



# RMHS Newsletter

Retired Ministers' Housing Society (RMHS)

Summer 2025

Welcome to the summer newsletter – we hope you are enjoying the season.

Here at RMHS we have continued to make a number of changes to improve residents' experiences of our service. We are delighted that Kathleen Benjamin has become our permanent Specialist Housing Officer; she is the first port of call for anyone struggling with their property or tenancy and is here to help. Kathleen's role also involves advocating for residents who need care and support at home, including working with local authorities to help people get aids and adaptations, and supporting residents to apply for any benefits they are entitled to. We will also learn from the results of the wellbeing survey how to improve our services.

We are also making improvements in property services, with planned works to replace all older boilers. We were also successful in gaining government funding for us to fund energy efficiency improvement works, explained in Michael's article on page 3. This is a major project for RMHS and we hope it will lead to more comfortable homes and lower energy bills.

As we turn towards the autumn, we will be making changes to our communications, by revamping our website to have much more useful information for residents and applicants. We'll also be including regular updates with key performance indicators for transparency. We will be uploading copies of all of our main policies and procedures to make it easier to understand what you can expect from us.

May the coming months be filled with blessings.



*Irmani Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer*



## Introduction to RMHS' new Chair By John Delahunty

I'm delighted to be able to use the newsletter to say "Hello" to RMHS tenants as I take on my new role as Chair of the Board – and it's also an opportunity to introduce myself.

My professional background is in housing, initially in council housing in the North East of England, then in the East Midlands when I moved down to Northampton, where I still live now.

Nearly 20 years ago, I started to work for Housing Associations, and for the last 13 years I have been Chief Executive of Innisfree Housing Association, an organisation, with Irish roots, of 600 homes, mainly in North West London.

Over the years, I have had various roles as trustee and board member of different organisations, and I saw joining RMHS as an opportunity to have experience of being on "the other side of the table" compared to my current role on the Board at Innisfree.

I'll also be able to share my experience of running another landlord organisation with the rest of the Board at RMHS, although I've a strong belief that some things will be particular to each organisation.

More generally, I love to meet new people and find connections – things that we have in common.

When I mentioned to my sister that I'd taken on this role she excitedly reported, "RMHS is the organisation that looked after Fiona's Dad". (Fiona being a Uni friend from 40+ years ago.)

So, the first connection I'm looking for is: did anyone know the Revd Joe Hislop, who retired from St James, Alnwick, in 1988 and was a tenant of RMHS – and who had the music for a reel written in his honour? (Google the Reverend Joe Hislop of Alnwick Reel!)

By the time we've finished, we could be related...!

### STAY SAFE from SCAMS ... Call 159!

Financial scams are increasingly common and affect a wide range of people. Call 159 has been set up as a quick and efficient way to call your bank.

The following information has been provided by the police. The new telephone number 159 is being promoted by Stop Scams UK, a combination of banking and telephone companies who want to help fight fraud. The 159 number is now live and is an automated telephone service that connects customers to the fraud help line of their respective banks. It is a simple concept that allows customers to have peace of mind that they are being connected to a genuine bank service rather than fraudsters.

[stopscamsuk.org.uk](https://stopscamsuk.org.uk)

If you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details, **stop, hang up and call 159** to speak directly to your bank. 159 works in the same way as 101 for the police or 111 for the NHS. It's the number you can trust to get you through to your bank, every time. Only a fraudster will object to you calling 159. Remember, 159 will never call you.

#### Call 159 if:

- Someone contacts you saying they're from your bank – even if they are not suspicious
- You receive a call asking you to transfer money or make a payment – even if it seems genuine
- You receive a call about a financial matter and it seems suspicious



Remember, 159 will never call you. But you can rely on 159 to get you through to your bank.



## Update from the RMHS Sustainability Project Lead

By Michael O'Brien

I am pleased to announce that we have made further progress with the Sustainability Project and appointed **Correct Contract Services Ltd (CCS)** as our supply chain partner. Over the next 20 months CCS will undertake Retrofit Assessments and install energy efficiency improvements to homes that have poor energy ratings.

The homes eligible for the project are properties in England, Wales and Scotland with Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) that have an energy rating in bands D, E, F or G.

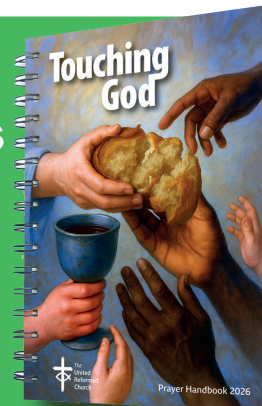
The project is being funded by RMHS along with a grant from the government's Warmer Homes Challenge Fund for properties in **England**. The grant, worth up to £1.158m, will help to make RMHS homes more energy efficient and support the URC's ambition to lower its carbon footprint. Tenants with equity share will not be charged for improvements offered under this scheme.

The scheme will make homes more comfortable, reduce energy consumption and lower energy bills.

The improvements will also ensure RMHS homes comply with the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard, which is due to become mandatory for new and existing tenancies by 2030.

## Discount for RMHS members

Use the coupon code **RMHS** on the checkout page at [www.urcshop.co.uk](http://www.urcshop.co.uk) for a discount on any URC bookshop product.



The grant scheme also enables us to offer air source heat pumps with solar panels to 11 suitable homes in England, including those that are already achieving an EPC rating in band C. Priority will be given to homes that have older heating appliances. If you are interested in switching from your current heating appliances to an air source heat pump with solar panels please get in touch with me, on **0788 922 4457** or [michael.obrien@urc.org.uk](mailto:michael.obrien@urc.org.uk) to discuss the suitability of your home and register your interest.

If you need to check the current energy rating for your home on the National EPC Register, just follow the link below and enter your post code, then select your address:

For properties in England and Wales the web address is [gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](http://gov.uk/find-energy-certificate)

For properties in Scotland the web address is [www.scottishepcregister.org.uk](http://www.scottishepcregister.org.uk)

## Holidaying and letting RMHS know

The holiday season is now in full swing, and holidays provide opportunities to travel, explore and connect with family and friends.

To everyone who gets in touch with RMHS to let us know you will be away – a huge thank you! This helps us plan and arrange repairs and compliance checks in advance and keep these up to date. Contacting us in advance of being away also avoids us

being unable to contact you, and becoming concerned for your welfare.



When you are planning to be away **for more than a month** please let RMHS know in advance – an email to [rmh@urc.org.uk](mailto:rmh@urc.org.uk) or call to **020 7871 7871** and ask for RMHS are great ways to contact us. *Happy holidays!*



## Falls Prevention Tips

### Staying safe starts with small steps – let's take them together

Falls are common in later life, but they're not inevitable. With a few practical changes, you can reduce your risk and stay confident at home.

#### Keep Moving

- Gentle exercise like walking or seated stretches helps improve strength and balance.
- Aim for two sessions a week. Ask your GP about local falls prevention programmes.

#### Eyes, Ears and Medications

- Have your sight and hearing checked annually.
- Medications can cause dizziness. Ask your GP for a review.

#### Footwear and Foot Care

- Choose shoes with non-slip soles and good support.
- Avoid loose slippers.
- Look after your feet – report any pain to your GP.

#### Make Your Home Safer

- Clear clutter, and secure rugs.
- Use non-slip mats in wet areas.
- Install night-lights for visibility.

#### Hydration and Emergencies

- Drink water regularly to stay alert.
- Keep a mobile or personal alarm within reach, especially at night.

#### Falls Alarms (Telecare Services)

*(Most alarms involve a one-off setup fee and a small monthly charge. Please check with your local authority if you are eligible for a discount.)\**

- 'Personal alarms' that can be worn as pendants or wristbands will alert a response centre or your family in an emergency (Ask your GP to help you to apply).
- 'Telecare Services', are available from your local council (and may be available at a reduced cost).

#### Where to get falls alarms

- Your local council:  
[gov.uk/find-local-council](https://gov.uk/find-local-council)
- Age UK: [bit.ly/46pFfGW](https://bit.ly/46pFfGW) 0800 085 8032
- Lifeline24: [lifeconnect24.co.uk](https://lifeconnect24.co.uk)
- PPP Taking Care: [taking.care/](https://taking.care/)

#### After a Fall

- If unhurt, use furniture to rise slowly.
- If stuck or injured, call for help and use your alarm.
- Always inform your GP.

#### Support is available from:

- You can ask your GP for a falls risk check.
- Age UK advice line **0800 678 1602** 8am to 7pm [www.ageuk.org.uk](https://www.ageuk.org.uk)
- NHS websites for guidance [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

**There is still time to  
complete and return your  
WELLBEING SURVEY  
We look forward to receiving it.  
Thank you.**



## Meet the RMHS Board

We would like to introduce you to our Board of Trustees. The Society is managed by a Board that comprises members from across the URC,

experienced housing professionals and tenant representatives with the skills and experience to govern and maintain high standards. You can also read about them on our website:

[rmhs.org.uk/about-us/our-board](https://rmhs.org.uk/about-us/our-board)



### **Mr John Delahunty: Chair**

John is CEO of Innisfree Housing Association, Vice-Chair of BME National and the Chair of Safe Haven Northampton.



### **The Revd Geoff Felton: Board Member**

Geoff was ordained in 2000 and currently serves as Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the URC. He is the Moderator's representative on the RMHS Board.



### **Mr David Greatorex: Vice-Chair**

David previously worked in local authority housing in Derby and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing. He is Treasurer at URC EMS and a member of URC Trust.



### **The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar: Board Member**

Michael is a retired URC minister. He has previously served in many roles including as Moderator of URC General Assembly (2012-2014).



### **Mr Alan Yates: Board Member**

Alan is an Elder and Lay Preacher in the URC, and was Moderator of the General Assembly from 2016 to 2018. Additionally, he is the Honorary Treasurer of the URC Trust.



### **The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith: Board Member**

Nicola has served as a URC minister for 30+ years and was previously Moderator of the Southern Synod. She is Secretary for Ministries and advises the Board on ministry issues.



### **The Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller: Board Member**

Carla is a practical theologian and ordained minister who has served in the United Church of Christ (US) and the URC. She is the Board's tenant representative.



### **The Revd Paul Whittle: Board Member**

Paul is a retired URC minister who has previously served as Moderator of Eastern and Scotland Synods. He is the Convenor of the RMHS Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee.



### **Mr Cliff Patten: Board Member**

Cliff is an architect who serves on synod and URC property related committees. He is an Elder at Maldon URC, Essex, and is a URC Trust representative.



### **Mr Richard Abraham: Board Member**

Richard has a background in transformational leadership in the UK, Canada and Australia. He was previously Chief Operating Officer at Portsmouth Cathedral.



### **Mr Gary Goggins: Board Member**

Gary has a construction background and has worked in the housing sector for 30 years. He has extensive experience in delivering customer focussed property related services, including repairs and asset management.



### **Mrs Victoria James: Board Member**

Victoria is the Chief Operating Officer of the URC. She has a legal background including experience of property and family law. She has previously worked as Diocesan Secretary for a CofE Diocese.



# Mountains – what does the word mean for you?

By David Greatorex, RMHS Vice-Chair

There are numerous references to mountains in the Bible, as I'm sure you are aware – several very significant, others perhaps less so.

My memories and like of mountains started last century, to be precise in 1961 during a visit to Norway with my company of the Boys' Brigade. It was a planning expedition for a longer visit in 1963 to celebrate the 21st anniversary of founding the company – ironically the 21st Derby!

We started off in Bergen – a city surrounded by mountains – and for one evening's devotions we went on Mount Fløyen and it was there that my love for mountains started – and indeed I believe my Christian journey.



Over the last 60 years or so I have had many pleasant mountain experiences, though few as good as my now regular trips to the Austrian Alps.

I like the peace and quiet – although the relative ease of getting to the tops by way of cable cars brings the 'remoteness' within reach of many more people. I do make use of the lifts. I have never climbed with ropes, but have walked the hiking paths – although my children prefer it now when I walk with others!



I visited the Alps first with my late wife, for our silver wedding anniversary in 1996, and I have continued to visit since her death in 2003.

Originally even the more accessible places remained relatively remote but with the advance of technology a profusion of mobile phone masts, particularly, now exists. (Somewhat changing the views but a vital communication link in times when dangers threaten.)

Finally, two pictures, the first being a church at c.2,095m at Penkenjoch – above the Ziller Valley, Mayrhofen and Finkenberg – which is used for services and indeed one was attended by a minister colleague from East Midlands last year.

The other is a more general view towards the Tauern National Park in the Austrian Alps, taken from near to the church.

We enjoy reading about things that give our residents joy. Perhaps a favourite hymn or Bible passage?

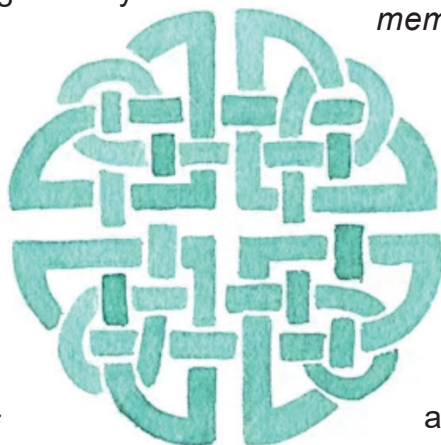
If you would like to share a reflection for inclusion in a future edition of the RMHS Newsletter, please send it in to us. Thank you.



## RMHS Vision and Values

On 12 May, at Goodenough College in central London, RMHS held a Vision and Values Day. The purpose of the day was for RMHS's Directors and staff to come together as one team to articulate their shared passion for the purpose of RMHS. The day was facilitated by the Revd Fiona Bennett, Minister of Augustine United Church URC in Edinburgh, who did an excellent job of leading the day.

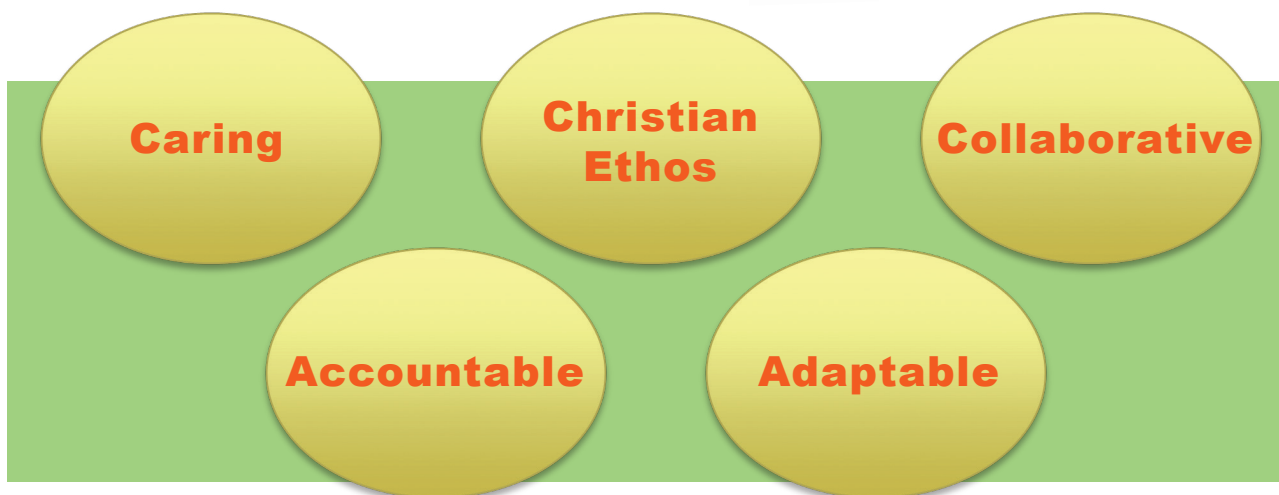
Throughout the day the Celtic symbol, the Dara knot, was used as a metaphor for RMHS. The knot mimics the interwoven roots of an oak tree and exemplifies how the interconnectedness of the team has grown over time and represents strength and durability.



We soon realised that aside from our connection to RMHS, there were other things that many of us held in common, whether it was a love of travel or the desire to learn a new skill. Fiona reminded us of a quote from the former NBA coach Phil Jackson, who said:

*"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each individual member is the team."*

As the day progressed, we worked together to focus on the positive differences that RMHS makes, what shapes RMHS as an organisation, and what core values we aspire to work within, to continuously improve the service we offer to you. The five proposed values that will serve as a guide to RMHS's behaviours and actions are:



We would value your opinion on the proposed values, so if you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions please do get in touch with us. You can do this by sending an email to: [katia.crowley@urc.org.uk](mailto:katia.crowley@urc.org.uk)

Watch out for the final RMHS values when they are shared across our communications and on our website.





## The RMHS staff team

<b>Irmani Smallwood</b>	Chief Executive	<b>020 7916 8636</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Judith Williams</b>	Head of Housing Management	<b>020 7520 2714</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Ted Ford</b>	Maintenance Surveyor (North)	<b>07739 360 034</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Francesca Pitts</b>	Maintenance Surveyor (South)	<b>020 7691 9868</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Michael O'Brien</b>	Sustainability Project Lead	<b>07889 224 457</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Roger Corbett</b>	Tenancy Transactions Coordinator	<b>020 7916 8643</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Maria Cardazzone</b>	Repairs & Maintenance Coordinator	<b>020 7520 2716</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Khadija Idris</b>	Finance Administrator	<b>020 7691 9875</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Kathleen Benjamin</b>	Specialist Housing Officer	<b>020 7871 7871</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Helen Corbett</b>	Housing Officer (part time)	<b>020 7916 8682</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>
<b>Katia Crowley</b>	PA to Chief Executive	<b>020 7916 8636</b>	<b>rmh@urc.org.uk</b>

## For emergency/out of hours calls

Please call **Service Solutions Direct** on: **01772 289 499**

**\*IF YOU SMELL GAS** you should ring **0800 111 999** and inform the National Gas Emergency Service.

**\*\*For WORCESTER BOILER BREAKDOWNS** please call **0330 123 9339** and Worcester Bosch will confirm if your boiler is covered under their warranty.



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Retired Ministers' Housing Society.