

TheChain



...linking people together



ISSUE 19 • WINTER 2017



Housing Minister Visit



Kevin Stewart chatted to tenants at the opening of our latest homes in Countesswells.

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CaRTO Secretary's Report



Find out what tenants have achieved during their first year as a Registered Tenants Organisation

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Unforgotten Forces



Help and support is available for veterans and their families, and it is easier to access than you may think through this new partnership

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WIN £50 in our Winter Quiz!



Read this newsletter to find the answers and a chance to win £50 of shopping vouchers!

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Raising £620 is the icing on the cake for Aberdeen Care & Repair

Care & Repair raised an amazing £620 for Macmillan at their recent coffee morning. Macmillan provide medical, emotional, practical and financial support for people with cancer as well as campaigning for better cancer care.

It was organised by Lyn Ross, Dementia Project Officer and Maureen Brew, Funding Officer and took place on Friday 29th September at the Care & Repair office at 7 Waverley Place in Aberdeen. It was well attended by clients, staff, family, friends and staff from other organisations Care & Repair work closely with.

Lyn was delighted with the turnout and amount raised for such a worthy cause.

Aberdeen Care & Repair provide advice and practical assistance to people aged 60 years and over, people with disabilities and people with long-term health conditions, to allow them to continue to live within their own homes as independently as possible. **Please call 01224 251133** to find if Care & Repair can help you.

Thank you to all who took part!





Letter from our Chief Executive...

This year, Castlehill became an associate member of EVH (Employers in Voluntary Housing). This is a long established Scotland wide organisation that provides support services and good practice guidance to organisations in the voluntary sector. Our membership will assist us in ensuring that we always meet our obligations as an employer, but also give invaluable advice in relation to Health and Safety issues both for staff and for tenants, in our role as a landlord.



Health and Safety gets a bit of a bad press as a kind of "killjoy" to folks getting on with their lives, but the reality for us as a responsible landlord is that it is perhaps the most important thing we need to consider in all our activities. Ensuring you can live in a safe and secure home is a top priority.

In the last newsletter I mentioned some of the works the Association has been undertaking to further enhance fire safety in our properties and I would like to take the opportunity to thank tenants for co-operation in helping to make sure that common areas of buildings and access to fire escapes are kept free from obstructions that could hinder people leaving should an emergency arise. There are some further tips on home safety in this edition of the newsletter.

I've written in the past about Castlehill's plans to develop new housing over the next few years and it is great to see these plans become reality with completion of developments such as Countesswells. As you'll see in this edition of the Chain, this takes our stock of homes we manage to over 2000 properties. Early in 2018, we look forward to handover of other new properties currently on-site in Inverurie and Aberdeen. Best wishes to everyone for a safe and happy festive season.

David Lappin

Chief Executive

FREE Energy Advice Service from Castlehill



Most people are not used to thinking about how they use the energy that powers our homes. But simple changes to your daily habits could have a huge effect on the gas and electricity bills that drop through your door. Surveys have shown that around 75% of people find their energy bills difficult to understand. It's not easy considering the amount of information and different terms used on each bill; estimated reading and actual readings, dual, standard, or fixed tariffs, personal projections etc.

Not understanding an energy bill can cause a great deal of stress. You may feel it's too complicated, or that there is nothing you can do about it.

This is where I can help. As part of my new role with Castlehill, I can offer free advice including; energy saving information, information on energy discounts, and also help to compare and switch energy providers.

My aim is to: help tenants understand their energy bills, get the best tariffs available and give tips on saving energy in the home.

If you have any issues, or questions regarding your energy bills and usage, I can pop out and see you, or phone, or email you.

Please contact me on **01224 974569** or email at **jodie.dunbar@castlehillha.co.uk**

Minister opens Castlehill's NEW Countesswells homes



Housing Minister Kevin Stewart has officially opened a flagship development for Castlehill Housing Association in Aberdeen.

The first tenants have now moved into both Castlehill Housing Association and Osprey properties at Countesswells, built by Stewart Milne Homes on the western outskirts of the city. This is the first planned new community for Aberdeen and the only housing development in the UK supported by HM Treasury's UK Guarantee Scheme, along with £7.3 million of funding from the Scottish Government for 106 units.

Castlehill Housing Association Chief Executive David Lappin said:

"We are delighted with the handover of these much needed new properties. This is a landmark for Castlehill Housing Association that brings our stock in the North East to over 2,000 homes."

Mr Stewart toured the site and met some of the new tenants. He said:

"I am delighted to see the completion of the first phase of affordable housing at Countesswells, which will bring great benefits to the area. It not only provides high quality, affordable accommodation, but an exceptional place to live."

"Support for this development is a great example of how the Scottish Government is helping provide the right homes, in the right places, and to a standard anyone would be proud to call home – a core part of our drive to make Scotland a fairer and more prosperous country."

"We are committed to delivering at least 50,000 affordable homes over this Parliament – backed by £3 billion of investment. As this projects shows – with a promise of 106 affordable, energy efficient homes on this particular development – I am confident that target can be achieved."

Castlehill has a mix of one, two and three-bed flats and houses at the development, providing a mix of social and mid-market rental (MMR) properties. Castlehill's remaining 12 MMR units will be handed over by the end of November, with the final nine social rented units handed over by mid January.

Countesswells, which will have 3,000 new homes, including 750 affordable, will be phased in over 15 years, boosting the local economy and supporting 1,000 construction jobs in the region. Facilities within Countesswells will include a new secondary school and two primary schools, healthcare facilities, local business units, retail and leisure, together with high quality open, civic spaces and extensive parkland linking the community to the existing mature woodland.





It has now been a year since the Tenants Panel made the decision to become a Registered Tenants Organisation (or RTO). The Tenants Panel had developed over a few years and grown in numbers, and the time was right to progress and take the organisation to the next level, being officially recognised by the Scottish Government. We devised a constitution and set out our aims and objectives. We chose a new name – Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation, a.k.a CaRTO.

Our main purpose is to encourage the tenants and residents of Castlehill to engage with each other and Castlehill, and to discuss policies and issues affecting all tenants.

The benefits to being a Registered Tenants Organisation include:

- A right to be consulted over proposed changes to housing services.
- The opportunity of applying for grant funding from the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- The opportunity to get involved in regional RTO networking forums.

In the year since CaRTO has been established, tenants have made many achievements and been involved in many different projects and meaningful activities.

- Three CaRTO members now serve on Castlehill's Management Committee
- CaRTO's Secretary was shortlisted as one of 4 finalists for the Tenants Information Service National Excellence Awards, recognising his voluntary work with Castlehill, with NETRALT, with social housing at a regional level and also his voluntary work outside of social housing with the wider community.

- CaRTO have been integral in designing the new Castlehill corporate website
- Brought our tenants closer together by focussing on our Moray tenants and making it easier for them to be a part of CaRTO
- Moray tenants being involved in the development of Moray Tenants Partnership, which has now changed its name to Northern Tenants Partnership as it has grown to incorporate a wider area
- Developing a new design for Castlehill's Annual Charter Performance Report
- Discussing the results of the three yearly tenant satisfaction survey and how CaRTO and Castlehill can work together to achieve better outcomes in certain areas
- Fire Safety consultation
- Tenants have been consulted on the Freedom of Information Act
- Tenants attended a "Value for Money" seminars
- Study trip to Blackwood's flagship assisted living development in Dundee
- Visit to the Scottish Parliament
- CaRTO tenants continue to play a significant part in NETRALT (North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together) and in fact make up a third of active members.
- Two tenants went to the annual TPAS conference (TPAS stands for Tenant Participation Advisory Service), which is the leading conference aimed at tenants to educate inform and inspire on all things tenant participation.
- CaRTO asked that the annual sheltered magazine be reinstated and this is now happening, with a new look magazine to be published in April.
- CaRTO have input as to what they would like to see included in The Chain newsletter
- A major achievement was CaRTO devising a devolved budget proposal that has been accepted by Castlehill.

Going forward, we have lots of ideas and plans we are excited to be working with Castlehill on, including supporting tenants with digital participation, encouraging local groups and helping shape a better housing service for tenants.

We would love to welcome new members to CaRTO. If you would like to find out how you can get involved, please contact our **Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 625822.**

Colin Stewart
Secretary



You may remember from the last edition that a group of tenant volunteers have been gradually transforming a disused area of ground at Aquhorthies Circle in Inverurie (off Blackhall Road) with the vision of creating a community garden. They were joined recently by members of Inverurie Foyer Reach Team 8, who have helped them in their quest to create a peaceful place to enjoy nature and to garden collectively as a community.

Foyer Reach is a 12 week employability course for people in recovery from anything that has held them back from progressing towards employment, training or further education. Foyer Reach operates in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership and North East Scotland College.

Part of the course is completing a community project, which is where helping to improve the community garden at Aquhorthies Circle came in. The team had to raise their funds so they held a coffee morning and raised £140 for the project, which helped pay for a new bench and materials. They consulted and worked with volunteer tenants to share ideas and help shape the community garden.



All the tasks that the team took part in for the fundraiser and community project gave them confidence and skills that they can develop which increases their employability skills, and up to date experiences that they can highlight in application forms and interviews.

The team was led by Claire Farquharson, Development Coach for REACH. Over the years, Claire has led many courses and she said, **"It's interesting to see how much the students have learned and have gained in confidence in such a short space of time."**

Diane Edwards, a Castlehill tenant said, **"The garden has had a huge boost due to the help of the group. There are two compost bins, the start of a mud kitchen, a bench, flowers and a huge area has been cleared for vegetables and fruit plus so much more. The council helped, some tree surgeons came and cleared an area and also I & K Motors donated tyres. It was amazing how much could get done in such a short time. If anyone has any ideas and would like to take part even just for a small amount of time then that's great. Any help is much appreciated as are any donations."**

If you would like to join in with this project, please contact Catherine Coutts, Tenant Participation Officer on **01224 625822** or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk



Younger volunteers have been mucking in and working hard too!



Have you ever served, or are close to someone who has? Help could be available and it's easier than you may think, for those who have been involved with the Territorial Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, National Service, Merchant Navy. If you are not sure, please ask (contact details are at the end of this article).

Unforgotten Forces is a collaboration of 15 organisations, large and small, all of whom have made a commitment to work together and individually to develop new services and improve existing access to services for veterans and their families.

This Government-funded project arises out of a need to address isolation and marginalisation in the community and thereby improving overall wellbeing. At the moment the service is being aimed at 'older veterans' (roughly 60 and above) but we hope to secure further funds which will enable us to roll the service out next year across all age groups.

Unforgotten Forces partners include:

Action on Hearing Loss

Our service will provide support to veterans, their families and/or carers on issues surrounding their hearing loss or tinnitus and offer a pathway of support alleviating concerns over their hearing loss.

Age Scotland

Information, friendship and advice through the Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222: including care, benefits, housing, legal issues, veterans' rights and services. Community development – training member groups on veterans' rights and issues, linking to opportunities, digital inclusion policy and influencing – using evidence from service delivery to inform policy developments.

Armed Services Advice Project (CAB ASAP)

Advising Older Veterans: The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP), part of the Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau Service, will provide information, advice and support to older veterans. We work with organisations supporting older people, reaching out to older veterans, and work with other organisations to help people access the support they need.

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DWWS)

DMWS will deliver a holistic medical welfare service, providing emotional and practical support for veterans, their families and carers, in health care pathways. Working with partners, we will enable early supported referrals to appropriate local support and services thereby improving recovery, wellbeing, discharge planning, independent living, and reducing social isolation.



Fares 4 Free

Fares4Free is a charity (SCIO) that coordinates and provides free transport by asking taxi drivers to give up to 4 fares per month to help us help Veterans access important services and combat loneliness and isolation. Our aim is to fight loneliness and isolation one mile at a time.

ILM Highland

The Highland Veterans Handyperson Service is a partnership with Unforgotten Forces, Care & Repair Scotland and ILM (Highland). Together we will help veterans over the age of 65 who are having difficulties with carrying out small jobs around the house in Moray.

Legion Scotland

Legion Scotland's community support and comradeship services will help veterans to combat loneliness and isolation by engaging with the community through tailored activities and support visits. The focus of comradeship events is to get veterans to mix with fellow veterans.



Music in Hospitals & Care

Music in Hospitals & Care's project Play it Again SAV will enable older veterans to design musical programmes full of their own personal choices. Professional musicians will work with people living in designated care homes for retired service personnel to co-produce playlists which will ultimately be played live for them and for other audiences in the future.

Poppyscotland

Poppyscotland provides life-changing support to our Armed Forces community, reaching out to those who have served, those still serving, and their families at times of crisis and need by offering practical advice, assistance and funding. The Break Away service will provide respite holiday coach tours and hotel breaks across the UK for older veterans and their families.

Scottish War Blinded

SWB supports veterans with a visual impairment that impacts on their independence. The sight loss does not need to be a result of their service. SWB works throughout Scotland and provides specialist equipment and training to maintain independence, financial and practical help to improve quality of life and social opportunities.

Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA)

The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) exists to give a strong voice to older people about their concerns and experience of life, raises issues about age inequalities and identifies issues that worry the older population. It conveys messages direct to Scottish and UK Governments and supports policy that has a positive impact on later life and challenges. Although SOPA is not a service provider, it is therefore a member of the project in a consultative and advisory capacity.

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association (SSAFA)

SSAFA is the UK's oldest military charity with branches in all parts of Scotland. With an extensive network of Volunteer Caseworkers who visit referred veterans in their homes to assess their needs, SSAFA coordinates financial and practical support to individual veterans. SSAFA's Branches will identify and refer older veterans to appropriate Unforgotten Forces Partners.

University of the West of Scotland (UWS)

UWS will support the service delivery of this initiative by undertaking an action-based evaluation which will take cognisance of the experiences of both service providers and their client groups: quality and referrals between services, examples of good practice and areas where there is a gap in the opportunity to develop the service/s further.



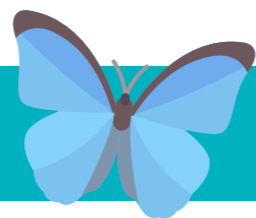
A key point to note is that contacting one of the Unforgotten Forces group is like contacting them all. This holistic approach supports cross-referral between members, providing easier access to the wide range of services available for older veterans.

We hope that anyone who is, or who knows, an older veteran who would like some regular company or some community support from a trusted organisation, will reach out to us and let us be there for them. Our service is confidential and professional, but also warm and welcoming.

Please contact Emily Clark to find out more on **07876 202437** or **e.clark@legionscotland.org.uk**



Dementia Enablement Project available for Aberdeen City residents



As an organisation which supports older and disabled people to live longer in their own homes, we are pleased to announce a new service funded by Life

Changes Trust to provide personalised support services for people affected by dementia. The project aims to improve the homes, independence and confidence of people living with dementia, ensuring that they receive the appropriate equipment and adaptations to assist them to continue living independently for as long as possible. Project staff can provide advice on other services / activities available locally.

Throughout their dementia journey our clients are offered a range of aids including clocks, whiteboards, lights and signage, plus the assistance from staff to support them / family to install bathrooms, kitchens and external adaptations which

could take away the stress of trying to organise and cope with what could be a difficult time for the person with dementia.

Small changes to the home environment like these have been shown to reduce falls, accidents and confusion. This can lead to an increase in confidence and independence, and even better physical health. Early intervention could also be less costly in the long run.

Many of the specific changes needed are preventative in nature and are enabling or re-enabling, and while these physical changes in the home need not be dramatic, often the improvements in well-being and confidence for a person with dementia can be significant.

If you are living with dementia or caring for someone with dementia and would like some further information please contact Lyn Ross, Dementia Officer, Aberdeen Care and Repair on **01224 251133**.

Scam Warning: Phone message threatens HMRC lawsuit



HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) has warned of a scam which targets taxpayers and seems to be aimed at older people in particular. We have been asked to share the following information:

There is currently a telephone scam where a recorded message is left, allegedly from HMRC, stating that HMRC are bringing a lawsuit against the individual and is going to sue them. The recipient is asked to phone 0161 850 8494 and press "1" to speak to the officer dealing with the case. This scam is becoming widely reported and seems to be targeting older people.

Please do not reply to the message.

HMRC takes security very seriously but you need to be alert. If you cannot verify the identity of the person making the call you should not disclose your personal details. You should report these incidents on the Action Fraud website, or you can call them on 0300 123 2040 (Please note this number will be charged at your normal network rate). They are open Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00.

To learn more about dealing with phishing and scams visit GOV.UK

NEW report available NOW!

Our latest Annual Charter Performance Report has been published, offering you an insight into how we are performing as your social landlord. It is available on our website at castlehillha.co.uk or you can call **01224 625822** to request a copy.

Copies are also available in sheltered / very sheltered schemes' common rooms. We would love to hear your feedback on the report, and on our performance.

Thank you to CaRTO members who were involved in creating this new look publication and we hope you find the report interesting.

If you would like to be involved in producing next year's report, please contact Catherine Coutts Tenant Participation Officer on **01224 625822** or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk



What is the Private Residential Tenancy I keep hearing about?

Please note that this agreement DOES NOT apply to Castlehill Housing Association tenants because we are a registered social landlord, not a private landlord. However, if you are considering a move to private rented property, then it is important that you are aware of these changes. Castlehill subsidiary, Castlehill Solutions, has private tenancies available for mid-market rent.

The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016

Its purpose is to improve security for tenants and provide safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors. The tenancy will be open-ended and will last until you wish to leave the let property or your landlord uses one (or more) of 18 grounds for eviction.

Improvements for tenants include:

- more security – it's an open-ended tenancy so your landlord can't just ask you to leave because you've been in the property for a set length of time
- protection from frequent rent increases – your rent can't go up more than once a year and you must get at least three months' notice of any increase
- any rent increase can be referred to a rent officer, who can decide if they're fair

- if you've lived in a property for more than six months, landlords have to give 84 days' notice to leave (unless it's because you've done something wrong)
- if you think you were misled into moving out, you can now apply to the First-tier Tribunal for a 'wrongful termination order'. If the Tribunal gives the order it can award up to six months' rent in compensation
- local authorities can apply to Scottish Ministers to cap the levels of rent increases in areas where rents are rising too much

More detailed information can be found online at gov.scot If you would like to know more about Castlehill Solutions and its mid market rent properties along with their availability please contact Sharon Travers on **01224 625822**.

Help STOP 'cuckooing'



It is well known that drug dealers from Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield and London are targeting vulnerable members of our community and taking over their homes to store and deal heroin and cocaine.

This behaviour is known as 'cuckooing' and is extremely harmful to individuals and our community.

Housing Officers are liaising with Police Scotland to combat the issue and are urging tenants to report any suspicious behaviour including:

- **Increased visitors throughout the day / night**
- **Increased vehicles outside the address, including taxis, new vehicles and hire cars**
- **Increased anti-social behaviour in the area**
- **Occupant staying elsewhere or appearing withdrawn**
- **The smell of cannabis**

If you have information about potential drug dealing where you live, contact your local community policing team on 101 or your housing officer and this can be done confidentially.

You can also give information anonymously to the independent charity Crimestoppers - **0800 555 111**.

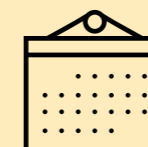


January Direct Debits

If you pay your rent by direct debit, **please note** that your payment will come out of your bank account on **3rd January 2018**, instead of the usual 1st of the month. This is due to the banks being closed on the 1st and 2nd.

Please ensure that you have money in your account to allow your rent to be paid on **3rd January 2018**.

Thank you!



Festive Safety Tips



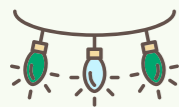
- **Check your smoke alarm is working.** Replace batteries if necessary. Report any faults to Castlehill.



- **Never place** Christmas cards or decorations around a mantelpiece.



- Check your Christmas light plugs are fitted with the correct fuse, **don't overload extension leads** and ensure all electrical devices are Intertek BEAB approved.



- **Always switch Christmas lights off** and unplug them before you go to bed.



- **Decorations can burn easily** – don't place them near lights or heaters.



- **Never leave cooking unattended**, especially when using hot oil. For early warning of fire consider fitting a heat alarm in your kitchen.



- **Take time to check on elderly relatives and neighbours this Christmas** as they are at greater risk from fire, particularly if they suffer from ill health.



Fairy Lights & Decorations

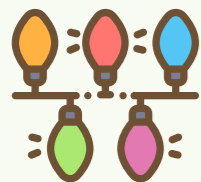
- **Unplug fairy lights** or other electrical Christmas decorations when you leave the house or go to bed.

- **Check fairy lights are in good working order** and replace any bulbs that have blown.

- **Bulbs can get very hot;** don't let them touch materials that can scorch or burn easily, such as paper or fabrics.

- Make sure the **fuse in the plug** is the correct rating.

- If you need to plug more than one appliance into an electrical socket **use a multi-socket adaptor** which is fitted with a fuse and has surge protection.



NETRALT'S First House Party!



North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together



A partnership of North East social landlords held a house party themed event to encourage tenants to come along and speak to a host of organisations about a range of housing related issues in an informal, relaxed setting.

NETRALT (North East Tenants, Residents, Landlords Together), which includes Castlehill Housing Association, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Blackwood, Cairn Housing Association, Grampian Housing Association, Langstane Housing Association, Moray Council and Sanctuary Scotland, organises events to share information and help tenants and residents in the Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray area.

The free event was attended by Housing Minister Kevin Stewart, and featured the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, CFINE, City Wardens, Energy Advisers, Financial Inclusion Team, Housing Officers, SACRO Mediation, SHMU Radio, Silver City Surfers, SMART (Money Advice Project), Waste Aware and much more.



These organisations were there to promote their free services and help tenants in the North East with any concerns they may have. Staff from each social landlord was on hand to discuss tenancy issues and talk about housing options available, and there was the opportunity to talk about shared ownership and the Help to Buy scheme. There was even a kids' corner offering glitter tattoos and competitions, and refreshments were available throughout the day.

The house party took place on November 25 at Woodhill House in Aberdeen.



Important and Useful information



Please note:

Castlehill has a new Freepost address, which tenants can use for reply mail e.g. for questionnaire or consultation returns.

Freepost CASTLEHILL is the new address.

Yes, that's all! Nothing else should be written on the envelope please, or it may not reach us.

Christmas & New Year office closure

The main office at 4 Carden Place, **Aberdeen will close at 1pm on Friday 22 December 2017.**

We will **re-open at 9am on Wednesday 3rd January 2018.**

During the holidays, our emergency repairs service will operate.

Please phone the main office number 01224 625822 for our emergency call-out details.

For gas heating:

Kingdom Gas
T 0800 3899463

For central plant / air-source heating:

Heat Care Oil & Gas
T 01343 842042

For other emergencies

(floods, leaks, loss of power, etc.):

Camwater
T 01651 872929

If you live in sheltered or very sheltered housing, please report any repairs to scheme staff as usual.

The Committee and staff of Castlehill would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2018!

Win £50 in our Winter Quiz!

Win £50 of shopping vouchers!

Answer the questions and email to - **E** catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk or post them to

Catherine Coutts
Tenant Participation Officer
Castlehill Housing Association
4 Carden Place
Aberdeen AB10 1UT

by 28th February 2018.

1. How much money did Care & Repair raise?

2. Who visited our Countesswells tenants?

3. Who is the contact for our Dementia Enablement project?

4. When will direct debits be paid in January 2018?

5. When did the NETRALT house party take place?