

# Bridge Brief



Autumn 2017

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The magazine for Newport City Homes' residents  
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**Brollies and bibs for school pupils**

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News stories   Local events   Interviews   Your stories  
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# OUR 2020 VISION

## Newport is changing and so is Newport City Homes.

We have never been just a housing association. Our residents are Newport and we're proud of that. Working with our partners, it's time to realise the full potential of the city. 2020 Vision sets out our ambitions for the next five years and there is a lot to be excited about.

We are the largest social landlord in Newport, with 71% of the city's social housing. We are ambitious and ready to be the partner of choice in building Newport's future. Throughout Bridge Brief, you will find the 2020 Vision 'stamp' against some of the stories. This is so you can see exactly what progress we're making against each of the five areas.

**2020  
VISION**

We're focusing on:



Putting residents at the heart of what we do



Investing in our homes and neighbourhoods



Providing new homes



Making a difference in our communities



Strong and effective organisation

## Top tip!

"Help us tackle fly-tipping. We want Newport to be a place in which we are all proud to live. Fly-tipping is an eyesore that spoils green spaces and beauty spots across the city. Anyone found fly-tipping could face a £20,000 fine and up to six months in prison. If you witness fly-tipping, report it confidentially to the council by calling 01633 656656."



**Steve Richards**  
Tenancy management team leader  
See P18 for more about tenancy management

## Get in touch with us

We need your help to make us even better!

Let us know how we've done, whether you've had a great experience or there's some way you think we could deliver a service better.

We would love to hear your thoughts:

- enquiries@newportcityhomes.com
- 01633 381111
- NewportCityH on Facebook
- @NewportCityH on Twitter
- Nexus House, Mission Court, NP20 2DW
- 8-11 Ringland Centre, NP19 9HG
- 8-11 Bettws Centre, NP20 7TN
- www.newportcityhomes.com

# NEW BOARD IS APPROVED

**Newport City Council has approved plans to renew our board structure.**

With an emphasis on a 'skills-based' board, we can now appoint board members based upon the skills we need.

This will make it easier for us to respond to the growing housing needs of the city.

We were set up in 2009 to bring council properties up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, which we achieved in 2015.

With ambitions of developing new homes and regenerating communities becoming a reality, we knew that new skills were needed to support the robust corporate governance of a complex social business.

The former board structure saw 15 board members fall under three categories: residents, council

representatives and independents. It also saw the council hold a third of voting rights for some decisions.

The number of board members has reduced to 12 and the council share will now count for one vote.

Board chair Nicola Somerville (left) said: "Our focus has always been on our residents, and what we can do to improve their homes, communities and opportunities.

"Our new governance arrangements will not only see residents play a full part in NCH's future, they will give us the opportunity to turn our plans for Newport into a reality."



## New brollies and bibs for Somerton school pupils

**Somerton Primary School pupils have their brollies at the ready for their winter walking bus, thanks to our contractors Mi-Space!**

Mi-Space, which is carrying out the Somerton regeneration scheme, delivered hi-visibility vests and umbrellas to the school assembly to help its walking bus.





## We're changing to serve you better

**We are always listening to what you tell us about how we can get better.**

To help us improve the services you tell us are most important to you, we have brought together our resident engagement and customer service teams to form the new customer experience team.

We know from your feedback that you want quick and easy to access services.

You want us to get it right first time and treat you, your family and your home with the care and respect you deserve.

The good news is that is exactly what we want to do too! This is us putting the resident at the heart of all we do.

Traditional customer service is about

how we help when things go wrong, and about being polite and helpful whenever you interact with us.

However, customer experience is about much more than that.

Customer experience is about how it feels to do business with us throughout

your relationship with Newport City Homes. This could be when your first bid on a home to your 50th anniversary as a resident.

We know that will mean different things to different people, so the customer experience team will always engage with you to build a deep understanding of what matters most to you. It will then work with other teams across the business to make it happen.

- **To get involved, contact 01633 381111 or [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com)**





# Meet Kris Ablett

Meet your new customer experience manager Kris Ablett.

Here he tells you a bit about him and the new customer experience manager role:

## Can you tell us a bit about the journey that brought you to NCH?

I had a part-time job in retail while I was at school. I did lots of different jobs over 17 years in retail all over the country.

The jobs I enjoyed most were always the ones where I got to work with customer service. I saw the role here as an opportunity to combine what I love to do as a job and a chance to give a little back to the community.

## What were your first impressions of NCH?

I have been really impressed with the commitment of the people who work here. Everyone I have met really cares about the communities they serve and wants to do their part to make a difference to the city of Newport.

## What is on the horizon for customer experience at NCH?

We have been listening hard to the views of our residents. They tell us

they want it to be easier for them to access our services. To achieve this, we are reviewing how we work and have some big projects in the pipeline.

We are working on a new website that will mean you can access more of our services where and when you want to. We are also looking at opening a new office in the heart of the city. This will be designed by you, for you.

## Can residents help?

Yes, fill in the satisfaction survey when it drops through your door or into your inbox. I read every one and it gives me really useful information about where to look for ways to improve.

Without your feedback, we could spend lots of time working on a really great answer to the wrong question.

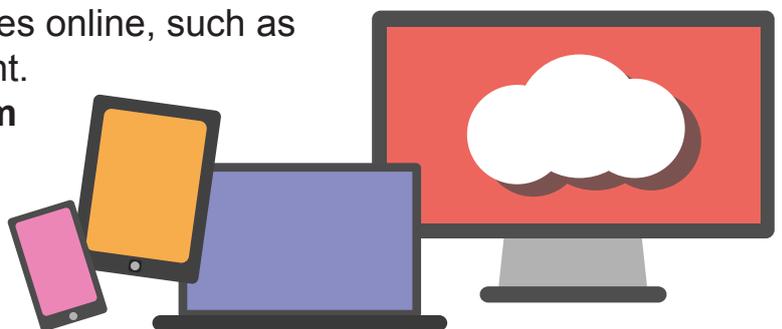
So, let me know what you think. Whether you love it or hate it, please tell me about it!

**Have your say, contact [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com)**

## Register your interest in online services

**You can now pre-register your interest in our new online services that will go live on our website in the new year.**

Once live, you will be able to access services online, such as checking your balance or making a payment. Simply go to [www.newportcityhomes.com](http://www.newportcityhomes.com) and click on the scrolling banner that says 'Sign up online'. From here you will be able to complete a simple form.



## UNITY premieres film



### A Newport youth forum has premiered its own film.

Uniting Newport Inspiring Tomorrow's Youth (UNITY) is a youth forum that we set up with Charter Housing last year. The aim is to develop skills and confidence of young people, and promote and campaign for their rights.

The film, which was launched at a special event at the Riverfront, aims to help recruit members to the group. To find out more contact 01633 227844 or [chelsea.crook@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:chelsea.crook@newportcityhomes.com)



## Avoid unexpected costs with our home insurance

**We offer residents the opportunity to take out home contents cover with us.**

We have joined up with Thistle Insurance Services to develop a low cost home contents insurance package for our tenants, leaseholders and homeowners. The scheme offers affordable premiums payable weekly.

## Talking Bridge Brief

### What would you like to see in Bridge Brief?

We're looking for creative advisors to offer ideas and suggestions. Join our online group to see your ideas come to life in print.

Email [communications@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:communications@newportcityhomes.com), tweet [@NewportCityH](https://twitter.com/NewportCityH) or like [/NewportCityH](https://www.facebook.com/NewportCityH)

## Our award nominations

### We are up for some awards!

Former board member Cissie Beale has been shortlisted as tenant champion of the year at the national 24 Housing awards and as inspirational volunteer at the GAVO awards here in Newport.

We also have two nominations shortlisted in the 'empowering

and involving communities' category at the Welsh Housing Awards for our work with UNITY and Shaftesbury Youf Gang.

Finally, our Duffryn biomass boiler has been shortlisted at the Wales Green Energy Awards in the 'best use of renewable energy in the public sector' category.

We'll let you know how we get on!

Many of our residents do not realise that we do not insure their personal belongings, furniture or internal decorations against theft, fire, vandalism or burst pipes.

You must take out your own insurance to cover these unexpected costs.

• **For an application pack or for more information call us on 01633 381111.**

## Recycling

Don't forget, bins and recycling will be collected one day later than usual over the Christmas and New Year period.

Go to [newport.gov.uk/waste](http://newport.gov.uk/waste) and put in your postcode on the bin collection page to find out when your bin and recycling will be collected.

Your real Christmas tree can be recycled by:

- Placing it in your garden waste bin for collection in February
- Taking it to the household waste recycling centre
- Asking the council to collect it for £6

Christmas cards can go in your green recycling box with cardboard and wrapping paper goes in your blue box, but no foil wrapping paper!

For more information on recycling, go to [wastesavers.co.uk](http://wastesavers.co.uk)

# Fireworks advice

Bonfire night is coming up and we want to make sure everyone enjoys it.

While many people want to enjoy the excitement, fireworks can also frighten and disturb people and animals, cause annoyance, and reduce air quality.

In particular, children and the elderly can be intimidated and scared by firework noise.

Here's some tips to make sure the night is enjoyable and safe for everyone:

- Consider going along to an organised fireworks display. These events are run by professionals who make sure that all health and safety regulations are met.
- Try and give neighbours some notice of your firework display, particularly if they are elderly, have young children or pets.
- Use appropriate fireworks – try to avoid really noisy ones. Your supplier should be able to tell you what they are selling.
- Consider timing and try to make sure they are over by 11pm.

- Let off your fireworks in an open garden area – noise bounces off buildings and smoke pollution can build up in an enclosed area.

- Make sure pets and other animals are safely away from fireworks. If a neighbour complains that the fireworks are disturbing them, their pets or livestock, be considerate and think about ending the display as soon as possible.

- If you have pets and are concerned about fireworks affecting them, there is advice at [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

- Avoid letting off fireworks in unsuitable weather conditions. Strong winds can be hazardous and cause fireworks to be a danger to people watching.

Finally, enjoy a safe and fun bonfire night.



# Pillgwenly project progresses

**Our Pillgwenly regeneration scheme is progressing well.**

Pillgwenly regeneration contractor United Living is currently installing sprinklers in six properties with 19 installations planned, while structural repairs have taken place in 20 out of 26 planned properties.

The team has been working hard with the local community, particularly Pillgwenly Primary School, to deliver important health and safety messages to pupils.

This included a visit by construction industry mascots Ivor and Honor Goodsite from the Considerate Constructor Scheme, who came along and met all of the children to



introduce the regeneration scheme and general site safety.

In partnership with BRC Recruitment, United Living also ran a competition, asking pupils to design a poster that showed some of the key safety messages.

An incredible 230 posters were created to very high standards making the decision to select the ten top artists, who were presented with certificates and prizes. The chosen posters will now be displayed on the site hoarding around the project so the pupils can see their work as they walk to and from school.

As there were so many good posters, in addition to the 10 winners, a further 20 posters will also be displayed around the site. Well done, all!

**To keep updated on the project, like /NewportCityH on Facebook or follow @NewportCityH on Twitter**

**2020  
VISION**



# Plans submitted for RINGLAND REGENERATION



**We have submitted a planning application for the start of our ambitious multi-million pound regeneration plans for Ringland.**

The investment is set to play a vital role in the redevelopment of this area, and we are working with a steering group of local residents and retailers.

In September, we submitted a detailed planning application for the redevelopment of the Cot Farm site, which will provide a total of 56 new homes as follows:

- 11 one-bedroom apartments
- 19 two-bedroom apartments
- 18 two-bedroom houses
- 8 three-bedroom houses

The housing mix has been developed in response to a review of local housing need and demand. We have held extensive consultation with the local community during the Cot Farm design process and, where feasible, we incorporated

**“Employability will play a key role, with all building contractors being required to provide employment and training opportunities for local people”**

Board chair Nicola Somerville said: “We want to provide more affordable homes, design out areas that allow anti-social behaviour to thrive and improve access to community facilities. The

steering group is helping us to deliver not only what the community wants, but what it needs. We are confident that this project will completely revitalise the area.”

**Visit [www.newportcityhomes.com](http://www.newportcityhomes.com) for more information.**



# Universal Credit: Are you ready for the changes?

Universal Credit (UC) is a single monthly payment of benefit for people in and out work.

From November, families and couples, as well as single people, making a new claim for benefit will also be expected to claim this new benefit.

People of Pension Credit-age will remain unaffected.

If you move onto UC, you will have to apply for and manage your UC claim online. You will only get one monthly payment, which will be paid into your bank account.

If you're entitled to help with your rent, this will be included in the monthly payment and you will have to pay the rent to us.

You will still need to claim some benefits separately, like council tax reduction and 'personal independence payment'.



### Banking

Universal Credit can be paid into a bank or credit union account. Set one up or use the one you have



### Online

All claims are managed online, so you need to know where you can access the internet and you need the skills to go online



### Budgeting

You need to plan your budget. Universal Credit is paid monthly rather than weekly or fortnightly

## How to make a claim

To make the process as quick and easy as possible, make sure you have all of the following information:

- Your national insurance number, and your partner's national insurance number
- Your postcode
- Your email address
- Your mobile phone number
- Your landlord's address – Newport City Homes, Nexus House, Mission Court, Newport, NP20 2DW
- Your rent details – contact us if you're not sure of the correct amount
- Your tenancy start date – we can provide you with this
- Details of any household members that live with you, including their name, date of birth and relationship to you
- Details of any savings
- Details of any other money you receive
- Bank account details, sort code and account number

### What else did BOB do?

I created an email address. I started saving money each week, so I had money before my first UC payment.

Don't forget, it takes at least six weeks for your first payment to arrive after you make your claim.

**Be like BOB!**

### What did BOB do?

When BOB heard his benefits were changing to become a single monthly Universal Credit payment, he got ready

to **Bank**

go **Online**

and **Budget**

so that he could claim.

If you need help, contact us:

01633 381111

income.services@newportcityhomes.com

www.newportcityhomes.com

### Moving to UC

Changes to housing benefit, child tax credit, working tax credit, employment support allowance (income-related), job seekers allowance (income-based) or income support will move you onto UC.

# How are we doing?

Putting residents at the heart isn't just something that we say, it's something that we do.

This is our opportunity to share with you the strides we are making towards meeting our plans to continuously improve. No matter how good our services are, we can always be better.

**This is how we think we're doing.**

More importantly, how do you think we're doing? By listening to your views we know we can truly make a difference in our communities.

Find out more at [www.newportcityhomes.com](http://www.newportcityhomes.com)

We'd love to hear from you.



Talk to us on

NewportCityH

@NewportCityH

enquiries@newportcityhomes.com

01633 381111

## Putting residents at the heart



## Investing in our homes and neighbourhoods



## Providing new homes

We have started masterplanning for the

# Ringland regeneration programme

and have appointed architects to design a new layout for phase one of the works.

We have committed to building

# 300 new homes

per year by 2028.



## Making a difference in our communities



In the last five years,

# 91

apprentices have completed their training with

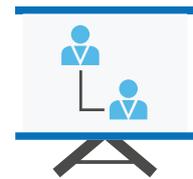
# 86%

progressing to a career in construction



Through our maintenance contracts, we have supported the creation of

**47** short-term jobs    **53** long-term jobs.



Our training and employment Academy has helped people in our communities gain work skills and experience in the last year.

## Strong and effective organisation



We reinvest our money into building new homes. For 2016/17 this is

# 17.26%

of our income.



More of our staff are now working in our community bases so they can be

# closer to residents

Our Equality and Diversity working group helps us promote

# equality of opportunity for all

and ensure we're representative of the communities we serve.

# Kitchen revamp helps charity

**We helped revamp a community kitchen in Lower Dock Street.**

King's Church has been based in the city centre for more than 25 years and has a history of helping people in need, including feeding people. It does this through its Jesus Cares project, which delivers more than 2,500 food hampers a month to people in poverty and deprivation, and by feeding people from its base in Lower Dock Street.

Office manager Hayley Corley said: "Howdens Joinery very kindly donated a kitchen to us, but we needed help with the installation.



"As part of its commitment to make a difference to its communities, NCH agreed to step in using money from contractor community benefits.

"This kitchen will enable us to continue to reach out to people from all walks of life, delivering hot food to the homeless during winter months and also to help

feed various community groups that use the church facilities on a weekly basis.

"We would like to thank NCH, LCB Construction and the whole team who helped pull the installation together.

"The food from this kitchen will be enjoyed by many for years to come."

## Enjoy free food and sport with Fit and Fed

**More Fit and Fed sessions for children will be held in half-term (30 October – 2 November).**

The programme was created to allow children aged eight and above to access local, fun and safe sports activities while also receiving a nutritious meal.

It aims to help tackle holiday hunger, isolation and inactivity across some of the city's most disadvantaged areas. It is a partnership between us, Newport City Council, RASCAL, Melin Homes, Charter Housing, Street Games and Newport Live. For information, call 01633 235609.



# Smart meters can help you save

**Smart meters are changing how people understand the way they use their gas and electricity.**

The government wants every home to have a smart meter by 2020. Whether you currently have a prepayment meter or pay for your energy monthly by direct debit, your energy provider will offer you a smart meter.

A smart meter connects to the internet, so it can 'talk' to your energy provider, which means you'll never have to submit a meter reading again. You will not get estimated bills, as your provider will always know exactly how much energy you're using.

The meter can also help you to keep an

eye on your usage, see where you could save money and reduce your energy bills.

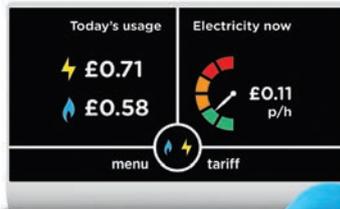
The government believes this information could help you to cut about £26 a year off your energy bills by 2020, and as much as £43 a year by 2030.

There are laws about information security and data protection, to protect users.

Your supplier will install a smart meter in your home completely free and you

do not need permission from Newport City Homes for their installation.

If you have any further questions, contact 01633 227662 or mark.phillips@newportcityhomes.com



## Closures

**Our offices will be shut over the Christmas period.**

All offices will close at 4.30pm on Friday 22 December and reopen at 9am on Tuesday 2 January.

In case of emergency, call 01633 381111.

## Energy saving tips for the winter

**With less daylight and colder temperatures, people inevitably spend more time indoors during the winter.**

This generally means higher gas and electric bills, so here are some energy saving tips:

- Insulate your hot water tank
- Use a timer for your immersion heater
- Use saucepan lids when cooking
- Only boil the amount of water you need
- Don't leave fridge or freezer doors open for a long time
- Defrost your freezer often
- Use saucepan lids when cooking
- Turn off lights when rooms aren't occupied
- Use energy efficient bulbs
- Close curtains at dusk
- Insulate windows and letter boxes to stop draughts indoors
- Turn off electrical equipment such as your TV – don't leave them on standby

# Stay warm this winter

**With the winter months meaning colder weather and shorter daylight hours, it is particularly important for older people to keep warm.**

A lack of warmth can make underlying health problems worse. Here's some tips to help you stay safe this winter:

- Make sure heating and cooking appliances are checked regularly.
- Flues and chimneys should be swept to ensure ventilation points are not blocked.
- Check that your carbon monoxide and smoke alarms are working.
- Keep a few simple cold and flu remedies at home, so you don't have to go out if feeling unwell.
- Quit smoking and you will quickly notice that breathing is easier and they are more comfortable exercising. Support groups are available.

- Have a flu jab – people aged 65 or over and some younger people with certain health conditions can have a flu jab for free.
- Regularly wash your hands to prevent the spread of infections such as colds or the winter vomiting bug.
- Regularly check the weather forecast.
- Order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time to make sure that, if the weather is bad, you are not left without supplies of your regular medicines.
- Get some tinned, frozen and dried food in early, so you can manage for a few days or a week if you are unable to get out to shop and there is no-one to help.
- Make sure you eat as well as you can afford to, have warm drinks and move around from time to time rather than sit all day. All of these will help to prevent your body temperature dropping too low.

## Stay safe

**The winter months can be particularly difficult for older residents.**

Keeping active will help to strengthen your bones and muscles, improve balance and coordination, and reduce the risk of you falling. However, there are small things you can do around the home too, such as:

- Checking your slippers or shoes are not worn down or 'slopping'.
- Not trailing wires across the floor if you use items like plug-in heaters.
- Getting hand rails on steps or stairs if you have difficulties going up or down.
- Getting your medication checked by asking your pharmacist for a medication review, as tablets can react against each other and lead to loss of balance as well as other side effects.

## Help to pay your water bills

**Contact us to find out about the range of tariffs we offer that could help reduce your water bill.**

These include HelpU, WaterSure Wales, Water Direct and the Customer Assistance Fund. Terms and conditions apply to each, but they could help you save money or reduce your debt.

Contact 01633 381111 to find out more.

## Rent free

We offer residents two rent-free weeks a year, if they maintain credit on their account.

The next rent-free week begins Monday 25 December.

If you are in credit and pay your rent by direct debit every fortnight, four weekly or monthly, you don't need to change your payments. We calculate your rent payment, taking into account the two free weeks that you would be entitled to.

If you owe rent arrears, you will be expected to make your usual payment to give you a chance to catch up. You will receive written notification in advance of the rent-free week if you are expected to make a payment.

Contact your income officer or call 01633 381111 for more information.



### Since the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, we have been working hard to reassure residents living in our tower blocks that their homes are safe.

Their safety is our priority and, as an interim safety measure, we have 24-hour fire wardens at each of our tower blocks.

United Living has started installing sprinklers at Hillview and this should be completed before Christmas. Sprinklers will then be installed at Milton Court and finally Greenwood. We expect all work to be completed by March 2018.

Hillview resident Denis Crowley said:

“The boys were only here a few hours. I didn't have to leave. They moved the bookshelves for me and tidied up after themselves. They were really good.”

While United Living is the main contractor, the specialist work is being completed by Residential Sprinkler Protection Ltd, which has a FIRAS certificate. FIRAS is the mark of endorsement of competency in the installation of sprinkler systems.



# Eviction following alleged illegal & anti-social behaviour

**We have evicted a tenant for alleged serious illegal activity and street anti-social behaviour connected to the property.**

In July, Newport Magistrates granted Gwent Police a Closure Order that resulted in 20A Potter Street, Pillgwenlly, being closed for three months.

The order gave us the ability to seek possession on 'absolute' grounds, which resulted in the possession order.

The eviction follows partnership working with Gwent Police to tackle illegal and anti-social behaviour in the area.

Crime and disorder reduction officer PC Paula Spence gathered evidence showing that the property had been allegedly linked to the use of class A

and B drugs, serious crime and disorder, and serious assaults on officers.



Welcoming the court's decision, tenancy and leasehold service manager Lindsay Murphy said: "We are working extremely hard with Gwent Police to improve Newport and target all areas that can impact on safety and people's perception of our city.

"Close partnership working is more important than ever in ensuring we can deliver the best possible services for our residents. This case is a clear example of a minority of offenders repeatedly causing problems in the same area. We hope the court's decision will deter future anti-social behaviour in this area."

## A day in the life of tenancy management

**Our aim in tenancy management is to help tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and other breaches of tenancy conditions.**

We proactively support our residents to achieve this.

Every morning we check all the recorded instances of domestic violence in the city over the last 24 hours. If one of our residents is affected, we put support in place.

A lot of our work focuses on ASB and this can take many forms, including

drug dealing, alcohol-related nuisance, fly-tipping, noise nuisance, harassment and hate incidents.

We support our residents in different ways. For example, for people suffering from noise nuisance, we encourage them to use the Noise app, which allows them to record instances on their smartphone.

We also help other departments gain access to homes for such things as statutory gas safety checks, which has helped us reach 99.9% gas safety compliance for the last few years.



**Steve Richards**

# Residents transform garden



## Residents at Isca Court have transformed a garden area at the sheltered housing scheme.

Sue Kitson and Jim Duke worked tirelessly at the start of the year to remove overgrown weeds that blighted one corner of the garden area.

They have now seen the fruits of their labour, as colourful flowers have blossomed and vegetables have grown.

“When I moved in, this part of the garden was really overgrown,” explained Sue.

“Jim noticed that the bench was facing this area, but it was completely covered in weeds. It made us think that there must have been some kind of scrubs and herbs there in the past, so we decided to make a feature of it.”

The pair initially didn’t have any tools,

so borrowed them from friends and neighbours. They dug out all the weeds and their roots, before laying new soil and erecting a trellis.

“It was very hard work,” Jim said. “There were weeds and brambles everywhere. We started work on the area in the spring, fitting in the gardening when the

weather was good. The hard bit was making sure the land was prepared thoroughly.”

Sue and Jim planted all the donations they received from residents, and the flowerbed now boasts geraniums,

hebes, begonias and mini rose bushes among others.

The pair have also set up a gardening fund for residents at Isca Court, allowing people the option to donate £2 a month to buy more plants and tools to maintain the ground.

“We hope it becomes a focal point for the residents who live here.”



**Rhowch ein pwmpen yn eich ffenestr os nad ydych am gael galwyr Nos Galan Gaeaf**

**Please display our pumpkin in your window if you would prefer not to have Halloween callers**

Os yw eich diogelwch personol dan fygythiad, ffoniwch



**999**

is the number to call if your personal safety is under threat

PAN FYDD YN LLAI PWYSIG NA 999



**101**

WHEN IT'S LESS URGENT THAN 999