



Newsletter – September 2021



Periodic maintenance

Priority external work to the flat blocks and the clock tower finished last December. Flat porch re-decoration in July and August is complete. CSCS work at height using a large hoist to check and repair flat gutters, investigate and rectify known flat roof problems started on 6 September and is due to take three weeks.

Tenders for combined work in 2020 and earlier in 2021 resulted in few bids with prices from large contractors around three and five times previous levels, so were unaffordable. Consequently, work has been split into work packages small enough to be done by local firms at lower prices. Work is combined if there would be a cost saving, as with current CSCS gutter and roof work.

Planned work to cover everything needed is:

- Autumn 2020: Flat and clock tower repairs
- Summer 2021: Re-decorate flat porches
- Autumn 2021: Check and repair flat gutters
- Autumn 2021: Investigate & repair flat roofs
- Winter 2021-22: Work in flat communal areas for fire safety
- Between other work in 2021-22: Pilot landlord electrical upgrade
- Spring 2022: Re-decorate flat oriels and Estate cupola feature at high level
- Spring to summer 2022: Re-decorate flat windows at high level (see below)
- Summer 2022: Re-decorate low flat windows.

The Directors will explain the reasons for splitting the work at the 2021 AGM and discuss options for re-decorating flat windows at high level for owner agreement. With most windows now replaced and other work separate, the only economical way may be from within the flat. If owners or residents decline this, the owner would need to pay the extra cost of access from a scaffold tower or hoist.

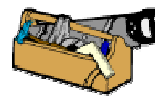
For up-to-date information, see the Estate website: <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/periodic>.

Because work is split, each package is likely to be below the threshold requiring section 20 consultation with owners by law. If any work does require consultation, it will take place.

→ Going paperless

Rendall and Rittner is going paperless so can no longer handle paper applications and cheques. All St Benedicts forms must now be submitted online with payments by electronic transfer. If you cannot apply online, you need to download, complete and email a scanned copy of the form. Other arrangements will only be made for those who genuinely do not have Internet access.

Property owners are reminded to sign up to *Rendall and Rittner Online* and landlords should encourage their tenants to sign up to receive Newsletters and messages in an emergency.



Maintenance

Work is updated monthly on the Estate website at <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/maintenance>.

Edward Payne & Co carried out planned Estate tree work, leaving one tree as birds were nesting in it, that will be completed in September. The sycamore causing issues at 31-45 Church Lane was felled by the insurer's contractor and an oak in Rectory Lane was reduced in size at the request of an insurer of a nearby house.

AMS marked parking spaces in thermoplastic, which we hope will last longer than paint, although it may crack. Arrangements have been made to move cars to mark remaining spaces.

After the first signs reduced dumping of waste, no fly tipping signs were mounted on bin stores across the Estate. Owners are reminded that dumping waste is a criminal offence, they and their tenants will be reported to the police if caught, permission to sub-let to those tenants would not be renewed and owners would be charged the cost of disposal at commercial rates.

Minor repairs were carried out, including re-attaching loose stair edgings and to fire doors.

→ Annual meeting 2021

With national and local Covid-19 rates remaining high and fluctuating, there would be high risk of having to postpone or cancel a meeting in person. The 2021 meeting will be held online like last year under the powers approved then.

It may be later than mid-November because of issues accessing Rendall and Rittner's system.



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→ **Pets not allowed in flats**

Flat owners are reminded that the leases do not permit pets like dogs and cats to be kept in flats. Some residents with allergies live on the Estate specifically for this reason, so this is a health and safety issue to protect such residents.

Landlords are legally responsible for passing on lease restrictions to their tenants and are in breach of lease if they or tenants break them.



Work this year

Work arranged by the Directors and Managing Agent this year includes:

- Carrying out a tender for the periodic external flats work, only to find that prices, which were unaffordable last year at about three times the previous cost, had nearly doubled again.
- Splitting the periodic work into smaller work packages that can be carried out by smaller local contractors with lower prices but can still be combined if it would reduce costs. These are set out in a separate article and took considerable work by the Directors.
- Re-working the budget for the new split of periodic work and making every effort to keep flat charge increases as small as possible at 4.1% despite a further 10% increase in insurance premiums and 4.4% index-linked increase in contractor payments. This also took considerable work by the Directors.
- Re-painting Estate step edges white and re-marking parking spaces with thermoplastic.
- Replacing the final third batch of Estate security lights with more efficient LED ones.
- Adjusting Estate metal security gates.
- Re-laying paving to reduce trip hazards.
- Mounting additional no fly tipping signs on bin stores across the Estate.
- Annual tree work on the bank between Abbey Drive and St Benedicts Close and to other small trees as needed, including one which fell on Rectory Lane in a storm.
- Unblocking sewers and drains as required.
- Repairing Estate fences.

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- Tendering work to re-decorate flat porches, which is now complete.
- Tendering work to inspect and repair flat gutters and to repair flat roof faults identified by the surveyor or where there is water entry, which is now underway.
- Insurer repair work at 21-26 Abbey drive. It is still monitoring 31-45 Church Lane having felled the nearby sycamore tree.
- Major roof repairs at 73-103 St Benedicts Close to stop significant water entry.
- Repairs to flat porch gutters.
- Replacing flat porch glass damaged by children with an airgun or catapult.
- Routine repairs to flat block entry and fire doors, locks, closers and stair edgings.



Water leaks one year on

Since policies on water leaks were revised in July 2020, there have been many fewer water leaks into adjacent flats. After a leak, the Management Company's solicitor writes to the flat owner about the breaches of lease, its contractor inspects all flat plumbing and the owner is required to bring the plumbing up to the required standard, all at the owner's expense.

There were no insurance claims for leaks last year, as the owners responsible chose to pay to repair damage in their and adjoining flats rather than pay for insurance premium increases. It is hoped this will help limit future premium rises.

There were no leaks into an adjacent flat last year from plumbing maintained to the required standards, which was a concern at the AGM.

As another owner commented at the AGM, it is better to pay a relatively small amount to maintain plumbing to appropriate standards than risk paying a high amount for leak damage.

→ **Flat communal areas**

Residents of flats may not store anything in the communal areas because of the fire risk and the obstruction of emergency exits. Notes are left on items found, which may be removed. Solicitors will contact repeat offenders at the owner's cost.