

Warwickshire  
**Rural**  
*Life*

The residents' newsletter for  
**Warwickshire Rural Housing Association**

**SPRING 2016**

[www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)



# *Wildlife Haven*

**Residents are set to turn an overgrown communal area of land in Priors Marston into a wildlife haven.**

We asked residents for suggestions for improvement and are now supporting them in turning the land into a garden for all.

Resident James Smith, who's leading the makeover, says: "The plan is to clear away all the scrub and thistles, plant some nice wildflowers and fruit trees and put benches there."

• Read more at [www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)

# UC Rollout

The next phase of the Universal Credit roll-out begins in May and will apply to all people making a new claim for benefits. Also, if someone is already claiming benefits and their circumstances change, they will be moved onto Universal Credit.

Remember, with the new system you'll receive a single monthly payment direct into your bank account, rather than individual benefits.

If you live in a Rugby Borough Council area the roll-out will happen in May, while for those living in Stratford Upon Avon District Council areas the roll-out will take place in December.

For help and advice, call the Universal Credit Helpline on **0345 600 0723** or speak to your Housing Officer.

## New Guide

Have you read your new Pocket Guide to Universal Credit?

It's been sent to every resident to explain, in an easy to view format, everything you need to know about how Universal Credit will work and what you need to do to make a claim.

It's also available on the website at [www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)



## Housing Benefit backdating period reduced:

From 1 April 2016 the period working age claimants can claim backdated benefit will be reduced to a maximum of four weeks. Currently when a working

age tenant requests a backdate and can show good cause for making a late claim they can get housing benefit backdated for up to 6 months.

## On a more positive note/good news ...

### ● National Minimum Wage increased:

The National Minimum Wage will be 'rebranded' as the National Living Wage and will be increased to £7.20 per hour for those 25 or over from April 2016. It will reach £9.00 per hour by 2020.

### ● Personal tax allowance increased:

The Personal Tax Allowance, the amount you can earn before paying income tax, will be increased from £10,600 to £11,000 from April 2016.

### ● New State Pension makes it simpler.....

For those reaching pension age from 6 April 2016 a new State Pension is being introduced to replace the basic State Pension and State Second Pension. This affects all women born on or after 6 April 1953 and all men born on or after 6 April 1951. The new pension is designed to be much simpler than the current system and will consist of a single amount to be awarded which should make it easier to work out how much state pension you are likely to get. For further information please visit [www.gov.uk/new-state-pension/overview](http://www.gov.uk/new-state-pension/overview)

### ● Rent reductions – you will have recently received notification of your new rent for 2016/17.

As you may already be aware social housing rents are being reduced by 1% for the next 4 years –remember this does not apply to service charges.



## Minor repairs

Remember that minor repairs such as mending cupboard door catches, replacing fuses and re-fixing toilet seats are your responsibility. Details can be found at [www.warwickshirerha.org.uk/living-in-your-home/your-responsibility/](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk/living-in-your-home/your-responsibility/)

If you're a shared owner, you're responsible for all your own repairs.

## Good neighbours

When you park your vehicles, please try to think of your neighbours to avoid causing any problems.

- If you find you do have a problem, talk to your neighbour to try to resolve the issue.
- You may find it easier to write to them if you don't want to speak face-to-face.
- If the problem affects you and other neighbours it may help to contact the person responsible as a group, it may help them realise what they are doing is affecting more than just one person.
- If the problem persists, speak to your Housing Officer.



## JOIN THE TEAM

**Want to have a real say in how your housing services are delivered? Join the Resident Involvement Board!**

Any resident can join and you'll be asked to comment on our policies, promises, newsletters and documents. It's a great way to share your thoughts and ideas and help to improve services for residents.

Full details and an application form can be found at

[www.warwickshirerha.org.uk/living-in-your-home/resident-involvement/](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk/living-in-your-home/resident-involvement/)

Get in touch!



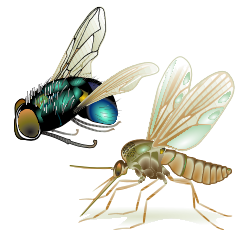
# Great days out

**Have you enjoyed a great local day out recently? If so, we'd love you to spill the beans! We're looking to share details on Facebook of the best places to go and the best things to do without having to travel far.**

Is there a value-for-money attraction which the kids adore, a special place you head out to when you've time to relax or a hidden gem which you've just discovered on your doorstep? Send your suggestions to [sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk) and we'll choose a selection to post on our new Facebook page.

## Pest control

Spring is here but with it comes the threat of pests including wasps, ants, rats and other creatures!



Contact your local council if you have a problem with any pests in your home or garden. Some councils offer free pest control services while others may charge depending on the type of pest you have!

## Filming opportunity!

Transparent Television is making a one hour documentary for a major broadcaster about love and marriage in later life. They want to hear from any couples aged over 70 who are planning to get married before the end of 2016. The documentary will follow their journey towards their big day.

Interested? Call Emma Linstead on **020 7704 3310** or email [emmalinstead@transparenttelevision.com](mailto:emmalinstead@transparenttelevision.com)



## Alarmed?

Smoke alarms can save your life so it's important they're maintained properly. If your alarm is beeping, it probably means the battery needs changing. It's easy to fit a new battery and you should find it works fine again. If not, then call us.

## Follow Us

Have you liked us on Facebook yet? We're regularly sharing lots of useful information, such as updates about Universal Credit, so you can read the latest news straight away.



We'll still be sending you information, including this newsletter, through the post, but we know that residents increasingly like to read news digitally, so we're moving with the times!

Visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for us then click 'like'.

## Service standards

We will use plain language and avoid the use of jargon.

## Ask us ...

Have you got a question about your home or the services we provide? If so, ask away! We'll be answering one of your questions in every newsletter. Simply email them to [sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk)



## Need a translation?

If you need a copy of Rural Life newsletter in another language we will happily provide a translation for you. All you have to do is call the office on **0300 1234 009** with your request.

## Keep it clean

Are you a considerate resident? Do you clean up after your pet?

We are giving away one FREE poop bag dispenser with some poo bags to each household who owns a dog or cat (while stocks last). If you'd like one, ask your Housing Officer.

Dog mess is a serious health hazard. Grounds maintenance cannot look after communal areas if they are littered in animal faeces. Please clean up the mess left by your pet by bagging it and safely disposing of it.



## Improvements planned

Our planned maintenance programme ensures tenants' properties are kept warm, safe and fully modernised. During the coming year we'll be:

- Fitting new windows at 20 properties.
- Replacing the front and back doors at 18 properties.
- Replacing the back doors at 11 properties.
- Installing new kitchens at 11 properties.
- Fitting new bathrooms at 5 properties.
- Completing heating upgrades at 8 properties.

Shirley Whittaker, who had new front and back doors fitted last year, says: "The house is so much warmer now and it holds the heat so much better."

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is published by Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, Whitwick Business Centre, Stenson Road, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4JP.

**Tel:** 0300 1234 009

**Fax:** 01530 278086

**E-mail:** [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)

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