

# Linkup

WINTER 2006

united  
welsh

LINKUP CIRCULATION 3,100

A newsletter for and by United Welsh tenants

# 1000 great ways to start the year!



See page 3 for the full story

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**The Big Chill** - Staff from United Welsh helped raise money for homeless people by taking part in a 'sleep-out'. **Do you have any comments?** Our Chief Executive and Heads of Departments are going to be visiting all our estates during 2006 to ensure they are in reasonable condition and give you a chance to have your say.

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**Streets Ahead - The Future of Tenant Participation in Wales** United Welsh were main sponsors of the annual TPAS conference in November and Linkup reports on the community groups who attended.



## Time for a financial health check-up?

We all know the benefits of good health and we are offering all new tenants a free financial health check with Paul Daley, UW's Benefit Advisor.

## PAGES 8 & 9

**Community News** – tenants from Heol Rees, their children and classmates from the local primary school teamed up and showed that they can make a difference to their community. **voice4tenants'** first Local Area Forum was held at



## PAGE 12

Nowhere is safe from the inscrutable Soduku and Noticeboard is no exception.

## Are you missing out on cash prizes?

Had a repair done recently? Did you fill in the Repair Report Slip? If not you are missing out on the chance to win a cash prize - just by filling it in and returning in the pre-paid envelope...

**...IN THE LAST YEAR 36 LUCKY TENANTS HAVE WON PRIZES TOTTALLING OVER £1000!**



The winners of the January draw were: **£50** – Mrs E Webbe, Caerphilly, **£25** – Mrs O Davies, Abertillery, **£10** – Ms G Morgan, Llanbradach

## CELEBRATE WITH A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE!

With the Repair Report Slip you will also get a form called 'NOMINATE A BEST WORKMAN'. If you feel that the workman carrying out your repair did a good job, you can nominate him and go into the draw to win a bottle of champagne (pictured left is champagne winner Jeff Williams of Trafalgar Home Improvements and UW tenant Allan Thomas of Aberbargoed who nominated Jeff in 2005).

The Best Workman winner this edition is Lee Jenkins who works for Quadron Services and was nominated by Mrs Riding of Tredegar. Congratulations to both, a bottle of champagne is on its way!



## APPLICATION

Please register me for membership of the **Five Star Loyalty Scheme**

Name

Address

Post code

Rent account no.

Home telephone no.

Work telephone no.

Mobile telephone no.

National Insurance no.

Signed

# £1000 surprise for Ebbw Vale couple...

Mr and Mrs Langford got a wonderful surprise at Christmas when Sian Weeks, Housing Officer, called around to tell them they had won first prize in the **Five Star Christmas Draw**.

“ This couldn't have come at a better time”, said Mrs Langford, pictured far right receiving the cheque from Sian. “You can imagine how great it is to get a £1000 windfall just before Christmas, especially when you've got two young children.

It came out of the blue - and just because we joined the **Five Star Scheme** - I'd advise anyone to join today!



# THE BIG CHILL

## BY TOBY - IT'S A DOG'S LIFE!

Staff from United Welsh helped to raise money for homeless people by taking part in a 'sleep out' for Cardiff Action for the Single Homeless (CASH) who collect money for homeless people so that they have a better Christmas.

Toby, one of the staff's pet, gave us a dog's eye view of what happened on the sleep out on Friday 2nd December, one of the wettest nights of the year.



“ I got very cold and the floor was very hard and it was scary sitting by Marks and Spencer's in Cardiff. Lots of noisy people kept walking by and talking to me and I didn't like being a homeless dog even for the night! I'm sure my hang dog look made people sorry for me and helped to raise even more money for a great cause.

As well as my 'mum' Janice who works for United Welsh, there were other staff on the sleep out - Chris, Joseph, Elizabeth, Beth, Sarah and Ann - who helped raise more than £350 ”



# DO YOU HAVE ANY Comments?

Because they're coming to listen to you!

The staff at United Welsh have decided they have had enough of senior managers continually cracking the whip around the office so now we are passing them on to you!

The Chief Executive and Heads of Department are going to be visiting all United Welsh estates during 2006 to ensure they are in reasonable condition.

Look out in the next few weeks for Paula Kennedy, Director of Housing and Community Services, and Richard Mann, Development Director, at areas of Ebbw Vale, Tredegar and Tirphil on February 22nd. Paula will be visiting more sites in Ebbw Vale, Llanhilleth, Crumlin, Risca and Cwmfelinfach on the 27th with Tony Whittaker, Chief Executive of United Welsh. More information of visits in April in the next edition.

## 22nd February 2006:

**Ebbw Vale:** The Nook, William Adams Court, George Parry Court.

**Brynmawr:** Canterbury Road, Cwrt Rhyd

**Tredegar:** Cronin Court, Citadel Close & Pant Glas.

**Rhymney:** Benjamin Court.

**New Tredegar and Tirphil:** Glan yr Afon, Greenwood Court, Railway Terrace

## 27th February 2006:

**Abertillery:** Gwern Las.

**Cwm**

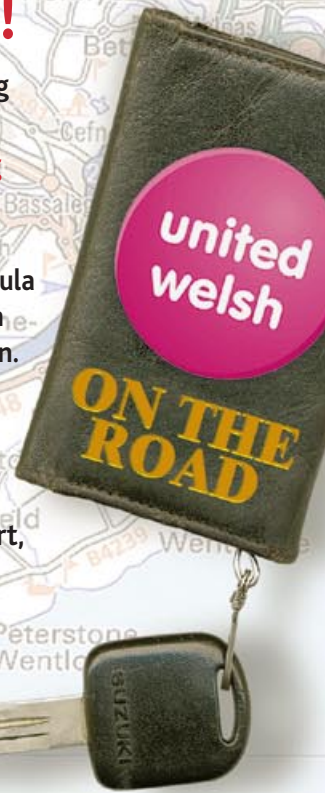
**Ebbw Vale:** Acorn Villas, Tabernacle Court, Beechwood Lodge.

**Crumlin**

**Llanhilleth**

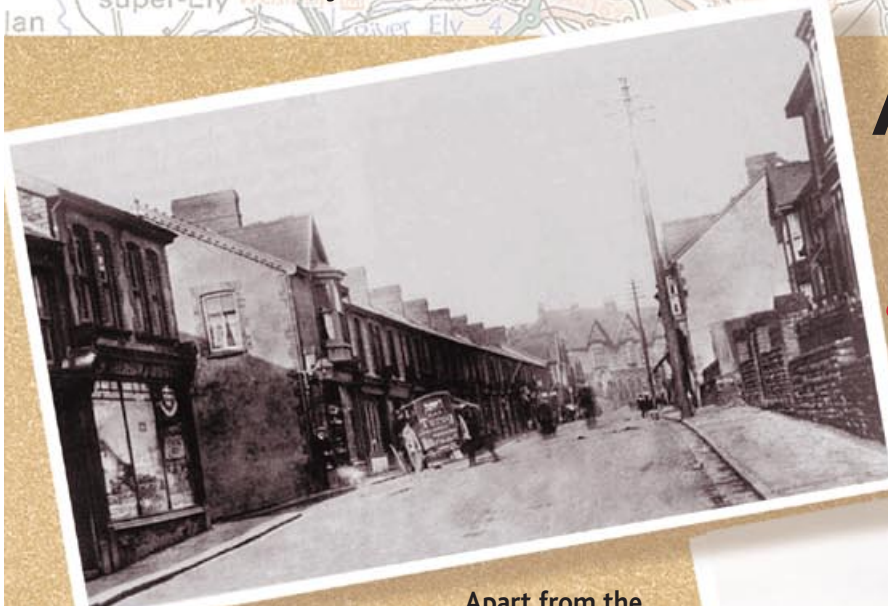
**Risca:** Ravenswood Court & Cwrt yr Ysgol

**Cwmfelinfach:** Cwrt y Babell.



## Aberbargoed...

*...then...*



Apart from the transport, nothing much has changed at Commercial Street Aberbargoed since the beginning of the last century has it. Everything is still recognisable, including the old council offices, now Blaen y Cwm, United Welsh flats, at the top of the picture. Thanks Edward (Sam) Samuel for sending in the old picture.

Do you have any old pictures of areas where United Welsh tenants now live? If you do, ring David on 029 2085 8166 or Cath on 029 2085 8126. We can arrange to have a comparison photograph taken and show them both in Linkup with a £20 book token for every photograph used.



## ...and now!

In November 2005, United Welsh, as main sponsors of the annual Tenant Participation and Advisory Service and Welsh Tenants' Federation Joint Conference "Streets Ahead", offered free delegate places to tenants as well as an opportunity for any active Community Groups to promote their projects at the conference as exhibitors.

There were four representatives from community groups at the conference with the Community Services Team from United Welsh. Elaine Griffiths attended as representative of the Van Communities First Partnership in Caerphilly; Roger Dafydd represented the Windsor Quay Tenants' Association in Cardiff as well as voice4tenants; and Idris and Ann Pethers attended as representatives of the Dinas United Tenants' Association (DUTA) from Dinas Powys. DUTA also took the opportunity to present an impressive exhibition of the work they've been doing to develop play and leisure facilities for the young people in their area.

The largest tenant participation event in Wales, the TPAS Cymru and Welsh Tenants' Federation Conference is a popular and well attended housing event, with around 400 delegates in attendance. As the only major housing event in Wales where such numbers of tenants

and landlords come together, it is the place to be for tenants and community groups interested in having their say on the future of tenant participation in Wales.

The Conference offered opportunities for debates, information sharing, showcases of the best practice in Wales, workshops, networking and chance to find out about the benefits, advantages and new thinking in tenant participation through plenaries, policy workshops and

general workshops, all based on its theme "Streets Ahead, The Future of Tenant Participation in Wales".

Idris Pethers from Dinas Powys was enthusiastic about the way the Conference brought like-minded people together. "I've had a

lot of experience as a campaigner in the past but active tenant participation is relatively new to me. I was surprised and heartened at the extent to which tenant campaigners are working on behalf of RSL communities in Wales and impressed by the willingness to tackle topics like an all Wales strategy for Tenant Participation, the Right to Know and the political will for supporting Tenant Participation."

"Our decision to exhibit the DUTA projects was more than rewarded with other delegates approaching us to talk about our activities, ask for or offer advice or just simply wish us luck. We'd certainly consider repeating the exercise given another opportunity and we'll be pitching for United Welsh to allow us to send a delegate to the 2006 Conference."

## STREETS AHEAD?

### The Future of Tenant Participation in Wales



*Wendy Griffin, Community Participation Officer at United Welsh and a landlord representative on the TPAS Management Committee stood down as Chair of that Committee this year at the end of her term of office.*

*John Drysdale, Chief Executive of TPAS Cymru said "Wendy did an excellent job for us in a time of huge changes at TPAS Cymru and I for one will miss her as Chair of the Management Committee. We're very glad that she accepted the nomination for Vice Chair and will be working with our new Chair, tenant representative Roy Parry".*

# New tenants... time for a financial health check?



Every day you pick up the paper or switch on the television and you are bombarded with the positive effects of having a health check-up...

Blood pressure normal? Carrying too much weight? Cholesterol level too high? The list is endless. The same could be said for your financial well-being. If you ignore the vital signs, the results can be devastating.

With this in mind United Welsh are offering all new tenants a free financial health check with Paul Daley, Benefit Adviser, who is shown below in the main photograph offering free advice on looking after money.

Not sure whether you are entitled to certain benefits? Debts starting to mount up? Never enough money to pay your bills? Paul can look at your individual circumstances and advise you on how best to maximise your income and balance your budget.

Its good to start off in your new home on a sound financial footing and what better way than with a free financial health check.



## Dinas United Tenants' Association

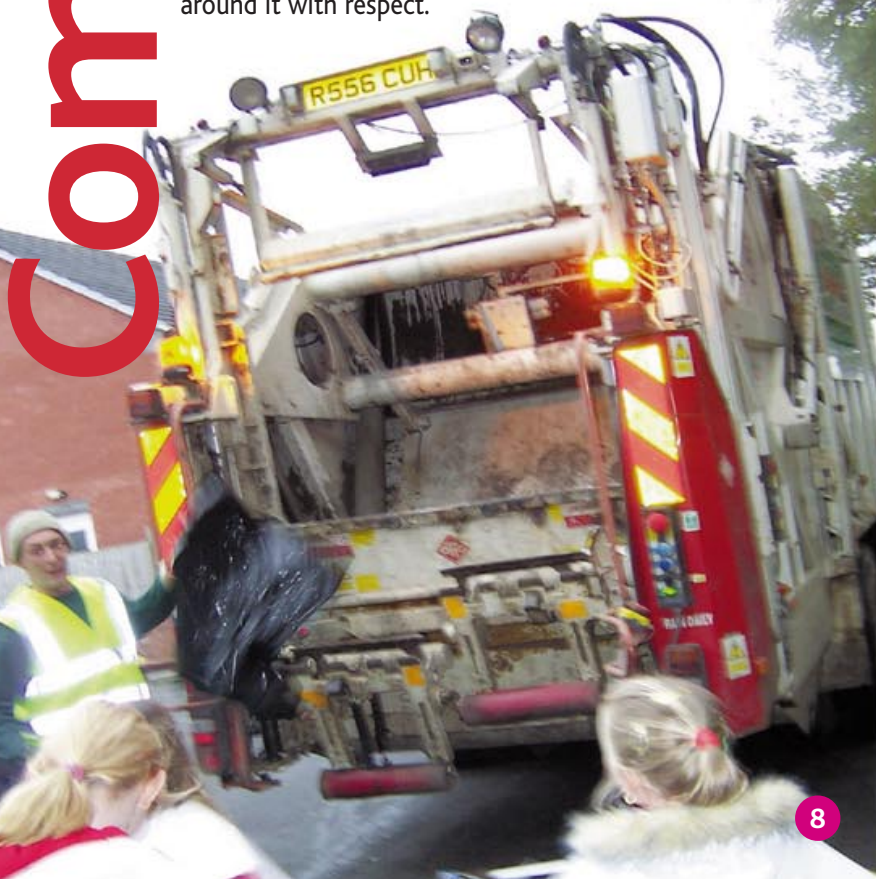
The Dinas United Tenants' Association will be holding its first Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 21st February.

If you live at Dinas Powys and would like to be part of community improvements there, DUTA would like to hear from you. Contact Melanie on 029 2085 0885 and she'll put you in touch.

## Heol Rees Tenants' Association

As part of an event to make a difference within their communities, the Heol Rees Tenants' Association teamed up with Hengoed Primary School to clean up their street. All of the children from Heol Rees, a small estate at Hengoed near Caerphilly, who attend the school, took part in a litter pick, collecting all of the litter from the street and its surrounding area.

At the end of the exercise, one of the Caerphilly County Borough refuse collection vehicles turned up to collect the litter they had collected and the children were treated to an explanation of what happens to their bin bags once they are taken away. For the Heol Rees TA this is the start of an environmental project aimed at improving the look of the estate. An application has been made to the Welsh Assembly for funding to pay for a series of projects over the next three years with the objective of helping the children and young people in the area to improve and appreciate their environment and to help them see why they should treat their community and the people who live in and around it with respect.



## Christmas in the Community

The Community Services Team was out amongst our communities in the lead up to Christmas, advising, helping and running Christmas events with some of the more active tenants groups.

The Van Communities First Partnership held what has become a very successful annual event for the children of the area. Wendy Griffin, Community Participation Officer with United Welsh and leader of the team organising the event, was very pleased with the turn out this year. "When you consider that there were just twelve children at the first event three years ago at a time when the Van Community Centre was hardly used, the fact that we had over ninety children this year is a great sign that a sense of community is returning to the area."

The Heol Rees Tenants' Association and Dinas United Tenants' Association held their own very successful events for local children and some of the more senior tenants had Christmas parties as well.

The Living+ Schemes at Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr got together to celebrate the seasonal goodwill with evenings of entertainment organised by the Community Services Team. The party atmosphere was helped along by a fabulous performance from crooner Ricky, sequence dancing led by United Welsh staff member Cath Lee and husband John and the comments afterwards from people who attended are all about how enjoyable it was.

"We set out to try to make sure that everyone had a good time and it looks as though everyone did!", Kerry Goodenough, the Tenant Participation Officer co-ordinating the Brynmawr party told us. "It was very much a team effort, with contributions from the Living+ and Blaenau Gwent Teams helping to make sure it ran as smoothly as we could manage and it all came together very well."

"Watching Cath and John dance makes you realise what a wealth of hidden talent we have at United Welsh and the reactions of the residents at the party who were encouraged to get up and dance, in some cases for the first time in quite a while, were absolutely heart-warming. Who said older people can't party!"



# F



# forum

## LOCAL AREA FORUM

Shortly before Christmas, voice4tenants held the first of its planned local Area Forums, at the Twyn Community Centre in Caerphilly. The Forums are the main chance for members of v4t, which of course means all tenants of United Welsh, to air their views and raise issues directly with the Executive Committee, whose role it is to collate those views and feed them back into United Welsh in discussion with its Chief Executive and the Chair of the Board of Management.

Attendance of members outside the Executive Committee was a little disappointing, but it was felt by the organisers that the issues raised by those who did attend made the exercise a worthwhile one.

### 'spectre of anti-social behaviour'

Roger Dafydd, Chair of voice4tenants told us: "We expected a relatively low turn out at the first of the Forums, if only because people did not yet know what to expect. The point of the Forum is to allow people to let us know what the local issues are and from that point of view, even though there weren't many at the meeting, the topics they brought up made up for it in their weightiness and relevance to many tenants across the different areas." "We initially expected to be talking mostly about repairs and contractor performance and indeed, this did come up, but far and away of most concern was the spectre of anti-social behaviour and a lack of good-neighbourliness."

"It is well appreciated", Roger continued, "that United Welsh has made some significant advances in tackling anti-social behaviour in recent times, but it is beginning to look

“ If v4t is to work effectively... tenants need to attend the Forums to raise awareness and pass on important information ”

from the information we are already gathering, that the problem is even more widespread than we originally thought." "This is one of the issues that we need people to attend the Forums to discuss and to bring us the information we can use to determine just how widespread the problem is. Until we do that it would be very difficult to argue for more resources from United Welsh or other agencies to deal with the problem properly and this holds true for a whole range of other issues."

"Tenants need to take some responsibility to make sure that if there are subjects they want raised with United Welsh, that they bring them to voice4tenants via the Area Forums." Roger added. "If v4t is to work effectively to make sure that the items tenants want discussed are on the agenda and being heard, tenants need to attend the Forums to raise awareness and pass on important information".

### Issues can be 'raised anonymously'

One of the things the Executive Committee is keen to point out is that no-one attending a Forum wishing to raise an issue needs to give details in an open meeting and that they can be raised anonymously by either submitting details in writing or by talking to one of the Executive in confidence before the start of the Forum. Details of how to do either will be given with adverts for the Forums themselves.

The next Area Forum will be held in Blaenau Gwent in March so if you live in Blaenau Gwent, watch out for details and an invitation coming your way in the next few weeks.





...OR  
HAPPY  
CHINESE  
NEW YEAR!



## Chinese Crispy Pork with Onions

The Chinese New year is the oldest and most important festival in the Chinese year. The date of the celebration is determined by the lunar calendar so it varies and this year fell on January 29th - THE YEAR OF THE DOG. Here's a recipe to try - if you want to celebrate New Year 'Chinese style'!

**Ingredients:**

1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> oz plain flour	oil (for deep frying)
1/2 tsp paprika	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> oz cornflour
1/2 tsp chilli powder	1/2 tsp cumin
1/2 onion	1/2 pork fillet
	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> fl oz milk

### Method

1. Heat the oil ready for deep frying.
2. Cut pork into strips
3. Mix together the flours and the spices and coat the pork
4. Cut onions into rings and soak in the milk then toss through the flour mix.
5. Deep fry both the pork and the onion rings for 2-3 minutes or until crisp and golden.
6. Serve on a bed of either boiled or fried rice.



# Planning FOR change

Many tenants often ask why they have to wait to have a new kitchen or their windows replaced. Julian Evans, who joined United Welsh in October and is responsible for the Planned Maintenance Service, explains the difference between planned maintenance and day to day repairs.

"When a tenant rings to report a dripping tap or a broken window handle, that's reactive maintenance and is dealt with quickly depending on its urgency," said Julian. But dealing with major replacement contracts such as new windows, doors, kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems takes more planning, if it is to be effective, and is based on the 'life cycle' of the item being replaced. This allows the association to plan years ahead and to spend the budget for this work in a more cost effective way by carrying out replacement contracts on properties in an area, all at the same time.

"We also work within the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards. This means that if, for example, new bathrooms are to be replaced we will look, if practical, at the whole room to see if there are other items that can be brought up to standard to make it more user friendly and safer - close to new build standards.

"A budget has also been allocated this year to help improve access at our Living + properties such as ramps, hand rails and escape routes," said Julian.



# CWRT Y HEN BONT

NEW HOMES FOR RENT AT GELLIGROES ROAD,  
**OLD BRIDGE COURT**  
PONTLLANFRAITH, BLACKWOOD



The Cwrt Y Hen Bont development was completed by United Welsh in December last year and will provide the following new accommodation for rent:

**4 x FIVE PERSON**

three bedroom semi detached (supported house)

**1 x SIX PERSON**

four bedroom detached (supported house)

**1 x FOUR PERSON** four bedroom (supported house)

The scheme has been built by M & J Cosgrove (Builders) Ltd and is built to Lifetime Homes standard – *'homes that are more flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the occupants'*.

The scheme has been named Cwrt Y Hen Bont. The historical department of the council carried out an investigation and found that the site was part of a rediscovered railway where an old bridge carried the railway system, hence the name in English 'Old Bridge Court'.

All properties will be allocated to nomination from Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Housing Officer for this scheme will be Clive James who can be contacted on 02920 858124.



# Noticeboard

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## OFFICE CLOSURE

The United Welsh offices at Ty Cennydd, Caerphilly and the Walters Building in Cardiff will be closed for the Easter Bank Holidays on Friday 14th April 2006 and Monday 17th April 2006.

If you need an emergency repair when the offices are closed, please contact the special United Welsh number below.



**(01495) 769624**

Remember – this service is for emergencies only!

## WINNERS OF THE REPAIR REPORT SLIPS DRAWS

FIRST NAME DRAWN WINS £50,  
SECOND NAME WINS £25 AND THIRD WINS £10.

### November

£50 Miss A J Williams,  
Caerphilly

£25 Mr M A Jones,  
St Mellons, Cardiff

£10 Mr M J James,  
Cardiff

### December

No draw took place

### January

£50 Mrs E Webbe,  
Caerphilly

£25 Mrs O Davies,  
Abertillery

£10 Ms G Morgan,  
Llanbradach

# Sudoku - the craze that's capturing a (western) nation!

The concept of sudoku reputedly began with the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler who in 1783 invented Latin Squares - NxN grids which have all numbers from 1 to N appearing exactly once in each row and column.

Sudoku puzzles as we know them were first published in the late 1970's in Math Puzzles and Logic Problems magazine by Dell Magazines. Dell took Euler's Latin Square concept and applied it to a 9x9 grid with the addition of nine 3x3 sub-grids, or boxes, each containing all numbers from 1 to 9.

So, the sudoku concept was not invented in Japan as many people may believe, although name sudoku was.

To solve the puzzle, each of the numbers 1 to 9 must appear exactly once in each row and column and only once in each of the nine grids. We've printed three games below of different levels. Why not let us know how you get on? Good luck!

1				2	3	4		
			4	5	6			
			3		6	7	8	
	6	2		9				
8	7				1		9	
		8		5	4			
4	3	5		9				
			6	2	7			
	6	2	5					9

EASY

		1	2	3	4			
				5			1	
5	6	7						
3			8		7			
1	2						9	6
			9	1				5
						4	8	2
	9			8				
			5	7	2	3		

MEDIUM

1			2					3
4	5			6				
			7	5	8			
	1			4				9
	6							5
	3			1				7
			9	2	6			
				3				2
7					5			1

HARD