivers Ant and Burel. I hope this edition of Lighthouse can provide a pleasant distraction from all the continuing difficulties all around us.

We've once again packed in loads of interesting and useful articles for your perusal. For example, we've got news about some employees joining Housing Services – including Matt McDonald, who is working with me in the Tenant Involvement role. Mary Stevens, BHT Sussex Environmental Officer, talks to us about the important BHT Sussex Environmental Strategy, as well as giving us some advice on other environmental issues. We also have an article on the success of the Blake Court Tenants' Association, encouraging other properties to follow suit. And of course we have all our normal features, like Joe's crossword and our top picks for things to watch, read and listen to over the fast approaching long nights.

If you have any bright ideas for articles, or you have an interesting story to tell that you think the other tenants might be interested to hear about, then please do contact me and we'll see if it can be placed in an upcoming edition of Lighthouse.

Happy Reading!
Alasdair, BHT Sussex Involvement Officer

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A message from David Chaffey: BHT Sussex Director of Housing and Property Services

I hope this finds you well. As we continue to live and work in the midst of the virus we are fully aware that this remains a difficult time for us all. For example, for our repairs service the dual impact of structural economic changes following Brexit and the pandemic on the cost and availability of materials (not to mention the fuel crisis as I write) has made carrying out repairs challenging. However, we are doing all we can to continue to provide a regular service whilst ensuring the safety and security of our staff, tenants and contractors.

We continue to apply our pre-19th July COVID protocols regarding how we work whilst making sure we deliver our services as well as possible. Bearing that in mind, we are doing our best to be flexible as to how we can be contacted, and we are always here to either directly help you or signpost you to other services as appropriate.

Of course, providing a safe environment for you and your neighbours is paramount so please do allow us access for gas, fire, asbestos, and electrical checks in your home and do contact us if you have concerns around this as we can offer solutions.

Please use our website for the latest information on COVID and look out for our text messages too. Please keep in touch with us and your neighbours as we approach the winter- together we can support each other through these challenging times.



Front Cover: The winning garden from BHT Sussex In Bloom Competition 2021, by Debbie Joseph from St. Leonards on Sea, read more on page 4.

Pictured above, the runner up garden from BHT Sussex In Bloom Competition, from Matt & Mel.

New BHT Sussex Staff introductions

Hayley Coleman: Housing Services Administrator

'I joined BHT Sussex in July and I am enjoying every aspect of my new role.'

I have worked in Housing for 12 years supporting tenants and working closely with maintenance contractors and private landlords to ensure good standards of accommodation.

As Covid restrictions have eased I have been fortunate to have visited some of BHT Sussex properties and meet my new colleagues in their varied roles and get a better understanding of Services available to tenants and the community.

My role will include supporting the repairs team, arranging and coordinating maintenance works and arranging maintenance repairs where a property becomes vacant.

It is exciting to be part of an organisation that offers such valuable services and support to their tenants.'

Matt McDonald: Involvement Intern



'BHT Sussex is an inspirational charity that I have the privilege to engage with through an internship in Service user Involvement under Alasdair Tenquist.'

I am excited to have a chance to give back to BHT Sussex while also enjoying use of the services.

I have many years' work experience in office environments and can apply this knowledge and understanding to develop and maintain a professional BHT Sussex standard.

I enjoy water sports, cricket and many other sports. Walking in the countryside really gives me a sense of freedom and connection to the bare necessities of life. Cooking is a fantastic way that I explore the flavours of the earth, of which Italian tops my list.'

Introducing Mary Stevens and the Environment Strategy



In April, I joined BHT Sussex as Environmental Officer. I am enjoying working with colleagues across the trust and looking at strategies to reduce our environmental impact.

Previously I worked for Brighton-based membership charity, Environmental Protection UK, on air pollution, noise and planning issues. I've also worked for a waste management business and animal welfare charity. Outside work I enjoy growing veg, cycling and live music (when allowed).

I'm looking forward to applying my knowledge of environmental management and continuing to learn about the housing sector. I am interested to look at how we can reduce our use of resources – energy, water and everything else!

Our Environment Strategy was approved by the board in July. It is an initial two-year plan to assess our environmental impact and identify measures we can take now to reduce carbon pollution, and ultimately lower costs for clients and tenants, properties and the organisation as a whole. We're keeping an eye out for funding opportunities for energy saving and insulation measures, while working on collecting information on current impacts of homes, offices and operations. We want your input and ideas too, and in the coming weeks we plan to ask for help from tenants in surveying homes – so watch this space!



Prizegiving day, left from right Debbie Joseph, Katherine Pope, Kelvin MacDonald, Mark Bailey

“

Deborah was really engaging and it was clear she took pride in her home and garden.”
Housing Services Manager Katherine Pope



Before comparison... Debbie has transformed this garden from a pile of rubble to the urban wonderland it is now.

The BHT Sussex in Bloom Competition 2021

The BHT Sussex in Bloom competition, kindly sponsored by one of our landscaping contractors, Southern Land Services, rates each of the entrant’s gardens according to specified criteria, including Visual impact, Design, plant variety and health.

Due to the pandemic we were not able to hold the BHT Sussex in Bloom competition last year. However, the relaxation of restrictions this summer has meant we were

delighted to be able to once again get the chance to view and judge some of the wonderful gardens that our tenants have been lovingly tending over the last year.

The judges were Mark Bailey (Southern Land Services), Kelvin MacDonald (Trustee and Chair elect), Katherine Pope (Housing Services Manager) and myself, Alasdair Tenquist (Tenant Involvement Officer). On 22nd July we all set out to inspect tenants’ gardens spread out in properties in Hastings/St Leonards on Sea, Brighton and Hove, and Burgess Hill. The judges had a wonderful day chatting with our green-fingered tenants, and were all blown away by the efforts, flair and imagination our tenants had put into each of their gardens.

The prize for the Individual Gardens section of the competition was won by Debbie Joseph of St Leonards on

Sea. In the few months since she arrived at the property, Debbie had transformed her garden into something of an urban wonderland, a riot of colour created not only by judicious choice of flowering plants but also by the careful choice of unique and inventive furniture and artefacts.

Mark, Southern Land Services Operations Manager said, *‘This resident has made a positive impact in a short space of time, utilising the limited space cleverly and giving the garden a clean and modern feel.’*

Trustee Kelvin MacDonald said, *‘There were so many creative and original touches that it was hard to take them all in – ranging from the water feature made from a fire pit to the plants in ice buckets and silver tea pots.’*

The prizegiving ceremony was held in early October, where Debbie was presented with her prize (sponsored by Southern Land Services), an official certificate, and a plaque with a summary of all the judges’ comments and advice to take forward for her garden development.

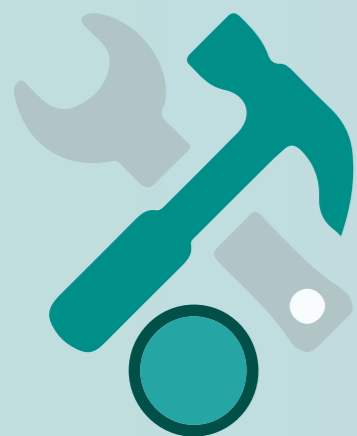
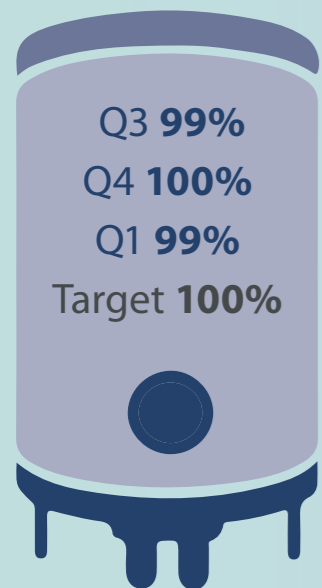
There will be another BHT Sussex in Bloom competition next year. In the meantime we all want to extend our congratulations to all the entries, who made the day one to remember.

BHT Housing Services: How Well Are We Performing?

Q3 Oct–Dec 2020, Q4 Jan–Mar 2021, Q1 Apr–Jul 2021

Boiler Servicing

Percentage of boilers serviced yearly



Repairs: Routine

Response time: 28 days

Q3 **96%**
Q4 **95%**
Q1 **95%**

Target **95%**

Rent Arrears

Percentage of overall rents collected

Q3 **97%** Q4 **97%**
Q1 **97%** Target **94%**

Letting

Days until vacated property is re-let



Repairs: Urgent

Response time: Four to seven days

Q3 **95%**
Q4 **92%**
Q1 **92%**

Target **95%**

Repairs: Overall Satisfaction



Repairs: Emergency

Response time: 24 hours

Q3 **100%**
Q4 **100%**
Q1 **100%**

Target **100%**

Charlie's Spiced Pumpkin Soup

A seasonal dish to celebrate Halloween and a great winter warmer as the longer nights approach.

Ingredients – 4/6 Servings

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3/4 knobs butter
- 2 onions peeled and chopped
- 1 litre hot vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 tsp mild curry powder
- 1 tsp ground ginger or finely chopped fresh ginger
- 1.5 kg pumpkin or butternut squash peeled and cut into biggish pieces
- 2 apples cored and quartered with skin on
- 1 tsp coriander powder or a handful of chopped leaves
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

- Heat a large saucepan with the olive oil and butter, add the ginger and a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Stir well, then add the stock, curry powder, sugar and coriander. Bring to the boil then turn off the heat and let it infuse.
- Put the pumpkin, onions and apple into a roasting tin and bake in a pre-heated oven 200c for about an hour, turn halfway through cooking and add a little more oil to prevent it from scorching too quickly.
- Put the roasted pumpkin, onions and apple in a food processor or liquidiser until smooth. Return the soup to the pan to reheat. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Ladle the soup into warm bowls and serve with fresh bread. Enjoy!
- After the Halloween celebrations this is a great tasty way to use up all the apples and pumpkin that is left over.

The Blake Court Residents' Association

'It is great having a tenancy association because we can now talk things through with our landlords as a group rather than each individual repeating the same issues.'
Steven Devote, TA member

Derek, BHT Sussex tenant, is Chair of the Blake Court Tenants' Association (BCTA) in Brighton and tells us about the Association's journey so far:

'Between us, tenants of Blake Court and BHT Sussex we have been able to start a Tenants' Association. We were grateful for the assistance of Alasdair (Involvement Officer) and Kiri (Housing Officer). Our aim with BCTA, is to work with BHT Sussex to get things done in a timely manner, things that need to be brought to BHT Sussex's attention as well as trying to save money for BHT Sussex, as if they are not aware of a problem it can degenerate and end up costing more to fix.

We experienced a little resistance at first, as some tenants don't want to be involved either due to lack of trust or medical reasons. However, most think it's a great idea and

do support us. Even though the attendance is low now, we are confident it will get better.

Don't think it's a waste of time, during the short time we have been running BHT Sussex have helped and listened to us in every way possible. A Tenants' Association makes things more transparent as everything is in the open.

All tenants have a voice, and if they want to they could start their own Tenants' Association! We have had a lot of things done since we started and there are a lot of things in the pipeline to be done.

I can honestly say the Blake Court TA will continue to work with BHT Sussex as they really do listen to what we say and suggest! OK they don't have a magic money tree but can and will do things within reason.

Better your community, get involved and start a Tenants' Association for your own block. It gives you a say in what you as tenants feel is important- It gives you a voice! That can only be for the better for tenants and for BHT Sussex.'

If you are interested in starting a tenants' association in your property, just contact Alasdair on 07825425084 or a.tenquist@bht.org.uk.

Call Out: Become a Green Inspector

Are your gardens important to you? Well-kept and trimmed gardens are beautifully calming and positively enhance people's mood.

We at BHT Sussex want to make sure that your garden is in the best shape it can be. To do that we need your help, by opting to be a BHT Sussex Green Inspector.

As a Green Inspector you are the 'eyes and ears' for BHT Sussex Housing Services. You let us know how well our gardening contractors are doing their job. It's simple to do. We tell you when your contractor is due to visit. You then look round the grounds as soon as possible after

they have visited and use a simple online form to rate their performance against 5 criteria: grass cutting, shrub beds, hedges, paved areas and weeds. There's a simple selection grade of 1-3 for each of the 5 questions and the option to upload a photo.

If you'd prefer to fill it in by hand we will provide you with hard copies of the Green Inspector's recording form along with stamped addressed envelopes for you to return it to me.

With your help, together we can maintain all our gardens to a standard that improves every resident's well-being.

Please contact Matthew McDonald for more information on matthew.mcdonald@bht.org.uk

Advice from Mary Stevens, BHT Sussex Environmental Officer

Help keeping warm this winter

It's nearly the time when we think about turning the heating on – and prices to keep us warm are set to increase. Help is available from the Government through the Warm Home Discount scheme, which offers £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2021-2022. If you receive a means tested benefit you may be eligible. You will need to apply for the discount through your energy supplier, so first check if they offer it. If eligible, you will receive a one-off discount from your bill between October-March. The scheme opens on October 18th. If you receive a cold weather payment or Winter Fuel Payment, this will not be affected.

There are other ways you can keep your home warm. If you are in Brighton & Hove, the BH Energy Services Co-op can offer advice on switching tariffs to get the best deal, as well as help applying for the Warm Homes Discount. They can also provide advice about installing free energy saving measures in your home. Contact them for a free consultation: [Help for Brighton & Hove residents with winter energy bills | BHESCo](#) Tel: 01273 284470. For tenants in East Sussex, advice is available from the East Sussex Warm Home check service - [The Warm Home Check service \(warmeastsussex.org.uk\)](#) – text WARM to 80011 or call 0800 464 7307. If you are in Mid Sussex see [Mid Sussex District Council - West Sussex Energy](#) for available advice.

Watching our waste

As part of our BHT Sussex Environment Strategy we're watching our waste – and want to reduce it as far as possible. During lockdowns littering and dumping of waste increased. Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of waste, items or materials and is a criminal offence. Common examples include leaving household appliances and furniture by communal bins; leaving items on the pavement for others to take; dumping rubbish or building materials in green spaces.

If you see fly-tipped waste on public land, report it to your local council who will remove it. Waste electrical items contain toxic metals (everything from phones to TVs and fridges), so must be safely disposed of. Local councils have different systems for collection and disposal, so if not sure what to do with, for example, an old phone, kettle or TV that no longer works, check with your council. If you have large items to get rid of, and can't take it to a local authority waste site yourself, make sure you use a licensed waste collector to ensure its properly disposed of – if it's dumped you could risk a fine.

If you have any items that are still usable – try and avoid throwing them away. The Freegle online network is a great way to ensure items are reused: freegle.ilovefreegle.org

Fire Safety and prevention in Your Home – David Reid, BHT Sussex

BHT Sussex takes its responsibility for fire safety in its properties extremely seriously.

We ensure suitable systems are in place to ensure the alarm is raised in the event of any fire incident. There are however steps that you, as a tenant can take that will increase your safety in the event of an incident occurring.

- Know your evacuation plan – look for notices indicating fire call/assembly points and advising what to do in the event of an alarm sounding.
- Know the fire evacuation routes available – look out for the signs indicating these.
- Inform your Housing Officer if you need assistance in evacuating the building, so they can advise the emergency services accordingly.
- Keep passageways clear.
- Test your smoke alarms weekly. Do not interfere with or remove smoke detectors.

- Allow fire safety companies to complete statutory fire safety checks
- If you wish to discuss any aspect of fire safety, please contact your Housing Officer.

Fire Prevention

Listed below are the most common causes of house fires and steps you can take to help prevent them occurring:

- Appliances – Switch off appliances at night and only buy appliances from trustworthy sources.
- Kitchen Fires – Take extra care when cooking with oil and never leave it unattended.
- Electrical sockets – Do not use adapters to overload sockets and have no more than one plug in each socket.
- Cigarettes and candles – Stub out cigarettes properly and dispose of them appropriately. Make sure candles are in a fireproof holder and don't light them near children, pets, curtains, or other fabric.
- Rubbish – Put all rubbish in the bins provided, nowhere else.
- Gas appliances – If you have a gas boiler, make sure BHT Sussex' gas maintenance supplier is given access to test it when required.

Complaints: How do they work?

We sometimes get questions about how the BHT Sussex Complaints Procedure works.

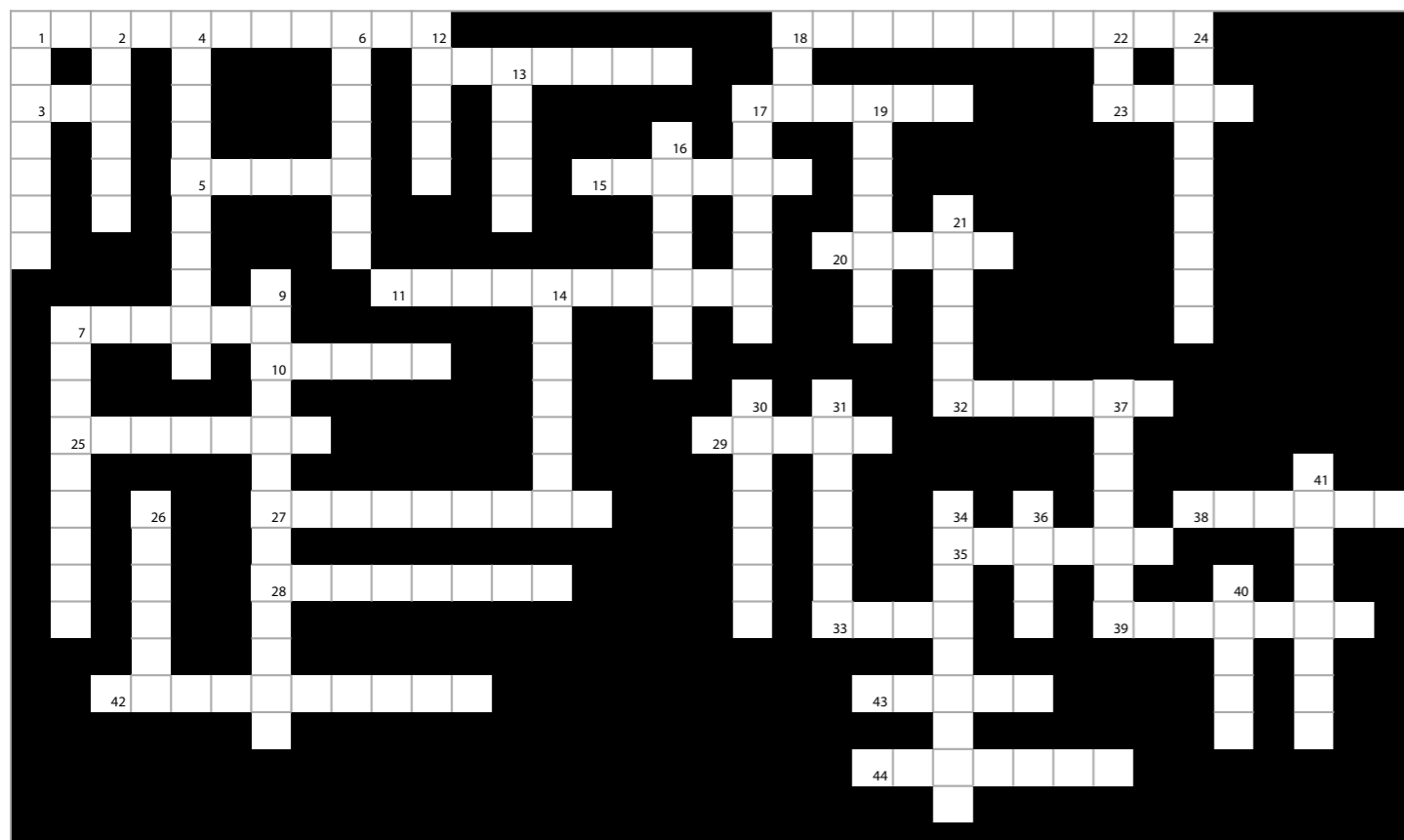
In this article, Bonnie Bird, BHT Sussex Building and Maintenance Surveyor, gives you an example of the process in relation to a complaint about a tenant's water bills.

We received a complaint from a tenant regarding her high water bills. She requested that we investigated as she was convinced there was a leak in a pipe. However,

BHT Sussex sent out plumbers on two separate occasions to investigate, and in both cases they found no leaks. Southern Water were also called. They investigated and found nothing wrong with the meter or any leaks on pipework. Upon further investigation, the number of people living in the property had increased by 2 people. Clearly, this would increase the water bill. Unfortunately, during the period of the complaint, regular payments of bills hadn't been kept up, and the tenant had fallen into debt.

After we contacted the tenant with our findings, she was not happy and proceeded to raise the complaint to Stage 2. Another plumber was sent out, and further investigation into the bills and usage again proved the amount was typical of 3 people in the property. We again concluded no further action would be taken.

Environment Crossword (Answers on the back page)



Across

- 1. The natural world as a whole (11)
- 3. Form of lubricant used as a fuel (3)
- 5. Generic term to describe plant life (5)
- 7. Fuels such as coal formed from living organisms (6)
- 10. Layer in Earth's stratosphere consisting of colourless gas (5)
- 11. Collection of plant life found in a particular habitat (10)
- 15. Part of a tree that grows out from its trunk (6)
- 17. Chemical element emitted by human consumption (6)
- 18. Able to continue over a long period of time (11)
- 20. Generic term for all animals found in a certain habitat (5)
- 23. Adjective used to promote the use of local produce and cultures (4)
- 25. An upward current of warm air (7)
- 27. Energy provided through the use of turbines (4, 5)

- 28. The quantity of precipitation over a given time (8)
- 29. The planet on which we live (5)
- 32. The colour of daffodils and buttercups (6)
- 33. Dark brown material from which plants grow (4)
- 35. Bodies of water that cover 71% of the Earth's surface (6)
- 38. Plant protein source eaten by bees (6)
- 39. The long term pattern of weather on the planet (7)
- 42. An enclosed space used to grow plants, or the name of an effect (10)
- 43. Colourless liquid that forms rivers, lakes and seas (5)
- 44. A long period without rainfall (7)

Down

- 1. Study between living organisms and their environment (7)
- 2. A low area of land between mountains usually close to a river (6)

- 4. Tropical area of dense vegetation (10)
- 6. The tidal mouth of a large river (7)
- 7. The amount of carbon an individual emits into the atmosphere (9)
- 9. The gradual increase in the temperature of Earth's atmosphere (6, 7)
- 12. Tall, perennial plants with trunks and leaves (5)
- 13. Cultivated plants that are grown on farmland (5)
- 14. Rotary device that produces energy powered by the wind (7)
- 16. Professional activity that grows produce or rears animals on a plot of land (7)
- 17. Environmentally friendly way of travelling on two wheels (7)
- 18. Body of water where creatures such as fish and dolphins live (3)
- 19. Renewable organic material obtained from plants and animals (7)
- 21. Power derived from utilising physical resources for heating and light (6)
- 22. Form of public transport used as an alternative to driving a car (3)
- 24. A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment (9)
- 26. Black and white animal that lives in a sett (6)
- 30. Produced from animal or plant life and not manufactured (7)
- 31. A group of small, narrow rivers (7)
- 34. Damage caused to the atmosphere by human behaviour (9)
- 36. Number used to describe targeted carbon neutrality (4)
- 40. Type of meter fitted in homes to aid energy saving and to reduce costs (5)
- 41. Vehicle powered by the use of a motor and not a combustion engine (7)

Top picks of books, films, shows and podcasts

Brighton BHT Sussex tenants Steve, Steve, Kerry and Charlie give you some of their recent recommendations. Many of these are widely available free at the moment.

Steve P recommends...

Murdoch Mysteries, TV series (Alibi, Fridays)
Set in the 1890's Toronto with Yannik Bisson as the star detective William Murdoch. He works with George Crabtree who reads too much Jules Verne and is obsessed with Venusians and mythical creatures.

Death in Paradise, TV Series (Alibi, Wednesdays and Thursdays)
Starring Kris Marshall, Ben Miller and now with Ardal O'Hanlon as its star detective. It's set on the beautiful Guadeloupe, an old British governed island with a French history.

Columbo, TV Series (Channel 5 USA)
The craggy rain-macked detective who is a favourite of many is presently doing the rounds again on the weekends. See if you can spot the episode directed by Stephen Spielberg.

Murder on the Orient Express, Film
Huge cast including Johnny Depp. Though a remake, it's a beautifully made film with wonderful scenery and the great twist at the end. Happy viewing!

Kerry P recommends...

I May Destroy You, TV Series, BBC iPlayer
The absolute best thing I have seen on British TV! A really well written and acted drama by Michaela Cole around the complicated issues of sexual consent.

Nomadland, Film
Brilliant film based on real life about older US people being forced to live in camper vans doing gig economy jobs. Lead is the amazing Frances McDormand. Really moving film. Thoroughly recommend.

Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evarista, Book
A lovely book based on lesbian life of mostly black women in late '80's early 90's London. Very relatable for me, recalling venues I used to frequent and familiar dilemmas!

Grounded with Louis Theroux, Podcast
Louis has an unassuming but very clever way of getting famous people to open up! The Michaela Cole, Miriam Margolyes and Boy George interviews are particularly good.

Mary Anne Hobbs Radio6
Start the weekend on a Friday at 12.30. Dance tunes old and new to dance round the living room to!

Charlie G. recommends...

Better Call Saul, Season 1-5, TV Series, Netflix
This is the spin off from Breaking Bad with several of the same actors/characters. I'm hooked and am in anticipation of the sixth series being released.

Star Wars: ROTJ, Film
I'm a great Star Wars fan. My favourite has always been Return of the Jedi, the third film in the original trilogy. I especially loved the Ewoks on Endor, and Chewbacca in the AT-ST (chicken walker), I am truly as passionate about Star Wars as I am about England Rugby. May the force be with you all!

Steven D. recommends...

Twin Town (18), Film
The next film is possibly the best Welsh film to date called Twin Town (18) set around Swansea, South Wales. it's about a pair of male twins and their capers. Very funny and bursting with Welsh self-deprecating humour, a great addition to British film.

Contact Us

Brighton Housing Trust Head Office and General Enquiries

144 London Road
Brighton BN1 4PH
01273 645400
info@bht.org.uk

Rents and Repairs

01323 340018
rents@bht.org.uk
repairs@bht.org.uk

MyTenancy

www.mytenancy.co.uk
Report a repair or check your rent
statement on-line

Housing Officers

Brighton Housing Officer:
Kiri Black 01273 645454 / 07826874849

Hastings, Eastbourne & Saltdean
Toyah Thomas
07824306591 / 07824306591

Tenant Involvement

Alasdair Tenquist
01273 645443 / 07825 425084

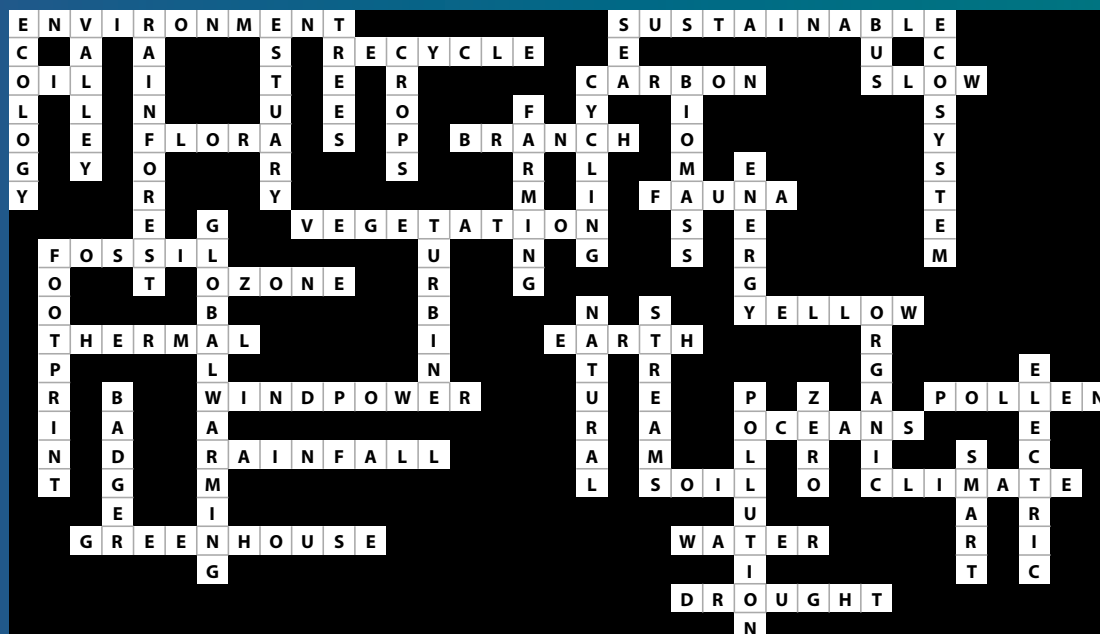
Out of Hours Emergency Repairs
Redman Howard 07493223016

Gas emergencies
0800 030 4425

Our mission: Combating homelessness; Creating opportunities; Promoting change.

Our values: Empowering People; Inspiring Change; Collaboration; Delivering Excellence; Being Accountable.

Crossword Answers



Congratulations to our prize draw winners

Congratulations to Charlie from Brighton who won a £20 shopping voucher in the Direct Debit prize bi-monthly draw simply for setting up a Direct Debit with BHT Sussex. Your Housing Officer can guide you through the process step-by-step.

Congratulations also to Nicola from St. Leonards On Sea who won a £50 shopping voucher in the prize draw for the repairs survey. Have you had a repair carried out recently? If so, how did you find the service? We need your feedback, so fill in the survey you receive in the post or answer the questions in a phone survey and you could win a £50 shopping voucher in our quarterly prize draw.