

Railway Housing Association



Gardening competition is blooming marvellous

It may have been a summer to forget for most people, but the mixture of sunshine and showers was a godsend for green-fingered gardeners competing in Railway Housing Association's best kept garden competition.

Earlier this year we asked people to submit entries for the competition and the standard was very high. Given the wide geographical nature of our properties we decided to select one winner from the area north of our Head Office in Darlington and one from the south.

After much deliberation the judges awarded the southern prize to Jean and Grahame Ellis and their next-door neighbour Sue Dunlin, who live in Kingston Road, Willerby, Hull. The northern prize went to Jim and Anne Walker, who live in Mead Crescent, Forest Hall, Newcastle.

Jean and Grahame share a front garden with Sue and whatever the weather they are out at all hours ensuring it always looks immaculate. Jean and Sue are in

charge of planting and tending to the flowers whilst Grahame's pride and joy is the lawn, which would not look out of place at Hull's KC football stadium.

Sue said: "Jean and Grahame are friends as well as being neighbours and it is so nice that we have been able to share this award, which is wonderful."

Jim and Anne, who were nominated by a neighbour, love spending time in their garden, especially in the summer when they often spend the entire day outside.

Jim said: "As long as the weather is dry I am always pottering in the garden and although winning the competition was a real surprise, it is

nice to know that people appreciate the work we put in."

The winners received £50, along with a trophy, donated by the sponsors Arcus Architects. The judging was carried out by Swinburne Horticultural (south) and F. Tinkler & Son (north).

Barrie Ward, Chair of Railway Housing Association's Board, said: "It's great to see gardens so well kept as this and it's pleasing that our residents go to such great strides to maintain their homes both inside and out.

The runners-up were Bryan Story, of North East Railway Cottages, South Milford and Denise Gleeson, of Mainsforth Road, Ferryhill.

A Great Run

Housing Officer Kim Jackson completed the Great North Run in a highly commendable 2 hours, eight minutes and 11 seconds.

Running in the half-marathon with her sister Hayley, they have helped to raise over £500 for Bowel Cancer UK.

Kim did not manage to beat her personal best on this occasion. She puts this down to having to stop for a 'call of nature', which she estimates cost her at least a couple of minutes.



Community fund

Railway Housing Association has introduced a small fund to help support community activities. Grants will be made to support projects and activities that will benefit the Association's residents and their communities.

These could include activities in schools, local churches, community centres and sheltered housing schemes that support healthy lifestyles and independence, improve the local environment, reduce anti-social behaviour or increase opportunities for local people to socialise together.

Do you know or help out in community projects or activities in your area? Does your group need a small grant to help fund their activities? If so please contact your local Housing Officer who will be able to give you more information about this fund.

Turn2us

Residents who would like to find out what financial benefits they are entitled to can now do so through the Railway Housing Association website.

If you go to the 'Paying your rent section' (listed under Housing Services) of our website – www.railwayha.co.uk – there is a link to the Turn2us website.

Turn2us exists to help people access the money available to them – through benefits, grants and other financial help. Its free, accessible website – www.turn2us.org.uk – has been designed to help people find appropriate sources of financial support quickly and easily, based on their individual needs and circumstances. Features include:

- A benefits checker that helps people ensure that they are receiving all the welfare benefits they are entitled to
- A grants search section containing the details of hundreds of grant-giving

charities (national, regional and local) that may be able to provide financial support and other services

- A confidential 'My Turn2us' account that can be used to make online enquiries and applications to grant-giving charities
- Information and interactive tools covering a wide range of subjects on welfare benefits, grants and managing money.

The Turn2us service is comprehensive, reliable, free, confidential and secure.



New Homes Completed

Residents have begun moving into Railway Housing Association's newest affordable housing development.

People are now settling in to the 14-home development on the site of the former Hillington pub in Spennymoor, Durham.

We have created ten two-bedroom apartments and four two-bedroom

bungalows. One of the bungalows has been designed with wheelchair access in mind and all 14 properties will be let to people aged 55 and over.

The three-storey apartment block includes a lift and communal areas such as a garden, lounge, bike store and motorised wheel chair charging and storage facilities.

In a first of the kind for the Association the homes all have photovoltaic roof tiles, which capture the sunlight and convert it into electricity. This method of renewable energy will provide electricity to the communal areas and facilities.



Legal Action Taken

Railway Housing Association has taken legal action against a tenant because of her anti-social behaviour.

The tenant, who lives in Martin Cheeseman Court in York, has been verbally abusive to her neighbours, caused excessive noise and was arrested for drunken behaviour.

Our Housing Officer, Juliet Kerins, has worked closely with residents who had either witnessed, or suffered from, the tenant's anti-social behaviour; and with

City of York Council, to apply to court and obtain a 'Suspended Possession Order'.

The order requires the tenant to adhere to the terms of her tenancy agreement that states that tenants and visitors to their homes must not cause a nuisance or annoyance. If she does behave in an anti social manner again within one year of the order then an application can be made to Court for a warrant for eviction and she could lose her home.

The Association takes a fair but firm approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour so that all residents can enjoy the right to peace, quiet and security in their homes. We will always try to resolve problems quickly and only use legal action as a last resort.

If you want to report any type of anti-social behaviour you can contact your Housing Officer; telephone us on 0800 0287428 or 0300 1230734; use the online form on our website www.railwayha.co.uk; or email us at housing@railwayha.co.uk.

Resident Involvement

Every year we try to measure and evaluate the improvements that have been made to services by involving residents.

In 2010/11 we offered an extensive range of activities and resources to enable residents to become involved. These opportunities were taken up by approximately 450 residents and their involvement has successfully influenced the Association's services and plans for the future.

What difference have residents made?

- Railway Housing Association's Business Strategy for the next five years includes residents' priorities
- Annual Report – the style and content was decided by residents
- The Association's Budget for 2011/12 was discussed and agreed by residents
- Value for Money strategy – the content was influenced by residents

- Service changes – a new leaflet has been produced in response to residents' requests for more clearly explained information
- Fencing in open gardens – a pilot scheme has been introduced
- Refurbishment of communal lounges – residents chose the style and colours of furnishings and decoration
- Guest rooms at sheltered schemes – a charge is now made for use of guest rooms and the money is used by the Residents' Association
- New bathrooms – residents agreed the work specification, selection of contractors, choice of bath or shower and colour of wall panels and flooring
- A Residents' Scrutiny Panel has been established.

Two means of involving residents need to be improved:-

- The editorial panel – only a small number of residents are currently involved in this activity and the impact is not as significant as it could be. In 2011/12 we will be working to try and develop the role of this group so that residents have more influence on the documents published by the Association.

- The involvement of residents in the development and review of policies - we would like to see our residents have more influence over this. We will look at ways to improve this in 2012/13.

If you would like to know more or have any ideas on how we could improve then please contact Julie Clark on 01325 373055.

New Board Members

Railway Housing Association has welcomed three new board members, including two of our residents.

John Smailes, Michael Tasker and Alistair Brown have all joined our Board of Trustees, bringing the Board up to full strength.

John and Michael are both residents of Railway Housing Association. John lives in Doncaster while Michael is from Leeds. They were elected after a thorough recruitment process that involved a written application, formal interview and an election, which all Association residents had a chance to vote in.

John, a retired teacher and health and safety manager, says he is looking forward to becoming involved in the work of the Association.

“It will be a big learning curve for me, but it is something I am really looking forward to making a real contribution to,” he said.

Michael, who worked on the railways before being employed by Leeds Metropolitan University, said: “I am looking forward to giving input from a resident’s perspective and playing my part in the running of Railway Housing Association.”

Alistair, who works as an

Accountant for the Department of Work and Pensions, is also looking forward to his new role.

“I am hoping to use my financial experience to support the work of the Association and to ensure it continues to be a well run and respected organisation.”

Barrie Ward, Chair of Railway Housing Association, said: “With these new appointments the Board of Trustees is now at full strength and we have a very strong range of skills that will prove helpful in the day-to-day running of the Association.”



Seated from left to right are John Smailes, Alister Brown and Michael Tasker, with (standing) Anne Rowlands, Railway Housing Chef Executive, and Chairman Barrie Ward.

Community News

Goodbye Bush!

There was once a bush, outside our Great Western Court sheltered housing scheme, in Hereford, that grew and grew and grew.

It was only the local neighbourhood cats that had any love for the bush and their morning ablutions certainly ensured there was a strong aroma!

The residents got together, decided it had grown big enough and the funds were raised to employ a gardener to remove it and replant the area.

Most of the funds came from donations and sales tables from former residents and their families, and there will soon be a small plaque put in place to name it as a garden dedicated in fond memory of past friends.



Coffee Morning

Residents of Plevna Mews in Shildon, Durham recently hosted a coffee morning to raise funds for the Shildon Community Bus.

The Community Bus, a registered charity, operates 2 accessible minibuses for local groups and voluntary organisations to use and have had a presence in the town for over 20 years. The scheme, which is run on a completely voluntary basis, currently has over 50 affiliated groups within Shildon and the surrounding area and carries over 6,000 people a year.

The fundraising event was a huge success and we would like to express our thanks to all the volunteers who helped and all those who came along and supported the event. A total of £430 was raised and will go into funds to help purchase replacement vehicles, which normally cost in the region of £45-£50,000 each.

Diving down memory lane

A resident of Railway Housing Association's Hackworth Court scheme in Stockton has been reminiscing about an old hobby, which led to the first police frog team in the North East being formed.

Joyce Kendrick went to see the film, the Cockleshell Heroes, at the Odeon in Stockton in 1956 with her late husband Bill. It was a film about the true story of the Cockleshell Heroes, who canoed almost 100 miles behind enemy lines to blow up ships in a daring World War II raid called Operation Frankton in Bordeaux Harbour.

As they entered the cinema they saw a poster asking for anyone interested in starting a local branch of the British Sub Aqua Club to get in touch.

Inspired by what they had seen on the big screen, with friend Patrick Mullen, they decided to start a branch in Stockton and organised an inaugural meeting at Elmwood Community Centre.

Joyce explained that around 20 people attended and the local branch of the British Sub Aqua Club was born – and she understands it is still going now.

They spent many enjoyable evenings and weekends attending events and activities with club members at various locations across the North East and Lake District.

One evening, in 1957, when she and Bill returned to their home in Stockton an Inspector Duke from Durham Constabulary was waiting for them. He had come to see if they would be interested in helping to train the police to dive, for search and rescue incidents on the region's rivers and lakes.

Joyce said: "Bill went up to Durham to teach them – it went on for quite a while. But he also went out diving for the police as well, searching for and recovering bodies

"I am sure it was the first police team of its kind in the North East, if not the whole country."

Cancer fundraiser

A Macmillan Cancer Care fundraiser that took place at Great Western Court in Hereford raised £650 - £150 more than the target.

The 2011 fundraiser started with a sales table to which many kind residents donated items, helping to raise over £100. This was added to with a very generous cash donation from Mrs Pryce-Lewis, a resident of Great Western Court.

On the day of the Cream Tea, there was a lovely variety of stalls where residents Mrs Jackson, Mrs Goff, Mrs Pryce-Lewis, Mrs Burge, Mrs Gill, Mrs Cosnett and Mrs Davis, along with Elena and John (the Community Support Police Officers) worked hard drumming up trade and raising cash.

Yvonne and Wendy did a sterling job running the kitchen and kept the teas, coffees and cream scones coming (not to forget doing the washing up). The raffle was a great success, with prizes donated from residents and friends, including The Courtyard Theatre, Sainsbury's and the Co-operative. This raised over £160.

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came and spent their money or donated prizes and bought raffle tickets.



Happy Birthday Emily



Housing Manager Julie Clark with Emily Briggs

In August, Emily Briggs celebrated her 100th birthday in great style, with 84 family and friends at a party held at Forster House in Hull.

On her big day, as well as her card from the Queen and her telegram from Ian Duncan Smith (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions), Emily received over 100 cards from friends and family. She was also entertained by her friends in the sewing group and at bingo.

Emily was born the eldest of 10 children in Oakham, in Rutland in 1911.

Her father was a farmworker/shepherd and the family moved regularly. All the children had jobs to do from a very young age, from bringing in fuel to heat the home to feeding the sheepdogs.

Emily acted as midwife to her mother on 3 occasions from the age of just 9. At 14 she left school and went into service with a family who lived at Gunthorpe Hall in Rutland, who once entertained the late Queen Mother

when she was Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon – Emily even helped cook for her.

She met her first husband, Fred Robertson, who had been a batman for the family's son in the Great War, and agreed to come to Hull for a week to see what it was like – 75 years later she's still here!

She and Fred both worked in the Hull area, Fred on the railways on the docks and Emily in a variety of jobs. They had 2 daughters and now she has five grand-daughters and nine great grand-children.

When Emily was 46, Fred passed away, but she eventually found new happiness with Ted Briggs, also a railwayman. They lived in a Railway Housing Association property in Ella Street in Hull, but Emily regularly visited Forster House to play bingo. After Ted died from Parkinson's disease, she moved into her present first floor flat.

Emily is remarkably fit and still walks unaided up and down the stairs to her flat, does all her own cleaning, washing (by hand) and shopping. She joins in the bingo at Forster House twice a week, and is an active member of the sewing and knitting club that meets every 2 weeks. She also joins in the activities run by the local Parkinson's disease support group – she hasn't missed a Christmas lunch in 40 years!

Emily said that at her time of life she didn't need any presents so she asked if anyone who wanted to give a gift would instead give a donation to the Parkinson's disease Society and a total of £263 was raised. She did say that the one thing she would like that she didn't have was a tattoo!

When the man from the Department of Work and Pensions came to check her birth certificate before she turned 100, he said he nearly asked "is your mother in?" because she looks much younger!

Making a meal of it

Residents at Patrick Stirling Court in Doncaster had an enjoyable evening raising money to buy flowers for the garden.

The residents sat down to a meal, which was very well received, and the money raised will all be spent on improving the garden.



Fair to all

Railway Housing Association has a responsibility to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment, and to promote tolerance, fairness and equality.

We try to ensure that no individual or group is treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. We aim to recognise the needs of individuals and treat each person with dignity and respect.

We have a written policy that complies with the Equality Act 2010. In it we detail how we will meet our responsibilities in relation to recruiting and employing staff; providing services to customers; involving residents; dealing with harassment, hate crime and domestic violence; buying goods and services;

governance; dealing with customer complaints; and building and maintaining homes.

The Association will ensure that no individual or group is disadvantaged in terms of selection for housing, quality of housing or the subsequent service they receive. All tenancies will be let in an open and accountable way that prevents discrimination and gives equal access to all groups of applicants.

We offer a range of consultation and involvement activities to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to participate in the management of their homes.

The Association's Board aims to have members with a diverse range of backgrounds, skills and experience that is broadly reflective of the communities we serve.

In 2011/12 we will be making several improvements to make sure that we

treat everyone fairly. These include finding out the most effective ways to help residents who have hearing difficulties, for example, by providing text phones, video phones, or hearing loops for meeting rooms and communal lounges; contacting key agencies and support groups for disabled and other minority groups to make them aware of the Association; and reviewing the age criteria for lettings at each scheme.

For further details, please see our website or ask a member of staff.

Our Performance

We constantly measure and monitor our performance to gauge how good the service we provide is and to make sure we are keeping our promise to offer customers the highest possible level of service.

green
Performance on target 

amber
Performance below but close to target 

red
Action is needed to meet target 

How we performed from 1st April 2011 to 30th June 2011.

<p>Income Management</p> <p>Amount of current rent arrears outstanding – 1.91% (target is 1.90%) </p>	<p>New Applications</p> <p>Percentage of new applications assessed within 14 days = 100% (target is 95%) </p>
<p>Lettings</p> <p>Average time taken to repair and let an empty property = 56.61 days (target is 25 days)  <small>The average time taken to re-let empty properties has increased because several properties that were empty for a long time have been successfully marketed and re-let.</small></p>	<p>Complaints</p> <p>Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage = 100% (target is 95%) </p>
<p>Disabled Adaptations</p> <p>Percentage of work completed within 4 weeks = 100% (target is 95%) </p>	<p>Repairs and Maintenance</p> <p>Average cost of a responsive repair = £104.30 (target is £108.37) </p> <p>Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service = 96% (target is 96%) </p> <p>Percentage of repairs completed correctly first time = 82% (target is 86%) </p> <p>Percentage of repairs completed on time = 93% (target is 90%) </p> <p>Average number of days to complete a repair = 9 days (target is 11 days) </p>
<p>Response to Letters</p> <p>Percentage of letters responded to within 30 working days = 97% (target is 95%) </p>	
<p>Response to Telephone Calls</p> <p>Percentage of telephone calls answered within 7 seconds = 58% (target is 65%)  <small>Performance has improved since June and will be shown in the next report.</small></p>	
<p>New Tenancy Visit</p> <p>Percentage of new tenants visited within 6 week = 100% (target is 92%) </p>	

Recipe:

Spice lamb and courgettes

Serves: 6

Prep: 10 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, plus marinating

1 tsp cumin seeds

1tsp coriander seeds

1tsp fennel seeds

2 tbsp olive oil

Juice of half lemon, plus lemon wedge to serve

1 x 750g boneless butterfly leg of lamb

3 large courgettes, halved and cut into chunks

1.

Bash the seeds in a pestle and mortar. Mix in the olive oil and lemon juice. Make slits all over the lamb with a sharp knife and rub the spiced oil all over the lamb and into the slits. Leave to marinate in the fridge for a few hours and bring to room temperature before cooking.

2.

Preheat the oven to 190 oC, fan 170 oC, gas 5. Season the lamb and roast for 35 minutes, for medium cooked meat. Add the courgettes for the last 20 minutes – stir them into the juice and base the lamb at the same time. When cooked, leave to rest for 10 minutes.

3.

Slice the lamb and serve on a platter with the courgettes. Pour over any juices. When cooked, leave to rest for 10 minutes.

If you would like to submit a recipe for future editions of RHA News please send them in an envelope to Karen West, Bank Top House, Garbutt Square, Neasham Road, Darlington, DL1 4DR, or email kwest@railwayha.co.uk



RHHA

English

Information can be made available in other languages, or other formats such as Braille, large format or audio tape, on request.

Arabic:

يمكن توفير المعلومات بلغات أخرى و صيغ أخرى مثل طريقة بريل أو شرائط سمعية ، حسب الطلب

Bengali:

আপনি অনুরোধ করলে এই তথ্যগুলি অন্য ভাষাতে, অথবা অন্য কোনো মাধ্যমে যেমন ব্রেইল-এ বা অডিও টেপে, পাওয়া যেতে পারে।

Somali:

Faahfaahinta waxa kale oo aad ku heli kartaa luuqadaha kale, ama siyaabo kale, sida Farta waaweyn ama canjal maqal ah, waana in aad soo codsato.

Turkish:

Talep üzerine bu bilgi diğer dillerde veya görme engelliler için kabartma alfabetesi ve ses bandı formatında da temin edilebilir.

Urdu:

یہ معلومات دیگر زبانوں اور دوسری صورتوں میں (نابینا افراد کے لیے خصوصی عبارت) یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر بھی فراہم کی جاسکتی

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Railway Housing Association

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Registered Social Landlord: A1855 Registered Charity: 216825

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