



CARTREF

THUMBS UP FOR GREEN HOMES



Mr Jones with Olivia and James from our PV team

Twenty-two households in Cwmllynfell and Lower Brynamman are seeing the benefits of greener energy after having solar panels (PV) installed on their roofs. Jointly funded by Tai Tarian

and Welsh Government, the panels will provide tenants with reduced electricity costs, a real positive in the current climate. Mr Jones from Cwmllynfell who has lived in his home

for 10 years is excited to see the difference these will make to his bills, whilst doing his bit for the planet too.

Story continues on Pg.3...



NEW YEAR NEW YOU?

Our Academy is looking for new members to be at the heart of everything we do. Keen to have your say and make a difference? More on **Pg.6**



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RENTS

How do we set your rent, where does your money go and who can help if you are worried? More on **Pg.7**



AN INSPECTOR CALLED KATIE

If you have ever needed a repair at your home, one of our inspectors may have called first to look at the job. We caught up with Katie to find out more about her role. More on **Pg.4**

COMPETITION TIME

More on... **Pg.8**





LINDA'S COLUMN

We have recently written to you all about changes to your rent and (where applicable) service charges, which will start from April.

With such a spike in inflation in recent months, we too have seen huge increases in the cost of essentials, like the materials we need to carry out maintenance to your homes.

Additional rent will allow us to continue to offer our same level of service and we are committed to providing the best possible value for money for every pound of rent we receive.

More on this on **page 7** along with details of support we can offer if you are worried.

There has been increased focus on social housing recently following the death of 2-year-old Awaab Ishak from mould at his family home.

Rest assured we take reports of mould in our homes seriously, so if you have any concerns please contact us.

Elsewhere in this addition we hear from our apprentices who have joined Tai Tarian recently, our inspector Katie about her role in repairs, and details of how you can join our Academy. Enjoy,

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

MEET THE APPRENTICES



Simon and Anastacia, two of our new apprentices

Back in October, some new apprentices joined Tai Tarian. They will spend the next two years working alongside our skilled tradespeople to learn their crafts.

Three months on, we caught up with two of them, Anastacia and Simon to see how they were getting on:

For Anastacia, working to become a fully-qualified plumber will be the realisation of a lifelong dream:

"Ever since I was a child, I've wanted to become a plumber. My father, grandfather and uncle were all plumbers, and as a child I used to help them out, passing them their tools, completing simple tasks and just watching them at work.

"I started training when I was 18, but I couldn't complete the course at the time, so went to work in retail. But even when I was working there, I used to go on about my dream to become a plumber all the time – I think my friends got bored of me talking about it! In the end, one of them saw this post advertised and told me to apply, so here I am!

"Female plumbers are still pretty rare, so I hope the positive experience I've had so far can inspire others to take up the tools and follow their dreams.

"I think my previous experience in retail really helps me in the role as a lot of it is down to customer service, as you're working in people's homes, so it's important to treat them and their property with respect."

Simon is training to become a bricklayer. Like Anastacia, his interest in his trade stems from his younger days, helping on site as a labourer with his friend's father's building company. However, his career path then took a different turn:

"After working on site, I joined the armed forces and spent 17 years in the army. However, I kept an interest in the building trade and carried on labouring when I was home on leave.

"After leaving the armed forces, I joined Tai Tarian's Copper Foundation programme – a scheme that helps people back into work. Following that, I stayed on with Tai Tarian, working as a labourer for the repairs team, when my manager suggested I should

apply to become a bricklaying apprentice."

"At 46 years old, I'm older than your average apprentice, but I don't mind that. I feel my age and previous experience actually helps me. I think it's great that Tai Tarian is willing to give anyone an opportunity to succeed.

"I'm really enjoying the experience so far. I have a passion for the role and to succeed in it and it's that passion that inspires you to go to work every day and do your best."

COME WORK WITH US

We have a wide range of job opportunities up for grabs at the moment. A great place to work, opportunity to grow and really make a difference.

Apply for the latest jobs here:



MORE HOMES GOING GREEN!

Tai Tarian residents in Lower Brynamman will soon see the benefits of greener energy after having solar panels (PV) installed on their roofs.

Jointly funded by us and Welsh Government, the panels will provide tenants with reduced electricity costs, a real positive in the current climate.

Traditionally, PV will generate most electricity during summer time, when days are longer and lighter, but electricity will also be generated when it's cloudy - good news for us when sunny days can be limited in Wales!

Over the year, the panels should reduce electricity bills – but tenants will make bigger savings if they adapt their electricity use to make the most out of them, something our designated Tenant Liaison Officer, Olivia has been advising residents on:

"When our tenants use the electricity as it is being generated it's free, but the panels will only generate a certain amount of electricity, so if they use more than the

panels are producing, they will have to pay for it.

"The homes have also been fitted with battery storage units, so electricity can be stored for use after dark when the panels will not be generating electricity.

"The real savings will come from tenants being smart with their household routine, carrying out jobs during daylight hours and using appliances one at a time to get the most out of the panels and keeping their bill to a minimum."

Solar panels on just one of these homes can reduce carbon emissions by 1.3 tonnes per year. In simple terms, that's the equivalent of the amount of CO2 emissions that comes from using 536 gallons of petrol or charging 607,904 smartphones.

Great for our tenants and a positive step for us in reducing our carbon footprint and delivering on our aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Cwmllynfell resident Mr Jones has had panels installed, he said:

"When we were asked to have solar panels installed, we were keen to get involved and have been really impressed with how straight forward the installation was, disruption was minimal really. The panels themselves were installed in just a couple of hours with electrical work in our kitchen taking about a day to complete.

"Thanks to having a smart meter, already we are noticing

a difference in what we are spending on electricity, so are looking forward to the summer when we will expect to save even more with longer brighter days."

More solar panel installs are planned from April onwards, watch this space.

FACT
Did you know we have over **9000** homes across Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe.



Mrs Rees with Olivia and James from our PV team

WHOLE HOME ENERGY SAVING



Progress at Caewern

Work has begun on a green voids project, to make our empty homes more energy efficient before new tenants move in.

Jointly funded by us and the Welsh Government, 45 homes have been selected for improvements.

A three-bedroom, semi-detached in Caewern, Neath has been part of the programme. It has benefitted from new windows, doors, roof, solar panel, loft and floor insulation, a new heating system, together with a new kitchen and bathroom.

The energy rating has gone from a D to a B, meaning a much more comfortable,

energy efficient home for a new tenant to enjoy.

Liam Gadd, Voids and Works of Adaptations Manager said: "Each of our 45 voids as part of this programme have been looked at on an individual basis to see what measures can be introduced to help reduce the carbon footprint of each home, helping us reach net zero by 2030."

Check out our Instagram progress video...





SPREADING CHRISTMAS CHEER

In the run up to Christmas we were busy co-ordinating hundreds of festive donations thanks to the generosity of our contractors and colleagues.

Christmas Day dinners, gifts, hampers, afternoon teas, thousands of pounds for food, gifts of clothing plus hundreds of selection boxes, chocolates and mince pies spread Christmas cheer at a difficult time for many.

Roxanne from our Economic and Social Regeneration team said:

"We have some wonderful charities in Neath Port Talbot carrying out vital work, so we were delighted to help them with gifts and monetary donations.

"We have also worked closely with our own staff, partners and community leaders to be able to identify those in need and help as many people as possible locally with some lovely donations. We hope this made a difference to them."

Could we support your community or a local charity with a donation? Get in touch, email community@tairarian.co.uk



AN INSPECTOR CALLED KATIE



Katie from our repairs team

If you've ever had a repair carried out at your home, the chances are you will have met one of our inspectors. We have 10 of them based around the borough, and they will visit you to take a look at what needs fixing and making arrangements for the work to be carried out.

One of our inspectors is Katie, and we caught up with her to find out a bit more about what the job involves:

Originally part of our contact centre team taking tenants' phone calls, Katie decided she wanted a more hands-on approach to helping them with their issues, so made the leap over to our repairs team, to become a trainee inspector. Now two years on, and promoted to inspector, she says the customer service background she has from working in the contact centre helps her in this job:

"Being an excellent communicator is vital. We're going into people's homes and, depending on the nature of the job, we could be there a while. Therefore, it's important we can clearly explain to the tenant what we're going to do

and address any concerns they may have.

"For me, meeting different people is one of the highlights of the job. Dealing with people's homes means there is a lot of pressure to get things right, including whether to classify a job as non-urgent, urgent or an emergency.

"We're also alert for any non-repairs issues that may be affecting the tenant. If, for instance, we notice they have mobility issues or they mention damp inspection to diagnose what exactly the problem is. I'll check if the trickle vents and extractor fans are working properly and that the radiators are doing their job efficiently. I will also systematically move throughout the property and take humidity readings using a

hygrometer thermometer, this will indicate a percentage of the water vapour in the air.

"If mould is present then we will work with the tenant whilst also issuing the repair required to combat the condensation and high humidity issues. In 99% of cases, the best way to prevent mould growth and condensation is through heating and ventilation.

"Purely from a property maintenance point of view it is extremely important to use your central heating when it is required, the recommended temperature to heat your property is no lower than 18°C. Having said that, we do appreciate that with high energy costs at the moment, this may be difficult for some of our tenants, so it is a delicate balancing act."

Katie finds the job a very rewarding one: "I know it's a cliché, but no two days are the same, and each job I attend will be different. I love being out and about in the community, meeting lots of people. It is really satisfying helping to fix their problems and making sure they have a functioning roof over their head."

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KATIE'S TOP TIPS TO REDUCING REDUCING DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION IN YOUR HOME



An average family home can produce around 20 pints of moisture a day, so we asked Katie for her top tips to deal with this:

- ▶ When in the bath or shower, keep the bathroom door shut, so the steam is dispersed by the extractor fan before it escapes to other parts of the house
- ▶ After showering, keep the bathroom door closed for around an hour to allow the fan time to disperse the steam.
- ▶ Where possible, dry clothes outside. With Welsh weather and Winter, we know this is not always possible so if you have to dry clothes inside use a clothes horse, ideally located near the kitchen or bathroom fan.
- ▶ Do not dry clothes on radiators as the moisture in the clothes evaporates into the air,

condensing on walls, ceilings and windows, potentially causing mould growth.

- ▶ Keep a lid on the saucepans when cooking to reduce the amount of moisture released into the air and keep the kitchen door shut when cooking to prevent steam escaping to other parts of the home.
- ▶ If possible, only put furniture against internal walls. If furniture must go against external walls, leave a four-inch gap to allow air to circulate behind the furniture. External walls are far colder than internal walls and without air circulating between the furniture and the walls, moisture can become trapped and mould can grow on the walls and any furniture in contact with the wall.
- ▶ Keep the trickle vents in your windows open at all times to allow ventilation.

NEED REPAIRS? TIME TO TELL US

If you find an issue in your home, and you believe we are responsible for repairing it, please get in touch with our repairs team to report it as soon as you can.

It's easy to report non-urgent repairs via our website. Just add the details of the repair, tell us when you are available and one of our customer service team will assess if its our responsibility and get back to you to book a suitable time to carry out the job.

If your repair is an **emergency**, such as an immediate danger or health hazard, **please call us to report this as soon as possible.**

When you get in touch our team will ask several questions to allocate your repair into one of the following categories:

- ▶ Emergency repair - endeavour to complete within 24 working hours
- ▶ Urgent repair - to be attended to within 7 working days
- ▶ Non-emergency (timescale dependant on the nature of the work)

We will then book an appointment for the job to be carried out.

We may advise you to carry out repairs to your own property such as sink/basin plugs and changing light bulbs and can assist over the phone with this.

Our contact centre is open from 8am-6pm Monday-Friday and our out-of-hours service is available if you need to report an emergency repair outside of these working hours by calling the same number, **0300 777 3000**



If you are unable to call us or use our website, you can email repairs@tairarian.co.uk but this should only be used for non-urgent repairs only.

Need to report a repair?

Don't delay do it today! ▶



JOIN OUR ACADEMY



A unique opportunity for tenants to be at the heart of everything we do.

We are looking for enthusiastic tenants from all walks of life who share our vision to make a difference to the people and communities of Neath and Port Talbot.

The Academy is our tenant voice. As a member, you will evaluate how we are performing, hear what progress we've made and share ideas on how we can improve. You'll regularly meet senior colleagues and get to the heart of what we do and why we do it.

No prior experience is needed, as training will be given once you join.

We will also introduce you to local training providers and the lead tenant participation service in Wales (TPAS) so you can develop your skills further. Being part of the Academy

could also lead to you becoming a Tai Tarian board member in the future.

The commitment

You'll need to attend around 12 meetings a year, either online or in person, depending on what works best for you. These are usually held in the morning at our head office in Baglan, but we may offer different times and locations in the future.

In return, we'll provide refreshments, reimburse your travel costs and give you a £10 supermarket voucher for each meeting you attend as a thank you for giving up your time.

Interested? Then call us for an informal chat on 01639 506079, e-mail corporate.governance@tairarian.co.uk A session to find out more will be held in February.

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES ...ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Recently you will have received a booklet outlining the rent, and where applicable service charges you will need to pay from April onwards.

As a community landlord we receive guidance from Welsh Government on how much we can charge you, while still ensuring we are able to spend on maintaining your home, providing services and improving our communities.

We then calculate what this would mean in pounds and pence for all tenants to ensure what you pay is still affordable. A key part of this is looking at our affordability principles which were developed with tenants. These are:

1. We will compare our rents against market rents.

Where does my money go? Based on each £100 received, we spend...



2. Our rents will be affordable, in-line with the Living Rent Model for households who earn a low wage.

3. Our rents will consider the number of bedrooms you have.

4. We will set out what you will receive for service charges, and will ensure the amount is fair, reasonable, and provides value for money

85% of our income comes from the rent we receive from you,

and you can see above how that money is spent.

Rising cost of living

We're here for you through these difficult times. If you're worried about paying your rent or about your household budget being squeezed by higher bills and other everyday costs, please get in touch with us as soon as possible.

Whether you're in work or claiming benefits there may be

help available.

Contact details for your designated rent officer and housing officer are included on page 3 of your booklet or call us on 0300 777 3000 for further advice.

Find out more on how we set your rent here:



WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Following a fantastic response to our recent tenant board recruitment exercise we have now welcomed two new members to our board.

Huw Freeman from Sandfields and Ananda Woodley from Skewen will join Sam Jones and Daniel Smith as tenant representatives.

Both took part in our Board Ready training programme in early autumn to enhance

their knowledge of the housing sector and their work experience and passion for our communities really shone through at interview.

They attended their first meeting in December and are both looking forward to playing an integral part in the decision making of the organisation ensuring we are accountable to tenants and other stakeholders.

Congratulations both.



Ananda Woodley, Skewen and Huw Freeman, Sandfields

CONTRACTS COMING SOON

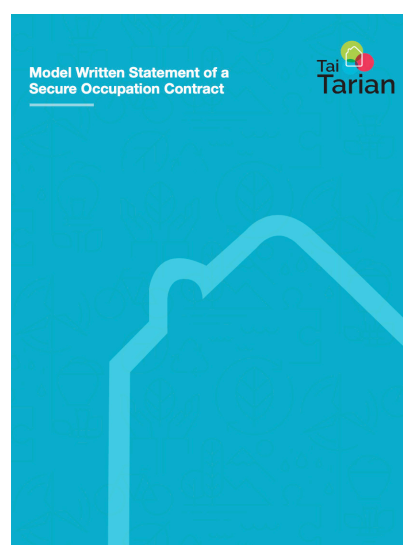
The Renting Homes (Wales) Act became law on 1st December, with all new tenants since then signing up to new style contracts.

You too will receive a new contract in the spring, 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.

For a reminder of what the Renting Homes Act means for you visit: ▶



COST OF LIVING TIPS FROM STEPH

With our household bills higher than ever we have some tips to help save you money.

1 See if you can reduce what you pay for broadband by calling your provider. Ask them about social broadband tariffs which offer special discounted deals to those on low income. Some start at just £12 a month and aren't usually subject to price rises or exit fees.

2 Try and get a cheaper mobile phone contract. Could you reduce your monthly allowance for data or calls or opt for a pay as you go contract if your phone still does the job? It's also worth shopping around to see what other providers can offer you.

3 Have you signed up to a subscription or policy that you no longer need? Go through your bank statements to see what you could cancel.

4 Plan your meals for the week, stick to your list in the supermarket and only buy what you need.

5 Cook food in a microwave, slow cooker or air fryer instead of the oven which uses more energy. If you receive benefits and need cooking facilities but don't have the cash, you may be eligible for a grant from the Discretionary Assistance Fund.

You can choose from a conventional oven or a more energy saving equivalent, our team are able to help you apply.



6 Have you had your meters capped? Please get in touch to see if we can access help for you to heat your home.

Things are really challenging at the moment but as always, our financial inclusion team are here to help if you are worried about money. Please don't suffer in silence call them on 01639 315000 or email financialinclusion@tairarian.co.uk



NEW HOMES TAKING SHAPE

Our new homes in Sandfields, Margam and Eaglesbush are progressing well.

Phase one at County Flats Sandfields will complete in the spring, with tenants looking forward to moving back into their newly revamped, energy efficient homes and welcoming new neighbours to the block too.



Pant Celydd Margam



County Flats Sandfields



LENTIL BOLOGNESE

Serves 4 (Source BBC Good Food)

Ingredients:

- ½ tbsp olive oil
- 1 celery stick, finely chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, peeled and finely chopped
- 100g mushrooms, finely chopped
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tsp dried oregano or thyme
- 200g brown or green lentils
- 600ml vegetable stock
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium-low heat. Add the celery, onion, and carrot with a pinch of salt, plenty of black pepper and cook gently for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft.
2. Add the mushrooms, increase the heat slightly and cook for about 5 minutes, until any liquid has evaporated.
3. Stir in the tomatoes, tomato purée, herbs and lentils. Bring to the boil for a minute then add the vegetable stock. Turn the heat down and simmer for 20–25 minutes, until the lentils are tender. Taste and check the seasoning – if the sauce is too salty, add a good squeeze of lemon juice.
4. Cook the pasta according to the packet instructions, drain and serve with the bolognese.

Instructions:

1. Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium-low heat. Add the celery, onion, and carrot with a pinch of salt, plenty of black pepper and cook gently for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft.
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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** or email **financialinclusion@taitarian.co.uk**



COMPETITION TIME

Often, during the cold and dark winter months we just want to hibernate, but if you wrap up warm spending time outdoors does wonders for your wellbeing.

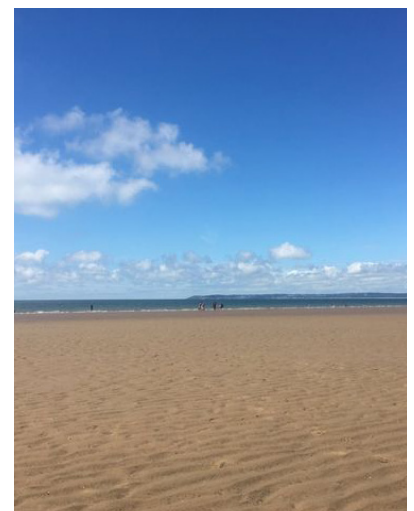
Competition closes 27th February.

Congratulations to Heidi from Ystalyfera who won our top money saving tips competition in the last edition of Cartref.

Explore what's on your doorstep but be sure to take some pictures and enter our photo competition.

All we ask that your favourite spot is outdoors and a hidden gem in your community.

Enter by emailing media@taitarian.co.uk or WhatsApp 07772 912064 to be in with a chance of winning a £50 shopping voucher.



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).

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

Give it a go!

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@taitarian.co.uk



Need to get in touch?

- ☎ 0300 777 0000 (General enquiries 8.30am-5pm Monday to Friday)
- ☎ 0300 777 3000 (Report a repair) Emergency line available 24/7.

Follow us on social!

