

YOUR VOICE

Issue 27 | Winter 2023/2024

HOUSING NEWS FOR
TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

Minister visits new homes for Northamptonshire

See page 16

Also in this edition...



Page 5 NPH Volunteers
awards celebration...



Page 6 Eco housing project
shortlisted for two awards...



Page 12 Community Grant helps
youngsters fish...

At a glance...

5 Celebrating NPH Volunteers

Awards celebration to say thank you...

6 NPH Shortlisted for two awards

Eco housing project helps residents' energy bills...

7 Mutual Exchange

Interested in exchanging your home? Learn more about the process...

10 Investing in our Neighbourhoods

Recent improvements and how you can get involved in shaping improvement programmes...

14 New Homes for West Northants

We've been busy building new homes for residents, here's the latest updates on our building projects...

16 Ministers visit NPH Housing Development

Minister of Housing visits New South Bridge Road building development...

Welcome

to the Winter issue of Your Voice

Welcome to the Winter edition of Your Voice.

It's been a busy time since our last edition. We've been investing in upgrades to our residents' homes with a rolling programme of repairs and improvements including new kitchens and bathrooms as well as building new homes across Northamptonshire. We even recently welcomed some visitors from Westminster to one of our building developments (see page 16 and 17).

Reducing energy bills and carbon emissions are both really important and timely issues so we are proud to have recently been shortlisted for two awards for our work in these areas (see page 6). We'll carry on making improvements for our residents and for the planet.

This issue is full of residents' news as usual but we are always interested in more of your



stories, please do contact **voiceeditor@nph.org.uk** with your article ideas or to let us know what you would like to hear more about in the next issue!

For now, please enjoy this edition of Your Voice.

Regards,

Steve Feast
Chief Executive



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES**

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Large print?

If you would like a version of this magazine in large print, or another language, please call

**0300 330
7003**



Reader Friendly

NOTICE BOARD

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN BOOK A COMMUNITY HUB?

NPH has 15 purpose built community hubs, situated all over Northampton. Each hub contains a main room, kitchen and toilets - all with full disabled access. Many have enclosed gardens.

As a resident of NPH, you can book a community hub **for free** for:

- Birthday parties
- Private events
- Community activities
- Resident meetings
- Many other things!

If you are interested in booking a community hub please contact our resident involvement team via email at getinvolved@nph.org.uk

VISIT THE PAINT SHOP



We've teamed up with Community Repaint to collect reusable, leftover paint for the community at much reduced prices. Pick up a litre of paint for as little as **£1** - you'll save money and save paint from going to landfill.

Could you spare a few hours to be a volunteer? We need help with paint sorting, retail and sales. If you are hard working and want to benefit the community please let us know! Email ThePaintshop@nph.org.uk for more information.

The Paint Shop
12 Park Square
Kings Heath
Northampton
NN5 7LQ
01604 527073

Volunteer with us

Join our resident Scrutiny Panel



Our resident Scrutiny Panel will be completing a Scrutiny Report on the NPH Anti-social Behaviour Service in the New Year. Our Anti-social Behaviour Service deals with complaints from residents about anything causing them distress, alarm or harassment including noise complaints and nuisance so it's an essential and important resource.

If you have an interest in the Anti-social Behaviour Service and would like to get involved to give your views on shaping the service and our response to Anti-social behaviour complaints please join us. Your views will really make a difference and could help your local community.

The panel meet at least once a month (transport or expenses can be provided). All welcome!

To get involved please contact getinvolved@nph.org.uk



TELEPHONE NUMBER CHANGE

Our outgoing telephone number has recently changed.

When we ring you the phone number will now show as **01604 527483**.

The telephone number to contact us has not changed and is still **0300 330 7003**.

Fire safety

We recognise that following the festive season there are often excess amounts of household waste, packaging and recycling.

This is also a time when people will often discard older items that are no longer required. NPH is committed to keeping the estates and areas that it manages clean, tidy and clear of refuse. We also adopt a zero tolerance approach to fire safety in communal areas which means that areas such as landings, corridors, lifts, shared entrances and gardens must be kept free of items that may cause a fire risk or cause an obstruction. This includes small things such as door mats and plant pots to larger items such as white goods and soft furnishings. By adopting this approach we ensure that the risk of a fire is significantly reduced. We would ask that you ensure you make use of the refuse and recycling facilities provided.



If you spot a potential fire safety issue then please report it to us immediately on 0300 330 7003

Tax Credits are ending

Universal Credit is replacing older benefit schemes such as Tax Credits. Universal Credit should make sure you're getting the financial support you are entitled to in one single benefit scheme. Once you receive Universal Credit you may also be eligible for more financial support to cover other costs, such as housing, bills and childcare.

If you currently receive Tax Credits, you will receive a Universal Credit Migration Notice from DWP in January telling you how to migrate to Universal Credit but there are some important things to be aware of before you make the switch.

Switch to Universal Credit at the right time!

When you receive your Universal Credit Migration Notice from DWP it's really important you **do action it** – ignoring it will stop your existing benefits if you do not migrate across to Universal Credit within the deadline the Notice sets out.

Do not transition to Universal Credit until you have received the Universal Credit Migration Notice from DWP inviting you to do so. If you

migrate to Universal Credit before this Notice you may be worse off.

Who do I ask about this?

If you need any help understanding when to migrate to Universal Credit please speak to your Rent Income Officer who will explain what you need to do and when.

Those receiving Housing Benefits don't need to switch yet

If you receive Housing Benefits as well as Tax Credits you won't yet receive a Universal Credit Migration Notice from DWP so you don't need to migrate to Universal Credit yet. Wait for the DWP to contact you with the next steps.

Email rentincome.nph@nph.org.uk with any queries.

Celebration in honour of NPH volunteers

At the end of 2023, NPH volunteers were invited to a celebration lunch hosted by our Resident Engagement Team. Our Volunteers are an amazing group of people who give up their time in all sorts of ways including maintaining communal green spaces and gardens, helping in our Paint Shop, running community groups and being part of our resident panels.

The event, which was held at the Old Savoy Theatre in Northampton, was an end of year celebration to thank everyone who has volunteered with us in 2023. Cam Whyld, NPH Head of Customer Engagement, delivered a presentation and spoke about what had been achieved over the past twelve months.

Cam also took the opportunity to give a special thank you to three volunteers who have gone over and above supporting their local community. Sarah Hayman, Colin York and Ian Knight each received a voucher in recognition of their efforts.

All volunteers enjoyed a buffet lunch and were given a gift from the Engagement Team. It was a great way to end the year, with people from all different communities swapping stories and answers to the quiz, which was quite a challenge!

If you are interested in finding out about volunteering opportunities for 2024, visit our website for more details:

www.nph.org.uk/volunteering-opportunities



Cam Whyld presents Colin York with his award

Eco Housing Awards Shortlist

The NPH 'Whole House Retrofit Programme' has been nominated as the 'Most Innovative Retrofit/Refurbishment Scheme' at the Housing Digital Innovation Awards 2024 and the 'Best Net Zero Carbon Initiative' at the NHMF Conference Awards 2024.

NPH is leading the way in whole house retrofitting having secured further funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator phase for further retrofitting of more of our NPH managed homes later in 2024.

The retrofit approach chosen by NPH has been explicitly 'fabric first'. This means focusing on minimising heat loss rather than utilising heating technology. This approach means residents feel much warmer as well as reducing carbon footprints.

The project has transformed what used to be some of our least energy efficient homes by reducing space heating demand by up to 70% which will significantly reduce energy bills. These homes were often expensive to heat and energy inefficient, with an EPC rating of band D or below because of how they were originally built. Residents have reported that 'since insulation, once the house is heated it stays warmer longer'.

The current wave of the project, which is due for completion in Spring next year, has been retrofitting a range of energy efficiency measures into homes in the Kingsthorpe and Kingsley areas of the town. The selected properties, which were

all built in the 1920s and 1930s, have seen improvements such as installing external wall insulation, loft insulation top-up, new windows, doors, and mechanical ventilation.

Paul Tucker, NPH's Sustainability Manager, is delighted with the recognition and said: *"West Northamptonshire Council (formerly NBC) was one of only 17 local authority areas to be awarded funding from the SHDF Demonstrator, and we're really pleased that it's helping to make a difference to the lives of NPH customers. The energy efficiency improvements will help to protect these households from the worst impacts of rising energy costs, saving them hundreds of pounds per year on heating bills whilst reducing the carbon footprint of the homes by up to 95% in some cases."*

The recognition from Housing Digital demonstrates how NPH is committed to sustainability in housing and this project shows that changes to older homes can have a big impact, saving people money while helping the environment, by minimising the carbon footprint."



NPH Homes after Energy Efficiency Retrofit Measures.

Exchanging your home

Does your property no longer meet your needs? NPH offers a dedicated service to assist tenants who may want to consider exchanging into a different property. This service includes face-to-face, online and telephone assistance with completing application forms and knowledgeable advice and support from our friendly mutual exchange team.

Our mutual exchange team will act as a single point of contact, right from application stage, through to sign-up.

Did you know, you can exchange into a property that is 1 bedroom larger, or 1 bedroom smaller than your needs?

This is what some of our customers have to say about our service:

'The communication has been excellent'

'The service was very quick and everybody was lovely'

'Everyone I have spoken to has always been helpful and polite'

'The process was very smooth and easy from start to finish'

To get more information or to apply to exchange your home visit this page on our website

www.nph.org.uk/exchange-your-home or collect mutual exchange forms and information from the Guildhall.

Jacqui Pritchard, Housing and Mutual Exchange Officer



Mutual Exchange – Rebecca's story

Rebecca and her family carried out a mutual exchange in 2023. It has worked out really well for Rebecca, here is her story.

Why did you want a mutual exchange?

My last property was in Wootton which though lovely was far away from our family and places of work so we wanted to move closer to them. My daughter has additional needs and that family support is so important.

What property did you have before?

We had a two bedroom bungalow in Wootton before we moved. It was a great village, really quiet and with nice people but as I don't drive I was having to take the bus everywhere which took hours and was a real pain with my daughter's heavy mobility buggy.

What property do you have now and how are you finding it?

We exchanged and now have a 3 bedroom home in Lings. We are loving the area and it's so near my family – a twenty minute walk now gets me to my Mum's house! Lings has been great for us so far and it's also nearer my work so much more convenient overall.

Our new house is lovely and we are working on making it into our forever home. There are repairs to be made and we want to decorate next - it's a work in progress. Occupational Therapy are helping us too with getting the bathrooms fitted out with aides for my daughter.

Life is much easier now and I barely need to use the bus, I just walk everywhere!

How was the mutual exchange process?

We had a few knock backs to begin with as the houses we wanted to swap with didn't want to swap with us but I'm so pleased we hung in there and kept trying. We swapped our house with a lady who just wanted a fresh start in a different area so it has worked out really well for both of us.

Jacqui (the Housing and Mutual Exchange Officer) was really supportive and kept checking in with me to see if we needed any extra help throughout the process.

Would you recommend mutual exchange to other residents?

Definitely! I would say give it a go and just don't give up too quickly, it can take a little while to find the right home but it is so worth it.

HELP ON HOW TO STOP DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION



What causes it?

Many of us will unfortunately experience damp in our homes at some point.

These are some of the main causes of damp, mould & condensation in the home.



Excess moisture



Rain seeping in from damage to the roof



Rain coming in from damaged window



Building defects



Poor ventilation through the property



If your home isn't getting enough heat

What you can do:

There are some easy things you can do around your home to try to prevent damp and mould.

We recommend trying all of these things to actively prevent mould build-up.



Always cook with lids on pans



Keep bathroom and kitchen doors closed and open windows



Dry clothes outside on an airer



Wash areas affected by mould



Dry windows and windowsills



Use your heating system to keep your home as warm as possible



Need to report damp and mould?

Get in touch with our team on 0300 330 7003 or report online at www.nph.org.uk/report-repair

NPH retains erosh Independent Living Standards Accreditation



Erosh is a well-recognised national consortium for older people's housing and has its own quality standards framework.

Housing providers can apply for an erosh Independent Living Standards accreditation. Being awarded the accreditation enables housing providers to demonstrate the quality of their independent living accommodation and services against nationally recognised standards. We are delighted that NPH has been recently assessed by erosh and has retained our erosh Independent Living Standards accreditation.

In order to maintain accreditation, there is a rigorous annual review process. It involves erosh assessors meeting with staff and residents and reviewing the services and support we provide. The assessor who visited this year was very interested in all the tenancy support NPH offers including supporting tenants dealing with issues such as domestic abuse, financial hardship, anti social behaviour, substance misuse, downsizing, hoarding and

many other issues. The assessors also looked into the close partnership working practices between NPH and West Northamptonshire Council to support those experiencing rough sleeping, homelessness and settle them into longer term housing.

The erosh assessment team were impressed with NPH's wide range of services provided for our older residents and vulnerable tenants who may require some additional support in their homes. The assessment team highlighted how we help residents with adaptation needs and mentioned this was of a particularly high standard.

NPH are delighted to retain the accreditation for another year, it really confirms our commitment to providing an excellent standard of older people's housing and supporting our most vulnerable tenants.



Investing in your neighbourhoods

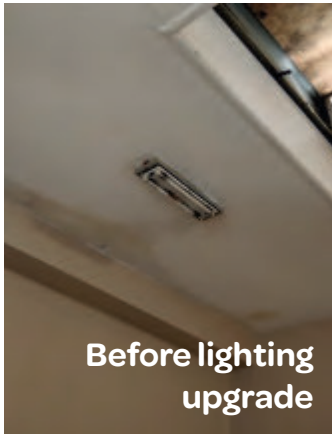
We continue to work hard to carry out planned improvement programmes to NPH managed homes. Here is some information about the type of work carried out and how you can get involved in shaping the improvement programmes going forward.

NPH undertakes all manner of planned improvement works to NPH managed homes including:

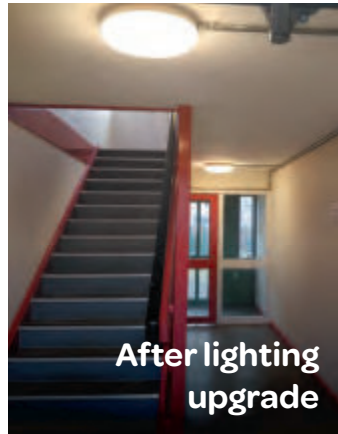
- New kitchens
- New bathrooms
- Heating systems
- Full electrical rewires
- Aids and adaptations
- External works such as roofing, block cleaning, external lighting, communal flooring, energy efficiency works
- And more besides

Here are some before and after photos to demonstrate the breadth of improvement works recently carried out...





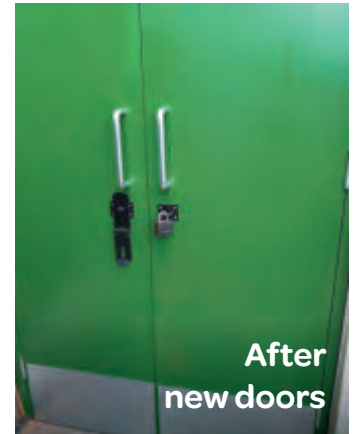
Before lighting upgrade



After lighting upgrade



Before new doors



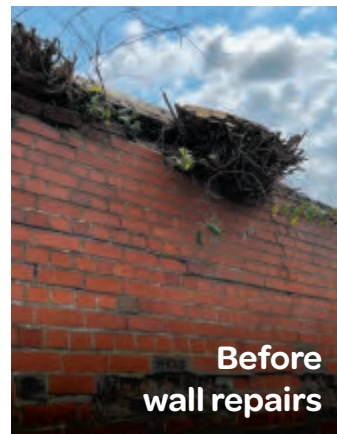
After new doors



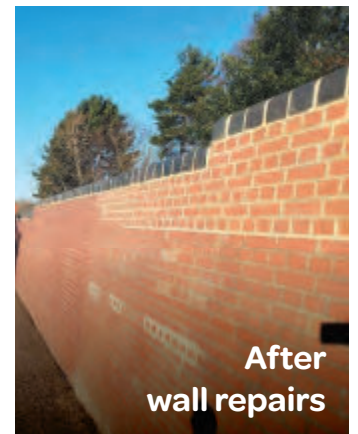
Before new path



After new path



Before wall repairs



After wall repairs

Tell us what you think about our plans to make your homes better

We're looking to involve residents to shape future plans for improving NPH managed homes. We'll be looking for feedback on topics including:

- Evaluating the planned programmes to update homes
- Reviewing options such as kitchen door colours, cabinet handles, worktops, taps and front door colours
- Looking into NPH's sustainability and energy efficiency measures
- Community ideas to improve your area
- And much more besides!

Interested in having your say on how NPH plans its improvement programmes for your homes?

You'll get to see behind the scenes of how NPH delivers investment in our homes with planned improvement programmes and you'll make a difference to future planning, it's a great way to get involved.

Transport or expenses can be provided to allow you to attend.

Please email getinvolved@nph.org.uk for more details



HAPPY TO HELP

COMMUNITY FUND

Over the Summer the Northampton Nene Angling Club were awarded funding from the Happy to Help Community Grant Fund towards fishing lessons with professional Angling Coach, Sue Galloway.

Happy to Help is a social enterprise subsidiary of NPH (funded by contributions from our contractor partners). The Community Fund can give small grants and support to residents and community groups to help make a positive difference.

The fishing sessions, designed specifically for young people, were held at the lake at Abington Park. Budding anglers were shown how to bait a fishhook, how to cast a line and how to return a catch safely into the water.

Sue Galloway, who was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to young people and disadvantaged communities this year, hopes to encourage more people to take up the sport. She said fishing is great for families to do together and *"spend more time in the*

outdoors, enjoying nature and hopefully being able to maintain a healthy well-being."

Brothers Romeo, aged 11 and Hades, aged 7, were brought along by their Grandad to try fishing for the first time. Romeo said: *"I'm used to playing sports like rugby, which is very different. I like that its peaceful and I get time to think."*

The grant from Happy to Help has provided essential equipment for participants to use, removing any cost-barriers for those wanting to have a go.

If you have an activity that would benefit the community and could use some additional funding you can apply for a grant from our Happy to Help Communities Fund. Visit our website for more info at **www.nph.org.uk/happy-help-cic**



Are you getting the most out of your recycling service?

Help the environment and keep communal bin areas tidier by recycling items in the right way.

Are you a bit of wishcycler, putting things in the recycling in the hope they can be recycled, even if you are unsure?

Recycling is a great way to help the environment, however, it is important to put the right thing into the right bin. Putting the wrong items into the recycling bin may contaminate the whole load, which means that it won't be recycled.

Top recycling tips:

1. Check out what is accepted in your recycling bin
2. If you are unsure, it's better to put it in the general waste bin
3. Always wash or rinse out recycling to remove food waste
4. Remove any non-recyclable parts of an item before recycling.

Head to our
website to
find out more



West
Northamptonshire
Council



westnorthants.gov.uk/waste



Scan
here



New homes for West Northants...

We continue to be busy building much needed new homes for NPH residents across the county. Here's an update about a few of our current building projects.

- We are developing eight different sites all previously derelict **garages and infill scrubland** (including Derwent Drive and Swale Drive shown here)
 - Land previously used for fly tipping and anti- social behaviour is being repurposed into new family homes
 - Each site has a mix of two, three and four bedroom houses, bungalows, flats and maisonettes – all designed for the needs of the area
 - Will be finished in 2024 with some ready as early as the Summer
- The first phase of building work at **Castle Street in Northampton** continues apace
 - Will comprise 24 family homes – a mixture of two, three and four bedroom houses
 - Homes will be ready in the Summer of 2024
- Building at **New South Bridge Road** is going well
 - The development of 28 new one and two bedroom apartments is talked about more on pages 16 and 17
- All properties have been designed to be highly energy efficient with an EPC rating of at least B to save residents money on their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions
- Homes are being built to Nationally Described Space Standards which ensures rooms are really generously sized



Derwent Drive



Swale Drive



Castle Street

Stock Condition Survey programme

NPH are undertaking a Stock Condition Survey (SCS) programme and many of you will have received a letter asking you to arrange an appointment. The survey involves assessing the condition of each NPH managed home to help us plan future improvement programmes.

Stock Condition Surveys must be carried out to comply with the Regulator for Social Housing requirements, the Government's 'Decent Homes Standards' and Health and Safety Regulations so it's really important that you arrange a survey for your home.

Companies Pennington Choices and ARK Consultancy are carrying out the surveys on behalf of NPH. The companies will contact you directly to ask you to make an appointment for them to complete your survey. You can book the survey to suit you (including at the weekend) and it will take approximately one hour to complete.

We aim to complete a large volume of Stock Condition Surveys between now and March 2024. During the Survey the surveyor will inspect the inside of your home, your loft if applicable and external areas.

Homes that aren't inspected in this round of surveys will be surveyed over the course of 2024/2025. If you haven't yet received any communication from us or from Pennington Choices or ARK Consultancy then your home will be included in the next round of surveys and you don't need to do anything yet.

As part of this round of Stock Condition Surveys NPH residents will have the option to be entered into a free prize draw which will be open until March 2024. The winner will receive £100 of £100 of shopping vouchers for a supermarket of your choice. At your survey appointment the

Surveyor will enter you into the prize draw.

NPH aims to reduce carbon emissions and this involves making homes more energy efficient and more affordable to run. To achieve this, we are striving to obtain an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for all properties and this will also be created during the Stock Condition Survey carried out at your home. Having EPCs for all our homes will help us achieve our carbon reduction ambitions.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the residents who have supported NPH in giving us access to their homes to complete the Stock Condition Survey so far. We can't stress enough the importance of providing safe, sustainable, enriched homes for Northampton residents for years to come and this survey really helps us achieve this.





Alex Burghart - MP, Lee Rowley - Minister for Housing, Steve Feast - NPH CEO, Stuart Docker - NPH Head of Development at New South Bridge Road

Minister for Housing visits New South Bridge Road Building Project

We recently welcomed a visit from the new Minister for Housing, Lee Rowley, alongside Alex Burghart MP to one of our social housing developments.

Steve Feast, NPH CEO, along with Stuart Timmis, WNC Executive Director, Place, Economy and Environment, gave Mr Rowley and Mr Burghart a tour of the site on New South Bridge Road, which will comprise of 28 one and two-bed flats when finished. The ministers were delighted to see positive progress on this site which will deliver much-needed new housing.

Accompanying the ministers were Andrew Lewer, MP for Northampton South, Council Leader

Jonathan Nunn, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Housing, Cllr Adam Brown and Portfolio Holder for Finance and, Cllr Malcolm Longley.

Steve Feast, NPH CEO said, *"The development at New South Bridge Road has demonstrated how NPH, working closely with WNC and local suppliers, can achieve great quality, fit-for-purpose family homes that will serve our community for years to come."*

The New South Bridge Road development is of particular interest to Mr Rowley, due to an essential funding contribution received from the Department of Levelling Up and Communities (DLUHC) via the One Public Estate programme.

The funding awarded to WNC was through the Brownfield Land Release Funding (BLRF) scheme which aims to unlock council-owned sites for housing by addressing site viability issues. Prior to the start of the building works last year, the former brownfield land had been unused for several years and the funding from the DLUHC enabled extensive remedial works to completely clear the site and make it suitable for development into housing.

Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Lee Rowley MP said: *"We want to build the new homes people need and brownfield land in places like Northampton is crucial to delivering the Long-Term Plan for Housing."*

"Our £470,000 funding will transform this unloved and unused brownfield site into a thriving new neighbourhood, help more families on to the property ladder and deliver the affordable homes that this community needs."

Cllr Adam Brown, Deputy Leader of West Northamptonshire Council and Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure, said: *"It was a pleasure to welcome Mr Rowley and Mr Burghart to Northampton to see first-hand the high-quality affordable homes that we are building. The New South Bridge Road development is one of many social housing projects in the pipeline being delivered in West Northamptonshire as we continue to take significant steps towards providing more affordable housing and sustaining the national housing demand."*

"We are grateful for the £470,000 funding from central Government's Brownfield Land Release Fund which has enabled us to work with local contractors to deliver this project on what was formerly undeveloped land. We look forward to seeing the project completion next year."

The development is currently on schedule and predicted for completion late summer 2024.



New South Bridge Road

Briar Hill Young Residents Leave No Rubbish Behind



Some young residents gave up their time to help the Northants Litter Wombles litter pick around Briar Hill.

Alison, from Northants Litter Wombles said:

"The young people who help out are always full of energy and enthusiasm. They really care about their surroundings and are especially protective of their green spaces. We really appreciate their support."

Northants Litter Wombles arranged a morning of fun craft activities at our Blackberry Lane

Community Hub for the young volunteers to thank them for their support. The craft activities included making a bug hut from recycled materials.

Northants Litter Wombles are just one of the community groups who make use of our community hubs for activities. To find out more, visit <https://www.nph.org.uk/community-hubs>



Tenant survey coming soon...

Our quarterly Tenant Survey started in October last year where we welcomed your feedback to help shape our services and priorities.

We will be looking at developing a new Corporate Plan over the coming months where we will use the feedback already received. We will be continuing to gather tenant input over the coming months to help shape our plan with the things most important to you, so please look out for a survey coming your way soon.



GARDENING SERVICE

WINTER TIDY-UP

While it's quiet now might be the time to have a tidy-up. Get leaves raked, and the garden cleared so there's less to do when spring comes.

Our Gardening Service is subsidised and provides you with peace of mind. Contact us to request a quote by phone, email or online form.



Cost and information:

- £15 per hour
- £60 for half a day
- £100 for a full day
- We require a 10% deposit for half and full day jobs
- Customers can make a pay-what-you-feel donation on top if they wish which helps us to keep the prices low



How do I book?

Fill in the form on our website:
<https://www.nph.org.uk/gardening-service>



0300 330 7003

happytohelp.nph@nph.org.uk



Winter Wordsearch



There's a Winter theme to our wordsearch.
Can you find all 10 words?

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

- ☐ Winter
- ☐ Snowflake
- ☐ Jacket
- ☐ Skiing
- ☐ Cold
- ☐ Ice
- ☐ Frost
- ☐ Blizzard
- ☐ Chilly
- ☐ Arctic

We'll share the answers on our Facebook page, **NPH Connect**, shortly.

