



ENGLISH RURAL

SUMMER 2019

# THE Bulletin

RESIDENTS' NEWSLETTER FROM ENGLISH RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION



*Springtime rainbow in Warehorne*

## Hello & Welcome...

To the Summer 2019 edition of The Bulletin.

It has been another exciting few months for English Rural, with the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer and welcoming new members of staff to the team. See inside for all the details, plus the usual hints and tips and an update from the maintenance team.

I need your help and participation for future issues. This newsletter is for the Residents' and your input is important. This time we are particularly keen to hear about local community events that you are involved in. Did you know that English Rural has sometimes helped to sponsor community events that engage with and benefit our residents? Why not get in touch about yours!

As always, we are also keen to hear from you about any other contributions or suggestions. Please get in touch with fellow resident and newsletter editor Mel by emailing: [melanie.olymbios@englishrural.org.uk](mailto:melanie.olymbios@englishrural.org.uk)

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# BUSINESS STRATEGY REVIEW

In a rapidly changing political and economic environment, it is essential that English Rural has a robust plan to take them forward. In February 2019 the Board agreed a 5-year plan to revise the business strategy to cover 2019-2024. The organisation's purpose is "The provision and management of affordable housing for local people in rural villages in England and to be an advocate for affordable rural housing". This revised business strategy shows how English Rural will effectively use resources to deliver on its purpose.

English Rural holds a unique position in the housing association sector. Its brand goes beyond that which is typical for an organisation of its size. A reputation for delivering quality homes and services, alongside extensive advocacy work at national and local level has been fundamental in achieving this. The well-documented challenges facing rural communities make this purpose as relevant today as it was when English Rural was formed in 1992.

**English Rural's 7 Strategic Ambitions:** *English Rural continues to be in good financial health. The updated 30-year financial business plan that has been prepared alongside this revised business strategy shows that the organisation has longevity and business resilience:*

<b>1</b> 	<b>Work with residents and deliver services in an accountable way</b> Proud to be an early adopter of the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants' plan; put the safety of residents first and be 100% compliant with gas, electrical and fire safety checks; innovate using technology and launch a resident self-service portal within 12 months; be a more transparent and accountable organisation and consult with residents to set clear performance targets.
<b>2</b> 	<b>Grow by building new homes in partnership with rural communities</b> Steadily growing by building new homes is fundamental to our purpose and business model. English Rural has always prided itself on being community-led and delivering high quality homes that meet local needs.
<b>3</b> 	<b>Play a leading &amp; influential role nationally within the rural housing sector</b> The success of achieving English Rural's purpose and business strategy is dependent on continued political support for and investment in affordable rural homes.
<b>4</b> 	<b>Invest in and deliver good governance</b> Good governance underpins the effectiveness and health of any organisation. English Rural is no exception.
<b>5</b> 	<b>Invest in securing and keeping the best talent</b> English Rural has a successful record of attracting and retaining high performing and dedicated members of staff.
<b>6</b> 	<b>Actively seek partnership opportunities with other smaller rural housing associations</b> The English Rural brand is beyond that of a usual organisation of the same size. It is already a trusted partner for other smaller rural housing associations.
<b>7</b> 	<b>Use assets effectively and support sound financial health</b> English Rural's strong financial position enables it to build more affordable rural homes, invest in resident services and keep a strong independent brand and reputation.

## ALL CHANGE AT HQ

With the retiring of Adrian Maunders as CEO, English Rural welcomes the appointment of Martin Collett to the post of Chief Executive. Martin commenced the position in March 2019. Congratulations Martin in your new role.

There have also been some structural changes to the staffing team that will secure added talent and skills needed to deliver the evolving business strategy. These proposed changes support the Chief Executive's future vision.





## POTENTIAL MERGER – NEW FOREST VILLAGES HOUSING ASSOCIATION

The New Forest Villages Housing Association was established in the 1980s to provide affordable housing in the New Forest District. In recent years they have worked with English Rural to meet this objective. After considering a range of options it was agreed that seeking a merger between English Rural and The New Forest Villages Housing Association was the best way to meet objectives whilst maintaining expertise.

No decision has been made yet, but a programme is being worked to, assuming both Boards are satisfied, that will see a decision being taken in the summer. Any new arrangement, if agreed, is likely to take effect in Autumn 2019.

### AGM

Our AGM will be held in September this year. For full details please contact Karen Eagles at [karen.eagles@englishrural.org.uk](mailto:karen.eagles@englishrural.org.uk)



Please welcome Dave Barrowcliff and Beau Rickerby to the English Rural Team.

**Beau joins English Rural as Head of Property Services** – This role reflects the growing importance of good asset management which is illustrated by the growth in business investment and increased regulatory interest in value for money and consumer standards.

**Dave joins English Rural as Communications Officer**

– This position will support the Chief Executive with the growing national advocacy role undertaken by English Rural. A dedicated communications role supports the organisation's growing scale and profile and provides resource to develop media, brand and marketing.

## TOGETHER WITH TENANTS

English Rural is proud to be working with the National Housing Federation as an Early Adopter of its newly launched 'Together with Tenants' plan. The plan aims to build relationships between residents and their landlords, encouraging residents to play a greater part in influencing the decisions made about their homes and services, with a focus on four key action points:

1. A new requirement in the Code of Governance for boards to be accountable to their tenants and residents.
2. A new Charter setting out what tenants and residents can expect from their housing association landlord.
3. Tenant and resident oversight and scrutiny of the charter, with a report on how their landlord is doing against the charter commitments.
4. A closer link with regulation.

We will be working with residents to develop our response to the plan and to strengthen our approach, giving residents a greater voice to both influence and scrutinise how our services are delivered.

If you would like further information on the Together with Tenants plan or how you can play a part please contact Terri Browning on [terri.browning@englishrural.org.uk](mailto:terri.browning@englishrural.org.uk)

<https://www.housing.org.uk/topics/together-with-tenants/>



## NEW DEVELOPMENT



### A NEW DEVELOPMENT...WIDFORD

English Rural recently completed our first scheme in East Hertfordshire and our first scheme working with the Chelmsford developer Stonebond Properties.

Work got underway at Meadow Gardens, Widford, in June 2018 with completion of the two 1-bedroom maisonettes and five 2-bedroom homes in March 2019. The two shared ownership and five affordable rent properties were all allocated to people with local connections, maintaining family links and contact with local employment. The community-led scheme designed by architects Arcady placed the homes within a wide landscaped area linked by simple pathways, creating safe and pleasant surroundings for young families. These spacious and comfortable low-energy homes are based on a Fabric-First approach helping to keep energy bills as low as possible.

One of our purchasers said "Me and my family are so happy to be buying a shared ownership property in such a lovely village like Widford. English Rural have been more than helpful letting me see the property even when it was still being built. Can't wait! Thanks again."



**HEATING** - Although it is usual for tenants to turn heating appliances off during the summer months, it is recommended that rather than turn the appliance off, the thermostat is used to control the temperature. It is also advisable to run your own frequent checks before the winter months by occasionally turning the thermostat up to ensure heating works. This will reduce the number of emergency callouts once the winter months arrive and reduce the number of tenants without heat and hot water.

**Please note:** *During the summer months (April - Oct) a lack of heating and hot water should not be reported as an emergency. The repairs team will also ascertain whether there are any elderly or vulnerable tenants before informing contractors.*

**EMERGENCY REPAIRS** - The emergency repairs line is not to be used for general enquiries, as advisors do not have access to full details. Only repairs that are deemed to be an emergency will be allocated to an operative.

**Please note:** *Operatives are usually only able to make safe and not repair by isolating water supplies and heating appliances. They may not have access to necessary parts required out-of-hours. In these situations, the follow-up repairs will be dealt with by the repairs team when the office reopens. We understand that it is difficult to provide access during the working day, however this out-of-hours service is for emergency repairs only.*

**BBQs** - If we should get a warm summer, please be sensible when using BBQs and keep them well away from the property, fencing and any other flammable materials.

**PEST CONTROL** - Wasps should be dealt with by pest control (this is the tenant's own responsibility). We advise that you contact your local authority who have a pest control department and can assist.

**Bees** - we recommend that local beekeepers are contacted as they are more than happy to come and retrieve them for you.

Please dispose of **garden rubbish** appropriately rather than building large compost heaps as this makes a lovely nest for vermin. Unfortunately, vermin are common in properties in rural areas. Once rats and mice are established in the garden, they will eventually make their way into your homes (especially lofts and cavity walls) to keep warm in the winter. Pest control is the tenant's own responsibility and if vermin are not controlled appropriately, then this will become a bigger and more unpleasant problem for everyone.

**WINDOW PANES** - Please take care when cutting grass and strimming. Stones hitting windows are a common mishap. Children playing in gardens and accidentally breaking panes are another common accident. Broken window panes that occur due to these types of accidents are the tenant's responsibility. It is often cheaper for the tenant to source local contractors to replace broken panes, rather than incurring a rechargeable cost.

**FENCING** - English Rural understand that current tenants (or previous tenants) will erect their own wooden fence panels. When these are in need of repair, this is the responsibility of the current tenant to maintain. English Rural will only repair and maintain the privacy panels adjacent to the property, in-between each neighbour. When reporting fencing issues, we recommend that tenants provide pictures of the fencing. These are usually better when taken from an upstairs window, or from a distance, so that the repairs team can ascertain exactly whose fencing it is.

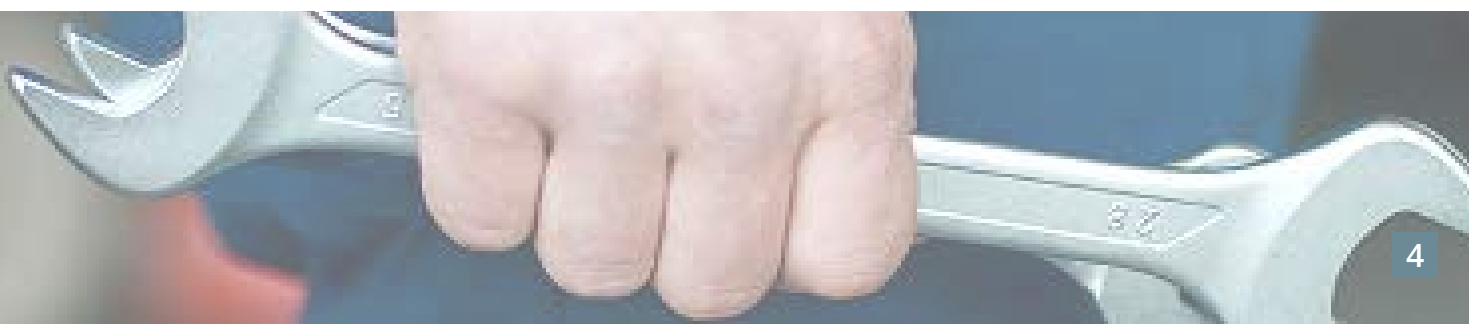
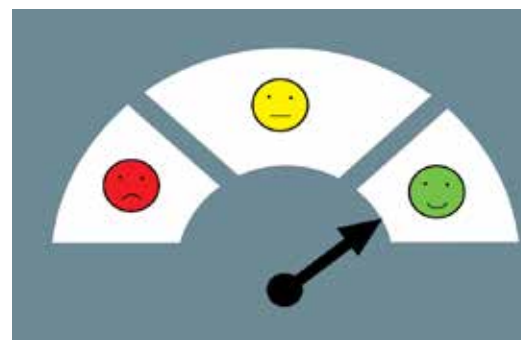
**GROUND MAINTENANCE** - Our contractors are currently commencing with their schedules. Please remember ground maintenance can be restricted depending on weather and some areas may not be maintained due to Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 which reads that "it is an offence to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built, or to intentionally kill, injure or take chicks or adults, or intentionally take or destroy any eggs". Contractors will only carry out work from schedules provided by the Association, therefore please refrain from requesting additional work.

**REPAIR SERVICE** - If you are unhappy with the quality of a repair, the way your repair was handled, or the performance of the contractor, please contact the repairs team to discuss.

**Repairs must be reported to the repairs team and not with the contractor directly.**

The repairs team need to monitor the contractor's performance, value for money and your repairs progress, and can only do this effectively if we are made aware. We have found that our contractors are often asked to carry out additional work when they are on site, however they will not do this without instruction from the repairs team.

*We are currently reviewing the service provided by our out-of-hours provider to ensure that English Rural continue to provide residents with a good, reliable, emergency repairs reporting service.*







When money is tight and bills are mounting, one of the many 'payday' money lenders may seem attractive. However, as easy as it may seem to obtain the money, this is not a solution and can quickly escalate any debts. Payday loans are extremely expensive to pay back, with a APRs typically exceeding 1000%. The £100 you borrowed soon becomes £1000 and what looked like a quick debt fix, can quickly turn into a nightmare.

If you need to take out a loan and are unable to gain one from a high street bank, then your local Credit Union is a safe place to borrow money.

Credit unions are small, non-profit financial organizations set up by members with something in common to benefit their community. Credit unions cover the UK offering loans, savings and current accounts to their members. They can be a welcome alternative to expensive payday loans or doorstep lending. But they're not just for those struggling financially. They also appeal to those who want to bank ethically and benefit their community. To find out more about your local Credit Union, talk to your local council or contact English Rural.

## UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE RESIDENTS SCRUTINY GROUP

### CHRISTINE KNIGHT

**Christine has been a resident of English Rural for the past 13 years and has been contributing to resident involvement activities for almost as many years. She lives in Kent with her family and works within Kent Specialist Children's Services.**



Following the devastating events at Grenfell, landlords have come under increased scrutiny to ensure they are listening to and responding to their residents and there has never been a more important time for residents to get involved.

As the Chair of the Residents Scrutiny Group and former Resident Board Member I have seen first-hand how we can use our collective voice to make positive changes to the services we receive. The Scrutiny Group plays a key role in monitoring the performance of English Rural and also gives residents the opportunity to have a real input into all aspect of service delivery.



*Following the last meeting English Rural are proud to be an Early Adopter of the National Housing Federation's 'Together With Tenants' plan and residents will continue to influence the response to this.*

NATIONAL HOUSING FEDERATION

together with tenants

early adopter

The next Residents Scrutiny Group meeting will be scheduled for Summer 2019 (date to be announced). During the meeting, residents will discuss our response to 'Together with Tenants' and look at how English Rural can ensure its services meet the commitments set out in the plan.

The Scrutiny Group is just one way residents can help influence and implement the 'Together with Tenants' plan and other aspects of involvement across the organisation.

English Rural are also keen to hear from residents who perhaps can't commit to attending meetings but could become part of a 'virtual engagement group', offering input and responses online or remotely. If you would like to get involved please contact the Housing Services Administrator for more information on 020 7820 7930 (option 2) or [terri.browning@englishrural.org.uk](mailto:terri.browning@englishrural.org.uk)



If you need free and confidential debt advice contact agencies such as the following for support:

[www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/)

## PETS CORNER

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014, the new Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 came into effect in England and Wales. This Act closes the legal loophole in the current Dangerous Dogs Act, to cover private as well as public property. This now protects all visitors to your property including postal carriers and couriers. It also covers dog-on-dog attacks plus the very sad crime of dog attacks upon service dogs. Punishments and jail sentences have also been increased.

In rural areas, the incidents of dog attacks on sheep are also on the rise. Please ensure that you follow the Countryside Code and keep all dogs on leads in areas where there are livestock.

## SUMMER WORDSEARCH

Can you find all 18 hidden fun in the sun words?

- ☀ beach
- ☀ bees
- ☀ bucket
- ☀ daytrips
- ☀ flipflops
- ☀ heat
- ☀ holiday
- ☀ icecream
- ☀ lollies
- ☀ rain
- ☀ salad
- ☀ sand
- ☀ spade
- ☀ sun
- ☀ suncream
- ☀ sunglasses
- ☀ sunhat
- ☀ wasps

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

## Protecting livestock – know the law

'Worrying' livestock is a crime under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

If you are on agricultural land and a dog you own or are in charge of **attacks** or **chases** livestock in a way that may cause **injury, suffering** or **loss**, you could be **prosecuted, fined** and **ordered to pay compensation**.

Under the Animals Act 1971, a person acting to **protect livestock** may be able to **kill or injure a dog**, without incurring any criminal or civil liability, if he or she believes it is worrying livestock.



**Please keep your dog on a lead.**

If you see a dog worrying livestock, please call the police on **999**.



Protecting and serving the people of Kent



## A ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

With HRH The Princess

Royal as our Patron,

English Rural staff

members were delighted

to be invited to and attend

a sun-soaked Garden Party

at Buckingham Palace this

month.

## CONTACT US



[info@englishrural.org.uk](mailto:info@englishrural.org.uk)

[www.englishrural.org.uk](http://www.englishrural.org.uk)

## REPAIRS LINE

Tenants should report repairs and required property maintenance on the number below:

**0800 121 4422**

(9am to 5pm Mon - Fri)

In case of emergencies:

**0808 168 6246**

(out of hours)

## OFFICE

Accounts, lettings, sales, rents, standing orders, permissions and other general enquiries:

## English Rural Housing Association

Astolat

Coniers Way

New Inn Lane

Burpham

Guildford

Surrey

GU4 7HL

Tel: 020 7820 7930

## HOUSING MANAGERS

### Steven Bland

Mobile: 07552 126678

### Jade Clark

Tel: 020 7820 7930 (Option 2)

Mobile: 07552 126686

### Luke Versteeg

Tel: 020 7820 7930 (Option 2)

Mobile: 07552 126679