



HOUSING NEWS

Lower Oldpark (Coronavirus Special Edition)

April 2020. Lower Oldpark Community Association, 9-23 Avoca Street, Belfast BT14 6EN. Tel: 02890351334. Email: loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com

Coronavirus Delays Cliftonpark Avenue Appointment

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has been unable to finalise the selection of a developer for the open green space site bounded by the Crumlin Road, Cliftonpark Avenue and Landscape Terrace due to the Coronavirus crisis.

The site was put up for sale on the open market in January 2020. Following the submission of development proposals and financial offers for the site by potential purchasers, a developer was selected. This selection now has to go through an NIHE internal approval process.

This includes consideration of the decision by the NIHE Regional Clearance House. Due to the cancellation of the April and May meetings of the Clearing House due to Coronavirus, June 2020 is now the earliest date for consideration of the appointment by the group.

Once approved by the Regional



Clearing House, the decision then goes to the NIHE Chief Executive's Business Committee. If it passes this stage, a sale agreement will be signed by the NIHE and by the selected developer. This is the final stage and the point at which Lower Oldpark Community Association will learn the name of the appointed developer and what their development proposals are.

If the appointed developer needs planning permission, it could be over a year before work begins. If they already have planning permission, work should be able to start quite quickly.

LOCA Housing Advice Service

Lower Oldpark Community Centre temporarily closed on 23rd March 2020 because of Coronavirus.

As a result, the Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) Housing Advice Service provided by the Housing Project Worker is no longer available on a face-to-face basis.

However, the service continues to be available by:

- Mobile: 07713990976

- Email: loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com
- Facebook (private messaging): (@loweroldparkhousing)

Providing a housing advice service at this time is more difficult than usual. In many cases, only basic services are being provided by Government and public bodies. Many staff members are working from home and this can make contacting them difficult. The Housing Project Worker will do his best to deal with all advice requests made.

Collect and Deliver Service

Due to Coronavirus, some residents may be finding it difficult to get out to the shops to buy food and essential household items or to collect prescriptions. If you are in this position and currently don't have help with these tasks, contact Lower Oldpark Community Association. We provide a Collect and Deliver Service. Contact us on:

Mobile: 07713990976 (between 8.00am and 4.00pm) or email loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com or Facebook private message @loweroldparkhousing .

You're Never Alone

If you are in trouble at this difficult time, don't despair. Help is available. Below are the websites of services that can offer you help.

- www.refuse.org.uk (women's shelter)
- www.ncdv.org.uk (domestic violence)
- www.womensaid.org.uk (domestic abuse)
- www.victimsupport.org (rape help)
- www.mensadvice.org.uk (men's domestic abuse)
- www.nspcc.org.uk (child abuse)
- www.childline.org.uk (children's wellbeing)
- www.mind.org.uk (mental health)
- www.wearehourglass.org (elder abuse)
- www.samaritans.org.uk (crisis aid and suicide)
- www.cruse.org.uk (bereavement support)

NIHE Housing Services

Local Office Opening

All public reception areas in Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) local offices are closed until further notice. NIHE staff are still working from NIHE offices and can be contacted on these phone numbers:

- 03448 920 900 - General enquiries. You can also make a general enquiry online - information@nihe.gov.uk
- 03448 920 901 - Repairs
- 03448 920 902 - Housing Benefit

Lines are open from 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. You can also write to the NIHE at the Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB.

Repairs

Due to Coronavirus, the NIHE is only carrying out repair works when there is a risk to life or property.

When reporting a repair, staff will ask if residents are self-isolating. If so, the NIHE contractor will be advised and will have to carry out a risk assessment before attending to the works. The contractor will contact you to advise on what to do next.

Repairs can be reported by phone on 03448 920 901. If the problem occurs outside of office hours, also call 03448 920901. Repairs can be reported on the NIHE website Home page (click on Report and select Repairs) or by texting 66644.

Housing Applications and Allocations

If you are not currently a Housing Executive tenant and you want to apply for social housing, you should ring the NIHE on 03448 920900 and ask for Housing Solutions covering the area of Belfast you live in. For Lower Oldpark, it is North Belfast. Housing Solutions will assess your housing needs over the phone. You won't have to go to the NIHE's office. This process is used for housing applicants and applicants who are presenting as homeless. You can also apply for rehousing online using the NIHE website Home Page (click on Apply and select Apply For A Home).

Due to Coronavirus, the NIHE has temporarily halted the allocation and letting of its properties to housing applicants on the waiting list.

Lower Oldpark NIHE tenants, including those who have become homeless, who wish to apply for a

transfer should contact the Lower Oldpark Patch Manager, Martin McClure, on 03448 920900.

Housing Benefit

During Coronavirus, Housing Benefit (HB) payments are continuing as normal. To make a new claim or to tell the NIHE about a change in your circumstances, ring 03448 920 902. You can also apply for HB on the NIHE website Homepage (click Apply and select Claim Housing Benefit). To report a change in circumstances online, go to the NIHE website Home page (click Report and select Change In Circumstances).

Rent Payments

The NIHE advises any of its tenants who are facing financial difficulties as a result of the on-going emergency to telephone their Patch Manager (Martin McClure in Lower Oldpark) on 03448 920900 for further advice.

The NIHE says that it will employ a sensitive approach to those in financial difficulty.

Tenants can pay their rent charges online on the NIHE website Home page (click on Pay).

Choice Housing Services

Office Opening

Choice Housing offices are closed until further notice. However, it continues to provide housing services with reduced face-to-face contact.

Choice can be contacted on 0300 111 2211 or by emailing enquiries@choice-housing.org.

Rent Payments

Choice will take a sensitive approach to those in financial difficulty. If you are worried about money, Choice's

Financial Inclusion Team (phone 0300 111 2211) is available to help with benefits, debt and budgeting issues.

Applications/ Allocations/ Lettings

Choice is not carrying out any allocations at present.

Repair Service

Choice is concentrating on repairs that are an emergency and on works of a health and safety nature.

To minimise the spread of the virus,

and in keeping with the Government's advice on social distancing, when reporting repairs, Choice staff will ask all customers if they are self-isolating. If so, Choice's contractors will be advised and will carry out a risk assessment before attending to the works. They will contact you to advise on what to do next. Repairs can be reported on 0300 111 2211 or by email to repairs@choice-housing.org.

Home Visits

Choice staff won't be undertaking home visits until further notice.

House Building Restarting

Building work on the new housing at the junction of Oldpark Road and Cliftonpark Avenue is expected to restart on 27th April after stopping in March due to Coronavirus. This was the latest news at the time Housing News Lower Oldpark went to print on 24th April.

The contractor for the scheme, Brendan Loughran, went off site because building supply companies temporarily shut down due to Coronavirus. Unable to obtain more bricks, the brick layers couldn't continue working.

The contractor will be returning to the



site with a reduced workforce that will be following the Government's social distancing rules. The Coronavirus will delay completion of the scheme but the contractor is hoping for completion by Christmas 2020, subject to Coronavirus restrictions.

Radius Housing Services



Office Opening

Radius Housing offices are closed to the public. Radius continues to deliver services while keeping face-to-face contact to a minimum as much as possible. This is to ensure the safety of its staff and tenants and local residents.

Repairs

Radius repairs' service is focused on carrying out emergency and urgent repair work of a health and safety nature as well as work it must do (ring 028 90428314 to report an emergency repair).

If you call Radius with a routine repair request, you will be asked to call back in a months' time (ring 0330 1230888). If you need to call outside normal office hours, phone 028 90421010.

Before visiting any home, Radius staff and contractors will ask a number of questions about your household's health before making a decision on whether to complete a visit. This is necessary to protect Radius staff, its tenants and local residents.

Rent and Tenancy Enquiries

If you have queries to do with your rent or tenancy, ring 0330 1230888 and ask to speak to the Housing Officer for your area. You can also email Housing.Officer@radiushousing.org.

Housing Applications and Allocations

If you are a Radius tenant and you want to apply for a transfer to another social house, you should ring 0330 1230888 and ask to speak to your Housing Officer. They will assess your housing needs over the phone.

Due to Coronavirus, Radius has temporarily halted the allocation and letting of its properties to housing applicants on the waiting list.

Visits

Radius staff won't be carrying out home visits until further notice.

NIHE Won't Be Lifting Dumped Rubbish

The Housing Executive (NIHE) won't, at the present time, be lifting rubbish dumped on walkways it is responsible for in Lower Oldpark.

This is because, at this time of Government Coronavirus restrictions, the NIHE is only carrying out emergency work.

The NIHE said it won't be removing the large amounts of material that has been dumped in Lower Oldpark until it returns to carrying out non-emergency work. There is currently no clear date when this will be.

NIHE Grounds' Maintenance Restarting

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's grounds' maintenance contractor hopes to start working again in North Belfast on 27th April 2020.

They will be concentrating on cutting grass and lifting litter.

Up until this date, the contractor will continue to only provide an emergency service where there is a risk to life. This restricted service is a result of Coronavirus.

Dumping Is Anti-Community Behaviour

Lower Oldpark Community Association is asking residents not to dump rubbish and unwanted household items on open spaces, the street or walkways in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood.

Coronavirus is making life difficult for everyone, so please don't make it harder and more dangerous by dumping. Dumped material spreads disease and creates a hazard for everyone, but especially for the elderly, disabled and children.

Clanmil Housing Services

Offices Opening

Clanmil Housing offices are closed to the public until further notice.

Clanmil is also minimising face-to-face contact as much as possible to ensure the safety of staff, tenants, residents and contractors.

Contacting Clanmil

Clanmil staff can be reached during normal office hours (9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday) by:

- Email to an individual staff member's email address or to housing@clanmil.org.uk
- Telephone for urgent enquiries (not repairs) on 028 9622 3905
- Telephone for emergency essential repairs, only on 028 9622 3907
- Telephone for rent arrears on 028 9622 3906

- Telephone for Money Advice on 028 9622 3908
- Facebook Messenger @clanmilhousing
- Twitter @ClanmilHousing
- Visit website clanmil.org

Home Visits

Clanmil home visits will be significantly reduced until further notice. Staff and contractors will ask tenants a few questions about their household's health and about recent travel before deciding whether to make a home visit.

Repairs

Clanmil is now limiting internal repairs to emergency and essential work only (phone 028 9622 3907). Clanmil's out- of-hours emergency repairs service continues to operate on 028 9042 1010.

Non-essential repairs are not being carried out at this time. However, Clanmil is asking its tenants to continue to report non-essential repairs as usual, so that they can be dealt with when the normal service restarts.

External repairs and repairs to vacant Clanmil properties are, currently, continuing as normal.

Money Advice

If you need money or benefits advice, contact Clanmil's dedicated Money Advice Team. Its Money Advisors can help you make the right decisions.

COVID 19

If you have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and need help or support (including information on food and prescription deliveries), you can contact Clanmil's Communities Team on 028 9622 3908.

Courts' Project Delayed

Work on the appointment of a contractor for the Courts' Project environmental improvement work in seven Lower Oldpark's shared surface courts has been delayed due to Coronavirus.

The courts affected by the scheme are Foyle, Shannon, (plus 1-11 Shannon Street), Bann, Liffey, Bandon, Manor and Southport.

Belfast City Council Covid-19 Belfast Community Helpline

0800 587 4695

For Help With

Food Parcels/ Prescription Pick-ups/
Advice/ Emotional Support.

Social Housing Scheme

Due to Coronavirus, there is no update on the completion of plans for the social housing scheme on the site running from Manor Street to Alloa Street and to the former Annalee Court.

Also, the company that has to carry out an essential CCTV survey of drains on the site currently isn't operating due to Coronavirus.

A further obstacle to progress is that Belfast City Council Planning Department currently isn't accepting new planning applications.

On Facebook

@[loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing)

For the latest Lower Oldpark housing news and for details of help available during the Coronavirus crisis.



Coronavirus Information



Go To

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>

Bathroom Kitchen Scheme Delay

The start of work on Phase One of the Housing Executive's (NIHE) Lower Oldpark Bathroom/ Kitchen Replacement Scheme has been delayed due to Coronavirus.

A NIHE representative advised that it will contact tenants affected by the scheme as soon as it can start moving things forward. This will depend on advice it receives from the Government on the Coronavirus restrictions.