

# Tenant Topics

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## Take control – booking is easy!

Our online repair booking service goes from strength-to-strength, nine months after it launched through our website.

This new initiative makes it easy for tenants to report an urgent or routine repair at any time of the day or night – and book a suitable appointment, all at the same time.

*“It’s great not to sit waiting for the phone to be answered, and it must be easier for staff, as well as me. Some people might be afraid of using their computer, but it is so simple, logical and user-friendly that I’m sure even those who don’t go online regularly wouldn’t have any problems. If they do, then Otis is there to help.”*

Otis is our Online Tenant Information Service expert, and he has made a tutorial to show exactly how to use the booking facility. All you need to do is log on to [www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk), and visit ‘My account’. If you haven’t already been issued a username, you can register using your email address, and this will generate a password.

If you need an extra incentive then, from April, everyone who books a repair and appointment online and completes the satisfaction survey will be entered into a free prize draw – with one lucky winner every month.

**Turn to the centre pages to see how easy it is to use.**

If you haven’t tried it yet – perhaps because you’re not very confident with computers – Carol Reynolds has some words of encouragement.

*“I decided to give it a try and was surprised by how easy it was to use,” she said. “At first I thought it would get lost in the system, but it went through and then everything happened really quickly.”*

Carol, who lives in Lydney, has used it again since that first time, and enjoyed the same experience.

Carol Reynolds says our online repair booking service is so easy to use.





# Kome kurling!

If you've been inspired by the Winter Olympics, but deterred by the lack of icy conditions, you might like to try a new sport that's sweeping the Forest.

Kurling has been adapted from the traditional sport of curling, and is being played in community centres by people of all ages. Tiny ball-bearings have done away with the need for an icy surface and it can even be played whilst sitting down.

Our Community Engagement team borrowed kurling equipment from Active Gloucestershire, and has been introducing it within our communities. It has proved so popular that we're expecting it to become a permanent feature on the local social calendar – rivalling the growing interest in soft bowls – and will be buying a set for groups to use.

If you're interested in giving kurling a try, please get in touch with our Community Engagement team.

## Meet your Neighbourhood Housing Advisors



### Roxy Light

- Cinderford
- Ruardean
- Ruardean Woodside
- English Bicknor
- Littledean
- Lydbrook
- Joys Green
- Worrall Hill
- Newnham-on-Severn
- Soudley



### Amy James

- Alvington
- Aylburton
- Blakeney
- Awre
- Hewelsfield
- Brockweir
- Lydney
- St Briavels
- Sedbury
- Tutshill
- Woolaston



### Clive Wilce

- Coleford inc Staunton
- Broadwell & Clearwell
- Coalway
- Redbrook
- Bream
- Sling
- Berry Hill
- Christchurch
- Yorkley
- Parkend
- Whitecroft
- Withington
- Sutton St Nicholas
- Gorsley



### Helen Greenway

- Bromsberrow/Heath
- Churcham, Corse
- Drybrook, Dymock
- Hartpur, Huntley
- Kempley, Longhope
- Mitcheldean, Newent
- Redmarley, Staunton
- Taynton
- Tibberton & Upleadon
- Westbury-on-Severn
- Gloucester, Churchdown
- Ledbury, Stroud
- Stonehouse
- Thrupp

There have been some changes within the Housing team and we thought it would be useful to show you which Neighbourhood Housing Advisor covers which area.



# Sedbury's new Space

The space inside our community building in Sedbury has been transformed through a recent refurbishment.

Walls have been moved to create different room combinations, patio doors make the back garden more accessible, the kitchen is a much more practical space and a lick of paint completes the fresh new look.

Two Rivers Housing owns Sedbury Space. The building – and its neighbouring chip shop – is our only non-residential property and we have encouraged different community groups to use it over the years. Volunteers have worked hard to achieve the makeover, led by community Minister and Chair of Sedbury Space committee, the Rev Janice Hamilton.

Julie Burlow is our representative on the committee. *"Janice wanted it to be a much more usable community space to encourage local people to set up and run their own groups from there," she explained. "The refurbishment has been a huge success. It's brighter, warmer and bigger than before and it's so adaptable and flexible now. I look forward to seeing the community make the most of it."*



Julie Burlow from Two Rivers (left) checks progress with the Rev Janice Hamilton and volunteers Nick Henley and Catrin Karvik.

Adult Education, Learn Direct and other groups will be using Sedbury Space as a base to offer skills training, advice, friendship and social opportunities to people of all ages. The memory café, homework club and youth group will soon return to the new-look premises and it is hoped others will take

advantage of the facility for their own meetings.

The work has been funded with the help of substantial grants from the Barnwood Trust and Gloucestershire Environmental Trust. An official opening is planned for April.

## Preparing to leave home

We have been helping young adults to prepare for leaving home, in a new initiative with students at the Five Acres college campus in Coleford.

### SAVING TIP

Compare prices across all main supermarkets, and find what deals they're offering right now.  
[www.mysupermarket.co.uk](http://www.mysupermarket.co.uk)



A series of workshops, and an open 'marketplace' of stalls by various agencies, gave the 16 to 25-year-olds food-for-thought about the reality of living independently, helping them to plan ahead.

Topics covered by our staff included options for finding a home, the practical responsibilities of renting a property, budgeting, behaviour and house-sharing.

We were also joined by partners such as Gloucestershire Nightstop (which provides emergency and temporary accommodation for young people), the Hollie Gazzard Trust and Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service.

More than 50 students took part and we will be learning from the feedback to see how well it worked, and if it is something we should repeat, and perhaps extend to other schools and colleges.



Many congratulations to Ivy Harris, who celebrated her 90th birthday at Tufthorn Close in Coleford, joined by her family and friends.



*Offer opinions, voice your thoughts, influence decision-making*



*We value your input.  
Take part in tenant consultation  
and influence future services  
and partnership working*



*Help to make things  
happen and shape future  
improvements*

## Debate for change with our Forum

If you like nothing better than a bit of lively debate, then our Tenants' Forum could be just the thing for you!

This group is exclusively for our tenants, and members get to grips with a range of topics – some directly related to Two Rivers, while others tackle wider issues, such as refuse collection and food poverty – and there's always a healthy exchange of views.

Where possible, members like to come up with ideas for improvements.

The Forum has been meeting for a year, and two members – Diane and Alan – have told us why they like to be involved.

Meetings are currently held every other month in the evenings, but we are happy to change the format if enough people would like a daytime event, or run with both evening and daytime events.

The next two Tenant Forum meetings are on 14 May (review of Local Offers) at Watermeads in Lydney, and on 9 July ('Looking forward') at our office in Newent.

If you would like to know more, please contact our Community Engagement team. You can email **communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk** or call **0800 316 0897**.

### Diane Keogh



#### **What does the Tenants' Forum mean to you?**

I find the whole experience all-encompassing by meeting people from all areas and listening to and

discussing ideas with different people on different topics. I always find it informative and learn things I didn't know.

#### **What would you say to get other tenants involved?**

It sounds very informative and covers all aspects of Two Rivers. Lots of people put effort into making it work, so why don't you come along and give it a try?

#### **What are your other interests?**

I love looking at old household items at boot sales and vintage markets. I also enjoy reading and gardening.

### Alan Hawkins



#### **What does the Tenants' Forum mean to you?**

Education and knowledge. First of all, I met a variety of Two Rivers staff, who work in different areas, and it was

interesting to learn about their jobs and how the system works. I also met other tenants from various parts of the Forest. I found the discussions educational where they covered the likes of refuse collection, house adaptations and housing in general. What was interesting was the amount of anti-social behaviour there is and how it affects the quality of life of those troubled by it. Hearing about other situations puts your problems into perspective.

The meetings are constructive and everyone is encouraged to have their

say. If a sign were hung in the meeting room, it would read 'there is a problem; let's find a solution'.

#### **What would you say to get other tenants involved?**

It's good to meet fellow tenants and discuss problems which affect their quality of life and that of their neighbours, and hopefully find a solution to that problem. I think the Tenants' Forum is a good thing. It is a mouthpiece for the tenants to bring matters to the attention of Two Rivers management; matters affecting their quality of life.

Tenants no longer stand alone. Their voice can be heard much louder through the Forum and I am there to help them.

#### **What are your other interests?**

I enjoy being part of the Gloucester and Ospreys wheelchair rugby teams. This gives me a sense of purpose and keeps me fit. Even though I am shattered after the three hours' training, I appreciate the banter with my teammates.



# Spring has sprung!

Spring is here and it's great to see our gardens bursting into life again, which means our grounds maintenance teams are already hard at work.

They have been pruning and weeding throughout the winter, and the summer programme started two weeks early because everything was growing so fast.

Three different levels of service are provided, according to the type of home in each area.

- 1 Most tenants benefit from a 'standard' cut where the cuttings are collected at the beginning of the season, they're left in place mid to late summer, and collected after the final cut of the year.
- 2 HomePlus residents pay extra for an 'enhanced cut' and more attention to detail.
- 3 Areas where our homes are outnumbered by home-owners (who don't contribute towards the cost of the service) receive a 'reduced cut-and-drop' four times a year.

Some of our tenants are estate 'monitors' who check the quality of service and report any problems they find.

The schedule and estate maps can be found on the 'Your home' page of our website. Any questions about the service should be directed to your Neighbourhood Housing Advisor.



Recruitment and training for the Centigen teams began soon after Christmas, as Team Leader Paul Ballinger explained: ***"We believe in giving our staff the right clothing, equipment and skills to do their job well, so our comprehensive training programme includes the safe use of chemicals, ladders and vibrating equipment."***

Team Leader Paul Ballinger (left) advises on the correct and safe use of the strimmer, as the grounds maintenance season gets underway.

## Goodbye to storage heaters

Tenants in two streets in Lydney should be feeling the benefit after their electric storage heaters were replaced with full gas central heating.

Not only will their homes be warmer, but they will have more control over their heating, and they should see a reduction in their bills, too.

These improvements have been possible thanks to a bid we made for some funds from National Grid. The project is aimed at the top 25% of most deprived areas of the UK which are not currently served by gas.

More than 230 applications were submitted for the funding, so we were delighted to be among the successful 45, receiving £132,000 to spend on upgrading 35 homes in Steel Avenue and Klondyke Avenue.

This project comes hot on the heels of our successful insulation programme which was also achieved through bidding for national funds.

Gordon Bourne, who had his loft and walls insulated this winter, said: *"There's been a vast difference and I noticed it straight away. I haven't had a heating bill through yet but it can only reduce*

*my costs. I used to have my heating on at number six, and now it's down to one or two. It's been amazing. Well worth having it done."*

Over the next two years, we hope to be working in partnership with Severn Wye Energy on further projects that will improve the warmth and energy-efficiency of our tenants' homes.



# Your guide to booking a repair online

'My account' is one of the most important sections if you are a Two Rivers resident. It is the gateway to everything related to your home and your tenancy.

Once logged in, go to the 'Repairs and maintenance' tab and select 'Repairs' to show this screen.

# 1

## Repairs

Below you can view details of any repairs that are open, are subject to a future appointment or have been completed within the last 12 months.

The date shown in the 'Status' field could be:

- your appointment date and time slot if we have agreed one with you. ('Appointed')
- the date we are aiming to complete the works by. ('Estimated completion')
- the date when the repair was completed. ('Completed')

[Report a repair →](#)

Show  entries

Search:

Order ID	Date raised	Description	Contractor	Status
350306	19 May 2017	ONLINE - Baths, Basins, Sinks: Basin, Basin in the bathroom; Basin loose; pedestal; 01594719713	PropertyPlus	Estimated completion: 09 Jun 2017
350305	19 May 2017	ONLINE - Baths, Basins, Sinks: Basin; Basin in the bathroom;	PropertyPlus	Estimated completion: 09 Jun 2017

Click the orange 'Report a repair' button (shown in the image above) and use the icons and questions to tell us about the fault.

# 2

Home

Go Back Cancel Request

Please select an item

Search

Baths, basins, showers

Doors, locks

Drains, wastes

Electrics

Floors, stairs

Garden, outhouse

Gutters

Handyperson

Heating

Kitchen fittings

Pipes, taps

Roofs, chimneys

Toilets

Walls, ceilings

Windows

When complete, you will have a **summary screen** that looks like this.

# 3

## Repairs details

Repairs Reference: 350319

Property: RIVERS MEET, CLEEVE MILL LANE, NEWENT, Gloucestershire

Description: ONLINE - Doors, Locks: Frame; Architrave loose or damaged; External door, bedroom; Wooden architrave; Architrave loose; Other; 0800 316 0897; No

Date first Reported: 23 May 2017

Assigned Contractor: PropertyPlus

## Appointments

[Make an Appointment](#)

If you need any help registering or using 'My account', please get in touch with our Customer Service team on **0800 316 0897**, email [customerservices@2rh.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@2rh.org.uk) or chat online with us through our website, [www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk).



Click the '**Make an appointment**' button (shown in image no 3) and you will be shown a calendar. Select your **preferred date** and then choose a **time**.

4

#### Appointments

Please select your preferred day (only days shown in green have appointments available)

< May		June 2017				Jul >
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Finally, you will see a screen that **confirms the repair and appointment time**.

You still have the opportunity to cancel but, if you are happy with your choice, we will email you the next working day to confirm your request.

Your request can now be seen in the '**Repairs**' page (shown in image no 1).

5

#### Repairs Reference: 350319

Property: RIVERS MEET, CLEEVE MILL LANE, NEWENT, Gloucestershire  
Description: ONLINE - Doors, Locks: Frame; Architrave loose or damaged; External door, bedroom; Wooden architrave; Architrave loose; Other; 0800 316 0897; No  
Date first Reported: 23 May 2017  
Assigned Contractor: PropertyPlus

#### Appointments

Date	Time	
Wednesday 14 Jun 2017	12:00 - 16:15	Cancel

This shows the times between which we expect our operative to arrive. However, your appointment slot is 12:00 - 16:30 and you need to be at home throughout this time to allow for the work to be completed.

Thank you for using this service. We will send you an email to confirm the details of your request within one working day.

It really is as simple as that! Why not give it a go?

**Winner!**

Book your repair online through 'My account'  
£25 prize draw every month  
[www.tworivershousing.org.uk/myaccount](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk/myaccount)



# Let the feasting begin!

The feasting has begun, and families are coming together to cook, eat and play together in a brand new project.



The first Family Feast in March saw six families meet after school to prepare and cook an evening meal from surplus



supermarket food that everyone then shared. And while the magic was happening in the kitchen, the children were entertained

The Family Feast is a new initiative between ourselves and the Salvation Army in Broadwell, making the most of their premises, kitchen facilities and staff to make it run smoothly.

*"Busy lives don't always allow time for family meals any more, yet it's an important part of family life," explained Julie Burlow, who leads our Community Engagement team. "This exciting project gives people the space to learn some food preparation and cooking skills and make a meal from scratch for everyone to enjoy together."*

The next Family Feasts are in Broadwell on Tuesdays 10 April, 8 May, 19 June and 10 July, from 4-6pm. Places are limited, but can be booked by contacting the Salvation Army on **01594 839106** or our Community Engagement team – email **communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk** or call **0800 316 0897**.



## New laws on Data Protection

Data protection may not sound like the most interesting of subjects, but new laws will impact on all of us in future – and we're improving our systems to safeguard your information, too.

The UK is currently running through a new Data Protection Bill as part of Brexit preparations and this will include the General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR for short. Although this is European Union legislation, the UK will still be required to comply, even after we leave the EU.

Two Rivers Housing is preparing for this new legislation and we have introduced a new system to make sure any personal information we hold about you is stored safely and processed appropriately.

GDPR has six principles covering issues broadly in line with the current Data Protection Act. There are also eight 'individual rights' which organisations must be able to support. These include the right to be informed about what processing is done with your personal information and the right to have any incorrect information put right. See **www.ico.org.uk** for further details.

This is more stringent than before and there is an overall theme of accountability that organisations should be able to prove they comply with.

This will give you greater guarantees of confidentiality and that

personal information will only be used for legitimate purposes. You can read about what personal information we gather and process in our Privacy Notice in the footer of our website.

We have appointed a Data Protection Officer who may be contacted about any queries you may have about data protection on **dpo@2rh.org.uk**.

We also comply with the Government's Cyber Security standards relating to our IT systems and controls, and passed the Cyber Essentials scheme in December.



### SAVING TIP

*Always shop around if renewing insurance, energy or broadband – and ask your current supplier to match, or improve upon, your best quote.*



# New year, new rent

Letters have recently been sent advising you of your rent charge for 2018/19.

If you claim Universal Credit, you will need to contact the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to advise them of the rent you are expected to pay next year.

Failure to do this could mean you do not receive the correct sum of money from the DWP, and that could affect your ability to keep up your rent payments.

## Save money on DIY

If the arrival of spring inspires you to improve your home, then don't forget the Travis Perkins discount all our tenants are entitled to.

We've negotiated a special deal and, once registered, you can save 10% or more on your purchases (excluding promotions or trade offers). And it's so easy to do.

- Visit or telephone the Cinderford branch (01594 822157) to register, telling them you are a Two Rivers Housing tenant.
- Give them your name, address, telephone number and email address (if you have one).
- Start shopping – online, by phone or in person at any branch.



*Catherine is excited to be able to return to her home village.*

## Catherine came home

*"I was desperate to stay here because of the children, the schools and my family," explained Catherine. "When these came up, I was delighted and so excited to be moving in."*

A scheme of seven homes in Churcham has given the village its first brand new homes in more than 50 years.

With strong support and input from the parish council, we have built one bungalow, two flats and two homes for affordable rent, and two Shared Ownership houses, providing much-needed affordable accommodation for this small community.

These homes were reserved for people with a connection to the

area – welcome news for Catherine Leaver, who feared she would have to leave the village, where she had been born and brought up, as house prices and rent are so expensive.

The road has been named in honour of Churcham's most famous 'son', Private Henry Hook, who was awarded the VC following the Battle of Rorke's Drift in the late 1800s. It was wonderful to be joined by Pte Hook's great niece – who still lives locally – and great great nephew at the official opening.



*Shirley Fowler and Peter Collin join us to commemorate their hero relative at the opening of Henry Hook Close (VC).*



Staff commemorate our  
Top 100 achievement.



# Scaling new heights!

We are celebrating our fourth consecutive year of improvement in the national Top 100 of Best Companies to Work For.

In 2014 we joined the list at 82; in 2015 we climbed to no 65; the following year we achieved no 46; last year we leapt to no 23 and this year we are thrilled to have landed just short of the top 10, at an impressive no 11.

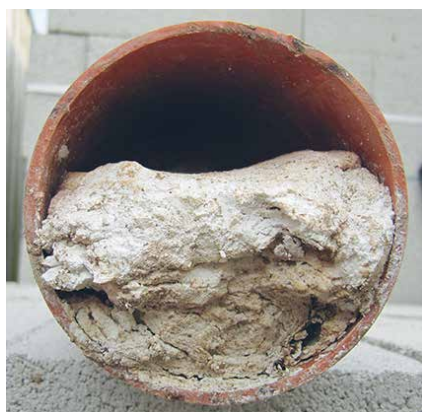
We faced strong competition in the 'not-for-profit' category, although our main challenge came from within as the most important aspect of this is improving our own performance – regardless of how that compares with others.

We know we scored more highly than ever before and that is what we always aspire to.

The Top 100 is based on how well we measure up as an employer – how we treat our staff and the working environment we offer them. We hope that if we look after the people who work for us, they will look after our tenants and other customers, in turn.

We always review the detailed results to learn from the feedback, and aim to improve still further.

## Bust the fat



British households pour seven Olympic swimming pools' worth of fat and cooking oils down their sink each year – and we all feel the effects.

Not only does this make our sinks run slower, but it clogs the drains in the street and can also block the condensate pipework for our boilers. This has the potential for water to back up and flood the boiler and electrical components, causing hundreds of pounds of damage.

So, please find other ways to dispose of fat and oil when you've finished cooking.

- If it will solidify (eg fat, suet or lard), wait for it to set and put it in with your normal rubbish. (Or mix it with nuts and seeds and make a meal for the birds.)
- If it won't set (eg cooking oil), wait for it to cool, then pour it into a sealable container and throw it away as normal.
- Wipe away any excess with a paper towel.

Thank you.

# Love was in the air!

Our free February Valentine's-themed Holiday Club provided fun activities, support, nutritious food, and an opportunity to make new friends, to the many families that attended.

It can be hard and costly to keep children amused and well-fed over the holidays, but the Holiday Club offered the opportunity for everyone to get involved in games and colouring, face painting, arts and crafts, plus the chance to socialise and make new friends.

Stroud-based 'The Wiggly Worm' provided a wonderful hot lunch rounded off with home-made apple pie with yoghurt and milk to drink, all for no charge.

"We had a great time at the Holiday Club", said Katherine Goodall, who is pictured with her daughters Josie (nine), Priya (eight) and Selvi (eight). "We have

Josie, Priya and Selvi Goodall enjoy the Valentine's-themed crafts with their mum at our recent Holiday Club.



been to a few of these events and I have recommended them to friends. It is brilliant to get out of the house and make things together."

The next Holiday Club will be on Thursday 31 May between midday and

2pm at Cinderford Community Church, so make a date in your diary now and come along for some fun!

(Please note all children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.)

## Universal Credit update

Universal Credit has now reached Gloucester city, but introduction to Hereford has been delayed until the summer.

New benefit applicants, and anyone whose circumstances change, will now need to claim Universal Credit for income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working and Child Tax Credit or Housing Benefit.

If you are on a low to moderate wage, of working age and already claim any of these benefits, you will eventually move onto the new system, although the timing depends upon individual circumstances. You will be advised when this applies to you.

Universal Credit is received as a single monthly payment, paid directly into your bank account and you are responsible for making sure this is used to meet any payment commitments, such as your rent.

Our Income Collection team is working hard to contact tenants as soon as a claim is made to discuss their rent accounts, payments and offer advice on various support agencies that may be able to help.

We also have a Welfare, Benefit and Debt Advice team which is on-hand to offer Two Rivers tenants friendly and confidential information and support. They can help with applications, benefit checks, appeal support, budgeting and debt options.

If you would like help applying for Universal Credit, searching for jobs or maintaining your online journal, you will find computers, support – and cake! – offered every Monday between 10am and 1pm at the Salvation Army Hub in Broadwell.

**No need to book – just drop by.**

Please contact us if you need advice or support. Alternatively, you can go to **[www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)** or visit our website **[www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk)**.







# Spring tea break

It's lovely to see spring on its way, with a promise of warmer days after a pretty chilly winter.

In celebration of the sunshine, we've chosen a spring theme for our puzzle. All you need to do is decide which of the words is **NOT** included in the wordsearch, circle your answer and send it to us. Alternatively, you can save yourself the postage and email that missing word to us, using the contact details below.

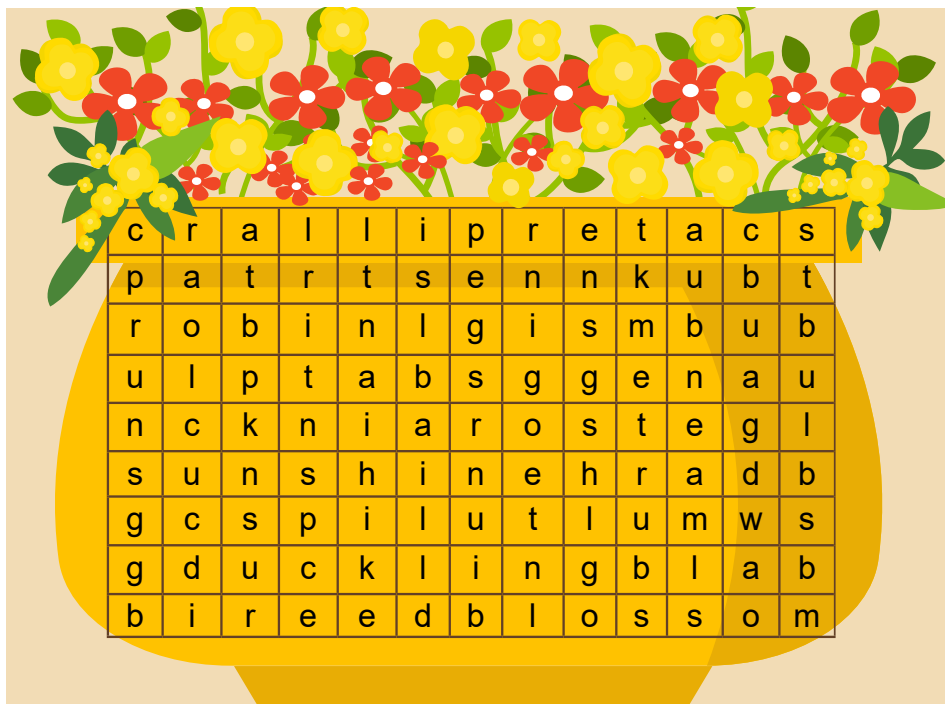
The winner of our Christmas competition was Ann Marchant of Coleford, who receives a £15 gift voucher, so we send our congratulations to her, along with her reward.

If you would like the chance to win the prize this time, please send your entry to:

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

Or email **communications@2rh.org.uk** – remembering to include your name and address along with the missing word.

Completed entries by **30 April** please.



Which spring word is missing from the grid?

caterpillar  
seeds  
robin

tulips  
duckling  
bulbs

rain  
blossom  
sunshine

eggs  
lamb  
nest

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel number/email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Welcome to Engie

Two Rivers tenants will soon become familiar with the new name of one of our contractors.

Keepmoat – which carries out a large amount of our external building work – has been taken over by a multi-national company called Engie.

So, although the people may be the same, they will be driving vehicles, wearing uniforms and carrying ID cards bearing the name of Engie.

As always, if someone calls at your home claiming to be from Two Rivers Housing or working on our behalf, and you want to check they are who they say they are, please give us a call – before you let them in. We will be able to quickly tell you if they are who they claim to be, and give you peace-of-mind about your visitors.



## 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**

Join the Two Rivers community on



@TRHousing and



Registered Charity No1104723

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

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