



TIGHRA TALES

Spring 2006

Retired Tenants Voice Their Views

At a conference in Elgin on 12th May, retired tenants from the Highlands, Islands and Grampian voiced their views about current housing, services and pensions in Scotland. The delegates had been invited from housing associations and local authorities to contribute to the conference which was organised jointly by TIGHRA and Trust and Hanover Housing Associations.

In response to the Scottish Executive's current consultation 'Age and Experience: Developing the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population', particular themes were identified by delegates as priorities for future action.

Amongst the measures called for were:

- More affordable and adaptable accommodation in local communities to meet the needs of older people.
- Flexible, efficient and economic heating systems.
- Consistent and accessible health-care and support with emphasis on clearer information to service-users and better communications between departments.
- Development of free rural community transport services.
- Improved incentives for people to save without the worry of being financially penalised for their savings in later life.

Many delegates came from rural areas and there was a strong message to the Scottish Executive that services for rural and remote communities needed to be properly addressed in any strategy for the future.

The findings from the workshops were presented to Andrew Sim from Age Concern Scotland and are to be collated with other responses for issue to the Scottish Executive by 5th June 2006.

Other speakers to the conference included David Bookbinder (featured, right) from The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Mary Culley from Voluntary Services, Aberdeen, Jim Pearson from Alzheimer Scotland and David Gordon from Hanover Housing Association.

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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

That's the theme of our annual conference. Why not join us!
Quality Station Hotel, Perth
15th-16th September 2006



NEWS FROM COMMUNITIES SCOTLAND



National Tenant Engagement

The National Engagement Tenants Conference on 20th March brought together Registered Tenant Organisation representatives from all over Scotland to report back the findings of the recent consultation and to discuss and agree the next steps in taking national engagement forward. Malcolm Chisholm, Minister for Communities, confirmed the Scottish Executive's commitment to working directly with tenant representatives and involving them in the policies which affect their homes. National engagement will now be taken forward through regional networks. For more information contact Jennifer Horne on 01224 332977

Review of Regulation and Inspection Framework

Communities Scotland is currently carrying out a review about how it should regulate and inspect social landlords in Scotland in the future.

The present system, which aims to ensure high quality in housing and homelessness services and protect the interests of tenants and other stakeholders, focuses on regular inspections of the landlords' activities.

In recent times service-users have been involved in the inspection design and process and this has enabled tenants to contribute views directly on the quality of their landlords' services as they find them.

One of the questions asked in the current consultation document from Communities Scotland is 'How should we enable service-users to influence our selection of organisations for inspection?'

The consultation period ended on 7th June and we hope to hear more information about the future of regulation and inspection processes from Communities Scotland at our annual conference on 15th and 16th September in Perth.

GOOD IDEAS IN RETIREMENT

Getting To Grips with IT!

Residents in sheltered housing complexes are demonstrating that computers aren't nearly as daunting as some people would have you believe. In Grampian area, the Housing Co-operative, 'Tenants First' has been innovative in enabling and supporting the use of computers by tenants. By providing the equipment and offering on-site training, the organisation has helped residents access lots of information through the internet, keep in touch with younger family members through email and generally enjoy new skills in many areas. Funding is available from a variety of sources to help people who are interested in making the most of computer technology.



Home Support

Only a small proportion of older people live in sheltered housing. For those who choose to remain in general housing within their community or are waiting to move, options for essential support and security can be limited. In the Central Belt a community-based group received grants from The National Lottery and Lloyds TSB Foundation to set up *Home Supported Living* which provides essential support to older people and those with disabilities. Services include community alarms with mobile area warden support and home care. Perhaps some rural community groups would be interested in exploring a similar scheme?

The places to be seen this summer;

Have you got some questions to ask your community this summer, or are you seeking more effective ways to engage with residents ?

Have you thought of hiring a stand at a local show or summer fete in your area?

You could arrange a summer meeting at the office and practically no-one would turn up, but if you go to where everyone is already gathered then you've got a captive audience! Shows attract a wide cross-section of people, from those with children to the elderly and, generally, people will be happy to answer a few questions before passing on. How about entering completed questionnaires into a prize-draw? Just be careful that you don't break any rules with the organisers - and watch out for the survey form returned in candy-floss!.



And the people to be seen with!

It's great when the children get their summer holidays, but, if you're hoping to have meetings with community residents then you've got to make additional arrangements to accommodate child-care and there are rules about who can look after children.

Why not run an event which involves the younger members of the family?

Competitions such as painting or sports events can attract young families and you can find ways to engage with all age-groups at once.

Check insurances first though.

Some Golden Rules for Useful Consultation

Consultation is a process of discussion between two or more parties that leads to a decision. To work effectively it requires each of the parties to listen and take account of the others views - at least that is what should happen!

Consultations between landlords and tenants are a core part of tenant participation activity but, sometimes, poor planning and poor understanding on the part of both parties leaves everyone feeling that their time and experience has been wasted.

So what can be done to help the process along? Listed below are a few principles:

1. There must be something to consult about!. Decisions should not be concluded before the process begins.
2. Each party should have access to sufficient and appropriate information about the subject to enable them to give an informed opinion.
3. Adequate time must be allowed to enable the process to work. Too often insufficient time is allocated to the consultation process resulting in essential tasks and decisions at the end being squeezed out. Failure to feedback conclusions to tenants about the decisions reached is often the result of bad planning.
4. The process must be transparent and properly recorded.
5. Recommendations arising from the consultation should be implemented within the agreed timescales. If not, participants will wonder whether it was worth-while getting involved.

To get the best out of consultation we recommend that organisations spend some time getting together with their consultation partners to establish ground-rules and agreeing structures that will work in a range of circumstances.

TIGHRA can offer training and workshops to help get consultation right.

Get The Jackpot for YOUR Community!

The Big Lottery Fund in Scotland has **£257 million** to spend between 2006 and 2009. It seeks to invest this money to bring real improvements to communities and to the lives of people most in need.

The area for investment are described as

- **Growing Community Assets** (helping communities to grow stronger by acquiring or developing assets for their own use).
- **Dynamic Inclusive Communities** (assisting the development of stronger, more vibrant communities).
- **Life Transitions** (supporting projects that help people deal with change in their life and encourage them to move on).
- **Supporting 21st Century Life** (projects to enable people cope with new patterns of life and the pace of change communities are experiencing).

A range of groups can apply for funding including community groups and local authorities.

We're sure that some of this money could benefit our rural communities and so we urge our members to get their thinking-caps on and pens out.



New Resource for Rural Volunteers

Last year we completed our research to examine how tenant volunteers were contributing to rural tenant participation across Scotland. The research looked into the different structures of participation beyond the traditional and very valuable resource provided through local tenant and resident groups.

As a result of the research we have developed a resource pack of information which we hope tenant volunteers will find useful to develop their skills.

The chapters in the pack are;

1. Tenant Participation in Scotland
2. Representing Your Community Effectively
3. Helping Tenant Groups To Develop
4. Consulting on Housing Issues
5. Understanding Housing Finance
6. Housing Law, Best Practice and Regulation
7. Information and Communication Technology.

The information will be available on our website soon.

We can also offer a session on how to recruit and support tenant volunteers and use the resource pack to maximum effect.

Contact our office for details.



Membership Changes

There's some good news and some bad news for our landlord members this year.

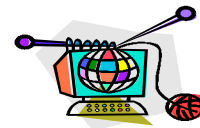
Unfortunately, our funding is effectively decreasing and so we need to ensure that we bring in enough other income to maintain our viability.

So, this year we've decided to put up our landlord membership rates to levels just below those of other similar organisations.

The good news is that we will offer an enhanced service to the landlords paying the additional sum. They will be entitled to receive a free half-day of work from TIGHRA. This can be used to provide training to staff, committee or tenants or can also be used for research or consultancy, perhaps as part of a larger contract.

We have received renewals from most of our landlord members and some have already organised to receive their free work from us.

Free Publicity for Tenant and Resident Groups!



If you represent a tenants or residents group and would like a website without the trouble and expense of setting one up, then we can help.

We can set up pages for you in our website, giving you the opportunity to keep tenants in your area regularly updated with your activities. Contact us.