



WEALD *Living*

by Saxon Weald



**PERFORMANCE REPORT**  
to residents

2020

## Welcome

I hope this report finds you safe and well. For many, events of the past six months have made us think about what is truly important. Our health, and the wellbeing of those around us, has come top of the list for most. A safe and secure home is a huge part of that, so as a responsible landlord, we know how important it is that we do a good job. I couldn't be prouder of the Saxon Weald team who have kept our essential services running throughout lockdown. My thanks go to all of you who have shown us your support, patience and appreciation during what has been an exceptionally challenging time for everyone.

In this report, we'll tell you how our services have been performing, not just recently, but over the past financial year. There are many things we are pleased with, and one or two things we'll be working to change. A major piece of work this year has been to review the way we manage service charges. This is a great example of where your feedback has helped us to understand where we need to focus our attention and create improvements.

I hope the information we've supplied gives you confidence in us and our services. If you have any feedback on what we've said, or anything you think we've missed, please email us at [info@wealdliving.com](mailto:info@wealdliving.com).

With best wishes,

*Steven Dennis,*

Chief Executive



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Saxon Weald is a housing association, established in 2000, managing approximately 6,750 homes across Sussex and Hampshire. Of these, 1,010 come under our Weald Living brand. This includes homes for market rent and shared ownership sale.

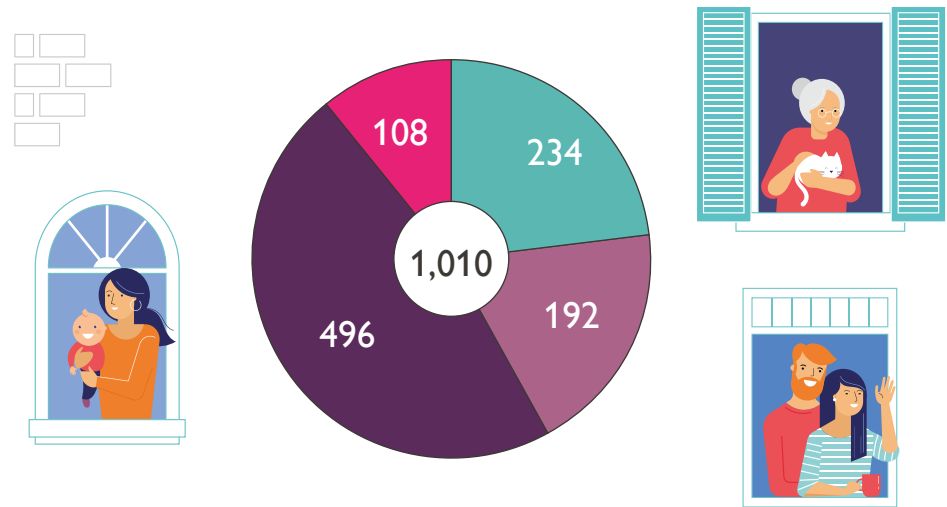
We are a charitable Community Benefit Society, with the money we make from rents being re-invested in the management, maintenance and building of homes. We are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Please note throughout this report, that unless otherwise stated figures are taken from the period 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020.

# About us

## NUMBER OF WEALD LIVING HOMES

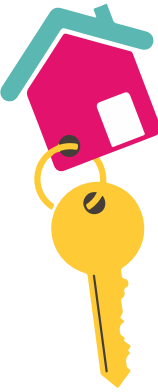
Saxon Weald manages 6,761 properties overall. Of these, 1,010 (15%) come under our Weald Living brand. This includes:



Total number of homes: 1,010

- 234 Shared ownership homes
- 192 Leasehold homes for older people
- 476 Leasehold homes
- 108 Market rent homes

## MOVING IN AND MOVING UP



Five households moved from being Saxon Weald tenants to becoming homeowners last year, having bought their properties under the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire legislation.

- 53 Households moved into new shared ownership properties.
- 6 Shared owners moved.
- 24 Properties in extra care schemes have been resold. Of these, 19 were shared equity apartments and five were outright leaseholders.
- 2 Shared owners have staircased (bought additional shares in their home).



## OUR STAFF

Office staff.....	126
Scheme managers .....	37
Maintenance .....	78
Board members.....	9
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>250</b>
(229 full-time equivalents)	



## Customer experience

### GETTING IN TOUCH

Our customer experience team is made up of 12 colleagues. Between them they handled over 199,000 enquiries during the year!



### KEEPING YOU INFORMED

We work hard to keep our website, [wealdliving.com](https://wealdliving.com), up-to-date with a wealth of useful information and important service updates. Last year we had over 45,000 visits!

Likewise, our Facebook and Twitter pages provide handy tips, news and information, and offer an opportunity for you to ask questions or add comments on our posts. Last year between them we received over 1,800 views. Stay in the loop and visit [Facebook.com/wealdliving](https://Facebook.com/wealdliving) or [Twitter.com/wealdliving](https://Twitter.com/wealdliving).



By 31 March 2020, 150 households had signed up to use [MyWealdLiving](https://mywealdliving.com), our 24-hour digital service. That's 28% of our Weald Living households and an increase of 10% since the previous year.

Registered users can report repairs, view upcoming appointments, send us a secure message, view statements, update their personal details and more, at any time of day.

We've recently made improvements to the system, including to our repairs section, with more repair options available to choose from.

In the last financial year there were 738 logins to MyWealdLiving, which equates to about nine logins per customer over the year.

Go to [mywealdliving.com](https://mywealdliving.com) and give it a go!



# Customer experience

## YOUR VOICE IN WEALD LIVING

We carry out several surveys throughout the year, ranging from our overall service to specific things, such as repairs and complaints. The results of these surveys give us great insight and help us identify where we need to improve.

### Your voice counts – Spotlight Autumn/Winter 2019 survey

At the end of last year, we asked for your views on how well informed you are and whether you feel your voice is heard.

#### What were the results?

We were pleased to hear that most of our customers feel listened to, with only two in 10 people feeling we could be doing more. These customers believed that we could improve:

- how we communicate feedback from customers
- how customer feedback will be used

### Grounds maintenance and communal cleaning survey, July 2019

We received over 350 responses to this survey, which were considered when we were tendering these contracts. We also invited customers to be part of the tender interview panel.

### Coming soon in 2020/21

We are introducing a new survey provider called Target Apps, who will send you surveys from us via emails and text messages. This means you can offer your feedback anywhere, at any time, that suits you.

**Your voice** - We have just launched a special section on our website where you can express your views and leave feedback. We will be using the information you provide to shape our processes and decisions, to continually improve our services to you. Go to [wealdliving.com](http://wealdliving.com) to find out more.

## COMPLAINTS

It's important that we know if things go wrong, so we can improve our service to you and put things right when we need to. Simply contact us with the details of your concerns by any of our means.

### ► We resolved 58 problems last year at the first stage

We try to resolve the issue within three days

### ► 2 problems needed further investigation and went on to the second stage of our complaints process:

5	Breach of policy	4	Staff behaviour or attitude
3	Dispute over charges	2	Standard of accommodation
7	Quality of work	39	Standard of service

### ► We report our complaints and what we have learned from them to our Board and Executive Team. This allows us to spot trends and review and improve our services. Examples of improvements include:

- HomeFix have introduced a new process for notifying customers when works in communal areas are brought forward earlier than originally planned.
- All relevant notes to a complaint are now logged in one specific area of our system to improve communication whilst the complaint is being handled.



“ I have a problem ”



“ It's not good enough ”



“ You didn't do a good job ”

## COMPLIMENTS

We also welcome and learn from your compliments. If you're happy with something we've done, let us know. It makes our day!



## Service charges

### SERVICE CHARGE REVIEW

In September 2019, the Institute of Customer Service carried out a survey of our residents on our behalf. The results were disappointing, with satisfaction among leaseholders coming in much lower than in other resident groups.

#### What did we do?

Based on key points from your feedback, in November we began a review of the service charge process. This aims to improve the process and our leasehold management in general.

In the first stage we reviewed:

- How the service charges are calculated
- Which departments are involved in the process
- How the charges are communicated to customers

This stage is now complete. In response to our review we have created a new service charge team. This team will become the central point of contact for all related enquiries from Weald Living customers.

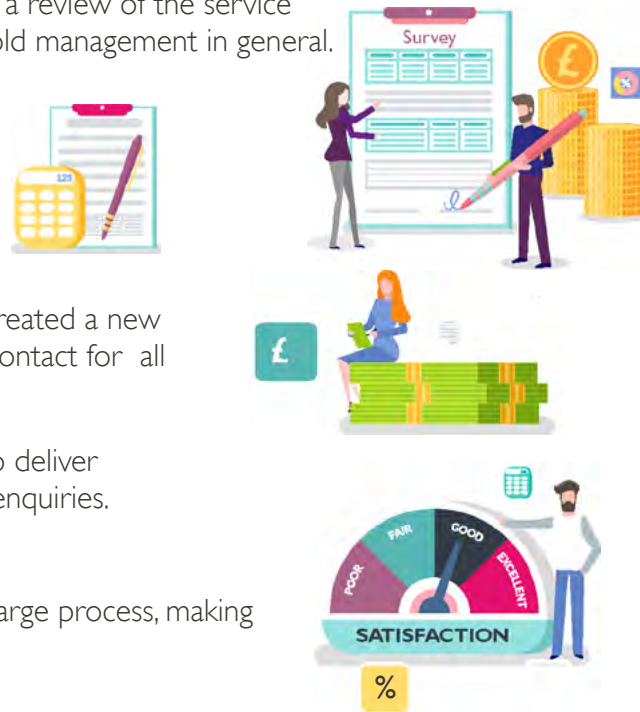
The new team will collect information from our other teams who deliver chargeable services, and they will co-ordinate responses to your enquiries.

#### What's next?

- We will keep making further improvements to the service charge process, making sure it is efficient, and focuses on the needs of the customer.
- We will continually review leaseholder satisfaction levels
- Every year all leaseholders will receive a survey from us on the anniversary of their original purchase. We will use the results of this survey to monitor your opinions on the improvements we make

Keep an eye out for your survey. Remember your opinion will really help make a difference.

For further information on service charges, please visit our website [wealdliving.com](https://wealdliving.com).



### SERVICE CHARGE DEBT



We always try to put reasonable arrangements in place to help people pay their service charges, particularly if there has been a substantial charge for maintenance or improvement work.

Please talk to us if you are having problems with paying your service charge. In cases of hardship, we would rather be flexible over payment instead of putting your home at risk because of non-payment.

However, there are occasions where people try to avoid paying what they owe. In these circumstances, we are obliged to contact their mortgage provider for assistance. Last year we had to do this on just one occasion and recovered £2,088 in the process.

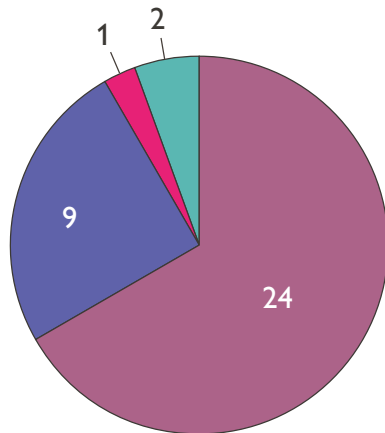
Last year 53 people challenged their service charge costs. This resulted in us making 13 amendments.

## Works and contracts

### CONSULTATIONS FOR WORKS

As a leaseholder, you pay towards the cost of any works to the building your home is a part of your service charge. As the freeholder, we must consult you on the work required. Last year we carried out 36 consultations affecting 109 leaseholders.

What did we consult on?



- 24 Painting and decoration
- 9 External fabric works
- 1 Roof
- 2 Door and window replacements

A common misconception is that leaseholders in some way subsidise works that tenants benefit from. This is simply not true. Tenants pay for their share of the works through their rent.

### CONSULTING WITH YOU ON NEW CONTRACTS

Before entering into a long term agreement for works and services, we're required to consult with you. This is known as a Section 20 Consultation.

The consultation process is an important part of renewing agreements with our existing contractors or bringing new ones on board. The feedback provided during these discussions helps ensure our contractors can deliver the high standard of service our customers deserve.

Last year, when we held consultations around our cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts, we invited one of our tenants and one of our leaseholders to join the interview panel. This proved to be a successful way of ensuring resident involvement, and we're keen to ensure similar opportunities are available for residents in the future.

#### Grounds maintenance

From 1 April this year, idverde, took over Saxon Weald's grounds maintenance contract. During the tender process, idverde submitted an impressive proposal and now have a detailed service specification they must stick to. Saxon Weald has a new dedicated contract manager to oversee the teams working on our grounds, and our own teams will be at hand to closely monitor their performance.

#### Cleaning

Cleanscapes were awarded Saxon Weald's cleaning contract for a second term. This is due to their strong performance over the last five years and their commitment to providing online services for both staff and residents. These services will include up to date information on both planned and past visits, and the ability to submit enquiries online.

#### Coming soon

Both idverde and Cleanscapes are currently in the process of developing an online service for residents to contact them on. Keep an eye on our websites and social media for further news about this exciting development.





# Making changes to your home and your lease

## MAKING CHANGES TO YOUR HOME

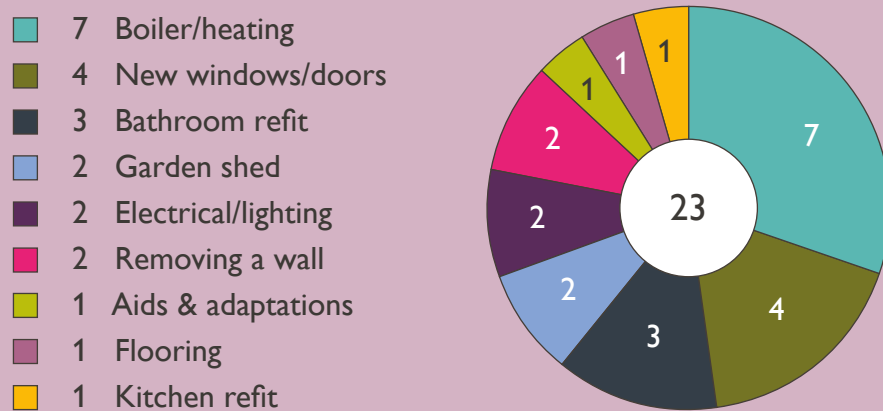
If you're planning some home improvements, make sure you stay within the terms of your lease or you could run into trouble later. Remember, you need our written permission to make any structural alterations or changes to the fixtures and fittings of your property. **You may also need to get planning permission and/or building notice from your local authority.**

If you have made changes without permission and wish to sell your property in the future, you will have to apply for the permissions retrospectively, which will cost you more and if declined, you may need to put things right.

You can find more information about permissions on our website: [wealdliving.com](http://wealdliving.com).

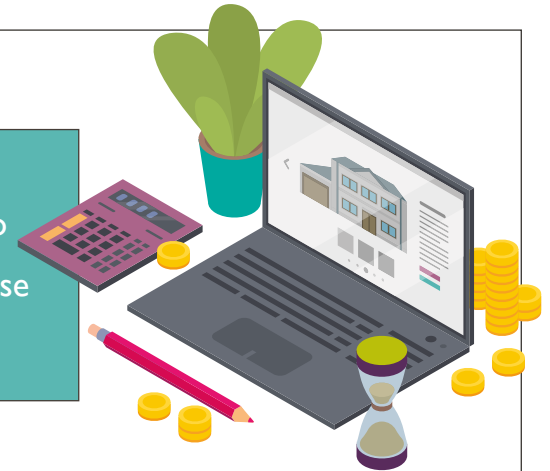
Last year 23 permissions were granted for residents to alter their home.

Of these, five applications were made retrospectively before the homes could be sold and cost the leaseholder roughly 65% more than if they had applied when originally getting the works done.



## EXTENDING YOUR LEASE

During the last financial year, we received 28 applications to extend leases. Of these 21 lease extensions were completed.



### Should I extend my lease?

If your lease has less than 85 years remaining, it may be harder to sell on your property and affect its value. It can become harder to get a mortgage or remortgage against the property. It also becomes more expensive to extend your lease, as it decreases further and further, year on year.

If you have owned your property for at least two years, you may have the right to a statutory lease extension. This gives you the right to add an additional 90 years to the existing term of the lease and means that you will no longer need to pay ground rent. Please note that this right does not apply to shared owners.

Alternatively, we can offer you a voluntary lease extension. In this case, we will offer you a new lease which will also add an additional 90 years to the term and reduce the ground rent to zero.

The statutory route is generally a more lengthy and costly procedure. With the voluntary route, a fixed price will be charged for the valuation and legal costs in relation to the new lease.

### FREE INDEPENDENT ADVICE ABOUT LEASES

A wealth of information and advice about leases, including how to extend them, is available on the Leasehold Advisory Service website [www.lease-advice.org](http://www.lease-advice.org) or email [info@lease-advice.org](mailto:info@lease-advice.org).



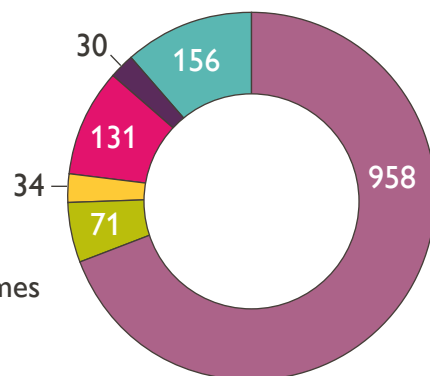
# Neighbourhoods and new homes

## PRIDE IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

No matter the weather, our estate improvement team are out and about making sure our neighbourhoods are kept clean and tidy.

This year they carried out:

- 958 Estate inspections
- 71 Garage block inspections
- 34 Garage lock changes
- 131 Garage checks
- 30 Garden tidying in empty homes
- 156 Empty homes clearances



One of the most common things they have to deal with, is belongings or rubbish left in communal hallways. These pose a safety risk as they can block escape routes, preventing people from leaving a building safely in an emergency.



We will remove items if we need to.

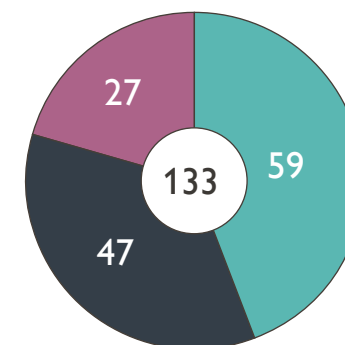
Another problem is large items such as furniture or white goods left in the bin stores or gardens. These should be disposed of by the resident at the local recycling centre. Disposing of other peoples' rubbish costs us a lot of money every year and takes our team away from other jobs they could be doing. If you see someone dumping goods they shouldn't, please report it.

## NEW HOMES

In the financial year 2019/2020 we built 133 new homes, which is well above our annual target of 100. These were in Horsham, Burgess Hill, Angmering, West Chiltington and Hassocks. Our flagship scheme Winterton Square in Horsham delivered 65 homes for affordable rent, shared ownership and market rent.

How many properties we built

- 59 Affordable rent
- 47 Shared ownership
- 27 Market rent



Over the last year we have been building relationships with community land trusts with the support of Sussex Community Housing Hub. The sites are usually in rural areas and aim to provide affordable housing for local people.

We continue to work with Horsham District Council and other local councils to deliver more affordable homes.



## Covid-19 report

# We're all in this *Together*

Since the end of March, when the whole country (and most of the world) went into lockdown from Covid-19, we've had to make many changes to the way we work and had to adjust to the changing situation as it happens. Helping keep you and our colleagues safe has been our priority, as well as keeping our essential services running, in line with Government guidelines. It's been challenging at times, but we are proud of the work our colleagues have been doing to keep things going.

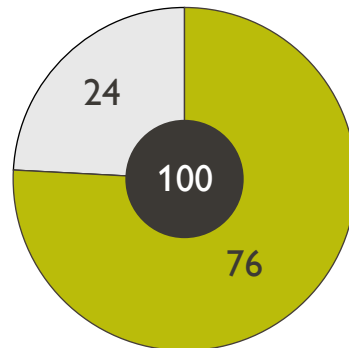
This section takes a look at some of what's been going on since the end of March, when lockdown began.



### SAXON WEALD STAFF ON FURLOUGH

During the period between April 1 and July 31 2020 we had 100 people on furlough leave. Of these 76 were HomeFix operatives while the other 24 were staff from other areas of the business.

We had 10 members of staff who were shielding, six of whom could work from home and four operatives who were furloughed.

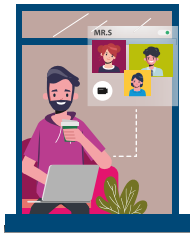
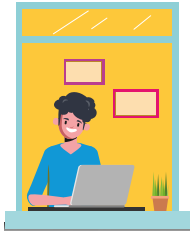


### WORKING FROM HOME

Our head office had to close and all 126 of our head-office staff had to work from home. Thanks to an incredible effort from our IT team, everyone has had the equipment, software and support they have needed to do their job.

Meetings went online, with Skype video calls becoming the new normal.

Our customer support team weren't able to take direct calls from customers and instead we offered a voicemail service where they responded to over 6,000 messages! They also responded to over 6,500 emails and nearly 4,000 online enquiries!

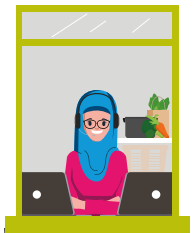


over  
6,000  
voicemails

over  
6,500 emails

4,000 online  
enquiries

Our office remains closed to the public, however, we do now have a small number of the team working safely (and socially distanced) in the office, who can take calls.



## Helping hands

### BENEFITS & HELP DURING COVID

Our money matters team have been busy too, as the changing situation has meant more people needing benefit advice due to losing their jobs or being furloughed.

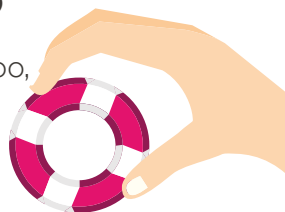
The team have created a special [Covid benefits advice page](#) on our Saxon Weald website, including information for new or existing claimants, whose situations have changed. The team continue to monitor the advice being given by the Government to keep this updated.

If you are having difficulties please let us know and we will see what we can do to help. Email us at [info@wealdliving.com](mailto:info@wealdliving.com) with some information and we will see if we can refer you to the team for advice.



In the financial year 2019-2020 we helped 431 Saxon Weald and Weald Living customers get the help they needed

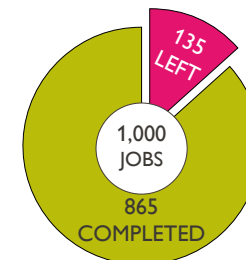
They claimed back over £471,000



### CATCHING UP

Due to lockdown, we had to prioritise emergency appointments and cancel over 1,000 scheduled HomeFix jobs. A much smaller team of operatives carried on working throughout lockdown to fix emergency repairs and carry out gas safety checks.

Since the team started to get back to work on 15 June, they have been working hard to prioritise these cancellations and reschedule appointments. By the end of July, we only had 135 jobs left outstanding.



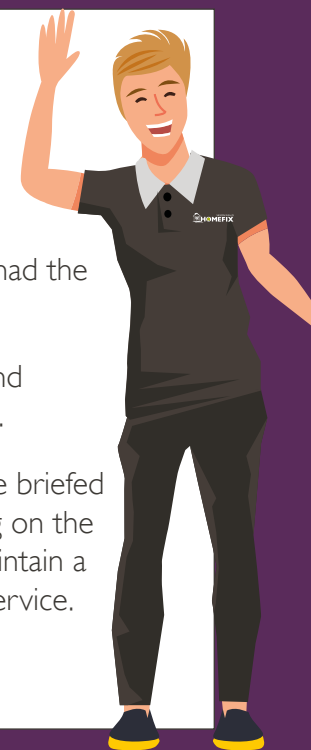
### A WORD FROM A HOMEFIX OPERATIVE

Throughout the lockdown period, Saxon Weald made a tremendous effort to keep our staff and residents as safe as possible. During this difficult period, a lot of hard work has gone into sourcing PPE such as: masks, hand sanitisers, social distancing high visibility clothing, gloves and over-shoes. There has also been a lot of effort making sure we have all had the best guidance possible for carrying out safe working practices.

Saxon Weald has reacted and adapted to all the Government advice, and with the easing of the lockdown most trade staff are now back at work.

We all carry sanitiser and wear our Covid-19 PPE, and our residents are briefed that social distancing applies whilst we are carrying out repairs. Working on the frontline I am confident we are doing everything we possibly can to maintain a safe working environment, whilst maintaining a high level of customer service.

*Stay safe! Dale* HomeFix Electrician





WEALD Living

## HEAD OFFICE

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If you received your copy of this report in the post, please consider doing your bit for the environment and go digital. If we have your email address, we will automatically send it to you electronically.

If you've changed your email address recently, please let us know or log in to [mywealdliving.com](http://mywealdliving.com) and update it there.

Thank you.

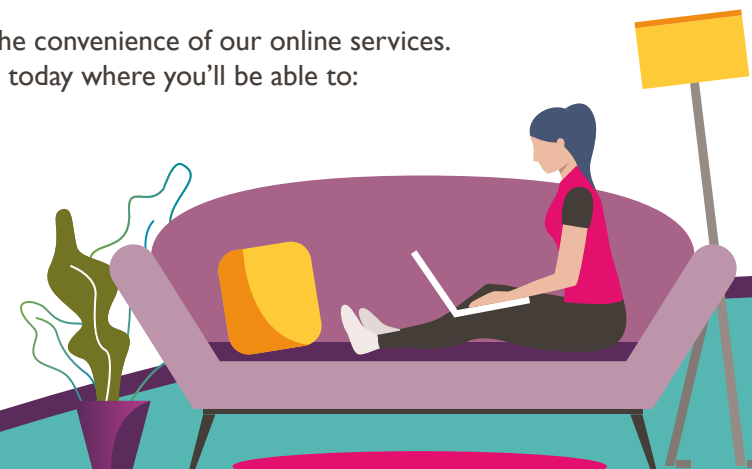
# MyWEALDLiving get c<sup>o</sup>nnected

It's so much easier online

Accessible on your desktop, tablet or mobile, and available online 24 hours a day, My SaxonWeald is the easiest way to manage your account on the go.

Thousands of customers are already enjoying the convenience of our online services. Not yet registered? Sign up to My SaxonWeald today where you'll be able to:

- Report repairs
- Update your personal information
- View upcoming appointments
- Send us a secure message
- View statements



Find out more at [mywealdliving.com](http://mywealdliving.com)

