



TIGHRA TALES

LAUNCH OF NEW TIGHRA WEBSITE AND VIDEO

TIGHRA is to launch its new website and the first of two training and promotional videos featuring aspects of the Housing Act and Tenant Participation. The launch will take place at the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference in Aberdeen on Wednesday 10th March. Both projects received funding support from the Scottish Executive.

TIGHRA WEBSITE— WWW.TIGHRA.ORG

TIGHRA's new website, which has been in development over the last few months, will provide a central access point for everyone wanting to keep up-to-date with the latest happenings in Tenant Participation. The Website features pages which include items of latest news, opportunities for training, a map locating tenant groups in the North of Scotland and Information Sheets on a range of subjects published by TIGHRA. In addition TIGHRA members will gain entry to restricted pages which will include opportunities for consultation and contribution to a bulletin board.

TENANTS 'KNOW-HOW' - *Participation on film*

TIGHRA's new video is intended to be a tool for landlords and tenant groups, to stimulate interest in tenant group participation and community involvement.

The video features three tenant/resident groups who have achieved benefits for their local communities. From the development of play facilities, to housing improvements, adult learning facilities and a drop-in centre, our groups talk on camera about the challenges and satisfaction of 'making a difference' to their communities.

TIGHRA's thanks go to -

Kalliness and Southside Residents Association (Shetland)

Hatton Area Residents Association (Aberdeenshire)

and

Fintry North Residents Association (Dundee)

for their assistance and commitment in the making of this video.

SPRING 2004

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

POLICY WRITING IN CONSULTATION	2
TIGHRA FOCUS	2
NATIONAL TENANT ENGAGEMENT	2
TRAINING NEWS	3
GOT A GOOD IDEA? (Tenant Groups' Grants)	3
NEW INFORMATION SHEETS	3
MEMBERS NEWS	4

FIRHILL WIN THE DRAW !

Firhill Tenants and Residents Association in Alness was recently presented with £100 to spend on promoting Tenant Participation in their area as winners of our prize draw. We're told that the money will be spent on arranging daytime meetings to attract Firhill residents and on giving them access to various websites.

Firhill were just one of many groups which entered our draw by signing on to our Tenant Group Locator - the page on our website which gives all tenant and resident groups in the North of Scotland the opportunity to advertise their availability to tenants.

All the groups who sent in their details for the website before 21st February were entered in our prize draw.

If you haven't taken advantage of this opportunity yet - don't worry. There is still plenty of space available. Contact Judith at the TIGHRA office for a form to register on the Tenant Group Loca-

Lindsey Cargill and Anne Woods from Firhill with the cheque received from TIGHRA Director, Bryan Summerfield

POLICY WRITING IN CONSULTATION

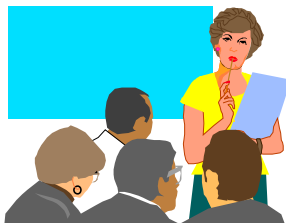
As we know, the Housing Act requires landlords to consult with tenants before making or changing any housing management or maintenance policy that is likely to significantly affect their tenants. It is also expected that Tenant Participation Strategies will describe the process through which tenants will be consulted over any changes.

So, do the new principles of consultation fit comfortably with existing policy development and review processes? If you are a landlord, are you confident that your methods of developing policies are clear, effective, inclusive and can easily incorporate the stages of consultation?

It is vitally important that policies are not just seen as documents taking up space on an office shelf. They must be fully functioning, working guides for both staff and tenants and to succeed in that they have to be user-friendly.

This may be a good time for landlord organisations to hold a comprehensive review of policy writing.

TIGHRA can offer a workshop course on the principles and processes of policy development and consultation. If you would like further details of this course contact Judith at our office.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTED TO PROMOTING NATIONAL TENANT ENGAGEMENT.

The Scottish Executive is actively seeking new ways to engage with tenants at a national level.

The objective is to give local tenant federations and tenant organisations the opportunity to contribute views on current issues relating to the Scottish housing agenda.

The Executive and the Tenant Participation Advisory Group, of which TIGHRA is a member, are currently examining the most effective and inclusive ways to take this forward. TIGHRA would welcome *your* views on how tenants from remote and rural areas can be assured of an equal opportunity to be involved in national engagement.

TIGHRA FOCUS on Aberdeenshire and Orkney

ABERDEENSHIRE'S TENANT EVENT

Aberdeenshire's Tenant Participation Promotion Team (TPPT) held a successful and enjoyable event for tenants in October and is planning a further event in the spring.

Speakers for the day were Councillor Anne Robertson, Chair of Social Work and Housing, and Ritchie Johnson, Head of Strategic Development, Social Work and Housing.

The TPPT represents council tenants from across Aberdeenshire and aims to ensure that Tenant Participation remains at the top of the Council agenda.

Two new members, Sheila Leys and Stanley Green, were elected on to the team during the Tenant Event.

A final highlight of the Event was the presentation of certificates to the first four tenant groups to be official 'Registered Tenant Organisations' with the Council.

Members of Aberdeenshire's
Tenant Participation
Promotions Team.

WESTRAY COMMUNITY BUILDS ON SUCCESS

For island and remote mainland communities who are worried about losing services and facilities to more central areas, there comes encouraging news from Westray in Orkney.

Building will start soon on five new one-bedroom flats for older people that will be suitable for wheel-chair users. They will form part of the new Westray Care Centre.

The island has a population of 560 people and a higher than average percentage of older people so the supported housing along with short-break services and day-care will be a welcome benefit both socially and economically to the community.

Westray Development Trust, which was instrumental in the development of the project, was established in 1998 and, along with Papa Westray, the island was recognised by the Scottish Executive as a 'fragile area' and given 'Initiative at the Edge' status. Sam Marcus, Local Development Officer for the Trust can be contacted at 01857 677790

If you would like a large print copy of this newsletter please contact
TIGHRA, Fairfax House, 64 Market Place, Inverurie, AB51 3XN
Tel: 01467 672233 Website: www.tighra.org

TRAINING NEWS

FREE TRAINING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS FOR RESIDENT GROUPS IN HIGHLAND

Highland Council is arranging training courses on a range of useful topics for groups over the next few months. The sessions are being held at Alness and Inverness and include:

- Mediation Awareness
- Equal Opportunities in Participation
- Project Management for Residents Groups
- Health and Safety for Residents Groups
- Applying for Funding
- The 'New Ideas' and Seeing is Believing' Funds
- Plain English
- Effective Responses to Consultation.

The sessions are free and any group can attend at any location. Money to cover travel and child-care costs is available to Highland Council tenants (but you need to discuss your needs when booking your place). Where the courses last for a full day, lunch will be provided (with a small charge for those who are not Highland Council tenants).

For full details contact Carol Elliot on 01349 868685 or Carole MacKenzie on 01463 703859

GOT A GOOD IDEA? IT COULD BE WORTH UP TO £10,000 TO YOUR COMMUNITY

The Scottish Executive is due to provide guidance on the new grant scheme for registered tenant groups. Under the scheme groups can apply for a grant of up to £10,000 to enable them to undertake an innovative and replicable project that will advance tenant participation in their community.

The Executive is particularly keen to assist disadvantaged groups and communities through the grant scheme and projects addressing the difficulties of advancing tenant participation in rural and remote areas will receive favourable consideration.

It is likely that there will be a 'two-stage' application process with a group submitting an initial idea to the Executive and then, if this is approved, providing detailed proposals for final consideration. The grant will not be available for projects that the Executive considers should be funded by a landlord.

Communities Scotland Tenant Participation Development Officers will monitor approved projects.

TIGHRA will be available, as a contractor, to assist groups fulfil their project aims.

NEW FROM COMMUNITIES SCOTLAND

Communities Scotland will be launching their research report on A Good Practice Framework For Tenant Participation' at the CIOH Conference in Aberdeen in March.

Meanwhile a new guide called 'Does Your Strategy Document Measure Up?' is now available from the TP development team. Its aim is to provide a practical checklist on what a good strategy document should look like and cover. If you would like a copy please contact the team on 0131 4795162.

INFORMATION SHEETS FROM TIGHRA

TIGHRA has just published two new Information Sheets, which will be available both on our website and as written copies from the office.

UNDERSTANDING RENT CHARGES AND REVIEWS

This is a guide for tenants who wish to know more about where their rent goes and why their landlord seeks to increase it every year. The guide also looks at how rents are set for different properties and what tenants can do to ensure that they make the best use of consultation opportunities.

HOW DOES YOUR LANDLORD PERFORM?

If you are confused about what information and statistics your landlord should be providing, or if you want to find out how and who regulates and monitors your landlord, this guide should help.

There are two versions of each information sheet - one for Housing Association tenants and the other for Local Authority tenants.

'HOMES' BECOMES 'HEMS'

Confused?

'HOMES', the current *Housing Mobility and Exchange Service* is about to be replaced by 'HEMS', the *Housing and Employment Mobility Service*.

'HEMS' remit is to improve both housing and employment mobility throughout the UK. It will bring together information on housing and jobs opportunities from across the country.

'HEMS' will include mobility services to help people find new homes, web-based information on local areas covering access to housing, neighbourhood and jobs, and information about individual housing and job vacancies.

More information on 'HEMS' can be found at www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/

TIGHRA NEWS

As we approach the start of another financial year, TIGHRA is finalising a number of projects which have received support from the Scottish Executive. In addition to the two training videos and the website, we've completed 60 roadshows on the Housing (Scotland) Act and published a number of new Information Sheets.

In conjunction with Communities Scotland we held a seminar in Nairn for officers involved in managing funding for tenant participation and we organised regular meetings for tenant participation officers through the TPO Network.

In November we requested specific two-year funding from the Scottish Executive to carry out a number of projects aimed at improving access for Tenant Participation in rural areas.

Unfortunately the Executive was unable to commit the full amount of funding necessary to carry all these out but we have been asked to prioritise one of the projects which involves research into the roles of Tenant Information Volunteers in rural communities and the production of an associated training programme.

We are still keen to deliver on all the projects and are currently seeking other funding to allow us to do this.

Recently we reviewed our *Schedule of Rates and Services* which details the training, advice and consultancy services we can offer members and non-members in 2004-5. This document is now available on our website or from our office.

TIGHRA's Exhibition
Stand at Rural Housing
Services Conference in
Birmam during February,

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION FOR 2004-2005

Like many other voluntary organisations TIGHRA has adjusted the membership year to run from 1st April to 31st March.

This means that during March all our members will be receiving information from us requesting that they renew their annual membership.

In addition to the existing benefits of membership, which include access to reduced training and consultancy fees, special Conference rates and regular copies of our newsletter, members will also have access to the restricted pages of our Website and will have an opportunity to contribute to discussions on our bulletin board. Members will receive their personal password for entry to the member's pages in April.

Membership rates for 2004-2005 will be:

Landlord members - 6 pence per property (minimum £60, maximum £1000)

Tenant Groups - £10; Tenant Federations - £40

Individuals - £5 (waged), £1 (unwaged)

We are also considering a new membership category for other types of organisations - details will follow.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Arthur Harris

Arthur got involved with Tenant Participation in 1994 when Inverness District Council wanted to set up tenant panels in six housing estates within Inverness. He has been a Community Councillor for about 15 years and first got involved with TIGHRA in 1995, becoming a member of the Board two years later.

Arthur represents TIGHRA on the Highland Housing and Community Care Trust, which provides houses for elderly and disabled people, and is an active committee member of the Highland Tenants and Residents Federation.

The Federation has been instrumental in assisting tenant groups and individual tenants work with Highland Council to ensure that they have an effective input to the way policies are set and services are delivered.

Two representatives from the Federation were on the working group that helped draw up Highland Council's Tenant Participation Strategy

Arthur states that his priorities for improving Tenant Participation in rural areas are-

- More recognition of the difficulties created by the lack, and cost, of rural public transport.
- Ensuring that tenants can be kept informed about housing issues.
- More use being made of Tenant Information Volunteers where there are no tenant groups.
- More affordable homes being built to keep people in the rural areas.
- Commitment from everyone involved
- Assistance from the Scottish Executive to address the high costs of keeping tenant participation active in rural areas

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY - THE TIGHRA AGM AND CONFERENCE WILL TAKE PLACE ON FRIDAY / SATURDAY, THE 3RD / 4TH SEPTEMBER AT THE ABERDEEN AIRPORT THISTLE HOTEL.