

Sanford's award

Congratulations to Sanford Housing Co-operative, in New Cross, south London, on an amazing achievement. In five years they have gone from knowing virtually nothing about sustainability to winning the *Inside Housing* award for the most sustainable social housing refurbishment project in 2008.

'The project started out as planned maintenance,' says Jim Noble, the co-op's chair. 'We needed new boilers, some roof work and kitchen renewal. We decided to look into alternatives to fossil fuel and solar technology. What we settled on was solar thermal hot water and a sort of mini "district heating", with one large wood pellet boiler shared between each pair of our 14 houses. Insulation and ventilation were addressed in the most energy-efficient way feasible, and our kitchens included recycled and sustainable materials.'

And it really took off from there. *'The co-op has had a lot of help and advice from people who knew a great deal, particularly CDS, which provides us with management services, but all the decisions were made by members of the co-op,' Jim continues. 'The*



Sanford's chair, Jim Noble, left, and vice chair, Alastair Cormick, with the co-op's sustainability trophy.

project is about more than just energy sustainability, it is also about social sustainability. We have not just made buildings more environmentally friendly but as a co-op we have strengthened our community, brought skills into our community and secured Sanford for the future. We even had some fun along the way.'

Sanford has set an example that should be copied by other co-ops for the sake of the environment, their properties and their communities. For further information, please look at www.sanford.coop or phone 020 8692 7316.

Inside this issue

Season's Greetings	2
Claim What's Yours	2
Commission on Co-ops	3
Our New Website	3
Canterbury Tales	4
Community Spirit	4
Lawrence's Garden Tips	5
Goodbye, Housing Corporation	5
CDS People	6
Changes to the Board	7
Service Check	8

Season's greetings to you all



The board of management and staff at CDS Co-operatives would like to wish you a peaceful and happy festive season.

Our offices will close at 5.30pm on Tuesday, 23 December 2008, and re-open at 9am on Friday, 2 January 2009. But we will be operating an emergency maintenance service during this time.

Emergency repairs

If you normally report your repairs to a local maintenance officer on your estate, then your co-op will inform you separately about any special arrangements for the holiday period.

If you normally report any repairs to the CDS Help Desk, then you can phone 020 7397 5707 and our out-of-hours team will help you.

Please remember that they will be dealing only with emergency repairs. Other repairs will have to wait until the offices re-open on 2nd January 2009.

Make it a good time for everyone

With the party season, we hope that everyone enjoys themselves and has a good time. However, consideration for your neighbours is still important.

Be considerate when you park, and make sure your visitors know about the agreed parking arrangements on your estate.

If you have a party, don't let noise levels get too loud and quieten things down as it gets late. Make sure your guests leave quietly when the party winds down.

If you are disturbed by excessive noise during the holiday period, you can report the matter to your local authority noise team, who will investigate and have powers to take action in certain cases.



Claim what's yours

As Britain falls into recession, people may be worried about how they will pay their bills, especially if they lose their job. But if the worst comes to pass, there are things you can do.

Everyone in employment pays National Insurance contributions. These entitle you to claim certain benefits, including Job Seekers Allowance, if you lose your job. These benefits are not 'charity', they are a legal right, based upon the contributions you have paid while working. You should not be embarrassed to claim them.

Many benefits cannot be backdated, so do make a claim immediately – even if you think you will find another job soon. Making your claim promptly will help you avoid getting into debt – and, if you are able to claim Housing Benefit, it should prevent you from falling behind with your rent.

If you need advice on what benefits you are entitled to, or want help making your claim, try the Citizens Advice Bureau or another local advice agency. Your arrears control officer at CDS Co-operatives will be able to point you in the right direction. **Claim what's yours – you've earned it.**

STATUS – your views on our services

A big thank you to all tenant-members who took part in the recent STATUS satisfaction survey. Your views will help us improve our services. We will publish the results of the survey in the next newsletter.

Commission on co-ops

A new, independent Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing has been set up to explore the benefits of living in and running a housing co-op.

The commission's aim is to gather evidence about housing co-ops and to recommend ways to encourage their development. The commissioners include independent experts drawn from the world of housing, academia and the international co-operative housing sector.

David Rodgers, CDS Co-operatives' executive director, is one of the commissioners. *'This is an exciting time for housing co-operatives in the UK,'* he says. *'It is our chance to provide the evidence*

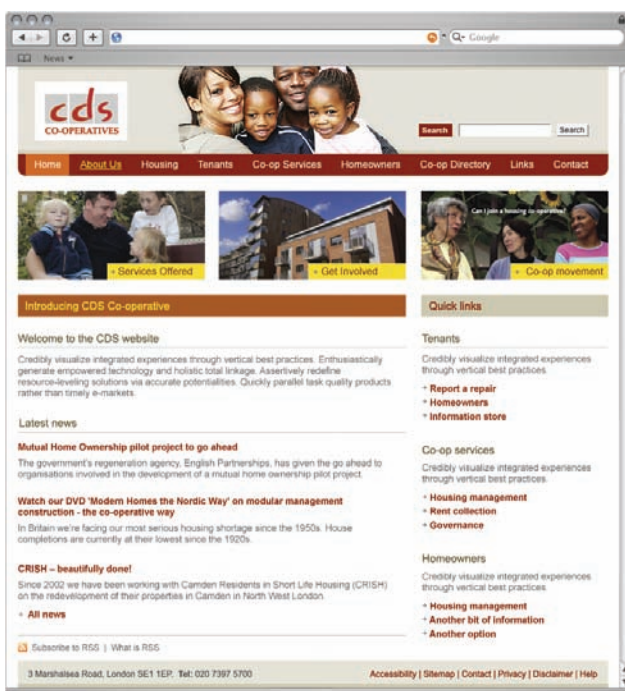
that housing co-operatives can help improve our communities, create sustainable communities and encourage citizens to be more active locally. It will help drive our sector forward in the future.'

The commission plans to hold hearings around the country to gather evidence about housing co-ops. If you or your co-op would like to submit evidence to the commission, or make a donation to its work, contact the commission secretary, Kevin Gulliver, either via the website (www.ccmh.coop) or by emailing him at kevin.gulliver@ccmh.coop. You can also write to him at 17 Kestrel Road, Russells Hall, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 2JU, or call 01384 230849.

Our new website

We have been upgrading our website (www.cds.coop), which should be up and running by the time you read this newsletter.

The new website is a lot easier to use and has more facilities. We will be adding new material and updates all the time, so do keep checking it.



We've made it easy to tell us if there is more information you would like to see there – just use the feedback form on the 'Tenants' page.

Report repairs on-line

In line with our commitment to improving services, our new website (see left) allows you to log **routine** repair requests online. (This applies only to schemes where CDS carries out your maintenance.)

If you have internet access and an email address, you can send your request at any time. Go to the tenant services section on www.cds.coop and enter your postcode under 'Services'. You can also click on the quick link on the right-hand side under 'Tenants'. Please give us as much information as you can, and do include a telephone number, in case we need to contact you. Our Help Desk will email back to confirm that your repair has been logged.

Note: This is for routine/normal repairs only. For emergencies please contact the helpdesk as usual on 03333 213 030 or our out-of-hours maintenance service on 020 7397 5707.

Canterbury tales

Once a year the Housing Services Sub-committee (HSSC) tries to get out of the office and visit some co-ops, to see the properties, meet the tenants, and get some idea of how we can help residents.

This year, it was the turn of four independent co-ops in the Canterbury area of Kent. On Saturday, 4 October, a delegation including the chair (Maureen Stables) and vice-chair (Glyn Thomas) of the board of management, the housing services manager (Maria McCarron) and several members of the HSSC set off for Canterbury.

First stop was at Franklyn Housing Co-op, in the London Road area of Canterbury. Liz Wiffen, Franklyn's treasurer and lettings officer and Kevin Richards, co-op chair and maintenance officer, showed us around the estate, which looked

well maintained. The appearance of its 58 properties has recently been greatly improved by new doors and windows. There are about 70 children on the estate and lots of them (all well behaved of course!) were in evidence during our visit. Liz told us there aren't enough play areas for them, so the co-op's management committee is looking at possible options.

Next stop was Warwick Co-op, where we met the co-op's chair, Shane Floyd; the secretary, Lindsey Barrowcliffe; and maintenance officer, Jane Brunwin. The lunch we had there was much appreciated, as was the high standard of maintenance and the evident community spirit in the co-op – see 'Community Spirit' below. By the time we reached Pine Tree, the weather was too bad to do much more than a brief inspection. But its 25



HSSC members being shown around by Franklyn Housing Co-operative's secretary, Liz Wiffen (far right)

family-sized properties, just 10 minutes from the city centre, did look well maintained.

The final visit was to Golden Hill in the seaside town of Whitstable. This was another attractive and well planned estate, although, as lettings officer Tracey Stonham told us, some properties on the lower level at the entrance are prone to flooding. We also met the co-op's chair, Phil Luck, and its secretary, Maureen Holms.

Community spirit From fancy dress to Christmas fun – 'the possibilities are endless'

Those of us who visited Warwick Housing Co-operative, in Canterbury, in October were impressed by the use they make of their community hall. They call it their activity centre, with the motto 'The possibilities are endless'. So far, these include co-op meetings, art and crafts evenings, theme nights, discos, family and adult bingo, youth nights, game nights etc. And the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) uses the centre as a base.



Lindsay Barrowcliffe (L) showing Maria McCarron plans for a new play area for children

The centre is managed on a voluntary basis by a sub-

committee of the management committee, working closely with other local groups for community cohesion. Some of the members have done NVQ courses in childcare so they can help supervise events with children.

If your co-op has a community centre, you would do well to talk to Nigel, the Warwick centre co-ordinator, for ideas. Please contact him on warwickactivitycentre@hotmail.co.uk

Lawrence's Garden Tips

Winter is the perfect time to take stock of what you have in your garden, says Lawrence Zollner of Bonham and Strathleven Housing Co-operative.

Winter work

Deadhead winter-flowering pansies and violas to encourage more flowers.

It is not too late to plant bulbs such as alliums, late-flowering daffodils and tulips, and you can transplant seedlings of hardy plants like cyclamen once they have developed three or four leaves.

If newly planted shrubs and trees have become loosened by wind, firm them in by pressing down the soil.



Prepare for frost

Wrap tender plants in fleece or – my preference – see-through bubble-wrap.

Keep paths free of ice during freezing weather with a scattering of salt and grit – your co-op should be able to provide this. You can also tack chicken wire over decking or other slippery

surfaces to create more grip. And your pond won't freeze over if you float a rubber ball on the surface.

Plan ahead

Look at gaps or parts of the garden that need attention and think about the plants you would like to plant when the time comes. Then get out your gardening catalogues and order summer plants, bulbs and seeds in good time for the spring. Garden centres and suppliers run out of stock quite quickly, so the sooner you get your order in, the less likely you are to be disappointed.

Goodbye, Housing Corporation

At the beginning of December, the Housing Corporation, the government body in charge of the housing association sector, was replaced by two new organisations: the Homes and Communities Agency, and the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The Homes and Communities Agency

This agency has responsibility for house building and regeneration programmes, and is now the place to apply to for grants for major repairs.

The Tenant Services Authority

This is the new independent regulator for the social housing sector. It is dedicated to raising the standard of services by putting tenants first.

The TSA's aims are:

- To champion tenants' needs and aspirations, standing up for what tenants want and making sure they have the information they need.
- To promote choice for tenants and providers of affordable housing.
- To shape the direction of future housing, working to create more choice about the way housing is managed and the landlords who provide it.

This is the organisation responsible for ensuring that registered providers – the new name for all social landlords, including co-ops – are viable, well governed by their management committees and well managed by their staff.

CDS People

Eric Gyamfi Kissi

Eric is on our Housing Services Sub-committee and has been a member of St George's Church Housing Co-operative since it was established in Southwark, London, in June 1994.

Born in Nkawkaw, in Ghana, he grew up in a farming town called Asuboni-Rail, where his family had a four-bedroom detached house. It was a happy childhood in a friendly environment. His first contact with the co-op movement was as a child, when his father used to bring him to meetings of the local cocoa farmers co-op.



Eric trained as a cocoa clerk, then worked in his grandfather's shop, and later set up his own small-scale footwear and bag

manufacturing business in Accra, the capital city. He was married and has three grown-up sons, who still live in Ghana. He now works as a security officer for G4S Security.

Eric has been an active member of his co-op since he joined. He says that the idea of the co-op movement is a noble one, and would like more people to be involved in their co-ops to make improvements to their properties and improve their quality of life. He says that living in a co-op people 'love and care for each other, like a family'.

Marie Manchester



Marie is one of the customer service agents on the CDS Help Desk.

I started at CDS Co-operatives in 1992 as a receptionist, working part-time to fit around my family

life. As my children grew older I found myself doing more hours, in different roles in various departments e.g. finance, lettings and development, as well as my afternoon reception duties.

I was born and grew up in Greenwich, where I still live. When I was young we lived in a prefab. It was a community, very much like co-op living. After leaving school I worked for an insurance company, as a school classroom assistant – and at Mitzi Lorenz, the milliners who made those fancy hats you see at Ascot.

In 1995 I went to Sanford Housing Co-op to help out with the administration on a temporary basis. I am still there, working with Mark Langford, the co-op support officer.

In 2004 I became a customer service agent on the Help Desk. I enjoy the work and the contact I have with tenants – even though some of them want everything yesterday! I have recently also started working at Deptford Housing Co-operative. But I still manage to spend quality time with my six grandchildren.'

Changes to the board

Following the annual general meeting in September there have been a number of changes to the CDS Co-operatives's Board of Management. The treasurer, **Ajit Mitra**, stood down due to ill-health. We would like to thank Ajit for all his hard work as a voluntary board member and wish him a speedy return to full health. Our new treasurer is **Munir Malik**. He is a chartered accountant with experience in both public and private sectors. He used to be an elected councillor in the London Borough of Bexley and has long been active in the wider co-operative movement, including the Co-operative Group.

We also have two new board members. **Milan Glendza** is a maths teacher and a tenant member of Brighton Buildings Housing Co-op in Southwark in London. In the 1990s he was a director of a workers co-operative housing committee in Belgrade, capital of the former Yugoslavia, with responsibility for housing maintenance and management for several housing estates in the city.

Steve Smith is a consultant landscape architect (semi-retired) and lives in Milton Keynes, where he was previously involved in two self-build housing groups. He is an area committee member of the Co-op Group taking an active role on the Cambridge Co-op Party Council.

New faces on the Help Desk



Vivien Sweeney-Collins has joined the Help Desk as the senior customer services agent. Viv comes with more than 20 years experience of the social housing sector, dealing with issues such as rent arrears advice and repairs both over the telephone and face to face. She has also spent 10 years managing customer services officers dealing with allocations, repairs, housing benefit advice, leasehold management and rent arrears advice etc. 'I am looking forward to the challenges in working with tenants and the various cooperatives,' she says.

James Lucius has also joined us as a part-time customer services agent.

If you have any stories of interest please let us know and we may be able to feature them. Please contact the editor of the newsletter Chisanga Passwell on 020 7397 5737 or email chisanga.passwell@cds.coop

Opening hours

Closed from 5.30pm, Tuesday 23 December until 9.00am on Friday 2nd January 2009

Emergencies

If you normally report any repairs to the CDS Help Desk then call **020 7397 5707 (emergencies only)** Otherwise check with your committee for local arrangements.

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!



Service check

By Maxine Ruddock, tenant auditor



Since the last newsletter, I have carried out a survey about our repair services. I spoke to more than 70 of you and the information you gave me about how our contractors are performing will help CDS provide a better service. The survey results will be published later and you will know how your responses to my questions helped.

One thing that I did spot was that people do not always ask the contractor for identification. Many of you told me you 'knew him anyway'. I know it may seem nit-picking to ask for their ID, but it is still good practice. How do you know the individual still works for the company? Just be careful.

The hardest part of the survey was finding I had incomplete or wrong telephone numbers for many of you. With people constantly changing phone numbers it is difficult to keep up, especially for mobile phones. Do let CDS Co-operatives know



of any changes in this vital information. Also let us know if you have a 'No incoming calls' facility set up on your telephone. And if you can supply an alternative emergency number, that would be really helpful.

New Help Desk Number

We have introduced a new number for contacting our Help Desk 03333 21 30 30. We have made this change as the cost of calling an "03" number is lower than the cost of calling 0845, particularly for people phoning from mobile phones.

The old 0845 number will continue to operate alongside this new number for the foreseeable future.

This document is available in other languages, large print, audio tape or Braille on request.

এই ডকুমেন্ট অনুরোধে বাংলায় পাওয়া যায়।

CDS Co-operatives, FREEPOST SW140,
LONDON SE1 1BP Telephone 03333 21 30 30

Don't be afraid to complain

If you are dissatisfied in any way with our services, you must let us know. Your complaints show us where we are falling down and what we need to do to rectify the problem.

Write to us at: 3 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1EP
Telephone 03333 21 30 30 Email enquiries@cds.coop

This newsletter and other documents can be made available in other languages or in large print or audio tape. Please phone the Help Desk for more information on 03333 21 30 30.