

Tears for one of the last residents on Livingston ghost estate

One of the last residents of a West Lothian ghost estate has admitted there will be tears of sadness and joy as she finally looks forward to moving out after 18 years.

Kerry Mackintosh explained her struggle to the Local Democracy reporting service.

Go to Livingston's ghost estate today and the crumbling shells of empty homes stand still.

But the tarred street and pavement disappears into dust, and a new path appears.

It curves away from the line of the old road, and carves the way to a new neighbourhood.

Almost 20 years after the Deans South houses were condemned because of flawed concrete roofing a new community has started to rise.

Springfield Homes is now on site and plans to clear the land at Easter. Work has already started on the council's 29 new homes .

The foundations are visible just across from Kerry Mackintosh's garden fence.

It's the fence which marks her 17-year fight for a new home. The fence will get one last lick of paint – the number 18 added – before she moves out.



It's been a long and hard road for the families who bought the former council homes on the estate in the days when Deans South was once the future.

Last year the Local Democracy Reporting Service highlighted life in lockdown on the ghost estate, and the determination of those fighting for the right to win a home for a home rather than poor compensation.

As Kerry pointed out at the time: " I couldn't afford a caravan with what the council offered me- never mind a three bedroom family home."

Now Kerry knows she is moving in the Spring – so do her kids.

She said: "It will be Easter. I remember seeing it in the Bulletin, which is West Lothian Council's newsletter on the same page as there was the story about the council's new homes. And I thought 'Yes. it is in the paper. It's definitely going to happen."

While the move is another winter away, it's there. It's a date ringed on a calendar for the first time in a long time.

Winters have been the hardest, The porous concrete – Siporex – roofs cause multiple leaks into Kerry's home when it snows or rains. It's not helped that buildings on either side are boarded, empty and crumbling.

Kerry continued: "We've got one more winter. One more winter of keeping the weather out, but now we know we are moving. We'll be in a temporary home from Easter but then we'll be in our new home from home."



The garden has been a sanctuary from the endless arguments and from the hostile boarded up houses that surround her own home.

It's a well-kept garden, and filled with birds. Bamboo chimes knock out a hollow, irregular rhythm in the late summer breeze. That, and the statue of the Buddha, offer a Zen-like tranquillity compared to the ugliness over the fence.

She said: "I've made it a sanctuary and it's kept me grounded through all of this."

She plans to take cuttings when she moves, to transplant into the garden of her new home , which will probably be only around 100 yards up the road.

Springfield Homes and West Lothian Council signed a deal last winter to redevelop the estate. Kerry and her neighbours had campaigned for years for a home for a home deal. Springfield made that offer and finally won their deal late last year.

Kerry and her elderly neighbours – the Baxters- will remain as neighbours in their new homes.

Asked about street names and Kerry reckons Springfield Square or Springfield Crescent would be her favourites. Springfield deserves the tribute, she says.

There's already been changes. Regular security patrols tour Deans South at night since Springfield took over the site.

Kerry admits: "It makes us feel a lot safer."

How will she feel when she finally pulls the door shut on a house she has physically worked to maintain, and keep happy, for so long?

The fence, emblazoned with combative slogans, will be burned, she declares.

She admits: "I'll be in tears. Tears of happiness, but also tears of sadness. As a family we have very happy memories inside this home. My kids grew up in this house- it's the only home they've known.

"Happy memories we can take with us to our new home."



by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter

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