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Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010

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## Blooming Marvellous!

GREEN-FINGERED New Charter tenants are celebrating winning a raft of awards in the North West's biggest gardening competition.

Representatives from 14 community groups, resident associations and estates travelled to Southport to had their hard work over the past year recognised in the North West In Bloom It's Your Neighbourhood Awards.

This year's entries to the competition were an unprecedented success. Dixon and Forrest Road Communal Garden, Denton took a trophy for Best Small Neighbourhood, and the transformation of Central Estate, Dukinfield, earned Central Residents' Action Group a cup for Best Large Neighbourhood.

Ashton-based Ashurst Gardens and Lockingate Gardens joined Brushes Estate Management Board, Stalybridge, in scooping outstanding awards, while relative newcomers Smallshaw Lane were given accolades in the improvers' category.

A total of eight other groups made up of New Charter tenants took awards in Developing and Thriving categories, with all entrants receiving higher results than last year.

New Charter supported entrants by holding clean up days, hanging basket workshops and other community events aimed at inspiring tenants.

Regeneration Officer Laura Middleton said: "It's great that tenants' hard work over the past year has been recognised, especially as there was some stiff competition from expert gardeners, and entries from picturesque villages and rural areas.

It was also the first time that many tenants have entered the competition, so to come home from Southport with so many awards is brilliant!

"Groups have worked really well with each other to produce these results and transform their communities. They've really been able to take ownership of the areas in which they live."

New Charter's Executive Director of Neighbourhoods Tony Powell, added: "The amazing results in this year's In Bloom awards are a wonderful reflection of the hard work and dedication shown by New Charter tenants in transforming their environment.

“Working towards awards like these creates an infectious sense of community spirit and a real sense of pride.”

**Notes to editors:**

1. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage homes transferred from Tameside council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £70million a year and a workforce of 880, New Charter is one of the region’s largest registered providers of social housing, and is regulated by the Tenant Services Authority, a Government watchdog. The Group owns 18,600 homes. It was named at 6th place in The Sunday Times 100 best companies to work for in 2010.

2. Aksa Housing Association is a registered provider of social housing. It has operated since 1990 and owns over 670 homes in Oldham, Tameside, Bury and North Manchester. Its offices are in Oldham town centre, and its Board chose to join New Charter in November 2005.

3. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a long-term project highlighting housing associations’ performance. As social businesses, housing associations do not make profit. They offer homes for rent and sale at prices local people can afford. Housing associations provide more than homes - they help create places where people want to live. Wherever you see the **iN business for neighbourhoods** sign, something great is happening in the area. Housing Associations who display this logo are committed to their customers, the neighbourhoods they work in and strive for excellence in everything they do.

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