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Community News

Edition 16 | AUTUMN | October 2025

Welcome to the 16th edition of Community News.



We hope you enjoy all the latest news, activities, upcoming events and items of interest from around our Woven Communities.

Congratulations to tenants involved in the **Woven Anonymous Shopping Group** who received the Highly Commended Award for **Excellence in Tenant Engagement** at the Supporting Communities All Ireland Awards.

Over the past 12 months, the group have played a vital role in testing and identifying areas of improvement across Woven services.

Would you like to join our editorial panel?

Community News is produced by tenants, for tenants; co-ordinated and compiled by the Editorial Panel and members of Woven's Homes & Communities Team.

We are on the lookout for willing tenant volunteers. Gain experience of newsletter production and share news with tenants across NI. Email: newsletter@woven.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

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Find our latest
events online at
www.woven.org.uk

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Homes, Lives
and
Communities;
Woven as one.

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Events

Regional Panel meetings			
North West	North Coast	Belfast	
13/5/2025	15/4/2025	12/2/2025	
01/7/2025	08/7/2025	23/6/2025	
02/12/2025	25/11/2025	15/9/2025	
03/03/2026	11/03/2025	8/12/2025	23/02/2026

'Housing for All' Advisory Group meetings			
Portrush/ Portstewart	Sion Mills	Hollywood	Lorne St / Malone Mews
23/5/2025	03/06/2025	19/05/2025	07/4/2025
19/09/2025	02/09/2025	22/09/2025	01/09/2025
28/11/2025	25/11/2025	15/12/2025	08/12/2025
27/02/2026	11/03/2025	09/03/2026	23/02/2026

Residents' Forum	Service Improvement	Policy Review Panel
28/04/2025	Gardening / grounds	Corporate Net Zero
14/10/2025	22/05/2025	Policy: 03/06/25

Editorial Panel / Community Newsletter Group - online meetings			
Apr 2025 weekly	Jun 2025 weekly	Aug 2025 weekly	Nov 2025 weekly

Additional Diary Dates	
Mystery Shopping	Tenant Training
September 2025	Neurodiversity (Orchardville) 19/06/25
Tenant Conference	Dates tbc for:
26/02/2026 (venue tbc)	Mental Health First Aid; First Aid; Mediation/Conflict Resolution

SAVE
THE
DATE

Dates may be subject to change, if you are interested in attending, please contact a member of the Communities Team to confirm

UPCOMING
EVENTS

There is an extensive programme of community events planned across our schemes over Halloween/Christmas. Follow us on Facebook to stay up to date and look out for flyers/texts advertising events in your area!

Other Events

Check out these events taking place across Northern Ireland in the coming months

BELFAST
INTERNATIONAL
ARTS
FESTIVAL

Belfast International Arts Festival
14th October - 9th November
All across Belfast!



Halloween in Dungannon
24th October (from 6:30pm)
Market Square/Hill of The O'Neill

Halloween Half Term at Mount Stewart
25th October - 2nd November
Mount Stewart, Newtownards



DERRY
HALLOWEEN

Derry Halloween
28th - 31st October
Various venues across the city



Visit discovernorthernireland.com for more info and to find events in your area

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Tenant Zone



Welcome to Tenant Zone! This section is all about our tenants. Got a photo, a story, a poem or anything else to share? Get in touch and we could feature it here.

This is also your opportunity to get involved and have your voice heard.



This Summer saw Woven launch its inaugural 'Gardening Competition'. There were three categories for tenants to submit their gardens into: Small Space; Traditional and Communal

We are delighted to say we received a number of brilliant entries! The full list of winners will be displayed in full in the next edition of the Newsletter, along with photos of their entries but for now, the winners of each category are shown above and these are:

- Small Space - Angela Barr
- Traditional - Barry Diver (Overall Winner!)
- Communal - Sullivan Close, Holywood

All winners and runners up received vouchers and Barry gets a gardening hamper as well for being the best overall garden.

Well done to all!



Mystery Shopping

Staff and tenants recently attended 'Supporting Communities' All-Ireland tenant conference in Belfast and received a 'Highly Commended' award for their successful Mystery Shopping exercise that was ran last year. Well done to all involved! Read more about the conference and award in our next edition!



WE WANT YOU!

Want to join our Editorial Panel and get involved in writing articles as well as designing and editing the Woven Community Newsletter?

Or do you just have a story you want to tell? Maybe you have an article you think other tenants would love to read?

If so, get in touch at newsletter@woven.org.uk



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Out and About

As ever, the Communities Team have had a busy few months. Below is just a snapshot of events that have taken place recently...



Regional Panels... Housing For All... Community Events... Environmental Projects... and more!



There are plenty of events already planned for the coming months and lots of exciting ideas in the pipeline for the year ahead. Keep an eye out for posts on our website and social media! Any events local to you are often advertised via texts and flyers too!

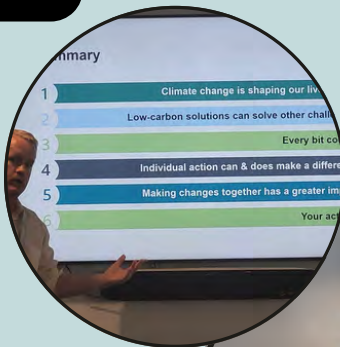
Carbon Literacy Training!

Our Biodiversity and Environmental Officer, Ciaran McLarnon has been busy deliver training to staff and tenants alike, courtesy of the Carbon Literacy Project.

Carbon Literacy is “an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis” and the training encourages individuals to reflect on the own impact and also their impact within Woven.

The training is followed by a written assessment and if individuals pass, they receive a certificate confirming they are now ‘Carbon Literate’. It is hoped eventually, all staff will complete the training and as many tenants as possible!

Carbon Literacy Project



WITCHES OF ISLANDMAGEE

As we approach Halloween, Woven tenant and Carrickfergus resident Dave Maher takes a look at real life scary story that took place on these shores over 300 years ago...

As October winds howl and nights draw in, we find ourselves in the perfect season for ghost stories but some tales are not born of imagination, they are stitched from the fears, superstitions, and tragedies of real lives. One of the most chilling in Ireland's history is the story of the Islandmagee witches of 1711, a tale of strange fits, whispered accusations, and a community overtaken by fear. Though more than three hundred years have passed, the story still lingers like sea-mist along the Antrim coast.

The story begins in late 1710, at Knowehead House, a sturdy dwelling in Islandmagee, Co. Antrim. Ann Haltridge, a widow of some standing, began reporting strange occurrences. She spoke of being tormented by a ghostly boy who would appear in the halls, whispering obscenities, moving furniture, and filling the night with terror. Ann's household staff and visitors claimed to have witnessed the disturbances too, dishes shattered, bedsheets tugged by unseen hands, and chilling cries echoing in the dark.

The widow died in February 1711, her passing attributed to the torments that plagued her. If the haunting ended with her death, perhaps the story would have sunk into quiet legend. But fate had something darker in store.

After Ann's death, her 18-year-old niece, Mary Dunbar, came to stay. Mary was educated, from a respectable family, and hardly the type one might expect to see in the grip of hysteria. Yet almost as soon as she set foot in the house, she was struck by violent convulsions. She claimed invisible hands clawed at her, lifting her into the air, throwing her against the walls.

Mary retched pins and feathers, screamed in voices not her own, and cried that spectral figures were tormenting her in the night. These grotesque fits drew the attention of neighbours, ministers, and eventually magistrates. Fear spread like wildfire. It was Mary who gave the accusations their shape. Between spasms, she named eight local women as her tormentors. She claimed they had sent demons to plague her, and that their spirits visited her bed each night. The women she accused were not outsiders but neighbours: Janet Carson, Janet Latimer, Janet Main, Janet Millar, Margaret Mitchell, Catherine McCalmont, Janet Liston, and Elizabeth Sellor.

The accused were hauled to trial at Carrickfergus in March 1711. The courtroom must have been thick with tension as crowds gathered to see if witches would truly be unmasked. Witnesses spoke of Mary's fits and of the apparitions she claimed to see. One woman was beaten so badly by the crowd on the way to court that she lost an eye.

The eight pleaded not guilty, but their fate was sealed. The law under which they were tried, the Witchcraft Act of 1586, made it a crime not only to conjure spirits but to even consult with them. Despite the lack of physical proof, the testimony of Mary Dunbar and the fearful weight of public opinion carried the day.

The women were sentenced a year in prison and four humiliating sessions in the pillory, where they were jeered at and pelted with filth by the crowd... but the story didn't end there.

Even after the women were jailed, Mary's torments continued. Still convulsing, still vomiting pins and feathers, she turned her accusations toward a man this time: William Sellor, the husband of Janet Liston and father of Elizabeth Sellor. Sellor was tried in September 1711. This time, the penalty was harsher. Convicted, he may have been executed, historians debate the detail, but records suggest he was among the very few in Ireland to die under witchcraft law.

As for Mary Dunbar, her story took an eerie turn. Not long after her testimony, she died. Some whispered that the witches had finally claimed her, others that the possession burned through her body until it could take no more.

The Islandmagee trials were the last of their kind in Ireland. Unlike Scotland and parts of Europe, which saw thousands executed, Ireland had relatively few witch trials. But for those caught in the hysteria of 1711, the suffering was real. Their names were blackened and their lives ruined.

It would take over 300 years before the community revisited this dark chapter. In 2022, a plaque was unveiled at the Gobbins Visitor Centre, acknowledging the injustice done.



Drawing depicting the Court trial of the accused



The plaque located at Gobbins Visitor Centre



Modern day Carrickfergus, the location of the trials

A (Brief) History of Housing...

Woven tenant, Dave Maher takes a look at the history of housing, from early man to modern day!

If you've ever stood at your front door, glanced around your neighbourhood, and wondered, "How did we end up living like this - all in little clusters, close together?" then you're in good company. People have been asking that question for thousands of years. Our ancestors, from cave-dwellers to castle-builders, have shaped not just the buildings we live in, but also the reasons we live close to one another. It's a story of family, of survival, and of something deeper: the human desire to belong.

In the Palaeolithic era (the early part of the Stone Age), humans were nomadic. They followed animals, gathered plants, and sought shelter where they could find it, caves, overhangs, or temporary huts made from branches and animal skins. These weren't "homes" as we know them. They were shelters, functional, temporary, and quickly abandoned when the group moved on.

So why didn't early humans strike out solo, each finding their own cave or corner of the forest? Simple answer, survival. Humans aren't the biggest, strongest, or fastest species but we're incredibly good at working together - sharing food, watching for predators, teaching children, and caring for the sick or injured. Early humans probably lived in extended family groups, perhaps with a few unrelated individuals, not just to survive, but to thrive. The seeds of community were already being sown.

Fast forward to around 5,000 years ago and we arrive at one of the most fascinating ancient settlements in Europe, Skara Brae, on the windswept Orkney Islands of Scotland.

At first glance, Skara Brae might look like a tidy little cluster of prehistoric homes, stone walls, low entrances, hearths in the centre. But look closer, and you'll see something remarkable, the homes are connected. There are covered walkways linking them, shared architectural styles, and evidence of a communal life, shared tools, similar furnishings...



These people weren't just building houses. They were building a neighbourhood.

Why? Well, the climate of Orkney was (and still is) harsh. Huddling together behind thick stone walls made sense. But beyond the practical, Skara Brae speaks of emotional closeness, of trust, cooperation, and social ties that bound the residents together. These weren't just survivors, they were community builders.

The Agricultural Revolution

When humans discovered farming, about 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent (modern-day Iraq, Syria, and surrounding areas), everything changed. For the first time, people didn't have to move constantly in search of food. They could plant crops, raise animals, and settle down.



This shift gave rise to the first permanent villages. Mud-brick houses were built side by side, often sharing walls to save on materials and heat. Families grew larger. Communities became more structured. Shared responsibilities, like irrigation, defending against wild animals or other groups, and organising harvests, meant people had to co-operate more than ever. But these early settlements weren't just about efficiency. They were also about identity. Living in close proximity allowed cultures, languages, and traditions to develop. People started to see themselves as more than individuals.

Clans, Kin, and the Power of Togetherness

So, was the drive to live closely together family driven? In part, yes. Many early societies were based on kinship, you lived with your parents, grandparents, cousins, and their families.

However, some people were adopted into clans. Others joined through marriage, trade, or mutual protection. Trust was key, but it didn't always depend on being related. What mattered more was whether you contributed and belonged. This is a valuable reminder, even today. We often think of community as "family first," but history shows us that "family" has always had a flexible meaning. Inclusion, even then, was about more than just genetics.

Here Come the Strangers: Invaders, or Neighbours-in-Waiting?

As history marched on, larger and more complex settlements began to emerge, towns, then cities. With them came trade, politics... and conflict.

The British Isles, in particular, saw waves of invasion: Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Normans. Each group, at first, was seen as a threat, and understandably so. Battles were fought, kings were toppled, lands were seized.

But here's the twist. Over time, the invaders didn't just take, they also became part of the society..

The Romans brought roads, aqueducts, and new building techniques. The Vikings brought shipbuilding, metalwork, and a rich storytelling tradition. The Normans brought castle-building and a new system of governance.

In each case, the newcomers weren't simply absorbed, they changed the communities they joined. What began in violence often ended in shared culture.

This slow blending gave Britain much of its richness and it happened because, at some point, people opened their doors to the stranger and said, "Come in. Let's make something new together."

Medieval Villages: Shared Lives, Shared Labours

By the medieval period, the village had become the dominant unit of life for most people. Thatched cottages, narrow lanes, a central green, a church or market, all the things we might picture in a scene from a history book.

Life wasn't easy. Most people were peasants working the land, often under the control of a lord or landowner. But they shared tools, helped raise each other's barns, and supported one another.

And once again, housing wasn't just about shelter. It was about proximity, living near your neighbours meant you could hear a cry for help, share a loaf of bread, or pitch in when the thatch blew off someone's roof.

It's no accident that some of the most beautiful architecture from this time is communal, the great cathedrals, the market halls, the almshouses. People were expressing, in stone and timber, their connection to something bigger than themselves.

The Modern Day

Humans have always lived in communities because we need each other. Whether in a cave, a stone hut, a Roman villa, or a medieval village, our homes have never really been just about walls and roofs. They're about belonging.

Even now, in modern homes like those provided by Woven, and other housing associations, the basic principles haven't changed. We still need to feel safe. We still benefit from knowing our neighbours.

And perhaps, like our ancestors, we can learn to extend that sense of belonging, not just to those we already know, but to the strangers, the newcomers, the ones who may not yet have found their place - after all, every "stranger" was, once, a neighbour in the making.

People of the past understood that life is richer when shared, and that homes, real homes, are about more than stone. They're about connection.

In a world that sometimes encourages us to build higher fences, maybe we could look to the past and ask, what if we built longer tables instead?



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Cooking Corner



Caramelised Sweet Potato and Roasted Beetroot Salad with Feta

Ingredients:

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes
- 2 medium beetroots peeled and cut into wedges
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- Bag of rocket/salad leaves
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ block of feta, crumbled
- small handful of walnuts, toasted
- 2 tbsp balsamic glaze
- Pinch of salt and pepper

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 200°C. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Toss the sweet potato cubes with 1 ½ tbsp olive oil, 1 tbsp honey, salt, pepper and thyme. Spread on half of baking sheet.
- Toss beetroot wedges with remaining oil and spread on other half.
- Roast for 25 minutes, turning halfway through until caramelised and tender
- Arrange salad on large plate and top with sweet potato, beetroot and red onion.
- Sprinkle crumbed feta and toasted walnuts over top
- Drizzle with balsamic glaze

Cajun Garlic Butter Steak Tips with Cheesy Pasta

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ lbs sirloin steak tips
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 ½ tsp Cajun seasoning
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp smoke paprika

For Pasta

- 340g farfalle pasta
- 2 tbsp butter
- 4 cloves minced garlic
- 350ml double cream
- 120ml milk
- 100g cream cheese
- 340g shredded mozzarella
- 340g grated Parmesan
- ½ tsp Cajun seasoning

Directions:

- Fill large pot with water, season with salt and bring to boil. Cook pasta until tender and drain, saving a cup of water. Set aside.
- Whilst pasta is cooking, pat steak dry and season with Cajun, garlic powder, paprika, salt and pepper.
- Heat pan over medium-high heat with olive oil and 1 tbsp butter. Once hot, add steak and sear 1-2 mins per side until brown. Set aside, covered.
- Reduce heat to medium. In same pan, melt 2 tbsp butter, add garlic and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant.
- Pour in double cream and milk, stirring well. Add cream cheese and whisk until melted.
- Stir in Parmesan, mozzarella and pinch of Cajun. Mix until smooth and velvety. Season to taste. If too thick, add splash of water. Add pasta and mix into sauce.
- Top pasta with steak tips and garnish with fresh parsley.



COOKING FOR KIDS

Try these fun and delicious treats with the kids over the Halloween period. By Woven tenant Cavell Moore.

HALLOWEEN EGGS AND FINGERS

A fun Halloween alternative to eggs and soldiers!

- Preheat grill to medium. Boil eggs in saucepan for 4½ minutes. Transfer to egg cups.
- Remove crusts from toastie bread and slice each into 4.
- Roll each slice to make a rounded log shape then score lines in the 'finger' for knuckles and around the nails.
- Press the back of teaspoon handle into one end to make an indent where the ketchup 'nail' will go.
- Toast fingers under the grill for 2-3 mins until pale golden. Squeeze and little ketchup onto the toasted fingertips and serve with the boiled eggs!



BANANA MUMMIES

Get your kids eating fruit on Halloween with these tasty treats!

- Peel and halve banana crossways. Insert cake pop stick into the cute base of each banana. Put on tray lined with non-stick paper and freeze for 1 hour.
- To prepare eyes, empty mini marshmallows into a bowl and cut 6 in half crossways.
- Melt dark chocolate in a bowl over simmering water. Dip each banana into the melted chocolate. Press the halved marshmallows on to make eyes. Freeze for 30 minutes.
- Microwave remaining marshmallows on high for 30 seconds. Allow to cool so strands form, then wrap around each banana with a fork. Use writing icing to dot an eye onto marshmallow halves.

JACK-O'-LANTERN CHOCO ORANGE CAKES

Get creative with your designs with these spooky treats!

- Slice the top off 1 orange and set aside. With the rest of the orange, scoop out the flesh.
- Cut triangles for eyes and a nose and a zigzag line for the mouth (or whatever design you want!). Return cut out pieces as 'plugs', wrapping with clingfilm to secure. Leave the top open. Repeat with other oranges, retaining the juice.
- For the cake filling, add 7 tbsp self-raising flour, 5 tbsp caster sugar, 1 tbsp cocoa powder, 3 tbsp sunflower oil and 1 medium egg to a bowl with 1tbsp of the orange juice and whisk until smooth.
- Half-fill the oranges with the cake mixture, transfer to microwaveable plate and microwave for 2 minutes.
- Remove clingfilm and set aside to cool slightly.
- Remove orange 'plugs' and pop the orange tops back on before serving!



Have you made any of these recipes?

Share your successes (or failures!). Send a photograph to newsletter@woven.org.uk and you could feature in the next Edition!



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COLOURING COMPETITION



Colour in the above picture for a chance to win a goodie bag! Send your child's completed entry, name and address to newsletter@woven.org.uk.

Entries by Friday 14th November. For children aged up to 12 years old.



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