Newsletter covering Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Castlehill Connects

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Castlehill HOUSING ASSOCIATION



Get ready for winter

Stay safe and warm this season with tips and advice on page 8

Introducing our new CEO Isla Gray

read Isla's message on page 3

Unsure about using My Home?

We can support you every step of the way see page 5

In this edition we are **connecting** with - **Queen Elizabeth Court** in Fettercairn, **Glebe Court,** Portlethen, **Richmondhill Court** in Aberdeen see page 6

And much more...
grab a coffee and **connect** with your community!

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

Castlehill is delighted to welcome Isla Gray to the role of CEO. Isla brings with her a wealth of housing knowledge and has quickly settled into her new position. She understands the difference a good home can make to people's lives.

The Management Committee, SMT and Association team wish everyone a wonderful festive season and look forward to a fantastic 2027.

Newsletter covering **Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray.**

It also lets us show some of the community activities, achievements, special birthdays and celebrations that our tenants enjoy in the Castlehill wider community. In this edition we are **connecting** with -



Go to page 6 for the photos and connect with our community.

Win a £50 Housing Perks voucher!

To enter the prize draw:

- Log in to **My Home** tenant portal.
- Go to **My Feedback** and select **Make a Suggestion.**
- Type ***Castlehill Connects sent me*** and tell us if you took part in our Annual Rent Review Consultation 2027/28. Be sure to click **Submit.**

Not online? You can enter by phoning our office or writing to us. Remember to include your name and address.

Best of luck! This prize draw closes on 28 February 2027 and we will contact the winner shortly afterwards.

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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. If in doubt, please call reception or email info@castlehillha.co.uk.

Message from our new **CEO Isla Gray**



Welcome to our latest newsletter. As I write my first piece for Castlehill Connects, it feels like a good opportunity to say hello and tell you a little about myself. I'm delighted to have joined Castlehill, taking over the reins from David Lappin who recently retired. I'd like to thank David for his leadership and commitment to Castlehill. Having dedicated more than 30 years to the association, including 16 years as Chief Executive, David has played a significant role in shaping the organisation we know today.

I've spent my career working in social housing, starting out in frontline roles, and one of the things that has always motivated me is the difference a good home can make to people's lives. That belief has been shaped not only by my professional experience but also by seeing first hand the difference a good home can make to people's lives. Home is about much more than having a roof over your head. It's about feeling safe, settled and part of a community. I am proud to be leading an organisation that genuinely cares about the people who live in its homes.

Over the coming months, my priority is listening and learning. I want to understand what matters to you, what's working well, and where we can do better. I know we won't always get everything right, but I want you to know that your views matter and that we are always looking for ways to improve.

Like all housing associations, we face challenges; from rising costs to increasing demands on our services. But I am confident that by working together, listening to one another and staying focused on what matters most, we can continue to provide high-quality homes and services, and build strong, thriving communities.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the months ahead and to hearing your thoughts, ideas and aspirations. If you see me out and about, please do stop and say hello. Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Castlehill Connects and find the information in it useful.

Isla Gray.



SURVEY winner

Did you know filling in one of our surveys can lead to you being entered in a draw to win a **Housing Perks voucher of your choice**. Our latest winner at Richmondhill won a voucher for completing a survey about communal cleaning.

Our surveys are available on **My Home** under the My Feedback button – paper copies are available. We encourage tenants to sign up to **My Home** to let us know their feedback and be in the chance to win in our prize draws.

So, if you're asking to complete a survey, please do so – it could be worth your while!



My Home – A Simple Way to manage your tenancy.

Wouldn't it be nice to check your rent balance, report a repair, or contact us whenever it suits you, without having to make a phone call?

That is where My Home can help.

My Home is a safe and easy-to-use online service that gives you access to your tenancy information from the comfort of your own home. Whether you use a computer, tablet, or smartphone, you can access My Home at any time, day, or night.

We understand that technology is not everyone's favourite thing, and trying something new can sometimes feel a little overwhelming. That is perfectly okay. My Home has been designed to be simple and straightforward, and you will never be expected to figure it out on your own.



What Can You Do on My Home?

With My Home, you can:

- Check your rent balance and payment history.
- Make secure online payments.
- Report repairs quickly and easily.
- View your tenancy information.
- Update your contact details.
- Send messages directly to Castlehill.

Everything is in one place, making it easier to find the information you need, when you need it.

You asked – we did.

We have had a lot of encouraging feedback from you since the launch of My Home earlier this year. The one function many people asked for is an ability to pay your rent within the portal, and we are excited to confirm this is now available.

All you have to do is 'push the button' on the website or log into your My Home account and go to the pay my rent section and push the **Pay my Rent** button.

Using the payment function on My Home is the same as paying online for any goods or services. Your payment can be made at any point in the week your rent is due. Payment will show up in your rent account, and you can also use the system to pay any arrears or recharges you have.

We are thrilled to report that we have taken our 100th payment since we launched the pay online service.

Tenant Lee Thornton tells us,

"My experiences using My Home, with Castlehill has been very easy to use and navigate around. For paying my bills, it gave me ease to work around, unlike many other companies I have used before.

I would suggest they build on the look of It, now they have a nice working application. I would advise for others thinking of using this, I would suggest to others to give it a go.

I will be using it again."

Thanks Lee – and congratulations on being our 100th payment user!

Tenants also told us they wanted to be able to report repairs online, you can also report repairs using My Home, – you can pinpoint the issue, you can upload images to help our staff prioritise repair timing and you can monitor the repair in real time.

If you have not noticed you can also use My Home for many other aspects to help manage your tenancy for example, to update your household details (letting us know about who moves in and out of your home) and make request for pets.



When our tenant Margaret applied for permission to keep a pet through My Home, our tenant portal, she included a lovely picture of her new pup with the form. It fair brightened our day at the office.

Pet Permission is a great example of how the smallest element of My Home works; Margaret included a photo which showed us how small her beautiful Maltese pup is. Photos can be used to reinforce issues like repairs or issues in communal areas and gives us a clear indication of problems in a useful way.

Almost three-quarters of tenants asked rated My Home as Excellent, and 95% gave it a positive rating overall.

So, if you have not registered for My Home, you can do so here, all you will need is your tenancy number and answer a few short questions. Doing so means you don't need to phone during office hours, you can check and change information (updating phone numbers, emails and household members), find out our policies and procedures, see what's upcoming for your tenancy – scheme walkthroughs and gas servicing and report repairs.

My Home puts you in charge of your tenancy.

We have made it easier to tell us what you think about our services via My Feedback surveys and 'make a suggestion' button.

Our tenants agree.

'I find this portal very easy to negotiate considering I have technophobia; I am trying to face my fears let us just say so I am very happy that this portal is extremely transparent to access and use. Big Thanks Castlehill Housing.'

'Portal is v handy to check your rent statement and for reporting repairs.'

'More things we can access online, which is great, saves time phoning and getting through to the correct department.'

'Very easy to use.'

'Everything is more efficient.'

'It lets me see what is due on rent, the option to report a problem outside hours is good.'

Support Every Step of the Way

If you are unsure about using My Home, please don't worry.

Your Scheme Co-ordinator will be happy to help you get started. They can sit down with you, help you register, show you how to log in, and guide you through the portal at a pace that feels comfortable for you. There is no rush.

A Helping Hand from Family

If you would prefer, a trusted family member, friend, or representative can also help.

My Home offers a Proxy Access option, which allows someone you trust to access the portal on your behalf, making it even easier to manage your tenancy while keeping your information safe and secure.

Why Not Give It a Go?

Many residents find that My Home gives them greater peace of mind and makes everyday tasks that little bit easier.

Independent Living tenants that would like to find out more, have a chat with your Scheme Co-ordinator. They will be delighted to answer any questions.

Castlehill **Connects** communities across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray

FETTERCAIRN – Queen Elizabeth Court celebrates 40 years.






Tenants, families, and the local community came together to celebrate a very special milestone, the 40th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth Court in Fettercairn.

The scheme has a proud royal history, having been officially opened by the Queen Mother in 1986. She spent time meeting tenants, enjoying afternoon tea in the common room and presented a signed portrait which still has pride of place there today. There is another royal connection with the land gifted by the Queen Mother's niece.

The celebration included photo displays from the 1986 visit, along with snapshots of life at QEC over the past 40 years. Pupils from the local school created birthday cards, flags, and a timeline of world events.

There was a strong turnout with tenants and the local community all joining in. There were plenty of familiar faces, including former scheme manager Gladys and former scheme co-ordinators Jan and Cath.

Thanks to everyone who was involved in the celebration.



Evelyn wins our first Cardo prize.

Mrs Evelyn Bisset (92), a long-standing tenant with Castlehill Housing Association, was presented with a £50 Amazon Voucher from Cardo Group for arranging the annual gas boiler service first time. Mrs Bisset was delighted to be presented with her voucher. She had said that "Cardo were always very helpful and prompt" when it came to attending to her heating or boiler.

L to R - Mrs Evelyn Bisset, Joshua Millar (CHA) and Matthew Woods (Cardo Group)

PORTLETHEN – Glebe Court

Congratulations to our Golden Anniversary couple.

Glebe Court tenants Ron and Diane Skinner celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in September this year. They have two daughters, Sharon and Amanda and blessed with 3 grandchildren. They have been tenants at Glebe Court, Portlethen for the past 6 years.




Association updates

Community Benefits opportunities

Did you know we have funding to help wider community projects within Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray? We have funds available up to £25,000 per year, allocated depending on project requirements. Application forms are available from Community Benefit Fund – Fill out form




Stock condition surveys

Our stock condition survey programme is underway.

These surveys provide us with detailed information on the condition and the remaining lifespan on kitchens, bathrooms, windows and heating systems.

Surveys take approx. 40 minutes depending on property size. Access to all areas of the property is required.

If you have any queries, please contact your Property Services Officer.

Plug-in solar panels

Plug-in solar panels became available for sale in the UK in August. We have reviewed the current safety information available and on the advice of our insurers these products should NOT be used in a Castlehill Housing Association property.

We are investing in renewable technologies but at this time until clearer guidance is provided in terms of building regulations and fire safety, plug-in solar photovoltaic (PV) systems will NOT be allowed as tenant safety remains our priority.

Cannabis use

We recognise that tenants have different lifestyles and circumstances. However, cannabis is a controlled drug and its possession, production and supply are unlawful unless legally authorised. Tenants must be considerate of their neighbours and ensure activities do not cause alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance. Such behaviour may be treated as antisocial behaviour and a breach of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement. Smoke and strong odours can travel, so smoking within the building, Is discouraged.

If you have concerns about cannabis use, please report to Police Scotland. Where Castlehill receives information suggesting that there are concerns about cannabis cultivation within a property, we may seek access for inspection in line with the Tenancy Agreement and our procedures. Thank you for helping to maintain a comfortable living environment for everyone

Annual Charter Performance Report

Our Annual Charter Performance Report is now available. It highlights our performance over the past year and how we are working to deliver the best possible services for our tenants.

Keep an eye on My Home for a quick survey coming soon, where you will have the opportunity to share your views on the report.

Minor Adaptations qualifications

Staff have completed Trusted Assessor Training for Minor Adaptations, combining practical learning with hands-on experience of equipment that can help tenants and Care & Repair clients live more safely and independently.

It also provides enhanced expertise and formal accreditation, helping us identify the most suitable adaptations for homeowners and deliver an even better service.

Awaab's Law

The Scottish Government has introduced new duties on landlords to tackle damp and mould. These new duties are known as "Awaab's Law" – named in memory of two-year-old Awaab Ishak who died from exposure to mould in his home.

Under Awaab's Law, landlords must investigate reports of damp or mould and begin any necessary repairs within set timescales. Castlehill policy aligns with this and we urge you to contact us as soon as possible if you sport any signs of damp or mould in your home.

More information is available here: Awaab's Law

'Tis the season for...

Be severe weather prepared

The weather can be very unpredictable at this time of year. Storms are increasingly likely as is snow and ice. Castlehill has out of hours service available out with our normal working hours.

In schemes where there are access paths the Association will take reasonable steps to ensure that there are adequate supplies of sand/salt for use by tenants however weather conditions may not allow safe delivery of sand/grit. The Association makes no provision for clearance of car parks. For Independent living, Amenity and Very Sheltered schemes we will take reasonable steps to ensure that sand/salt supplies are available. Our policy on this is available on our website.

Remember in times of severe weather that you can check local social media for updates. We recommend keeping a few essentials at home, like battery-operated torches and lamps, spare batteries, non-perishable food and bottled water. Secure any outside furniture. Check on your neighbours. Follow advice from Police Scotland about whether it is safe to travel.



Using the Grit Bin

As winter approaches, and the temperatures drop, it makes sense for tenants to acquaint themselves with where their scheme grit bins are located.

If there are grit bins within the boundary of the scheme, they are topped up by the Association, if they are out with the boundary and next to the public road the Local Authority usually maintains them. When our staff are at the development we will check to see if the grit bins within the development need topped up and arrange for this to be done. In periods of prolonged bad weather grit will be needed more frequently, so if you notice the grit supplies are running low please contact us and we will arrange for a delivery.



Tips for this winter

We had some very tough weather conditions last year, so as we go into winter, we would advise you to consider a few things which might help make the winter months easier. Minor changes can add up to savings and preparing in advance can really help should the weather be bad or the temperatures drop significantly.

- **Create a budget:** this can be done by reviewing past spending and estimating seasonal costs for heating, clothing, gifts, and transport. It makes sense to prioritise essential expenses like rent, heating, and home maintenance over discretionary spending.
- **Cooler washes equal savings:** washing at 30°C instead of 40°C means you will use less energy without sacrificing clean clothes. Using a clothes horse and drying indoors can help cut bills – but remember to crack your windows open to reduce condensation.
- **Switch off at the socket:** appliances left on standby still use energy. By turning them off at the wall, you could save money. Remember to switch your lights off when you leave the room.
- **Keep the heat in:** Draft excluders can help stop heat escaping. Layer up clothes and use extra blankets on your bed.
- **Stock up on essential supplies:** buy some extra canned goods and freezer products, a couple of extra things each shop will really make the difference.
- **Register for 105 priority service with SSEN:** for extra help during severe weather or outages. It makes sense to have battery operated lights/torch and spare batteries in case outages happen.
- **Remember to close curtains and blinds at night:** it is a simple step, but closing curtains and blinds helps trap heat inside and reduces heating costs. Address home maintenance issues such as leaks with your property services officer quickly to avoid them getting worse.
- **Use a smart meter:** Smart meters are free from most suppliers and give you a clear view of what you are spending in real time. They are brilliant for spotting where you can cut back. If you would like advice, Care and Repair can help – just give them a call.

Christmas & New Year office closure

Our office will close on Dec 24th at 12pm and reopen on Jan 5th at 9am. Direct debits will be taken on Jan 5th 2027 - this is due to the public holiday.

Emergency repairs

Out of Office times, our emergency repairs service operates. Please phone the main office number **01224 625822** for our emergency call-out details.

- For gas heating: central plant/air-source heating: Cardo **01343 842 042**
- For other emergencies (floods, leaks, loss of power, etc.): Camwater **01651 872929**

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

The Management, Castlehill Committee and team wish you happy Christmas and a fantastic 2027.