

# linkup

Thames Valley Housing Residents' Magazine

Autumn 2009



## Making waves TVH addresses residents' needs

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Community Chest grants **p6**

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Responding to feedback **p10**

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## welcome...

to the autumn edition of Link Up. It was great to see so many of you at the residents' roadshows and home owners' events - see pages 4 & 5.

Our new website is about to go live and has an improved and faster range of online services. Log in to use these before 13th November and you could win £50 worth of Love2shop vouchers. Find out how on pages 8 and 9.

Last month we were joined by Paul Augarde, in the newly created position of Community Investment Manager. Find out more about Paul and the work he will be doing to contribute to your communities, on page 7.



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### Link Up Editorial Team



**Alex Noonoo**



**Rosalind Grozier**



**Stephanie Sheen**

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### Read Link Up online

If you'd like to help the environment by receiving Link Up by email, please let us know by emailing [link\\_up@tvha.co.uk](mailto:link_up@tvha.co.uk)

Please provide your email address with your name and postal address.



## A message from your Executive Team

**We know how much you value the outside space in your estates and neighbourhoods. So when you told us that there was room for improvement to the services we provide to maintain these areas, we began making changes to address this.**

Over the last few months we have been working hard to improve your external surroundings. We have trained more resident estate inspectors, who check and report back to us on the quality of cleaning and gardening service.

We also recently established the TVH Resident Auditors' Group. The group works in partnership with us to identify and improve the areas of service that are most important to you. You can learn more about the Auditors on page 12.

In order to improve and prioritise our services effectively, it's really important for us to hold up to date information about you. This enables us to provide targeted services that suit your needs. A resident profiling survey is enclosed in this edition of Link Up. If you haven't already filled one of these in, make sure you send your completed questionnaire back to us. See page 15 for more details.

Over the last few months our Resident Involvement team and other TVH staff have been out and about meeting with you at five tenants' road shows, two home owner events and two events for our older residents. Thank you to everyone who attended and shared their views on our services. We really appreciate your feedback.

Ultimately, the wider the range of residents' views that we hear, the more we can develop our services. Your satisfaction is our top priority.

**Mark Allnutt**  
Development Director



# Something for everybody

at TVH Residents' Days





**The TVH Annual Residents' Days took place in August and September. This year we held separate events for home owners, tenants and older TVH residents so the focus could be on the specific needs of these different groups.**

**Regional roadshows**

Children had fun with face painting, games and competitions at residents' road shows held at estates in Slough, Reading, Farnborough, Hounslow and Worcester Park in London over five days.

Residents had the chance to discuss issues on their estate with Mears, who provide the repairs service, and Quadron, who provide estate and garden maintenance. The Resident Auditors' group was also present and representatives from the police attended to talk about safety and security.

**Plain sailing**

Older TVH residents enjoyed a boat trip down the Thames and a day trip to Brighton in early September.

The aim of the trips was to gather views on the services we provide to make sure we're addressing older residents' needs.

**Consulting home owners**

Home owners' events took place in September in Reading and Farnborough. They addressed ways to reduce the service charge by providing more tailored services as well as discussing opportunities to improve their satisfaction.

**Resident profiling**

One of the key purposes of all the events was to ask residents to take part in our resident profiling. Turn to page 15 for more information.

**Look out for the outcomes and improvements we have made as a result of these events in future editions of Link Up.**



# Community Chest grants

**Community Chest is one of the ways in which TVH contributes to your local communities.**

It provides funding to TVH residents, community projects and wider community-based charitable programmes in the areas where we have a large number of homes and residents.

## Children go wild ... thanks to donation

**Children from Christ's School's 'Summer School' in Richmond had a fun-packed day out at London Zoo this summer, thanks to a donation from Community Chest.**

Georgina Hatton, Assistant Head said, "We were really grateful for this donation, it meant we were able to offer the trip to our students at a greatly reduced rate, ensuring everyone was able to attend."



## Mobility made easier

**Slough Community Transport and ShopMobility, a charity that loans scooters and wheelchairs to Slough shoppers with mobility restrictions, has added a new set of wheels to its fleet thanks to a grant from Community Chest.**

Wendy Field, the Charity's Chief Executive explains, "The grant allowed us to purchase a brand new scooter, which has ensured that we never have to turn a client away."

## Life skills workshops

**Reading Single Homeless Project got a boost earlier this year, thanks to a grant from Community Chest.**

The charity will use the funds to run its Life Skills Personal Development Workshops, which will equip their clients with the skills and confidence they need to tackle the workplace again.

# Your new Community Investment Manager

**Paul Augarde joined TVH in September, in the newly created position of Community Investment Manager. Paul will be taking a lead on a number of activities which focus on contributing to the growth and development of your local communities.**

Paul says "This is a really exciting opportunity to make a difference in the areas in which we work. I am looking forward to meeting and consulting with residents in order to find out about the community projects that they feel should benefit from TVH support and funding."

Paul will also oversee the Community Chest programme, he tells us "Community Chest is a really great initiative! To date we have supported some fantastic projects. I will be re-visiting them to find out how our funding has assisted them in reaching their much needed and worthwhile goals."

In his spare time Paul tries to keep up with his baby daughter Anna. He tells us "I'm reliably told that, before parenthood and sleep deprivation, I used to love the cinema, accordion-playing and the agony of supporting Ipswich Town."



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## Hats on for Hayes Carnival



**TVH families showed off their handmade hats and decorated float when they entered into the party spirit at the Hayes Carnival in July.**

Outfits had been made at workshops run by Eleanor Morgan, TVH Resident Involvement Officer.

Eleanor said, "Taking part in the carnival gave these families, who moved into their homes at the end of last year, the chance to get to know each other, take part in the festivities and feel part of their wider community."

# New TVH website goes live

[www.tvha.co.uk](http://www.tvha.co.uk)

**Our new website goes live on 28th October. Why not visit it and tell us what you think? The design is clearer and you can get to the information you want more easily. We've also increased the number of online services available. These are found in 'My TVH'.**

Within My TVH you can:

- Report repairs and track their progress
- View your rent transactions, your balance and your service charge
- View your tenancy details
- Find out who your Revenue and Neighbourhoods Services Officers are

## How to use the My TVH online services

**To register you'll need your:**

- reference number
- email address (you can create a free email address at [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com))
- choice of password

Go to [www.tvha.co.uk](http://www.tvha.co.uk) and go to My TVH in the top right-hand corner of the screen

Click on the 'register' link and follow the on screen instructions

## Already registered?

If you are registered to use the old site, you will automatically be able to use the new site.

All you need now is your:

- Email address
- Password

**NB** You no longer need your mother's maiden name, eye colour or reference number



## Find a home

Find out how you can buy your own affordable home, or rent a keyworker home.



## Resident services

**Resident services contains key information for tenants and home owners, including how to pay your rent, swap your home, buy and sell your home.**

Our information leaflets and publications are available for download, including Link Up and the Handbook.

## Taking part

Find out how you can get involved in improving services at TVH. Also, full details of the groups, events and activities, plus electronic contact forms for requesting more information, can be found here.

## Resident training

The Resident Training and Employment Centre delivers a raft of courses to help you into work, as well as one-day courses such as painting and decorating. The website provides full information about these courses and a form for telling us what course(s) you are interested in.



**Visit My TVH by Friday 13th November – and win £50 worth of Love2shop vouchers.**

**If you log in to use My TVH any time until Friday 13th November, you'll be entered into a prize draw. The first five names out of the hat will win £50 of Love2shop vouchers.**

**Remember – if you've already registered to use the old site, you can visit My TVH straight away.**

# Residents' Maintenance Forum



**The Residents' Maintenance Forum, which started in February this year, was set up in direct response to your feedback. The purpose of the group is to make sure we shape the estate maintenance and repairs services according to your priorities.**

The Forum met for the third time in August. The purpose of the day was to discuss the participation of residents in shaping the planned and cyclical works service, such as kitchen replacements and external decorations.

The day focussed on how involved residents would like to be in the type of contracts we set up for this work and how we decide on the contractor.

A further event took place at the beginning of September to discuss our partnering arrangements with Mears, who deliver our responsive repairs and Quadron Services, who carry out most of our estate cleaning and gardening. We'll be updating you on the outcome of these events in future issues of Link Up.

**If you would like to be involved in future meetings of this forum and have a say in how these services are provided, please contact Fran Moynihan on 020 8607 0784 or email her at [frances\\_moynihan@tvha.co.uk](mailto:frances_moynihan@tvha.co.uk)**

## Resident consultation

**In the last edition of Link Up we told you about the changes we were planning in order to improve the standard of service we provide to home owners.**

We have been working towards integrating the home ownership team into a single Housing directorate. We held a focus group and two events for home owners in September, which over 100 residents attended.

### What the integration means to you

While keeping within existing resources, we have reorganised our teams into specialist roles. The four teams are as follows:

#### Neighbourhoods Team

- Responsible for all on-site matters for home owners, shared owners and tenants
- Dealing with Anti-social behaviour and local issues.

#### Revenues Team

- Responsible for all income recovery and debt management issues
- Working with the Benefits team and Mortgage companies.

#### Leasehold and Service Charge Team

- Responsible for handling complex legal leasehold issues, management company liaison and calculating service charges.

#### New Homes Team

- Responsible for letting new homes and welcoming residents into their home, explaining rights and responsibilities.

The first point of contact will still be the CSC on 0800 358 7767, however other staff will be available to speak to according to the nature of the enquiry.

## Seaside competition

Congratulations to Wendy from Crawley whose name was first out of the hat. Congratulations also to Victoria from Fleet, Pam from Oxford, Patricia from Frimley Green and Steve from Aldershot who all won £20 worth of vouchers.

### Answers to our Summer quiz:

- 1 George IV built Brighton Pavilion,
- 2 Punch and Judy originated in Italy,
- 3 King Canute tried to hold the tide back,
- 4 Wigan Pier was a coal loading Jetty on the Leeds/Liverpool canal,
- 5 A traditional deck chair is made of 3 frames.

## Red hot issues

**If you discover a fire in your home or in the communal parts of your block or estate, do not tackle it yourself. Get out, stay out and call 999 immediately.**



### Safety tips

#### At home

**The most common causes of house fires are those started by candles, smoking, chip pans and other equipment in the kitchen.**

Following these fire safety basics will make your home much safer:

- Fit smoke alarms on every level of your home and test them weekly. NEVER remove the batteries.
- Don't leave children in the kitchen alone when cooking. Keep matches and saucepans out of their reach.
- NEVER leave a pan of hot oil unattended and do not have the heat too high.
- Don't overload sockets.
- Don't remove any automatic door closers, or wedge these doors open.
- Stub cigarettes out completely and dispose of them carefully.
- Candles should be in a secure holder and kept well away from curtains, fabric or draughts.
- Plan an escape route in your home and make sure everyone living there knows how to get out.

**You are more at risk from fire when you're asleep, so:**

- Close all internal and external doors before you go to bed.
- Check your home before you go to bed.

**For more information on how to prevent a fire in your home, go to [www.direct.gov.uk/firekills](http://www.direct.gov.uk/firekills)**

#### In communal areas

- Do not block the official escape routes in your block eg with boxes, bikes etc.
- Do not leave rubbish lying around in your block or in your refuse store.
- Do not open fire vents.
- Keep fire doors and panels closed. NEVER wedge them open.

**Please call us on 0800 358 7767 immediately if:**

- The fire escape signs in your block are missing.
- Any of the communal smoke alarms are not working.
- Fire doors are damaged or do not close properly.

## Smoke alarms

**The smoke alarm in your home must be tested once a year.**

Our contractor Allied Protection Ltd will contact you with an appointment to come and test your smoke alarm.

**If you are unable to make this appointment you must contact the contractor on 0845 226 2223 to make an alternative appointment.**

## Annual gas safety check

**We are legally required to carry out annual gas appliance safety checks to ensure that they are safe for use.**

You must give our contractors access to your property to carry this out. If you refuse, this will be seen as a breach of your tenancy agreement, and legal action will be taken to enforce entry. You will be liable for all fees incurred.

We will continue sending out legal letters to you up until the date the gas safety check is completed, even if an appointment has been booked.

**Please note that the checks for gas safety and smoke alarms apply only to tenants.**



# Residents regulate TVH services

**The TVH Resident Auditors' Group has now begun its work. The group is scrutinising the services we provide and will make recommendations on how these can be improved.**

The work it is carrying out is known as Resident Led Self-Regulation. This places residents at the centre of Housing Associations' internal processes. At TVH there are 16 residents who make up the Group. They have received extensive training in order to be able to work effectively.

The first phase of the audit started in August. The group interviewed officers and managers from the Customer Service Centre, and the Property and Asset Management department about the repairs process.

Resident Auditor, Steve McAllister, said, "Being part of this group enables us to monitor and challenge TVH from the resident's point of view, to help improve things for everybody."

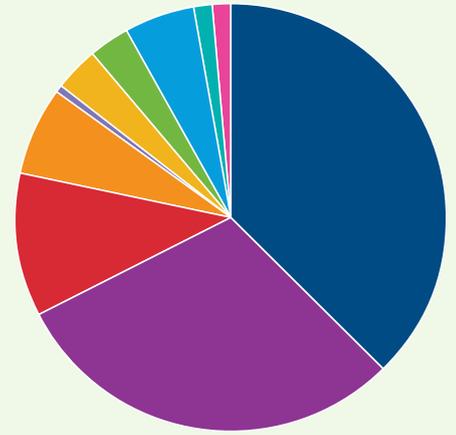
In August, the Group attended a series of Roadshows in some of TVH's core areas (see pages 4 & 5). They discussed TVH services with other residents in order to include those views within the audit.

Once the audit is complete in March 2010, the group will produce a report providing a number of recommendations for service improvements.

**The document will be available on the TVH website as soon as it is complete.**

## Complaints

January-June 2009



### New complaints by type

Day to Day maintenance	58
Defects	46
Estate Services	17
General Service	10
Homebuy Equity Loan/FTBI*	1
Lettings & Allocations	5
Management Services	5
Money Matters	8
New Build Homebuy	2
Planned & Cyclical Maintenance	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>154</b>

**Average length of time to complete:** 17.3 days

**Complaints that went to appeal:** 6

### Number of complaints completed with outcomes:

Fully upheld	59
Partially upheld	28
Not upheld	31
Pending:	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>

\*FTBI – First Time Buyers Initiative

# Open new doors by volunteering



## We have a number of volunteer placements available within TVH departments.

If you are looking to gain work experience and a nationally recognised housing qualification, this is the opportunity you have been waiting for!

By volunteering you will:

- Have the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification, for FREE!
- Gain valuable office based work experience
- Develop your skills and confidence
- Meet new people
- Add practical work experience and a reference to your CV
- Choose the day you want to work (one day a week, Monday to Friday)

Childcare and travel expenses will be covered by TVH.

**To apply, or find out more, contact Lorraine or Emildah for an informal discussion.**

**Lorraine Brown** Community Training & Employment Co-ordinator  
020 8607 0590  
lorraine\_brown@tvha.co.uk

**Emildah Chabata** Community Training & Employment Manager  
020 8607 0774  
emildah\_chabata@tvha.co.uk

## Help us identify tenancy cheats

**The government is encouraging housing associations to take part in its National Fraud Initiative.**

The initiative has been set up to help detect fraudsters who illegally occupy or sublet housing association homes, keeping the homeless and needy out of scarce social housing.

TVH has signed up to this initiative, and we will be working to make sure our homes are occupied only by genuine tenants who really need them. This means we will be looking to identify:

- Tenants who are housed in TVH properties but have tenancies elsewhere
- Tenants who own homes elsewhere
- Tenants who live elsewhere and rent their TVH home out to someone else – or sublet

**If you think a TVH tenant is committing fraud, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0800 358 7767.**

Your information will be dealt with in confidence.



# GALLERY OF HOMES

Why just pay rent?

**Part-buy, part-rent a brand new home from £423<sup>†</sup> pcm**

Now you can own a new home backed by Thames Valley Housing Association, one of the nation's leading housing associations, on a part-buy, part-rent basis for less than the cost of renting.

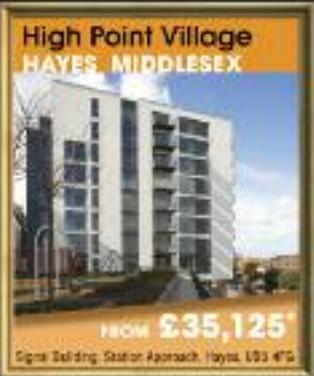


**St Mary's  
WANTAGE OXON**

**COMING SOON**

31 Marys, Wantage, Oxon

1 & 2 bed apartments available from winter 2009



**High Point Village  
HAYES MIDDLESEX**

**FROM £35,125\***

Signa Building, Station Approach, Hayes, UB3 4TG

\*Based on a 25% share of a 1 bed apartment valued at £140,500. 1 & 2 bed apartments available

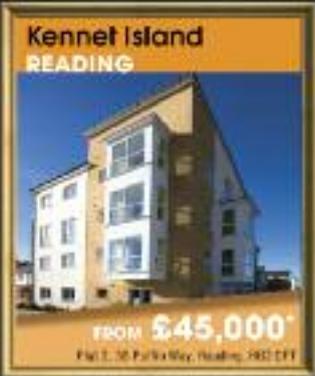


**The Broadway  
WIMBLEDON SW19**

**FROM £70,500\***

Brantree House, Stoney Road, Wimbledon, SW19

\*Based on a 30% share of a 1 bed apartment valued at £235,000. 1 & 2 bed apartments available



**Kennet Island  
READING**

**FROM £45,000\***

Plot 3, 36 Parkway, Reading, RG2 0FF

\*Based on a 33% share of a 1 bed apartment valued at £150,000. 1 & 2 bed apartments and 2 bed houses available

**FANTASTIC SHARED OWNERSHIP HOMES IN WANTAGE COMING SOON**

Please call **The Sales Team** for further details and to arrange an appointment to view on: **08444 70 46 49** lines open 7 days a week, email: [sales@tvha.co.uk](mailto:sales@tvha.co.uk) or visit: [www.homebuy4u.co.uk](http://www.homebuy4u.co.uk)



\*Monthly payment is based on a 2.75% share purchase of £35,125 (£7,025 net share deposit required) on a 1 bedroom property valued at £140,500 at High Point Village. Balance of payment includes collateral monthly mortgage payments and monthly net of £241.00 payable on the unpurchased share (at 2.75% pa). Excludes estimated monthly service charge of £110. Prices and availability are correct at time of printing. Mortgage financing is subject to qualifying, availability at time of completion and individual circumstances. AFTI may differ according to the size of the mortgage. For advice on mortgage financing, availability, terms and conditions please refer to our Independent Financial Advisor.

# Send us mail for free!

**TVH now has a freepost address, so when you need to send something in the post to us, you can do so FREE OF CHARGE.**

You do not need a stamp. Simply write the freepost address below on any envelope, pop it into the post and we will receive it within two working days.

You can use this service to return surveys, forms, enter competitions, or just to write to us with comments or suggestions.

The address you must use to send post to us for free is:

**Thames Valley Housing Association  
FREEPOST TK1763  
52 London Road  
Twickenham  
Middlesex  
TW1 3BR**



# Getting to know you



As a landlord and service provider, it is important for us to hold accurate and up to date information on you, our customers. It helps us to understand your needs, which will enable us to improve and prioritise the services we provide to you.

**With this in mind, we are in the process of updating the information we currently hold about you.**

## How we collect information

A questionnaire is enclosed in this edition of Link Up. Please fill this in and send it back to us using the **FREEPOST** address on page 14. Alternatively, if you call the Customer Service Centre, our staff will ask you to complete the profile if you haven't done so already.

## Questions we will ask you

We will be gathering information that might be out of date like mobile phone numbers, email addresses and number of children in your household.

We will also be asking you questions around the six equality strands: age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexuality.

## Improvements you can expect

The information you provide will help us to create a clear picture of our residents; enabling us to provide inclusive services that suit and meet your needs.

We will also be able to improve the value for money you receive from us by better targeting of our services.

For example, we may use the information to contact our young residents about initiatives they can get involved in, or we can target residents with disabilities in order to promote our household aids and adaptations services.

It is up to you whether you answer these questions, but please do bear in mind that the information is being collected so that we can improve our services to you and ensure that they are inclusive.

**All information we gather is confidential and is subject to the Data Protection Act, which means that we do not share it with any other organisations.**

