

Nomination Form

Excellence in Digital Engagement



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 **Excellence in Digital Engagement** award recognises housing organisations who have demonstrated creativity in developing meaningful digital engagement opportunities.

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly changed the way that housing organisations engage with their tenants and communities. Traditional methods to get involved are now enriched by new technologies, innovative practices, and online communication tools to ensure tenants and communities stayed connected.

Submissions must **evidence how the organisation has worked collaboratively with tenants, residents, and communities to broaden the reach of engagement** by offering innovative, digital engagement opportunities and more, flexible choices to participate.

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:

Name	Catherine Coutts on behalf of NETRALT
Position	Co-Chair
Organisation	NETRALT
Email address	catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk
Telephone number	01224 625822

About the nominee

Please note information about the housing organisation you are nominating:

Organisation	North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT)
Email address	info@netralt.org.uk
Telephone number	c/o 01224 625822

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 overview of their current tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider engagement methods.

North East Tenants, Residents, and Landlords Together (NETRALT) is a group dedicated to supporting tenant engagement across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and Moray. By promoting strong partnerships and championing best practices, NETRALT ensures that tenant voices are heard, respected and acted upon.

Established in 2011, NETRALT aims to help landlords meet the Scottish Social Housing Charter requirements.

NETRALT's membership comprises tenants, residents, and staff from local authorities and registered social landlords:

Aberdeen City Council (**22,772 homes**)

Aberdeenshire Council (**13,106 homes**)

Moray Council (**6,342 homes**)

Castlehill Housing Association (**1,925 homes**)

Grampian Housing Association (**3,625 homes**)

Langstane Housing Association (**2,879 homes**)

Osprey Housing (**1,748 homes**)

Together, these organisations cover a significant group of social housing in the North East of Scotland, reflecting a broad geographical reach and a diverse tenant base.

NETRALT engages with tenants through:

- **Sharing best practices:** NETRALT provides a platform to exchange knowledge and experience, leading to a culture of continuous improvement for members
- **Providing value for money:** NETRALT maximizes value for money by sharing resources
- **Collaboration:** NETRALT coordinates joint activities such as training sessions and events, which help to build a sense of community and shared purpose.
- **Partnerships:** In addition to strengthening partnerships between its members, NETRALT forms partnerships with community groups to include diverse voices in decision-making

- **Support for tenant groups:** NETRALT promotes and supports local tenant and resident organisations, empowering communities to take a more active role in housing matters.
- **Equal Opportunities compliance:** NETRALT is committed to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 equal opportunities provisions.

NETRALT's initiatives ensure tenants have meaningful opportunities to shape the services that impact their lives.

Actions

Maximum 500 words

Please outline specific actions the housing organisation has taken to develop meaningful digital engagement opportunities.

For example, outline:

- The organisation's reason to develop digital engagement opportunities.
- How the organisation worked collaboratively with tenants, residents, and communities to develop digital engagement opportunities.
- An overview of the digital engagement opportunities that the organisation embraced.
- How the organisation explored innovative new ways to reach more people to get involved.
- How the organisation has championed digital engagement opportunities within their organisation.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

NETRALT have always embraced digital engagement, with all meetings being hybrid and communication between meetings taking place on Basecamp. Pre-lockdowns, NETRALT had several successful in-person study visits to other tenant groups across Scotland, and hosted study visits themselves. Post-lockdown, members expressed a desire to have a study visit experience, but there was a reluctance to travel. NETRALT wanted to replicate the benefits of a study visit, and since many tenants had gained confidence online during the lockdowns, a virtual gathering was selected.

The virtual gathering was a collaborative learning event between NETRALT and Northern Tenants Partnership (NTP). The theme was "Working in Partnership." It showcased good practice and insights on tenant and community involvement through engaging presentations, videos, and discussions.

The aim was to make this learning event more accessible to more tenants and residents than an in-person study visit. Geographic barriers were removed by making the event online, making it more inclusive. NTP covers the Highlands & Islands, Orkney, Shetland and the Hebrides. Attendees participated from the comfort of their own homes, eliminating the need for travel time and logistics. It was also beneficial for landlords because there was no expenditure for venue hire, catering, transport, childcare or accommodation; this event cost nothing to host and cost nothing to attend. This convenience meant over 40 people registered to attend.

A bespoke [website](#) was designed and created by a NETRALT tenant which included helpful hints on how to get the most out of your experience using Zoom and Slido. Recordings from the live event were available for on-demand viewing so people could access content at their own convenience. Staff were able to play these at local in-person events for those who could not access the event at home. Features such as closed captioning, screen reader compatibility and adjustable font sizes made content more accessible to a wider audience.

The event design comprised a series of 10-minute sessions followed by Q&As, with dedicated time for interaction, sharing experiences and advice. This structure ensured information flowed and stayed focussed. Plain language was used; there was a diverse audience with varying tenant participation experiences. Jargon was limited and clear definitions provided for technical terms and acronyms.

Sessions included slides, videos and conversations. This prevented “death by PowerPoint” and kept audience attention. Visuals such as graphs, charts and images complemented the presentations. Use of visual aids can enhance understanding, help clarify complex information and reinforce key points. Research shows that people retain information better when presented both visually and verbally. This was demonstrated by the quiz results.

Each session was tailored to the needs of the audience, and key points highlighted to reinforce learning. Plain language was used; there was a diverse audience with varying tenant participation experiences. Jargon was limited and clear definitions provided for technical terms and acronyms.

The whole event was planned by NETRALT tenants, with staff support. The programme included something for everyone, including topics like “why join a tenants’ group,” youth engagement, participatory budgeting, community initiatives like “Bite and Blether”, the Food Forest, NETRALT’s successes and the Regional Networks (now Tenants Together). George Walker (Scottish Housing Regulator) joined live from his holiday to start off the event with a keynote speech on working in partnership!

Outcomes

Maximum 700 words

Please outline **positive outcomes** achieved as a result of the housing organisation developing meaningful digital engagement opportunities.

For example, detail the impact on:

- Opportunities that have emerged as a result of introducing digital engagement options.
- Offering more, flexible participation options, that offer more choice and opportunities to get involved.
- Extending the reach of tenants, residents, and communities.
- The delivery of housing services.
- The improvement of satisfaction levels.

- Communication, strengthening relationships, and partnership working.
- The inclusion and lasting benefits of tenants, residents, and communities.
- The skills and knowledge of other tenants, residents, and communities.
- How others can learn from the organisation's good practice now and in the future.

NETRALT created a meaningful digital engagement opportunity, resulting in numerous positive outcomes.

Opportunities emerged:

This shift from in-person study visits to digital provided a platform for more participants, showcasing good practices and insights on tenant involvement through engaging presentations, videos, and discussions. Over 40 participants registered, a number unlikely to be achieved through in-person events due to geographical and logistical constraints.

Flexible participation options:

The virtual format offered flexibility, allowing tenants to join from the comfort of their homes, eliminating travel time, costs, and logistical barriers. This inclusivity made participation accessible to a broader audience, including those in rural areas like the Highlands & Islands, Orkney, Shetland, and the Hebrides. On-demand recordings further enhanced accessibility, allowing tenants to engage with content at their convenience.

Extending reach:

By moving the study visits online, NETRALT extended its reach significantly. The virtual event allowed participation from a wider geographical area, overcoming barriers that traditionally hinder in-person attendance. This inclusive approach led to a more diverse range of voices and experiences being represented, enriching the discussions and outcomes.

Delivery of housing services:

The digital engagement event facilitated the sharing of best practices and innovative ideas among tenants and landlords, impacting the delivery of housing services. The insights gained from tenant feedback during participation events help shape services that are more responsive to tenant needs, promoting a higher standard of housing management.

Improvement of satisfaction levels:

Feedback from the post-event survey was overwhelmingly positive, with an average rating of 4.6/5. Participants appreciated the variety of topics, the relevance and clarity of the material, and the friendly, informative atmosphere.

Comments included:

- *I loved the variety of topics you managed to have*
- *Relevant material, easy to understand*
- *I found it very friendly and informative*
- *Learned lots of what goes on and works in other areas and how things were set up and pros and cons of ideas.*

- *As a newcomer, I enjoyed hearing different approaches to tenant participation, and how some of the partnerships have worked well.*
- *I liked the variety of topics covered and hearing from different tenants and landlords. I thought the event was very well done.*

This high level of satisfaction indicates that tenants felt valued and heard, boosting their overall satisfaction with NETRALT's initiatives. 100% of respondents said they would choose to attend another NETRALT/NTP digital event in the future.

Communication and partnerships:

The virtual event strengthened relationships between tenants and landlords. The collaboration with NTP exemplified successful partnership working and gave an opportunity for mutual learning. Tenants from different regions connected and shared their experiences, expanding their networks and collective knowledge.

Inclusion and lasting benefits:

The inclusive nature of this event ensured that a diverse audience could participate, including those who might have been excluded due to physical or logistical barriers. Having recordings available with features like closed captioning, screen reader compatibility and adjustable font sizes made the event accessible to a wider audience, ensuring lasting benefits in terms of inclusivity and engagement.

Skills and knowledge development:

Participants, including those new to digital platforms like Zoom and Slido, gained confidence in using these tools. The event also featured sessions tailored to varying levels of tenant participation experience, ensuring everyone could engage meaningfully. This skill development extends beyond the event, empowering tenants to participate more effectively in future digital engagements.

A newcomer to tenant participation was the overall winner of the quiz at the end. This reflects the how well the content was communicated because he understood and retained that information.

Learning and future good practice:

NETRALT's approach offers a replicable example for other tenant groups. Their tenant-led, digitally innovative engagement demonstrates how to adapt to changing tenant circumstances while maintaining high levels of participation and satisfaction with the event. The success of the first virtual event has led to plans for a second event in September 2024, aiming to include even more participants nationally. This commitment to continuous improvement and sharing resources demonstrates good practice in tenant engagement.

Additionally, 3 tenants will be featuring on a radio show in August to talk about the success of the first event and promote the second one, all whilst spreading the word about tenant participation to more people. This is an exciting opportunity for those tenants.

Scottish Housing News published an article about the event:

<https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/tenant-participation-groups-host-first-interactive-session>

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.

NETRALT stands out for its first ever digital interactive tenant-led event to share the amazing work done across the North East and Northern Scotland. This digital collaboration with Northern Tenants Partnership provided a unique opportunity for tenants to inspire one another, share their good practice, enhance networking and promote the fantastic work being done in so many different communities. By moving the concept of study visits online, the event was more inclusive, creating stronger partnerships, boosting tenant participation across a large area, and receiving outstanding feedback, with 100% of attendees eager for future digital events. This successful event is set to be expanded nationally, showcasing NETRALT's commitment to promoting tenant engagement through digital innovation.

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	Catherine Coutts
Signature	
Date	11/07/2024

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 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.