



Staff meet royalty



Three members of CHA staff were invited along to discuss Prince William's Homewards project.

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Abbey Court fundraising for summer house



They raised approx. £8,000 and gifted the summer house to Abbey Court.

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Emergency Services Day



Tenants were joined by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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Cost of living advice



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SCOTLAND HOUSING AWARDS 2024

We have been shortlisted

CASTLEHILL'S INDEPENDENT LIVING TEAM IS SHA FINALIST

We have some exciting news. Castlehill has been shortlisted for the prestigious Chartered Institute of Housing, Scottish Housing Awards.

We are thrilled that the outstanding work on the launch of the Independent Living Service is in the final. This project, led by Senior Housing Support Officer Susan Pirie and the Independent Living team, is in the running for the Housing Team of the Year Award.

Their work will be used as an example of best practice in the Good Practice Compendium on the Chartered Institute of Housing website. The CIH see this as a core learning document and Castlehill being included in it is a huge honour.

This is the second time the Independent Living service has been considered for an award this year. It won the TPAS Best Practice. It is great to see that the huge amount of work involved in establishing this service and ensuring that it works well for our tenants is recognised.

The awards ceremony will take place in Glasgow on the 8th of November. We wish the Independent Living Team well for the night.

RENT PAYMENTS

There are a variety of methods available to pay your rent. Detailed information is available in the "How to Pay Your Rent" leaflet in your tenancy pack and on the Castlehill website.

A reminder that if you are making a payment by standing order or bank transfer, please make sure you quote your Tenancy number as the reference. This will make sure we can add payments to the right account.

Letter from our Chief Executive...

I recently attended a presentation on how new technology, and in particular AI (Artificial Intelligence), is impacting on businesses and the services they provide. While it was clear that aspects of AI such as "chat bots" are universally unpopular (how many questions do you have to go through before it asks if you want to speak to a "real" person?), technological advances also offer opportunities to improve efficiencies, customer experiences and tailor services towards individual needs, if used properly.

You'll see from some of the articles in this edition of The Chain that sometimes older technologies become obsolete, moving from analogue to digital, and we have to update to keep things working, for example changes to door entry and alarm systems in some properties or tenants having to get new meters to ensure that the shutdown of the Radio

Teleswitch Service doesn't result in their storage heating not working.

At Castlehill, we want to embrace the opportunities that new technology brings to further improve services and, in order to get this right, it's important that our tenants are involved in the process and can let us know what works best for them. This is an area where CARTO has a particular interest, and I would encourage anyone who would like to get involved to get in touch with our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 625822 or email info@castlehillha.co.uk

David Lappin

David Lappin
Chief Executive



Add us to your contacts

In order to guarantee that tenants can quickly get in touch with **Housing and Property Services Officers** we have introduced new emails for these departments:

Housing.Officers@castlelha.co.uk
or **repair@castlehillha.co.uk**



By using these we hope to ensure that your emails are never sitting in the inbox of someone who maybe off work unwell or on holiday.

We do not want you to miss any emails we send so there are a few steps you can carry out to prevent important emails ending up in spam or junk folders. Please 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.

Be Kind – Zero Tolerance of Abuse Towards Staff

Unfortunately, our frontline staff can sometimes be met with unacceptable abusive behaviour while carrying out their work. Our staff are here to help and should not be subjected to abusive or threatening behaviour.

We understand that customers can sometimes be angry about the issues they have raised with us. If that anger escalates into aggression towards staff, we consider that unacceptable. Any violence or abuse towards staff or contractors will not be accepted.



STAR PHOTO WINNER

This is Sally's winning photo from the Star Photo competition in the last edition. Sally's dog Daisy is ***"the thing that makes me happy. She has seen me through some tough times but has been a loyal companion to me over the past 12 years."*** Sally won a **£50 voucher** – well done and thank you for participating.

Staff meet royalty



homewards

Castlehill HA is member of the Homewards Aberdeen Coalition. The Aberdeen Coalition consists of fifty-five organisations and individuals working together to find solutions for homelessness in our region.

Senior Housing Services Officer, Susan Pirie, sitting with Prince William.

The Homewards Aberdeen project and Homeless Network Scotland hosted an event to celebrate those who work in the homelessness sector and recognise the contribution they make to those who experience homelessness. The Prince of Wales, Prince William as Patron also attended the event.

Three members of CHA staff were invited along to the event at the Union Kirk space in Aberdeen to discuss William's Homewards project. Aberdeen is one of six locations which is being provided with the space, tools, and expertise to deliver and demonstrate innovative solutions that prevent and end homelessness.

SMT nominated to represent CHA, Senior Housing Services Officer, Susan Pirie, Morgan McRitchie from Key Project, and Senior Housing Services Officer Suzanne Reid to attend the event due to their and their team's involvement with homeless individuals and supporting those at risk of homelessness. They were delighted to feed back on the event with Susan reporting,

'Being invited to an event to celebrate the great work done by all those in the sector that are working toward ending homelessness, assisting with resettlement and supporting tenancy sustainment was something we were

very proud to be part of. I took the opportunity during discussions to highlight the ongoing challenges for resettlement in terms of trying to access essential items and link people up with the correct services.'

Each attendee was presented with a thank you letter, Housing Director, Mhorag Ewen had submitted these along with the nomination for the event. Susan adds, 'I was extremely touched by her words, as were the others. Getting to meet Prince William was a bonus. Thank you Mhorag and Castlehill for the nomination.'

Did you know?

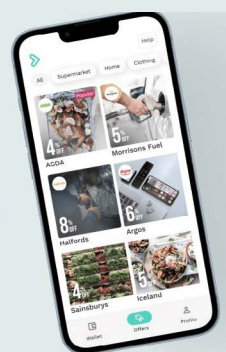
Since we launched the **Housing Perks app** for our tenants we have had **437 tenant sign ups to the scheme**. That's 437 of you currently making amazing savings across a wide variety of shops and services and our statistics show us you've made over **£3,500 in savings!**

So if you haven't signed up and are a Castlehill tenant what are you waiting for?? Download the Housing Perks App and use your tenancy number as the password.



HOUSING PERKS

SAVE MONEY ON ESSENTIALS



Abbey Court fundraising for summer house



Our Housing Officer and local resident Mandy Rae shared with us the story of how her cousins, Scott and Ian Murray, raised money for Abbey Court to build a beautiful summer house in memory of their dad.

Scott and Ian are ex Highland league football players, who following the death of their Dad (Mandy's uncle) from dementia, decided to hold a charity football match with all ex-Highland league players (who were all over 45) and donated the gate fee and the money raised by raffles.

They raised approx. **£8,000** and gifted the summer house to Abbey Court. Named Murray Lodge.

Scott has been a professional player since being spotted by Aston Villa while playing for Fraserburgh. Scott went on to have a season at Aston Villa, he was then bought by Bristol City and has been there ever since. Playing for the first team, now coaching and looking after the 1st team for all games.

We are told the residents are delighted with the summer house which has provided shelter and a focus for them over the summer.

Tenants and day visitors for Abbey Court also took part in a sponsored walk to raise money for their social events – some of which may be held in their fabulous new summer house. Powering around the garden space – an impressive £900 was raised which will certainly help them have fun.



Foudland Court Scarecrow

Some of the residents at our Independent Living Scheme Foudland Court have made a Dolly Parton inspired Scarecrow for a competition at their local Harvest Festival in Insch.

They have called her Corn Dolly, we hope she did well in the competition.

Emergency Services Day at St John's Court

Our independent living scheme in Stonehaven organised an Emergency Services Advice day in September. Tenants were



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

joined by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service who provided 2x 2-hour sessions. The firefighters spoke about fire safety and what to do if you have a fire. They spoke about how safe we are in buildings like St John's Court because of the way they were built, with fire doors and attic walls etc - which put a lot of tenants' minds at rest. Tenants were offered personal house visits on the day or on another day convenient to them. The tenants also watched a fire safety video. Lunch was provided for both the tenants and the firefighter by St Johns Court tenants' group fund. Everyone who attended really enjoyed the day, felt it was very informative and had helped clarify answers to questions that they had and put their mind to rest on fire- related issues.



Primary school clean up at Aquhorthies woodland vandalised

We were delighted that the P5 class of Kellands Primary School contacted us to ask if they could carry out some work in the community woodland at Aquhorthies Circle in Inverurie.



The children spend their time planting wildflowers, positioning bird boxes, litter picking, clearing weeds, putting up conservation posters, hanging windchimes and building a mindfulness shelter.

Sadly, soon after all this wonderful work the woodland was vandalised with much of the plants, posters and shelter destroyed. Kellands Primary is hoping that next year's primary 5 year group may attempt to repair the damage and hopes that it doesn't happen again.

Teacher Mr Gray got in touch with us to say:

'Thank you on behalf of Kellands for supporting our project and granting permission for the children to use the space. It has provided some valuable learning and the children have enjoyed it thoroughly.'

Andrew Burns is awarded the 'Nuclear Test Medal'



One of our wonderful tenants has received a medal from the King, some 65 years after the event which gained him recognition.

Andrew Burns our tenant in St John's Court has had a long and varied working career. As Chief Engineer at a brick making factory, working on North Sea offshore safety vessels and super tankers as well as a steel making works in Gartcosh.

However, it was whilst serving as Second Engineering Officer on-board the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Vessel Fort Constantine in 1957 / 58 that Andrew was involved in Operation Grapple. This was the re-supplying of UK forces during the UK atmospheric nuclear testing at Christmas Island and Kiribati. He spent 12 months on-board the Fort Constantine and witnessed first-hand some of the nuclear testing. In 2022 the UK Government announced the creation of the Nuclear Test Medal.

This was awarded to Andrew who is seen here proudly showing off the medal and veterans badge.

Ground Maintenance Survey shows satisfaction

Our property services team have been working closely with our ground's maintenance contractors Idverde and Nurture Group to ensure schemes experience the best possible service.

Castlehill conducted a grounds maintenance survey earlier this year for the schemes we directly provide the grounds maintenance service for (excluding factored schemes). 1,354 satisfaction surveys were sent out with an 8% dissatisfied response rate received. Castlehill property services staff have followed up on each dissatisfied response received with tenants who left their contact details. Staff have discussed the concerns raised and advised of the work that has been done with the contractors to rectify the issues.

If you smell it – report it



Once again Housing Officers report that 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, and some can even smell it in their own home. We remind you that it is not acceptable for others to be affected by the strong smell. We remind tenants that Cannabis is a class B drug and is illegal with penalties including large fines and up to 14 years in prison.

If you have concerns about illegal drugs and related anti-social behaviour in and around your home, then in the first instance you should report it to Police Scotland on 101. You can also report anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Then please contact your Housing Officer who can ask Police Scotland for a report on any actions that have been taken.

ARC published – Property Team perform well



We are delighted to say that despite staff shortages, our property services team, are more than hitting targets and KPIs as set out by the Regulator. In our annual return on the charter (published on our website) key indicators for reactive repairs and compliance are higher than they were last year and better than many other RSLs across Scotland.

Our Director of Property Assets Matt MacAulay praised the work done by his team, 'These results are due to the commitment and hard work by the team. It is especially pleasing to have done so well during a period of change and the restructure of the department.'

Do you know where the grit bins are in your scheme?



Do you know who is responsible for its contents and use? When the weather inevitably turns, it is useful to know about your grit bin.

If there are grit bins within the boundary of the scheme, they are generally topped up by CHA, if they are out with the boundary and next to the public road they are usually maintained by the Local Authority. When 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 more.

Cost of living – advice is out there

Many tenants continue to feel the impact of rising living costs, and at CHA, we are fully aware of these challenges. We are committed to regularly updating our advice and services to better support you during these times. For the latest information and resources, we encourage you to visit our website, where you'll find a bright blue button that links to up-to-date guidance on various issues tenants are facing.

If you have specific concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Housing Officer for assistance. Additionally, local council websites, including Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and Moray, provide valuable information on available resources, such as foodbanks and community pantries. The Big Food Appeal, the Trussell Trust, and Cfine all operate foodbanks in the region, while community pantries offer low-cost essentials, including healthy food, toiletries, baby products, and household items.

For families with children receiving free school meals, you may be entitled to additional support during school holidays. Local councils provide payments or vouchers via email or text, redeemable at most supermarkets.

For those experiencing financial difficulties, it's important to act early. Financial inclusion teams are available to provide expert guidance, and specific benefit information is also available on our website. Remember, rent is a priority bill, and if you're struggling, your Housing Officer can refer you to our Key Project team, who are dedicated to helping you maintain your tenancy.



Storm preparation



Many tenants will feel uneasy as winter approaches. CHA wants to make sure that our Independent Living and Very Sheltered schemes are adequately prepared.

Property Services have portable generators and storm kits which can be deployed to schemes with power outages. The generators will help keep power and heat to common rooms of cut off schemes while emergency services carry out the work of reconnection.

The Association will follow the advice of the emergency services and work with them to ensure schemes are kept running safely while not putting any of our team at unnecessary risk. In event of a storm our website will be kept updated with what we are doing and signpost to useful information. Working together we can weather whatever storm comes our way.

Do you know what to do if disaster strikes out of normal Castlehill Office hours?

It is important to us that you feel safe and secure in your home. We know that sometimes things can go wrong and as we head into winter would remind tenants that Castlehill Offices are open:

Mon	9am – 5pm
Tue	9am – 5pm
Wed	10:30am – 5pm
Thu	9am – 5pm
Fri	9am – 4pm

We have a comprehensive out of hours cover offered. You can access this when the office is closed (out of hours or during holiday periods) by calling **01224 625 822** for our emergency call-out details.

- For gas heating: Heatcare Oil & Gas **01343 842042**
- For central plant/air-source heating: Heat Care Oil & Gas **01343 842042**
- For other emergencies (floods, leaks, loss of power, and any further emergencies.): Camwater **01651 872929**
- Report the leak to Scottish Gas Networks on Freephone **0800 111 999**

(Independent Living/Very Sheltered)

Report to your Scheme co-ordinator as soon as possible



Staffing updates

There have been several staffing changes in the Carden Place Office this year. In July all office-based staff moved under one roof and all departments can now be found in the Carden Place Office.

New recruits to working with us in the Carden Place Office are Megan Olley who joined the property services team as admin. Karen Gardner joined Corporate Services and is our new HR Officer. The Housing

Services department also have two new starts. Josh Millar began work with us in July as Housing Officer and Joshua Wilson started with us as a Housing Services Assistant.

We also have several new starts out with the office, with three new starts in the Independent Living team who have added Kirsty Hart, Chloe Strachan and Debbie Whipps as scheme co-ordinators.

NETRALT shortlisted for two awards!



CaRTO Chair Colin Stewart in the SHMU FM studio with hosts Lady Ghada and Mike Melvin. Also pictured are Rebecca Blackwood and Lewis McGill of NETRALT.

North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) is a finalist in the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland Housing Awards 2024 in the Working in Partnership category. It is also a finalist for the Tenant Information Service (TIS) National Excellence Awards 2024 in the Excellence in Digital Engagement category.

This follows the success of NETRALT's second online collaboration with North Tenants Partnership, showcasing the importance of tenant and community involvement in shaping communities.

NETRALT tenant members were featured live on a radio show to talk about the event and to promote tenant participation. You can hear a recording of the show here www.mixcloud.com/shmuFM/shmu_sowhydontyouprogramme_withnetralt/

Decommissioning of Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS)

Some tenants may be aware of an upcoming change to the Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) used by around 250,000 households and businesses in Scotland to heat their properties mainly in off gas grid locations.

This technology is to be fully decommissioned by end of June 2025. From July 2025 RTS meters may no longer function properly causing disruption to heating and hot water supplies.

It is the responsibility of all major utility and power supply companies to replace these meters with new smart metering. You may use an RTS meter if your property has a meter that switches between peak and off peak tariff rates, such as Economy 7 or Economy 10 or a Total Heating Total Control (THTC) tariff; has a meter that automatically turns on your heating and hot water; is heated using electric or storage heaters; is located in a no-gas supply area (off grid), especially in rural areas. These energy companies should be contacting you to arrange fitting a new smart meter.

If not, then please contact your supplier direct as soon as possible. For properties unable to have a smart meter your supplier should be offering you an alternative solution to avoid any service disruption. If you have any questions then contact your supplier. You can also get free and impartial advice and support from Citizens Advice Scotland (0800 028 1456).

Care & Repair Project could help

Aberdeen Care & Repair's Charity have been granted funding from Aberdeen City Health Improvement Fund for equipment for their early intervention and prevention project.

This project begins with a survey, conducted by one of the highly trained team. The questions cover both the person and the property, expertly identifying potential issues or hazards and providing advice, and action to help support independent living both in the short term and long term. The funding from Aberdeen City Health Improvement Fund will be used to purchase smaller items like handrails, grab rails, easy to use cups, can and jar openers, easy to read clocks, day light bulbs and long handled grabbers for picking up items. Some of these items will be offered free of charge to those individuals who are taking part.

If you would like further information or would like to arrange an Early Intervention Survey, contact our team on 01224 625822 and select option 1.



Anti-Social Behaviour

Castlehill Housing Association want you to feel happy and safe in your home. We hope that our tenants and families will have consideration for their neighbours but unfortunately there may be times when this is not the case.

The Association can only deal with Anti-Social Behaviour if it is reported to us, if you are experiencing Anti-Social Behaviour please contact your housing officer on **01224 625822** (option 4) or housing.officers@castlehillha.co.uk for help and advice. Please keep a note of dates and times of incidents where possible.

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour contacting the Police is vital. Police Scotland can be contacted on **101** or online www.scotland.police.uk/secureforms/contact/. You can also contact them via Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**. Logging complaints with means more information can assist us in taking further action.

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 3rd January 2025**, instead of the usual 1st of the month. This is due to the banks being closed on the **1st & 2nd January**.

Please ensure that you have money in your account to allow your rent to be paid on **3rd January 2025**. Thank you!

Contact us...

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

OFFICE HOURS:
Mon 9am – 5pm
Tue 9am – 5pm
Wed 10:30am – 5pm
Thu 9am – 5pm
Fri 9am – 4pm

Registered Charity Number: SC013584

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.



• ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ •
Merry Christmas
• ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ •

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

Christmas & New Year office closure

Office closes 1pm on Christmas Eve and will reopen at 9am on Monday 6th January 2025.

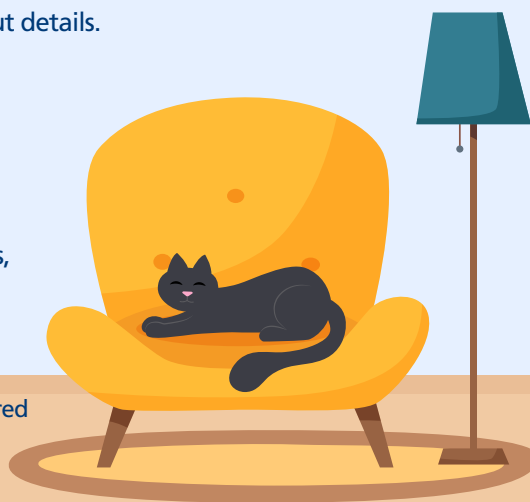
During the holidays, our emergency repairs service will operate. Please phone the main office number **01224 625822** for our emergency call-out details.

For gas heating: Heatcare Oil & Gas
01343 842042

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 VOUCHER - If you would like to be in with the chance of winning a £50 voucher, this time we are asking for feedback on this newsletter, The Chain. You can answer a short survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHA24 or use this form and post back to 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT



Q1. What do you most enjoy about the newsletter?

Q2. What would you like to change about the newsletter?

Q3. Any ideas for future content?

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Email: