

Issue No. 45  
Spring 2011

# Interlink

Residents' Newsletter



## Flaming heck!!!

Make up your own caption in our  
competition on the back page





Young at Heart Forum  
2010

## Snow stopping our older residents

Large numbers of residents defied the icy conditions to attend our 5th annual forum for over 65s. Despite many of the speakers cancelling due to the weather, residents were given a talk on services provided by Age UK and First Stop Advice, followed by talks by Chris Sweeney from West Suffolk Voluntary Association for the Blind and Ellen Kaye, Suffolk Hearing Support Service. In the afternoon our residents limbered up for a seated exercise session by Min Grob followed by a quiz hosted by our very own Paula Bone of St Marys, Mildenhall. 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize winners all received luxurious hampers. Many thanks to all who braved the weather and made the event a success.

# Suffolk Circle is here...

Suffolk Circle is a new membership organisation for people over 50. It's a great way to meet people and to get things done.

Members get together to share interests, socialise and get out and about. A social calendar lists events which members have suggested, they could include a trip to the cinema, a walk, or a pub lunch. Sometimes members need a lift to an event and others can offer one so the Circle helps to sort this out.

Members can also get help from other local people with practical jobs like putting up a shelf, doing some gardening or clearing out a cupboard. The Circle also puts members in touch with helpers if they'd like a hand to learn something new, from how to send a text message to how to use a drill.

The Circle provides an opportunity for the whole community to be involved. Local people of any age can join as Helpers and everyone has a skill they can share – for instance giving someone a hand with the cleaning or showing them how to shop on line. Helpers could offer an hour a month or several hours a week.

To get involved in the Circle, either as a member or a Helper, please get in touch:  
Tel: 0800 112 3446 Email: [info@suffolkcircle.org.uk](mailto:info@suffolkcircle.org.uk) [www.suffolkcircle.org.uk](http://www.suffolkcircle.org.uk)



## Estate Improvements

Did you know we have a pot of money to be used for specifically improving our estates? In the past this money has been used to update the landscaping, white line car parking bays, improve lighting and put up new signage. Do you have an idea about something that could improve your estate? Speak with your Housing Officer or let the Customer Service Team know (our contact details are on the back page). We might not be able to do anything this year but we can put your suggestion on to the wish list to be considered at our budget setting meetings held in November and December. Any work approved will then be carried out next year.

## Up in the roof!



Just a reminder for those of you with access to a loft space.

We would prefer that, if possible, you did not store your belongings in the loft. The loft spaces are generally not boarded out which makes storage and access difficult. The other difficulty is that if you store a large number of bags and boxes you will be required to clear the space before any improvements to loft insulation is carried out and the contents may be prone to mould growth due to condensation.

# JOIN IN

*"A two way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening."*  
- Definition of Resident Involvement

Welcome to our 'Join In' page for resident involvement. In this issue of Interlink we have included a number of ways in which you can help be involved with Suffolk Housing. Included is information on the re-launch of Tenant Friends and the Editorial & Readers Panel, plus news of an exciting new initiative called Tenant Inspectors.

We can try and fit many of our activities around you, so if you feel you are too busy, but would still like to help us shape Suffolk Housing's services, please contact me for an informal chat.

*Jonathan Routledge*  
Tenant Liaison Officer

## Editorial and readers panel

### Help us improve information we send you

We need your help to make sure that our publications are easy to read and understand from a resident's perspective. We also want to make sure that our new policies reflect your views and to make sure that they do not miss anyone out. As a member of our Editorial and Readers Panel we will send you our publications and policies and ask for your feedback.

Our residents really can make a difference, both the updated Tenant Handbook and our Single Equality Scheme Policy were reviewed by our residents and changes were made because of their ideas and suggestions.

All publications and policies reviewed by the panel will display the 'Resident Stamp of Approval'.



### CONTACT ME

**T:** 01284 715391 **E:** jonathan@suffolkhousing.org  
**Write to:** Tenant Liaison Officer, Suffolk Housing Society, Old Mission House, St Botolph's Lane, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2AX



## 10 things you didn't know about... Jonathan Routledge

### What is your favourite Song?

There is a light that never goes out – The Smiths

### What is your earliest childhood memory?

Slicing my head open on a make shift go-kart. My older sister decided it would be helpful to show me my injured head in a mirror to reveal the gory extent of my injuries. I can still see it now!

### What was the last book you read?

The Life and Death of Ann Boleyn

### What is your most cherished possession?

My late grandfather's model steam train. My grandfather died before I was born but whenever I visited my Nan's house as a child I was in awe of his giant collection of model steam trains. Years later, unknown to me, the collection was sold to train collectors. When I heard the news it was a major disappointment but my Nan left each member of the family a single train from the collection.

### Where is your favourite place in the world? Cornwall

### If you did not do your current job what would you like to be? Archeologist

### What is your favourite film?

The Lord of the Rings

### If you could meet one person, alive or dead, who would that be? Brian Wilson – the creative force behind the Beach Boys. His music and life have always fascinated me since I was younger.

### Tell me something that will surprise your colleagues? I like to paint waves!

# Do you like helping your neighbours?

If so we would like to hear from you. Our re-launched network of **Tenants Friends** is an important link to all our communities.

As a Tenants Friend you would be the Society's eyes and ears in the local area reporting back to us on important issues, whilst also introducing yourself and providing helpful information and support for new residents.

Please get in touch if you would like to join or just want further information about the role.



## Residents Association

### Need help setting one up?

A Residents Association can give you and your neighbours a bigger voice in your local community, arrange events, tackle problems such as anti-social behaviour, raise money, and lots more. We can help you get your association off the ground providing help and advice, printing, and even reimburse the costs of venue hire.

**Why not get in touch to find out more about Residents Associations and how we can help set one up?**

## Living in Sheltered Housing?

**Have you had a kitchen or bathroom replacement?  
Did you find it suited your needs?**

Suffolk Housing belong to a group of housing associations that purchase products together to achieve better value for money. The group regularly consult residents on products that eventually will be used as part of our kitchen and bathroom refurbishments.

They also help choose how contractors are selected for major work on your homes. There are currently no representatives from our Sheltered Housing Schemes and while we always try and choose the most suitable products for our residents we need your opinion and views to make the best decisions.

You don't have to have been involved in anything like this before and we can pay for travel expenses.

## Tenant Inspectors

Do you agree with the following?

- **I like to get involved and help solve problems**
- **I want to be hands on, rather than sitting in meetings**
- **I want to help improve Suffolk Housing's services**

Tenant Inspectors are volunteers who are trained to monitor services, collect data themselves and actively report on how well our services are doing.

The Tenant Inspectors decide which service area they want to inspect, and they receive feedback on the improvements they recommend.

This initiative is currently in the planning stages, but if it sounds like something you would like to be involved in, please get in touch.

## Mystery Shopping

Do you have an eye for detail? Why not join our group of mystery shoppers? We are always looking for ways to improve the services we provide, by being a mystery shopper you can give us a unique and valuable insight into the service our residents receive on day to day issues.

All mystery shoppers receive free training and we will provide you with a form to complete after your shop, its that easy! We also cover all travel expenses.

**HELP  
TEST OUR  
SERVICES SO  
WE CAN BE  
BETTER**



# Susan's UPDATE

At the last Tenants Voice meeting we were joined by the new Chief Executive of Suffolk Housing, Ian Winslet, Nigel Aitkens, Chairman of the Board, and Julie McGrath who was observing as a resident.



The meeting was lively and generated a lot of discussion including such matters as the proposed new void standard, Grounds Maintenance, the re-launch of the Tenants Friend initiative and a proposal to introduce Tenant Inspectors.

We were quite surprised to hear that there are about 70 tenants registered as Tenants Friends, and if you are one of those I'd like to say a big thank you for volunteering, and we hope to support you in this work, as we should work together.

We are hoping to have a Fun Day this year, which will give us the opportunity to meet as many tenants as possible, and give them the chance to express their views on our work, and how they feel about their tenancies.

Having attended my first two Board meetings I am pleased that the Board are keen to encourage Tenants Voice to identify areas of concern to take to the Board for their consideration. They are very supportive of tenant led initiatives.

So over the next year we hope to take a more pro-active role in raising concerns and challenging policies and decisions made by Suffolk Housing.

**Susan Feary, Chairman of Tenants Voice**

## Is there an issue you would like Tenants Voice to discuss?

Contact Susan on 01638 615413 or email: [suekat@googlemail.com](mailto:suekat@googlemail.com)



## Tenants Voice profiles

In each issue of Interlink we hope to provide you with a small profile of each member. We hope this will give you an insight into the residents who are part of Tenants Voice.

### PAULA BONE

St Marys, Mildenhall  
Contact: 01638 715529



#### *How long have you been a member?*

Since Tenants Voice started

#### *What do you enjoy most about being part of Tenants Voice?*

Interaction with other members and discussion of the various things we are asked to report on

#### *Please tell us about something which Tenants Voice has done which you are particularly proud of?*

The fact that from the very beginning, we are recognised as an important part of SHS, and with 3 of our members being Board members, we have the ability to influence decisions.

### JOHN CAMPBELL

Bloomfield Street, Ipswich  
Contact: [j.campbell048@btinternet.com](mailto:j.campbell048@btinternet.com)

#### *How long have you been a member?*

3 months

#### *What do you enjoy most about being part of Tenants Voice?*

A sense of participation in decisions with landlord and tenant

#### *Please tell us about something which Tenants Voice has done which you are particularly proud of?*

The revamp of the Tenants Handbook

# Diary dates

Office closed for Easter on Friday 22nd April and Monday 25th April and bank holidays on Friday 29th April, 2nd May and 30th May. From 1pm on Friday 13th May for a staff conference.



## Repair Appointments

We are undertaking a trial to offer appointments for two of our main contractors – Suffolk Electrical Services and Trevor Benton Construction Ltd. So when you ring Customer Services to report a repair we can book an appointment for the following:

### **Trevor Benton – our plumbing and general building contractors**

Bury area IP29 to IP33 appointments on Tuesdays, morning or afternoon

Ipswich area IP1 to IP10 appointments on Wednesday, morning or afternoon

Haverhill/Newmarket CB8 and CB9 appointments on Thursday, morning or afternoon

### **Suffolk Electrical Services**

Ipswich area IP1 to IP10 appointments on Wednesday mornings.

If these days and times are not convenient our contractor will contact you to arrange an appointment.

## How digital switchover will affect tenants



You will shortly receive a booklet to your home from Digital uk which will tell you everything you need to know about the switch from the analogue signal to digital by this November:

In a nutshell:

- There are 3 transmitters which cover our area and the following table gives you the relevant dates for the switchover.

Transmitter group	Serving	Starts	Completion
Sandy Heath	Cambridgeshire, Suffolk Border	30 March 11	13 April 11
Sudbury	parts of Suffolk and Essex	6 July 11	20 July 11
Tacolneston	Norfolk and north Suffolk	9 Nov 11	23 Nov 11

- You will be responsible for re-tuning your TV set. Many tenants have already done this and most people will be able to convert to digital themselves, with information and advice available from Digital UK, the not-for-profit company responsible for leading the switchover
- As your landlord, we are responsible for making sure all communal aerial systems are upgraded to receive digital signals. Tenants who have their own aerials will not normally need a new aerial to receive digital systems.

Extra practical help with converting to digital is available for older and disabled people who need it – if you are eligible, you will be contacted by post by the Switchover Help Scheme. You must respond in order to get the help.

Any tenant who wants to find out more about switchover or the Help Scheme can visit Digital UK's website at [digitaluk.co.uk](http://digitaluk.co.uk). Alternatively you can ring digitaluk on 08456 50 50 50. Their opening hours are Mon to Friday 8am to 7pm.

## Are you covered?

This might be a good moment to remind you to take out your own household insurance to cover damage or loss to your personal belongings.

My Home Contents Insurance, promoted by the National Housing Federation, is a national scheme offering affordable premiums with a variety of payment methods. It can cost less than £2.50 per week for up to £10,000 worth of cover. For an information pack call 0845 3372463.

## How urgent is your repair?

Together with our contractors we try to arrange for a repair to be completed as quickly as possible. However there are maximum target times for different repairs which our contractors need to meet.

## From Suffolk Police

We've been hearing reports about an increase in thefts of heating oil. Suffolk Police issued the following simple steps that can help make your tank and fuel more difficult for thieves to target.

- Screen your tank with fencing or hedges
- Close and secure any gates leading to the tank
- Conceal or cover any external pipes and fuel lines.
- Install lockable caps supported by a closed shackle padlock.
- Regularly check your fuel levels, sensors which monitor levels from inside the home are available
- Consider installing a tank alarm
- Join a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

### EMERGENCY

These are repairs where there is a serious health or safety risk to you or a risk of serious damage to the building. These would be completed in one working day and examples would include:

- Blocked or leaking foul drain
- Blocked toilet where there is only one in property
- Complete loss of water where Anglian Water not responsible
- Uncontainable leaks
- Total loss of heating or hot water supply from 1st October to 30th April
- Doors or ground floor windows which cannot be secured

### URGENT

These are repairs which substantially affect your comfort or convenience. Examples would include:

- Blocked toilet if more than one at property
- Minor leaks
- Loss of heating to one room or hot water or during summer
- Loss of lighting in bathroom

### ROUTINE

These are minor repairs which can wait a little longer. They could take up to 14 working days to complete and would include:

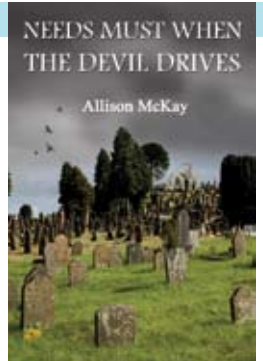
- Minor adaptations
- Leaking/dripping taps
- Loss of light one room
- Faulty socket or extractor fans (Dependant on circumstances)
- Fencing repairs

### NON URGENT

These are repairs that can wait and probably require ordering of parts. These can take up to 28 working days to complete and examples would include:

- Replacing specialist doors
- Major adaptations
- Window repairs where security is not an issue





## Competition time

We had a great response to our missing reindeer competition and as a number of children entered as well we decided to hold two separate draws. Congratulations to Mrs Cohen from Newmarket and Samuel who also lives in Newmarket who correctly found the reindeer having a sneaky cup of tea on page five.

This time we'd like you to suggest an appropriate caption to our front cover picture. The picture is of Rob Longfoot who, along with Allison Cooper, took part in a fire walking challenge in aid of the Stroke Association. If entering by email simply send your name, address and phone number, and if under 18, your age together with your caption to [hazel@suffolkhousing.org](mailto:hazel@suffolkhousing.org), alternatively send in to the office using the address on the bottom of this page. Please send your entry in by 30th April 2011.

## In my dreams

Many of us sit around dreaming of what we could do...

Climb a mountain, run a marathon, write a book, invent the next big thing and become a millionaire, but not many of us actually get around to doing any of it. Well one of our colleagues has done something, she has just written and published her first novel! Allison says 'When I was a kid my Grandmother gave me a really old battered typewriter and a pile of paper and told me to write my stories down and so I started. I have wanted to be a writer from the moment I hit the first key on that old machine. I never thought I would be published but here I am and I guess it shows that if you really want to do something don't ever give up.' So a big well done to Allison on this fantastic achievement.

Get your copy of 'Needs Must When The Devil Drives' by Allison Mckay (ISBN: 9781849630443) from your local Waterstones or order direct from Austin and Macauley Publishers Tel: 0207 038 8212 or email [mail@austinmacauley.com](mailto:mail@austinmacauley.com)



*Cast of the Wizard of Oz 2010 Panto held at Trafalgar House.*

## Have you heard about sheltered housing?

Sheltered housing is accommodation specifically for people over 65. Generally the schemes have individual one bedroom flats with communal facilities such as lounge, kitchen, laundry, gardens and guest room. One of our schemes also has a community shop and hairdressers. Each flat has an alarm system which links to an on site scheme co-ordinator during working hours or to a monitored call centre during the evenings and weekends.

Residents get together to organise events and activities to which all are

invited but there is no pressure to join in. These can be anything from a darts evening to a summer barbecue or a meal and musical entertainment to a panto.

If you think you might be interested in this type of accommodation you will need to be registered with one of the choice based lettings schemes (Homelink for our schemes in Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds, Gateway to Homechoice for Ipswich and Thurston). Speak to your Housing Officer or Customer Service Team for more information.

## FIND US ON FACEBOOK



For the latest housing and community related news, including opportunities for involvement, please join our Facebook page. The page can also be used to contact us, just type a message and we will get back to you.

To view the page either visit Suffolk Housing at [www.suffolkhousing.org](http://www.suffolkhousing.org) and click on the link or go direct to Facebook and search 'Suffolk Housing'.

