

Bridge Brief



Spring 2017

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The magazine for Newport City Homes' residents
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Litter-pick heroes help clean Bettws
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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.

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

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 four areas.



Top tip!

"The HelpU scheme is designed to help low income households reduce their water charges. To qualify, your household's total income needs to be £15,000 or less per year. If you think you may be eligible, give the tenancy support team a ring on 01633 381111."

Sumim Nahar
Tenancy support officer

Read more about the work of our tenancy support officers on page 12!



Get in touch with us

We would love to hear your thoughts via:

enquiries@newportcityhomes.com

01633 381111

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Nexus House, Mission Court, NP20 2DW

8-11 Ringland Centre, NP19 9HG

8-11 Bettws Centre, NP20 7TN

www.newportcityhomes.com

Laughter yoga helps residents to 'shake away the cobwebs'

Residents of sheltered scheme Stelvio Park Court enjoyed four free laughter yoga classes.

Residents were able to have fun while de-stressing and re-energising, with guidance from laughter yoga instructor Lynette 'The Cobwebbe Shaker' Webbe.

"What we're doing is meaningful activities but using fun and laughter and jester, music, movement and dance," explained Lynette. "This alleviates isolation and loneliness."

The sessions may



help improve brain function, reduce pain and stress, alleviate depression, lower blood pressure, boost immune system and change moods within minutes.

Resident Margaret Joseph said: "It's great. I love it anyway because I've done yoga before."

"Laughter yoga is really

enjoyable."

The sessions ran for four weeks at the sheltered scheme as part of a free trial.

Community investment officer Casey Edwards said: "The sessions involve a lot of laughter, and you can't help but come away smiling, which is something a doctor can't prescribe."

Find out more about laughter yoga at cobwebbeshaker.co.uk



Contractor appointed for £7.9million Pillgwenlly regeneration scheme

We have appointed the contractor for our £7.9million regeneration scheme in Pillgwenlly.

United Living will carry out the work, which will see garages in Knight Close, Coulson Close, Francis Street and Alma Street demolished.

Nine one-bedroom flats and two three-bedroom houses will be built, as well as a new community hub.

This is part of a wider £10million investment in Pillgwenlly

The project also involves recladding the outside surfaces of a number of the existing buildings to improve their appearance, and removing a basketball court in Francis Drive, which is often the target of anti-social behaviour.

Two areas of open space and parking will also be created

United Living's regional manager Mark Perry said: "Our simple aim is to create a lasting legacy, supporting the sustainable growth of local people and business via our delivery approach."

Work is expected to start on site in the summer.



2020 VISION



Glen Court work to start



We have hired local contractor P&P Buildings to help us deliver our £1.6million development at Glen Court in Bettws.

The site in Monnow Way will include 11 new family homes and a bungalow equipped for people with disabilities. Each home will include a fire sprinkler system, which can help protect residents in case of a fire.

Welsh Government has approved almost £1million of social housing grant towards the new development.

The work is due to start in the coming months and we aim



to complete the development early next year.

Head of development and regeneration Rachel George said: "We are really excited to be working with a small local business on this development.

"Our plans should create a safer, more open and attractive space where families want to live."



2020 VISION

Improving homes

We have secured millions of pounds to improve homes in Somerton and St Julians.

This money will be spent on the outside of properties, ensuring they are wind and water tight, while also improving energy efficiency and the homes' overall appearance.

The new external wall insulation will make homes more energy efficient, warmer in the winter, cooler in the summer, and better looking. Mi-space has been selected to carry out the work, which will be phased over the next two years.

APPRENTICES EXCEL AT NCH

We celebrated National Apprenticeship Week in March.

We run a joint apprenticeship scheme with contractor M Delacey & Sons, which allows apprentices to gain knowledge in a range of environments and businesses.

The apprentices are employed by M Delacey & Sons to gain the experiences they need to pass their NVQs.

Here three of our successful apprentices share their thoughts on their experiences.

What made you want to go on the apprenticeship?

It was for stability. If you have a trade, you've got work.

What skills have you gained?

Noticing the difference between professional and not professional, and little bits and pieces I thought I'd never need. You think it won't make a difference, but it does.

What do you enjoy most about the apprenticeship?

The people I've met. They've helped me a lot.

What do you hope to do after your apprenticeship has finished?

Hopefully I'll be taken on. Eventually I would like to start my own business. That's always my main goal. I need to get enough experience to push me forward to that stage.

What advice would you give to anyone thinking of applying for an apprenticeship?

100% do it. The wages are low to start with, but with the experience you gain towards the full amount, the wages aren't even worth thinking about. Just go for it.



Simon Beer

How did you get onto the apprenticeship?

I saw it online when I was working in an office and applied for it.

Why did you want to go on the apprenticeship?

I fancied it for a couple of years. I couldn't find an apprenticeship anywhere for ages. I applied for a carpentry one.

What was a typical day like during the apprenticeship?

For the first year, I was doing works on kitchens. I used to meet the contractor on site at the address, and we used to do a kitchen a day.

Did you gain many skills from your apprenticeship?

Definitely. The kitchens were good to start with. I then found there was a wider range of skills to learn, such as doors, frames, and skirting.

What advice would you give to people who want to apply for an apprenticeship?

You just have to stick with it. Whoever you're with, listen to what they say and take it all in, and make sure you're on time.



Matthew Rees

Encouraging women to apply for apprenticeships

Anne-Marie Jordan is learning new skills while earning as one of our apprentices.



The apprenticeship scheme allows apprentices to gain vast knowledge and experience in a number of environments and businesses, giving them an all-round understanding and practical experience of their chosen trade.

To date the scheme has recruited carpenters, plasterers, and painter and decorators.

Anne-Marie Jordan is completing a two-year painting and decorating apprenticeship with us.

Anne-Marie was a stay-at-home mum. Since becoming an apprentice, Anne-Marie has learnt a variety of skills including cutting in, wallpapering, and how to remove and prevent stains.

Anne-Marie said that there's no difference working with just men: "I don't want to be treated any different. I just want to

get on with the job."

Anne-Marie believes the physical aspect of apprenticeships put women off applying. "You also don't see many women in it as it is seen as a man's trade," she added.

However, Anne-Marie encourages more women to get into the trades industry:

"Go for it! You can be WHATEVER you want to be."

Anne-Marie hopes one day to have her own business: "Hopefully in a few years I'll start my own business when I'm a bit more confident."

To find out more about the apprenticeship scheme and how you could get involved, contact 01633 227729 or kate.rowberry@newportcityhomes.com



Welfare reform changes update

In a previous edition of Bridge Brief, we told you about upcoming welfare reform changes.

Here are some updates on Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

Universal Credit roll out

Universal Credit is rolling out across the UK, covering everyone who receives work benefits. Currently, it only affects single claimants. The aim is that all applications for Universal Credit will be made online by 2021. This will start in November 2017 for new applicants in Newport. The main change is that you will need to pay your rent direct to your landlord out of your monthly benefit payment.

Local Housing Allowance

Have you entered a new tenancy from April 2016 onwards?

Any housing costs you pay through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit will be limited to LHA rates from April 2019.

Newport LHA rates are available at www.newport.gov.uk



Please get in touch if you feel that you could be affected. Contact 01633 381111, income.services@newportcityhomes.com or tenancy.support@newportcityhomes.com

RESIDENT BOOSTS PRIDE IN SHELTERED SCHEME

Westgate Court resident Ray Cavill is helping to boost community spirit at the sheltered scheme.

Mr Cavill was involved in setting up a committee for Westgate Court and neighbouring Isca Court. He is now chairperson, helping to organise events and improvements for the schemes.

There are currently six members on the committee, and up to 15 residents attend the meetings.



The committee meets monthly to arrange activities.

Scheme manager Lisa Watkins said: "It is great to see our residents arranging a varied selection of social events and encouraging others to join in."

One of the committee's triumphs includes the creation of a communal patio.

The materials were purchased through a £2,500 grant from us.

Mr Cavill explained: "All we're trying to do is make the place a nice neighbourhood."

Improved car park gets the 'thumbs up' from residents

We have carried out resurfacing works to a car park in Ringland.



The car park, located behind Costcutter in Ringland shopping centre, was in need of some TLC.

Staff and our contractor DT Contracting resurfaced the car park, removing any hazards such as potholes.

Resident David Cammies has diabetes and had his right leg removed. Before we completed the project, he could not use the area: "I almost fell out of the chair and became very nervous. Now I have no problems," he said.

We have also introduced two disabled car parking bays and installed

Resident Lillian Spellman added: "I'm able to get to the other side of the roundabout whereas before I was unable unless offered a lift."

dropped kerbs.

Resident Kenneth Dennison is pleased with the work: "I would cross the road into the car park and felt very nervous about getting to the shops. I'm moving into Milton Court soon. Now the car park is complete I am looking forward to moving.

"Before I was hesitant and the outlook was not great due to the many hazards on route."

Protecting residents against carbon monoxide

We have installed more than 1,000 carbon monoxide alarms in our homes across Newport.

We are working to install Aico carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in residents' homes to help protect you from CO gas. CO is an invisible, odourless gas that can be produced by any fuel-burning appliance, such as gas boilers and gas cookers. It can be very harmful.

The CO alarms have a unique sound of three beeps then a slight pause,

repeated. This helps distinguish them from a smoke alarm sound, which is a constant rapid beeping.

We will continue to fit the alarms over the next 13 months. Where possible, we will fit the alarms during a gas heating service to reduce disruption.

The CO alarms will work independently from the smoke alarms that are already installed.



We need YOU!

Would you like to have a say in how we deliver our services? We're asking



residents to come forward and get involved. We want to be an organisation that represents the people we serve. We want to keep getting better and, to do this, we need your help. You can have as much involvement as you like, from filling in surveys,

coming to meetings, joining one of our networks, or being a member of our Facebook groups. We have more than 250 engaged residents. Some people regularly attend meetings and events, and some residents have specific interests. You can make sure your community's

concerns are brought into the organisation, and help us address them. Over the years, residents have helped us develop communications tools, services, and a satisfaction survey. Residents have influenced corporate



Get involved and make a difference!

plans, contributed to annual reports, and developed our customer service standards.

RESIDENT HELPS US TO SHAPE SERVICES

Gaer resident Shelley McGuire is helping to shape our services after becoming an involved resident.

Shelley has previously been involved in community development and regeneration work. She knew she could help achieve our aim of being about people and not just homes.

"It's not just about bricks and mortar," she said. "It's about the gardens. It's about the green spaces. It's about the health and well-being of the tenants who are in those properties."

Shelley has helped to improve and determine services on our Community Voice panel, and offered suggestions for our new website. She said: "If you don't say something, you don't have a voice as a tenant or as an individual, and nothing will ever change."



COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

We have a new community relationship manager.

Jon Conway took up the new role in March, having been a resident engagement officer with us since 2009.

He was part of the team that set up the original process for involvement with NCH. He's been part of every review as we've refined them, tweaked them, and made them more fit for purpose.

"My team and I will be working closely with our residents, and working with the organisation as a whole to help them put residents at the heart.

"Any resident that wants to get involved with us can expect support from us. We're here to help," said Jon.

If you want to get more involved in our work, contact 01633 381111 or enquiries@newportcityhomes.com



See your ideas come to life!

What would you like to see in future editions of Bridge Brief?

We're looking for creative advisors to offer ideas and suggestions in our Talking Bridge Brief group. The online group allows you to post anytime, anywhere, discussing story ideas and feeding back on previous editions.

To get involved like NewportCityH on Facebook, follow @NewportCityH on Twitter or email communications@newportcityhomes.com



Like a phoenix rising from the ashes

A Duffryn resident became involved with NCH thanks to support from a fellow tenant.

Aneurin Bevan Court resident Christine Oakey moved to the sheltered scheme in 2012. A close friend and neighbour of Christine's, Maria Cairns, encouraged her to get involved in our various panels. The pair enjoyed our training opportunities and were engaged in a number of groups helping to improve our services.

"Besides outside pursuits, we literally did everything together," said Christine.

On 26 November 2013, the duo attended our residents' conference. The next day, Maria unexpectedly passed away. Christine stated: "I felt as though



I had lost my right arm; it was so hard to come through that time."

Christine received support from the staff at Aneurin Bevan Court, our resident engagement team, and fellow tenants during this difficult period: "Whenever I was at Nexus House, I would often see a team member or two and be given a cwtch."

Although Christine found it hard to be involved with as many panels without her best friend by her side, she is still helping to make a difference. Christine is involved in activities in her local community with fellow friends and neighbours.

"I had to find a way through that experience because I knew it's what Maria would have expected of me," explained Christine.

A DAY IN THE LIFE WITH TENANCY SUPPORT

Tenancy support officer Sumim Nahar speaks about a typical day in work:

We help struggling residents find ways to keep up with payments and stay in their home. Mostly, we help with benefit claims, appeals, and backdating requests. We help increase people's income and reduce their outgoings or debt. As an example, the income team recently referred a single dad with severe mental health

issues, who had recently taken custody of his son. He was affected by the bedroom tax and was in arrears because he could not keep up with payments. I checked which benefits he could receive and helped him with the applications to maximise his income. He received a discretionary housing benefit payment to help him to clear the arrears, preventing him from losing his home. He now receives the HelpU tariff, which is reducing his water

charges. He is working with a local support organisation to help him with his mental health.

• **Benefits are changing. If you need any support and advice, you can contact the tenancy support team on 01633 381111.**



Social enterprise buys new van thanks to grant funding

A social enterprise offering training for people with additional needs has received £5,000 through our 'making a difference' fund.

Reseiclo Training is a day service for people with additional learning needs and mental health issues. It provides carpentry-based work to support people in recognising their strengths. Project director Mike Cook explained: "I started Reseiclo Training in 2015. There were very few day services available in Newport. Anyone can come in, say they want something, and we will endeavour to make it."

Reseiclo Training applied to our 'making a difference' fund, which is available to people or organisations who wish to develop a project which will support the community.

Through the £5,000 grant, Reseiclo Training has purchased a van that can transport six volunteers and equipment around Newport.

Our community investment officer Julie Gower said: "We are delighted that Reseiclo Training has been able to purchase a van through our fund."

"The van was a necessity for the group to be able to expand their work across Newport."

If you're interested in applying for one of our grants, contact Julie Gower on 01633 227889 or julie.gower@newportcityhomes.com, or Lisa Ash on 01633 227764 or lisa.ash@newportcityhomes.com



From farmland to urban life in Bettws

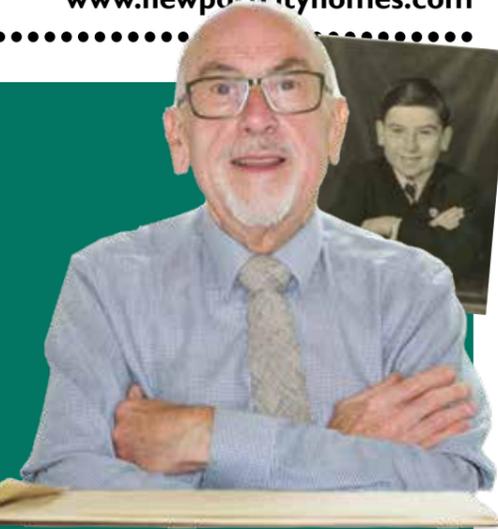
Local historian and resident Keith Wood continues his series of historical articles, this time focusing on Bettws:

John Frost, the famous Chartist leader, businessperson, magistrate and mayor, married Mary Geach at St David Lewis RC Church in Bettws in 1812. In 1844, life in Bettws was focused on the church, a corn mill, a few cottages, and approximately six farms. By 1900, this had increased to 11 cottages and nine farms, providing extra business for the local mill. The corn mill

would eventually become the Merry Miller Public House, recently demolished. The site now provides 19 homes. Sixty years ago, Bettws was about to change forever. Newport council commissioned a document dated December 1957, reporting on proposed new roads and drainage works. It showed the Malpas brook, commonly known as Bettws brook, winding through the countryside. It was straightened and partly relocated to form the present brook and facilitate the proposed housing estate. In 1961, the building of Newport's largest housing estate

began near the junction of Bettws Lane and Bettws Hill. All but three streets in Bettws were named after British rivers. The three anomalies were Livale Court, Road and Close. An eleven-year-old boy at Millbrook Junior School highlighted this in the late 1960s. During those early years, Magor and St Mellons Council took care of services such as refuse collections. Those of a certain age will remember the mauve-coloured vehicles.

Keith Wood



COULD THIS BE YOUR NEW HOME?

We have homes available at Milton Court in Ringland.

There are one-bed and two-bed homes for people aged 55 and over at the sheltered housing scheme. Residents Granville and Silvia Beddis have lived there for eight years. Mr Beddis said: "Silvia and I always said we'd never live by a school, near a pub, near a shopping centre or in a high-rise flat. And yet, we've come to Milton Court and we love it!"

To find out more, contact Helen Hart on 01633 227773.



Litter heroes join forces for Spring Clean Cymru

We joined forces with partner organisations and residents to clean up a brook in Bettws as part of Keep Wales Tidy's Spring Clean Cymru campaign.

A team of 13 volunteers and two police community support officers removed 50 bags of rubbish from the Malpas/Bettws brook area.

Our executive director of operations Robert Lynbeck said: "We'd like to thank the volunteers who helped us clear up the brook, without them it wouldn't have been possible. "We also encourage residents and the wider community to continue looking after their local environment, not just for their benefit but for future generations as well."

Steve Chamberlain, from Keep Wales Tidy, said: "It was great to see so many people from Newport coming together and getting involved in Spring Clean Cymru. It's vital that we all do our bit to care for our local environment. This event has been a perfect example of what local communities can achieve when they work together."



Defnyddiwch eich gwasanaeth AILGYLCHU NEWYDD i AILGYLCHU MWY!

Use your NEW recycling service to RECYCLE even more!

1



2



3



Gallwch roi eitemau trydanol bach yn y blwch glas hefyd Small broken electrical items can also go in the blue box

www.newport.gov.uk/recycling 01633 281281

recycle for Newport ailgylchu dros Gasnewydd



Celebrating the 'Youf Gang'

Shaftesbury youngsters were celebrated at an event for helping to improve their local environment through litter picks.

Gwent Police community support officer Richy Davies has been overseeing the Shaftesbury 'Youf Gang', which so far has 10 enthusiastic local children aged nine to 14.

He explained: "They really are a credit, not only to themselves but to the local community.

"Their journey has been made possible by the support of our partners at Communities First and we hope to continue to work together and help engage with young people for many years to come."

To thank the group for their efforts,

Newport City Homes, Westdale Services Limited and restaurant Tiffins sponsored football kits for the Youf Gang.

Newport City Homes resident engagement officer Kate Aspinwall said: "We have been supporting Youf Gang for some time. They are an incredible group of young people who are real role models to other teenagers, showing what can be done when you work together to have fun and look after your community."



Newport County footballer Ben Tozer presented the Youf Gang with their kits at a special event in Shaftesbury Community Centre.

For more information about Youf Gang, contact 07404 653018 or richy.davies@gwent.pnn.police.uk

Make a will

Make sure you have a will so you decide who receives your property and belongings when you are gone.

You can put your matters in order and leave clear instructions to help your loved ones. It is important to make a will whether or not you believe you have many belongings or much money.

A will is a legal document and having one can help reduce stress for your loved ones.

Where there is no will, there are certain rules that affect how your money, property and belongings are shared. This may not be what you wanted.

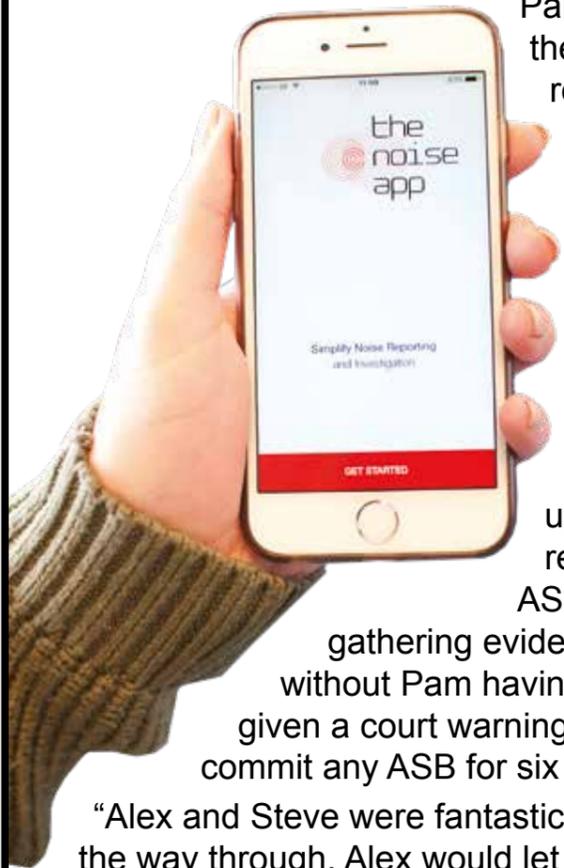
You can record your funeral wishes so your loved ones know exactly what you would like them to do.

Organisations such as Citizen's Advice Bureau can help you write a will. If you are a member of a trade union, it may offer a free will writing service.

Eviction for anti-social behaviour

A resident has peace of mind after a person regularly committing anti-social behaviour (ASB) has been evicted.

*Abbie was smoking illegal substances on her doorstep and playing music so loud that it was causing the walls of neighbour *Pam's house to shake.



Pam asked Abbie to turn the volume down but received verbal abuse, and so contacted us. Tenancy management officer Alex Williams visited Abbie several times about her ASB.

However as soon as Alex left, Abbie would turn the music back up. We asked Pam to record all instances of ASB on the Noise app,

gathering evidence to use in court, without Pam having to attend. Abbie was given a court warning stating she could not commit any ASB for six months.

"Alex and Steve were fantastic," said Pam. "All the way through, Alex would let me know exactly what was going on, and would ring me to keep me updated."

However, Abbie still committed ASB, so we got a court injunction, breach of injunction and possession order, which led to Abbie's eviction.

"Pam took all advice on board. It was the partnership between NCH and Pam that resulted in the successful conclusion," explained tenancy management team leader Steve Richards.

If you are a victim of ASB, contact us on 01633 381111.

***Names have been changed to protect identity.**



Choir hits all the right notes

Residents at Shaftesbury Court welcomed some very special guests.

Pupils from Crindau Primary School's choir visited our sheltered housing scheme and performed a selection of songs to an audience of residents.

Scheme manager Sharon Holbrook said: "The performance was brilliant and we all thoroughly enjoyed the show. The pupils sang beautifully and behaved impeccably. All the residents had a great time and we would all like to say a big thank you to all the pupils who took part."

Communal security system is a success

We have installed a key management system into some of our communal blocks to help reduce anti-social behaviour.

The key management system is a modern way of giving residents safe and secure access into their communal block, through uniquely

programmed fobs.

We have installed the system into communal blocks in Bettws, Malpas and Old Barn.

No uninvited people are able to enter the blocks, providing a safer environment for residents. The fobs grant access to communal areas only and not individual properties.

Old Barn resident Lucy Hunt said: "I feel safer

and more secure with the new doors and fobs. When I open my front door I know my children will still be safe."

If a resident loses or misplaces their fob, once reported we can deactivate it immediately and provide a new one.

Since installation of the system, there have been no reported instances of vandalism.

SPRING OFFICE CLOSURES



Our offices will be closed during the spring bank holidays:
Friday 14 April (Good Friday), Monday 17 April (Easter Monday),
Monday 1 May, Monday 29 May.

**In the case of an emergency, contact us on
01633 381111.**

