

## Board of Trustees' response

The Tenants' Association of the National Trust (TANT) is one but not the only voice for National Trust tenants. Other organisations and groups the Trust works closely with – such as the Tenant Farmers Association and National Farmers Union (both of which have had appointees on our Council or advisory bodies) or other groups of residential tenants not affiliated to TANT – receive no Trust funding and rely on membership subscriptions. We do not believe it is right to support one association or group and not the others.

The National Trust is not a social housing provider, but we are clear in our ambition to be a fair and professional landlord, offering warm, comfortable homes and a good service to tenants in return for a market rent. We let about 4,500 houses at a market or regulated rent, all the net income from which is invested back into the Trust's conservation work. These rented properties represent a legacy of buildings which are often beautiful in appearance but expensive to maintain and difficult to upgrade to meet modern regulations, such as for energy efficiency. We have embarked on an extensive investment programme to upgrade them and undertaken work to ensure we have an understanding of our tenants' needs and put in place local teams and systems so we can provide as efficient a landlord service as possible, including a much improved ability to avoid disputes and also to resolve them locally if they arise.

This includes:

- Investing over £20m annually in refurbishments and repairs since 2014
- Conducting our first Trust-wide residential tenant survey and acting on the findings
- Reviewing and then reforming our rural surveying model by creating larger local teams of Estate Managers, Lettings Officers and Estate Management Officers and an associated skills development programme with specific modules on relationship building and dispute resolution
- Having supported the original establishment of TANT via seed corn funding

We believe we are alone amongst large private landlords, such as the Duchy of Cornwall or the Crown Estate, in having supported and funded a house tenants' association of this type. We welcome the contribution that TANT makes, but always felt that it should become independent of National Trust funding, and self-financing through subscriptions – for the sake of its independence, as a test of the value it provides to its members, and to avoid diverting the National Trust's resources from house maintenance and other conservation work.

In late February 2014 we informed TANT of our intention to discontinue funding, allowing three years for TANT to make provision for this by introducing subscription charges for its members or by other fundraising activities. The expiry of this period is now approaching. We remain very happy to help in the transition to an independent, self-supporting organisation and would also be pleased to continue to provide long-term help in kind (advice on fundraising or marketing, offering meeting rooms, inserts to mailings, etc). However, we do not feel it is right for the Trust to fund an organisation such as TANT indefinitely when it might better be supported through its own membership.

The Board recommends that members vote against this resolution.