



# TIGHRA TALES

Spring 2007

## Participation Practices Under Scrutiny

Local authorities and registered social landlords in Scotland will be evaluated this spring, to find out how effectively they are delivering tenant participation. It is now almost six years since the law changed to ensure that tenants were put at the heart of their landlords' decision-making processes and were given rights to influence policies and standards.

The Scottish Executive believes that sufficient time has now passed for the tenant participation strategies (seen as the essential tools in the process) to be fully operational and making a genuine difference to engagement and consultation opportunities.

The consultancy firm, ODS Consulting was awarded the contract from Communities Scotland to evaluate the impact which the legislation has had in practice. In order to achieve an accurate picture, landlords and tenants will be positively encouraged to take part in the research and contact will be made by the consultants in late March or early April.

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**Put a date in your diary!  
TIGHRA Conference 2007  
Inverness Marriott Hotel  
21st and 22nd September 2007**



This year our conference moves back to Inverness. Our choice of venue seems particularly appropriate as it's the Highland Year of Culture and Inverness will be buzzing with activity.

As usual, there will be plenty to get your teeth into, with presentations, workshops, debate and discussion on the programme.

We'll be examining the latest changes to the housing scene which will affect Scotland's rural communities. In particular, we'll explore how we can rise to the challenges of ensuring that everyone has equal access to services and to effective engagement on housing and community issues. We'll look at opportunities to engage with young people as well as those with different cultural and communication needs and those who have disabilities or health problems.

The booking form for the conference can be downloaded from our website from April onwards or you can get a copy from our office.

## Consultations

### **Accommodating Sex Offenders**

The accommodation of sex offenders in communities will be the subject of further discussion this year. We will shortly be seeing the introduction of a National Accommodation Strategy for Sex-Offenders and new legal requirements will mean that police, public bodies and social housing providers will have to work together to ensure that risks relating to sex offenders are properly assessed and managed. Research has shown that communities are better protected by ensuring that offenders are not driven underground through lack of adequate housing and supervision.

### **Sustainable Development Policy**

The Sustainable Development Policy proposed by Communities Scotland has come to the end of its consultation period. The policy sets out the aims and objectives for the organisation, its stakeholders and partners and proposes actions to ensure that Scotland's communities remain places where people want to live and work in the future.

### **Homelessness and Local Connection.**

Consultation has just ended on an important proposed adjustment to homelessness law which could see homeless people having greater freedom in deciding where they choose to live in Scotland.

The law relating to many aspects of homelessness in Scotland is undergoing development with targets laid down in the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 due to be met on or by the year 2012.

Local authorities currently have the power to refer certain homeless households who do not have a 'local connection' to another local authority. (This power applies when the person is determined to have priority need for housing and be unintentionally homeless).

Under the proposed change, councils would have this power suspended and would be required to accommodate homeless people who want to live in their area as long as their request is realistic in terms of accommodation and support capacity in that local authority area.

Watch out for more information about the outcome of the consultation and about how any changes could impact on rural housing supply.

## Calendar Girls

The Kirkside Area Residents Association in Highland wanted to make sure that local residents didn't miss out on their meetings, so the members produced a calendar highlighting their meeting dates throughout the year.

Each page has an artistic view local to the group's area and a sunset over the Kirkside rooftops shows the area in a stunning light.

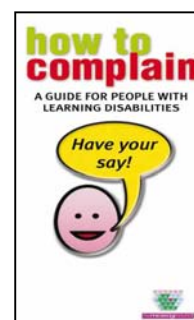
The group received funding through the Communities Scotland Registered Tenant Organisation Grant Scheme, which funds innovative ideas to get residents more involved in tenant participation activities in their local communities.



## Complaints Made Clear!

The Moray Council has taken steps to ensure that people who have learning disabilities have the same access to making complaints as other residents.

The council provides several different leaflets called 'How to Complain' and the one designed for those with learning disabilities describes how to follow the procedures in an easy to understand format with graphic symbols.



## Does your community need a helping hand?

If you represent a Tenants or Residents group or you help to support one, then you might be interested in the grants available to communities through the Awards for All scheme. Grants of between £500 and £10,000 are available through the scheme for people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities, as well as projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community.

For more information go to the website for further information – [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)



### Training Opportunities.

We have been told that some interesting training courses are going to be available in Ross-shire over the next few months. Highland Council tenants will have priority for the sessions but if spare places are available then interested participants from other areas are welcome to join in.

The courses running from March until June are:

Improving Your Newsletter - Wednesday 21st March (Aness)

Being Representative - Tuesday 24th April (Dingwall)

Get Bonfire Night Right - Thursday 14th June (Aness)

**Contact Carol Elliot or full details on 01349 877408**

## Just a Minute!

Do you inwardly groan when you're elected to be the secretary of a Group or even if you just get 'volunteered' to take the minutes of a meeting — Yes?, well you are not on your own then!

The secretary has probably the most demanding of all jobs and taking the minutes is a task which is rarely appreciated by others. The chairperson is sometimes commended or the way he or she handles a meeting and the treasurer impresses others with a masterly grasp of the calculator and the accounts, but how often does anyone notice the skills required to compact two hours of discussion into a clear and concise report of the proceedings?

However, everyone does seem to notice if the minutes don't appear on time or if they are not accurate so we've listed a few tips below to make sure your minutes don't attract the wrong type of attention!

- Always write-up the minutes when they are fresh in your mind. The shorthand notes that made sense on the day itself may be far from clear a month later.
- As soon as they are ready, get them approved and circulated.
- Provide a column to highlight action points for specific individuals. If responsibilities are clear they act as a timely reminder to the people concerned.
- If you are unclear about what's being decided at the meeting or you are unable to keep up with discussion points, ask for clarification or time to catch up.

TIGHRA offers training on Committee Skills, including minute-taking. Contact us.

## TIGHRA in 2007

This year will prove to be another financially challenging one for the organisation. Thanks to Scottish Executive funding we will be able to continue to produce our regular newsletters, information sheets and website. We have also been funded by the Executive to research good practices in relation to housing services and participation for new tenants from the European Union and to examine potential improvements to the distribution of housing information to remote rural communities. Our work in relation to tenant volunteers will also continue and we are keen to assist housing providers develop volunteer schemes.

During 2007 we also hope to continue our training and consultancy services to local authorities, RSLs, tenant organisations and other bodies. However, at present our audit services are booked up to mid-summer, so we suggest that organisations interested in tenant participation audits during 2007 make early contact with us. We are seeking funding for further projects in 2007 and are interested to hear from members who would like to discuss potential housing and community-based projects for their area.

## Membership Matters!

It's that time of the year again when lambs are bleating, swallows are arriving — oh, and you're due to renew your TIGHRA membership!

Last year, many of our landlord members made good use of the special offer that goes along with their annual membership fee. Some received a subsidised or free in-house training session whilst others obtained a discount on a tenant participation audit from TIGHRA.

For those of you who haven't contacted us to arrange to take advantage of the offer, you can still make a booking up to 31st March. Contact Judith for details.

### New Information Sheet Choice-Based Lettings

Download it from our website



## TIGHRA TRAINING — BOOK NOW!!!

### An Introduction to Housing

A course for new staff, committee members or tenant representatives. To book this course at your own premises call the TIGHRA office or email [judith@tighra.org](mailto:judith@tighra.org).

Special member rate for up to 12 participants is £350 (plus travel costs).



## TIGHRA BOARD MEMBERS 2007

New to our Board this year is Charles French, a very experienced tenant organisation representative from the Moray area. Charles is featured below, speaking at our annual conference. Our full Board is now;

|                         |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Anne Allan (Chair)      | Heather Anderson (Vice Chair)  |
| Sandy Allan (Treasurer) | Marion Brown Bryan Summerfield |
| Leslie Angus            | May Duncan                     |
| Eleanor Feltham         | Charles French                 |
| Stanley Green           | Margaret Greig                 |
| Arthur Harris           | Pearl Paul                     |
| Anne Robertson          | Nigel Slater                   |



## Free Publicity for 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.**