



CARTREF

HOUSING LAW CHANGE IS COMING THIS DECEMBER



COULD YOU BE OUR NEW TENANT BOARD MEMBER?

A chance to provide us with strategic leadership in a paid role. More about how to apply on **page 7...**



COST OF LIVING TIPS

More money advice and details of available funding from our financial inclusion officer Steph...more on **page 2**



WIN £50

Share your savvy money saving tips to help tenants this Christmas. More on **page 8.**

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act will change the way we, and all landlords in Wales rent our homes. This will improve how people rent, manage, and live in rented homes – which is good news for all tenants across Wales.

The new law will apply from 1st December and we have shared some of the most frequently asked questions we are getting on **page 5...**

TIPS FROM STEPH ON COST OF LIVING

Energy prices have been rising dramatically since last year. The price cap rose from £1,277 to £1,977 and was due to rise to £3,549 in October, with a projected hike to £5,400 in January 2023.

The Government recently introduced a freeze on energy costs from 1st October. This was promised for two years but a recent u-turn has meant it will only be in place until April 2023.

So what support is available to help you with the cost of fuel this winter?

Energy Bill Discount

£400 will be applied automatically to all households' energy bills from October 2022 to March 2023 and paid in instalments of approximately £66 over 6 months. This will reduce the amount of fuel the average household pays to £2,100 per year.

Cost of Living Payments

There is an additional cash amount of £650 to be paid to means tested benefit claimants. The first instalment was paid back in July and the second instalment is expected to be paid in November.

Disability benefit claimants

Further cash support of £150 was paid to disability benefit claimants in October as it is likely their energy costs are higher than the average household due to health equipment or conditions that require the use of more energy.

Pensioners

Pensioners will also receive £300 cash along with the Winter Fuel payment.

Energy Vouchers

The Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) issue vouchers a few



Stephanie has some helpful advice on where you can access help with your fuel bill this winter

times per year enabling tenants on pre-payment meters to claim up to three vouchers of £49 per year to help pay for fuel.

The Welsh Government will also be issuing fuel vouchers to the value of £49 from October 2022 to help with the rising energy costs.

The Winter Fuel Support Scheme

The Winter Support scheme 2022-2023 can now be applied for on the Neath Port Talbot Council website. You can claim a one-off £200 payment if you are a household claiming benefits.

If you are unable to apply for this online please call 01639 686188 and someone at the local authority will assist you.

NPT funded initiative by Warm Wales – further details to be released in October.

Over the next few months we will be sharing helpful advice on the cost of living crisis on our social media channels so please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Tik Tok, just search Tai Tarian.

Steph



As always, our FIT (Financial Inclusion Team) team are here to help, you can call them on 01639 315000 or email financialinclusion@taitarian.co.uk.

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

With Christmas not too far away we wanted to share some top safety tips:

1. Think twice, click once

As the Christmas offers start stacking up in your inbox, it's easy to forget that not all emails bring festive cheer. Most hacks start by convincing you to open an attachment or visit a link to download something. It's an easy way for hackers to install malware onto your machine.

Think twice, click once. If something is unexpected, don't trust it – delete it.

2. Make sure the shop site is secure

If you're shopping online, you can protect yourself further by only shopping on sites with HTTPS at the start of the web address and a padlock icon close by. The 'S' in HTTPS stands for 'Secure'. This tells you communications between your browser and the website are encrypted.



3. Avoid putting personal info on social media

Personal info that you put on social media can be used by hackers to help them crack passwords and work their way into your confidence for scams. Consider setting your social media profiles so that only friends can see what you put online.

4. Use complex passwords for each account

When choosing a password, use a mixture of capital letters, lower-case letters, numbers and special characters to make passwords much harder for hackers to crack.

Received a suspicious message?

You can help the government track and stop cyber criminals by sending suspicious emails to: report@phishing.gov.uk

LINDA'S COLUMN

Welcome to the autumn edition of Cartref.

The cost of living continues to be a real worry. Even with government help for energy bills, we don't feel this is enough and that this will still be a hugely challenging time for many of you.

Steph from our financial inclusion team has shared some helpful tips and details of funding support that you could be entitled to on page 2.

I want to stress that if you are struggling financially, please don't suffer in silence and get in touch with Steph or her team on 01639 315000.

Elsewhere it's been a busy few months here at Tai Tarian. Most notably, we moved our modular units from the Sevenoaks factory in Neath to their new home in Sandfields.

The transportation and lift were planned with military-style precision to ensure everything went off without a hitch. Seeing them on the move was quite a sight and certainly attracted the attention of several passers-by! You can read more about it on page 4.

We enjoyed our Annual General Meeting at our head office, the first in-person meeting since 2019. It was wonderful to share with members the progress we have made and for them to vote on key decisions.

After including details of our 'Board Ready' training programme in our last Cartref, we were delighted by the response and have already started the training programme for some applicants. We currently have tenant board member vacancies which we want to fill before Christmas. Full details of what the role involves and how to apply can be found on page 7.

The implementation date for the Renting Homes (Wales) Act is drawing closer, so we have included some frequently asked questions on page 5.

Just a reminder that new contracts will be sent to you within six months of the new act coming into force. It will be a big document which we legally have to send you, so please take time to read through it and keep it in a safe place.

Take care and please, if you are concerned about the cost-of-living crisis, get in touch with us.

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.

MAKING GREENACRES GREENER!

Building new homes is a major focus for us, but we also want to make sure our existing homes are as energy efficient as possible.

As part of this, we recently carried out work to a row of three cottages at Greenacres in Margam. Built in the late 1960s, they originally housed workers from the nearby crematorium. The houses were not only in need of renovation but were clad in tin without any insulation, so we embarked on a special project to make them greener.

Working with our contractors, Joyners, we set about removing the tin to expose the bare bricks. We then installed external wall insulation before rendering over them to make the homes more energy efficient. The roofs were also replaced, incorporating solar panels with kitchens and bathrooms also updated.

Tenant liaison officer Laura was our tenants' first point of contact during the work.

"These homes needed updating and the transformation has been remarkable. The residents have been telling me what a difference it has made to their lives and how much more comfortable and homely they feel."

Tenant Mrs Davies said:

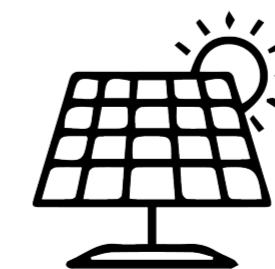
"We are really happy with the work that has been done. We've lived here a long time and the houses look so much better, it's such an improvement."



Before - The tin cladding was impractical and needed to be removed



After - the new rendering helps make the homes more energy efficient



More green homes

We have just launched a new initiative to make some of our empty properties 'green' before they are re-let. Working with three contractors we will be installing a range of energy efficient measures to help reduce energy usage for new tenants.

Elsewhere we have been awarded funding to carry out this type of work to lived-in homes, more on that in the next Cartref.

NEW HOMES TO SANDFIELDS

Our new homes are taking shape at County Flats on Aberavon seafront. This landmark development includes 55 new flats and the renovation of a further 72.

In August, we made history when the first of our new modular unit flats, that were built in a factory in Milland Road, Neath, travelled to their new home in Sandfields. The flats were hoisted into place much to the amazement of the local community. Here are some pictures of it happening.



County Flats, Aberavon Seafront



Kitchen ready at County Flats



New modular unit flats, Sandfields.

You can view our modulars on the move video here ▶



You can also see what the homes will look like when complete. ▶



RENTING HOMES REMINDER

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act is the biggest change to housing law in Wales for decades and will affect all tenants.

Across Wales, the Welsh Government plan for the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 to change the way all landlords in Wales rent their properties. It will improve how people rent, manage, and live in rented homes – which is good news for all tenants across Wales.

Here are some of the questions we have been asked by tenants.

What does it mean for me?

No need to worry.

You will still be able to live in your home, you will still pay rent, and we will still do your repairs and look after your estates and communal areas. There are lots of positives for tenants.

The new law will make renting easier and provide greater security for you and all tenants, even those renting privately.

- ➔ New customers will sign the new contract in the usual way.
- ➔ You will continue to receive the same services from us.
- ➔ You'll retain your existing legal rights to stay in your home.
- ➔ 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 (new tenants) 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 maintain a consistent approach to anti-social behaviour.
- ➔ We will be able to repossess abandoned properties without a court order.

Will we be called something different?

- ➔ Under the new law, all tenants will become 'contract-holders'.
- ➔ Tenancy agreements will be replaced with 'occupation contracts'.
- ➔ We will be known as a 'community landlord'.

Do I get a new contract?

Yes, you will receive a new contract within six months of the implementation date which will replace your existing tenancy agreement.

It will be a large document that we legally must send. To make things easier, we will include a letter with it 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.



The way you rent is changing, find out more here: ▶



NPT EMPLOYABILITY

- Are you aged 16+ and living in Neath Port Talbot?
- Are you unemployed and hoping to find work?
- Are you in employment, but working part time or on a low wage and looking to improve your situation?
- Would you like to attend training courses to learn new skills or improve the skills you have?

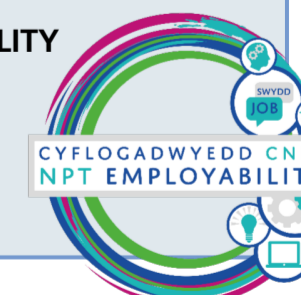
If you answered **YES** to any of the above, then **NPT Employability** may be able to assist you!

For more information, contact us on:

- 📞 07976 589811
- ✉ jobsupport@npt.gov.uk

Find us on social media
@NPTEMPLOYABILITY

WWW.NPT.GOV.UK/NPTEMPLOYABILITY



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TENANCY RELATIONS OFFICER

One of the most regular staff contacts you have with us is likely to be with a tenancy relations officer (TRO).



Natalie and Tegan
Tenancy Relations Officers

We have 15 of them based around Neath Port Talbot, each one with their own 'patch' often spread across several communities. They are the go-to person for any tenancy related queries and are on hand to support you in your home.

We caught up with two of them, Natalie and Tegan to find out a bit more about the role.

Here's what Natalie had to say:

"The job is really varied and it may be a cliché but every day is different! The main purpose of the role is to build strong relationships with our tenants, making sure they feel supported and able to sustain their tenancies with us."

Tegan agrees:

"I love the variety of work we do, it could be anything from making sure someone has settled into their new home, working with partner agencies to ensure our

tenants feel supported or dealing with challenges such as anti-social behaviour.

We also enjoy getting out and about, it's really important for us to be visible in our communities. It's great to chat to residents so we build relationships and find that's a better way to find out what help individuals or the wider community may need."

Natalie stresses the importance of working with other agencies:

"Something really key to our role is the wide range of partner agencies we work with that allow us to support our tenants. These include the police, mental health providers, local food banks, women's aid, social services as well as our own financial inclusion team and intensive housing management team. It's all about providing as much support to our tenants as and when they need it."

Natalie has worked in housing for 20 years and talks about what she enjoys:

"I really enjoy meeting people from all walks of life and housing gives you such a variety.

Tegan, agrees

"We always try and build a strong relationship with all our tenants, life can be challenging so we are empathetic and supportive when things get tough.

Something which can cause real stress in our communities is anti-social behaviour which presents itself in many forms. It could be noise nuisance such as loud music or late-night parties, people having a disregard for our residents and communities which can then lead to neighbour disputes.

Sometimes other factors and complexities play a part so in lots of cases we have to work with partner agencies to ensure the right support is in place for the people involved, so things can get better.

Communication is key, as is managing expectations, as sometimes things take time to resolve."

Natalie talks about problem solving, which is the approach we always take when issues arise:

"Often cases can be easy to solve – once we just asked someone to turn their music down as they weren't aware it was causing a problem to their neighbours. They were very apologetic about it.

"Dealing with people and their homes means sometimes problems arise and we have to have challenging conversations to deal with difficult and complicated situations.

"This can be frustrating for people but our aim is always for our tenants to have homes where they can thrive and be a part of a community they feel proud of."

The job is worthwhile for Tegan:

"It's when you make visits to people who have just moved into one of our homes. We visit after six weeks and then after eight months to make sure they are settling in okay and to offer any help they need to sustain their tenancy. Seeing how having a stable roof over someone's head can transform their life is amazing and it's moments like this that make the job really rewarding."

Natalie agrees:

"We have the ability to change someone's life and that's quite humbling. I remember helping a gentleman move from a first floor flat to one on the ground floor. He had mobility issues and found it difficult to get out and about. This in turn affected his mental health. Moving him to a ground floor flat was life changing for him – he found it easier to get around, his health improved, and he was really thankful for his new flat. It's cases like that that really do make you smile."

The final word goes to Tegan:

"It's the people you meet in our communities and the positive difference that we can make to people's lives that really make this job so rewarding."



Tegan, TRO

You can contact the TRO for your area here: ▶



COULD YOU BE OUR NEXT TENANT BOARD MEMBER?

We have an exciting opportunity open to all tenants to join our board.

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 is a taxable income and would impact on any benefits you receive. Our financial

inclusion team will be able to look at how this impacts you, their contact details are on page 2.

The commitment

Time commitment for the role is on average one and a half days, per month. This covers preparations and attendance at meetings, reading of reports and training.

Board meetings are held seven times a year, usually at our headquarters in Baglan with a 5.30pm start.



Two board development days are also held.

In addition to this you will be a member of one of our committees and these meetings are currently held quarterly, online and usually starting late afternoon.

How to apply

All you need to apply is your CV and a letter explaining why you think you would make a great board member.

Visit www.taitarian.co.uk/vacancies for more details.

Interviews will take place with other board members and Linda, our chief executive.

In the meantime, if you would like an informal chat about the role you can contact Carolyn, from our governance team on:

01639 506079 or email carolyn.heaven@taitarian.co.uk

You can see all our current vacancies here: ▶



HOUSING POLICIES YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Permission for pets

Thinking of getting a new pet? – remember you need to speak to us first.

Unfortunately, if you live in a flat with a shared entrance and outside area, we won't be able to give you permission to house cats or dogs. The only exception are assistance pets.

So why is this?

Although there are many responsible pet owners, a considerable amount of time has been spent dealing with complaints and problems in flats where there are dogs and cats, including fouling, poor hygiene, noise and damage to properties.

As a result, the decision of no dogs and cats in flats with shared entrance and outside area was made.

CCTV Guidance

We know tenants are using camera doorbells and CCTV at their homes. But since we have no control over the device you may install, the footage being captured or how this is used we cannot give permission for its use.

As they are being used in our communities, we have been in contact with those tenants using recording devices that are known to us.

We have explained our stance, but asked tenants affected to note the following:

- If you install CCTV without permission, you will be responsible for any damage caused either internally or externally due to the installation and this will be rechargeable when identified.

- Any installation must comply with the latest Information Commissioners Office's (ICO) guidance. Failure to do so could lead to ICO taking action against you.

- Where devices are installed and any neighbouring property feel that it is intrusive and causing nuisance harassment, the complainant can refer this to the police as per ICO guidance.

If the police validate any allegation, they may take action and we could then take action in accordance with our anti-social behaviour policy.

Our priority is to ensure you feel safe and secure in your home, so if you are affected by this decision get in touch with your TRO so we can discuss your circumstances and come to a solution that might help.

More about this and the implications of being subject to data protection laws on the ICO Website. ▶



COMMUNITY CHALLENGE RETURNS

Our Community Challenge is back, and we are looking for three worthwhile local projects to transform in 2023.

So what's it all about?

The community challenges involve our staff and contractors volunteering at a community facility for a day to give it a makeover. Painting, gardening, decorating, repairs or general maintenance are all things we can carry out.

Schools, churches, community centres and childcare facilities

have benefitted in the past.

Who could we help next year?

Please spread the word and encourage any local community facilities to apply.

All we ask is for that they must be local to Neath Port Talbot, not for profit and for them to complete our application form sharing details of what they would like us to help with.

Apply for the Community Challenge here: ▶
Closing date 16th Dec



TEA BREAK CHALLENGE

How to play?

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. and columns are 9 "squares" (made up of 3 x 3 spaces).

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

Give it a go!

OUR GARDEN COMPETITION WINNERS...

Congratulations to the winners of our garden competition.

Best Grow Your Own Garden
– Mrs Scott, Skewen

Best Wildlife Garden
– Mr Crick, Cwmgwrach

Best Overall Garden
– Mr Taylor, Baglan



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@tairarian.co.uk
www.tairarian.co.uk

Christmas closure

We will be closed over the Christmas break from 1pm on Friday 23rd December to 9am on Tuesday 3rd January. During this time we will be available to carry out emergency repairs, these can be reported in the usual way.

What is an emergency repair? You can find out here: ▶



REGISTER FOR AN E-VERSION OF CARTREF

If you want to receive future editions of Cartref via e-mail instead of post, or need a large print copy please let our communications team know media@tairarian.co.uk



GET COOKING

Simple Tomato and Bean Soup

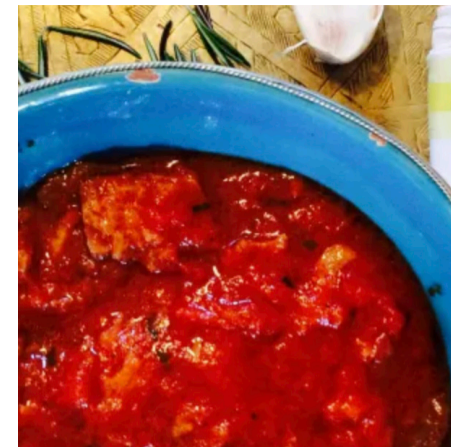
Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 carrot
- 500ml stock made with a stock cube and water
- 1 x 400g tin of baked beans
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 x 400g carton or tin of chopped tomatoes

Instructions

1. Peel and chop the onion, peel and finely chop the garlic, wash and chop the carrot. Put them all into a saucepan and cover with the stock.
2. Drain and rinse the tinned beans, then throw them into the pan.



3. Add the herbs and the chopped tomatoes, then simmer for 30 minutes until the vegetables are soft.
4. This soup can be served chunky – by tipping half into a blender, pulsing and mixing the purée back in with the chunky half in the pan – or smooth, by pulsing the lot in a blender.

Recipe from 'A Girl Called Jack' by Jack Monroe. Jack has written six cookbooks, why not visit your local library and borrow a copy. Alternatively, lots of her recipes can be found here: www.thebootstrapcook.co.uk

WIN A £50 VOUCHER



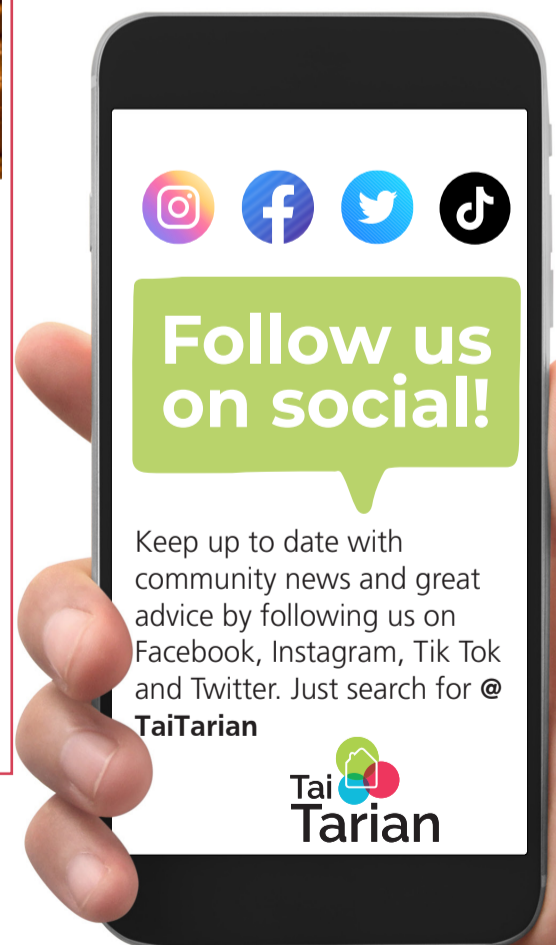
Christmas is such an expensive time for many and this year will be tougher than ever.

So, we are looking for your savvy tips to lighten the load.

We will share our faves on social media, with all those that we use going into a draw to win a £50 shopping voucher, just in time for Christmas.

Email your tips to media@tairarian.co.uk by November 20th.

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

