

# Welcome to Rivers Meet



*For you - for your community - not for profit.*



## A year to celebrate

Two Rivers Housing had many reasons to celebrate its 10th anniversary year. We confirmed our vision, smashed our target for improving properties, completed more than 80 new homes for our tenants and launched Centigen Facilities Management – a new business venture to fund our future aspirations. We won an award for training young people, earned the highest possible recognition from the national Quality Housing Services and marched our way into the prestigious list of the Top 100 best companies to work for. Then we rounded off an excellent year by moving to an office that has achieved the internationally-recognised BREEAM 'Excellent' standard for energy-efficiency. All of this gives us a fantastic base from which to launch the next chapter in our exciting history.





## More than just a landlord

Two Rivers Housing has been providing quality affordable homes in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire since 2003.

We offer a wide choice of modern and traditional properties that meet current standards of heating and insulation, and benefit from a rolling programme of refurbishment and upgrades. We also build new homes with energy-efficiency and sustainability high on the list of features.

### In our first 10 years we:

- spent £55 million on upgrading people's homes.
- double-glazed 1,600 properties.
- fitted 2,500 new kitchens.
- installed 2,900 heating systems.
- invested £1.2 million in adaptations for elderly or disabled people.
- built 500 eco-homes.

However, that's not all we do.

- As a registered charity, we invest surplus funds back into our properties, the communities where they belong and the people who live there.
- We support neighbourhood initiatives and local groups, helping them to provide play facilities, cafes, woodland walks and gardens, for example.
- We use local firms wherever possible to support those who live and work in the area.
- We run an active – and award-winning – apprenticeship programme to train young people for careers in office skills, construction and craftsmanship.
- Future ambitions include supporting tenants to make the most of the internet and helping them to set up their own businesses.

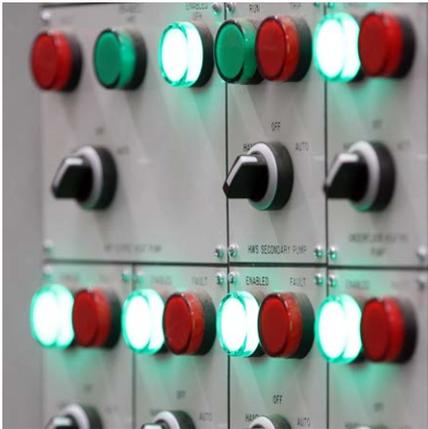


## An office for the future

In early 2014, Two Rivers moved to its purpose-built office in Newent.

Rivers Meet is packed with features to save and generate energy, making it better for the environment and cheaper to run. In fact, we estimate our running costs to be half those of our previous office, leaving more money to invest in homes and services for our residents.

Our 'A' energy-efficiency rating is higher than most other brand new buildings, and it's the first new-build office in Gloucestershire to secure the coveted BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, which shows we mean what we say about keeping our environmental impact low.



# A positive working environment

These are just some of its features:

## Energy

We have installed low-energy appliances and fittings throughout the building to keep running costs as low as possible.

The amount of natural light reduces the need for artificial light but, when we do need extra, we can adjust the levels required. The lights will also turn off automatically when not in use, saving energy and money.

The office roof has been fitted with a large number of photovoltaic (solar) panels that provide instant 'free' power. We expect to generate around 20,000kWh per year, and the 'feed-in tariff' will pay us for every unit (kW) we make.

A display panel in Reception clearly shows how much energy we are generating and saving, minute-by-minute, every day.

## Water

Fittings and appliances have been specially-selected to economise on water and we will closely monitor our use. A leak detection system is installed on the main, helping us to save a valuable natural resource and reduce our water bills too.

## Heating, ventilation and insulation

An innovative heating and ventilation system takes fresh air from outside and heats or cools it to the required temperature. Any remaining heat is extracted before it is expelled from the building. The result is an energy-efficient continuous flow of air which keeps the office healthy and comfortable to work in.

The office also meets high standards of insulation and air-tightness which further help to cut our running costs.

One of the main attractions of Rivers Meet as a place to work is the amount of natural light streaming in.

The interior is bright, modern and designed with flexibility in mind. The open plan office areas improve communication and shared working, and the various project desks, meeting rooms and breakout areas offer many options for formal and informal meetings.

We cover a wide geographical area and staff are encouraged to work where they will be most productive. They can use the office, base themselves at a satellite desk in one of our HomePlus schemes or they can work from home if appropriate. This means they spend less time travelling (plus reduced vehicle emissions) and more time providing services for our residents.

The garden area by the front door is an ideal spot for lunchbreaks and informal discussions and our visitors are welcome to use it, too.



## Working with nature

We wanted the office to be sympathetic to its rural surroundings, as well as a great place to work.

The 5,500 trees, shrubs and grasses planted on the site will provide a wide variety of new habitats for wildlife. Many of these plants are native to the area, including some specific local varieties of fruit tree.

### To minimise our impact on the environment, we have:

- designed the garden around native and wild plants and trees to encourage birds, butterflies, animals and insects.
- planted a sedum roof as a natural haven for wildlife.
- retained an old bramble hedge to provide food and shelter for small animals, insects and birds.
- left an area of ground bare to allow natural regeneration of the original plant species.
- built bird and bat boxes into the office walls.
- used natural local materials for the courtyard and the oak pergola.

## Keen to be 'green'

We want to be as 'green' as possible and will continue to recycle as much of our waste, including compostable products, as we can.

We have also fitted an underground storage facility to catch oil or petrol that spills on the car park. An innovative device then alerts us when we need to arrange safe disposal of these pollutants.

Many of our staff are keen cyclists and the bicycle storage area – plus shower facilities – will encourage those who like to bike to work or exercise during the day.

We have also fitted two charging points for electric vehicles that are available for staff and visitors to use.



## Tackling the challenges ahead

It's important our staff have a pleasant and healthy place to work, and Rivers Meet should help us to attract quality staff when we recruit in future. All of which is excellent news for the people we are here to serve.

It's also a good base from which we can take on future challenges, such as:

- Building more affordable homes in rural areas to meet demand, despite reduced Government grants.
- Providing homes with 'extra care' to meet the needs of the older population.
- Raising new income to fund building projects, for example selling homes which are difficult to let and expanding Centigen, our new facilities management business. This will provide extra money we can invest in providing homes people want to live in and can afford.
- Finding ways to make our homes more energy-efficient to help residents cope with the rising cost of living.
- Working with colleagues in other organisations to support residents affected by cuts in health and social care.
- Continuing our work to help tenants budget effectively in the face of changes to the benefits system.





## Joining the Newent community

Moving to Newent confirmed our support for the local economy and our commitment to the future.

We have helped the council to breathe new life into an area of wasteland on the edge of the town that was ready for regeneration. We also plan to develop an adjacent site to meet local demand for homes for older people.

Even the fibre-optic cables laid to the office have spin-off benefits for Newent, bringing faster Broadband speeds for residents and businesses.

We will enjoy being an active member of the community, supporting local businesses, getting involved with school projects and inviting groups and societies to use our facilities. We also hope many of our tenants who live in the area will come to the office and get to know us in person.



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Two Rivers Housing has an important and exciting future ahead. If you would like to find out more – and perhaps learn how you can be part of this – please give us a call, visit our website or, better still, come and see us.

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