

Tenant Topics

Newsletter for Two Rivers
Housing Tenants

Garry King to step down as Chief Executive

Garry King (right) breaks ground at our Rivers Meet office site
with tenant Bert Bullock and contractors in 2012

In May 2023,
Garry King
announced that he
would be stepping
down as Two Rivers
Housing Chief Executive.

Garry has worked in the
social housing sector for
the last 36 years. He played
a key role in transferring
3,600 homes from the
Forest of Dean District
Council to the newly
formed Forest of Dean
Housing, which
became Two
Rivers Housing
in 2006.

Turn
to page two
to find out
more

See
back page for
your chance
to win a
£15 voucher!



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tworivers
HOUSING

Garry King: 20 years' service

During Garry's time as Chief Executive, we have continued to provide warm, safe, affordable homes to families across Gloucestershire and the surrounding areas.

We have invested almost £100 million in our homes and donated £1.4 million to local community groups through Two Rivers Initiatives. In 2018, we committed to building 1,000 new affordable homes in our communities by 2028 – a target which we are well on the way to meeting.

Garry and the leadership team have worked hard to ensure that Two Rivers Housing can be there for many more years to come. In 2020, we secured a private investment of £130m to support the long-term investment in our homes and development programme.

More recently, we secured funding from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to start work on reducing our carbon footprint. These projects are helping to improve the energy efficiency of our homes, reducing energy costs for tenants as well as our impact on the environment.

Garry will remain as Chief Executive until January 2024.

We have now started the search for our next Chief Executive and are working with specialist recruitment agency GatenbySanderson to help us find the right person to take the Group forward.

We hope to make an appointment in July and will make a further announcement once the decision has been made.

Garry has been at the helm of Two Rivers Housing since it was launched in 2003

An update on our grass cutting programme

We would like to apologise to tenants who have experienced delays in our grass cutting programme. Our grass cutting programme usually starts in April however, there has been some significant disruption to our programme.

While we are working hard to resolve this as quickly as possible, this does mean that we have already missed some cuts this year.

What are we doing to put things right?

We have increased the size of our ground's maintenance team. Our new Centigen team members will be joining us shortly, so please give them a warm welcome when you see them on our estates.

We have appointed a local contractor to help us get back on track with the current schedule over the coming months.

We are also using feedback from our Challenge & Change Group and Your Views Facebook Group to look at how we can improve how we share information about this service going forward.

What about my service charges?

We recognise that grass cutting forms part of the service charge that some tenants pay and will be reviewing the service delivery at the end of the cutting season. After this, we will write to all affected tenants and outline what we intend to do for those that have not received the full service.

We will not be able to provide any further information on this before the review has taken place.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in this matter.

For more information on our grass cutting programme, please visit our website: www.tworivershousing.org.uk/your-home/grass-cutting/grass-cutting-2023

www.tworivershousing.org.uk

Glorious gardens!

**Best Garden
winner 2022**



**Best Edible Garden
winner 2022**



**Best Tubs
winner 2022**



Competition
closes on
**1 September
2023**

Download the
Entry form from our website:
[www.tworivershousing.org.uk/
your-home/getting-involved/
tenant-gardening-competition](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk/your-home/getting-involved/tenant-gardening-competition)

**Enter our competition
to win one of eight £30
vouchers!**

The sun is shining, gardens are blooming, and we are looking for the best of the bunch in 2023.

If you are proud of your patch, great at growing veggies or particular about your pots we want to hear from you. Our annual garden competition is now open, and this year, we've added three new categories to give even more of you a chance to get involved.

To take part, simply download the entry form from our website and send your completed form with pictures of your entry to us.

The categories

Best garden

Does your garden have the 'wow' factor? Judges will be looking for a variety of plants in different colours and shapes, and ornaments used to good effect.

Best tubs, pots, and baskets

Even in the smallest outdoor space, we want to see the creative ways you have been growing.

Best edible garden

We want to see a variety of vegetables, herbs, and fruits.

New for 2023!

Following feedback from tenants, we've added three new categories for this year.

Best use of initiative and creativity of a small space

We want to see how creative you can be within a small space, whether that is in your house, flat, balcony, or garden.

Best communal garden

Making the most of your communal area, we want to see how you have transformed your communal space into a lovely garden for everyone to share.

One for the kids....

Plot on a plate

Make a miniature garden on a plate or plant pot base using items in and around your home. It must measure no more than 30 cm. Prizes will be awarded for age range seven and under, 8-11 year olds and 12-16 year olds.

Home surveys: Please let our team in!



At the end of 2022, we began our home survey programme. At the end of this programme, we will have visited and surveyed every single one of our homes and created a report on their condition.

These surveys are a visual inspection of the inside and outside of your home and take about an hour to complete. This is a really important piece of work, as it will help us plan our future home improvements programme. It will also help us identify any issues that need immediate attention in your home.

So far, our team has visited more than 2,000 homes, but we still have a lot of properties to check. We will write to you to let you know when our team will be in your area. Please make sure you let them into the property so they can complete this essential work.

If you have any questions, please contact the team by emailing: customerservice@2rh.org.uk



Supporting our communities

Happy 104th Birthday Gladys



Earlier this year our team paid a visit to Gladys who was celebrating her 104th birthday!

Gladys grew up in the Forest of Dean alongside her seven brothers and sisters and their mother.

As a schoolgirl, she remembers soldiers setting up base at Broadwell, where she used to attend dances. Her love of dancing led her to meeting her husband Alex, who had moved to the UK from Poland during the war. They met at a dance hall in Cheltenham that they both attended every weekend.

Both Gladys and Alex worked at the local cable works in Lydbrook before moving to Gloucester. Several years later, they moved back to the Forest of Dean, where they have lived for the last 37 years.

During their retirement, they purchased a caravan and toured the UK making memories and visiting lots of different places.

Luke and Elaine took Gladys some flowers to celebrate her birthday and we are sure you will all join us in wishing her all the best for her 105th year and many more to come!

In our communities

As the weather has improved, there has been a lot going on across our communities, here's a round up of some of the fun!

CommuniTea at Danby Close

In April, our community engagement team joined tenants and other local support groups at Danby Close. They were joined by the Forestry Commission and the Fire Brigade as well as Community Builders and Street Wardens from the Forest of Dean District Council and spent time listening to tenants and sharing important information.



Parkside Easter Bonnet Competition

Tenants at our HomePlus scheme in Parkside organised an Easter Bonnet Competition. The judges had a tough decision to make but, after much deliberation crowned this year's winning entries. Congratulations to the winners pictured below!



Helping out the Easter Bunny



It's tough being the Easter Bunny. Getting to every child in Gloucestershire is no easy task and sometimes even the most organised Bunny needs a bit of extra help.

This Easter, we got a call from our friends at the Salvation Army, who'd been asked to help find some eggstra chocolate eggs for children in the Forest of Dean. The team jumped into action and our Rivers Meet office was soon full of sweet treats for them to collect and deliver.

Out and about in our neighbourhoods

Our neighbourhood housing team will be out and about in our communities throughout the year to talk to tenants, inspect the neighbourhood and listen to your feedback.

Alongside their usual tenant visits, the team will be carrying out quarterly visual inspections of our neighbourhoods to help identify

any issues and report any work that needs to be done. They will also work with other agencies such as highways to raise any issues that are not part of Two Rivers Housing's responsibilities but may be causing difficulties for our tenants.

Your neighbourhood housing advisor will be out and about in

the community on specific days throughout the year. You can find all the latest information in the events calendar on our website – including when they will be in your area.

If you see them out and about, come and say hello!

For more details visit our website: www.tworivershousing.org.uk/news-library/events



Safety focus: Keeping your water supply safe

As your landlord, there are a number of checks and tests we need to complete in your home to ensure that it is safe. One of these is a legionella test.

Star tip

Going on holiday or leaving the property for a while? Flush the water systems when you get home by running all outlets for two minutes before using them.



Legionella is a type of bacteria that is found in the natural environment. The bacteria can be found in tiny water droplets, which can be inhaled by people and cause Legionnaires Disease. This pneumonia-like illness can affect anyone but heavy smokers and drinkers or those with an impaired immune system, chronic respiratory illnesses, or kidney disease are more at risk.

Legionnaires Disease can be fatal, so we regularly undertake tests in all our homes to check for the bacteria.

Where could you find Legionella in your home?

Legionella bacteria thrives in low temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. It can be found in water systems, including domestic hot and cold water systems. To minimise the risk of Legionnaires Disease, you should make sure that:

- You do not change the settings on your boiler or hot water system. The water should be heated to a minimum of 60°C.
- Hot water is kept hot and above 60°C degrees Centigrade and cold water is kept cold.
- Clean, descale and disinfect your shower head regularly. If the shower is only used occasionally, flush it through by running the water for two minutes once a week.
- **Allow us to complete our tests and inspections in your home.**

Hosepipes

Hosepipes often retain water after use. This can be a breeding ground for Legionella, so here are some simple tips to help keep you safe:

- Keep your hosepipe somewhere cool and out of the sun, this will help reduce the risk of bacteria thriving in your hosepipe.
- Legionella can be easily inhaled in water vapour. So, before you use the hose pipe, run it slowly to avoid creating water vapour and flush out any standing water before using any spraying attachment.

Please tell us immediately if:

- Your boiler or hot water tank are not working properly – particularly if the hot water is not coming out of the taps hot after you have run it.
- Your cold water continues to run warm after you have run off any water that may have accumulated in the pipes. It should not be above 20°C.
- You find any debris or discolouration in the water supply.

Safety focus: Fire safety in shared spaces

When you live in a building with shared spaces, you need to be extra cautious when it comes to fire safety.

We know that you might want to make the entrance of your home look and feel welcoming but, in the event of a fire, this can put you and your neighbours in real danger. Here are some simple steps you can take to make sure shared spaces remain safe for everyone.

1. Don't leave items such as bikes, buggies, mobility scooters, or potted plants outside your home. These can act as fuel, block escape routes, and even prevent the fire brigade getting to your door.
2. Do not hang pictures, decorations, or storage boxes outside your home. They burn with very black smoke and make rescue attempts more difficult.
3. Remember, smoking is not allowed in any shared spaces. If you smoke in your home, make sure that cigarettes are put out properly – never throw them out of the window.
4. Keep doors (including your own front door) that provide access to shared spaces closed. Never wedge them open or closed or adjust the closing mechanisms.
5. Remove rubbish and only ever store this in the bin stores provided.
6. Report any repairs needed to fire doors or fire equipment immediately by calling **0800 316 0897**.

Together, we can help reduce the risk of fire and keep everyone safe.

Thumbs up for our new engagement framework

In the last issue of Tenant Topics, we asked for your feedback on our new customer engagement framework. Almost 300 of you completed the survey and shared your thoughts on the proposed changes, here's what you told us:

What you said

87% of you agreed that the proposed changes would improve tenant engagement.

What we are doing

We are adopting the new framework and will be sharing more information on how you can get involved over the coming weeks and months.

What you said

91% supported the creation of our new tenant group Tenant's Voice

What we are doing

We will be disbanding our Challenge & Change Group shortly, so that we can establish our new Tenant's Voice Group. You can find out how to join our new group on page 10.

What you said

91% of you would support a training programme to help support the Tenant Voice Group and enable them to challenge our organisation effectively and constructively on your behalf.

88% of you agreed that we should offer a small incentive to the Tenant's Voice members to thank them for their time.

What we are doing

We are putting together a training programme for the new Tenant Voice Group, that will upskill them and give them the tools and techniques to challenge us effectively. We are also looking at the best way to thank the group for their time and input, many of you thought a small payment or voucher would be a good idea and we will consider this over the coming weeks.

Introducing Tenant Inspectors

As part of the survey, we asked if you would support the creation of a Tenant Inspector role. More than 85% of you agreed that this would help improve our services. As a result, we will be looking to recruit tenants on an adhoc basis to undertake inspections against our Service Standards. If you are interested in being added to our list of Tenant Inspectors, please get in touch with our community engagement team:

communityengagement@2rh.org.uk



Keeping you informed

We also wanted to understand if our customers feel informed, listened to and able to review and feedback on our services easily.

64% of you said we keep you informed of how we are performing and using your feedback to make improvements.

52% of you agreed that we listen to your thoughts and opinions on our services.

We know we have some work to do here and will be looking at how we can keep tenants better informed of what we are doing and how we are using their feedback going forward.

45% of you agreed that we give you the opportunity to influence the decisions we make.

48% of you agreed that you have the opportunity to review and scrutinise our services.

Getting involved

More than three quarters of those that completed the survey said that having more ways to get involved would encourage them to do so in the future. Don't forget, there are lots of ways you can share your thoughts and feedback with us including:

- Joining our Tenant's Voice group
- Joining our Your Views Facebook Group
- Becoming a Tenant Inspector
- Signing up to be part of focus groups
- Joining our Tenant Communications Group

If you'd like more information, get in touch with our community engagement team, email

communityengagement@2rh.org.uk



Free training and networking for tenants

We've been working with tenant engagement specialists Tpas to help us strengthen our relationship with tenants.

As part of our membership, Tpas provides all our tenants with the

opportunity to take part in free training and regional networking events. To see what's available and get access to the training and networking events, simply register your details at **www.tpas.org.uk**.



Tpas also operates a free enquiry service for those interested in getting the most out of engagement activities. Call **0800 731 1315** to find out more.

for you -for your community - not for profit

Spot the scams!

There are lots of ways that cyber criminals try to get our information. Here are some of the most common types of scams and how to avoid becoming a victim of cybercrime.

Phishing emails

These are designed to make you do something you shouldn't like opening a link, downloading a malicious attachment, or sharing your information. The criminals send thousands of these out in the hope of 'catching' you or someone else out.

Criminals will use recognised company logos to make you think the communication is genuine. They will use words that are designed to make you panic, not think clearly, and react quickly. They often contain misspelled words, incorrect information, and are often unexpected.

If you receive a suspicious email, take your time, do not click any links, and delete the email.

Online shopping fraud

As a result of the pandemic, more and more of us turned to online shopping. This is an easy place for scammers to sell fake goods using false advertisements.

If you are new to online shopping, it's recommended that you shop with familiar brands that you may also find on the high street. Using secure payment methods such as PayPal, will also help reduce the risk when buying items online.



Some retailers, such as Amazon also have other safeguarding methods in place to help protect their customers.

Social media: Know who you are talking to

Some fraudsters use social media platforms to obtain personal information. While social media can help us stay connected, it is important to know who you are talking to.

Be mindful of what you share on your social media accounts. Don't post about going on holiday, as this can alert potential thieves to the fact that your home will be empty. If you can, tighten the security settings on your profile so that only friends can see your activity.

Star tip

Remember, if someone starts pressuring you to provide information, money, or share things that make you uncomfortable, you can block their account and report them to the platform or even the police.



How to prevent falling victim to a scam

Remember:

- Take your time. Independently confirm what you are about to do is legitimate and that you want and intend to do it, as opposed to someone (you don't know) asking you to do it.
- Check you're dealing with a genuine scenario that you expected. Don't trust anything or anyone at first sight, be cautious until you have established legitimacy and trust.
- Ask someone you trust for their opinion or advice.

If you think you have fallen victim to any of these scams, take these steps to minimise future risk:

- Protect your account by immediately changing your account password, ensuring it is strong and complex.
- Protect your device by keeping it up-to-date and installing security software on your laptops and computers when it is available.
- Uninstall unused software and apps.

Protect your money by checking directly online (not from email links) and notifying your bank or payment service of any problems. If you think you've been tricked, they will be able to provide advice and assistance.

Easy ways to pay your rent: Direct Debit

For many of our tenants, Direct Debit is the easiest way to manage their rent account. Our income collection team can help set this up for you. They can also set the payment up to be collected on any day of the month as well as weekly, fortnightly, every four weeks or monthly, whichever suits you and your lifestyle best.

There are many other reasons why so many tenants choose to pay their rent by Direct Debit, including:

- The peace of mind in knowing that your rent will be paid automatically.
- Not having to remember to make a rent payment.
- Not having to wait on the phone to pay your rent.
- Not having to go out on cold, wet days, or when you don't feel very well.
- Not having to re-calculate your payments when your rent changes – this is done automatically.

For busy tenants, it can reduce the amount of contact you will get from our income collection team. They will only need to contact you if the Direct Debit fails, or they need to make a change.

If you would like to set this up or discuss this with us, please contact the income collection team on **0800 316 0897**.

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or are concerned about missing Direct Debits and incurring bank charges, please contact our income collection team. They will be able to help find an alternative solution such as a recurring card payment.



The Two Rivers Housing Tenant Census:

Why are we collecting your information?

In the last issue of Tenant Topics, we let you know about the Two Rivers Housing Tenant Census. This is a big piece of research that will help us better understand who our tenants are and what they might need from us now and in the future.



Having accurate and up to date information is really important. It will help us develop and shape our services based on what you need from us and help us make better decisions on things like the types of homes we need to provide in the future.

We are working with a specialist research company called IFF. They have already written to all of our tenants and asked them to complete the survey and are now following up with those that have not yet done so by telephone.

We know that some of the data is personal, and you may not want to provide this. That's ok – you don't have to answer all the questions or provide any information you do not want to. You can simply tell the researcher that you do not want to provide it.

All of the data we collect is handled in line with our Privacy Notice and is collected in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

As a thank you for completing the research, we will enter all tenants that complete the survey into a prize draw to win one of 16 vouchers. Visit our website to find out more:

www.tworivershousing.org.uk/2023/03/tenant-census-2023

Join our team!

Are you passionate about making a difference in your community?

We have a number of jobs available and are looking for people to join our team. If you are dedicated to delivering a great customer experience and want the opportunity to grow and develop your skills, we want to hear from you.

We need the very best people to help ensure we can continue to provide warm, safe, affordable homes across our communities. If you are looking for a role where you can make a real difference to people's lives, with great benefits and the ability to develop your skills – we could have just what you are looking for!

You'll find the latest vacancies on our website

www.tworivershousing.org.uk/careers



Our new Apprenticeship programme

COMING SOON!

We have a fantastic apprenticeship programme coming in 2023.

This is a great opportunity to gain valuable experience and be part of an organisation that makes a real difference to the local community.

All the information will be available on our website and shared on our social media channels, so keep your eyes peeled, get your CV ready, and grab a great opportunity!

www.tworivershousing.org.uk/careers

Get involved! Be a part of our new Tenant's Voice group

There are lots of ways you can get involved with Two Rivers Housing. But, if you are looking to make a real difference, influence decision making and help shape our services, our new Tenant's Voice group may be the perfect option for you.

Our Tenant's Voice group will work directly with key members of the Two Rivers Housing team to review our services and provide the customer perspective in our decision making. They will have direct access to the Group Board and will provide them with assurance that customer feedback and needs are at the heart of the Group.

This is a great opportunity to give back to your local community and learn and develop new skills that will help you review our services and challenge our team in a positive, effective, and constructive way.

We will be looking for 8-10 people to join the Tenant Voice group. If you are interested or would like to know more, we will be publishing all of the information on our website over the next few weeks..

Alternatively, get in touch with our community engagement team:

Email: **communityengagement@2rh.org.uk**

Telephone: **0800 316 0897**

News in short

New Corporate Director of Property

Ian Atkinson joined us in June as our new Corporate Director of Property. He will be responsible for our development, property services and asset management teams and will take the lead in running our repairs and maintenance company Centigen.

Three new Board members!

Charlotte Marshall, Tim Sharpe, and Sharon Wilkins joined our Group Board in March 2023. Between them they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience on a number of key subjects including asset management, retrofit work, customer engagement, and digital services.

RoSPA President's Award



President's Award

In April we were awarded our tenth gold medal and the President's Award for health and safety practice from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. This is an internationally recognised award that celebrates best practice across the world.

Julia Small, RoSPA's head of qualifications, awards, and events, said: "We would like to congratulate Two Rivers Housing on achieving its tenth Gold Medal and receiving the President's Award for showing an unwavering commitment to keeping colleagues, tenants, and customers safe from accidental harm and injury."

Get a 'Leg-up' with the Garnett Foundation

Have you always wanted to learn a new skill, complete a course, or improve your career prospects?

If so, the Garnett Foundation could help. Exclusive to Two Rivers Housing tenants, the 'Leg-up Fund' could help you achieve your goals by providing help with funding.

First launched in 2015, the 'Leg-up Fund' provides up to £2,000 each year to support tenants and help them complete a course or study to learn a new skill or improve their work or career prospects.

In the past, the fund has been used by tenants to complete a beauty therapy course, funded a year's membership to a professional association, helped cover expenses for a tenant studying for a degree and gave a family man a chance to retrain as a Quantity Surveyor.

Applications for the Garnett Foundation Leg-up Fund are currently open. To find out more, including how to apply visit our website:

www.tworivershousing.org.uk/leg-up-fund

Star tip

Adult Education Gloucestershire provide a range of courses for adults living in Gloucestershire.

**[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/
adult-education-in-
gloucestershire](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/adult-education-in-gloucestershire)**





B I V H S K Q L O O P W D B
 K C A R S T O U B C S E G A
 S W I M S U I T O I L N G R
 T G L V D V N Z Z S U I P B
 E Z T L N U B G I H M H X E
 S F H D A J H K L E X S O C
 A R H W S B R E O A F N L U
 O C E A N H H S D L S U Y E
 E Y G W L W Z C B R S S O R
 A D I L O I A T A G E N E K
 C U G L Q L D R L E O U Z S
 H P I M N I F A M X B J M L
 A S A I L I N G Y W O Z L H

Which of these Summer words is missing from the wordsearch?

Barbecue Sailing
 Beachball Sand
 Flowers Sunglasses
 Humid Sunshine
 Ocean Swimsuit
 Pool Warm

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number/email: _____

Preferred voucher: ☐ Amazon ☐ Tesco ☐ M&S ☐ B&Q ☐ Argos

Summer tea break

You can enter by emailing your name, full postal address, preferred voucher, and the hidden word to us at **communications@2rh.org.uk** or by completing the form and returning it in the post to:

Communications team, Two Rivers Housing, Cleeve Mill Lane, Newent, Gloucestershire GL18 1DS

The first correct answer selected at random after **31 July 2023** will win a £15 gift voucher.

The missing word in our spring wordsearch was **FLOWERS**.

Good luck!

Win a £15 voucher!

Grab a pen and a cuppa, sit back and complete our summertime teaser!

Simply find the words in the wordsearch and let us know which one is missing and you could win a £15 voucher.



Contact us:

Please tell us if you would like this in large print or on audio CD.
Freephone **0800 316 0897** Email **customerservices@2rh.org.uk**



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