

## Start on 18 homes in North Devon

Parish councillors led the celebrations at a turf-cutting ceremony at Woolsery, near Bideford, to mark the start of 18 new homes for local people.

MHA is spearheading the £1.9 million scheme to build 12 houses in Woolsery and six homes in nearby Bucks Cross, which are due for completion at the end of March 2011.

Woolsery Parish Council chairman David Bonnefin said housing for local people was the top priority in the parish plan that residents helped to compile in 2005.

"We hope this will go some way to meeting that need and especially to help youngsters afford to stay in the village. This is the most important thing – it's for the people of this parish and not for anyone outside.

"We've had a few setbacks over the years and if it wasn't for Roy Turner's dogged determination we wouldn't be here today."

Roy Turner, who is vice-chairman of the council, said: "This project to provide at least some affordable homes within the Parish has taken over five years to accomplish. The help of the Community Council of Devon has been of immense value in helping the parish council to navigate the red tape which any community must pass through to achieve even modest success."

James Higdon, Magna's development manager in Devon, said: "We are delighted to be working with the local parish council, Torrridge District Council and the contractors, Mi-space, on these important developments.

"The houses will consist of timber frame construction and will be designed to meet Lifetime Homes standards. All dwellings will also comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3. This means that tenants will benefit from reduced fuel bills and well designed internal layouts."

Six two-bedroom homes and six three-bedroom properties are being built at Woolsery, close to the community hall. At Bucks Cross, just down the road from the village post office, the builders, Mi-space, based in Exeter, are creating three two-bedroom homes and three three-bedroom properties.

The national Homes and Communities Agency has invested in excess of £1,200,000 in the project. This was represented by allocating £800,000 for the Woolsery scheme and around £400,000 for the Bucks Cross scheme. Torrridge District Council part-funded the scheme to the tune of £68,796, with the rest of the money coming from Magna.



James Higdon, development manager and guests at the turf cutting ceremony



## Magna helps new businesses

In the current economic climate, anybody thinking of starting their own business will certainly benefit from as much support as possible.

We have teamed up with Business Link in Dorset to ensure any of our tenants who would like to work for themselves have the best help available to do so. Residents have the chance to attend Business Link courses and meet their adviser team who will explain exactly what starting a business means, what the next steps are, and most importantly whether it is right for them.

Business Link is the government-funded advice service for small and medium-sized businesses and all their advice is both impartial and free.

The training will be delivered across Dorset at venues which suit residents wherever they are. And once they have started working with Business Link they have the opportunity to receive ongoing support if they decide to take the plunge.

For more information on Business Link, visit [www.businesslink.gov.uk/southwest](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/southwest), and for more information on activity in Dorset, contact Matthew Butcher at [matthew.butcher@businesslinkwessex.co.uk](mailto:matthew.butcher@businesslinkwessex.co.uk)

## Blooming Marvellous!

Each year Magna holds a garden competition for its residents. This encourages residents to take pride in their gardens and recognises those who do a good job in maintaining their gardens.

This year's competition was another big success!

We had over 20 entrants which made judging even more difficult. With gardens from Weymouth to Crewkerne the judges really did have their work cut out!

Judging took place on 12 and 13 July. Our three judges this year were John Foot, who is a Magna resident and who has been a frequent winner himself over the years; Kevin Parry, our new Community Connections vice chairman; and independent judge, David Downton. David is a member of The Dorchester Horticultural Society so has lots of experience in gardening.

This year we had four categories of gardens: large garden, small garden, patio & containers and vegetable garden. We had entries in all four categories.

Once again the standard was very high this year. Several of the regulars and previous winners did not take part this year but we did attract several new entries.

The prize presentation will be held at Athelhampton House in August.



## Magna Careline is celebrating



*Careline Staff*

after achieving the latest accreditation from the Telecare Services Association (TSA), the regulatory body for the UK's telecare industry.

It became one of the first 15 providers in the country to be accredited to the new code, which is used by telecare providers to ensure quality standards.

Careline's general manager, Tanya Grant, said: "The accreditation to our regulatory body underpins the quality of service we deliver to our customers. It's great news for the Magna Careline team who have worked hard to achieve this accreditation."

It was a rigorous two-day audit by independent inspectors and came just days after we moved from Hollands House in Poundbury Road, Dorchester, to the Poundbury Business Centre."

Magna Careline is a telecare monitoring service used by thousands of people across Dorset and beyond, to Plymouth in the west, West Sussex to the east and Wolverhampton to the north. As well as helping people to retain their independence in their own homes, the service also handles calls for commercial customers to provide business continuity 24 hours a day and offer protection for lone workers.

Magna Careline is an industrial and provident society and has been trading since 1989. Its chairman is the Mayor of Dorchester, Leslie Phillips MBE, who has been involved with Careline since its inception.

## Come and look at our houses!

Magna is keen to show off what we do to the outside world, as well as our own staff and board members. One of the ways we do this is by holding tours of our stock.

We are holding four tours this year, the first of which took place on Thursday 15 July in and around the Beaminster area.

Before setting off on the tour, we give everyone an overview of Magna which includes a profile of our residents and the homes they live in as well as information about what different parts of Magna do.

Whilst on the tour, people get a chance to see some of the projects completed through the community initiative fund (CIF). On the July tour these included:

- new fencing at Frampton
- communal patio
- a new storage cupboard in a communal room to store table & chairs when not in use
- bin store areas at Flaxfield Road, Beaminster

We also looked at two new major proposed schemes from the community initiative fund to improve car parking for Magna residents in Maiden Newton and Beaminster. This gave people the chance to look at projects that are being considered for funding.

Beaminster was an ideal place for our first tour because it has many different types and diverse properties eg brick, stone, pre-fabricated houses which have been clad to prolong their life, traditional built brick houses, flats and bungalows. It also has a mix of older properties, new developments, and proposed development sites.

At Flaxfield Rise we visited the newly-developed houses and flats and met some of the residents who have only lived there for a few weeks and are very pleased to be living in beautiful new spacious properties, many of which have large gardens, and with plenty of car parking spaces for all.

We hope to hold tours in Exeter and surrounding area, Yeovil and Shaftsbury. If you would like to go on one of the stock tours, please contact Lisa Williams, community development officer, on 01305 216041.



*Lisa Williams*

# Help get people into work

2009 statistics show that 4.8 million people, and 1.9 million children\*, live in workless households. Approximately one third of workless households live in the social rented sector.

Given the current economic climate, this is expected to worsen over the coming years.

"Workless" people include those who are of working age (i.e. aged 16 to 64), who are not working, not in full time education or training and who are not actively seeking work. It includes the unemployed but is a wider definition, as "unemployed" generally refers only to those who are actively seeking work and who receive job seekers allowance.

Magna recognises that many of its residents may be affected by worklessness, and that this can have a detrimental impact on day-to-day living and quality of life. We recognise that tackling worklessness may help communities to thrive.

We are committed to tackling worklessness through a range of measures such as:

- targeting local people for job opportunities;
- providing work experience placements for young people and for those who need support to get back into work;
- providing information for residents who wish to start up new businesses (see article on the front page );
- offering apprenticeships and
- committing to using local labour and local contractors wherever possible.

We are keen to see other local organisations offering the same support that we do, so if you are able to offer apprenticeships, then give them a go.

*\* Office for National Statistics website*



## Community Initiative Fund New way of working.

In April this year we set up our new group of tenants, Community Connections, and subsequently dissolved the three area panels made up of tenant representatives.

Some members of the tenant panels have now formed a new Community Initiative Forum (CIF). Their role will replace the responsibility of managing the Community Initiative Fund (CIF) previously done by all three area panels.

The CIF will consider all community initiative projects and approve those it wishes to support .

The forum has a total budget of £150,000 for the year and is made up of ten members from the old panels and one new member from the newly formed Community Connections group.

They still plan to monitor how the money is spent between the three areas (north, east & west) as the panels used to and try to spend the budget equally between all three.

If an application comes in, this new way of working gives the forum the opportunity to look at a major project in one of the areas. If the forum approves the scheme, it could mean more money being spent in this area.

The forum has also changed the way new applications are considered to check they meet Magna's criteria. Applications are looked at initially by an assessment team of four people (the chairman two appointed signatories and Magna's community development manager). They will decide which applications to put forward to the forum and which to reject.



## Your Views

Each year we give you a chance to tell us what we are doing well and areas where we need to improve.

We are keen to find out whether you would like us to hold a stakeholder conference or whether you would prefer us simply to send you a survey.

Please let us know by emailing [lisa.williams@magna.org.uk](mailto:lisa.williams@magna.org.uk)

# Director's role for Marianne

Magna's resident involvement manager, Marianne Fendle, has become a director of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Marianne, who has been with Magna for three years, was appointed to the voluntary role at the end of May. She joins a board of 10 directors and will be its south west representative.

Formed in 1988, TPAS England is the leading national tenant participation organisation working to promote tenant empowerment. It acts as a hub between government, social housing landlords and tenants. It gives members access to information and research, on-site involvement support and training, opportunities to share knowledge with key sector professionals and the chance to shape future government housing policy.

For the past two years, Marianne has been working with residents to reshape the way involvement is carried out at Magna. This means using the skills, knowledge and commitment that residents bring with them.

Magna is supporting Marianne to carry out the TPAS role alongside her 'day' job, seeing it as an opportunity for her to build on her knowledge of resident involvement. This involves working closely with tenants, leaseholders, board members and staff to encourage residents to get more involved in Magna's services.

Marianne, who has been involved in housing since 1997, said: "I believe we are a better organisation when we listen to our residents. So I'm delighted to have been appointed to the TPAS board as a landlord representative. Being on the board will give me lots of insight and knowledge about how resident involvement works from a TPAS point of view."



*Marianne Fendle and residents celebrate*

## Skilling regeneration

Work on regenerating the flats at Skilling, Bridport, is underway. Some £500,000 was allocated for a regeneration of the area in 2009-2010.

All residents' front doors have been changed this year and Magna is now working on new communal front doors, an intercom system and complete redecoration. Stage two of the scheme will be to look at the external communal areas to improve security, safety and privacy. If you would like more information, please contact Ruth Ashdown on 01305 216006.

## Leaseholder Management Service Improvement Review

Magna has a five year service improvement review programme, which runs from 2009 to 2014. This is an important part of our strategy and our commitment to making sure our services keep improving. In MHA, we identify the service areas we want to review in the same way the Audit Commission defines them in its housing inspection regime.

In accordance with this service review programme, we will shortly be starting an in-depth review of our leaseholder management services (including services to shared owners).

- The review will cover things like:
- The way we communicate and consult with leaseholders and the information we provide
- The way in which we provide services such as cleaning and grounds maintenance
- The way we calculate, bill and collect service charges and other charges
- The way in which we carry out repairs and maintenance for which we are responsible.

In undertaking this review, we will look at what we do now and then challenge the current service, looking at options for service delivery; compare our costs and performance with other landlords; take into account the results from consultation with leaseholders on their experience of the service; and ensure that the service meets all statutory requirements, good practice guidelines and the needs and wishes of customers.

The outcome of the review will be to confirm or set new service standards and have an agreed set of actions which, once completed, will make us excellent in our services and always improving.

The review will be led by a working group, made up of staff and leaseholders.

If you would like more information about the review, or if you have comments on leaseholder management that you would like us to take into account, please contact Carla Macqueen, Leasehold Coordinator, on 01305 214059.