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Around the Houses

June 2015

'Around the Houses' is published monthly to showcase the excellent work members are doing in a wide variety of different areas. If you have any stories you'd like to include in the next edition, please send them to sarah-harris@chcymru.org.uk.

Swansea East AM visits Gwalia SP project

Mike Hedges AM recently visited Cam Nesaf, a project that provides accommodation and support for young people who have experienced homelessness. Managed by Grŵp Gwalia, the project provides accommodation-based support service for people between the ages of 16-25. Speaking about his visit, Mr Hedges said: "I was really pleased to visit Cam Nesaf young person's project and see the real benefit it's giving to a lot of young people, changing their lives positively and making sure that people have the opportunities that many of us just take for granted." Andrew Vye, Gwalia's Director of Support, said: "We encourage the young people who live here to become more empowered by focusing on promoting inclusion, encouraging aspiration and stimulating independence. Our aim is for the young people to develop the confidence and skills they need to access employment or educational opportunities and in doing so become more independent. Last year we were able to support 11 young people at Cam Nesaf; however, with the Supporting People budget cut by £10m in Wales this year, we've seen over a 5% reduction in our funding here and we're doing everything we can to maintain the vital services we provide.'



SP High Street fundraiser for ResFest

Residents and staff from Supported Living schemes for homeless people and families across Flintshire recently took over a shop in Holywell High Street to raise funds for the annual ResFest celebration event. ResFest showcases the achievements of residents from schemes managed by Clwyd Alyn HA across North Wales, supporting people who have either experienced homelessness or have been at risk of being homeless. Each of the schemes organise a host of fundraising events to help pay for the day, and the Flintshire schemes raised around £1,100. Each of the areas are set a target of raising £500 for ResFest so the additional money will be reserved for resident support activities. Kevin Hughes, Director of Care and Support for Clwyd Alyn said: "ResFest is very much organised by and for the residents themselves. It is a real credit to their hard work and positive attitude that they embrace the opportunity to contribute to funding the event each year."



AM visits Newport landmark

Newport City Homes (NCH) recently welcomed Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, to its Greenwood tower block. Greenwood is one of NCH's three tower blocks in the city which have benefited from a £12.5m Welsh Housing Quality Standard investment programme. The Minister was greeted by the Chair of the Board, Chris England, and Chief Executive, Ceri Doyle before being invited to take in the views from the recently refurbished penthouse apartments. The minister then visited two residents in their homes to get their opinion on the renovations. She met Mr Bowers who has lived at Greenwood for over 30 years and Mr Lines who recently moved in. Each flat has received a new kitchen, bathroom, double glazing, heating system and re-wire. The works has been carried out by main contractor Wates Living Space and representatives were also in attendance to greet the Minister. Wates Living Space has won Considerate Contractor awards for its work on the tower blocks.

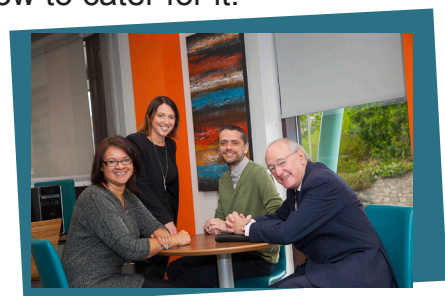


Partnership creates new homes in Anglesey

Five tenants are benefitting from new homes to rent thanks to a partnership with North Wales Housing, Welsh Government and Anglesey Council. The Rhes Capel project on a brownfield site in Holyhead has been funded by North Wales Housing and Welsh Government funds awarded through the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme. Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty said: "I am pleased the Welsh Government has been able to support this development with funding of almost £310,000. The project has not only created high-quality housing for local people, but also used local companies and supply chains – supporting the local economy. This development is an excellent example of partnership working between the Welsh Government, Anglesey County Council, North Wales Housing, and the local private housebuilding sector, which is helping to deliver our vision for housing in Wales. I wish all the tenants every happiness in their new homes."

North Wales Crime tsar visits SP project

Crime tsar Winston Roddick recently praised a project that helps youngsters at risk of homelessness. The North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner paid a visit to Yr Hafod, a supported housing scheme in Denbigh that offers temporary accommodation to young people between the age of 16 and 25. The scheme, funded by Denbighshire County Council's Supporting People programme, is based at HWB Dinbych. HWB Dinbych is an innovative £2.2m development from Grŵp Cynefin. As part of the visit, Mr Roddick was given a tour of the HWB, which includes an IT room, a community activity space and four teaching rooms used by Coleg Llandrillo to host a range of classes and courses available to the whole Denbigh community. Mr Roddick met with Will, 24, who was facing the prospect of being homeless before he moved to Yr Hafod. Will said: "Being here has helped me with a lot of things. It's helped me with my self-esteem and confidence. I've been learning about team building and finances. They're also helping me to try to find a job by putting me in contact with the job centre. I've been volunteering with Denbighshire County Council, doing forestry and looking after the countryside... It's the type of job I'd like to do because I've always been into outdoor work." Mr Roddick was impressed with what he saw, saying: "I think Grŵp Cynefin have a great deal to be proud of because they've demonstrated that they recognise the great need that there was for a place of this kind. This fills a huge gap in a very effective and meaningful way. You need only be amongst the people who live here, and those who use this place to get a measure of the appreciation on their part for what is being done on their behalf. It's an eye-opener to come here to see the standard of the facilities and the commitment of the people who work here. They are completely dedicated; they have a magnificent understanding of the need, and know how to cater for it."



RCT Homes highly commended!

RCT Homes has been highly commended in the 'Building Stronger Communities' award category at the Business In The Community (BITC) Responsible Business Awards in Wales. Named 'Wales Responsible Large Business of the Year' at the 2012 and 2014 awards, RCT Homes was also re-accredited on the night for its continuing commitment to its corporate responsibility programme. BITC's Responsible Business Awards celebrate and showcase the best of responsible business in action in companies of all sizes and sectors across Wales. RCT Homes was highly commended for the regeneration of Penygraig High Street where they successfully created a coalition of public, private and voluntary organisations to build a more resilient and viable community, centred on the focal point of Penygraig's high street. The project saw more than 200 staff from RCT Homes and the company's partners volunteering to give the high street a makeover in a 'Give and Gain' day in May 2014 – helping businesses and residents to put up signage, paint shop fronts, plant flowers and install new electrics and extractor fans in the local café as well as improving play spaces in local primary and junior schools. Partner organisations gave over £80,000 of materials and equipment and over 1,200 hours of time to support the regeneration. The project led to the high street experiencing a 53% increase in footfall.

Melin Homes signs ground-breaking energy efficiency contract

Melin Homes recently announced the signing of an agreement with energy company E.ON that will bring additional funding in order to provide energy saving measures to Welsh homes in the South and West regions. This agreement with E.ON is the first of its kind for Melin and will mean a potential investment of millions of pounds to help fund the provision of external wall insulation and other energy efficiency work to several thousand homes over the next 18 months. Nigel Dewbery, Head of Energy Efficiency at E.ON, said: "Energy saving schemes like this bring real benefits to communities; not only to thousands of people whose homes will be more comfortable and more affordable to heat, but also to the small businesses in Wales that will be working alongside us."

New housing unveiled at treasured Barrybados!

Ger y Môr, a new affordable housing development, was launched in true Barry Island style with buried treasures and ice-cream all round. Built by Newydd Housing Association in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council, the development of 20 new apartments at the former Marine Hotel was opened by Cllr Bronwen Brooks before Barry Island Primary School entertained tenants, partners and guests by singing songs. Named by resident Lisa Wallace after a competition in the press, Ger y Môr (near the sea) doesn't have one but two time capsules. The first was filled and buried by Barry Island Primary School and the second was buried during the opening ceremony filled with photos from local people on the Island, Barrybados and Bro Radio branded goodies, the history of the housing scheme and even a stick of rock from the Island. Barry Island Primary School worked closely with Pendragon Design and Build, the contractors appointed by Newydd to build the scheme, visiting the site and using their experiences for class projects throughout the build. Polly Davies, teacher at Barry Island Primary said, "We are delighted to be a part of this launch event. It has been a fantastic opportunity being involved in the project from the start seeing the development of plans to the completion. The children have had the opportunity to see real life, hands on experiences in the workplace, having a direct role and insight into the way that our community develops around us." During the build two apprentices received work experience at the site and gained qualifications. Liam and Mike have since gained full time work with the contractor, ensuring a successful future in the industry.



Prestigious award for United Welsh

United Welsh has won a prestigious award at the UK Housing Awards. The company's wholly owned subsidiary, Celtic Horizons, run in partnership with Mears Group, scooped the Maintaining High Quality Homes award at the event. Celtic Horizons, set up two years ago to look after the repairs, ground maintenance, cleaning, gas servicing and other requirements of United Welsh's 5,000 plus homes, was praised by the judges for its "strong commitment to developing customer service standards through embedding a strong leadership culture through investment in employee training and reinvestment back into the communities they serve." The team at Celtic Horizons are trained to notice problems such as fuel poverty and refer people for help if they think there are issues United Welsh can help to address. Celtic Horizons visited a property last winter and found one older couple living in just one room of their home as they could not afford to pay to heat the rest. Following a referral to United Welsh's money advisors, it was discovered they weren't claiming hundreds of pounds worth of benefits. They can now afford to heat their entire home. Chief Executive Anthony Whittaker was delighted with the award: "This is a fantastic achievement and a fitting testament to all the hard work by everyone at Celtic Horizons over the last two years. I am particularly pleased that we have won the award for our commitment to looking after the homes of our tenants and making sure they are maintained to the highest quality possible as this has a major impact on everyone's quality of life".

Breaking News!

Next month, we'll be revealing a brand new format for Around the Houses. Chris, our in-house designer, has been busy creating a bright new format and all will be revealed in July's edition. We need your vital contributions and we ask that, in addition to your press releases, you include a good quality photograph and the link to the story on your website. We're keen to drive traffic to your websites and you'll also be able to tweet stories from this new format. Please send contributions to sarah-harris@chcymru.org.uk - the deadline for inclusion is the 20th of every month. We'd love to hear your thoughts on the new format of Around the Houses next month!

Double celebration for Centre

Hafod Housing had a double celebration recently when both their staff and a tenant were recognised for their help in delivering the Fir Tree Centre - a fantastic community resource in Quakers Yard in the Merthyr Valley. The centre provides a wide range of services for the local community including an IT suite, training/meeting room and café. It offers activities for children and young people, formal and informal learning opportunities, healthy living initiatives, a range of advice and support services and is the base for the local Food Cooperative and Credit Union Collection. Hafod Housing has 96 homes in Fir Tree Drive and the centre is the culmination of over 12 years of working with the local community. There were many challenges along the way but perseverance and unwavering support from both staff and local tenants resulted in its doors opening in September 2014. These efforts were rewarded with tea at Buckingham Palace and a national award. Sally Cockerill, Head of Community Investment and Tanya Skinner, former Community Development Officer, attended the Queen's Garden Party following a nomination by the Lord Lieutenant for Mid Glamorgan. Tenant Glenn Price also won the TPAS Outstanding Achievement in Participation Award 2015. Sally said: "This project clearly shows what can be achieved by working in partnership and we are so thrilled for Glenn. He is a founder and dedicated member of the Fir Tree Drive Community Association and has worked tirelessly to help improve his local community. He is an incredible person and an excellent role model and has shown that with strength, determination and belief people can overcome any barrier that is before them." The Fir Tree Centre is located just off the Taff Trail and they sell amazing Welsh cakes if you're walking or cycling by and fancy a treat! www.firtreecentre.co.uk

