

2008 Tenant of the Year Award

Helen is nominated for housing Oscar

A South Hams woman is off to London later this week to attend the housing world's equivalent of the Oscars, having been nominated as the 2008 Tenant of the Year Award for the south west region.

Helen Robertson from Strete, near Dartmouth, is one of 5 tenants from the south west who have been nominated for the award which recognises tenants who do outstanding work in their communities.

Organised by the Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) and Northern, Midlands and Southern Housing magazines, this is the first stage in a five region competition and after the regional awards, they will go forward to the final in August when the overall winner will be announced.

Described as an inspiration, Helen is visually impaired and because of MS has a wheelchair. She has an invaluable helper, Bruce, a dog for the disabled, who Helen describes as her best friend.

Vicki Dunstone, Tenant Participation Manager for Tor Homes nominated Helen and says: She is an absolute inspiration. Generous and thoughtful, Helen has raised thousands for charities including Dogs for Disabled and Ring & Ride.

She is a volunteer who gives up her time for others. She is well known to all the staff at Tor Homes as a lovely and caring person and plays a vital role in representing her fellow tenants. She takes up their concerns and makes sure we listen to what she has to say on their behalf. We are extremely proud of her.

Typically, Helen says it's thanks to the support she has received from Tor Homes which has given her the confidence to take part in these activities.

I was so surprised when Vicki rang me to say that I had been nominated, said Helen. It is an honour to have been nominated and reflects the efforts of all the other tenant representatives and the staff at Tor Homes who have given me the confidence to play this role."

Helen is the Village Voice for Strete which means she passes on her neighbours' issues and concerns. She is a founder member of Tor Homes' Technical Forum. They visit new developments and she provides the housing association with invaluable feedback from the perspective of a wheelchair user.

She regularly attends the South West Tenants' Panel and Tor Homes' area panels and regularly volunteers for training days and focus groups

