



# Cartref

## Tenant Talks hit the road

**WIN**  
a **£100**  
shopping  
voucher!

Win £100 in time for Christmas with our latest competition. More on **page 8**.



### Meet the team

Meet the dedicated team dealing with damp, mould and condensation. More on **page 4**.



### New home, fresh start!

We caught up with a new tenant at Clos Castan. More on **page 6**.

**Your tenant voice matters, and we need to better understand your needs and expectations, after all you are the people at the heart of everything we do.**

This autumn we are coming to communities and want to make sure your voice is heard on all things Tai Tarian, both now and in the future. Whether that's your rent, repairs, services or to give us ideas on how we can make things better or improve your community. Whatever it is, we want to hear it! More on **page 4**.

# Challenge complete!

**Our Community Challenge made a return over the summer, bringing our staff and contractors together to provide a day's free maintenance or building work to local facilities.**



The team at Baglan Boys and Girls Club

Staff are encouraged to volunteer a day of their time to work on these types of projects and have made a significant impact in transforming spaces across the borough in the last 14 years.

First up this summer was the Baglan Boys and Girls Club, a charity-run facility that serves as a sports hub for over 500 young people every week. The club, which hadn't seen a new coat of paint in more than 20 years, was given a vibrant makeover by 11 eager staff members, and our contractors Joyner Group.

As part of their community benefits, Joyners did extensive preparation work at the facility

and made the day possible by supplying the paint, equipment and extra manpower.

Next up was Melincryddan Musical Theatre Company (MMTC), formed in 1923 and dedicated to performing arts. The charity has a senior and junior section producing a musical annually.

Contractors D&M carried out maintenance at the venue, clearing brambles and pressure washing external paths around the building. Eight volunteers from Tai Tarian got involved with painting the changing room space, toilets, external metal work and garage doors. A lick of paint worked wonders!

Katie John, headed up the challenges for Tai Tarian and was proud of the team effort:

“Once again, we had many applications for this year's community challenge, so it was a difficult decision to pick our winners. However, both Baglan Boys and Girls Club and Melincryddan Musical Theatre Company were in desperate need of a makeover. Knowing the important part they play in our community, they were the obvious choice as our winners in 2024.”

Nicola Vincent-Owen chair of Baglan Boys and Girls Club added:

“We are thankful to Tai Tarian staff and their contractor, Joyner Group for carrying out a community challenge for us.

“It was heartening to see everyone's genuine desire to freely give their time to improve the club's facilities. Everyone worked hard but with a smile.

“We are absolutely delighted with the results, our sports hall has been revitalised with freshly cleaned and painted walls for all our youngsters and local people to enjoy.”

**Applications for the 2025 Community Challenge will open in the spring, more in the next Cartref.**

## Worried about money?



We know the cost-of-living crisis is still having a real impact on lots of our tenants, and with the colder months and the expense of Christmas just around the corner, we know people are worried.

Whether you are claiming benefits, working, or doing both, lots of people are telling us things are tough.

Our team is here with no judgement. Support is available, and we want you to access it. Even if you aren't struggling yourself but know a tenant who is, please encourage them to get in touch.

**01639 315000,  
financialinclusion@  
taitarian.co.uk  
or contact us on  
social media.**

## Donations make for a summer of fun

**This summer, thanks to the generous support of our contractors, we made a difference to a host of summer events in our community.**

Donations included providing 1,350 packed lunches, along with snacks and refreshments, ensuring that lots of children were kept fed at events during the holidays.

In addition to meals, we supplied ingredients for Cook Stars cookery sessions, where children learned valuable

skills, and we donated outdoor sports equipment and crafts to keep kids active and engaged. Regular donations to local food banks also ensured that families in need had access to essential supplies.

Fourteen community initiatives were supported throughout the borough, with donations totalling £2655 over a six-week period.

We are incredibly grateful to our contractors for their generosity, and now as the year comes to a close our focus turns to spreading some Christmas cheer!



Food bank donation to CATCH

**If you know of a community group who could benefit from a Community Benefits donation, then get in touch. Just send an e-mail with the details of your group and what you need help with to [community@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:community@taitarian.co.uk) and one of the team will be in touch.**

# Welcome from Linda



**It has been another busy summer. Our AGM was held in July and there we spoke to members about how important it is to hear our tenants' voices. So, we are visiting our communities over the next few months to chat to you about all things Tai Tarian. Please make every effort to come and join us for a cuppa.**

We have also been out in our communities talking about rent and affordability. With Christmas not that far away our Financial Inclusion team is continuing to help tenants daily with food bank vouchers, applying for energy grants, accessing benefits and other money. In lots of cases people are telling us they didn't realise that we could help, but we can. The biggest step is getting in touch and our team are here so please reach out.

We recently bid farewell to Jonathon Davies, Chair of our Board since 2016. His leadership has left a lasting impact on Tai Tarian, and we are grateful for his dedication over the last eight years.

Our new Chair of the Board is Fiona Jones, you can find out more about her below.

*Linda*  
Chief Executive

**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)

## Cartref superfan uncovered

When we recently visited tenants in the Sandfields area, we met Mr Osbourne who was keen to give us feedback on our Cartref newspaper.



**"I always look forward to receiving Cartref as it keeps me up to date with what's going on. Steph's column is always full of great advice, so I really value that."**

Thanks Mr Osbourne, this really made us smile!

## Introducing Fiona Jones

**Our new Chair is no stranger to Tai Tarian or our local communities.**

**Fiona, who lives locally, has taken up the reins from outgoing Chair of the Board Jonathon Davies, who stepped down after a whopping eight years in the hot seat.**

Fiona grew up in a forces family, so moved around a lot, but made our patch of Wales her home when she took up a job to run the job centres and service centres across Wales for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Now firmly settled in Wales with her Welsh husband, large family and granddaughter, Fiona recalls where she first encountered Tai Tarian. She said:

**"I absolutely loved working in the communities and the partnership and collaboration with Tai Tarian in Neath and Port Talbot. We would liaise if someone had complex needs, or if someone was made homeless and needed the right support.**

**"One of the things I loved about Tai Tarian back then, and I see it now, is that it's a really kind organisation that truly cares."**

Fiona believes strongly in consistent customer service. Managing the job centres and service centres for DWP clearly brought challenges, so she ensured she would personally visit every single centre at least twice a year.

After moving into the role of Director for Customer Experience for DWP, she was then asked to join the Home Office as Director of Asylum and Human Rights, where her commitment to safeguarding people was called upon again.

Fiona was awarded an OBE in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to unemployed people in Wales.

Throughout her career Fiona has proved she isn't afraid of a challenge and has set herself a new goal:

**"To be the best chair I can be for our customers and colleagues."**

Find out more about the role of our Board and its members here:





# Meet the DMC team

**Earlier this year, we created a specialist team dedicated to sorting damp, mould and condensation (DMC) in our properties.**

**Believed to be one of the first housing associations in Wales to create such a team, we caught up with two members, Emma and Alex to find out more about what they do.**

**Emma explains why the team was formed:**

“DMC in social housing has been in the news a lot over the past couple of years. With many of our homes being 50-70

years old, we knew that it was inevitable that we would have cases in some of our properties too. So, to tackle this problem head-on, we established a team that could deal with DMC effectively and efficiently.



“There are 14 of us, made up of inspectors, surveyors, planners and multi-skilled trades, ensuring that we can offer tenants a one-stop shop when it comes to dealing with DMC in their homes.”

**Alex is the team’s surveyor. He said:**

“A warm, dry and well-maintained home helps prevent mould and keeps us healthy. When we get a report of DMC our aim is to stop what is causing the problem, so once dealt with we minimise the risk of it returning.

“Once we receive a report of DMC, the team swings into action. I or our other

inspector Desiree will go and visit the property to make an assessment to see what work needs to be done. We’ll grade the property on a scale of 1-4, with 1 representing the most urgent cases. We base our assessment on both the amount and type of DMC in the property and who lives there – for instance, we’ll prioritise properties where vulnerable people are living such as the elderly, people with certain health conditions or babies and young children. “Once I’ve graded the property, I’ll pass over to Ben, our planner, who’ll organise for one of our trades to visit, treat the DMC and fix its cause.

## Tenant Talks – are you coming?

Continued from page 1.



**We are hitting the road and holding Tenant Talks in Neath Cricket Club, Sandfields Library and Ystalyfera Community Centre over the next few weeks.**

Why? Because we want to hear your views on all things Tai Tarian and how you think things could look in the future. Getting tenants involved has always been something we have been passionate about, but it’s time for a

reset and for us to get the kettle on and chat to you, the people that matter, about how we need to do things.

We plan to venture further afield over the coming months. We will let you know via postcard when we are in your area and will also share details of where we go next on our social media pages.

If you come along to share your views you will be entered into our prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher.

**Dates for the diary:**

Ystalyfera Community Centre,  
25th October 12-3pm

Neath Cricket Club,  
28th October 3-6pm

Sandfields Library,  
29th October 2-5pm

## Talking affordability



**Each year a lot of work goes in to making sure that the rents and service charges for your homes are fair and affordable.**



“When that happens our first priority is to try and remove as much mould as possible at a specialist clean and treat appointment. Our team of painters and trades target the affected areas, ensuring mould spores are removed. The area is treated with special anti-fungal wash to stop the mould coming back. We then paint the affected area following treatment. This first step helps reduce the risk of mould exposure within the home.

“Follow up work will then begin where we complete the repairs that were causing the DMC in the first place. This will help minimise the risk of it returning.

“Once all is complete we may need to repaint any affected areas if any mould has returned and make sure the tenant is happy with all the works that have been completed.”

In more complex cases, Emma in her role as tenant liaison officer (TLO) will also get involved, as she explains:

“My role is to act as the link between us and the tenant, keeping them informed of the work we’re planning and being there throughout the process to keep them informed.

“Sometimes, because of the scale of the work required, the complexity of it, or just because the tenant needs a little more reassurance as to what’s going to happen, I come on board. I’ll be with them every step of the way, regularly updating them on the progress of the work and being at the other end of the phone if they have any queries.

“I’ve also been trained to carry out some simple inspections myself, although I know I always have the support of Alex or

Desiree if something more specialist is needed.”

Emma also draws on her years of experience working across a number of Tai Tarian departments.

“I’ve got a lot of experience of working with our tenants and that really helps when forming relationships with them. I’ve worked in lots of teams over the years, so I know exactly what extra help and services are available to tenants should they need them. Hopefully I can spot any signs if they are struggling and get them specialist help. We’re not just there to fix the DMC, we’re also looking at how else we can help the tenant too. It’s a great job and I really love interacting with our tenants.

“How we deal with DMC can vary enormously. It can be anything from a simple clean and treat, to roof repairs, chimney removals or loft insulation top ups. What is important is that we treat the root cause of the problem so that we can stop it from coming back. If we can do that then we will have succeeded and make sure that our tenants are once again living in a healthy home.”

If you have any concerns or questions about damp, mould or condensation in your home please get in touch with our contact centre on **0300 777 3000** or email **repairs@tairian.co.uk**

**More top tips for dealing with DMC here:**



**We are a not-for-profit community landlord and 85% of our income comes from the rent we receive. We use this to repair and improve your home and community and support you when you need our help.**

A key part of our cost of living and affordability work is talking to people to get their views.

Throughout the summer, our housing team have asked for feedback, been at community fun days and our Haven schemes, getting to hear how tenants are managing with money and how affordable they feel our rent and service charges are. The conversations have been so valuable. We have also

carried out an important survey and workshop to capture even more views from tenants on affordability. Next up we will consider the Welsh Government’s guidelines together with our research findings, whilst continuing the affordability conversation with our tenants.

You will receive rent booklets in January which will give details of how your rent is spent and what your charges will be from April 2025.

When you get yours, take time to read it and keep it safe. If you need help understanding the information or if you are worried about paying your rent, please get in touch.

## Garden comp winners

**We had a great response to our garden competition again this year, with a fantastic number of entries.**

**Our 2024 winners are:**



Best Grow Your Own - Sandra from Skewen  
 Best Wildlife Garden - Donna from Sandfields  
 Best Overall Garden - Llwynon, Crynant  
 Best Haven Garden - Cysgodfa, Tonna  
**All received a £50 gift voucher to spend at Zoar’s Ark, Neath.**

## Contract talk: getting others to act on your behalf

**As a tenant, there may be times when you want someone to act on your behalf when dealing with us, giving them access to the same information as you.**

To allow us to do this you need to ask for an Authority to Act form from us so that your chosen person can act on your behalf. We will send a form out to you, just fill it in and return it and we can then update our records. In the case of joint tenants, both of you will need to sign. If you ever want to cancel or change your Authority to Act, you will need to let us know in writing.

However, an Authority to Act is not the same as a Power of Attorney, which depending on your circumstances may be better option.

A lasting power of attorney (LPA) is a legal document that lets you (known as the 'donor') appoint one or more people (known as 'attorneys') to help you come to a decision or make it on your behalf. You must be 18 or over and have mental capacity (the ability to make your own decisions) when you make your LPA.

This option gives you more control over what happens to you if you have an accident or an illness and cannot make your own decisions (you 'lack mental capacity').

**There are two types of LPA and you can choose one or both:**

- health and welfare
- property and financial affairs

**The LPA is registered with the Office of the Public Guardian. For more information about this check out the QR code below:**



Don't forget if you have any questions about your contract you can get in touch with [mycontract@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:mycontract@taitarian.co.uk)

# Latest on our new homes



Eagle House, Port Talbot

**Development work has continued at sites in Neath and Port Talbot as we do our bit to address the demand for affordable housing in the area.**

With so many people desperate for a home, we work with the local council to support those most in need, whilst also making homes available on our Homes by Choice bidding system.

At County Flats, Sandfields work on Flint and Morgannwg House is underway with completion of the entire site expected by Autumn 2025.

At Eagle House in Port Talbot town centre work continues with 18 apartments expected to be ready for let during summer 2025.

Tenants have started moving into Clos Castan, Neath where we are building 52 homes. The site, which is a mix of apartments, bungalows and family homes, will see more



Eaglesbush, Neath

tenants moving in over the coming months. A visit from Melin Primary School is also planned with pupils who named the development burying a time capsule containing artefacts found at build stage.

Demolition has taken place at Heol Crwys, Cwmavon and groundwork is continuing on site. The new development will create 43 new homes.

We regularly share progress on our social media, so give us a follow!



County Flats, Sandfields



Sian at her new home

# Tenants move into Clos Castan

**At one of our biggest developments to date, Eaglesbush in Neath, we caught up with one of our new tenants in her first week at Clos Castan.**

Sian was born and bred in Neath, playing as a child in the conker field, which is now home to Clos Castan, aptly translated as Chestnut Close.

At the age of 17 she moved to Meadow Road, and then to a larger house on the same street a few years later.

Mobility issues meant Sian was struggling to manage stairs at her home so she applied to transfer to Clos Castan just a stone's throw away from where she was living.

**Sian said:**

**“It’s been wonderful watching the homes being built here over the last 18 months. I have lived in this area all my life but just couldn’t manage the size and layout of my home anymore. I feel so lucky to have been able to move into a bungalow that it is all one level and much more manageable than a three-bedroom house. It really is life changing, not just for me but my husband too.”**

## Steph’s top tips – Pension Credit



**The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves recently announced that the Winter Fuel Payment will no longer be available for all people of pension age.**

However, many people can still qualify if they claim Pension Credits, which from this year will also automatically identify eligible pensioners to receive the Winter Fuel Payment. Claiming also provides access to a range of other benefits such as help with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and for those aged 75 or over, a free TV licence.

There are many myths surrounding Pension Credits, but pensioners could still be eligible to apply even if they have modest savings, or a retirement income. It is worth checking it out even if you have been unsuccessful in the past as you may have had a change in your circumstances.

For example, if you live alone, or if you and your partner are both disabled and live alone and receive a disability benefit such as PIP standard rate for daily living, DLA middle rate care or Attendance Allowance, and no one claims Carer’s

Allowance for looking after you, you may be eligible to a pension credit disability premium.

The last possible date to make a successful backdated claim to receive the Winter Fuel Payment is 21st December 2024.

**Applications for Pension Credit can be made over the phone by calling 0800 99 1234 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm) or online here:**



**If you need help applying, please contact our Financial Inclusion Team for a benefit check on 01639 315000.**

### Don't forget

**It is your responsibility to deal with pest or vermin infestations in your home or garden.**

This could include rats, mice, wasps, fleas, flies or even ants. Once you have dealt with the issue and if any repairs are advised by pest control, please contact us on **0300 777 3000**.

### Affected by Tata?

**An online hub with information, help and support for people and businesses affected by Tata Steel Transition has been set up.**

**Access it here ▶**





# Cherry Shortbread

After supplying Cook Stars with ingredients for their summer sessions with local children, they have been kind enough to provide a tasty recipe for Cartref. You can find out more about Cook Stars by visiting [www.cookstars.co.uk](http://www.cookstars.co.uk)

### Ingredients

- 60g plain flour
- 40g butter
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 20g caster sugar
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 6 glace cherries

### Method

In a bowl mix the flour and butter together by rubbing them with your fingertips.

Add the vanilla extract to the mixture and then stir in the caster sugar.

Tear the cherries into 3 or 4 pieces and add these to the mixture. Raisins are a great alternative!

Sprinkle flour onto your work surface and using a rolling

pin, roll out the biscuit dough until its around 0.5cm thick.

Use a cutter to cut out 8 shapes from the dough. Place these on a baking tray lined with baking paper.

Bake the shortbread in a preheated oven (160c fan, 180c/Gas 4) for around 12-15 minutes.

Leave to cool.

## 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. Columns are 9 “squares” (made up of 3 x 3 spaces).

*Give it a go!*

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

## WIN a £100 shopping voucher!

If you would like to win £100 worth of shopping vouchers just before Christmas, then you need to enter our competition! Just count the number of times the word **TEAM** is mentioned in this edition of Cartef and email your name, address and contact number to [media@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:media@taitarian.co.uk) Get your entries in by 20th November.

## Go Green



If you fancy receiving future editions of Cartref via e-mail instead of post, please let us know by emailing [media@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:media@taitarian.co.uk) All those who get in touch before 10th August will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher.



## Need to get in touch?

- ☎ 0300 777 0000 (General enquiries)
- ☎ 0300 777 3000 (Report a repair – only emergency repairs can be dealt with outside of office hours.)

### Struggling with the cost of food?

Our Financial Inclusion team can issue food bank vouchers. Get in touch with them on **01639 315000**.



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