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# Investment Bonanza



We're improving more homes than ever! We told you in our April newsletter about the many contracts started this year. Now over 3,000 homes have work underway - and that's just since the New Year!

All our investment should be to the same quality, but that doesn't stop us from continually seeking improvements. This can mean that tenants who have waited a little longer than others reap the benefit - by improvements we introduce in the way we do work, and the speed which we can do it. We appointed Richardson Projects of Rochdale to carry out all our planned rewiring, and kitchen refits over the next year for our homes in Ashton, Droylsden, Mossley and Stalybridge. Our own Building Company was appointed to concentrate on kitchens for New Charter Housing (South), and all our bathrooms work. Using two excellent local contractors for the works they are best at should help us keep the speed and quality of investment work.

Although we still have a huge amount of work to do, tenants are already telling us how much they value the investment in their homes. We featured some of those tenants in our video commercial which some of you will have seen showing in Hyde's Clarendon Mall shopping centre in June. This commercial will shortly be screened at

our shops. Mrs Lorraine Chadwick of Dukinfield was one of the tenants featured. "I was really pleased with my new kitchen installed by New Charter, and was very happy to offer New Charter the opportunity to film my home. Mind you, I did think they might have paid me!" she joked.

Our Building Company installed new bathrooms at Pendle Road in Denton this year. Happy customer Mrs Violet Goddard was full of praise for the tidiness of workers as well as the finished product. She also allowed us to film, and recalls the film-makers were as speedy as the plumbers. "I was a bit apprehensive as replacing the whole bathroom seemed such a big task" she said, "but the lads were really good and they finished so quickly".

We sent all tenants New Charter's investment plan as a newsletter in April 2003. All new tenants who join us receive a copy of the special newsletter. We are on course to deliver our 10-year investment pledge made during the Big Switch.



## NO TO NUISANCE

Most of our tenants make our work a pleasure. But sadly there are a minority of tenants who behave without any thought for their neighbours or their responsibilities to us.

You may have seen in the local papers that we are now taking action ourselves direct against nuisance neighbours. We are pleased to report the local courts have considered carefully the evidence we, and tenants affected by bad behaviour have placed in front of them. They have supported us and issued banning orders.

And it doesn't stop there. We are also reporting successes taking action against people who are not even New Charter tenants, but whose activities are causing alarm and distress to our tenants.

Our tenancy compliance team has had a run of successes against the thoughtless minority, and banning orders of differing severity have been placed on individuals.

We have also obtained injunctions against tenants who don't control the behaviour of their visitors - one of your responsibilities under the Tenancy Agreement. As an example, we recently obtained an injunction requiring a tenant to control the behaviour of a former partner who was harassing her neighbours. The harassment culminated in an assault for which criminal charges have been brought.

We understand the vast majority of our customers want to live in peace and quiet. Those who are affected by nuisance neighbours do look to us to take action against them. While we will always start from a position of trying to mediate and resolve disagreements, we will not hesitate to use the full range of powers now given to us by the Government to take severe action against persistent offenders. We know from our customer surveys it's what you want from us as a landlord.

If you are experiencing nuisance neighbours, let us see if we can help. Contact us on freephone 0800 371830.

**THANKS TO YOU**

The Inspectors from the Audit Commission wanted us to pass on a big thank you to all tenants who got involved in our inspection in May this year. They couldn't have done it without you! The Inspectors hope to have their report ready for our Boards in September or October. We will feature it in a future newsletter.

## Open to all tenants

Why not come along to a Board meeting at New Charter? They usually last around 2 hours and are held at Newton Hall in Hyde. You aren't able to speak, but you can watch how the Board operates, and you will have a set of papers to follow the proceedings.

Take a look at the following dates and if you can attend, or would like more information, please contact Bill Wilkinson on 0161 331 2000.

### New Charter Housing (North) Limited

Thursday 4th September 6.00 p.m.  
Monday 20th October 6.00 p.m.

### New Charter Housing (South) Limited

Thursday 4th September 6.00 p.m.  
Wednesday 15th October 6.00 p.m.

### New Charter Housing Trust Limited

Thursday 4th September 6.00 p.m.  
Tuesday 14th October 6.00 p.m.

## Saturday seminar success

We held our latest seminar for tenants and residents on Saturday 26th July at Portland Basin in Ashton-under-Lyne. We gave information about the latest Government proposals about tackling anti-social behaviour including the Law commission consultation paper on creating a single tenancy for housing, and the proposals to reduce housing benefit.

We sought the views of those present and will add these to our own to respond to the consultation papers.

As always, the topic of anti-social behaviour kept everyone's attention. Chief Inspector Bleakley of Greater Manchester Police was a welcome addition to our panel of presenters. Many thanks to those involved in making the seminar a success.

## New homes for tenants...

It's not often you can see your new home built from scratch, but some of our tenants in Ashton-under-Lyne are doing just that.



Mrs Maureen Consiglio is among several tenants whose existing homes on Wellington Road face demolition to make way for the Metrolink tram station in Ashton town centre. New Charter is providing 21 new flats for rent on the former car park on Crickets Lane. It's just a short walk up Penny Meadow to the new homes. Those moving are keen to watch the builders progress their chosen flats.

## ...and one for us

There are less than six months to go before we move into our new offices in Ashton. Now we have completed our advice shops, we can concentrate on the headquarters on Cavendish Street. The building has started to dominate the skyline at the entrance to Ashton Moss. The builders are on course to handover the offices to us in January 2004.

## It's all about money

A new tenant group has been created to look at issues within the Revenues Stream. The first meeting took place in June.

Tenants have volunteered their time to look at the way New Charter deals with debt, payment facilities on offer, service charges and the major issue of rent reforms.

We hope the group will be active in improving services and helping us to communicate the complex rent reform requirements to all tenants.

This is the first time we have actively involved customers in our Revenues work and we see this as a valuable addition to our tenant participation.



## BROOM, BROOM - We're off!

It's not quite a new broom sweeping clean, but residents of Brushes Estate in Stalybridge have taken over!

We signed an historic agreement on 9th June with the Brushes Estate Management Organisation. The agreement legally transfers managing most parts of the estate services to the residents themselves.

The agreement is a culmination of several years of hard work. Residents served a "Right to Manage" Notice on the former landlord, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. On transfer of the housing assets, New Charter agreed to honour the arrangement. A ballot of all tenants on the estates took place in March 2001 where the majority of residents voted in favour of the estate being managed by the residents' company.

Like New Charter, the Brushes Estate Management Organisation is a not for profit company. We will continue to provide services including repairs, but Brushes will manage the estate budget and monitor the performance of the services.

One of the residents, June Humphreys of Tudor Avenue, was especially pleased as she founded the residents association almost twenty years ago. "At that time," she recalled, "You would have been laughed at for suggesting tenants could take control. But I have never doubted that people who live in the area can make the best decisions for that area. Now we have the best possible start to showing what we can do."

Residents, staff and Board Members of New Charter and guests from across the country were there to witness signing the Agreement. It is the first in the country to be based on a bespoke agreement. Previous agreements have been based on the Government's Modular Management Agreement.

Ian Munro, our Group Chief Executive commented "The signing is a milestone for us and Brushes residents. It has taken longer than either of us thought, principally because the usual modular agreements suited neither the residents nor ourselves. We've had to draw up a special Agreement that fitted both our needs. I am delighted yet another innovation in tenant involvement has been chalked up by New Charter".



## LAST CHANCE TO ENTER

Here's your final reminder to enter our Gardening Competition 2003. We are offering cash prizes of over £200 and it is so easy to enter. Simply send us a photograph of your garden taken this spring or summer, and with your name and address clearly marked on the back. We'd like your entries by Friday 15th August 2003. Send your photographic entries to Garden Competition, New Charter Housing Trust Group, P O Box 235, Hyde SK14 4YH.

Pictured above are a couple of entries we have already received.

# Tackling fuel poverty



New Charter has teamed up with British Gas to provide a helping hand to tackle fuel poverty for our tenants. Around 1,000 tenants should benefit from the scheme, and almost £200,000 worth of improvements done in this year alone.

The scheme is called 'here to HELP' and installs cavity and loft insulation to all homes that need it. Tenants receive a package of benefits to cut bills and increase their income.

New Charter has negotiated the deal with British Gas so in this first year, British Gas pays for everything - not a penny of tenants' rent goes into the scheme. If 'here to HELP' is successful, we will expand it in future years, and contribute 50% to the cost of the works.

## Why are we doing this?

- The scheme is free to all tenants. Unlike previous schemes, it is not means-tested.
- You do not have to be a British Gas customer.
- It attracts extra money to spend on tenants' homes.
- Works cause very little disruption, but can quickly lower fuel bills and prevent mould or condensation build up.

## What could you get?

- Energy efficiency products and advice, such as cavity wall and loft insulation to help keep your home warmer and save money on energy bills
- Increased income through benefits assessments and discounts on fuel bills.
- Home appliances, such as fridges and adaptors.
- Safety and security through installation of devices such as spyholes and monitoring systems for older people
- Free tailored advice and services from HELP charity partners for families, single parents, older and disabled people, those with sight difficulties and people with debt problems.

The scheme works best with a high take up. We need as many tenants as possible to know about the scheme. Taking part is obviously the choice of the tenant.

We launch the scheme this month by starting in Droylsden, and tenants will get letters direct about it. We have to leave out the Fairfield estate, because we have major works proposed there. When these happen, the part rebuilding means we will include insulation then.

The cash this year should allow us to then move to Mossley and to Dukinfield. How far we get depends on take up. Next year, we plan to include other towns in the scheme.

# Performance update

We record and report on our performance to our Boards and to the Tameside Tenants' & Residents' Federation. Our latest performance statistics are from the end of June 2003, the latest available as we went to press.

	North	South
<b>Rents - Collection rate</b>		
Our Target	99.0%	99.0%
Our Performance	99.1%	99.7%
<b>Relets - Average no. of days taken to let homes</b>		
Our Target	28 days	28 days
Our Performance	71 days	70 days
<b>Relets - Homes let to new tenants, monthly</b>		
Our Target	50 homes	45 homes
Our Performance	98 homes	63 homes
<b>Repairs - Emergencies - within 4 hour response</b>		
Our Target	95%	95%
Our Performance	100%	100%
<b>Repairs - Urgent - within 7 day response</b>		
Our Target	90%	90%
Our Performance	100%	100%
<b>Repairs - Routine - within 28 day response</b>		
Our Target	90%	90%
Our Performance	98.3%	94.3%

We are proud of much of our performance, and we know from your opinions gathered in surveys and from our enquiries system (see elsewhere on this page) that many of you recognise the improvements we have made so far.

## KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US BY E-MAIL

Are you interested in receiving news from New Charter by e-mail? We are proposing setting up an e-mail newsletter for tenants. We are inviting registration in this and the next edition of our newsletter. Simply send an e-mail with the word subscribe in the subject box to newsletter@newcharter.co.uk. Our first electronic edition is likely to be in November 2003.

# Listening to you!

Over the last year, we logged nearly 2,000 official contacts. These contacts comprised complaints, enquiries, and requests for services.

Around 30% of those contacts were complaints.

- 61% of those complaints came from tenants.
- 15% of them through Local Councillors.
- 14% from members of the public.
- 10% came from MP's, District Assemblies and Environmental Health.

Repairs are the main category of complaint currently. Maybe that isn't surprising as we do around 50,000 repairs a year. We've discussed the issues highlighted with tenants and the Tenants' & Residents' Federation through the Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Group. We are working on improving the whole of the repairs process - something this year's customer satisfaction survey brought to our attention.

Grass cutting, hedge trimming and shrub pruning are also issues that appear on our complaints. We have responded to improve information and create the right expectations. If you have a query about grounds maintenance, all our staff with computers can access the Grounds Maintenance calendar that Serviceteam follow.

We're committed to use what we learn from your complaints to improve services in future. If you do have a complaint - or a compliment - pick up a leaflet from our shops.



# Dear Editor

**Q.** There's some hedges near me that are starting to look straggly and will soon overhang the footpath. When do they get cut?  
*Mr MF, Denton*

**A.** We'll first check they are New Charter's responsibility to maintain. Assuming they are, all our staff with computers can check the programme of seasonal work such as hedge trimming for you. Our present contract with Serviceteam allows for two trims a season. Most are scheduled for May and August/September. Please let us know if they are not done by the end of those months.

**Q.** My question is simple - what does New Charter regard as an emergency?  
*Ms BS, Ashton*

**A.** We deal with emergencies 24 hours a day. Between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. you can telephone our Repairs Centre on 0161 331 2424. Outside these times Tameside Council currently provide our out of hours telephone answering service on 0161 342 2222. We consider an emergency repair to be "any repair(s) necessary to prevent serious damage, danger to health, risk to safety, and risk of loss or damage to the property or adjoining property, the tenant or their family and users of the property or members of the public". We will respond within 4 hours to make the situation safe, and do the repair if it is possible to complete there and then.

# Spring Clean 2003 HAVE YOUR SAY

New Charter is committed to keeping our estates clean, safe, and tidy. Every April and May we run Spring Clean, a scheme to remove bulky unwanted items. It is free to tenants. This year we shifted over 110 tons of rubbish off our estates! Next year we will run Spring Clean 2004, but how do we make it better? We need your ideas and views.

Please take a few minutes to complete and return this questionnaire in the reply paid envelope. Your views will help us improve Spring Clean and make your estate a better place to live.

**As a 'thank you', your reply will enter a prize draw. You could help improve your estate and win yourself some High Street vouchers!**  
**1st prize £50 worth    2nd prize £25 worth    3rd prize £10 worth**

- Please ✓
- Did you know about Spring Clean 2003? YES  NO
  - What did you use Spring Clean 2003 for?  
 Garden waste or clippings       White goods   
 Bicycles/old toys       (eg cookers, washers)  
 Furniture       Garden equipment   
 Wood       Bagged building rubbish   
 Other (please state)   
 I did not use Spring Clean  (please go to 6)
  - Were the places we collected from handy for you? YES  NO   
 (If you said "NO", where would you want us to pick up from?)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Do you think the Spring Clean service was:  
 Very Good  Fairly Good  Average  Fairly Poor  Very Poor
  - Were our staff helpful? YES  NO
  - Do you think Spring Clean 2003 made a difference to your street or block of flats? YES  NO
  - Do you think there was enough publicity about Spring Clean 2003? YES  NO
  - How do you think we could make Spring Clean better next year?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to take part in the draw:  
 Your Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Thanks again for taking part. Your views matter. Return to  
 New Charter Housing Trust Group, P O Box 235, Hyde SK14 4YF  
 by September 8th.

# How does your garden grow?

Here's our seasonal gardening tips provided by Matt Ling, the Contract Manager for Serviceteam Landscapes Division. Serviceteam provide our grounds maintenance service all year round.

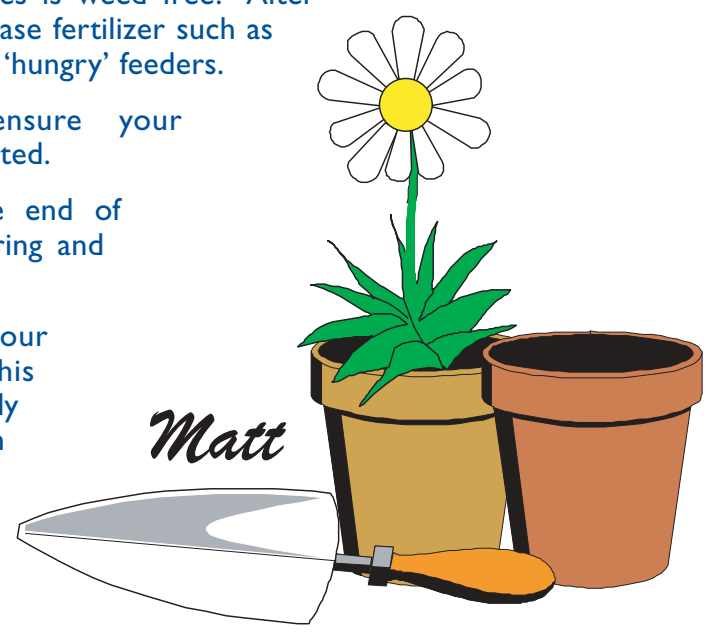
As I write this I hope we are all enjoying the summer sunshine (!) so it's time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

The summer to me is just about pottering in your garden, dead-heading, watering, weeding, tying back and putting the polish on to all that winter and spring preparation and planning.

But don't forget to always be thinking ahead. You could be thinking about ordering or buying spring bulbs for planting in the autumn; or sowing the seeds of our spring bedding plants. I recommend that this task is carried out while sitting in your garden on a warm summer evening, with a long cool drink in your hand!

Here's a few more quick tips to keep us all busy in our gardens:

- In dry periods, raise the height of cut on lawnmowers to keep lawns looking at their best.
- If you haven't already done so, prune spring flowering shrubs e.g. Forsythia, Ribes. Cut back all of this year's flowered stems by two thirds. This will encourage new growth in this season, which bears the flowers for next spring.
- Tie in all new growths on plants such as climbing roses, clematis, and sweet peas.
- Water hanging baskets daily (twice daily in really hot weather!), feed weekly and dead-head regularly.
- Dead-head summer bedding to keep plants flowering longer.
- Clip hedges often to keep them looking really neat. Ensure the base of hedges is weed free. After clipping, apply a general base fertilizer such as Growmore as hedges are 'hungry' feeders.
- If you have one, ensure your greenhouse is well ventilated.
- Dead-head roses at the end of their first flush of flowering and apply a special rose feed.
- Hoe the weeds in your borders and beds. This should be done regularly and is best carried out on a dry sunny day. The small weed seedlings are then left on the soil surface to dry up.



# HOW TO CONTACT US

**Main Switchboard** 0161 331 2000  
**Reporting Repairs** 0161 331 2424  
 We are open for your calls from 8 am until 6 pm  
**Lettings General Enquiries** 0161 331 2345  
**Out of hours emergency** 0161 342 2222  
**New Charter Housing (North) Limited**  
 If you live in Ashton, Droylsden, Mossley or Stalybridge  
**General Enquiries** 0161 331 2400  
**New Charter Housing (South) Limited**  
 If you live in Denton, Audenshaw, Hyde, Longdendale or Dukinfield  
**General Enquiries** 0161 331 2500  
 Our normal working hours are 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Wednesday,  
 8.30am to 4.30pm Thursday, and 8.30am to 4pm Friday.  
 Please note our shops open at 9am Monday to Friday.  
 2 Henrietta Street, Ashton-under-Lyne; 9 Albert Street, Denton;  
 12 Clarendon Street, Hyde; 63 Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge.

# ALL CHANGE AT GIBSON



Living conditions for homeless families are set to be dramatically improved, thanks to a massive cash injection.  
 New Charter runs the homelessness service for Tameside Council, and we own the Homeless

Persons Reception Centre at Gibson Terrace in Ashton-under-Lyne. We have been successful in attracting a massive amount of cash from the Housing Corporation and via the Council to redesign and upgrade the accommodation.

Ian Schofield of New Charter's Supported Housing Team said "This is fantastic news for all those families who are unfortunate enough to find themselves homeless in this area. New Charter has successfully lobbied to get the cash needed to do a major upgrade, and particular thanks are due to the Housing Corporation".

The refurbishment isn't straightforward. Gibson Terrace is a listed building, and the work of finding alternative temporary accommodation, while the building work is in progress, has already started. We hope to be on site in November 2003.

این خبرنامہ از طرف New Charter است، و برای اطلاع دادن به کلیہ مستاجریں در مورد فعالیتہای ما برایشان ارسال میشود. میتوانید از یک دوست یا خویشاوند درخواست کنید کہ بہ شمارہ 0161 331 2131 بہ ما تلفن کند، یا اینکه در صورتیکہ میتوانید بہ ما اطلاع بدہید کہ بہ چہ زبانی صحبت میکنید، ما ترتیب تائید مترجم را خواہیم داد.  
 আপনি নিউ চার্টার থেকে এই নিউজলেটার পেয়েছেন এবং আমাদের কাজকর্ম সম্পর্কে জানিয়ে রাখার জন্যে সকল ভাড়াটেদেরকে এটা পাঠানো হয়েছে। আপনি কোন্ ভাষায় কথা বলেন তা যদি আমাদেরকে 0161 331 2131 নম্বরে ফোন করে জানান অথবা কোনো বন্ধু-বান্ধবী অথবা আত্মীয় যদি আমাদেরকে জানান, তাহলে আমরা আপনার জন্যে একজন দ্বাভাষীর ব্যবস্থা করবো।  
 આ વર્તમાન પત્રિકા અમારા ન્યૂ ચાર્ટરમાંની છે અને અમારા દરેક ભાડુતમે અમારી પ્રવૃત્તિઓ વિષે જાણકારી આપવા માટે મોકલવામાં આવેલ છે. તમે તમારા મિત્ર અથવા સગાને 0161 331 2131 નંબર પર અમને ફોન કરવા કહો અથવા તમે જે ભાષા બોલો છો તે અમને જણાવશો તો અમે તમારા માટે દુભાષિયાની અવસ્થા કરીશું.  
 یہ نیوز لیٹر (خبرنامہ) سنے مشور کی طرف سے ہے اور یہ تمام کرائے داروں کو ہماری سرگرمیوں سے باخبر کرنے کے لیے بھیجا جا رہا ہے۔ آپ اپنے کسی دوست یا رشتہ دار کو کہہ سکتے ہیں کہ وہ آپ کی طرف سے 0161 331 2131 پر فون کرے یا اگر آپ خود فون کر کے بتا سکتے ہیں تو ہمیں بتادیں کہ آپ کوئی زبان بولتے ہیں، ہم آپ کے لیے ایک انٹریپرٹ (ترجمہ کار) کا اہتمام کریں گے۔