

Bridge Brief



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The magazine for Newport City Homes' residents | Winter 2016
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Happy New Year!

2016 has been a great year,
find out more inside.

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A MESSAGE FROM CERI, OUR CEO



Another year ends – where did 2017 go?

It went a long way to raising the profile of our fabulous city and residents. I'm so proud of the part NCH played in the city's success in 2016. Whenever challenges arise – and they do frequently at NCH, a quick look at #HatsOffNewport and #Newportselfie reminds me why so many talented and committed people choose to live and work in this city.

You can't help but smile at both the passion and madness of it all!

I'm privileged to work with talented people, motivated partners and essentially engaged residents in managing NCH. The four commitments in our 2020 Vision both illustrate and demonstrate the role we collectively play across the city:

Making a difference in our communities



Putting residents at the heart of what we do

Investing in our homes and neighbourhoods



Providing new homes

So what have we managed to do in 2016 to contribute to these commitments?

We've been making a difference in our communities through community investment projects, such as PopUp Business School. This has been a great success with 75% of attendees having started a business.

We've been putting you at the heart of what we do by discussing your views at consultations and through our panels. We spoke with 958 residents about how we provide services and what matters to you.

We've invested in our homes and neighbourhoods through projects such as the award winning Duffryn biomass boiler, where we have used wood from a sustainable source. The new system has created a saving of 2,032 carbon tonnes.

We will be building homes as part of our £10million regeneration project in Pillgwenly.

Our multi-million pound regeneration plans for Ringland are another example of our ambitious plans to address the growing housing need in Newport, and invest in projects that will have wider benefits for the whole city.

By building new homes, we can create a brighter future for generations to come.

Newport has massive potential. It is a wonderful city full of amazing people. And NCH will be a driving force in realising it. Not only for our benefit and yours. We want to see Newport flourish for the good of everyone.

We are half way through our 2020 Vision plan; the first half was all about finding out what we've got and how we can improve, expand and develop.

Now's the time to continue to make our 2020 Vision a reality. Watch this space.

Thank you to all our residents, partners and the people of Newport for your support in 2016.

Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.

We would love to hear your thoughts. You can contact us by:

✉ enquiries@newportcityhomes.com

📞 (01633) 381111

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WHAT'S HAPPENED IN 2016?

The average age of our engaged residents has reduced from **62 to 43**

98.52% of our homes are occupied



We attended **22 EVENTS** over the summer reaching more than **5,000 PEOPLE** across the city

Rent arrears have gone down by **£500,000** since 2014



No complaints answered out of target time

Gas safety compliance at **99.96%**

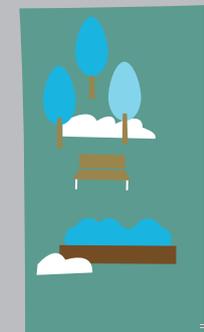
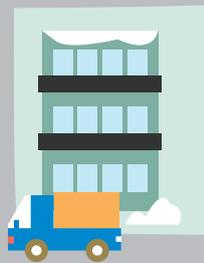
100% of our homes meet WHQS standard with exceptions of properties involved in major regeneration programmes

We talked with 380 residents to update their contact details and preferences

Community Voice, a resident group that gives us community insight, has **24 RESIDENT MEMBERS**

958 RESIDENTS have been talking to us about how we provide services and what matters in their communities

11 of these are newly engaged residents, representing 14 wards.



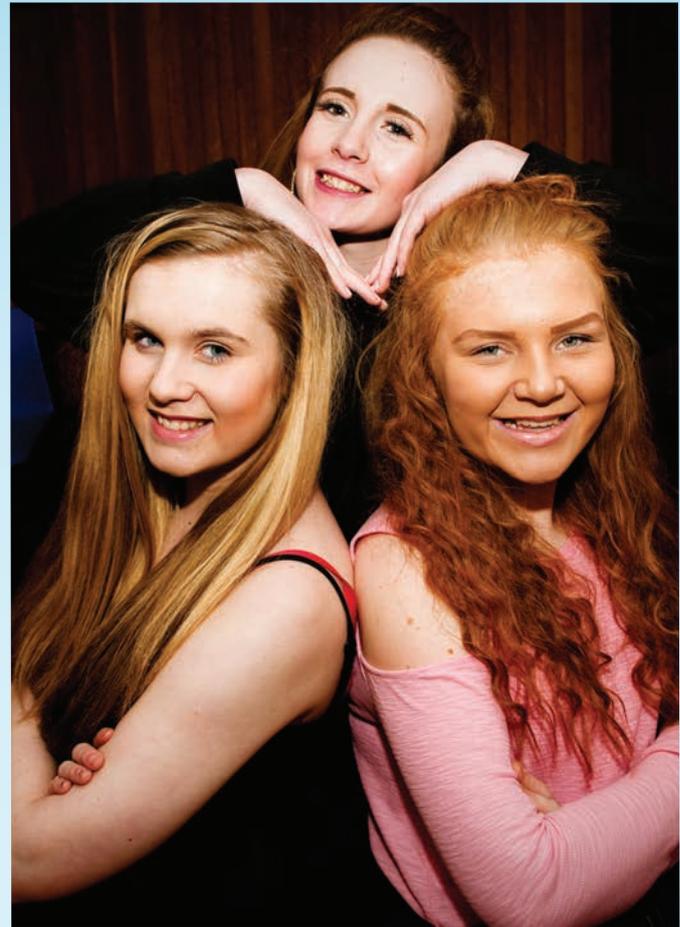
WORKING TOWARDS 2020 VISION

Here's some of the projects we've been involved in this year.



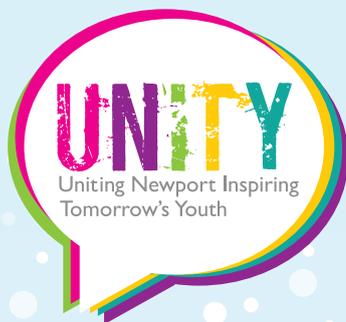
Supporting residents back into work

To support people getting back into work, we held a series of free initiatives including Launchpad. Focusing on helping residents find employment, write job applications, and prepare for interviews; Launchpad has been a great success with 75% of attendees now in full-time work.



Go Girls

Working with partner housing associations Charter and Bron Afon, we have launched Go Girls. This project aims to help build confidence and self-esteem among women aged 14-25 years old. It encourages them to develop self-respect, nurture healthy relationships and value their own abilities and qualities. Participant Abbie Naylor said: "Go Girls lets us have our say; it gives us a voice. We get to meet new friends and I hope to get some new training and skills to help me get a job."



Uniting Newport Inspiring Tomorrow's Youth

We have engaged 16 young people in our brand new forum UNITY, which launched at a youth festival this summer.

UNITY is a group made up of young people who represent future tenants on issues that could affect them in the home or their community.





Duffryn biomass boiler

Our new award-winning biomass boiler in Duffryn is delivering heat to more than 900 homes.

An environmentally friendly boiler that runs on locally sourced woodchip, the project has provided employment to local apprentices. We've also installed 650 smart energy meters in people's homes, allowing them to have greater control over their energy costs.

Embracing digital

We ran a number of social media training sessions to support residents in developing their digital skills as well as enabling them to access our services online. Using Facebook and Twitter, residents can now post enquiries at any time of day, at a time and place convenient to them.

This year we have launched a Facebook discussion forum for residents so that they can discuss topics with us from their own home.

Pill regeneration

Our £10million regeneration project for Pillgwenlly signalled a change in our investment approach.

The current design and layout in the area has historically contributed to increased deprivation and crime. This project tackles these issues and improves the environment for all residents.

Gill Healey, a resident of 34 years, said:
"We are pleased with the outcome of what is being done. The results will benefit 99 per cent of the people around here and anti-social behaviour will be knocked on the head."



Who's new at NCH?

Tim Jackson, Executive Director of Finance and Resources

"Newport City Homes is a vibrant place with a great future, providing excellent services and more homes for those in need.

I've spent more than 20 years working in social housing, and now is an exciting time to join the organisation.

We need to make the best use of our resources, spending money wisely with residents' priorities at heart. I will ensure we are in a strong financial position to develop new homes.

We need to have the right IT systems to do our day-to-day work easier and faster, communicating with you on the platforms you use.

Making NCH a great place to work is the one 2020 Vision goal you may not have heard about.

By having great staff who enjoy their work and the right investment in our services, we can provide excellent services to you".

Tim



Rachel George, Head of Development and Regeneration

"Newport is growing; more people are choosing to live here and more people are living longer.

We are about to start an exciting new phase, having completed the Welsh Housing Quality Standard on our properties. We are going to start building our first new homes.

I worked for a council in south London for 15 years, developing a new homes building programme and leading estate regeneration schemes.

I loved investing in an area and seeing positive changes for residents. For the last five years I have lived in Bristol and I wanted to help make a difference somewhere closer to home.

I'll be helping us to build new homes to help meet housing need in the city. This won't only benefit new and existing residents; it will improve neighbourhoods. Through good design, we will create wider benefits for the whole community to enjoy".

Rachel

New development plans to help tackle housing need in Bettws

We have received planning permission to develop a site in Monnow Way, Bettws into 11 family homes and a bungalow equipped for those with disabilities.



The new family homes will consist of nine two-bed homes and two three-bed homes. The innovative design for the area will provide an open, attractive space that has durability.

The site was previously occupied by sheltered housing scheme Glen Court, which was demolished in 2010. Before stock transfer, Newport City Council assessed Glen Court and decided that

the property was no longer fit for purpose and had begun decommissioning.

We visited the site and confirmed that the building would be difficult and costly to modernise.

Our development plans will help address the need for family homes and properties with disabled access, bringing the area back to life.

Head of development and regeneration, Rachel George commented: "We aim to create a place where families want to live; a safe environment that residents can feel proud of.

"We have gone out to tender and plan to begin work on the site in the New Year."

IT'S NOT WORTH THE RISK

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and nuisance can affect the well-being and sense of security of the local community. We will not tolerate any ASB or nuisance and we work closely with Gwent Police and other partners to combat these issues.

If you or any of your visitors cause ASB and nuisance in your area, your tenancy could be severely under threat. This includes dumping rubbish, vandalism and deliberate damage of property.

It's not worth the risk.

If you have been a victim of ASB or nuisance, please contact us by calling **(01633) 381111** or at our website www.newportcityhomes.com



Minister visits our multi-million pound regeneration project in Pillgwenlly

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, Carl Sargeant, visited Pillgwenlly to see our ambitious regeneration plans for the area.

We're spending £10million to tackle deprivation and anti-social behaviour in Pillgwenlly.

Carl Sargeant said: "Newport City Homes is working with partners and, crucially, communities to tackle need and build sustainable communities for the future. Along with funding from our Vibrant and Viable Places

scheme for work carried out by Newport City Council, the £10million invested by Newport City Homes is helping to transform the Pillgwenlly area."

The current layout of Pillgwenlly has contributed to an increase in deprivation and crime. Our project will help tackle anti-social behaviour and make a real difference to those living in the area.

NCH board chair Jane Mudd said: "We're tackling the big issues in communities with multiple and complex needs. Our £10million investment has been shaped with and for the community."

Pillgwenlly through time

In 1800, Pillgwenlly was marshland and scarcely inhabited.

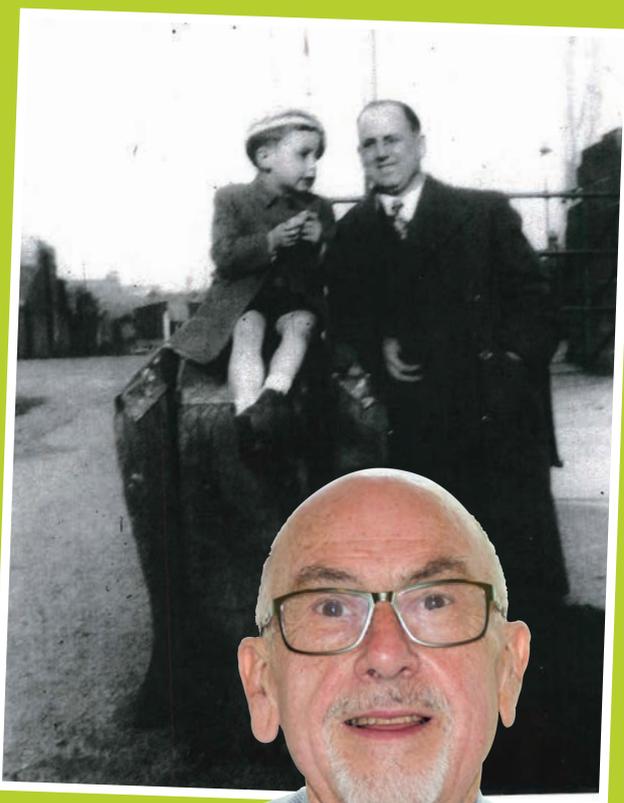
However, major development was about to begin. The first church to open was the Mariners Chapel in 1827; located near George Street Bridge. The town dock opened in 1842, and the cattle market opened in 1844, where ASDA now resides. The Transporter Bridge opened in 1906, with only a few minor accidents during construction.

Thirty-nine men were killed in a major docks disaster on 2 July, 1909. Fourteen-year-old Tom (Toya) Lewis from Wallis Street was one of the rescuers. He was awarded the Albert Medal, and has had a street and a pub named after him.

Mary Hart OBE JP from Lewis Street became Newport's first female mayor in 1937. Newport's famous poet, W H Davies was born in Portland Street in 1871, and Newport's first mosque opened at 26 Ruppera Street in 1954.

When George Street Bridge opened in 1964, it relieved the road traffic congestion on the town bridge. After the redevelopment of Pillgwenlly between the 1960s and the 1980s, many areas changed forever. Finally, many readers will have great memories of the Pillgwenlly Carnival; I can remember the first one in 1974.

Keith Wood



WORK PROGRESSES IN SOMERTON

We have started installing home improvements to our properties in Somerton.

Some of our properties here date back to the 1930s, and are traditionally made with cavity walls.

During the 1990s, there was a Wales-wide programme to insulate cavity walls. However, due to construction type and weather conditions the cavity wall insulation in some of our properties in Somerton became wet. This resulted in internal dampness.

We decided to extract the cavity wall insulation wherever possible, and undertake various repairs to prevent damp entering homes.



In 2014, we launched a pilot scheme involving four properties in Somerton. We installed external wall insulation, renewed roofline works, extracted the cavity wall insulation, cleaned the cavities and made various internal repair works. This pilot showed us the extent of the issue in some of our oldest stock, and so we have appointed Mi-Space to carry out a programme of work to more homes.

We will now be working on roofs, fascia boards, and soffits, which were contributing to damp in the properties. Mi-space will install external wall insulation to all of our properties in Somerton, and similar style properties in St Julians and Rogerstone.

Work is expected to be completed next year; we'll keep you updated on the progress.

For more information contact **(01633) 381111** or enquiries@newportcityhomes.com





I felt brilliant when I found out I was moving back to Bassaleg.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

We have helped a family find their perfect property.

Helen Sebury and her son lived in Moorland Park. However, due to Helen's medical condition and the size of the house, the property was no longer suitable.

Helen explained: "I was paying bedroom tax, and I wanted to be closer to our family. I didn't want to go just anywhere, I wanted the right area to become available."

The perfect property became available in Bassaleg, where Helen had grown up and her family currently live.

Helen said: "I felt brilliant when I found out I was moving back to Bassaleg. My son was a bit sceptical because we'd lived in our house for a long time."

Helen explained to our lettings team that her son has learning difficulties and struggles with change. Helen commented: "The lettings team were so understanding and helpful, they didn't rush us, and my son was happy in the end. We knew the area, which was a bonus."

Helen and her son moved in five days after viewing the property,

and couldn't be happier with their new home.

Helen said: "My son is feeling loads better. He feels more confident; he walks over to the shop now whereas he wouldn't do that before. It's a lot easier for me for medical reasons; it's all ground floor level and I've got a walk-in shower."

From her experience, Helen has now decided to become an involved resident. Helen explained: "I hope my experience can help someone else to pursue and keep going, as it's not easy, but if you persevere hopefully you'll get the ultimate thing that you're looking for. There's a light at the end of the tunnel."



LARGE BEE COLONY

Safely relocated from properties in Ringland

A large hive containing about 15,000 honeybees has been safely relocated from two adjoining terraced houses in Edward German Crescent, Ringland.

Our project surveyors were carrying out roofline works when the large bee colony was discovered in a cavity in the outside wall of the properties.

Senior project surveyor Mark Samuel commented: "Newport City Homes recognises that bees are vital for pollination and a key species for our ecosystem. We wanted to ensure the colony were safely relocated and so contacted Gwent Beekeepers' Association."

In order for Gwent Beekeepers' Association to relocate the colony, contractor Mi-space, part of Midas Group, had to partially remove the outer skin of the building.

Matt Howells, operational manager for Mi-space, said: "Our team had to remove more than 80 bricks from the outer wall of the building, in full protective gear, in order for the experts to access the nest, so quite an undertaking."

Gwent Beekeepers' Association was able to collect the vast majority of the bees within the nest, and they have been successfully moved to a new home in time for the winter.

Swarm liaison officer for Gwent Beekeepers' Association, Andrew Knapp commented: "This was a really interesting bee removal for us. We have to congratulate Newport City Homes on recognising the importance of saving this colony."





SOMEBODY TO LEAN ON

Craig* was suffering from alcohol addiction and was a heavy smoker. Two months after moving into sheltered scheme Church Court, Craig decided it was time to change.

Craig said: "I was having a drink and a cigarette and I thought, 'I'm going to ruin this place with the smell of cigarettes.' I knew that if I wanted to give up smoking, I'd have to give up alcohol too."

As a result, Craig lost nearly all his friends.

Craig explained: "I knew that if I wanted to change my lifestyle, I had to change who I hung around with."

Scheme manager Fiona Evans began working at Church Court one month after Craig moved in, and Craig believes Fiona and

cleaner Debra Watkins have been instrumental in turning his life around.

Craig said: "Fiona and Deb were always there to talk to if I was having a rough time. A TV advert came on the other night showing someone pouring a glass of wine and I thought, 'I could kill for one of them.' I told Fiona and Deb about it and they set me straight."

Craig is now a big part of the Church Court community.

Fiona explained: "Having the centre to go to has provided Craig with a routine. The

residents will come to Craig for help with moving heavy items or to have someone to walk to the centre with."

Craig added: "One day I realised this is like my little family. It doesn't matter who you are or what you are, we all help each other."

Craig now hopes to find employment.

Craig said: "I've given up alcohol the hard way; failed miserably a few times, but this time I've stuck to it. Without the Church Court community, I wouldn't have done it."

*Name has been changed to protect identity



Warm for the winter

Ringland residents Mr and Mrs Lloyd had expensive, inefficient electric storage heaters in their home.

The couple had put off changing their heating system because they were concerned it would be too disruptive.

Resident liaison officer Rebecca Sluman knew that Mr and Mrs Lloyd would be warmer and better off financially with a gas combi boiler. However, the property didn't have a gas meter.

Rebecca arranged for Wales & West Utilities to confirm that the gas supply to the property worked, so that we could get a gas meter fitted by British Gas. Rebecca then arranged for Ivor Cook to install the boiler, radiators and pipework, which took three days. During the work, Rebecca visited Mr and Mrs Lloyd to make sure that they were okay and felt supported.

Mrs Lloyd said: "Rebecca has done everything for us, she's marvellous. We got used to the cold in the evenings over the years. We used to have to put our hot water on overnight to heat up the water, whereas now we have instant hot water."

Mrs Lloyd wanted her gas and electric supply provided by the same company. Rebecca spoke to the gas provider, and got the couple set up with a payment plan and changed their electricity supply over to them.

Rebecca added: "We've worked out that Mr and Mrs Lloyd should save about £200 a year by having gas central heating now."

If you need support with any works in your home, talk to us on **(01633) 381111**.

Reader's Top Tip!



"Use baby wet wipes to clean snow spray off windows; this is fantastic for getting the spray off. Try it and see."

Wayne Hodgson, Ringland

Do you have a top tip for readers?
Email communications@newportcityhomes.com or tweet us @NewportCityH with the hashtag #TopTip!

NCH and residents shine at awards

Residents, staff and our projects have shined at local and national awards this year.



Four residents won three awards at the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations' (GAVO) Volunteer Achievement Awards.

The awards recognise the contribution volunteers make to the local community.

Bettws resident **Keith Wood** secured the Inspirational Volunteer award for his volunteer work with Newport museum, giving historical talks and workshops, and helping to shape services in Newport City Homes.

Bettws residents **Mark Harris** and **Deborah Loosmore** jointly achieved the Personal Journey Award, recognising how the couple have overcome significant barriers in their lives and now undertake a range of volunteering activities.

Maindee resident **Eileen Kempster** secured the Making an Impact Award for her commitment to ensuring the communal garden in Eveswell Court remains tidy and attractive.



Our resident engagement manager **Sian Nicholas** was shortlisted for Best Community Unsung Hero Award in the 2016 Women in Housing Awards.

The awards celebrate and recognise the achievements of female professionals from both the public and private sectors.

Sian was nominated for her constant efforts to go above and beyond both in her professional and personal life.

Sian has run NCH projects such as Community Voice, allowing residents to discuss what is important to them.

Outside of work, Sian has been an Age Concern Friend, part of Age UK's Befriending scheme to combat loneliness in the elderly.



In the last edition of Bridge Brief, we announced that our energy and compliance team had won the Staff Team of the Year Award in TPAS Cymru's Participation Awards for their work on the **Duffryn biomass boiler project**.

The new boiler uses wood from a sustainable source, so a new sapling is planted for every tree used.

The project has now secured Renewable Project of the Year and Best Initiative to Combat Fuel Poverty in AGSM's Supplier Excellence Awards.

Duffryn biomass was also shortlisted for the Sustainable Innovation Award in Cynnal Cymru's Sustain Wales Awards and Best Green Scheme in the 24housing Awards.



Our **Road to Rio** partnership project was shortlisted for the Collaboration Award in Chartered Institute of Housing's Welsh Housing Awards.

The project highlighted all the sports that are available in the city, while providing people with a taste of Olympic sports within their community.



Our **#HatsOffNewport** social media campaign was shortlisted in the Welsh Housing Awards for the Communications and Publications Award.

#HatsOffNewport was a campaign that asked people in the city to post videos on Facebook and Twitter, nominating the kindest person they know in Newport.

CEO Ceri Doyle commented: *"I knew within days of joining NCH that I was surrounded by hugely talented and committed staff and residents. I'm both honoured and proud of the overwhelming recognition our residents, staff and projects have received, and look forward to what we can achieve in 2017."*





WE ❤️ NEWPORT

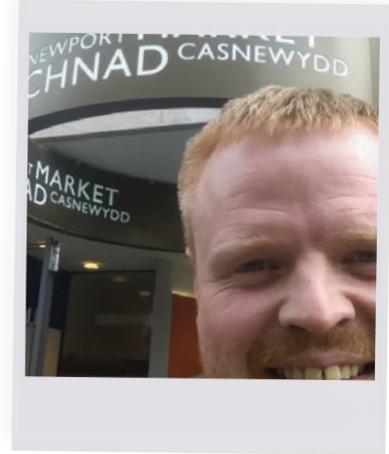
#Newportselfie is a social media campaign that celebrates the people and places that make Newport great.

We have had more than 150 selfies taken by the wonderful people who live and work in our city. Here's why some of them took part in the campaign and why they love Newport.



Sarah, Woof (& Meow!) Newport -
@woofnewport 🐾

I champion beautiful Newport, past, present and future. I embrace the old architecture and history, the beautiful areas we have now and the future plans. #beautifulnewport is ours.



Jon, The Kiosk Newsagents -
@TheNewsagent 🐦

I love Newport because even when I'm down, somebody always manages to cheer me up! I've traded in the city centre for almost 20 years, I have seen it in the good times, endured the tough times, and now we are coming out the other side. The one thing that has been constant is the support of the thousands of Newportonians I can call friends!



Ant and Matt, Parc Pantry - @ParcPantry 🐦

As a brand born and raised in Newport, we're proud to have been able to base our businesses in a city full of hidden gems! Dealing with local makers and food suppliers daily has convinced us of the quality and creativity that can be found right on your doorstep.



Lee, 1 Step at a Time -
@onestepatatim20 🐦

What we love about Newport is the ever-increasing feeling of community spirit in the city. It was evident when we started 1 Step but, since then the people in our community have been immense in considering those less fortunate and really have reverted back to a time where helping your friend was instinctive.

Get involved by tweeting us @NewportCityH or post on the /NewportCityH Facebook page with your selfie in the city and the hashtag #Newportselfie.



STEP INTO FITNESS

We have been running a fun competition to help residents get fit and healthy.



Digital Communities Wales provided us with five Fitbits, which we loaned to residents for six weeks.

The Fitbit Challenge involves monitoring participants' health, including number of steps taken, sleeping patterns, calories burnt and water intake over six weeks. Whoever achieves the greatest improvement wins a Fitbit.

Participant Kelly Morgan said: "I joined the Fitbit Challenge to try to be healthy. It's been fantastic, it gets quite addictive."

The team meet on a weekly basis to touch base and hold group walks.

Community investment officer Michelle Carlyle commented: "We thought it was a nice kick-start to get people back out walking, thinking about their health more."

Keep an eye out for future Fitbit Challenges in the New Year on our Facebook page /NewportCityH and Twitter @NewportCityH

TAKING SHAPE

Is your new year's resolution to improve your overall health?

Our Taking Shape programme is an all-in-one holistic health programme, helping you to get active, eat well and improve your well-being.

The course starts in January 2017.

For further information, please contact Casey Edwards on (01633) 227796 or Michelle Carlyle on (01633) 227887.



Your Hero, Barbara



Duffryn resident Barbara Bennett has been chosen as your hero for this edition.

Ringland resident Wayne Hodgson nominated Barbara, saying: "Since I've been an involved resident, Barbara has been helpful. Barbara is a voice for people across Newport; we both want all of Newport's residents to be happy, not just the area we live in."

Barbara received a £10 gift voucher to shop in Debenhams.

Barbara commented: "I was quite taken aback. It was very kind of Wayne."

Do you know an NCH resident who has gone the extra mile? Email communications@newportcityhomes.com

Demolition work on garage sites begins

Demolition of some of our garages has begun, carried out by AP Waters.

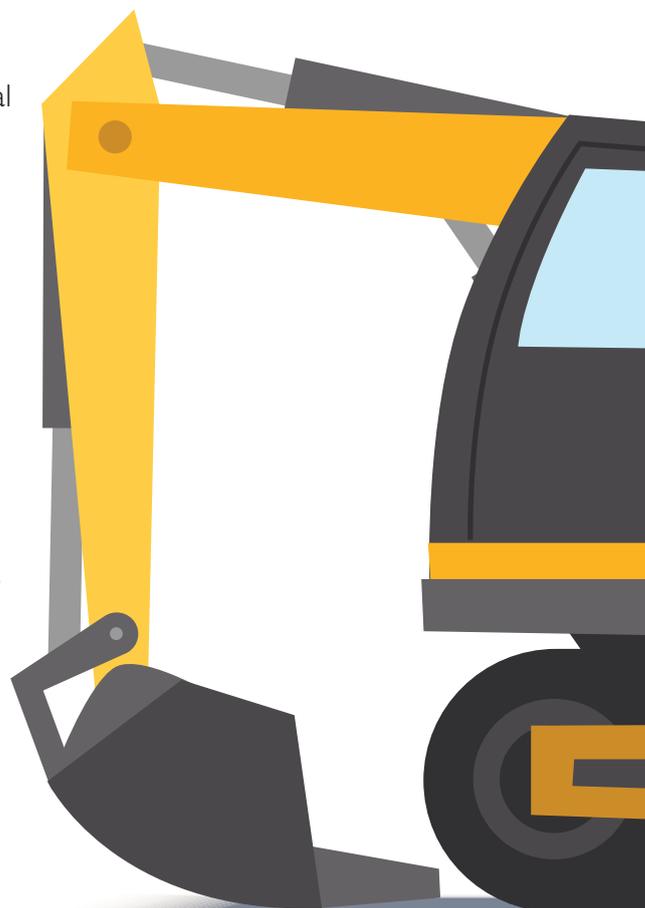
This work follows a stock condition survey on all of our garages earlier this year, which found a variety of structural defects. These could, if ignored, pose a health and safety risk. As a responsible landlord, we therefore had to take steps to keep residents safe. We have risk assessed all of our garages and some will be demolished because of this.

Please ensure that your children are made aware of the dangers of entering demolition/construction sites. Unauthorised entry could result in serious, if not fatal, injuries.

Please be vigilant and report any damage or unauthorised access immediately to the site team or us. AP Waters will do their best to minimise the disruption to residents and the wider community while the work is being carried out. However, please be aware that there will be vehicles in and out of the site during the works and some of the works will create noise and dust.

Site working hours will be strictly controlled. Pedestrian and vehicle routes will be managed by AP Waters to ensure public safety.

If you have any questions, please contact community relationship officer Laura Palfrey on **(01633) 227767**.



MEET LAURA

I am the new dedicated community relationship officer, Laura Palfrey.

I have worked for NCH (and Newport City Council prior to stock transfer) for more than 13 years. You may have spoken to me before about regeneration projects in Pillgwenlly and Ringland.

I'll be providing support to you and the wider community regarding the demolition of the garages. We want to understand your needs and aspirations for the place you live, and you will be able to discuss these with me at consultations and activities.

I'll keep you posted about these events, and look forward to speaking with you soon.





Keeping afloat **OF YOUR BILLS**

Resident able to save after struggling with debt.

Susan* was referred to our tenancy support team as she was struggling to keep up with her bills.

A member of staff visited Susan and upon completing a budget sheet, could see that she was eligible for Housing Benefit. This granted Susan £55 per week towards her rent. We were able to set Susan onto a reduced water tariff based on her household income, saving her over £200 on her annual water bill.

Susan stated that she had utility debt. A referral was made to a local energy advice service who will be

able to assist her with reducing the debt, allowing Susan to access grants.

Susan has been extremely grateful for the support she has been given. She is now able to budget and has even opened a savings account with the local credit union.

If you're struggling with paying your bills, please contact us on **(01633) 381111**.

*Name has been changed to protect identity.

Can you afford not to be insured?

Protect yourself financially against the risk of damage to your belongings.

We offer a home contents insurance scheme that is payable by weekly instalments.

The policy is provided by Aviva and insures your belongings against fire, flood, theft, storm and other

hazards. There is no excess to pay in the event of a claim, no minimum security requirements* and the application process is simple.

The scheme is available to tenants and leaseholders, and with affordable premiums payable by weekly instalments.

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

*You don't have to have a specified security alarm system or insurance industry approved locks to qualify.

Season's greetings!



Our offices will be closed from 3pm on Friday 23 December and will reopen on Tuesday 3 January at 9am.



Contact us:

-  enquiries@newportcityhomes.com
-  (01633) 381111

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