



# Vectis

Housing News  
Autumn 2017



## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2017

*Vectis residents enjoying their day out*



### More inside:

- Martyn's Column
- Welcome Malcom
- Growing Communities - Fruit Tree Give-away
- Customer Survey - Scores on the Doors

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# MARTYN'S BIT...



Welcome to our Autumn newsletter. It feels like Autumn has arrived rather abruptly with a noticeable drop in temperatures. The nights will start drawing in and the heating gets turned on again. Both place greater pressure on your utility bills, which can be difficult to absorb. If you are worried about your ability to cope financially, please contact us and we may be able to help, advise or refer you to someone who can help. Welcome to the new Chair of our Board, Malcolm Groves (see below). Malcolm brings a great deal of knowledge and experience related to the social housing sector. His arrival coincides with a bit of a change in the make-up of the Board.

Many thanks for those of you who have contributed feedback via our recent mini-STAR survey. The indication is that tenant satisfaction across all areas

appears to be improving. We are, of course delighted with that and hope that it indicates that you are too.

We are progressing with our plans to build new homes for social rent on the Island. The four bungalows in Forelands Fields Road in Bembridge are progressing well and we will shortly be commencing on four additional houses in Bouldner Mead, Yarmouth. We also have other developments in the pipeline and we hope to build at least 25 new homes a year moving forward.

Can I make my usual plea for those of you who may be interested in offering your time or views as part of our resident involvement activities to get in touch. We have two excellent champions of this activity in Yas White and Maria Wilkinson, either of whom will be delighted to chat with you about the possibilities. I give you my personal assurance that the views expressed by residents are very much taken account of. Well, have a happy Autumn and a great Winter!

*Martyn Pearl*  
VHA Chief Executive





## WELCOME TO MALCOLM

Following our recent annual general meeting we have had some significant changes to our Board. George Hibberd, our long-standing Chair has stood down to be replaced by Malcolm Groves. Malcolm is a born and bred Islander and comes with substantial experience of social housing. In addition to George, Mike Starke, another long-standing board member has also chosen to retire. As a result of these changes, we will be looking to recruit new, qualified members for the board later this year.

## CALLING FOR MYSTERY SHOPPERS AND BRIGHT IDEAS

Are you someone with good attention to detail and keen observation skills who doesn't miss a thing? If so, becoming a Vectis Mystery Shopper may be of interest to you.

Vectis is interested in recruiting a small group of Mystery Shoppers who can carry out real time checks on our services such as cleaning and grounds maintenance. Mystery shopping may also involve examining the quality of our repairs and our accommodation and more generally the helpfulness and friendliness of staff. Your identity will be confidential as you will work through only one member of the Vectis management team who will coordinate all activities with secret shoppers.

The role is voluntary but you will never be out of pocket if you carry out a mystery shop for us as any expenses such as transport, telephone calls etc. will be covered. In practical terms being a Mystery Shopper may involve carrying out checks (either individually or with another shopper) and reporting back to us. Mystery shopping may also involve carrying out special projects that support the Tenant Forum's wider scrutiny role.

Training will be given and ideally you will have enough free time to carry out up to 5 shops a year (typically taking up a morning or an afternoon) and be able to communicate your experience back to us in a detailed written report.



### THE 5 KEY SKILLS YOU WILL NEED ARE:

1. Reliability and good time-keeping. A mystery shopper has to be on time and punctual when turning up to any briefing or task.
2. Confidence. Remember that in some scenarios you are acting or posing as a local resident and will need to behave naturally.
3. Accuracy. Delivering truthful and honest feedback is crucial. A mystery shopper must be 100% accurate when performing tasks and a high level of detail is needed when reporting opinions and experiences back to the organisation. A good memory and recall is a bonus.
5. Access to a camera device. Whilst this isn't a skill, a mystery shopper may often need some sort of camera to record details. This can be on a mobile phone.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Vectis Mystery Shopper, please contact Yasmin White, Housing Services Manager on **01983 525985** or email [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk)

Vectis is always looking for ways to improve the way we do things and save money and we know that residents want good value for money for the rent they pay. Therefore if you have a bright idea about how we could do something better or more cheaply please write in and let us know about it. Mark your correspondence "Bright idea" and if we adopt your idea you will receive a £25 shopping voucher as a thank you.

## SCRUTINY - YOU CAN HELP US CREATE CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

At the last meeting of the Vectis Tenants' Forum, members expressed an interest in getting involved in tenant scrutiny. Tenant scrutiny is more than just another tenant involvement activity. It is a way of giving tenants greater influence through formal opportunities to investigate and challenge their landlord's performance in delivering housing services. Scrutiny is a critical examination of services, underpinned by good quality, up-to-date performance information. It's about being able to ask the landlord questions such as: why is a service delivered in a particular way; why are particular timescales in place; how much is this costing; can costs be reduced while still providing a good level of service; could we do this better or differently? The answers to these and similar questions lead to recommendations to Vectis staff and the Vectis Board that result in change and improvement.

Tenant scrutiny will involve the Tenants' Forum choosing a topic to scrutinise which is important to residents and perhaps where performance is not as good as it could be. Once a topic is selected, the group will get agreement from staff and Board members that they will be supplied with relevant information to investigate how the service currently works. The scrutiny process can involve gathering other evidence through interviewing staff and residents and calling on Mystery Shoppers to carry out



real-time reality checks. Once the group has fully investigated the service and has presented recommendations, an action plan is agreed and monitored until all service improvements have been put in place.

Tenant scrutiny is a great way of making sure that housing services meet tenants' priorities and needs, takes tenants views into account before decisions are taken and gives tenants an active stake in the running of their landlord's business rather than just being recipients of services. It also enables staff and tenants to work in partnership to achieve better performance and improved outcomes.

### **HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?**

Scrutiny will be carried out through the Tenants' Forum which is a group made up of Vectis residents. Each Tenant Forum member acts as a representative for an area. Their role is to get to know local residents and feedback any views they may have to Vectis. They can take up issues for individuals or groups of people and attend a monthly meeting with Vectis staff. They also attend neighbourhood walkabouts with staff to identify anything that needs repair or improvement in communal areas. Tenant Forum members can also give basic advice about where to go for help with a particular issue.

The Tenant Forum is always looking for new members and welcomes interest from all sections of the community. If you are interested in getting involved with the Tenants' Forum and like the idea of doing some Tenant Scrutiny please contact Yasmin White, Housing Services Manager on **01983 525985** or email [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk)

Training will be made available in fun and informal sessions. Tenant Forum members will never be out of pocket in any way through being involved, as expenses for travel, training and other costs are met by the housing association.

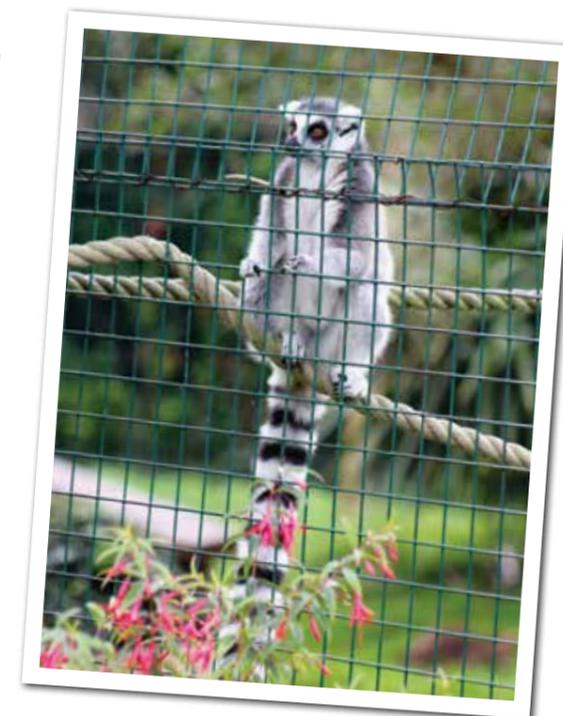


## **WILD ABOUT WIGHT SAFARI - IW ZOO**

As part of the Heritage Lottery funded Wild About Wight programme we have been able to offer a series of trips for our older Vectis residents to explore important locations and landmarks of the

East Wight. We also linked this trip to Age UK's 'Celebrating Age' programme of events. Last Sunday, we set off to Sandown Bay to explore the Isle of Wight Zoo, set by the sea in a historic Palmerston Fort with its stunning views of the AONB.

On meeting at the zoo, our group gathered in the Education Room to listen to a talk from Tracy Dove, who leads the Education Department. Tracy gave us a brief history of the zoo, which has existed on this site since the 1950s. It is very interesting to hear how zoos have changed the kind of work they do in recent years, with a much greater emphasis these days on conservation and education. The IW Zoo is involved in three main areas of conservation work - with tigers in Southern India, the prevention of deforestation for wildlife in Madagascar, and with habitat protection for our own Reddish Buff Moth that lives here on the Isle of Wight. The Reddish Buff Moth is a protected species that is found nowhere else in Britain, except in one small (closely kept secret) location on the Isle of Wight. The IW Zoo is working with the Hampshire and IW Wildlife Trust to survey the area twice a year for the Reddish Buff Moth to monitor the population.



Following the talk, the group had the opportunity to explore the rest of the zoo at their own pace; we met some of the keepers who were very knowledgeable about the animals, and happy to answer questions. Surprisingly, despite the cold weather, the animals are often more active at this time of year than in the summer, so it is a very good time to visit the zoo. Although all the animals we saw were very interesting, we all fell in love with the cute and friendly-looking lemurs from Madagascar, and were awestruck by the beauty and size of the majestic big cats.

The zoo is housed in a historic Palmerston Fort, which was also used during the Second World War as a pumping station for the PLUTO project, which provided vital fuel to allied troops in Europe after the D-Day landings. There is a small but informative PLUTO exhibition housed in one of the arches of the Palmerston Fort.

After the trip around the zoo, we warmed up at the next door Brown's Café for a sociable lunch. Just in time too, as the rain only started as we took shelter in the dry.



# GROWING COMMUNITIES - FRUIT TREE GIVE-AWAY

As part of the Growing Communities project funded by the Lottery, Vectis are organising a fruit tree and bush give-away to our tenants for planting in your garden. This is the ideal time of year to be planting fruit trees, and we are able to allocate one fruit tree or fruit bush per household.

We will be ordering a selection of:

- apple trees
- pear trees
- plum trees
- fig trees
- blackcurrant bushes
- redcurrant bushes
- gooseberry bushes
- rhubarb crowns

If you would like to take part in this project and receive a FREE fruit tree or bush, then please contact Suzie at VHA, [suzie@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:suzie@vectishousing.co.uk) or **07399 562928** leaving your name, address, contact mobile number or email, and let us know which variety you would like. We will also provide a Plant Care Factsheet with each item, to help you find out how to care for your new plant.

The Vectis Communities Team will be organising a delivery schedule during November, so that your fruit tree can be delivered direct to your front door.



# CUSTOMER SURVEY - SCORES ON THE DOORS

A big thank you to all those tenants who completed the customer survey, circulated with the last newsletter. It is really important to us to get regular feedback from our residents, as it helps us to keep track of the quality of service we are providing, and how and where we can make improvements. The star survey is our usual way of capturing feedback and this is usually completed every three years. We reported on the latest results of this in last year's Annual Report to Tenants. This year we completed our own survey and we are delighted that the results show an improvement in satisfaction.

A big thank you to all those tenants who took part.

% SATISFIED WITH :	2015	2017
The service provided by Vectis Housing Association?	90	99
The way Vectis Housing Association deals with repairs and maintenance?	86	93
That Vectis Housing Association listens to your views and acts upon them?	79	83
The overall quality of your home?	92	98
Your neighbourhood as a place to live?	na	95
The overall appearance of your neighbourhood?	na	93

All those who completed the survey were entered into a prize draw and the winners are:

**First Prize - £50 of love to shop vouchers - Kay Balchin from Cowes**

**Second Prize - £25 of vouchers - Terence Hicks from E Cowes**

**Third Prize - £10 voucher - Wendy Young from Ryde**

Our housing and maintenance staff were able to respond quickly to any issues brought to our attention through the survey. If anyone has any outstanding concerns please do contact us so that we are able to help.



# DOWN TO THE TOWN & NEW VIEWS

Wild About Wight is now embarking on a really exciting part of its project, called Down to The Town and New Views. This project is divided into two strands, both designed to engage with people of all ages, raising awareness of the visual beauty and architectural heritage of the East Wight area.

## HERITAGE WALKS

We are planning a series of guided heritage walks in towns of the East Wight over the next six months. The walks will be run in conjunction with heritage centres and historical societies, and be led by local experts. The walks will celebrate the unique heritage of each town, highlighting the architecture, landmarks and built heritage of the area.



Our first two walks are taking place this Autumn. The walks are FREE to participants, but numbers are limited, so booking is essential. For more information on either of these walks and to book, please contact [suzie@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:suzie@vectishousing.co.uk) or call **07399 562928**.



## VENTNOR HERITAGE WALK

A walk around this quirky Victorian town, well known for its health-giving micro-climate and its many hills! The walk will begin at **Ventnor Heritage Centre at the bottom of Spring Hill at 10.30am on Thursday 9th November**. Local historian, Richard Downing will lead the walk, which will last approximately 1.5 hours and cover a distance of 2 miles with some inclines. The walk will also finish

at the Heritage Centre, and the Centre will be open with free entry for any participants who want to go in and browse the very interesting exhibits.

## RYDE HERITAGE WALK

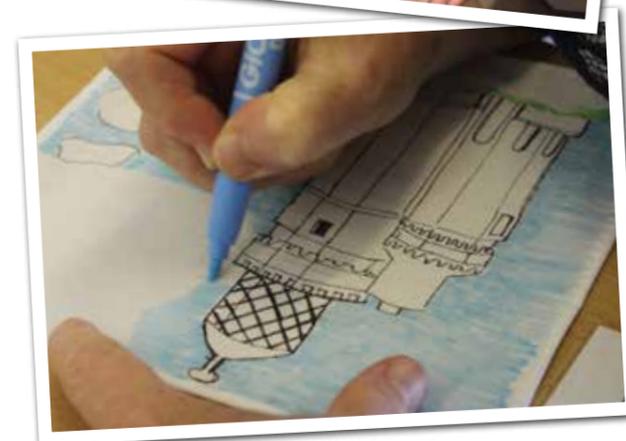
A walk down the grand shopping boulevard of Union Street and along the Esplanade. The walk will begin at **Ryde District Heritage Centre** which is in the basement at the back of the Royal Victoria Arcade in Union Street at **11am on Tuesday 21st November**. Local historian and author, Jo Cooper will lead the walk, which will last approximately 1.5 hours and cover a distance of 2 miles with some inclines. The walk will also finish at the Heritage Centre, and the Centre will be open with free entry for any participants who want to go in and browse. The Heritage Centre hosts an extensive collection of fascinating exhibits, including the extraordinary Gill Postcard Museum.

If the weather is inclement, these events will still go ahead, but will be replaced by a talk inside the museum in the dry.

# ARTIST-LED WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES

To celebrate the built heritage and natural landscapes of the East Wight area, Wild About Wight have commissioned a group of local Island artists to deliver a programme of workshops and events between now and March 2019.

Babs Gowan, Caroline Underwood, Hannah George and Ian Whitmore will be working together to host a series of 12 **FREE** workshops in different locations of the East Wight throughout 2018. We are launching this programme at a public event upstairs at **Sandown Library on Saturday 28th October, 10am -12.30pm**. This **FREE** event is family-friendly and open to all. Please come and join us to take part and find out more about the 2018 programme.



# PATH TO EMPOWERMENT - DELIVERING GREAT RESULTS

This programme, funded through the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation and the European Social Fund is now entering its final phase. To date the programme has delivered four GOALS courses, a three day programme of work related support, the Working Class programme, and a visit to find out about courses on offer at the Isle of Wight College.

A group of seven people visited the Isle of Wight College on the 27th July and several have now taken advantage of the training bursaries on offer, and signed up for courses.



44 people have been involved in the project. Of these eight have moved into employment and 14 have enrolled on, or completed training. Three people have started an AET adult education teaching certificate, one person is attending a plastering, painting & decorating course, two are studying Spanish and one upholstery. In addition 13 people completed a level 2 certificate in Food Hygiene which was delivered at the Storeroom in Cowes on 13th September.

VHA are still keen to hear from any unemployed or inactive residents who feel they might benefit from some employment support or training.

The final part of the project will include a two day course for anyone who would like to explore self-employment or starting their own business. The course will take place on 9 - 10 November. Call VHA **01983 525985** or email [maria@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:maria@vectishousing.co.uk) if you would like to attend this final course or if you would like to apply for a training bursary. The project will conclude in December with a celebratory event to recognise the huge achievements made by those who have been involved in this programme.

All sessions take place at Quay Arts. Refreshments will be provided.

# GREEN ARMY ISLE OF WIGHT



The research is stacking up - getting out and about in nature is good for us. It can make us happier, healthier and fitter! Our Green Army project goes one step further, not only do we get out and about in some of the Island's wildest places and spaces but we learn how to look after them while we're there - win win!

A volunteer group for anyone aged 16-25, Green Army is all about nature conservation. Once a fortnight we team up with environmental organisations like the Wildlife Trust for a day learning practical conservation management skills as well as a bit more about the species and habitats we're working for. Every day is different... we may be helping to clear bramble on Arreton Down one week, the next chopping back willow on the Eastern Yar river near Sandown... and in between times, we explore the Island (East Wight in particular) on foot or even by kayak! No

experience is necessary - our days are fun and informal and all you need is provided, from boots and gloves to a healthy picnic lunch!

Amazingly, Green Army has been running for 6 years now! In that time, over 350 young people have come along, meeting new friends, gaining new skills and heading off into employment, even winning a hat-trick of awards... The Merlin Trophy, Community Action IW Environment and High Sheriff Outstanding Achievement for Young People Awards! Dozens of Island nature reserves, green spaces and wild places have benefited as well as key Island species. So like we said, it's win win!



If you'd like to come along for a taster session and see what it's all about, or you know someone who might like to join in, follow us on Facebook - Green Army Isle of Wight or drop our Communities Team a line - [claire@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:claire@vectishousing.co.uk).

## Dates for Diaries:

Green Army Isle of Wight - **Tuesdays 24th October, 7th November, 21st November, 5th December 2017**. Various locations including **Arreton Downs, Bohemia Bog, Isle of Wight Donkey Sanctuary & Ningwood Common**.



## MY TENANCY REMINDER

Just a reminder that you are able to access your rent account on-line through the MyTenancy button on the website. Use of this facility will also allow you to check on the progress of repairs and check your repairs history. This is accessible 24 hours a day and so gives you the chance to check key information whenever it suits you.

You will need your login details to access your account on MyTenancy, which is secure to you. Your details can be found at the bottom of your rent statement if you have forgotten them. Alternatively, contact the office and we will be able to provide them to you.

## FRIDGE FREEZER RECALL FOLLOWING GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

The Metropolitan Police have announced that a Hotpoint FF175BP fridge freezer has been identified as the initial source of the Grenfell Tower fire. Owners of a Hotpoint FF175BP (white) and FF175BG (graphite) should call the manufacturer's freephone hotline on **0800 316 3826** to register their details for further information.



## DIRECT DEBITS

We are now well into the process of transferring standing order payment to direct debits. ***If you have recently switched to paying by direct debit please make sure that you cancel your standing order instruction to avoid the payment being taken twice.***



## FELINE WELFARE AND PET DOCTORS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

### SPAYING BLITZ!

We are offering cat spaying for families on a low income for just £20.00 between 28th August and 31st December 2017.

If you are on a low income (not necessarily on benefits) and own a female cat or kitten 4 months or over, we may be able to help you get her spayed.

If you have a cat who is nursing kittens we can spray her when the kittens are 7-8 weeks of age.

***Female cats can get pregnant while still nursing!***

Please call us on: **01983 521778**  
Or email: [felinewelfareiow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:felinewelfareiow@hotmail.co.uk)



# Home Swapper

The mutual exchange solutions for tenants and Landlords

## Want to Move Home?

HomeSwapper.co.uk's local & national service means mutual exchange is better than ever. It's the UK's largest community of social housing tenants looking to swap homes.

- Tenants from over 1,000 landlords are registered
- 2 out of 3 matched to potential swaps in 24 hours
- hundreds of households move every month

How it works:



## HOME SWAPPER

If you have an Assured Tenancy with Vectis you have free access to the services offered by HomeSwapper. The system is easy to use and has already helped many residents find a new home better suited to their needs.

### VISIT US:

[www.facebook.com/VectisHousing](http://www.facebook.com/VectisHousing)  
[www.vectishousing.co.uk](http://www.vectishousing.co.uk)

### CONTACT US:

**Emergency Repairs**  
**Phone Vectis Repair Line**  
**01983 520353.**



*Please call this number to report emergency repairs. Inappropriate use may result in any additional cost being recharged to you.*

*Please do not use the text service for emergencies, especially over bank holidays as we will not receive them out of hours. Please phone these through on the maintenance line 01983 520353.*

**SORRY WE ARE CLOSED**

**SORRY WE WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE CHRISTMAS BREAK**

*From:*

• 5pm on Friday 22nd December 2017

*And re-open at:*

• 9am on Tuesday 2nd January 2018

All other enquiries: **01983 525985**  
[enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk)