



SAXON
WEALD

Spotlight

The newsletter for Saxon Weald residents | Spring 2023



Wellbeing Roadshows

The second of our wellbeing roadshows saw us covering many miles to see our customers.



A closer look at repairs

We have created a customer taskforce to help shape the future of our repairs service.



Improving homes

The latest on what we're doing to combat damp, mould and condensation in your homes.



A note from our Chair

One of our most important goals is to provide all our customers with a really good repairs service via our inhouse team, HomeFix. Regrettably, we built up an unacceptable backlog of repairs over the past year or so. The board has therefore agreed to invest an additional £250,000 to try to clear more than half the backlog by May. We are regularly monitoring progress and hope you will see a noticeable improvement in this service during the coming months.

The colder weather, combined with the huge increase in energy costs to keep homes warm, has, sadly, led to an increase in cases of damp, mould, and condensation. I would like to reassure you that we take this problem very seriously and the Saxon Weald team is working hard to fix the problems that are reported to us. Details of our policy and how to tell us if you are experiencing damp or mould in your home can be found on our website: www.saxonweald.com/condensation.

It has been great to hear how many of you came to talk to us during our Winter Wellbeing Roadshow. Thank you to all of you who have

subsequently agreed to contribute to our customer consultation groups. Your feedback matters and will influence your board's decisions about our priorities for future investment.



As I write, we are about to begin planning the next stage of our roadshow program, with visits to some of our neighbourhoods in the Easter holidays. Details will be sent by email and available on our website and social media channels, so keep an eye out for more information. Do please take the opportunity to come and tell us what you think about Saxon Weald and anything we could do better.

Simon Hardwick,
Saxon Weald's Chair of the Board

Our website - thank you for your feedback

At the end of last year, we invited you to share your views and tell us what you think about our website for the chance to win a shopping voucher. We had over 200 responses to our digital and written surveys, so thank you to all our residents who took the time to get involved. Your feedback will be used to help us improve our website and ensure it meets your needs.

Of the 218 responses we received, 60% of customers said they use the Saxon Weald website. However, many customers indicated they associate our website as being My SaxonWeald.

If you didn't know already, you can find a wealth of information over on our main website: www.saxonweald.com. This includes details of our damp and mould approach, cost of living support, advice about living in your home, plus much more.



Congratulations to one of our feedback winners!

The winner of our written entry website feedback prize draw was Mrs Denyer. We were thrilled to meet her and present her with a £100 voucher to spend in M&S.

She's looking forward to treating herself!



We've been listening...

Last July, we shared our plan with you setting out all the ways we will involve customers and make sure you have a chance to have your say. Here's a quick look at some of the things we've been up to. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to give us their views!



Questionnaires and surveys

We receive around 350 survey responses every month. Some of these are completed over the phone while others are done online. These give us a real flavour of what you do and don't like about our services. But do they make a difference? The answer is a resounding yes!

You said: Grass cutting and grounds maintenance needs improving

We did: Your feedback about poor grounds maintenance has led to us ending our contract with Idverde and seeking new partners with a more local focus.

You said: We don't see enough of you

We did: You also told us that you would like to see more of us out and about in your neighbourhoods. This was one of the drivers behind our winter wellbeing roadshow. We visited eight estates over October half-term and seven retirement schemes at the end of January.

You said: It takes too many visits to fix heating issues

We did: We extended the amount of time we plan in for each job to give our operatives the best chance to complete the work on their first visit. There will still be occasions where parts are needed or the job is bigger than expected, but overall, you should see an improvement.

Domestic abuse policy

Your feedback led to important changes in our domestic abuse policy, including making sure that gaslighting was recognised. You also told us to add more information to our website on the support available to survivors.

Repairs service consultation

You told us that our repairs service is the most important area for us to get right. To find out what works and what needs to improve, we have

carried out two consultations so far. The first took place last summer when we had hour-long phone conversations with a dozen customers to really get some detail on how important the service is. We used this to help develop an improvement plan which aims to reduce waiting times, increase satisfaction and improve efficiency.

We have also launched a customer consultation group who we will be working with over the coming months. The plan is the group will come up with their own set of recommendations which will be reviewed directly by our Board. This started with an open event in our offices before Christmas. We now have seven volunteers who would like to be more closely involved.

And there's more...

We've also celebrated our first youth awards and reviewed our scheme manager service. You can find articles on these in this newsletter.

Want to know more?

You can find a copy of our customer engagement plan on our website. We share details of events and consultations via email updates, posters in schemes and communal areas, on Facebook, on our website and through this newsletter.

Coming next time... Residents' letters page



We want to share your letters with our readers in our forthcoming editions of Spotlight. If you've got a comment, would like to feedback on any of our services, or have ideas for improvement, please let us know. Email us at: marketing@saxonweald.com or write to: Spotlight letters, Saxon Weald House, 38-42 Worthing Road, Horsham, RH12 1DT





Celebrating young people's contributions to the community

Inspired by the mental health challenges a staff member's son faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, we launched our very first Youth Awards at the end of 2022. Members of the public were invited to nominate young people who are making a positive difference in their communities within our four awards categories. The winners were then selected by members of Saxon Weald staff and Board, as well as Youth Provision Officer for Horsham District Council, Dan Fairchild.



Congratulations to our 2022 winners:

- Caring Young Person Award - Tyler McKean
- Local Community Award - Harry Derby & Jacob Lee
- Sport and Physical Activity Award - McKenzie Box
- Achievement in Learning Award - Seth Browning

Saxon Weald's Chief Executive, Steven Dennis, was proud to host the awards ceremony evening:

"It was an absolute privilege to meet our inspirational award winners. I would like to congratulate Tyler, Harry, Jacob, McKenzie and Seth once again, and thank them all for the contributions they've made to their local communities. At Saxon Weald, we are passionate about recognising the personal achievements of young people, so I look forward to celebrating with more worthy winners in 2023."

Ensuring better domestic abuse support for the LGBT+ community

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting customers who are experiencing domestic abuse, members of the team recently received training on how to support survivors within the LGBT+ community.

The session was provided by charity, Galop, who work with and for LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse and violence in the UK. The training included LGBT+ identities and terminology, barriers to accessing safety and support, plus much more.

If you need support, please call us on 01403 226000. Any disclosures of domestic abuse will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially within 24 hours of the report. More information can also be found on our website: www.saxonweald.com/da.



Scheme manager service – how your views made a difference

Our recent retirement housing survey is a great example of how customer views lead to service changes. We carried out a survey of retirement housing residents in June 2021. Unsurprisingly, given Covid restrictions, customers told us that they simply did not see enough of their scheme manager on site. Respondents also told us that we needed to improve our communication. On the plus side, most people thought their scheme manager was helpful and friendly.

So, what did we do?

- Scheme managers stopped working from home and returned to scheme offices.
- We worked with residents in each scheme to draw up a charter setting out what residents could expect, such as when the manager would be available
- Agreed a schedule of regular meetings or coffee mornings based on customer requirements in each scheme
- Introduced a quarterly scheme newsletter

Has it made a difference?

We did another survey in December 2022 to see whether the changes had made a difference.

- 70% of people were satisfied the agreed times for the manager to be on-site are kept to. We will look to improve this in schemes where this remains an issue.
- 82% of customers said they had received a scheme newsletter.
- 49% of respondents said they were aware of the charter. To improve this, we will send a copy of the relevant charter with the next scheme newsletter and discuss at scheme meetings.

Thanks to everyone who took part – your views count!



Testing your smoke alarms

Throughout the year, thousands of accidental fires happen in the UK, and not having a working smoke alarm can have severe consequences.

As your landlord, we will fit a smoke alarm in your property, which you should test once a month to ensure it is in good working order. To do this, you will need to press the circular test button on the alarm.

Your smoke alarm will also have a date on it, this is the recommended replacement date. If you notice that your fire alarm expiry date is close or has passed, please contact us to arrange a replacement. While the alarm should continue to work after this date, we do recommend that it is replaced.



Our well-being roadshow hits the road again

Following the success of our winter well-being roadshow in October, we were delighted to hit the road again in January to offer residents in schemes practical support and advice on managing the current cost of living.

Throughout the week, we visited seven of our retirement schemes across West Sussex and Hampshire to help customers get the support they need. This included income advice, free refreshments, energy-saving tips, giveaways, and prize draws, as well as our own mini food bank.

Residents gave us a warm welcome and were pleased to see us in person. It was great to speak to customers from our schemes and the local community, hear their views and provide support where we could. A few residents took the opportunity to raise concerns and issues, which were taken away by staff and Board members to investigate further. It was also a fantastic opportunity for our residents to socialise with neighbours, all while enjoying a warm cuppa and a selection of sandwiches and sweet treats.



TUESDAY
GREEN MEADOWS,
PULBOROUGH



MONDAY
ALAN CHUN
HOUSE,
SOUTHAMPTON



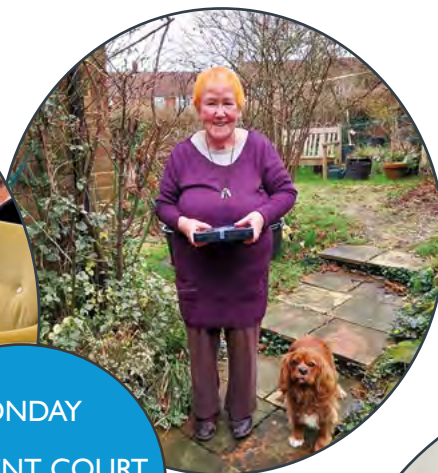
THURSDAY
BRIDGES COURT,
HORSHAM



We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone that came along and helped make the roadshow a great success. We hope everyone who attended found it beneficial, as we really enjoyed visiting your schemes and hearing your feedback. We plan to hit the road for a third time in the coming months, so keep your eyes peeled for more information!



MONDAY
MAIDMENT COURT,
HENFIELD



WEDNESDAY
MANOR COURT,
WORTHING



FRIDAY
HORDERN HOUSE,
HORSHAM



TUESDAY
OSMUND COURT,
BILLINGSHURST

Our support doesn't stop there...

We understand that many people are feeling the effects of the rising cost of living, so if you are struggling, please reach out to us! We have lots of information and advice regarding the current cost of living and energy crisis in our helping hand guide which you can download via the link in your email. If you've received a physical copy of Spotlight, a copy of our helping hand guide has been included.



A closer look at repairs

Customers making improvement recommendations straight to our Board is an ambitious plan. But that is what we are trying to achieve with our new repairs taskforce.

The project started with an open event in our head office where you were invited to come and tell us about your experiences. We welcomed 22 households during the day. We also had around 50 written responses from those who couldn't attend.

What you like

Most people told us that the operatives who had been to their homes had been friendly, polite, and helpful. You also said it was generally quite easy to report a problem.

On the other hand

You told us that we need to improve our communication about when work is going to be taking place and what happens if we need to come back. You also said you should only need to tell us about a problem once. Some people commented that our waiting times can be too long, although you



understood we had a lot of homes to look after. Finally, some people thought that we are good at small day-to-day repairs but that more major work was slow to happen.

Next steps?

Seven people have volunteered to form a taskforce to take a more in-depth look. We hope to give the group all the information and support they need to come up with their own set of recommendations and improvement ideas. This will be presented directly to our Board, making sure customer opinions are listened to at the most strategic level.

We'll let you know how we are getting on in the next edition of Spotlight.

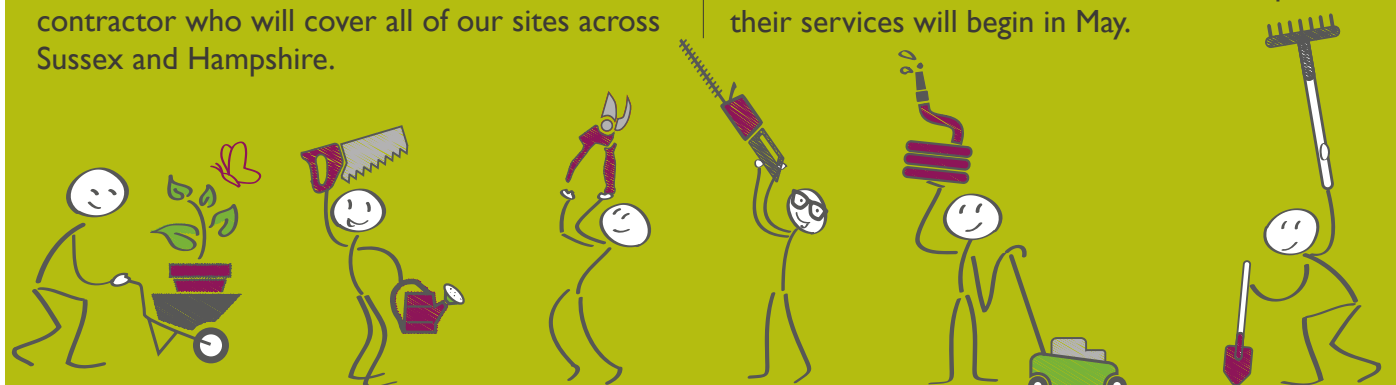
Grounds maintenance update

Following customer feedback that their service wasn't up to scratch, you may be aware we made the decision last year to terminate our grounds maintenance contract with idverde. Since then, we've been working to secure new contractors to carry out the work.

The plan moving forward is to split our grounds maintenance contracts into four geographical areas, which we hope will improve the service you receive. We will also have one tree contractor who will cover all of our sites across Sussex and Hampshire.

We've recently completed the tender process where contractors actively bid to take over the grounds maintenance contracts. This involved answering a set of carefully selected questions, and presenting evidence that they have the resources, quality and experience to take on one or two of our areas. A panel then carefully scored each of the bids and assessed the contractors' responses.

The new contractors will be awarded in April and their services will begin in May.



The importance of gas safety checks

Gas safety checks are an essential part of your tenancy agreement and keeping you safe in your home. So, it really is crucial for us to attend your property so we can carry them out.

If you can't be home for your appointment and haven't told us, our operatives fall behind, which impacts the service we provide to all our customers. If the appointment time you are allocated isn't suitable, please contact us as soon as possible so we can reschedule for a more convenient time.

Please be aware, if we are unable to access your home to complete our gas safety checks after several attempts, your gas supply will be capped. In rare cases and where necessary, legal action may also be taken in accordance with Gas Compliance Law.



Damp, mould and condensation

We take reports of damp, mould and condensation very seriously. As your wellbeing is our number one priority, we will do all we can to work with you and address the problem as quickly as possible. To help us do this, we've introduced a new damp, condensation and mould policy and procedure. In February, our staff received training on these documents to ensure a consistent and timely approach.

If you need to report a damp, condensation and/or mould issue in your home, we'll ask you a series of questions about the problem.

It's also helpful at this point to see photos of the affected area.

The first thing we will do is arrange for HomeFix to visit your home to wash down and treat the affected area. Whilst this is being done, the operative will carry out some checks on your home to see if there are any underlying issues causing the damp and mould.

Depending on what the problem is, a surveyor may need to attend to inspect the problem further. We also may need to book in further work, such as having extractor fan or insulation fitted or to carry out a roof repair to address the issue.

If you're experiencing damp, mould or condensation in your home, please contact our Customer Support Team by emailing hello@saxonweald.com or via your online account. Further information on managing damp, mould and condensation can be found on our website: www.saxonweald.com/condensation.



Fast connectivity

Openreach have been rolling out full fibre broadband across more than 1000 of our properties. This is part of the Government's drive to ensure everyone has access to the high-speed internet network. The operation has been ongoing for nearly two years and will continue until completion in 2025.

Openreach and its partners are currently concentrating on buildings that contain more than one property. So, at present, 40% of our schemes, including Highwood Mill, are benefiting from the next generation of broadband, at no cost to us or residents.

As Openreach continue their roll out, residents will be notified if there is likely to be any intrusive works. However, as the proposed works are all external, entry into your home is not required. Once the system is live, your internet provider will be able to help you connect to the new broadband, which may include a visit from their engineer.



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If you'd like to benefit from an internet service but you're finding technology a bit of a struggle, try visiting your local library. Many have digital volunteers/champions, who can help you master digital skills. You can also contact Age UK on 0800 678 1602 to ask about local training opportunities.

Easter holidays fun

We all love the Easter holidays and spending time with the family, but keeping the little ones entertained can be a challenge! To help, here are some ideas to keep the boredom at bay:

Easter egg hunts and adventures

Egg hunts are a great way to keep the kids (and adults) entertained, all whilst eggsploring the great outdoors. Head over to "Where To Go With Kids" to find out more about events in the South East:

<https://wheretogowithkids.co.uk/easter-events/best-easter-events-south-east>.

These trails can sometimes come with a small fee, so if you're looking for a cheaper alternative, why not create your own hunt? You could use hard boiled eggs, which the kids can decorate or buy some chocolate eggs from your local supermarket to set up some Easter fun at home.

Easter treats

If the weather isn't looking great, there are still plenty of things that you can do inside. Curling up with a movie, having a craft morning or baking some Easter themed treats are perfect family activities. Here's one of our favourite recipes from www.bbcgoodfood.com that the kids can get involved with, and is tasty enough for the adults to enjoy!



Recipe © Immediate Media Company Ltd. 2023

Easy Easter Nests

You'll need:

- 200g of milk chocolate
- 85g of shredded wheat
- Some chocolate mini eggs

Method

STEP 1

Melt the chocolate in a small bowl placed over a pan of barely simmering water. Pour the chocolate over the shredded wheat and stir well to combine.

STEP 2

Spoon the chocolate wheat into 12 cupcake cases and press the back of a teaspoon in the centre to create a nest shape. Place 3 mini chocolate eggs on top of each nest. Chill the nests in the fridge for 2 hrs until set.

Funding secured for Slinfold redevelopment project

In December, Homes England confirmed they will be financially supporting us to redevelop The Cobblers in Slinfold. The Cobblers currently consists of 17 outdated retirement flats which are no longer fit for purpose.

The funding of £660,000 will enable us to replace these flats with 12 modern one and two-bedroom homes for affordable rent. The new properties will also be designed to meet zero net carbon standards.

The demolition of the existing building took place in February and work is now underway with Westridge Construction to complete the redevelopment by the end of the year.



More affordable homes for more people

Ecclesden Park, Angmering

At the end of last year, several properties at Ecclesden Park in Angmering completed for both affordable rent and shared ownership purchase. The properties have been built in partnership with Barratt David Wilson, with more expected to handover in the autumn of this year.



Recently completed properties at Ecclesden Park

New Monks Park, Lancing

In January, we took handover of four new shared ownership homes at New Monks Park, Lancing. We also launched the sales of our latest phase of shared ownership properties in February, which are due to complete in April this year.



Newly built homes at New Monks Park

Interested in shared ownership?

Shared ownership is a government-backed scheme aimed to help buyers get on the property ladder. It allows you to buy a share in a property and pay rent on the remaining share, meaning you need a much smaller deposit.

Advantages to buying a home through shared ownership

- you'll own part of your home, rather than paying rent with no return
- your monthly mortgage and rent can work out much cheaper than buying outright and often less than private renting
- you can buy more shares in your home at a later date
- you only buy what you can afford so you don't overstretch yourself financially

You must not already own a property and eligibility criteria apply.

More information and a list of our available shared ownership properties can be found on our website: www.wealdliving.com.



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Reducing food waste with community fridges

Community fridges are independent charities that work like foodbanks. They provide food parcels to those in need, whilst also making food that would otherwise be wasted, freely available to anyone who drops by.

Check out our Helping Hand Guide for the locations of a few community fridges.

If you are struggling with the current cost of groceries, The Trussell Trust is a national charity that has a list of foodbanks in your area. To find your nearest, call 01722 580 180 or go to: www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-afoodbank/



Make life easier, get ☺Online!



Our easy-to-use, online self-service portals provide secure access to your information and services. They're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile.

What can you do once you've registered?

- Make a payment
- Report repairs and book an appointment
- View your rent account and payment history
- Send secure web messages
- View and update your details
- View and print account statements
- Add people to the household
- Request a payment card

Find out how to register for your account and enjoy the benefits of online access here:

www.saxonweald.com/getonline



My SaxonWeald technical difficulties - resolved

We are aware that some customers may have recently experienced technical difficulties when logging repairs via My SaxonWeald. We are pleased to report that the issue has now been resolved and the service is back up and running as usual. We would like to apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.



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PlaceShapers
Together we help communities thrive

