



# CARTREF

## NEW HOMES CREATE NEW JOBS



**We are building more and more homes and the life-changing impact this is having on our new tenants is wonderful.**

More money is spent locally and new jobs are created as a result. So far 26 new opportunities have been created as part of our County Flats development and we caught up with two lads called Rowan to see what their new jobs mean to them.. **More on page 3.**



### DELAY TO RENTING HOMES WALES

The Welsh Government recently announced that Renting Homes Wales would be delayed until 1st December 2022. More on **page 4**



### MEET OUR WILDLIFE WARRIORS

How we maintain our land has changed, with our planet now a priority. We caught up with our neighbourhood team to find out what difference this is making. More on **page 6**



### £25 VOUCHERS UP FOR GRABS

Share your best pictures of your garden. Details of the competition can be found on **page 7**

# Money matters with Stephanie

The Government have recently announced a **£15 billion** cost of living support package and this is what it entails...



Tips from Stephanie

**All households will have a £400 grant to help with the cost of energy. This will not need to be paid back and will be credited to your account. If you have a pre-payment meter you will either have it applied to your meter or paid via a voucher.**

If you are on means tested benefits, you will also have a **payment of £650**. This will be paid in two lump sums, the first from July and the second in the autumn. The money will be paid directly to you.

**£300 pensioner cost of living payment**

This will come as a top-up to the annual Winter Fuel payments in November/December and will be paid direct to you.

**£150 disability cost of living payment**

This will be paid directly to people who claim means tested disability benefits in September.

While this is all helpful we also wanted to share tips on what we can do to reduce the amount on energy we use.

**1. Switch off standby**

Save up to £30 per year by switching appliances off at the wall when they're not in use. This will also help to reduce your carbon footprint.

**2. Turn off lights**

Turning off lights not only saves money on electricity bills but reduces the number of light bulbs we use, saving up to £40 a year.

**3. Wash at 30 degrees**

Modern detergents are designed to clean clothes at a temperature of 30 degrees, using less energy and saving money!

**4. Swap bath for shower**

Swapping a bath for a shower not only saves water but also the cost of heating. Take a four-minute shower per day instead.

**5. Don't overfill the kettle**

Only fill the kettle with as much water as you need and watch your bills go down!

Statistics from the Energy Saving Trust

Our financial inclusion team is here to support you with money worries, budgeting help and claiming benefits.

If you are feeling the pinch, we are the team to help. Giving us a call has made a huge difference for many, so please get in touch. Call **01639 506623** or email: **financialinclusion@taitarian.co.uk**.

# Tom's gardening tips



Tom from Banwen is a keen gardener and has some great tips for you.

**With food prices at an all-time high, growing your own not only saves money but helps your wellbeing too.**

Bearing in mind the saying 'eat a rainbow', I've planted curly greens, red and green broccoli and black kale, all of which will crop throughout the year.

This season I've sown salad greens, spring onions and radish using seed strips bought from Lidl. I plant the seed strip half an inch deep, cover with soil, press down and water thoroughly. The seeds in the strip come ready spread out so no need for transplanting after germination. The paper strip then disintegrates into mould in the soil, and re-planting at three weekly intervals ensures a continuous crop. Really easy to use and worth trying if you are new to gardening. I've grown more flowers from last years seeds so look forward to seeing how they turn out.

It is surprising how many flowers are edible, been used for ages in cooking or as food decorations and this has dated as far back as 3000 BC.

Today, many fine restaurants in the UK are using more and more edible flowers to enhance salads with colour, texture and flavours, so I'll try that in the summer months. If you plan to do the same, always do your research as some flowers can be poisonous.

Herbs are always a great thing to grow as they can add so much flavour to your cooking. However, I never have much luck with parsley but have some tips this year to help. As the herb is slow to germinate, it can be killed by mould in the soil, so pouring boiling water on it beforehand should stop this.

A new herb I'm trying this year is chervil, a lovely sweet flavour with a touch of aniseed. Again, for a continuous supply sow in two or three weekly intervals. The flavour is particularly delicious in egg dishes or as a herb butter for fish or potatoes.

**Inspired by Tom? Why not enter our gardening competition, exclusively for tenants, details on page 7.**

**Is your stuff worth protecting from just**

**£0.67p\* a week**

Having home contents insurance can't prevent floods, thefts or fires from happening, but it can help you get back on your feet.

**Tai Tarian**

Find out more on [www.taitarian.co.uk/insurance](http://www.taitarian.co.uk/insurance) or scan here



# Linda's latest

Welcome to the summer edition of Cartref.

**We had a fantastic response to our first edition of our new look newspaper with lots of you enjoying its new style and finding the content nice and informative, but importantly not too formal.**

It's been great that many of you have signed up to electronic versions reducing our need to print and post as many copies this time around. Just contact [media@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:media@taitarian.co.uk) if you'd rather receive future copies via e-mail.

This month we have caught up with our neighbourhood team, chatting about their role and how it has changed quite

dramatically in the last few years as we focus on biodiversity.

Part of this means you may have noticed grass in your communities is growing longer than before and there's good reason for that. You can find out more on [page 6](#).

We also have our usual summer gardening competition, so if you have a garden that you love, or know a neighbour whose garden is their pride and joy, please encourage them to enter.

We have more information on the Renting Homes Wales Act which the Welsh Government have deferred so it will now come into force in December instead of this month as originally planned.

We have been preparing for the changes and caught up with Katie from our housing team in this edition to find out more.

We have a fantastic opportunity for all tenants to become 'board ready' ahead of us recruiting for new tenant members to join our board later this year, more on this on [page 7](#).

*Linda*

Chief Executive



Chief Executive Linda Whittaker

**Don't forget to scan the QR codes for more details.**

If you see a QR code in Cartref, grab your smart phone open your camera and hover over the code.

This will bring up the website page you need. Just tap to open.

If you don't have a smart phone, you can visit our website and use the search bar to find info on the topic.

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

## New jobs thanks to Sandfields redevelopment

Continued from page 1

**Whenever we work with contractors on big projects, they must commit to creating job opportunities for local people.**

At our County Flats development in Sandfields, Neath contractor Hale have already employed 25 local people, many of whom are getting their first taste of work. We caught up with two young lads, to find out about how their careers are going so far...

Rowan Lovering, a tenant from Seven Sisters, always knew what direction he wanted to head in after finishing school:

**"I've been involved in construction, helping my father, all my life. So, when I left school I knew that was something I wanted to go into.**

Added to that, was the fact that I really enjoyed maths at school, so it set me wondering how I could combine the two. After a bit of research, it looked like becoming a quantity surveyor would suit me down to the ground.

"At about the same time Hale were recruiting for trainee quantity surveyors, so I applied and was lucky enough to be offered the opportunity. I am mainly office-based but will regularly come down to the site so I can gain some practical experience. I also spend one day a week in college, working towards my formal qualifications.

**It's all going well so far, I'm learning lots and thoroughly enjoying it. Hopefully this is the start of a long career in the industry."**

Rowan Thomas was also inspired by his family to enter the construction industry, with his brother already working as a quantity surveyor:



Rowan Lovering at County Flats

"I could see how well my brother was doing and thought doing something similar would suit me too. I also love seeing how the construction industry can have a positive impact on a community through improving facilities or providing new homes, like we are doing here at County Flats.

Like Rowan, I also spend one day a week in college with the rest of my time on site, gaining practical experience. It's a two-year course initially, with a further five years studying in university.

**"Long term I hope to become a site manager, but for now, I'm really enjoying the experience and learning lots which will stand me in good stead for the future."**

For details of our current vacancies or those of our contractors, visit [www.taitarian.co.uk/vacancies/](http://www.taitarian.co.uk/vacancies/)

**More new homes on the way**

From Margam to Neath to Sandfields we are currently building 132 new homes with another 72 being redeveloped at County Flats.

For the latest on our new homes visit [www.taitarian.co.uk/newhomes](http://www.taitarian.co.uk/newhomes) or scan here ▶



# Delay to Renting Homes Wales

As covered in the last edition of Cartref, the Renting Homes Act is the biggest change to housing law in Wales for decades. The Welsh Government recently announced a delay in its implementation to 1st December 2022.



Housing Minister Julie James has done this to allow housing associations like us more time to ensure that systems are in place to support tenants, and so that you understand your rights and responsibilities.

From December we will be known as a community landlord and you will be called contract holders when we send you your new contract or other important information.

## What does the new law

### mean for you?

- You will receive a new contract within six months, replacing your existing tenancy agreement.
- New customers will sign the new contract in the usual way.
- You'll retain your existing legal rights to stay in your home.
- You will continue to receive the same services from us.
- Your rent will stay the same and, as we do every year, we will write to you in early 2023 about any increases from April 2023 onwards.
- Contract holders can be added with our agreement and removed with notice without the need to end the contract.
- Improved succession rights, setting out who has a right to continue living in a property if the existing contract holder dies.
- We will be able to repossess abandoned properties without a court order.

**Working together  
for a safe home for all**

## Meet Katie



Katie from our housing team tells us what's been going on behind the scenes here at Tai Tarian to get ready for the change.

"The Renting Homes Wales act was passed in 2016 but it was early this year when Welsh Government confirmed the changes would become legal. The date has just been deferred to 1st December.

Early next year we will post these to you. It will be a large document that we legally have to send. To make things easier, we will include a letter which will explain all the changes.

You won't have to do anything, but we do ask that you take time to read it, so you understand your rights and responsibilities and keep it in a safe place for future reference."

**Our teams have been busy updating our system to accommodate the new contract details, and ensuring we understand what the new legislation means for your rights, repairs and property maintenance. In the coming months we will do more of this and start preparing your new contracts.**

For more on Renting Homes visit [www.taitarian.co.uk/rentinghomes](http://www.taitarian.co.uk/rentinghomes)

Check it out here ▶



## Shower safety



We are seeing a rise in tenants changing their shower heads at the moment, often to power shower style heads instead. Making the change invalidates our warranty and can cause

problems with the shower working properly. If your shower head breaks, we can arrange for it to be repaired or replaced, but please don't make the change yourself.

# Does your rent provide value for money?



Every year we provide tenant satisfaction results to Welsh Government, with 20% of tenants surveyed about what they think about us.

One of the key questions we ask is if you feel that your rent provides value for money, 80% say yes.



As this was lower than the last time we surveyed you we thought we would share a little bit more about how your rent is spent and what you receive for the money which is paid to us.

The majority of our money is spent on improving and maintaining your home and on our services.

As well as rent delivering value for money, we know that affordability is always a hot topic.

We work with tenants every year to consider how much rent to charge, (based on guidelines given to us by the Welsh Government).

Your views about affordability have given us a better understanding of what you think about the rent you pay.

### Affordable and fair

You have told us that our rents and service charges are generally affordable and fair, but we want to continue our work with you to aim for fairness

and sustainability based on our four affordability principles:

1. We will compare our rents against market rents.
2. Our rents will be affordable, in-line with the Living Rent Model for households with tenants who earn a low wage.
3. Our rents will consider the number of bedrooms you have.
4. We will set out what tenants will receive for service charges, and will ensure the amount is fair, reasonable, and provides value for money.

**Remember we are here to help.** If you're having difficulty with making payments, please get in touch with your housing officer so that we can support you.

**More on affordability and our services, here**



## Check out our storyboards

Throughout the year we look at how we are doing and the difference we are making, not only to you, our tenants, but to our communities too.

We do this in something called a storyboard and they have four key themes which link closely to our corporate plan:

- Sustainable Homes
- Sustainable Communities
- Sustainable Planet and
- Our Business

For each theme, outcomes have been developed in consultation with our staff, tenants and other interested people.

These fit with Welsh Government requirements and really help us understand if we are performing well and the difference we are making.

We work with an independent group of tenants and associate members known as the Academy

to review the outcomes of our work and provide feedback through our storyboards.



Interested in getting involved in this work? You can find out more about the Academy here [www.taitarian.co.uk/academy](http://www.taitarian.co.uk/academy)

Read our storyboards here



## Handyperson help

Lots of odd jobs to do around the house but don't know where to start?

Our handyperson service is here to help you get back on track. Garden services include mowing your lawn, trimming your hedges, pressure washing, weeding or maintaining your flower beds.

We can also help with things like changing light bulbs, assembling or moving furniture, fitting shelves or hanging curtains or pictures.

Something else on your odd job list? Get in touch to see if we can help. All work is carried out by our reliable, trustworthy and skilled staff. This means you get peace of mind that the work has been completed by one of our experts. This service is being offered at a reduced rate, so we will only ever charge **£25** per person per hour.

If you need materials then we can help too. We will give you a complete cost before you decide to go ahead with the job.



Handyperson help

Get in touch now on **0300 777 3000** to find out more or get your job booked in.

Payment is taken at the time of booking so remember to have your bank card ready.

# Meet our wildlife warriors

It's a lovely spring day, as we head up the Afan Valley. We're going to meet Tony, Josh and Lewis, three members of our neighbourhood team, tasked with managing our land in a sustainable way.



Josh, Tony and Lewis, our wildlife warriors

**For the three of them, this is more than just a job. You can feel the passion they have for what they do, and they are keen to show us how their work is having an impact on the natural environment.**

We meet them on the main road up to Blaengwynfi, by a big bank of primroses, in full bloom. Tony explains why we've met here: "I wanted to show you all these flowers that have popped up in the last couple of weeks. This hasn't happened by accident.

"Over the winter we cut back the brambles that were swamping this area to open up the land. Now, in the spring, we would normally be strimming this area to keep it looking neat and tidy. But we have decided to give it its first cut later in the summer, giving the flowers time to grow and establish themselves – and look what's happened as a result, the bank is teeming with colour."

**"Had we cut when we normally do, we would never have had all these flowers as they would have been cut back too.**

**We will cut the area, but we will only do it once all the flowers have died back and have re-seeded themselves ready for next year."**

For Tony, that re-seeding is crucial:

**"This has to be a long-term project. By allowing the flowers to grow and then naturally die back, they deposit their seeds into the ground, which will grow next year and produce even more flowers.**

We are allowing nature to re-claim the land and the flowers to self-seed. Over the next couple of years, this will become a natural wildflower meadow and will look spectacular. It's not just about making the place look pretty, there's a more important reason for cutting less: "For me, it's about helping the environment," said Josh.

"Having these flowers blooming attracts all sorts of wildlife, particularly bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Something that would never have happened had we cut when we normally do."

## Why let the grass grow?



1. We are living in a climate and biodiversity emergency and as an organisation we want to do all we can to protect the planet.
2. Welsh Government is encouraging all of us to let it grow, and reduced grass cutting on our land is allowing wild flowers to grow and bees, butterflies and other pollinators to thrive.
3. Not everything will be left to 'rewild' as we will cut the borders of verges and cut some areas for recreational purposes. All areas will then be cut back once the wild flowers have naturally died, usually during July.
4. It's not about saving money but about saving the planet, and changing our approach to things will make a big difference.
5. Leaving areas uncut will allow more natural flowers to take hold year on year. So, by next year, there'll be more and more pockets of colour to be seen on our land and even more pollinators buzzing around.

As we look to change the way we manage and maintain our land, we recognise we may not always get it right and the new approach can look visually quite different to what has been done previously.

But hopefully, by working with our communities and stakeholders, we will be able to keep our land looking well maintained, whilst also helping biodiversity to thrive.

For more on why biodiversity is important to us, details of our grass cutting programme and an interview with Josh visit: [www.taitarian.co.uk/bees](http://www.taitarian.co.uk/bees) or

Check it out here ▶



"It just gives them a chance to get their food. A bee can only travel a couple of miles to get their nutrients, so where are they meant to go if there are no flowers for them?"

**"Regularly cut and weeded areas quickly become nature wastelands, with all potential diversity suppressed. Allowing them to 're-wild' can provide vital food for insects."**

Reducing the number of cuts is already bearing fruit, according to Lewis: "We've seen so many types of flowers pop up already. There are at least 12-15 species that we can identify straight away, and many that we aren't familiar with. We've had things like the cuckoo flower, common vetch and cowslip.

We've never had a chance to see these flowers before as they're cut before they can establish themselves. It's about going back to basics."



Going back to nature

# Love your local... Street Art



Since Banksy adorned a garage in Taibach with his artwork in 2018 there has been a renaissance of street art in Port Talbot.

UK renowned street artists have brightened up the area with beautiful artwork, with a raft of local talent also emerging as a result. The artwork is so plentiful an app has been set up by Artwalk Port Talbot allowing you to use your phone to go on a street art trail celebrating urban art in the area.

After working with Michael Sheen on several initiatives around ending high-cost credit and poverty it was fitting that through our community benefits scheme we were able to make a donation to the creation of his amazing mural by artist Hazard One.

Through our County Flats development we have also brightened up Sandfields Library with a beautiful mural showcasing some of the activities and services available within the building.



Sandfields Library

It also gives a nod to our commitment to the planet with wildflowers and butterflies included, representing our desire to transform our open spaces for nature.

The mural also includes sheep, as we are using their wool to insulate properties at the redevelopment.



Michael Sheen Street Art

The community hub at County Flats has been transformed with a beach scene from local artist Ryan Davies from Another Spray Another Day.

Go and explore the local artwork, the app is free to download. With new artwork popping up all the time, there's no doubt you will find more remarkable sights on your travels.

Check it out here ▶



Our County Flats Hub

## Becoming board ready

In the last edition of Cartref we told you about an exciting opportunity to get you trained ready to become a tenant board member.

### What do our board do?

Our board is made up of 12 members and they play an important role in providing strategic leadership, monitoring our performance and making decisions about our finances, standards and policies.

### A paid role

As a board member you receive an annual fee of £5,000 which is paid every quarter. This income is taxable and would impact on any benefits you may receive but our financial inclusion team could offer advice on this.

### The commitment

The role takes an average of one and a half days a month. This covers attending and preparing for meetings, reading board and committee papers and any training.



### Becoming Board ready

There are seven board meetings throughout the year, these are usually held at 5pm at our office in Baglan, along with two board development days, which tend to take place in the afternoon. In addition to this you will be a member of one of our committees, meetings of which are held virtually, on a quarterly basis, late in the afternoon.

### Getting you board ready

We have a training and development programme launching in the autumn for tenants who have an interest in joining our board.

The programme will give you an understanding of what the role entails, with formal training, information briefings and the opportunity to observe meetings.

All of this will get you 'board ready' for when we advertise for the roles at the end of the year.

**Interested?** If you would like to be part of our training programme or have questions, get in touch with our Corporate Governance Officer Carolyn Heaven.

✉ [carolyn.heaven@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:carolyn.heaven@taitarian.co.uk)

☎ 01639 506079

## Do you have a glorious garden?



If you have a garden to be proud of make sure you enter our garden competition to be in with the chance of winning a £25 voucher for Zoar's Ark Garden Centre in Neath.

- **Best overall garden**  
Is your garden your pride and joy or the talk of the village?

We are giving everyone plenty of time to get your garden looking its best and entering is really easy.

### Categories:

- **Best grow your own garden**  
Do you have a garden full of fruit or vegetables that you have grown yourself?
  - **Best wildlife garden**  
Is your outdoor space a haven for birds and bees?
- Just send your garden pictures, stating the category you would like to enter, along with your name and address to [community@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:community@taitarian.co.uk) by 20th August.
- Not green fingered but know a tenant who is? Please give them a nudge to enter.

# Tea break challenge

## How to play?

Sudoku is played on a grid of 9 x 9 spaces. Within the rows and columns are 9 "squares" (made up of 3 x 3 spaces).

Each row, column and square needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, but these can only be used once.

*Give it a go!*

		9		5 3	1 7			
7 5			2			9 8		
			9				3	
				4 2	7 5 1			
5 7			6 1 8		3 4 9			
3 4			5 7				6 8	
4 1 6	7					8		
						5 1		
	9 5		3 6					

## Competition winner



Congratulations to Wendy, the winner of our My Place My Space competition with her picture of Glyncorrwg Ponds looking tranquil.



We had a fantastic response to our competition, Wendy enjoy spending your £25 shopping voucher!

## Need to get in touch?

### Phone numbers:

☎ **0300 777 0000**  
(General enquiries 8.30am-5pm Monday to Friday)

☎ **0300 777 3000**  
(Report a repair - only emergency repairs can be dealt with outside of office hours)

**Ask@taitarian.co.uk**  
**www.taitarian.co.uk**

### Town centre offices

Our town centre offices have been closed since the start of the pandemic and with tenants switching to contacting us over the phone, online or arranging for us to visit them.

As a result, we recently made the decision to close them permanently. You can read more about our decision and our new way of working here:  
**www.taitarian.co.uk/tco**



## Register for an e-version of Cartref

If you want to receive future editions of Cartref via e-mail instead of post, please let our communications team know at **media@taitarian.co.uk**



## Get cooking

Always asking what's for dinner? Social media could have the answer!

More and more people are sharing fantastic recipes that are quick and easy and inspire you to cook something different, this is a great one that we have found, with most of the items easily substituted for whatever you have in the fridge.

### Cajun Chicken Pasta - One Pan Recipe

**Prep Time** 10 minutes  
**Cook Time** 20 minutes  
**Total Time** 30 minutes  
**Servings** 4 People

### Ingredients:

- 2 tsp olive oil
- 500g chicken breasts cut into chunks
- 3 tbsp Cajun spice mix
- 1 onion
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 2 peppers, deseeded and chopped
- 3 sticks of celery trimmed and cut into small pieces
- 250g dried pasta
- 750ml vegetable stock
- 400g tin of tomatoes
- Salt and pepper

### To serve:

- 100g cream cheese
- Basil to garnish (optional)

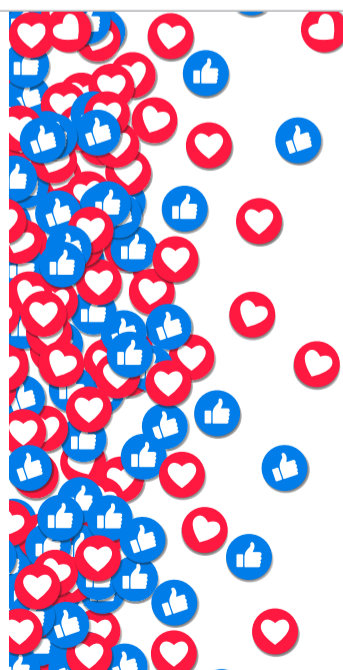


### Instructions

1. Heat your olive oil in a large, deep frying pan (or saucepan) which has a lid. Add the chicken and half of the Cajun spice mix. Fry for 5 minutes until the chicken is starting to brown.
2. Add in the onions, garlic, green peppers, celery and remaining Cajun spice mix. Cook for a further 5 - 10 minutes until everything is softened.
3. Add the pasta, vegetable stock, tinned tomatoes and salt and pepper. Give everything a good stir, pop the lid on and cook for 10 - 13 minutes.
4. When the pasta is cooked, remove from the heat and stir through the cream cheese and some fresh basil (if using).

For more inspiration, visit: **www.tamingtwins.com** or search for Taming Twins on social media.

Struggling with rising cost of food at the moment? Our financial inclusion team can issue food bank vouchers. Get in touch with them on **01639 315000**



Follow us on social!

Keep up to date with community news and great advice by following us on Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok and Twitter. Just search for **@TaiTarian**

