

TheChain

...linking people together

ISSUE 16 • SUMMER 2016



Housing Special Radio Show



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airwaves

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Castlehill tenants help shape the Charter



Tenants and staff from all over the North East discussed the Charter

Castlehill tenants played a part in helping to shape the future of Scottish social housing at an event at Aberdeen's Town House on May 26th.

The event brought tenants, landlord staff, councillors and board members together, and everyone had the opportunity to tell the Scottish Government their views on the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Discussions were held on the impact of the current Charter, the current outcomes and standards and whether anything new needs to be added to it. This event complements the formal consultation which will take place in the summer.

NETRALT (North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together) hosted the event on behalf of the Scottish Government and were proud to celebrate their "birthday" as NETRALT was established as a result of the Charter.

Castlehill's Tenants Panel will submit a formal response in the summer. If you would like to take part, or request your own copy of the current Charter, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 628109 or email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk.

The Charter is also available to download from housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk



Letter from our Chief Executive...

Rural Housing Matters!

Readers of The Chain may not be aware that one of Castlehill's core objectives is to contribute towards sustaining rural communities through providing housing in rural settlements. As well as meeting local housing needs, these developments also help to sustain communities by allowing people to work locally, support local businesses, such as shops or maintenance contractors, and help sustain populations that can keep rural facilities, such as schools, viable. The Association is also a significant employer in rural areas with staff attached to a number of our schemes.

While the bulk of our housing is in Aberdeen City and the surrounding areas, we have rural developments as far afield as Tomintoul, Portknockie, Cuminestown, Finzean and Braemar, to mention a few.

I am pleased to report that we now have plans in place for significant new housing developments over the next few years. Whilst the majority of these will be in the City, or larger towns such as Inverurie, we must ensure that rural areas are not forgotten about and that we do all we can to address local needs and demand in these areas. A small scheme of 6 houses in a rural settlement can have a huge impact on allowing families to stay in their area and contribute to supporting the local economy and community.

In this edition, you will see many great examples of tenants participating in the work of the Association and influencing how we deliver our services. Today's technology means that barriers to getting involved that may have affected tenants in more remote areas are no longer there and we are very keen to encourage tenants from our rural housing to get involved. If you are interested in knowing more please give Catherine Coutts a call at our Aberdeen office.

David Lappin

Chief Executive



The Minority Ethnic Housing Project



The Minority Ethnic Housing Project was set up to provide free guidance and housing-related advice to people from ethnic minority communities in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

- Interpreters and translators available
- Housing options explained
- Help with housing applications
- Help with benefits, rights and entitlement
- Money and debt-related support
- Advocacy

Vikki Duncan (pictured) is the Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker. If you are part of a minority ethnic community or have recently moved here from another country, and are looking for information on housing, Vikki will be happy to help. You can contact Vikki on 01224 423118 or on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MEhousingproject/>



Young tenants on air



Castlehill Housing Association and SHMU FM (Station House Media Unit) joined forces to produce a "housing special" radio show to engage with young people.

Castlehill and NETRALT (North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together) recognise that engaging with young people is vital and were delighted to collaborate with SHMU FM, who are a community-based radio station with an emphasis on youth involvement.

SHMU's Youth Media 16+ group were armed with many questions about their housing options, covering topics such as homelessness, the reality of having your own tenancy, how to sustain a tenancy and financial advice.

NETRALT staff members Catherine Coutts (Castlehill Housing Association), Katie Taylor (Grampian Housing Association) and Laura Allan (Blackwood) were on hand to join the discussion and share information. Emma Parkinson of Aberdeen City Council was able to answer questions relating to homelessness and support.

Two young tenants illustrated the reality of social housing and shared their experiences with the youth media group. They provided an invaluable insight and the group were able to relate to the scenarios that our tenants had faced.

Tanya, a young Castlehill tenant said,

"Choosing to participate in the NETRALT/SHMU Radio Show

discussion on social housing was a fantastic opportunity to offer advice to young people based on my own experience. In other words, turning a difficult chapter in my life in to a positive. My nerves soon disappeared as I was welcomed by the young people of SHMU and Catherine Coutts from Castlehill. The radio show was a fun and new experience which furthered my confidence and interpersonal communication skills. If the opportunity came again I would strongly recommend you take part, because I will."

The young people felt they learned a great deal about their housing options and the laidback, informal style of discussion meant that there were no barriers. They felt confident that they now knew what to do if faced with homelessness or how to find a place to live, and were amazed at the tenant participation opportunities available to social housing tenants.

NETRALT hope to work with SHMU again in the near future due to the success of the housing special. Watch this space!

If you are a tenant who is between 16 and 25 years old, and would like to take part in future events, please call Catherine on 01224 628109 or email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk



**North East Tenants Residents
and Landlords Together**

Castlehill tackles the three peaks for CHAS



This summer, an intrepid team from Castlehill Housing Association, climbed the highest mountains in Wales, England and Scotland (Mt Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis), travelling between the peaks by bicycle on a route of some 502 miles!

David Lappin, Castlehill's Chief Executive, who was one of the participants commented, "This was a really hard challenge and all those who took it on deserve great credit, particularly those who hadn't done this sort of thing before and did so well to complete the mountain climbs. There was a great sense of achievement at the end, especially with the amount raised for such a worthwhile cause"

CHAS is the Children's Hospice Association Scotland, which provides the only hospice services in Scotland for children and young people with life shortening conditions. CHAS runs hospices in Kinross and Balloch and also provides home care services and support for families, including a team based in Aberdeen.

At the time of going to press, the challenge has raised almost £4000 – a fantastic sum and we are extremely grateful for all the support. The fundraising page will remain open for a while and is: www.justgiving.com/cha3



Tenants celebrate milestone anniversary

Queen Elizabeth Court in Fettercairn celebrated their 30th Anniversary recently by having a party afternoon with a delicious buffet and music. The Court originally started operating in May 1986 and was officially opened by the Queen Mother in October 1986.

Featured in the photo cutting the cake is one of the current residents, Miss Ewen, who has lived there since the beginning and Gladys Ingram who was the Relief Manager at the beginning and went on to become Scheme Manager. It was interesting to know the weather we had on our celebration day (snow and wind) was exactly the same as the same day 30 years ago.

The sheltered housing scheme at Queen Elizabeth Court, Fettercairn was built in 1986 and consists of 22 flats in a two storey block building and three cottages. In the main building there is a large residents' lounge and attached kitchen, a laundry with washing machines and tumble dryers, two guest bedrooms and a hobbies room. A biomass boiler provides central heating to all properties.



Spotlight on St Peter's Court, Aberdeen

Stand Free – Farewell to an AFC devotee



Norman Goldie
10/10/28 – 03/05/2016

St Peter's Court tenant Norman Goldie sadly passed away peacefully on 3rd May 2016, aged 87. Tributes poured in for a well-known Aberdeen

FC fan. He could often be seen decked out in Dons gear, even on non-match days, wearing his iconic sandals with one red sock and one white sock.

Flowers and football scarves were laid outside Pittodrie as fans paid their respects to 'legend' Norman Goldie. Norman was given a DONS award for Distinction of Notable Service to Aberdeen Football Club by fans' group



Dons Supporters Together. AFC management have kept his memory alive by the painting and placing of a plaque on his seat at Pittodrie.

A crowd of supporters gathered outside Pittodrie to bid farewell to Norman prior to his funeral service at Aberdeen Crematorium.

Jess Horne, Norman's sister, was overwhelmed by the response to his passing and expressed her gratitude to the staff at St Peter's Court.

She said, "Thank you to the staff and carers at St Peter's Court, Torry, for looking after and looking out for Norman – this came with many challenges which were quickly overcome by Norman's smile."

Sincere condolences to Norman's family and friends from all at Castlehill.



Tenants enjoying their new Tuesday coffee morning at St Peter's Court



Photo of Aberdeen Harbour taken from the common room at St Peter's Court on a lovely warm and sunny day in May 2016

Activities

Tenants at St Peter's Court can enjoy a hot drink, fine piece and a natter at their new coffee morning, held on Tuesdays. Other activities on offer at St Peter's Court include bingo, chipper lunches, church services and a weigh-in group.

Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust

St Peters Court are delighted to have been specially selected by Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust to take part in an activity programme. The first activity will be afternoon tea on June 2nd at 2.30pm.

Aberdeen FC Community Trust's ethos is "to provide support and opportunity to change lives for the better". One of their aims is to develop and increase wider community engagement well beyond 'just' football. This work is done in close partnership with other like-minded groups and organisations. Involving participants of all ages, some

aged 100+, AFCCT has programmes addressing dementia, inactivity, obesity, social exclusion, social deprivation and more.

New Staff member

A big welcome to Ruth Craig who has now started working at St Peter's Court as part time Relief Scheme Manager.

St Peter's quick facts

Sheltered housing scheme on Victoria Road in Torry

31 flats over 5 floors

Converted from the original St Peter's Episcopal Church

Tenants' lounge has panoramic views over Aberdeen city and the coast beyond to the north

Good public transport links and easy access to city centre

Housing Support service 7 days each week and RCC/Community Alarm outwith working hours,

TENANTS' NEWS...

Know Your Landlord



The bus tour included a trip to Castlehill's amenity and mid-market properties at Cattofield Square in Aberdeen.

Castlehill's second Know Your Landlord event was held in April at Café Coast on the Beach Boulevard.

The aim of the day was to give our Tenants Panel an insight into how Castlehill operates, what we do, why we do it and how we do it.

Our Chief Executive David Lappin started the day off by telling us about Castlehill's history, how we are run, our objectives and future goals.

Gail Robertson, our Director of Housing Services talked about our frontline customer services, housing management and maintenance. Gail's presentation was followed by our Director of Development Services, Fiona Murray, who is responsible for planned maintenance and new housing development.

After lunch, we had a bus trip round some of our Aberdeen schemes. We finished with a tour of a Very Sheltered scheme at Craigielea Gardens in Mannofield. Jim Anderson, our Sheltered Housing Manager and Shirley Cassie who manages

Craigielea Gardens were on hand to answer tenants' questions.

Libby, one of our tenants who joined in the day said,

"Although I have been a tenant of Castlehill Housing Association for seven years, this was the first Know Your Landlord Day I had attended. I thoroughly enjoyed this informal day.

The Chief Executive, the Director of Housing Services and the Director of Development Services all gave short talks, followed by questions and answers which we were all encouraged to get involved in. There was a very "user friendly" atmosphere.

We had a great buffet lunch and then went on a bus tour of some of Castlehill's properties. This was very interesting.

FUN, FACTS, and FRIENDSHIP experienced by all who attended. A great day!!!"

If you would like to hear about future events like this one, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

Make a Difference – Become a Member

We are accountable to our members and we encourage any of our interested tenants to become a Member of the Association, for the price of £1.




Becoming a Member gives you the right to:

- **Vote for the Management Committee**
- **Stand for election to our Management Committee**
- **Attend and vote at our Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

For more information, please call 01224 625822 or email info@castlehillha.co.uk

Our Power

OurPower  Our Power is a new energy supply company established by Scottish social housing providers who want to make the energy industry work better for the residents and communities they serve.

Our Power aims to reduce heat and fuel costs by passing benefits from the energy sector to our communities. They do this by not paying dividends to shareholders, by finding the most efficient ways to operate, by generating our own power and by reinvesting any profits to benefit our customers and their communities.

Castlehill is a partner in Our Power and you can now choose them as your energy supplier. If you would like to switch to Our Power, or to find out more, please contact 0808 168 4534 to talk to one of the team or, you can do this online at www.our-power.co.uk/sign-up.

Scrutiny Panel update



Castlehill's Scrutiny Panel are progressing well through their first exercise and are meeting with the Tenant Led Continuous Improvement (TLCi) Scrutiny Working Group at Aberdeenshire Council to share ideas and their progress so far.

A tenant from Aberdeen City Council who

has extensive skills in report-writing will be on hand to provide additional support and advice to our tenants.

Our Panel are looking forward to sharing their findings and recommendations later on in the year.

Would you like to help develop our Pets Policy?



A considerable amount of time and money is spent on housing officers dealing with pets, the impact of pets on our properties and the impact on neighbours. Castlehill's pet policy will be under review at the end of the year and we are looking for your views and comments.

If you would like to see a copy of the current pets policy or make your views known, please call our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 628109 or email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

What's on my Work Order?



When you report a repair this usually results in a Works Order being issued to one of the Association's approved contractors, and you are sent a duplicate copy of the Works Order as confirmation.

A Works Order includes various items of information for your reference. These include:

- The name of the contractor the Works Order has been issued to
- The Order Number – for future reference if required
- The Date the Works Order was issued to the contractor
- The Priority Indicator, which shows how urgent the job is classified as, and the time within which the contractor should respond. Each order is classified as one of three categories i.e.

Emergency (the contractor should attend within 6 hours)

Urgent (the contractor should attend within 3 working days)

Or

Routine (the contractor should attend within 15 working days)

- The Job Address – i.e. your name and address
- Access Arrangements – your telephone number for the contractor to call you on to arrange a suitable time to attend, or any other access arrangements.
- The Work Required – a description of the job the contractor has been asked to carry out.
- Right to Repair information – there are tick boxes on each Works Order to indicate whether or not the repair qualifies under the Right to Repair. The Right to Repair is your right under specific legislation to have certain small urgent repairs carried out within a certain period of time, and your option to claim compensation if the work is not started within the time limit set, for qualifying repairs. Please note that for jobs where the "Does Not Qualify" box is ticked, these jobs are no less important to us! If you would like a full explanatory leaflet on the Right to Repair, these are available on request – please call the Maintenance Department on telephone number 01224 628104 if you would like one sent to you.
- Satisfaction information – you may have noticed that this section has recently been amended. We provide a Freepost return envelope with each order issued, and ask you to return your copy to tell us how satisfied you are with the completed job, and the service you have received. Previously there were just two tick boxes for you to tell us if you are either "Satisfied" or "Not Satisfied". We now have Five tick boxes, and you can choose between "Very Satisfied", "Fairly Satisfied", "Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied", "Fairly Dissatisfied" or "Very Dissatisfied". These new options are provided in order that we can monitor satisfaction levels more accurately, with a view to reporting to our Management Committee and providing a consistently good service.
- The final section requests your signature and a note of the date the work is completed by the contractor.

Extractor fan fire hazard

Reports show that there have been a number of domestic fires across Scotland lately caused by a build up of lint in kitchen and bathroom extractor fans. The lint can cause the motor to overheat and ignite. To reduce the risk of such incidents, the Fire Service recommends:

- all extractor fans should be inspected and cleaned regularly
- fans which are not easily accessible for regular cleaning, appear to have heat damage or do not turn freely should be replaced with thermally protected units
- avoid prolonged use and ensure the fan is turned off prior to leaving home.

If you have any concerns about your extractor fan, please contact our maintenance department on 01224 628104.



Gas Safety Advice (regarding gas cookers)

You may have noticed that our Gas Service Contractor also checks any other gas burning appliances in your house or flat when the boiler is serviced, such as a gas cooker if you have one.

Since January 2008, any new gas cookers installed in a multi-dwelling building, such as a flat, are required to have Flame Supervision Devices (FSDs) attached to all hob burners.








FSDs make gas hob burners safer as they automatically shut off the gas supply to the hob if they detect there is no flame.

The legislation is not retrospective, meaning that old cookers installed before 2008 are still legal to use. However, if our contractor finds any he will note the fact on the Landlord's Gas Safety Certificate, and make a recommendation to replace the cooker, for example "No FSDs on hob

– recommend cooker is replaced".

If you see this on your Gas Safety Certificate we would strongly recommend that you take heed, and see about replacing your gas cooker with a new FSD equipped one. FSD equipped gas cookers are in fact the only type of new domestic gas cookers available to buy now.

Standard Charges

	Cooker connection – electric	£75.00
	Cooker connection – gas	£100.00
	Washing machine connection	£100.00
	Lock change (working hours)	£120.00
	Lock change (outwith working hours)	£180.00
	Extra key or fob	£15.00
	Maintenance Officer call-out (where rechargeable)	£75.00



Our maintenance team are on hand to provide connection services, lock changes and extra keys. Please call 01224 628104 if you would like to book an appointment

Flood damaged homes update



You may have seen on the national and local news that some of our Sharing Owners in properties at Ritchie Row and Canal View, in Port Elphinstone unfortunately had a very unhappy start to their year, as the River Don burst its banks and flooded parts of Port Elphinstone in the early hours of Friday 8th January 2016.

The whole of Ritchie Row (nine houses) and two houses in Canal View were flooded. The properties are all bungalows and were evacuated by the local authority just prior to the main flood, which came in a torrent, rushing down the street and flooding the houses. Thankfully nobody was injured, but the houses were severely damaged.

With the help of our buildings insurer we soon had a Project Manager and contractors appointed to get the required repairs and reinstatement works started. The houses were devastated internally, and the stripping out, drying and reinstatement works will cost well over half a million pounds.

Fortunately every Sharing Owner affected had a contents insurance policy in place. Consequently the removal of the damaged contents including virtually every piece of furniture, beds, floor coverings etc., were also soon carried out, allowing the building repairs to proceed, and will later of course fund the re-furnishing of each house including new floor coverings, etc..

The damage was so bad that each house has been completely stripped out internally, basically only leaving the original ceilings intact. Repairs are now well on their way, with final completions estimated to be around July 2016. The photograph below shows one of the houses at the stage where the reinstatement works are ready to begin in earnest:



This is therefore a timely reminder on the importance of maintaining a suitable contents insurance policy. It should be noted that no matter what the cause of damage, for example, a plumbing leak, a fire or a flood, the Association is not responsible for replacing your damaged contents such as floor coverings, or anything else, as our Building Insurance Policy only covers the building structure.

Are you ready for Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is being introduced in stages and you will need a bank account to receive payments. The housing benefit element will no longer be paid to Castlehill, but to you the tenant, so you will need to set up a bank account if you have not already got one. It will be your responsibility to pay your rent to us.

If you have found it difficult to open a bank account in the past, there are several major banks who now offer fee-free basic bank accounts.

- **Barclays – Barclays Basic Current Account**
- **Santander – Basic Current Account**
- **NatWest – Foundation Account**
- **The Royal Bank of Scotland (Scotland) – Foundation Account**
- **HSBC – Basic Bank Account**

- **Nationwide – FlexBasic**
- **Co-operative Bank – Cashminder**
- **Lloyds Banking Group (including Halifax and Bank of Scotland brands) – Basic Account**
- **TSB – Cash Account**
- **National Australia Bank Group (Including Yorkshire Bank and Clydesdale brands) – Readycash Account**

The accounts are truly fee-free and can help you to manage your money without fear of running up an overdraft. The new basic bank accounts end bank charges if a direct debit or standing order fails and remove the risk that you will be forced into overdraft because of fees and charges. You can access all the standard over-the-counter services at bank branches and at the Post Office, and can access the entire ATM network.



LIVING AT HOME WITH DEMENTIA

LOTTERY FUNDED

A free, confidential and personal service to help anyone in Aberdeen living with dementia to live safely in their home for longer. If you or anyone you know could benefit from this service please call us for more information on 01224 251133.



Care & Repair

ENABLEMENT SERVICE



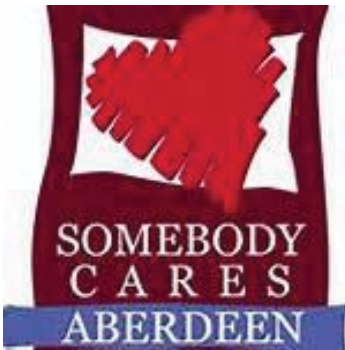
What is Carer's Credit?

Many carers don't realise that they're missing out on a National Insurance credit. Each year's credit could boost their State Pension by £230 a year once they reach State Pension age (2016/17 figures).

The Carer's Allowance Claim form DS700 forms and notes have been updated with new versions. You should use this form to claim Carer's Allowance by post if you are unable to make the claim online (forms available from Department for Work and Pensions).

For more information on Carer's Credit, visit www.gov.uk/carers-credit.

Somebody Cares



Somebody Cares is an Aberdeen-based charity supplying furniture, food and clothing to those in need. They require donations to be able to fulfil their aim of providing free support to those who need it most.

Somebody Cares will normally uplift furniture and other goods for free, providing they can re-use them. They do whole and part clearances and can help make it as hassle-free as possible.

Somebody Cares warehouse (for drop-offs)

Bergen House, Crawpeel Road, Altens, Aberdeen, AB12 3GL

Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri 8:30am – 4pm. Tues closed.

Somebody Cares Retail Centre

Hazledene Road, Aberdeen, AB15 8QU

You can contact Somebody Cares for more details on 01224 200197.

Does your smoke affect your neighbours?



Our housing officers have been dealing with an increase in complaints concerning the smell of smoke from some of our properties affecting other tenants, some of whom have young children. If you smoke in your property, please be aware that smoke can travel through vents, pipes and gaps as well as the more obvious places like open windows and doors. Communal areas such as stairwells and hallways should be smoke-free at all times.

We would like to remind tenants who smoke that the tenancy agreement stipulates that tenants must not act in an antisocial manner i.e. in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance to any person.

This means that if another tenant is being affected by smoke from your property, you are in breach of your tenancy agreement and you may be required to work with us to resolve the issue. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated by your neighbours and your housing officer.

More tenants save money on heating



Castlehill have recently completed the installation of air source heating at the properties at Parkvale, Longside.

The installation of the Dimplex heat pumps was completed in April by Earth Renewables working under contract to Dimplex.

Tenants in these 18 one, two and three bedroomed houses can now benefit from cheaper and more controllable heating.

This contract continues Castlehill's commitment to provide affordable heating to tenants throughout our stock.

Household changes – a reminder

If someone has moved in or out of your home, it is important that you let us know. It could be that your partner has moved in, or a teenager has moved out. You should let us know as soon as the change happens so that we can update our records. The information may be

useful in the future, for example, if you are trying to move to a larger or smaller property. If your partner moves in and you want to be joint tenants, it is important that you tell us this immediately, as he or she will have to have been a member of your household for at least six months,

and this form will be your record of them moving in.

You can call 01224 625822 or email info@castlehillha.co.uk to request a household details form.

It could be YOU!



We have a winner! **Mrs McDonald** (pictured) of Foudland Court in Insh was the lucky winner of the last The Chain quiz. Mrs McDonald was presented with her prize of shopping vouchers worth **£50** by Kevin Dowling, job share manager at Foudland Court. If you would like to be in with a chance of winning, why not have a go at this edition's quiz below?

Contact us...

Castlehill Housing Association

4 Carden Place,
Aberdeen AB10 1UT
Tel: 01224 625822
Fax 01224 625830

Website: www.castlehillha.co.uk
Email: info@castlehillha.co.uk
Office hours are:

Mon – Fri 9.00am – 5.00pm

Quiz

Q.1 What is the name of the new Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker?

Name:

Q.2 Which radio station did NETRALT have a "housing special" on?

Address:

Q.3 St Peter's Court is located in which area of Aberdeen?

Tel/Email

Q.4 How much is a standard electric cooker connection?

Please send your entry to:

Q.5 Where did Castlehill install air source heating in April?

Catherine Coutts
4 Carden Place, Aberdeen. AB10 1UT
Or email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

Entries must be received by **29th July. Good luck!**