

TheChain

...linking people together

ISSUE 32 • Summer 2024



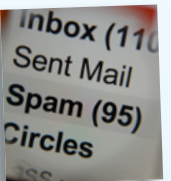
LEZ zone enforced.

All under one roof



All CHA departments now at Carden Place

Don't miss our emails



Please make sure to allow our emails or they will go in your spam box

CaRTO



CaRTO supporting schemes wellbeing

Independent Living launched



Our Independent Living service launches across Aberdeen City

Star Photo competition

Tenants should be aware that from 01 June 2024, Aberdeen City Council will be enforcing the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) of which Castlehill's offices are located at the edge of. Please see the map below.

From this date, all cars entering the LEZ will need to comply with the emission standards set by the government or they will incur a penalty. The LEZ will operate 24/7 all year and if your vehicle does not comply and you drive into it, you will receive a fixed penalty charge of £60 (reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days).

You can check if your car meets the [emission standards here](#)

Please make yourself aware of these changes and alter your route to the office if necessary.



Letter from our Chief Executive...

In these “post pandemic” times, the world of work has changed considerably, with many more people working at home, or in a mix of home and office based. Mobile technology and access to fast broadband has enabled many jobs to move away from the traditional desk or office. Against this backdrop, Castlehill has carried out a review of our office requirements moving forward. Introduction of a hybrid work pattern of home/office for many posts, and the fact that many of our staff are only in the office for short periods before being out visiting our housing, means that we now need less desk space and will therefore be consolidating our office requirements in a single location at 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen.



We are acutely aware of the increasing costs of operating office premises and this change will help us to ensure that we are working in the most cost effective and efficient way, delivering operational savings without any negative impact on the services we provide for tenants and other customers. Reducing things like commuting to offices will also contribute to improving our environmental impact as an organisation. As you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter, Care and Repair services have already relocated to Carden Place and all other staff who are currently based in our Waverley Place premises will be moving in the next few months. Like all businesses and households, we have faced significant cost pressures in recent times and the Association remains committed to delivering the services that people rely on in the most efficient way that we can.

David Lappin

Chief Executive

Care and Repair moves to Carden Place



Aberdeen Care and Repair has always been a department within Castlehill Housing Association. At the beginning of May the department moved from its former location in Waverley Place to its new home within the Association's main office on Carden Place.

Care and Repair's services are available to all over 60's regardless of the tenure. Moving within the office at 4 Carden Place brings all our customer facing departments together while continuing to provide people with the fantastic service Care and Repair provide.

If you have not heard of this department, please check out their services on their website. They can carry out small repairs, benefit checks, larger adaptations and targeted assistance like dementia support and their brilliant Trusted Traders list.

Care and Repair offer key advice and assistance to help homeowners and tenants from any landlord, repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and security within communities. Contact them to find out more.



Save money with Housing Perks

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting us all. Everyone is being impacted by higher prices for essentials across the board. That is why we have recently launched Housing Perks, giving Castlehill tenants access to discounts of up to 10% with over 100 brands and stores. This will help you save money with everyday spending. The free app will help you to save money on the essentials such as:

- Groceries
- Car Fuel
- Clothing
- School uniforms and equipment
- Home furnishings & DIY
- Family days out

With some of your favourite brands and stores, including Argos, Primark, B&Q, TK Maxx, Sports Direct, Just Eat and many more. It's free, quick and easy to sign up.

In the first month since launching, we have seen an amazing 388 tenants sign up already, with Tesco, Aldi, Sainsbury's, Asda and Marks & Spencer being the top 5 places for spending Housing Perks vouchers.



How to sign up

- Go to your app store and search "Housing Perks"
- Download the app
- Enter your mobile phone number
- Select Castlehill Housing Association
- Enter your tenancy reference. You will find this on your invitation email or ask our office. **GET SAVING!**

Rent and bills advice.

Just a gentle reminder to tenants that as we move into April you will find your rent and service charges have increased. It is important to remember that rent is a priority bill, the increase will influence your outgoings and because of this we advise that you check your bank account to ensure that you have enough money to cover it.

If you use the Housing costs page from Universal Credit, make sure you update your journal to reflect the changes. You can do this by reporting a change in circumstances, updating where you live and what it costs section of the housing costs page. Make sure you include the start date of the change and include your service charges if applicable. Check your changes before clicking the 'I understand...' box.

For more information about using your online account including updating the journal please visit www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk

Castlehill Housing Association Rent Policy



In February 2022 we wrote to tenants to advise that following a review of the Association's rent structure, a new structure would be introduced from April 2022. The introduction of a new rent structure brought about changes for current tenants. To implement this, and be fair to all tenants, it was decided to move tenants onto the new rent structure gradually over a five-year period. However, this move was paused during 2023 due to the cost-of-living crisis.

During the rent review for 2024 (which took place in November 2023), tenants were asked to give their views on two proposals. Tenants responded and were supportive and understanding of the Association's position, with 80% of responses for a 7.3% uplift from 1st April 2024. Tenants whose rent is increasing under the new structure will now be implemented over the next three years, and those whose rent is decreasing will now be implemented over the next two years. This was the fairest way to deliver the new structure for tenants without having a negative impact on the Association's overall income.

Tenants were sent the annual rent letter towards the end of February and this letter reflected these changes.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please let us know. We can help and signpost tenants to make sure that you are getting all the benefits and tax credits you are entitled to. We can also offer help to budget and manage your income and bills. Call your Housing Officer on 01224 625822 or email info@castlehillha.co.uk

Don't miss our emails!



The world is becoming progressively reliant upon digital means to stay connected to each other. At Castlehill we will be increasing our electronic communication with tenants as we develop new and exciting ways for tenants to interact with us. We do not want you to miss anything we issue so there are a few steps you can carry out to prevent important emails ending up in your spam or junk folders.

We would like you to add any Castlehill email addresses to your contacts list or if you find an email from us in your spam or junk folder simply click 'not spam' or 'not junk.' Doing this should ensure that our important emails are always received.

New Garden Bench at Craigievar Court

by tenant Shirley McLachlan



Towards the end of last year, I, Shirley, a tenant at Craigievar Court, applied to the Morningfield Association for a grant to purchase a recycled plastic garden bench (on behalf of the tenants). Our old one was deemed unsafe and had been removed. I was successful in the application, and we recently received the grant. A bench was subsequently purchased, and we are very much delighted with it. The bench is virtually maintenance free.

Unfortunately, there was a bit of a shortfall by the time we'd added VAT and delivery. However, thanks to a donation from CaRTO, swiftly arranged via our Tenant Participation Officer, we were full steam ahead.

Davie, our Castlehill Housing Association Joiner, along with Liam, Property Services Officer, came to the rescue and set up the bench for us.

We set up banners for the Great Opening.

Doris, our oldest tenant did the honours in cutting the ribbon to officially declare our bench "OPEN". Unfortunately, the rain poured that day so we quickly ventured inside to enjoy a cuppa and some cake. At the end of the day, would you believe, a huge rainbow appeared.

I would like to thank the Friends of Morningfield Association for making it



possible for us to get the bench. It is situated at the front of our building and tenants will be able to sit there on bonny days to enjoy the sunshine! Also, tenants often sit out while they're waiting for transport, or to rest before heading back to their flats after outings.



On behalf of the tenants, I would like to say a great big thank you to all concerned. (Friends of Morningfield, Catherine Coutts who liaised with CaRTO for extra funding, the Property Services team who were supportive, and Davie and Liam who did the set-up, not forgetting Doris who faced the wind and rain on the day of the "Opening").

Shirley McLachlan, Craigievar Court

CaRTO helping tenants have fun in Cullen.



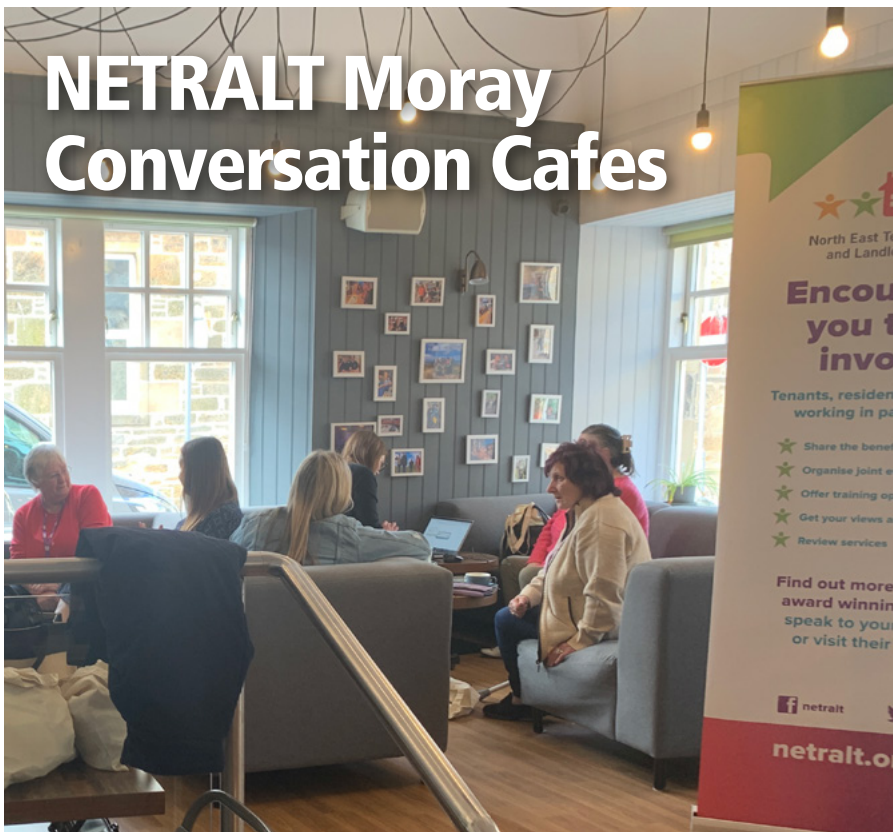
CaRTO were also able to support tenants at an independent living scheme to make better use of their hobbies room by funding a pool table. Some tenants at Bayview Court in Cullen had lost their confidence to socialise after being isolated during Covid, which had a longer-term impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Living in a hilly village, access to recreation is harder for some tenants and some rarely leave the building. Most tenants at Bayview Court were eager for a pool table to give more tenants the option to socialise and have fun without the challenges of having to arrange transport or extra assistance.

Tenants have given the pool table a massive thumbs up saying that it gives them 'more confidence' and is a 'great way to pass the time,' and 'it gets me out of my flat.' We've been told that they hope to organise a pool tournament for all the tenants shortly.





North East Tenants Residents
and Landlords Together



North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) have been reaching out to tenants from social landlords across Moray. With an open invitation to drop in for a fine piece and a cuppa, representatives from Castlehill, Langstane, Grampian Housing Associations, Osprey Housing and Moray Council were on hand to chat about tenant participation and the ways you can get involved. The first of the events was held at Elgin Youth Cafe in April and more sessions are planned for different locations across the Moray area so keep an eye on your scheme noticeboard for details. Everybody is welcome and you will also be in with the chance of winning a hamper in our prize draw!

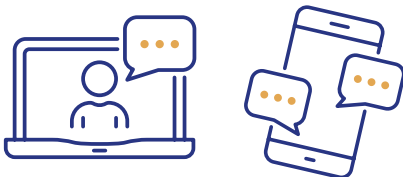
NETRALT is an award-winning partnership between Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, Castlehill, Langstane, Grampian Housing Associations and Osprey Homes. To find out more about NETRALT, visit netralt.org.uk.



CaRTO Online Chats Meet CaRTO at your scheme inspections.

Heard about CaRTO and keen to find out more? CaRTO is planning another series of online chats. These are designed to give tenants another opportunity to have a conversation with tenants who are already involved with CaRTO to explain in their own words what the group does and to see if you think you would be interested in joining CaRTO. No staff are involved in the meetings, so it is tenants talking to tenants.

Keep your eye on your inbox or letterbox for details of how to sign up.



Some of you may have noticed CaRTO members joining you at your scheme inspections.

Castlehill is keen to involve our tenants and would encourage everyone to join us if you can. These inspections by the Housing Officer and Property Services Officer take place approximately every 6 months and their purpose is to identify any communal or external problems at your scheme. We appreciate input from tenants as you know your scheme well and may be aware of issues which may not be immediately apparent to us. Please note that this is not an inspection of individual flats.

A member of the independent group Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation (CaRTO) may attend the inspection too. CaRTO members are keen to meet with other tenants and learn more about what life is like at your scheme. It is also another opportunity for you to chat to CaRTO members and see if you would like to join them.



Energy costs and savings

Aberdeen Care & Repair can help anyone over the age of 60 or anyone living with a long-term health condition including disabled children. No repair too small.

Please give us a ring on 01224 625822 if you require assistance with any of the services below. We can help anyone in the city whether you own or rent your home.

- **Decorating – internal & external**
- **Lighting**
- **Hanging pictures/mirrors/shelves**
- **Curtain rails/blinds**
- **Putting TVs on the wall**
- **Fitting electric cookers/washing machines**
- **Moving furniture within the home/turning mattresses**
- **Building flat pack furniture**
- **Grab rails & key safes**
- **Ramps/external handrails**
- **Other handyman jobs**
- **Recommending local repair companies**
- **Financial assistance for some repairs**
- **Benefit checks**
- **Blue badge applications**

WELCOME

TO THE TEAM!

Staffing update

There have been many new faces joining the team at Castlehill over the last few months, several of our staff have moved posts.

The biggest change is the creation of the Housing Services Support team. This brand-new team replaces the admin and reception teams to support the work of Housing Services and is the first point of contact for all tenants, applicants and customers. Our new Housing Services Support team have several fresh faces. Brooke Feeney and Sophie Paterson joined earlier this year and joining them is Nicola Eddie and Natasha Stark who have previously worked in the Independent Living schemes. These new members of the team join our experienced team of Gena and Jean and will help cover all incoming calls to the Association.

New to the Housing Management team is Courtney Rennie who joins us from a similar role at Langstane Housing Association as a Housing Officer.

Our Property Assets team has also undergone some changes in staffing. Jackie Ross has been seconded to the role of Technical Officer from our Property Services Customer Services team and Kirsten Buchanan has taken on that role of Customer Services Officer. Megan Olley has been recently appointed to the Customer Services Assistant role in Property Services.

Jackie Reid has been appointed to a Finance Officer role and we are delighted to welcome Karen Gardner to the HR Officer role in the Corporate Services team.



Independent Living launched across Aberdeen city.

Castlehill is delighted to confirm that our Independent Living service has been adopted in what was previously our Aberdeen Sheltered Housing Schemes across the city. This form of Enhanced Housing Management has been successfully adopted

in our Aberdeenshire and Moray properties and we are pleased to be able to roll it out in similar schemes in Aberdeen.

A Castlehill Independent Living Scheme offers housing for older people in a safe and secure property with the reassurance that staff are on-site most days. They promote independence with staff signposting tenants to other services as their needs change which helps tenants live independently in their home for as long as possible.

Castlehill has several Independent Living Schemes across the whole of the North East, we have lovely flats available in several of these schemes, should you want to be considered for one of them you can apply using the [These Homes website](#).



Energy swindles

Scammers do not care how careful you are. They are always trying new ways to part people from their money. There has been a rise recently in energy scams where criminals try to get you to share personal information or worse still, bank details.

They do this by pretending to be from energy companies, businesses connected with energy suppliers and sometimes even Ofgem.

How do they do this? By many diverse ways, the most common is an unexpected phone call, sometimes they text and there have even been occasions where people have turned up in person. Each time they will offer to help switch you to a cheaper tariff or move money to a safer account. They will ask for all manner of details to set things up – your bank details, your card details, and passwords.

Here are some top tips to keep yourself safer when it comes to this sort of scam.

If it looks dodgy it probably is. Take Five, the stop fraud organisation in the UK, recommends the following:

STOP

Take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information. Always ask for the person's name, job title and company they work for. Hang up, google the company and the phone number and if you feel the need to call back, use the number you have, not the one they may have given you.

CHALLENGE

Could it be fake? It is ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. It is your right to make your own decisions. Only criminals will try rushing you or making you panic, real representatives will have trained in how not to scare clients, so pay attention to how you are spoken too.

PROTECT

Contact your bank immediately if you think you have been scammed and report it to Action Fraud at actionfraud.police.uk or on 0330 123 2040.

Check the government website for information on scams and for information on what energy schemes they offer.

Never move any money to another account for 'security' reasons.



Use it and you could lose it.

Sadly, in recent months Housing Officers say there has been an increase in dealing with complaints about Cannabis smoking within some of our schemes. Many of these complaints concern the smell which lingers around areas where it has been smoked and occasionally others can even smell it in their own home. This is not acceptable for others to be affected by the strong smell of Cannabis. We remind tenants that Cannabis is a class B drug and is illegal with penalties including large fines and prison sentences.

If you have concerns about illegal drugs and related anti-social behaviour in and around your home, then you should report it to Police Scotland on 101. You can also report them anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

A passion for tenants

Powered by a passion for tenants: how our tenant participation group were the driving force behind Castlehill's adoption of the Housing Perks app.

In case you are unaware of our tenant participation group CaRTO and the work that they do on behalf of tenants, this group of dedicated tenant volunteers work tirelessly to ensure that the Association understands the wants and needs of our tenant community. They provide us with feedback, ideas and passion ensuring that Castlehill is always working with our tenants to provide the best service we can.

A new tenant to Castlehill brought us the idea of the Housing Perks app, which gives users fantastic discounts on various goods and services. CaRTO were in support of the app as they wanted to find some way of alleviating the prohibitive cost of living, we are all having to contend with. Our Tenant Participation and Housing team did some investigations and negotiations with

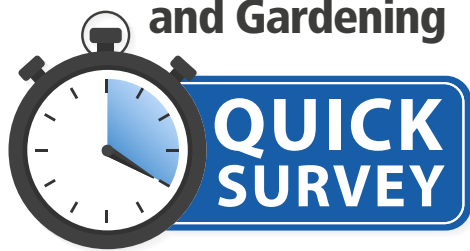
the Housing Perks team, and we happily delivered a cost-effective scheme which will benefit all our tenants.

CaRTO as a group work closely with our senior team, going over our policies and procedures to make sure that they are serving the tenants in the best possible way. They are involved in lots of tenant schemes like the digital inclusion project and scheme funding for new equipment and projects.

The group is always looking for new members who can bring fresh ideas and eyes to our services. They meet once a month via Zoom and have a variety of ways that you can get involved. If you have any questions or would like to talk to someone about becoming a CaRTO member, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 625822.



Cleaning and Gardening



Castlehill values the input of our tenants, especially when it comes to the service we provide concerning cleaning of communal areas and the gardening work. We issue surveys twice a year about the quality of work being carried out and really appreciate the responses.

Our most recent survey should be issued this week. If you get a survey, please can you take a few minutes to fill it in and return it. Many thanks.

Mobility scooter rules

It is important to us that our tenants have the resources to help them live their best lives. For many, mobility scooters play a huge role in helping them manage their mobility issues. Castlehill has several rules which users must comply with to use them.

You must ensure that you obtain permission from Castlehill before you purchase or hire a scooter, and you must speak to your Housing or Property Service Officer about where to store the vehicle. Prior to getting permission you should know that we will request that you have obtained a quote for insurance cover for any damage that they may cause to our property or scheme. If permission is granted, we will require evidence that you hold adequate insurance.

The insurance and maintenance of a scooter falls to the user, and they must be able to provide proof of an annual service and insurance documents when asked.

The use of these scooters will come with some caveats to ensure that they are kept and charged with the minimum of impact on those who don't need them, but Castlehill will carry out an inspection

to identify where they can be safely stored and charged. With most scooter requests Castlehill will not unreasonably refuse permission, but we may need to identify an area where it could be safely stored without impeding safe access to corridors or stairwells.

Finally, it is important that scooter users ride them responsibly around our schemes. Users should make sure that they are taking due care and consideration for others, riding them at the lowest speed setting when using them within schemes.

Castlehill has a policy which covers all the rules, and you can access it [here](#) or on our [website](#).



City fibre within Castlehill Schemes

You may have noticed that City Fiber have been conducting works around your schemes. City Fiber will only install this to the scheme if there has been an order made and this has been approved by our Property Assets department.

Electrical safety inspections

Electricity plays such a big part in our lives that we can often take it for granted. It's easy to forget how potentially deadly electricity could be if we don't take electrical safety seriously. Around 30 deaths, and thousands of injuries every year are caused by domestic electrical accidents, including fires.

Castlehill as a responsible landlord takes its responsibility to ensure the electrical safety of your home very seriously. Which is why we carry out electrical safety checks, in every home every 5 years and when we contact you about these safety checks, it is important that you make the time to let our contractors in.

Please remember, it is tenants' responsibility to ensure you are using electricity safely, especially outdoors. Extension cables, domestic appliances, lighting, etc. that are not certified for outdoor use, should never be used out with the main building. Doing so can result in fire, electrocution, injury, and potentially death.

You must always seek the permission of Castlehill before making any alterations to your home, including installations of any outdoor electrical equipment. This is to ensure that they are carried out safely by a qualified electrician, are completed to a high standard, and comply with current building standards, electrical standards, and current health and safety regulations.

If you have any questions, please contact your Housing or Property Services Officer.

Another opportunity to get involved with Castlehill!

★ Enter our new Star Photo competition for a chance to win a £50 gift card. ★

This theme for this competition is 'Things that Make You Happy'.

Send your Star Photo to info@castlehillha.co.uk for a chance to win a £50 gift card and have your Star Photo feature in our next Tenant Newsletter!

- ★ You must have taken the photo yourself.
- ★ You can edit/retouch the photo if you like.
- ★ If your photo includes people, you must have their permission. Email info@castlehillha.co.uk for our photo consent form, which must be completed, signed and returned with your entry.
- ★ Your photo remains your property. By entering the competition, you give permission for Castlehill to use your photos in online and printed publications, and social media. We will credit your photo with your name, and you still own the rights to the photo.
- ★ The judging panel's decision is final.

Closing date: Wednesday 31 July 2024

Contact us...

Castlehill Housing Association
4 Carden Place,
Aberdeen AB10 1UT
Tel: 01224 625822
Website: www.castlehillha.co.uk
Email: info@castlehillha.co.uk

Office Hours
Mon - Thurs 9am - 5pm
Fri - 9am - 4pm

Please do not call direct dial numbers, staff work varying hours Monday to Friday and if on holiday may not be able access their voicemail for some time. In doubt, please call reception or email info@castlehillha.co.uk.