

Vegetables bring music to French tenants conference

Community Development worker, Lesley Browne writes on the tenants conference she attended recently in Rennes

We caught the overnight Ferry from Plymouth on 13 November and arrived in Roscoff on Friday morning at 8am. From then on it was a packed agenda!

The tenants who attended were part of the Resident Event organising Group (REOG) and Devon Active Community Tenants network (ACT). Accompanying staff were Alice Potter, Tenant Participation Officer at Tor Homes and Dawn Bradley, Training and Employment Advisor at Plymouth Foyer.

Our hosts were Aiguillon Construction, an equivalent to DCHA, providing social affordable housing in France.

The conference was held to recognise the work and involvement of the Link Tenants who are a much-valued part of the organisation. Their role is to provide a welcome to new residents and give information on the local area such as where the bus stops are, local shops, health facilities, etc. They also help organise social activities, which are paid for by Aiguillon Construction.

This event was also organised as an opportunity for an exchange of information between our tenants and Aiguillon Construction as well as tenants from TBV Wonen in Holland.

In addition to the conference we enjoyed a visit to the main office of Aiguillon Construction to meet the group of tenants and staff from Holland. We also had a tour of some of the housing schemes in Rennes, including an environmentally aware project, which had a rainwater collection system used for flushing the loos.



The Link Tenants themselves don't receive a special reward or concessions. They are also discouraged from taking on any other role, such as reporting repairs or acting as mediators between the organisation and other tenants, as it's felt that this will prevent them from engaging effectively with the rest of the community. It's a system, which seems to work well and certainly encourages social interaction, which in its turn has reduced instances of anti-social behaviour. It would be great to enthuse residents in the UK to have similar roles.

We were treated to a very good dinner in the evening following the conference, with a hilarious entertainer who made music from different forms of vegetation, "Jaques aux verts Musicale"! And to think we just settle for strictly come dancing! Yes the French trip was a truly enjoyable, memorable and rewarding experience. An invitation has been extended from our Dutch colleagues to visit them in the future!