

# **Go-ahead for council's pilot common repairs scheme**

**The council has agreed to proceed with a pioneering pilot project in Wester Hailes. Common repairs to roofs and the external walls of 1400 homes in 181 blocks in Murrayburn, Hailesland and Dumbryden, where there are both owner-occupiers and council tenants will be undertaken.**

The scheme will be paid for by the council as owner of 71% of the homes, and also home owners or other landlords who are also legally responsible for their share of maintaining any common parts such as the roof and exterior.

Having bought their homes under Right to Buy individual owners were entitled to a discount on the price, and will have been made aware at the time of purchase that they would have to contribute to repairs. That does not however come without difficulty in paying for such repairs now and the council says it is aware of this. The council might also buy back homes if the owners cannot afford to proceed, and the valuations will reflect the secure tenancy if the owners decide to stay and become a council tenant instead.

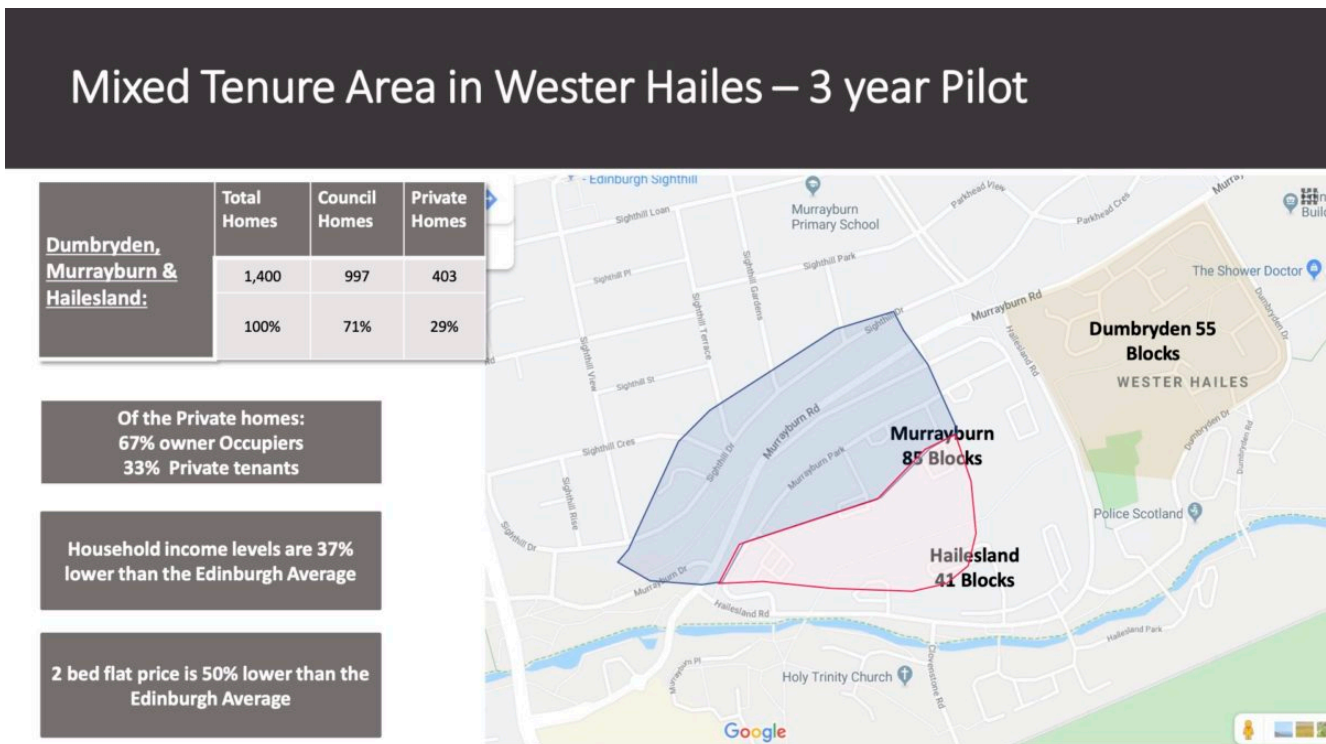
The proposed repairs will total £30 million over three years, which is equivalent to around 25% of the value of the

properties involved, and so the sums payable by individual owners could be considerable. The council is taking a proactive approach and will set out the scope of the intended works first, after which there will be a vote among all owners before the works proceed.

The council has identified potential funding in the form of grants for at least part of the work, will allow owners time to pay and they assure owners that the work will be of the correct standard and will carry warranties where appropriate.

The hope is that tenants and owners will feel safer and more secure in their homes after the work is completed. The blocks will look much better with the use of new colour schemes, and the quality of life for those who live there should be improved, perhaps coupled with an increase in collective pride among residents.

The works in Phase 1 will start in Murrayburn and then extend to Dumbyrden. It is hoped the work will begin towards the end of this summer.



The council has admitted that the roofs on some of the multi-storey blocks have not been renewed in the fifty years since

they were first constructed. These are now deemed at the end of their life.

At the Housing Committee on Thursday, Cllr Jim Campbell said he welcomes the pilot scheme which will help the council to catch up with necessary common repairs. He mentioned there has been some negative press coverage, and questioned whether there could be a lack of communication with tenants. He said: "Are we doing everything we can to communicate with owners and tenants here? Are officers placing themselves in the shoes of owners and tenants?"

The council officer replied that in terms of the service there is a dedicated team in place in Dumbryden made up of case officers and surveyors. The council team has an open door policy so if any owners want to meet the team then they can do so to discuss their individual circumstances. There is grant funding available which will also help owners. There is recognition that the the cost for some owners is significant and the council will work with them on a one to one basis. Communications will include letters, reports, vote forms, newsletters, FAQs, emails, phone calls, and either face to face or virtual meetings.

Housing Convener, Cllr Kate Campbell, said: "It is important we get the messages out about the level of financial support from Scottish Government and other sources. We need to bring tenants and owners with us."

Cllr Mandy Watt mentioned an hour long conversation she had with the council officer in charge of the pilot discussing all the financial and other support which can be put in place for owners and tenants. She explained that there is also a possibility of independent advice which may be offered.

There will be a review at certain stages of the project with the possibility of making changes at each point. The committee also agreed to report back in two cycles on major projects

such as this with details of the improvement works and indicative time frames when work will begin and perhaps be complete.

The council agreed in February this year to spend £1.2 billion over five years and £2.8 billion over ten years on affordable housing and net zero carbon. It was also agreed that there would be more resources allocated to the Mixed Tenure Improvement Service.

The pilot process will be reviewed and may then form a template for repairs in mixed tenure blocks elsewhere in the city.