

All change

Riverside has selected a new contractor to provide landscaping services in the North East.

From next year, the service will be provided by Connaught Environmental Ltd, Riverside's nationally procured contractor. From January 2010, the new contractor will be visiting all sites that require such services. Connaught vans are easily identified and all staff wear uniforms and carry identity badges. We will write to all customers affected by this decision when we have further information.

Going green

Riverside has gone green – printing all our newsletters on recycled paper.

We now print on 75 % recycled paper which has 25 % from FSC-certified sources. The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. Only those that meet certain standards can be certified.

Jesmond residents sitting pretty



David Gardener and his fellow residents enjoy the fruits of their labour

Jesmond resident David Gardner recently applied for funding to replace a garden seat and to install a water-saving butt.

The application was approved, and the latest installations have helped David and fellow residents make the most of their garden.

There are still funds available for community projects – and they must be spent before the end of March 2010. To find out more call our 24-hour Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.

If you require this magazine in another format e.g. large print or audio cassette or in another language, please telephone ☎ **0845 111 0000** or **0345 111 0000**

अनुवाद माटे अमने झोन करो

अनुवाद लਈ सानुं फोन करे।

برای ترجمه به ما تلفون کنید

Çeviri için bizi arayın

अनुवाद के लिए हमें फोन करें

ترجمه کے لئے ہمیں فون کریں

欢迎电话查询翻译服务事宜。

若需翻譯服務，請致電我們。

اتصلوا بنا للحصول على الترجمة

برای ترجمه بما تلفن نمائید

We are happy and able to accept Typetalk calls.

For Riverside tenants in the North East



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We need you!

Do you want to make your voice heard? Do you think you have what it takes to help us shape the future of Riverside in the North East?

If so we need you to join our Board. We currently have a vacancy for a Board Member and up to two observers – and you could fit the bill.

Julie Riseborough, Head of Community Engagement, said: “The role of the Tenant Board observer is a useful new opportunity for tenants who want to experience the work of the Board of Management without having to commit to the role of a Board Member.

“In fact we have recommended that all Board Members should become observers first, so that they can decide if they can cope with the demands of the role.”

We have received three expressions of interest to date but we want to make sure that all of our customers are aware of the current vacancies.

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Durham estate tidy-up



Residents in Ramsey Close, Turnbull Close and Alington Place got stuck in for a late spring clean. Riverside funded a skip for the estate, which has been plagued with fly-tipping.



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We need you!

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If you would like to express an interest, please contact us by Monday 11 January.

However, if tenants miss this deadline they can be put on a waiting list – all successful applications will be recorded so that we have a healthy reserve list. Managing Director Steve Ward said: “If we do not have sufficient tenant Board Members and observers it becomes difficult to conduct meetings – Riverside places great importance on the involvement of our customers so we need to have enough tenants to ensure that the Board of Management fulfils its vital role.”

For more information, contact Julie Riseborough on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.

You could switch and save!

Winter has come around again and in the current economic climate, the need to lower the costs of our energy bills has never been more important.

So why not see if you can switch and save?

Billscutter offers free independent advice about energy companies so that you can get the best deals on your bills. You can call them on Tel: 0845 872 5107 to discuss your needs, talk about your suppliers and see what you can save. You can also visit our Website: www.riverside.org.uk/cutyourfuelbills. Have a look at the fuel savings calculator and compare energy prices.

For more help, contact your local office or call our 24-hour Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.

Our Inspectors call



John Wood, Group Director of Housing Services, with the Tenant Inspectors

Our three Tenant Inspectors have been busy, carrying out their first inspection in the communal areas at Hill House in Newcastle.

The Inspectors also joined John Wood, Group Director of Housing Services, in a visit to Grosvenor Place in Jesmond.

John said: “Tenant Inspectors play a significant role in helping us to improve our performance and we really appreciate the contribution that they make to Riverside. We like to see them as our critical friends.” The Inspectors have called for the North East office to publish plans for decorating communal areas. So we have agreed that the following properties will be prioritised for painting in 2010 to 2011: Grosvenor Place, Osborne Avenue and Hope House, Newcastle; Victoria Avenue, North Tyneside; and Claypath, Durham.

Rhys killer’s mother evicted

The jailed mother of Rhys Jones’ killer has lost her home, as Riverside succeeded in a case to gain possession of the house in Good Shepherd Close in Croxteth, Liverpool.

We gave a number of examples as to why Janette Mercer’s home should be repossessed, including non-payment of rent, family involvement in anti-social behaviour which left neighbours and the community threatened and abused, as well as the danger to the family from gang reprisals in the area.

Tom McGuire, Divisional Director of Riverside, said: “We take a zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour and criminal acts within our communities.”

Summer of fun

Our Community Engagement Team took its message to the people, hosting a stand at the New Durham Summer Fayre.

Michael, a young resident from Alington Place said: “The Durham Summer Fayre was a marvellous event, with an Iron Man contest, a rock climbing wall and indoor stalls. I thoroughly enjoyed the event; one of the main reasons being the indoor stalls - raffles, handmade cards, and fresh tea and coffee, a big day for all.”



Enjoying the hula hoop fun at the East Howden fun day are Helen Harvey, and Megan, Spencer and Reece Tighe

We received good feedback from our partners at the event, which raises funds for the local residents' association, and look forward to making it an annual date in our diary. Riverside also attended the East Howden Family Fun Day on the August Bank Holiday weekend. The Hula Hoop competition was brought back by popular demand – and we were more than happy to oblige.

Julie Riseborough, Head of Community Engagement, said: “It was great to be able to help out with the event, especially as one of the key volunteers has been out of action recently. “It proves that investing in neighbourhoods is not just about providing money – Riverside believes that investing time and commitment is just as important.”

Financial guidance for all

The Citizens' Advice Bureau is involved in an exciting new project to bring money guidance to customers in the North East.

The Moneymadeclear service gives free information, tailored to the individual's needs, on a range of money matters including borrowing rates, budgeting skills and savings options.

By giving information about options and providing personalised guidance, the service aims to help people feel confident, informed and able to make the financial decisions that

are right for them. Unlike regulated financial advice, Moneymadeclear will not make recommendations for particular financial products or services, and it is 'sales free' and impartial.

The Moneymadeclear service is available:

- face-to-face with your local CAB – on Tel: 0845 543 8834 or E-mail: moneyguidance@citizensadvice.org.uk to book an appointment
- online at www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk
- on Tel: 0300 500 5000.

Garden gets a new look

Five residents from Durham were delighted to see the results of the improvements to their garden – and Riverside joined them in their celebrations.



Joe shows Steve Ward, Managing Director, his basketball skills

The garden is well used throughout the year – Joe and David like to enjoy their meals in the fresh air. Joe likes all of the garden but David likes the football pitch best.

Joe showed Managing Director Steve Ward his skill at basketball while Alan gave Riverside staff a tour of the garden. Everyone agreed that it was more accessible, thanks to a Riverside Community Chest grant.



David looks forward to a game of football

Our tenants

Jas Bedi, a resident in Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, is a shining example of how our supported residents can make a difference.

The 28-year-old likes to keep busy and spends a lot of his time during the week doing voluntary work and developing new skills. Jas has recently gained qualifications in literacy and numeracy, and would like to do an NVQ next at Tyne Metropolitan College.



Jas, with his support worker Jonathan, proudly displays his numeracy and literacy certificates

Clare Grainger from Middlesbrough lived with her parents before moving into a shared house.

She enjoys the independence, especially cooking for herself.

Claire also does voluntary work at the Teesside Hospice for Cancer Charity Shop, where she has helped out for more than 10 years.

I want to complain

At Riverside we make an effort to get things right. But when something goes wrong we will listen to our customers' complaints and try to learn from our mistakes.

We won't hide behind feeble excuses. We won't drown you in a tidal wave of jargon. If you complain we will take it seriously.

We have a complaints procedure that is easy to use and will give you a fair hearing if you are dissatisfied. All you need to do is contact us – by phone, letter, email or in person – tell us what your complaint is

s' views

Lee Thompson

Lee moved into his current home more than 12 years ago.

Lee's mum Janette worried about how he would respond to moving out – but Lee is enjoying his bachelor pad!

She said: "I have seen a massive improvement – the staff work around Lee, rather than Lee working around them. He is just one of the lads now."



Lee Thompson

In the future, Claire is looking forward to joining a gym to complement her healthy eating.



Clare Grainger

in!

and what you want us to do. A member of staff will deal with your complaint within a definite time frame. If you are not happy with the outcome you can appeal through two further stages.

If you want more information on our complaints procedure ask at your nearest office for our leaflet, Making a comment or complaint, visit our website: www.riverside.org.uk or call our 24-hour Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.

Residents are Living Well

Tenants at St Anthony's Court sheltered scheme recently took part in a range of activities during a Living Well event.

The day coincided with the International Day of Older Persons and was funded by Riverside's Community Investment fund.



Residents enjoy taster sessions of armchair exercises

Residents attended an advice session by the Primary Care Trust on preventing slips, trips and falls. They also enjoyed taster sessions of armchair exercises and hand massages by complementary therapist Isabel Lickes.

The day also included an inspection of the communal areas with members of the Property Services Team.

Meet the staff

Lucy Charters is Clerical Assistant in our Gateshead office



What do you enjoy most about your job and why?

The best part of my job is all the people I work with.

What is your biggest work related achievement so far?

Well I have only worked for Riverside for about two months so I am not sure if this would count as an achievement but one of the best things I have done was meeting all the residents at St Anthony's Court and helping out for the day.

What would be your one desert island item and why?

Tanning oil because if I ever got rescued I would at least like to have caught a tan in the time I was there.

What is your favourite book or film and why?

I have lots of favourite films mainly all the girly chick flick ones... Dirty Dancing, Flashdance, Love Actually, Notting Hill - I could go on forever. I am also a bit of a Walt Disney fan.

Who would play you in a film about your life and why?

I think I would be happy with anyone that wanted to play me in a film. As long as they had a good sense of humour and were funny that would be fine by me!

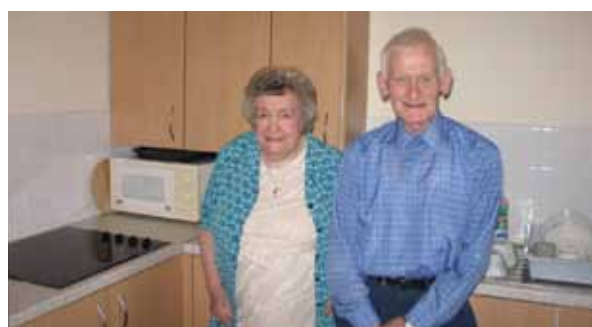
News in brief

- Faulty electrics from appliances, wiring and overloaded sockets can cause fires. Extension leads should display the British Kite Standard Mark or an EN number and carry the correct fusage.
- Tenants' Forum members visited Coggan Close, York recently. The office in Flat Six was open all day and residents held their quarterly Open Forum meeting, with members of the Property Services, Housing Services and Community Engagement teams attending.
- Tenants across England have been voicing their views about standards for Registered Social Landlords. The National Conversation was set up by the Tenants' Services Authority to help determine the future of social housing. A new body called the National Tenant Voice (NTV) is being established so tenants can influence national housing policy.
- Staff news: Jo Swan got married and is now called Jo Pringle. Lucy Charters has joined the Central Services Team as a Clerical Assistant. Rachel Trew is now working for the Development and Regeneration Team. Mark Nockels helped raise more than £4,000 in a Jet Pull for Heroes. Simon Aldred raised £750 for RNLI in the Great North Run.

Residents celebrate new kitchen

Walker residents Mr and Mrs Horton were thrilled with their new kitchen, which was installed over the summer.

Despite pressures on the budget, Riverside's North East office has managed to keep up the pace of stock improvement which means that we are on track to meet the Decent Homes Standard next year. Bob Coffey, Property Services Manager, said: "Since publishing the plans for improvements we have consistently delivered our promises."



Mr and Mrs Horton in their new kitchen

Repairs contract up for grabs

Riverside in the North East is currently working with Valueworks consultants to review the repairs contract.

We are legally required to test the market from time to time, to ensure that we are getting the best value for money, which includes an assessment of quality as well as price.

The value of the repairs contract is about £1 million a year and Valueworks has already helped other parts of Riverside on similar projects.

Valueworks provided the Tenants' Forum with an overview of the tendering process in October. It was agreed that representatives from the Forum would be involved in the contractor selection process – including interviewing the shortlisted organisations. Julie Riseborough, Head of Community Engagement, said: "This is a major project for the North East. We only need to tender



We are reviewing our repairs contract

the contract every five to 10 years so we are pleased to be supported by Valueworks who have an impressive track record."

The new contractor will be selected by the end of January and the new contract will run from 1 April 2010. Look out for details of the new contractor in the next edition of News & Views.

Handy hints

Keep you and your family safe this Christmas.

Keep toys, games and decorations with small parts out of reach of young children – remember they can choke on small things, including batteries.

Make sure gifts are suitable for your child's age and only buy toys from reputable shops.

Keep candles away from the rest of your decorations and never hang them from lights and heaters.

Don't forget your safety routines in all the excitement – check your smoke alarms are still working.

Brainteaser

Winter is coming so before we say goodbye to the garden, here's a wordsearch for you to try.

Hidden within the grid are 10 words, but can you find them all? The words are:

G	A	R	D	E	N	I	N	G	W	S	C
N	O	L	T	R	S	H	T	R	J	H	B
I	Q	U	N	T	D	F	L	O	W	E	R
R	G	T	D	A	S	Y	P	W	R	E	J
E	L	P	B	M	H	D	S	Y	A	P	K
T	W	B	E	S	E	A	M	O	O	L	B
A	U	O	S	T	D	R	G	U	X	R	M
W	I	R	F	N	H	E	F	R	C	I	O
A	S	D	L	A	V	G	E	O	N	P	H
C	F	E	O	L	K	I	R	W	R	K	L
I	P	R	I	P	G	J	C	N	O	L	F
R	Y	S	E	L	B	A	T	E	G	E	V

Gardening
Plants
Watering
Flower
Vegetables
Grow your own
Bloom
Weeds
Shed
Borders

For your chance to win £25 in high street vouchers send your completed grid to Julie Riseborough at Riverside, 6 Staithes, The Watermark, Gateshead, NE11 9SN by Monday 11 January.