



PRESS RELEASE

8th May 2006

Fatal attraction



Photograph opportunity at Tudor Avenue, Brushes, Stalybridge SK15 3EL with tenant in a coffin at 11.30am on Tuesday 16th May 2006

Tenant June Humphreys had cause to regret her words as New Charter's latest investment reached her neighbourhood.

The Greater Manchester landlord is trialling recycled plastic fencing, and June's estate at Brushes in Stalybridge is the first neighbourhood to benefit. But June, who feels she's been campaigning for over 20 years to get good fencing for all 230 homes on the estate, told a member of staff she thought she'd "be in a wooden box before Brushes got fencing"...

So New Charter arranged one of the weirdest contract starts ever - pallbearers carried June in a coffin the length of Tudor Avenue so she could inspect the first homes to be fenced with the new product.



business for neighbourhoods

Although New Charter owns the homes, residents formed the Brushes Estate Management Board and for the last three years have managed most parts of the estate services themselves. New Charter has continued to provide services including repairs, but Brushes manage the estate budget and monitor performance.

June Humphreys was a founder member of Brushes Estate Management Board, and recalled how the unusual journey came about. “I was chatting to one of New Charter’s staff I’ve known for many years, and who knew how important this investment is to us. Saying I thought I’d be dead before it happened – well, everyone’s used that expression, haven’t they? I just didn’t realise how literally he’d took it,” she said. “I just hope I get as big a crowd as today when it really is my turn to go!”

Steve Nettleton, New Charter’s Group Director of Property Services said: ‘I’ll bet June will be more cautious in what she says to some of our staff, but she’s a good sport for agreeing to this unusual start. I’m delighted that this green initiative has come to Brushes first, as it has a great scenic location overlooking the Country Park and the moorland of the Peak District. The fencing products are made using recycled waste plastic from the Tameside area, and even the traditional elements are manufactured locally. As it’s installed by our own Building Company, we’ve definitely thought global, acted local. And I expect this to produce real savings for us this year, meaning we can do even more for our tenants.’

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage homes transferred from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of almost £60million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the country's largest Registered Social Landlords, and is regulated by The Housing Corporation, a Government watchdog. By incorporating Aksa Housing Association recently, the Group owns just over 15,100 homes.
2. The Brushes estate comprises 226 rented homes. Additionally, around 40 homes have been purchased under the Right to Buy/Preserved Right to Buy.
3. There are only a handful of Tenant Management Organisations in Registered Social Landlords created by transfer. Many more start on the process but fail to get to the agreement stage.
4. Fence facts -
 - (a) Posts – those available were expensive and not environmentally friendly; we worked with a plastic recycler to design and produce a simple, cost effective and visually appealing post.
 - (b) Panels – recycled plastic was difficult to manufacture, visually poor and expensive; we designed a timber panel system with a local manufacturer.
 - © Gates – we worked with another local manufacturer to design a metal gate and fixings appropriate to our fencing system - cost effective, easy to install and maintain.
 - (d) Environmental impact – we designed each element to minimise the environmental impact. The posts and gravel boards are manufactured in Warrington from recycled plastic, are resistant to UV radiation and have achieved a fire rating in test. The timber infill panels are manufactured in Stalybridge with timber from managed and sustainable woodlands. The preservative treatment gives 15-year protection. Gates are also manufactured in Stalybridge, using galvanised and powder-coated steel for longevity and reduced maintenance. The steel is recycled stock.Local manufacturing of products reduce transport costs and environmental impact.
5. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a long-term project to improve housing associations' performance, and challenge negative perceptions of the sector and its customers. The project was launched at the National Housing Federation's annual conference in 2003. To date, 80 per cent of the sector's stock – over 1.5 million homes – is managed by associations who have joined the initiative and made fresh commitments to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence.

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