



## We're in the money

*Windmill Park wins £50,000  
Lottery funding*



### Plus...

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# Welcome

to the winter issue  
of *Housing Matters*



The New Year brings good news to all residents. Due to deflation, nearly half of our tenants will see a decrease in their rent in April 2010 and the remainder will have a modest rent increase (see page 3).

With the festive season just over, it's a good time to highlight the celebrations and successes we've recently enjoyed. Windmill Park won £50,000 Lottery funding (see opposite), former Origin residents have become CCHA residents (page 4) and residents of Mill Farm Close voted for their estate to be transferred to us (page 5).

With all this, and much more, there really are plenty of reasons to be cheerful! I wish you all a very happy 2010.

Best wishes,

**John Foxall**

*Managing director*

## Spot the difference winners

We had a good response to our autumn spot the difference competition. The prize draw for Argos vouchers was won by Ms H from West Ealing (£40), Miss K from Hounslow (£30) and Miss E from Northolt (£20), all of who will be contacted by post.

The competition gave residents a chance to tell us what they thought of our newsletters and we found out that you are interested in getting more information on our services for younger residents. That's why in this issue we tell you about how our Neighbourhood Award Scheme (page 7) and how it has helped young people.



**Catalyst  
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# Windmill Park wins £50,000



*Local residents gets their hands on the Lottery windfall*

Windmill Park was the successful winner of the People's Millions public vote in November. The result was announced live on the ITV news and received an ecstatic response from the local community. This means that we can now move forward in transforming the community centre on the estate by building a sparkly new media and arts room, which incorporates an IT suite and recording studio.

This will have a huge impact across the neighbourhood, opening up opportunities to learn everything from basic computer skills to how to design a website. More groups will also be able to use the centre, whether through attending a training course, developing business ideas or just to let off some steam.

The new facilities will also help the estate to combat problems of unemployment and anti-social behaviour by opening up new training opportunities to get people back into work and be a space for young people to spend their time.

# April rent changes

As a result of a drop in the rate of inflation, our tenants will either see a decrease in their rent, a rent freeze or a modest increase in April 2010.

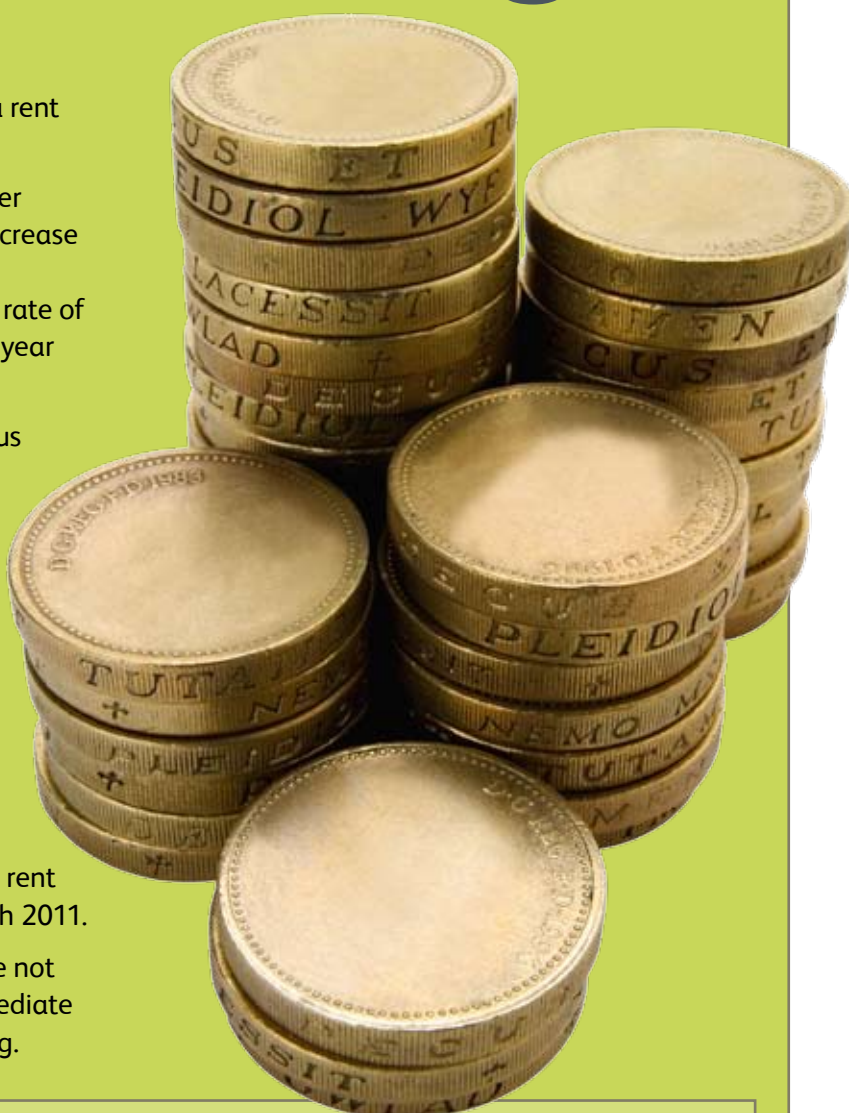
So why is that happening? In common with other housing associations, the level of annual rent increase that we are allowed to levy is determined by a government rent formula, which is linked to the rate of the Retail Price Index (RPI) in September in the year preceding the increase.

Due to deflation, last September's RPI was minus 1.4%. So, under the formula, tenants whose rents have already reached the 'target rent' will see their rent decrease whilst those whose rents are currently below the 'target rent' will experience a modest increase.

Whilst this is good news for tenants, it does mean that we will have less money to play with next year and this will impact on the amount of planned investment work we will be able to undertake.

You will receive a letter in February 2010 on the rent that you will be paying from April 2010 to March 2011.

Please note that some categories of tenants are not covered by these arrangements, such as intermediate rented, HALS, market rented and 20 year leasing.



Trying to explain rent increases is quite tricky because of the complexities involved. Below is an explanation of some basic terms, including those used in the article above.

- **Rent formula:** The government allows us to increase our rents up to the 'target rent'. This is subject to a formula based on the rate of RPI plus 0.5% plus £2 per week.
- **Target rent:** For each home the rent is fixed according to its size and location, and is calculated by reference to two factors – the capital value of properties in the area and the level of local earnings. Depending on when their tenancy started, tenants may be paying a rent lower than the 'target rent' but their rent will consequently be phased upwards until it reaches that level. The government has determined that target rents will increase by RPI plus 0.5% per year.
- **RPI:** The Retail Price Index is the measure of inflation used to determine housing association rents. This is calculated using the value of RPI in September of the previous year.
- **Assured tenancy:** Most of our tenants will have assured tenancies, which were introduced in January 1989. Here rents are set by the landlord according to the rent formula.
- **Secure tenancy:** Some tenants, usually those with tenancies dating from 20 years ago or more - have a secure tenancy. Their rents are set by the Rent Officer Service rather than the landlord.

## Welcoming former Origin residents

Just before Christmas, Catalyst completed the acquisition of several small estates in Feltham, Hounslow West and West Acton from the Origin Housing Group. We now have the great pleasure of welcoming 66 new tenants and 63 leaseholders.

Last year Origin decided to rationalise some of its housing stock by transferring properties outside of its normal areas of operation to other housing associations. We saw this as a chance to not only acquire homes where we already have housing but also as a valuable opportunity to provide a more local service to the residents.

Other housing associations are in the process of rationalising their housing stock and it is possible that we will take over other properties in due course. Growing our stock in this way not only allows us to help the existing residents but also provides opportunities for

existing tenants to move to one of the 'new' properties when they become vacant.



## A more efficient way to rent



Through Intermediate Rent (IR), residents are able to rent a brand new or refurbished home at less than the market rate. The rent charged is normally 20 per cent lower than what you would expect to pay for a similar home in a similar area if you were renting from a private landlord.

Homes are available on an assured short-hold tenancy, usually for an initial period of six months, which is reviewed regularly. Depending on the property, you may then be given the option to buy a share in the property on a New Build HomeBuy basis at a later date.

**If you know of anyone interested in IR or to find out more, please call us on 0845 601 7729 or visit [www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk](http://www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk)**

## Home sweet home

We can help you on to the property ladder through a range of affordable housing opportunities across West London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

### New Build HomeBuy

This is a part-buy/part-rent scheme that enables you to buy a share of a New Build property. You can normally purchase a share between 25 per cent and 75 per cent of the full market value and will then be charged a discounted rent on the share owned by us. The combined monthly cost of the rent and the mortgage will normally be substantially less than buying the property outright. After 12 months you will have the option of buying more shares, known as staircasing, in multiples of 10 per cent until you own the property outright.

### Resales

Resales are part-buy/part-rent homes that become available when existing 'shared owners' wish to sell their percentage in the property. The share you can buy and the rent payable will differ from one property to another as a result of differences in the percentage share purchased and any staircasing activity that has occurred.

**For more information on these schemes or any of the other schemes available, please call us on 0845 601 7729 or visit our website at [www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk](http://www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk)**

# Regenerating your neighbourhoods



*How the Dee Park estate, Reading, will look after the regeneration has finished*

Regeneration is an integral part of our business and at the core of our growth. However, we are not just here to build homes – we are committed to regenerating areas, and creating better homes and neighbourhoods that are a pleasure to live in. Mill Farm Close in Harrow, Dee Park in Reading and South Acton are just a few of the neighbourhoods that we are in the process of regenerating.

## Mill Farm Close

Residents of the Mill Farm Close estate voted for us to become their landlord during a ballot in October, where they endorsed our plans for the regeneration of the estate. A planning application was then submitted to Harrow Council. Assuming all goes well, the estate will transfer to us in late spring with construction commencing shortly afterwards.

The proposals to regenerate Mill Farm Close involve building 165 brand new homes for rent, shared ownership and outright sale. Through the regeneration we will be able to offer residents high quality accommodation and improved green spaces, as well as providing a range of community development initiatives, including modern apprenticeship schemes through our employment and training team.

## Dee Park

The outline planning application for the whole of Dee Park and the planning application for phase 1 of the scheme was approved in December 2009 by Reading Borough Council's Planning Applications Committee. Now that planning permission has been granted, we can move forward in starting work on site in spring 2010.

The regeneration of Dee Park will involve revamping the 1960s built Tilehurst estate by making it a more attractive place to live through improving housing, roads, parks and shops. We will also be building a new community centre and school. This regeneration project will eventually produce 482 homes for sale and 281 affordable homes.

## South Acton

Residents have already started moving into their new homes on the South Acton estate. Whilst we were building the homes, residents were consulted on various things such as the materials used and colours for their new homes.

Once complete, the current phase of the regeneration will provide a total of 129 new homes for the local community, with 74 homes being available for rent and 55 available through New Build HomeBuy. Beyond the physical regeneration, we and Ealing Council are working hard to facilitate community regeneration through a variety of initiatives including access to employment, training and personal development support as well as the sponsorship of a local youth football team.

# Get Learning!



If you're looking to learn new skills, why not sign up for one of our free training programmes through the Get Learning initiative. Our short, informative courses aim to develop your confidence and skills – both personally and professionally – helping you into volunteering or work.

*Abdou gets some hands-on experience at Catalyst's Reading Office*

The Get Learning programme has helped numerous Catalyst residents and one of them is Abdou Jallow.

Abdou, from Reading, was first introduced to Catalyst when he applied for a shared ownership flat in 2007. As a resident he received a leaflet stating that Catalyst was organising courses for residents, including a Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) level 2 in housing certificate.

He then expressed an interest in this course and was invited for an induction, where he took a test. Two days later Abdou received a call from us telling him that he had been granted a place on the course.

Consequently, it took Abdou couple of months to complete the CIH level 2 in housing but during this time he got a work placement at Catalyst's Reading office. During the placement, Abdou has been able to expand his knowledge of housing and through the skills he has learnt has been able to give back to his local community.

Abdou said: 'I have been working in different departments at Catalyst and one of these was community involvement. I learnt how to form a resident association and I have now gone on to form one in the block in which I live. My fellow residents have also nominated me as their block representative.'

In addition, doing a CIH level 2 in housing has also helped Abdou's career development. 'The CIH course has helped me pave a career in housing and I am currently doing a degree in housing studies at London South Bank University.'

As well as helping his career, through the work placement at Catalyst, Abdou has been able to increase his confidence and self esteem. 'I can't believe now Catalyst has changed my life', says Abdou.

**If you are interested in finding out more about the training opportunities available through the Get Learning programme, please contact our training and employment team on 020 8832 3366.**

## CCHA Reading hits the airwaves

Reading residents were able to tune into their very own local radio station in November as Reading4U went on air for the second year running.

Reading Community Radio chairman Eddie Winship, presented a fantastic mix of live and pre-recorded interviews as well as music performances. Many local residents were involved in producing programmes, and interviewing and profiling local community groups.

The station was supported by Catalyst, Home Group, L&Q and James Butcher housing associations.



*Eddie Winship (centre) presents radio show with the help of local residents and community organisations*

## Reading residents watch out for...

- **The Amersham Road Action Planning.** This will be hitting your letterboxes in early 2010 and sets out a list of planned improvements to the local area.
- **New FREE training courses.** We will be running courses in *health and safety at community events* and *first aid* in Reading. More details, contact Holly Roseneck on 0118 960 4519 or [holly.roseneck@chg.org.uk](mailto:holly.roseneck@chg.org.uk)

## Online review panel

Catalyst is looking for residents to join the Residents' Involvement Panel to review documents online, such as policies, procedures and action plans. These documents determine how we provide services to you, so – when examining them – you will be able to tell us what you think and how they can be improved. You will also have the chance to edit them.

If you would like to join this panel, please contact Michael Simms, resident involvement manager, on 020 8832 3111 or [michael.simms@chg.org.uk](mailto:michael.simms@chg.org.uk)

# Happy, healthy neighbourhoods



*Young resident captures his perception of life in his neighbourhood during the Bridge Youth Photo Project*

Our Healthy Neighbourhood Award Scheme has helped many residents achieve a sense of wellbeing, attain a healthier lifestyle and take pride in their neighbourhoods. We have funded numerous community projects through it including exercise classes for older people, food growing projects and wellbeing classes.

This scheme has also helped our young residents see the benefits of adopting a healthier lifestyle and attitude. The Bridge Youth Photo Project gave young people the opportunity to develop professional photography skills and they were able to represent their vision and perception of life. A project at Westcott Park encouraged young people from two estates to engage with one another in a bid to promote community cohesion.

For more information, contact Wendy Sweeney at [wendy.sweeney@chg.org.uk](mailto:wendy.sweeney@chg.org.uk)

## Get swapping with HomeSwapper

If you are looking for another tenant to swap home with, then why not join HomeSwapper. The scheme is free to use and registration is easy. Simply go on to the website, [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk), and fill in your details.

Once your account has been activated, you will be able to browse the details of other 'home swappers' and get in touch with them if you are interested in their property. Both tenants who want to swap must have permission from their landlord.

If you need any part of this information in large print, Braille, on CD or explained in your own language please contact us the numbers below.

Ky dokument ju jep informacione në lidhje me të rejtat për strehim, ngjarjet dhe informacionet locale, nëse ju duhet ndonjë pjesë e këtyj informacioni në Braille, në CD, në kasetë ose të shpjegohet në gjuhën tuaj, ju lutemi kontaktoni në numrin poshtë.

## How to contact us

### London

**Ealing Gateway**  
26-30 Uxbridge Road  
London W5 2AU

Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm.  
Translation services are available if you visit in person or call.

**Telephone:** 020 8832 3298  
**Gas heating & hot water:** Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290562  
**Emergency repairs:** Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290561

### Oxford

**The Farmhouse**  
Nightingale Avenue  
Blackbird Leys  
Oxford OX4 7BU

9am-5pm from Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays and the first Wednesday in every month when the office is closed for training. Translation services are available if you visit in person or call.

**Telephone:** 01865 712244  
**Gas heating & hot water:** Call Robert Heath Heating Ltd 0800 783 0833  
**Emergency repairs:** Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290563

### Reading, Slough, Wycombe

**Enterprise House**  
95 London Street  
Reading RG1 4QA

9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Translation services are available if you visit in person or call.

**Telephone:** 0118 951 2900  
**Gas heating & hot water:** Call Robert Heath Heating Ltd 0800 783 0833  
**Emergency repairs:** Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290563

### Website

You can contact us on the web by visiting [www.chg.org.uk/catalystcommunities](http://www.chg.org.uk/catalystcommunities)

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Niniejszy dokument zawiera nowości z rynku mieszkaniowego, informacje o wydarzeniach społecznych oraz doniesienia miejscowe. Jeżeli potrzebujesz aby całość lub część tego tekstu były przedstawione większą czcionką, w języku Braille'a, na nośniku CD, na kasecie audio lub zostały przetłumaczone na Twój język ojczysty, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem podanym niżej.

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਖ਼ਬਰਾਂ, ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਸੂਚਨਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਬ੍ਰੇਲ, ਸੀਡੀ, ਅੌਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਜਾਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਮਝਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

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