

# Nomination Form

## Housing Organisation of the Year



### TIS National Excellence Awards 2024

The **TIS National Excellence awards** recognise and celebrate housing organisations, staff, volunteers, tenants, residents, and community groups **who are leading the way and making positive change in the Scottish social housing sector.**

Categories honour excellence in everything **from partnership working, tenant participation and scrutiny practice, to digital creativity and innovation.** Hotly anticipated, the awards offer a seal of approval for the most outstanding work.

Finalists are selected by an expert and independent judging panel, and **winners announced at an awards ceremony on Thursday 7th November 2024 at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.**

**The closing date for applications is 5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024.** TIS accepts submissions in more than one award category.

#### Category Overview

The **Housing Organisation of the Year** award recognises an outstanding housing organisation who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation.

Submissions must **evidence how the organisation is dedicated to going above and beyond, to ensure tenants' rights are at the forefront,** have a meaningful say, and are pivotal in influencing housing policies, services, and standards. The organisation must promote quality and recognise that tenants are at the heart.

#### Who you can nominate

This award is open to housing organisations operating across the Scottish social housing sector.

## About you

Please note information about the individual, organisation, or group submitting the application:

<b>Name</b>	Gavin Wiffen
<b>Position</b>	Customer & Community Engagement Officer
<b>Organisation</b>	Riverside Scotland
<b>Email address</b>	Gavin.wiffen@riverside.org.uk
<b>Telephone number</b>	07970348724

## About the nominee

Please note information about the housing organisation you are nominating:

<b>Organisation</b>	Riverside Scotland
<b>Email address</b>	Gavin.wiffen@riverside.org.uk
<b>Telephone number</b>	07970348724

## Background

### Maximum 250 words

Please outline background information about the housing organisation that you are nominating.

For example, detail:

- The background of the organisation, including: total number of homes, total number of employees, and the geographical areas the organisation covers, etc.
- A brief background of their tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider engagement practices.

Established in 1993 as Irvine Housing Association, Riverside Scotland has been housing and supporting people in local communities across Southwest Scotland for over 30 years.

People are at the heart of Riverside Scotland – the people who we provide homes to, the people we support in the communities we serve, and our skilled and experienced team of employees of 42 employees.

We have more than 2,500 properties housing thousands of people across North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway and most recently expanding into South Ayrshire.

We are committed to transforming lives by providing well maintained, good quality affordable housing and have completed three new developments in the past few years, including Scotland's first large-scale affordable modular development. We support people facing a wide variety of challenging circumstances to lead more resilient and independent lives, including housing veterans through our partnership with Veterans First Point/NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

As we enter the fourth decade of our journey our focus is on our existing customers, putting them first in our decision-making and service development. We want to concentrate on improving their experience of Riverside Scotland as their landlord.

Going forward we want to deliver significant improvements to our assets, focusing on improving the homes we own and manage, striving for net zero and looking at how we can regenerate some of our estates by working closely with our partners.



## Actions

### Maximum 500 words

Please outline specific actions the housing organisation has taken to make an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation.

For example, outline:

- How the organisation has gone above and beyond to ensure tenant rights are at the forefront.
- How the organisation has made a real difference to the lives of tenants.
- How the organisation promotes equality and recognise that tenants are at the heart.
- How the organisation has explored innovative new ways to get people involved.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

We carried out a large consultation with customers in 2022, the Big Conversation. This focused on asking customers for their views on us as a landlord and the type of services they required from us as we came out of the pandemic. Over 600 customers responded to this consultation and told us quite clearly that we needed to adapt our approach to service delivery and to engaging with customers. They wanted a greater local presence from us, and for us to listen to their views and show that we're acting upon them.

As a result of this consultation and by listening to customer feedback, we completely reshaped the way we support customers. We have now fully implemented our 'Tenant Partner' model, which is focused on making staff more visible across our estates and enables greater availability to support customers. We increased the number of Tenant Partners we have, to over 10, allowing us to implement smaller patch sizes to manage. These smaller patch sizes and an increased number of staff has allowed us more time to be there for our customers. We have also made it easier for customers to contact their Tenant Partner, by providing Tenant Partner's direct contact numbers.

In June 2023, we established our new Service Improvement Group – with help from TIS. We now have five tenants on our new Service Improvement Group who are fully committed to working in partnership with Riverside Scotland to deliver positive changes for customers and for the organisation. They have recently completed their first project, which focused on our approach to Void Management, and made a range of recommendations to us in how we can deliver improvements in this area. The group are now keen to investigate their next area of scrutiny and we are committed to working in partnership with them.

Our approach to tenant participation has changed too, we're now engaging with our communities to listen to the issues that are affecting them, and to work in partnership to find solutions to these. One recent example of this was the work we carried out in the Pennyburn Estate in Kilwinning. Residents had been highlighting to us that there were ongoing problems with fly-tipping, incorrect waste disposal and untidy gardens, which was causing frustration amongst tenants and residents. As a result of this feedback, we arranged an estate walkabout, with tenants, residents, local authority partners, elected members and Riverside Scotland all being invited along to listen to the concerns of residents.

Residents were clear that they felt there was more we could do to support with this problem, so with this in mind, we came up with several innovative ways in which we could help. The first of these was our Big Pennyburn Clean Up event, which provided skips for residents to dispose of any household items safely. As well as this, staff from Riverside Scotland carried out an estate wide litter pick and we also ran advice workshops in partnership with the local authority to provide advice to customers on a range of issues such as waste disposal, their responsibilities as well as cover things such as welfare and affordable warmth.

We have also launched a new Garden Equipment Lending Scheme, which allows customers to borrow garden equipment to take care of their gardens. This was launched on the back of feedback that residents may need assistance to manage their garden, especially because of the cost-of-living crisis.

## Outcomes

### Maximum 700 words

Please outline positive outcomes achieved as a result of the housing organisation's commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation

For example, detail the impact on:

- The delivery of housing services.
- The improvement of satisfaction levels.
- The strategic approach of the organisation.
- The culture of the organisation and its core values.
- Communication, strengthening relationships, and partnership working.
- The inclusion and lasting benefits of tenants, residents, and/or communities.
- The skills and knowledge of other tenants, residents, and/or communities.
- How others can learn from the organisation's good practice now and in the future.

Our Corporate Plan outlines our vision on how we will deliver our services over the next few years. Included in this, is a commitment to Trusted Customer Services, Supporting our Customers Through the Cost of Living and New Homes and Better Places.

We have trialled several new initiatives over the past 12 months, based on listening to customer's feedback. One of these includes the Big Pennyburn Clean Up mentioned previously – which saw Riverside make a substantial investment into acting on feedback of customers.

We recently offered training to customers, focusing on improving their DIY skills. The aim of this was to provide customers with skills and experience that they could use to further their employment opportunities. As part of this training, we also offered four tenants driving lessons – with Riverside Scotland covering the associated costs. Lessons are due to start in May 2024, and we are working with a local driving school to deliver the lessons to customers – which has been well received. This demonstrates our commitment to supporting customers and communities and supporting their livelihoods as they navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

Other projects include things such as working with customers to try and establish local task and finish groups to work in partnership to deal with issues within their estates, rolling out a device lending scheme - in partnership with Connecting Scotland - to combat digital exclusion, and our recently launched Garden Equipment Lending Scheme – demonstrating how we are innovative in the way we support our customers.

All our work over the past 12 months has seen improvements to our customer satisfaction, we have seen improvements to the number of customers who feel that we're listening to their views, complaints handling and overall satisfaction with us as a landlord.

On the back of customer feedback, we also rolled out customer drop ins. This allowed customers to come and speak to staff in person. We trialled these across all our estates and worked with local groups and venues to facilitate these – with a focus on using community centres and similar venues to also support local organisations.

When it comes to communication with customers, we also reviewed our approach to this. We now deliver bi-monthly newsletters to customers that all customers receive in the post – our new “Word on the Street”. This has been well received and customers appreciate more regular updates on the work we are doing. As well as this, we have further utilised online and social media platforms to share messages and updates with customers. One thing we have also found useful when consulting with customers, is the use of text messaging, which helped to increase responses to our annual rent consultation in 2023.

We have been flexible and adaptable in our approach to communicating with and involving our customers – as outlined. I think there is a lot to be learned, such as being willing to try new ways to reach customers and get them involved, but also being able to identify what isn’t working and change course.

Other organisations could also look to adopt our approach to allowing customers to speak to us face to face. Customers demonstrated to us that despite many services now being online, they appreciate the option to speak to staff face to face, something we have facilitated through our drop ins and the greater availability of Tenant Partners, who can meet customers to discuss any concerns they have.

We have bigger plans to involve customers and support our communities over the next few years and have recently produced our Communities and Livelihoods Strategy, focusing on seven main objectives:

- Prevent evictions and homelessness by proactively working with customers to sustain their tenancies.
- Provide advice and support to tenants to increase tenancy sustainment.
- Support the livelihoods of our customers through projects that provide advice and support and build capacity for people to improve their own lives - going beyond the traditional landlord service.
- Explore options to establish a customer health and wellbeing offer.
- Support customers into training and employment opportunities.
- Promote community resilience and empowerment, by supporting new and existing voluntary groups who are trying to make life better in our neighbourhoods.
- Increase customer engagement with customers through a variety of methods to inform continuous improvement.

This strategy, along with our corporate plan outlines our commitment and determination to working with and supporting our customers and communities. We are looking forward to delivering on these objectives and to building on the positive work we have already done.

## What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?


Maximum 100 words

Please provide a short testimonial on why this housing organisation deserves to win.

Our exceptional commitment to tenant participation, scrutiny, and community engagement sets us apart. We have reshaped service delivery based on customer feedback, implementing the 'Tenant Partner' model to enhance staff visibility and support – resulting in increased satisfaction. Our Service Improvement Group (SIG) rigorously reviewed Void Management policies, resulting in valuable recommendations. We actively collaborate with tenants, empowering them to influence decisions. Innovative initiatives like the Big Pennyburn Clean Up demonstrate our dedication to improving lives. We are committed to providing the best possible service to customers and are empowered to challenge the status quo to ensure we can deliver this.

## Declaration

As the proposer I have completed this nomination form to the best of my knowledge, and the information provided is a true representation of the nominee's achievements.

Name	Gavin Wiffen
Signature	
Date	06/06/2024

Thank you for taking the time to complete this nomination form.

Please submit your nomination by **5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024** to TIS by email at: [info@tis.org.uk](mailto:info@tis.org.uk) or by post to: **TIS – Clockwise Offices, 77 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3BZ.**

## Next steps

- **All applications will be acknowledged on receipt by TIS.** If you do not receive acknowledgement within 3 working days, please contact us to ensure your application has been received.
- An **independent judging panel** will rate your application against the award criteria. The panel will consist of representatives from organisations across the Scottish social rented sector.
- Your award submission will provide the basis for both the shortlist and final decision of the winning entry.
- **TIS welcomes applications in more than one award category.**
- Please ensure you answer all questions as fully as possible and keep the content of your nomination focused – avoid exceeding the suggested word count.

- **TIS will inform all proposers of the outcome of their application Thursday 29th August 2024.**
- Finalists will be invited to the **TIS National Excellence Awards Ceremony**, as part of the TIS National Housing Conference and Exhibition, on **Thursday 7th November 2024** at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.