

TheChain

...linking people together

ISSUE 23 • WINTER 2019



You said... we did



See what changes have been made based on your feedback

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New Director for Castlehill



Isla Gray takes over as Castlehill's new Housing and Property Services Director

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Get involved - CaRTO



Have your say by getting involved in the Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation

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Dementia Enablement Project



Find out about our services to help those affected by Dementia

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Alan Morrison Above & Beyond Award 2019

This annual award commemorates former Castlehill tenant Alan Morrison, who volunteered a huge amount of time and energy to tenant participation at Castlehill and beyond. Those that knew him remember his compassion and kindness to others, therefore this award celebrates these attributes in the unsung heroes of our communities.

CaRTO (Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation) were tasked with deciding a winner. They were wowed by all the people who go the extra mile for Castlehill tenants and who make a real difference to the lives of others.

This year's winner is an exceptional gentleman from our sheltered housing complex at Glebe Court in Portlethen. Alec Duncan was nominated for the award by Wynne Harries, who explained how much time and effort Alec takes to ensure that the residents of Glebe Court have many varied social opportunities throughout the year, including entertainment, summer outings and Christmas dinners. This is quite an undertaking, made even more remarkable given Alec deals with debilitating sight loss. Wynne describes him as "one of the old brigade" and hopes that this award goes some way towards showing Alec how much he is valued.

Well done, Alec.



Letter from our Chief Executive...

It's hard to believe that we are about to head into a new decade with the arrival of 2020. Time does indeed fly and it doesn't seem that long ago that we were talking about Y2K and the Millennium Bug! (does anyone remember that?)

All this thought about time passing just reminds me that Castlehill needs to focus on moving with the times and properly plan for the future to make sure that we remain a well run and sound organisation, meeting the needs of current and future tenants.

With this in mind, we have recently developed a new Asset Management Strategy, setting out the things we need to consider to make sure that our properties remain "fit for purpose" as they get older and continue to meet our tenants needs and expectations.

Factors such as climate change and advances in technology will have a big impact in the next 20 years. Government targets for reduction in Co2 emissions will see a move away from fuel sources like gas, towards power that can come from renewable sources such as wind generation and new vehicles will no longer be fuelled by petrol or diesel. These things will impact on the types of heating we need to provide in our homes and on provisions such as charging points for electric cars. New build housing that we develop in the future will consider these issue from the construction phase but we also need to plan how we redevelop our existing stock to meet new requirements.

Advances in technology and increased use of broadband has enabled more people to work or access services from home and this will only increase in the future. Technology to assist people who need support to live independently is increasingly available and we need to see how we can best use this to enhance people's quality of life and address social isolation, while not losing the contact that contributes to well being.

Challenging times ahead, but also opportunities to improve our housing and make it fit for the future. After all, 2040 will be here before we know it.....

David Lappin
Chief Executive



Castlehill at 50.

2020 marks the 50th Anniversary of Castlehill Housing Associations founding in 1970 and we think that's something to celebrate! From a small beginning providing housing and support to young mothers we then moved into housing for older people, we now also provide general needs housing. Castlehill has grown and adapted and we now manage over 2000 homes across the North East.



Would you like to join in the fun? We want to encourage our tenants to celebrate too. Maybe you'd like us to help you organise an event at your scheme or a fundraiser? We would especially like to hear from people who can tell us a little about what their home with Castlehill means to them. Contact our TP officer Catherine Coutts on 01224 625822

Top tips for winter

Heading into the festive season Castlehill would like to remind you that it is important to take care during the celebrations and ensure that your property is prepared for the winter season.

If you are going to be away from the property for a significant amount of time, make sure you tell us by emailing info@castlehillha.co.uk

Please note that if you do not take reasonable precautions and water damage occurs, you may be recharged for the repair costs.



TIPS TO PREVENT FROST DAMAGE

There are some simple steps to take to help prevent your pipes from freezing:

- Leave the central heating on for short periods of time throughout the day.
- Keep room doors slightly open to allow warm air to move around the house.
- Know where your stopcock is so that you can switch off your water if there is a burst. Most frozen pipes occur in the roof space and below sink units and can cause considerable damage if they burst.
- Ensure that you have insurance for your contents and personal belongings.



IF YOU HAVE A BURST PIPE

Turn off the mains water supply immediately by turning the stopcock clockwise. This will stop any more water getting into the water pipes. You should immediately contact our Property Services in the event of a burst pipe within office ours only, or call our out of hours number in an emergency.



IF YOU HAVE A FROZEN PIPE

Thaw it out slowly by using hot water bottles or towels soaked in warm water. Do not use direct heat as you may cause permanent damage to the pipes. If in any doubt please contact our Property Service Team to report the fault.



GOING AWAY FROM YOUR HOME WHILE THE WEATHER IS COLD

- If you are likely to be away for a short period please leave your heating on low.
- If you are likely to be away for a long period, your house will be safer if you drain down the water pipes and switch off your heating and water. Please contact your Property Services Officer if you require advice about this and remember to let your Housing Officer know.
- Ask a friend or neighbour to check the house and leave a spare key.

General Advice for the winter

When temperatures drop most of us will be spending a lot of time indoors, and in these winter months it's important to make sure that your home is safe and warm.

- Keep your heating on at a low constant temperature, rather than heating your home up quickly allowing it to cool down again
- If you have a pre-payment meter, make sure you have sufficient credit!
- Close all blinds and curtains at night
- Keep furniture away from radiators to allow heat to circulate freely
- Keep outside doors shut and report any obvious draughts
- Make sure to order repeat prescriptions in good time, don't wait until you run out
- Keep a snow shovel handy
- Be aware of where your grit bins are
- Stay at home in really bad weather, even if that means re-arranging non-urgent appointments
- If you do have to venture out in bad weather, ensure you have adequate clothing. Wrap up in plenty of layers, and don't forget hats, scarfs and gloves!
- Look out for your neighbours in extreme weather and give your neighbours your phone number in case of emergencies
- If you have a mobile phone, make sure that it has sufficient credit

Also, remember make sure to...

- Know how to turn off your gas
- Know how to turn off your power
- Check where your stopcock valve is for turning off your water



Last October, the Association held three workshops across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire about how the Association should consult about how it sets the rent.

Feedback from those sessions told us that tenants wanted to know more about what the service charge pays for. A meeting has taken place between CaRTO and staff from Housing Services and Finance to talk about how to take this forward. Following a detailed discussion, a way forward has been agreed. From April 2020 tenants will be sent a breakdown of what the charges are for, that make up the service and provision charges.

The Association understands why tenants want to know more about what the service charge covers, and we are hopeful that the new format will provide that additional information. CaRTO will be kept up to date with the progress towards this and we look forward to receiving further feedback when this is in place.

Allocations policy changes

Changes to Castlehill's Allocations policy were made in May following consultation with tenants and applicants. These changes are aimed at making it easier for applicants to get priority passes without going down the long process of homelessness with the Council. The most obvious change to the passes offered by Homehunt, is the introduction of a bronze medical priority pass, and a silver plus priority pass for applicants threatened with homelessness.

The new bronze medical priority pass recognises applicants whose current accommodation is mildly or moderately affecting their health. Medical priority is awarded based on an existing health condition being made worse by an applicant's current accommodation. For example, if an applicant has mobility issues and their current accommodation is on the second floor. The new silver plus pass replaces the current silver impending homeless pass and tries to help applicants avoid having to go down the homelessness route. This pass is for

applicants who are threatened with homelessness, for example where an applicant has been served with a Notice To Quit from their current landlord or is leaving armed forces or tied accommodation.

If you would like any information about applying for housing or how to bid for our advertised properties, please contact the Homehunt Administrators on 01224 628101 or email: homehunt@castlehillha.co.uk



Mutual Exchanges.

Something we always get asked about – should you need to change your house as you find your property too big or you would like to change your area, then Houseexchange.org might be the place for you.

www.houseexchange.org is the site which provides tenants of all social landlords a way of swapping homes with another social housing resident as long as you meet the usual tenancy checks. Over 1800 people are actively registered on the site, which means there is a wide variety of property styles and bedroom choices all over the country. It helps that when you register on the site that your property has photos and good descriptions when you advertise your home. In the first 6 months of the year 723 people who are currently tenants of Social landlords in Scotland have registered on the House Exchange. In that period there have been 69 successful exchanges.



Home Contents Insurance why do I need it?

If you are a tenant, you should know that Castlehill as landlord does not cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement. It's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for in order to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one.

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen so home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

Home Contents Insurance can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.



There are many providers on the market and Castlehill can provide you with information from one provider we work with, Thistle Tenants Risks, and Allianz Insurance plc who provide the Home Contents Insurance Scheme, a specialist Tenants Contents Insurance policy

How do I get further information?

- Ask your local housing officer for an application pack.
- Call Thistle Tenant Risks on 0345 450 7286

Alternatively, please visit the www.thistletenants-scotland.co.uk for more information or to request a call back.

Emergency food

Throughout the North East there are many social enterprises who provide this vital service. Tenants can self-refer to or ask for organisations to refer them. Food parcels are provided to individuals in the greatest need and although they will do what they can, sometimes all that can be done is signposting to other organisations which may be able to help further.

<http://www.instantneighbour.co.uk/food-bank/>
01224 489955

<https://www.cfine.org/>
01224 596156

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/>
- can give you info on where to find a foodbank.



Throughout Aberdeen there are several community outlet stores which can provide people with affordable fruit and vegetables, pulses and dried goods. These pop-up stores are sold at nearly cost price and are available throughout the city. www.cfine.org/Pages/Category/cfo-events

Aberdeen City Council also has a list where people can go for free or nearly free hot food throughout the city. The provision of this is not always limited to those who are homeless although the providers may require people to meet certain requirements, there are numbers given so if they wish, people can check if they qualify. www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/homelessness/times-and-places-collect-free-food

During the festive season there are organisations who provide Christmas lunch. As before that list will be included on the Castlehill website nearer the time.

Update your info

With so many changes to legislation and how Castlehill keeps and uses your information it is always important to make sure you have kept us up to date with any changes to **emails** and **phone numbers**. If any of these have changed recently please get in touch and let us know or check next time you are speaking to your property services or housing officer that we have the most up to date information. We want to make sure we get it right.

CHA subsidiary appoints new directors

CHA subsidiary company, Castlehill Housing Trust is celebrating its new name with three new people joining the board. Nicola Shand, Allan Manson and Lyn Cullum are the first people to join the board as Castlehill representatives since the name changed from GCCCT last year. Their appointment takes the Trust to a full complement of Board Directors.

"Castlehill Housing Trust uses its expertise in housing to work flexibly with experienced care providers and local authorities to provide a solid base from which an individual's care can be provided," said Emma Ozanne Castlehill Housing Trust Manager, "We hope to limit the need for frequent moves and enable those with complex and evolving needs, to live in a place they can call home."

The new Board Directors bring enormous skills from their professional and personal lives having worked in housing and with those with special needs. The Board can draw on the



experience and knowledge of all its members to continue to meet the evolving needs of Castlehill Housing Trust customers. Nicola, Allan and Lyn

are delighted to have been selected and are enthusiastic about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

New Management Committee members

Castlehill has also been busy appointing new members to our Management Committee. Alan Pilkington formerly General Manager for Combined Health with NHS Grampian and Matthew Reid (pictured) who is currently Head of development at Inspire, have joined our Management Committee. Both bring with them valuable third sector experience and a desire to contribute to the local housing sector which they both feel has an important role in society.

Our Management Committee is drawn from the membership of Castlehill and can have up to 15 members. To join the Committee, people must have a commitment to the aims and objectives of the Association and to ensure the good governance of the organisation. We aim to have a range of skills and experience on the Committee and, at present, we are actively looking to recruit new members with a financial or accounting background.



Castlehill appoints new Director



Our Housing and Property Services Director Gail Robertson has left to take up a new position as Director of Angus Housing Association. Her role has been filled by Isla Gray who joins us from Horizon Housing Association in Livingston where she was Operations Director.

Isla Gray is no stranger to Aberdeen, having spent part of her early career in the city, working with both the local authority and 3rd sector organisations directly related to homelessness and housing.

Speaking of her appointment, she said,

"I'm delighted to be joining Castlehill, an organisation with an excellent reputation for high-quality customer-focused services and strong values. I'm looking forward to working with the tenants, staff and Committee to continue the excellent work of the association and I'm really pleased to be joining a team that is so committed to the communities that it serves. I can't wait to get started." Isla will take up her role in December.

New Managers Appointed

This year has seen a number of significant staff changes and we have new faces in three of our Manager roles within the Association.

Phil Nicol was appointed earlier this year as Property Services Manager. Phil brings many years' experience to the role having formally worked in the building industry for 23 years and then for another third sector for another RSL in a senior Property Services role. The Property Services Manager is in charge of all aspects of Property Services for our tenants, he will ensure that all maintenance is carried out efficiently and cost effectively.



Our most recent appointment to the role of manager is Amy Fyfe who will be managing the Corporate Services team. Amy has many years of HR experience having worked for Aberdeenshire Council and in the oil and gas sector and has been in her current role as HR advisor for the Association for the last year. Amy has responsibility for a team of four and aims to ensure that the department helps the Association meet objects in corporate compliance, recruitment, induction and regulatory obligations and performance management.

Also joining the managers is Nicola Wood, who took over as Finance Manager mid-summer, joining us from Cornerstone where she had worked for a number of years. Prior to that Nicola had worked in various roles in the Oil and Gas industry. As Finance Manager Nicola is responsible for operational aspects of the Associations finances and manages a team of five.



Maidencraig opening

Housing Minister Kevin Stewart MSP has officially opened Castlehill Housing Association's development at Maidencraig on the Lang Stracht in Aberdeen.

During his visit, Mr Stewart got to meet with new Castlehill tenants and see how they are settling in. Our tenant Alanna introduced Mr Stewart to her son, and over tea told him about the difference her new property has made. Mr Stewart said: "After meeting the happy new tenants here at Maidencraig, it's clear to see the difference these quality affordable homes will make. Not only will they offer people a sense of pride and belonging, they will help to create a vibrant, integrated community.

"Developments like this one are a testament to the strong partnership working between housing associations, the construction industry, local councils and the Scottish Government. These quality homes keep us on track to meet our ambitious target of 50,000 affordable homes by 2021, backed



by record investment of £3 billion."

Mr Stewart was welcomed by Castlehill's Chief Executive David Lappin and met with representatives of organisations who were involved in the development. David Lappin said, 'It is great for the area and for Castlehill to be able to provide houses

for families who really need them. Castlehill is committed to providing good quality homes at affordable rents and we are delighted with how the work with Bancon progressed to produce more affordable homes at Maidencraig Drive.'

How are we doing?

Our Annual Charter Performance Report has been published and it shows that compared with our peers, Castlehill is doing well. We are delighted that 97% of new tenants are satisfied with their new home, compared with the Scottish average of 92%. The report holds lots of statistical information on how we are doing including information on tenant satisfaction, repairs, mutual exchanges and abandonments.

A copy of the report is available on the website and a paper copy can be sent to you if you contact reception at our Carden Place office.



Are you satisfied?

Next year you will be contacted to take part in our Tenant Satisfaction survey, which takes place every three years. Information from this survey provides us with details on where we are getting it right and where we can improve, which ultimately helps to enable us to deliver the services we provide in the best way for our tenants. We look forward to your responses.

More things to note

Another policy changes to take note of is that of the facility, given to the Association by the Scottish Government, to change a Scottish Secure tenancy to a Short Scottish Secure tenancy agreement. This can be done when the Association has evidence of ongoing antisocial behaviour and all avenues to resolve the problem has failed. It also introduces a minimum occupation period of 12 months for household members, who may wish to apply with the tenant for a joint tenancy or other changes to the tenancy.

Please make your Housing Officer aware as soon as possible if anyone moves into or out of your home.

NETRALT update



North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) is a nationally recognised group at the forefront of tenant participation in Scotland. Going strong for 9 years, this dynamic collective of tenants, residents, registered social landlords and local authorities provides a platform to share good practice, offer best value and its members.

NETRALT are hosting a study visit 1-2 April 2020, giving a unique insight into its strengths and successes. Castlehill are proud to be a part of this multi award-winning organisation and are looking forward to welcoming tenants and staff from across Scotland.

Funding opportunities for Castlehill tenants



Do you need funding for a project that will make a difference to Castlehill tenants? CaRTO invite you to apply for their participatory budgeting scheme.

You can apply as an individual, or as a group. Your idea must benefit tenants at your scheme.

Our latest successful recipients were delighted with funding to purchase additional gardening equipment.

Take your pick!



Castlehill will consult with you on issues affecting your home or tenancy.

Did you know that there are a range of ways for you to have your say and get involved?

CaRTO (Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation)

CaRTO Home Link

Scrutiny Panel

Short-term working groups

Online or paper surveys

Chat to a member of staff

Scheme walkabouts

Support to set up your own tenants' group

Information sessions, visits, training and conferences

Call our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 625822 to find out how easy it is for you to get involved.

Have YOU signed up to CaRTO Home Link?

It's easy to get involved with our tenants group without even leaving the comfort of your own home.

CaRTO Home Link gives you a simple way to participate online, 24/7. All you have to do is email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk to register.

As part of our commitment to digital participation, Castlehill have signed up to the Digital Participation Charter, and frontline staff are being trained to be Digital Champions. Providing support to people who need it will help us ensure that digital is a tool to overcome disadvantages rather than something that increases inequalities.



Aberdeen Care and Repair (Castlehill HA) – Dementia Enablement Project – available for Aberdeen City residents



We are pleased to announce that Life Changes Trust has agreed to additional funding which has allowed us to extend this service until 31/03/2020.

This means we can continue to provide personalised support services for people affected by dementia. Our aim is to improve the homes, independence and confidence of people living with dementia, ensuring that they receive the appropriate equipment/ adaptations to assist them to continue living independently for as long as possible within their own home. Advice and assistance can also be provided to claim statutory benefit entitlements such as Attendance Allowance, Council Tax Benefit and staff can also signpost clients to local services/activities.

Throughout their dementia journey our clients are offered a range of aids including clocks, whiteboards, lights and signage. Our clients get assistance from staff to support them/family to install Bathrooms, Kitchens, heating systems 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.

A home fire and safety assessment is carried out to identify small changes to the home environment that can 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 and advice please contact Lyn Cullum, Dementia Officer, Aberdeen Care and Repair on 01224 251133.

FREE SERVICE AVAILABLE

Home Safety and Fire Safety Assessments

We can now offer a FREE Home Safety and Fire Safety audit to Castlehill tenants or shared owners living within Aberdeen City. This involves assessing your home for potential hazards and offering advice and assistance on the following:

- Fire Safety
- Trips and hazards
- Electrical Safety
- Safety and Security

(Equipment to reduce the above risks can be provided free of charge)

If you are interested in the above service please telephone the Aberdeen Care & Repair office on **01224 251133** for further advice.



Castlehill is Happy to Translate



Castlehill Housing Association understands that for those who English is not their first language, attending appointments and completing forms can be very stressful. For this reason, we are delighted to be adopting the Happy to Translate scheme which bridges communication gaps between organisations and service users who struggle to communicate in English.

We want to do our best to ensure that our current and prospective tenants have all the information they require regardless of their language or cultural background.

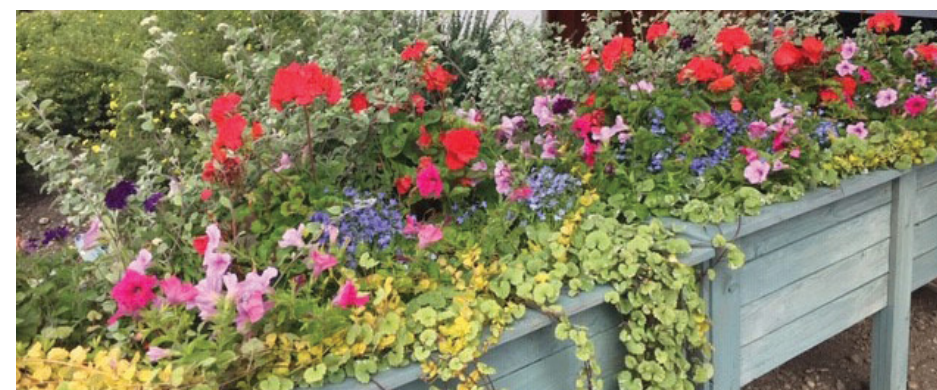
By adopting the Happy to Translate scheme we aim to have fully trained frontline staff working with the Happy to Translate toolkit enabling them to understand the requirements for those for whom English is not their first language. This training will mean frontline staff and managers have the knowledge and confidence to arrange for documents to be translated or for an interpreter to be brought in. The Happy to Translate toolkit will guarantee that Castlehill is able to offer the best service we can to people who need our services and we will be able to offer this service from January 2020.

Have you or someone you know considered Sheltered Housing?

Castlehill has beautiful properties available in schemes across the North East and we happy to discuss your options with you if you have questions. We offer sheltered accommodation in flats or cottages with their own doors allowing independent living with the reassurance of a Scheme Manager or call system. Many of our schemes have communal areas where they have a wide range of social events, where tenants can make new friends and develop new interests.

We have immediate availability in Inch, New Deer, Rhynie and Tomintoul. For information about all our sheltered housing schemes please visit our website at www.castlehill.co.uk/shelteredhousing

For further information please call our office on 01224 625822 and ask to speak to someone about applying for sheltered housing or register on Homehunt www.homehunt.info



Beautiful planters at Abbey Court

Summer cheer is continuing in Mintlaw with the beautiful planters outside Abbey Court being kept looking gorgeous by staff. These lovely arrangements of flowers are keeping our tenants spirits up and have fetched lots of positive comments from visitors and tenants alike.



Sheltered Magazine update

Please keep your contributions coming in. Articles, poems, recipes, photos, art work, jokes...whatever you would like to contribute. We encourage you to send these into us year-round so that we can keep the magazine going. Remember there are 2 x £50 prizes for submissions up for grabs courtesy of CaRTO! Please email info@castlehillha.co.uk or post to our main office at 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT.



January Direct Debits



If you pay your rent by direct debit, **please note** that your payment will come out of your bank account on **Friday 3 January 2020**, 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 2020**. **Thank you!**



The Management Committee and staff of Castlehill would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2020.



Christmas & New Year office closure

The main office at 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen will close at 1pm on Tuesday 24 December 2019.

We will re-open at 9am on Friday 3 January 2020.

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 0800 3899463

For central plant/air-source heating:
Heat Care Oil & Gas 01343 842042

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.

Win £50 in our Winter Quiz!



Last edition's winner was a lucky tenant from Braemar. To be in with a chance of winning vouchers worth £50 from a shop of your choice, enter our quiz.

Answer the questions and email to -
E catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

or post them to

Freepost CASTLEHILL
by 31 January 2020.



**GOOD
LUCK**

1. Who won our Alan Morrison Above & Beyond Award?

2. How old will Castlehill be in 2020?

3. Who is our new Property Services Manager?

4. Abbey Court is in which Aberdeenshire village?

5. The main office will reopen at what time on Friday 3 January 2020?

name
and address