



And the winner is...



After fierce competition, the winners of the Welsh Housing Awards 2016 were announced at the end of November. WHQ looks at the organisations, projects and people who were honoured at the awards evening in Cardiff

HOME PARTNER - CARTREFI CONWY

CIH Members' Choice Award

Sponsored by Coastal Housing Group

The winner of this award was voted for by a poll of CIH members in the run-up to the awards.

Cartrefi Conwy launched its 'home partner' service in 2015 and it has proved to be of massive benefit to tenants and to the organisation as a whole. The concept is simple. The in-house gas servicing team accesses all tenants' properties on an annual basis and the Association saw this as a wasted opportunity to engage with tenants on an individual basis. The two 'home partners' accompany them and spend around an hour with the tenant whilst the work is being carried out.

The service was established to provide an early intervention and preventative approach to a range of tenancy management and support functions. Areas discussed include energy efficiency, rent and financial support, housing condition and safety and health and well-being.



The service ensures Cartrefi Conwy has accurate and informative tenant profiling information, can identify tenants early who need support to maintain their tenancy and offers tenants additional benefits.

Outcomes in the first year included 94 tenants identified as being vulnerable and needing additional support while 20 needed urgent financial assistance.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'A simple idea with tenants at the heart'*



TENANTS' VOICE - FIRST CHOICE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Communications and Publications Award
Sponsored by Welsh Housing Quarterly

First Choice stakeholders encourages them to learn more about tenants' disabilities. Stories about tenants' lives have encouraged others to try new activities that increase their independence and quality of life.

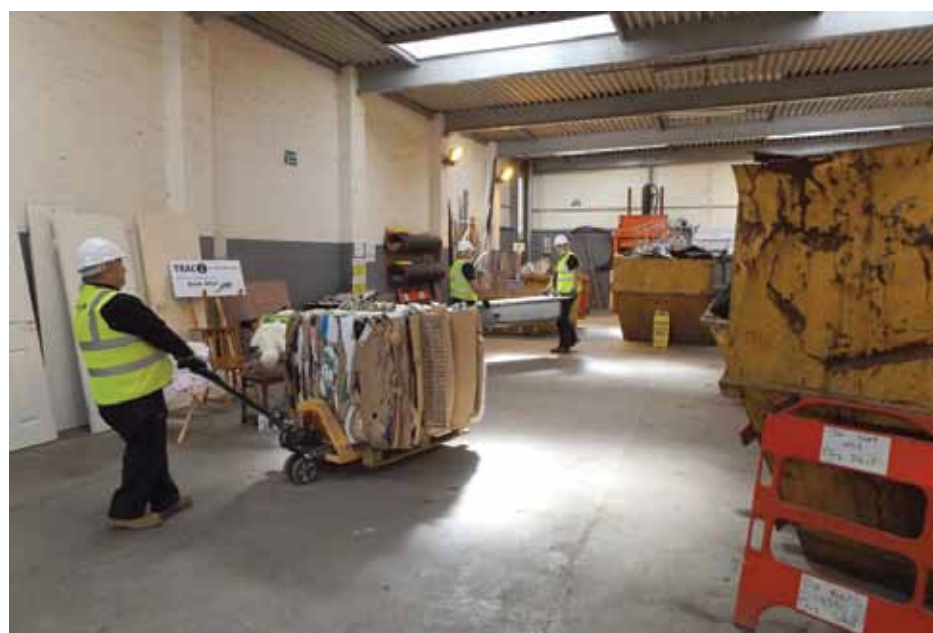
The Tenants' Voice editorial group is made up of people with a learning disability and many also have a physical disability. They are supported to take part and encouraged to take ownership of the newsletter. The newsletter is produced internally with the use of images and accessible easy-to-read information in which the staff have received specialist training.

First Choice produces a Tenants' Voice newsletter four times a year in partnership with our tenants. It holds meetings in North, Mid and South Wales with a variety of members with different and interesting viewpoints who are encouraged to have maximum involvement producing the newsletter

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'A publication for users, by users'*

First Choice tenants have a learning disability. This requires innovative methods to enable them to participate in First Choice and meaningfully influence the services provided to them. Geography presents another challenge, with tenants dispersed throughout 18 local authorities.

The Tenants' Voice newsletter helps break down barriers providing an insight into tenants' lives. Distribution to



REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE - BRON AFON WITH TRAC2

Collaboration Award (RSL lead)
Sponsored by Contract Services (South Wales)

Bron Afon started the initiative to recycle building components replaced by WHQS programmes, recover and re-use surplus materials and reduce landfill (both environmental impact and associate tipping costs). Income generated goes towards community benefits

The recycling team manages all kinds of waste derived from void properties and maintenance carried out by their property services teams. The recycling centre team accept, segregate and reuse or recycle disparate waste streams including decommissioned boilers, wood waste, metals and cardboard.

In just two years it has saved 50 tonnes of waste from going to landfill sites by donating it to charity, along with 120



PAT-tested appliances and over 3,500 other non-electrical items, 150 tonnes of wood and 24 tonnes of cardboard. Bron Afon's landfill costs have fallen from £285,000 in 2012-13 to just £80,000 last year with this years projected landfill costs expected to be just £9000. It has generated an income of £50,000 since 2013 by selling mixed metals.

Partnerships have been formed with local charities including ones that support people in crisis, young people and disabled people, an animal sanctuary and a community farm.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'A wide ranging collaborative project with a commitment to the environment'*

BRINGING EMMAUS TO WALES – EMMAUS SOUTH WALES WITH VALLEYS TO COAST

Collaboration Award (LA/other)

Sponsored by Contract Services (South Wales)



Following the completion of a sheltered bedsit conversion project in Bridgend, V2C was left with another empty bedsit sheltered complex nearby. V2C realised a plan to convert it into self-contained flats was not possible and the Wallich Community suggested it should work with the then newly formed Emmaus Bridgend organisation.

In an Emmaus community, formerly homeless men and women (called companions) live and work together in a supportive environment. Everyone has a role to fill and contributes to the well-being of the community.

Since 2009 V2C and Emmaus have been working to establish a community home and a viable social enterprise to deliver the work experience. A wider partnership was

established which included the key support of Bridgend CBC, Welsh Government, the BIG Lottery, the Henry Smith Charitable Trust, Emmaus supporters across the UK plus other charitable assistance.

V2C sold Nantlais to Emmaus and then project managed the refurbishment programme to completion in December 2015. Officially opened by the First Minister, the project has established the first Emmaus community in Wales and has developed 24 rooms for companions to have a settled home following a period of homelessness. The Duchess of Cornwall visited in July.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'Demonstrated a real impact on people's lives'*

being greener

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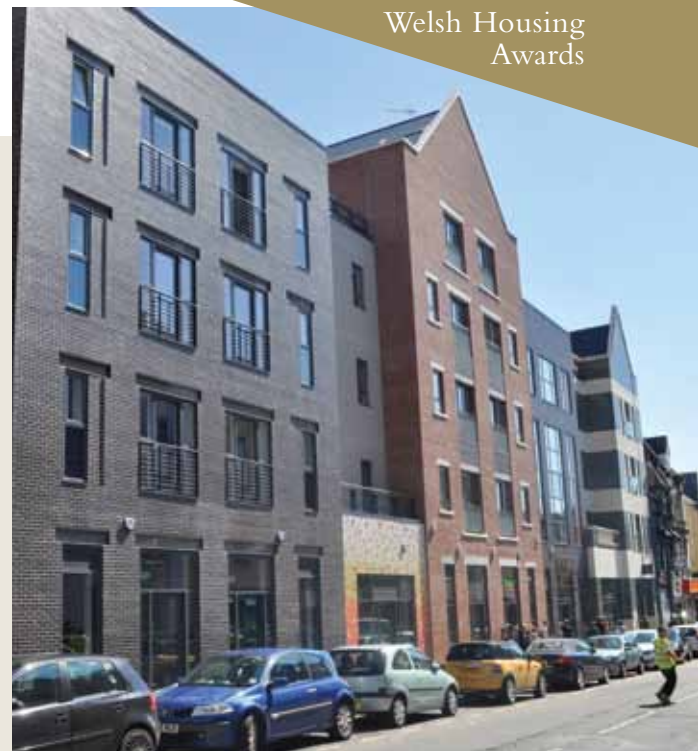
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URBAN VILLAGE - COASTAL HOUSING GROUP AND PARTNERS
(HIGHLY COMMENDED: CUSTOM HOUSE COURT - FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL)

New Development Award
Sponsored by Blake Morgan

Initiated through a £25 million scheme for the regeneration, redesign and rebuilding of the High Street and Strand Row areas, the Urban Village is a vision of sustainable living and working. Coastal Housing Group completed the project in two phases.

The first phase was completed in 2012 and saw the development of five floors of office and retail space facing Swansea's High Street, along with the construction of 76 affordable apartments to the rear of the development.

The second phase comprises a refurbished Victorian warehouse and the centrepiece of the Village, the Creative Cluster. With 16,500 sq ft of creative space situated over five

floors, this is an affordable and cutting-edge hub for small start-ups and creative companies. The community-centred work environment is the first dedicated space in Wales to be built purely for use by the creative industries.

With the Urban Village now complete, the development continues to incorporate social, economic and physical regeneration into an area which will draw ever increasing levels of related activity to its immediate area, resulting in spillovers which have already begun to fuel sustainable economic growth in this formerly deprived and neglected area of the city.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'A truly inclusive regeneration project'*



CCHA initiated a customer services improvement project following disappointing results in the national tenant survey of 2015. The head of customer and support services and the corporate services director were asked to jointly lead the initiative, as it was felt that to see results in external

CUSTOMER CULTURE - CARDIFF COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Customer Excellence Award
Sponsored by Pobl

customer services, internal issues needed to be addressed first. Initially they met with representatives from the tenant service inspectors group to discuss how CCHA could improve the tenant experience, and what they expected from staff.

Staff engagement and participation was key and workshops on customer service for all staff were run by an external facilitator. A group of staff volunteers then met to identify what they considered to be the principles required to achieve excellent customer service, and they also came up with a new slogan for the project 'Be the Best', which was launched at the CCHA staff conference in 2015. Workshops were also run for operatives from contractors.

The project has been a huge success so far. Customer satisfaction rates have risen, employee engagement surveys show more staff feel positive or very positive about working for CCHA and there has also been a marked improvement with contractors.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'A cultural change that is organisation-wide'*

WILDMILL YOUTH REVIVAL - WILDMILL YOUTH CLUB WITH VALLEYS TO COAST HOUSING

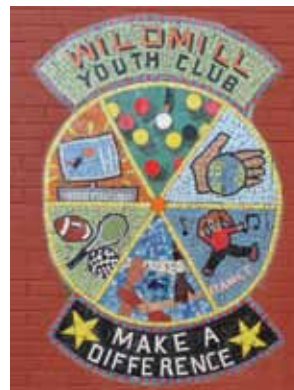
(HIGHLY COMMENDED: OUR MUTUAL - MERTHYR VALLEYS HOMES)

Empowering and Involving Communities Award
Sponsored by United Living

The dedicated youth facility on the Wildmill estate run by local youth organisation Youth Works closed in 2014 due to difficulties in its parent company, leaving young people without a valuable hub for youth activities.

On a large estate this was a devastating loss. Young people formerly accessed social activities, health advice and learning, and employability training at the centre. There were fears that there would be a real loss of engagement with the youth of Wildmill.

Youth worker Debbie Bryn and others on the estate brought people together in an action group to see that youth provision was not lost forever. This small group went door-to-door gathering support and approached V2C for help. V2C organised for an experienced youth work manager to work with them to develop policies and identify what they needed and arranged for a building on the estate to be allocated to use as a youth club/building at no cost to the group. The group officially re-opened the youth centre in April 2015 and has since worked closely with V2C on a number of projects.



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: 'A good example of combining training, skills and empowerment to support people's skills development, and to make a difference locally'



CAUSE FOR CONCERN - CHARTER HOUSING ASSOCIATION AND PARTNERS

Promoting Equality, Inclusion and Support Award

Sponsored by Cardiff Metropolitan University

Whilst developing its 'Prevention by Intervention' strategy and working with police and other local agencies, Charter became aware that the scale of safeguarding issues affecting tenants was much greater than previously thought.

Charter developed a new approach called 'Cause for Concern', based on a confidential database that allows all staff to record concerns around any type of safeguarding issue. It captures data from all departments in one central point only accessible by specifically trained staff.

Since the project launched, staff have reported over four times more cases than before, enabling Charter to

successfully intervene in far more cases than was previously possible. Since 2014 it has reported and investigated 435 incidents of domestic violence, 70 incidents involving child safety and 219 involving adult safety.

This has led to hundreds of referrals to health services, police and social services, staff attending over 20 MARAC meetings and a range of other actions. Charter is now able to support far more people to stay in their home and avoid situations escalating out of control, with only 15 per cent of all tenancies ending doing so for negative reasons.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: 'A really practical approach to the constant challenge of sharing information'



LITTLE BY LITTLE - MELIN HOMES

New Idea Award

Sponsored by Mi-Space UK



Little by Little (LBL) was a new idea created through Welsh Government Warm Homes funding and worked across five local authority areas located in South East Wales (Torfaen, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Blaenau Gwent and Cardiff).

It engaged with households in areas that had previously received Arbed or Max ECO funding and had hard measures installed such as new windows, doors, boilers and external wall insulation. The core aim was to demonstrate that significant positive outcomes can be achieved by providing residents with energy and behaviour change advice and interventions.

The project set out to demonstrate the value of direct behaviour and advice interventions and that investment in

energy and behaviour change advice has a significantly greater impact on the Welsh economy than the cost of that advice

Total savings made by the project were £300,737. These were achieved through energy switches to new providers, better deals offered through existing suppliers, accessing grant funding, benefit entitlement checks and professional advice on behaviour within the home.

Welsh Government has now put energy behaviour change and financial maximisation into all its hard measures tenders going forward from the results of the LBL programme as a requirement.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *'A great partnership approach, demonstrating wide ranging impact'*



Congratulations to all of our staff involved with our Customer Culture project, winner of the 'Customer Excellence' award.

Find out more about our work:
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www.ccha.org.uk

LEAVING A LEGACY - CONTRACT SERVICES (SOUTH WALES)

Community Focused Contractor Award

Sponsored by BRC

Contract Services has adopted a step change approach to meaningful community engagement by harnessing the strength of multiple stakeholders, and leading on projects that can be rolled out across several communities.

It worked with Caerphilly Council to identify its aspirations from the WHQS programme. Rather than spread itself too thinly, it committed to one secondary school throughout the duration of the six-year contract and agreed a programme of initiatives; focusing on one specific community for whom it has devised a bespoke programme called 'Making a house a home'. Allocated to Lansbury Park, the aim was to deliver measurable and jointly agreed outcomes that enhance life quality. It now aims to replicate this approach across our other contracts.

Cllr David Poole, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing at Caerphilly CBC, said: 'Contract Services has made excellent progress, over a relatively short space of time, in their delivery of community benefits in the Caerphilly county borough. The company has demonstrated a real willingness to work in partnership with the council, along with the enthusiasm and commitment to really make a difference to the lives of residents and local communities.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: 'An SME who are committed to building the local economy and making a difference'



TAI FFORDDIADWY
O ANSAWDD
WEDI EI DYLNIO
AM FYWYD

AFFORDABLE
QUALITY HOMES
DESIGNED FOR LIFE

CARTREFI
CONWY
creu cymunedau i fod yn falch ohonynt
creating communities to be proud of

DROS YR 8 MLYNEDD DIWETHAF, MAE CARTREFI CONWY WEDI BOD YN CREU CYMUNEDAU I FOD YN FALCH OHONYN NHW, AC MAE GENNYM NI HEDDIW DROS 3,700 O EIDDO DRWY OGLEDD CYMRU.

RYDYM NI'N PARHAU I DYFU, DYHEU AC EDRYCH TUAG AT Y DYFODOL. RYDYM NI'N CROESAWU NEWIDIADAU MEWN FFYRDD O FYW, YR AMGYLCHEDD A THECHNDLEG, AC RYDYM NI'N GWEITHIO'N AGSACH GYDATN CWSMERIAID HEDDIW NAG A FUOM ERIDED O'R BLAEN

MAE EIN PORTFFOLIO EIDDO CYNYDDOL YN PARHAU I EHANGU AR DRAWS RHANBARTH GOGLEDD CYMRU AC RYDYM WEDI YMRWYMO I ADEILADU DROS 200 O DAI FFORDDIADWY O SAFON ERBYN 2020.

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LYN BOND, NEWYDD HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Housing Champions Award

Sponsored by Lovell

Lyn Bond is a Newydd Housing Association tenant living in Rhydyfelin near Pontypridd. Following a rigorous interview process and presentation, she fought off stiff competition to win the award which recognises an individual or group whose passion, enthusiasm and commitment has made a real difference to the lives of others and gone the extra mile.

Lyn's presentation focussed on her proudest achievement, which she believes is the way she has influenced the improvement of services at Newydd. By working alongside fellow tenants discussing and improving policies and procedures she feels that the resulting changes implemented by the organisation has significantly improved the service provided to tenants.

Following years of taking part in workshops and meetings to improve services, Lyn became a Newydd Board member in 2009. She is currently acting Chair of the Board and is the Board Champion for Community Regeneration.

Lyn, pictured with her son Steven, said: *'Winning this award is a huge achievement for me, I was delighted to have been shortlisted never mind to have won! I would like to thank Newydd and CIH Cymru for their support and training over the years. I am hoping to continue what I do, to get involved and make a difference, in a shy and retiring manner as always!'*

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Louise Sulley,
Cardiff Community Housing Association

ccha
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Bucking the trend

An award-winning development by Coastal Housing Group in Swansea provides footmark for future regeneration projects focussing on the British high street crisis



Across the UK, the nation's high streets are coming under increasing strain, with latest research revealing an alarming 15 shop closures every day, while new openings have fallen to their lowest level in five years. In Wales alone, one in eight shops are empty and the number of people shopping in our town centres is down again on last year. It's clear to see that Britain's high streets have reached crisis point and without urgent regeneration and investment, the future of British high streets doesn't look much brighter. However, one UK housing association bucking the trend and driving the resurgence of one British high street is Coastal Housing Group.



The leading South Wales housing association has been leading the way in transforming the disused and outdated Swansea High Street into the bustling heart of a city through the development of exciting new affordable housing, retail, dining, and office spaces. Coastal's mission is innovative yet simple: to renovate Swansea High Street into a creative quarter by strategically targeting the arts and creative industries in a bid to increase footfall, trade, sentiment and ultimately help fuel the local economy.

Located in the heart of Swansea's city centre, Urban Village is the flagship scheme for Coastal's pioneering regeneration work and is the first dedicated space in Wales to be built purely for use by the creative industries. The multi-million-pound project has already attracted industry recognition, picking up the prize for the new development award at the prestigious Welsh Housing Awards after being praised for its innovative design, value for money and meaningful contribution it makes to the local area.

Consisting of a number of buildings, including both commercial and residential areas, the centrepiece of Urban Village is the Creative Cluster; a 16,500-square-foot creative space situated over six floors that adopts a community work environment, inspiring like-minded creative individuals to work co-operatively to accelerate growth and success. The £25 million development also incorporates 76 apartments for social rent arranged around a private courtyard, bringing affordable living to the city centre and further encouraging footfall to the region.

SWANSEA'S REGENERATION

The development perfectly typifies Coastal's vision for the regeneration of Swansea's city centre, transforming a previously fading high street into a vibrant new community for living, work and leisure, while also helping to promote Swansea as a hub for the arts and creative industries. But it's not just the Urban Village development that has helped to carve a better future for the area: Coastal has also invested in multiple projects over the years to ensure the empty

buildings that litter Swansea High Street are being restored and utilised by the local community once more.

In 2010, the not-for-profit organisation acquired a former supermarket store, which stood derelict on the High Street for years, and transformed the unit into a community space, offering local arts and creative businesses flexible and affordable rental terms on otherwise unoccupied buildings. As well as enabling dozens of local businesses to gain a presence in the city centre, the initiative has been commended for increasing footfall and sentiment towards the High Street.

Earlier this year, the housing association offered flexible retail rates to Swansea-based photographer, Richie Crossley, in order to help get his business dream off the ground. The celebrity photographer had previously overcome depression through his passion for photography, and with Coastal's support, Richie has opened a brand-new photography studio, Chic Studio, to support other people suffering from mental illness through photography. Chic Studio is open for charities and individuals with physical or mental disabilities, offering them free one-to-one coaching about how to get into photography, as well as teaching them basic photography and modelling skills.

With emerging out of town retail parks, soaring rental rates and shifting consumer patterns to online shopping, Britain's high streets face a lengthy battle. True, regeneration takes time, and in a society that expects instant results, endurance can be the biggest challenge of all. But organisations like Coastal prove that with a clear strategy, significant investment and the luxury of time, there is life in the British high street yet. Having invested millions of pounds into Swansea High Street over the last two decades, the South Wales housing association has progressively re-invented the area into a thriving creative quarter that is perceived by the local community as a place to live, to visit and to do business.



MARK GARDNER, ANTHONY WHITTAKER & DUNCAN FORBES

Outstanding Contribution to Housing in Wales

Sponsored by Merthyr Valleys Homes.

This year's award went to three people who between them have amassed around 100 years of service to the sector.

Paul Diggory, chair of the CIH Cymru board, paid tribute to them as he made the awards.

Mark Gardner began his career with a local authority in the north before heading south to join CIH Cymru as only its second director in Wales in 1993. Within two years he landed a chief executive role and 12 years later led a merger of two associations that became the first RSL to have a core funded employment team. As chief executive of Melin Homes he played a pivotal role in establishing a pioneering collaboration between a Health Board, local authorities and registered social landlords within Gwent. This programme has revolutionised the way people with complex health and social care needs get the housing and support they need. He is leaving Wales for Ocean Housing Group in Cornwall.

Duncan Forbes was in at the birth of Shelter Cymru and

was the original company secretary of both TPAS Cymru and Welsh Tenants – all of which he did pro bono. A qualified solicitor, he was a corporate director for an English council before returning to Wales to head up a stock transfer team for a local authority, then becoming chief executive of Bron Afon, Wales' first community mutual, after a tenant ballot. He is passionate about attacking poverty and mobilising the resources of his organisation to make a real and lasting difference.

Anthony Whittaker has worked in housing for nearly 40 years, 23 of them in a leadership role at United Welsh, for which he has just retired from as chief executive. During that time he has seen the organisation grow from one that employed 50 to one that now employs over 280. In a sector that embraces innovation, he has been a stand-out leader, prepared to take risks and leading in areas such as targeted recruitment and training where eventually the whole sector follows.

Further information on the winning projects and all other shortlisted entries is available on the CIH Cymru website at www.cih.org/cymru/welshhousingawards/goodpractice16