



National
Housing
Trust

+ **Always Home** +
Scheme Upgrade Newsletter

Issue 2 | March 2023

Bethel Town Housing Scheme - Aerial View, Westmoreland





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+ Message

NHT Managing Director, Mr Martin Miller

Dear readers, it gives me great pleasure to highlight the incredible work of the National Housing Trust, NHT, in Jamaica towards maintaining and improving the country's housing schemes.

Access to affordable and secure housing is a basic human need, and the NHT has been playing a pivotal role in ensuring that Jamaicans have access to safe and decent housing. Over the years, the NHT has invested heavily in developing and upgrading housing schemes across the country, with a focus on providing affordable options for low to middle-income families.

However, the NHT's contribution does not stop there. The organisation recognises the importance of maintaining these schemes to ensure that they remain in good condition and continue to provide a safe and comfortable living environment for residents. To this end, the NHT has implemented several programs and initiatives aimed at maintaining and improving housing schemes.

This newsletter is our main channel to highlight these projects and more importantly, to highlight the stories of the contributors past and present, who call these communities home. In addition, the NHT through our Social Development Department, has partnered with several organisations to provide training and support to residents, with a focus on promoting community development and sustainability. For example, the NHT has worked with the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) to provide training in areas such as entrepreneurship, financial management, and leadership, which helps to build the capacity of residents and promote economic empowerment.

The NHT's contributions to maintaining housing schemes in Jamaica have been significant, and the impact of its work is felt by thousands of Jamaicans who benefit from affordable, secure, and comfortable housing.

As we look towards the future, it is clear that the NHT's continued efforts are essential to ensuring that Jamaica's housing needs are met and that its citizens can enjoy a better quality of life.

Here's to another in our series... *Always Home*.

-Martin



+ Editorial

Editor, Tameka Hill



Travelling the country has always been a great experience for me. Since the beginning of this newsletter, I have traversed many parishes and communities, but this time, I do not wear the lens of a nature lover, as I have in the past, nor do I sport the attire of an island girl. Instead, I proudly wear my polo shirt embellished with the National Housing Trust (NHT) logo, my sunscreen, jeans and a nice pair of flat shoes. I enter these communities as an NHT representative.

Within a week, I visited five parishes, and one message rings true, 'the whole of us.' It sounds silly and in fact, perhaps grammatically unsound, but the meaning that lies below is as telling as it is beautiful. Nobody becomes successful on their own. Within any corporate environment, a true leader knows he is as strong as his weakest employee. Without the support, loyalty and hard work of a team, your success will be very limited.

The National Housing Trust has been clear on this vision since its inception, and has constantly partnered with different agencies and entities in the building of communities and homes. The success of the first volume of this newsletter has been 'the whole of us.' The work of writers, graphic designers, photographers, proof readers and community members willing to share their stories and accommodate us in their spaces. It has never been one person; it has always been a whole.

The success of the NHT Schemes Upgrade Project has been a group effort, as the NHT's Project Team consulted with residents and contractors in the delivery of physical infrastructures of which they are proud. The impact it has had, the ways in which it has changed so many lives, has been for me, a very beautiful experience.

Progress, growth and development do not strive on the back of one, it is accomplished, instead, by the whole.

Happy reading.

-Tameka



+ A Breath of Delight

Vaughansfield Housing Scheme



The air is pristine. It dances through your airways, giving you an ‘aha’ sensation as you breathe out. Who knew air could take you to several realms? Take a visit to Vaughansfield Housing Scheme in St. James and you will experience the delight of breathing.

Initially a place of swamp, which facilitated the occasional horseracing, the vision of creating homeownership opportunities was that of the National Housing Trust, NHT as it transformed the swampland into a homeowner’s paradise in 1979. Dwight Reid remembers perfectly the area before the NHT came in and developed the space.

“I remember it also had like a cane field. Sometimes, they’d keep dances over here. I couldn’t really go to the dance though, so I would just peep through the canes and then run home,” he said, as his hazel eyes glistened with delight.

The scheme has seen the best of time and the worst, as the dilapidated roadways became an eyesore for residents. Under the NHT’s Scheme Upgrades programme, which sees the organisation rehabilitating physical infrastructures in housing developments built between 1976 – 1986, Vaughansfield Housing Scheme now boasts smooth and beautiful road surfaces.

“It’s a nice facelift to the community,” Trescelin Treleven said, a sentiment echoed by Garnett Thompson, a former Firefighter who has lived in the community since 1982. After constant struggles of fixing the roads themselves, residents breathed a sigh of relief, noting that they could not have done it without the help of the NHT.

One of the first residents of the development, Monica Robinson Harding, noted that she is most grateful for the sidewalk.

“I am really happy for the sidewalk. We never had any before. So, now children and elderly persons can access it,” she said. A similar sentiment was echoed by Vanzie Kennedy, who added, that the pavement creates a feeling of urban lifestyle with a sense of security and protection from moving vehicles for young children who utilise the roads.

Young Justice takes a leisurely walk in her community



Mr & Mrs Vanzie Kennedy, residents of the community for the last 40 years, share a beautiful embrace



Vaghansfield Housing Scheme - St James



The community is breathtaking, perfectly etched against the mountains

Residents of Vaughansfield engage in conversation along the newly built side walk.
From L-R: Trescelin Treleven, Opel Jones, Garnett Thompson and Monica Robinson Harding



The 60-housing-unit community is as welcoming as the residents living there. As they converged the streets to applaud the NHT for the work done to their infrastructure, they laughed heartily, not as neighbours but more like a family. As the men sit on the sidewalk, Opel Jones, a Construction Worker and resident of the community, offered each lady coconut water, using his machete to create a small incision in the top. Basking in the coolness of the air, they flip their heads back to guzzle down the fresh water before handing it to him to eat the jelly inside.

Indeed, the land is fruitful, with many residents sporting several fruit trees and ground provision. They have the land to spare, as Triscelin boasts, “the lots here are so big we could easily build another house.”

Retired Principal, Paulette Kennedy, who has lived in the community for the last 40 years said the rehabilitated roads “is welcoming, enhancing the entire scheme landscape, adding value to our property. I really appreciate this development in our living area, in our community. Citizens are proud to have the road looking beautiful.”

The community is breathtaking, perfectly etched against the mountains, Vaughansfield Housing Scheme is indeed a breath of delight.





+

Building Wealth through Homeownership

Bethel Town

The smell of freshly cut turmeric lingered still. Grinded to perfection, the minced plant glistened against the silver tray. Like golden sand, its yellow colouring was rich and deep. Leroy Wilson sifted through the heap, explaining that it helps with the pain in his legs and is the only thing that does. A resident of the Bethel Town Housing Scheme, Leroy has lived in the community for over 40 years. Among the second batch to have received one of the two bedroom units, he recalls how difficult it was in acquiring the house, which costed him \$15,000.

“Dem time deh, \$15,000 a whole heap a money. By the next batch, it appreciate in value and was going for \$40,000,” he said chuckling while he placed his hand on his knee.

The community of Bethel was amongst one of the first set of developments in Westmoreland and its establishment brought value to the

area. The community, which is surrounded by a police station, schools, libraries, a health centre and several commercial complexes, speaks to the key input of housing in economic, social, and civic development.

With a lifespan of over four decades, the community has endured many natural disasters and constant commute that, overtime, caused damages to the roadway. Not one to mince words, when asked to describe what the road was like, Leroy said “bare precipice and boulder,” before laughing.

While Leroy’s description is a bit of a stretch, resident Marcia Ambersley noted that the road condition was indeed severe and made commuting in and out of the community a difficult one. The 68-year-old noted that many taxi operators did not traverse the area and would simply leave them at the entrance, which was a long way from home for most residents.

Under the NHT’s Schemes Upgrade Programme, Bethel Town Housing Scheme was selected as one of the communities to receive a much needed upgrade. The Trust saw to the rehabilitation of the roadways and drains. Now residents are proud to call Bethel Town Housing Scheme home again. As new residents continue to move into the community, the parish of Westmoreland continues to see an overall boost in their economic growth and development.

Indeed, good housing builds wealth by appreciating in value, providing a hedge against inflation, providing secure premises for income-generating activities, and opening the door to credit. With even better roads, Bethel Town is perfectly advanced in building wealth in the parish and a lasting legacy for generations to come.



One of the first units to be built in Bethel Town Housing Scheme



A father teaches his son to navigate his bicycle along the smooth roadway



Leroy Wilson shares a thrilling story with Marcia Ambersley



+ Sunshine in the Rain

When the writer penned the song, “when it rains, it pours,” perhaps he had Knollis Housing Scheme in mind. The St Catherine development has had its share of bad road conditions, particularly in rainy seasons, where some residents likened the appearance of the road to that of a river. “We had no filters or anything, so when the rain fall, it would just settle on the road. It just looked like a pool,” resident Millicent McLean said.

There have been no upgrades to the scheme since it was developed some 44 years ago. The wear and tear resulted in less than desirable roadways. A little rainfall would often result in several children being absent from school.

Teacher of the Knollis Basic School, Ms. Valda Rigmaiden, highlighted that the conditions under which they had to come to school, particular during rainy weather was unhygienic. “It was muddy, garbage scattering all over the place. So it was unsanitary, walking through the mud to come to school. Several times we were asking for help for the road, children jumping over like is river them jumping from,” she said, against the sounds of children screaming and laughing in the background.

Under the Schemes Upgrade Programme, a project that allows for the modification of schemes infrastructure built by the NHT between 1976 and 1986, water boots and plastic bags for shoes is now a thing of the past.



The Knollis Basic School has served the community children for many years



After winning the game of basket toss, this young lad shares a thumbs up with the camera

Knollis Housing Scheme





The school, which facilitates 3-5 years old, will no longer see residents laying boards across the roadway in an effort to ensure their children get to school. Nor will they have to hustle and bustle, holding on to their children while jumping from one side of the road to the next. That is no longer their reality. Instead, they now boast smooth road surfaces with effective drainage system that sees the roadways clear even during heavy showers.

As the children sat, waiting to engage in a game of basket toss, a few smiling brightly as the photographer captures their images, there remains a beautiful sentiment by Ms. Rigmaiden, "even when it's raining, it's like we have sunshine here every day now in Knollis."

Children will never have to experience stopping from school because of a little shower, but will bask in the rain thinking it to be sunshine.

"The work was efficiently done and we are extremely happy from where it is coming from. Seeing it from where it was is a far cry. And we are happy," said Ripton McLean, a resident of the Knollis Housing Scheme for the last 21 years.



The new roadway in Knollis Housing Scheme - St Catherine



Resident Ripton McLean is excited by the new developments





+ From Woodland to
Paradise Barieffe Hall



It's where urban meets nature, as the crisp air passes through your lungs while the chirping birds sing beautiful melody. Barieffe Hall in St. Mary is the perfect paradise. With its breathtaking and unobstructed view of the James Bond Beach, the community sits close to the Ian Fleming International Airport with easy access to several business complexes and social amenities.

"I remember when I heard about Barieffe Hall, it was in the 70s and it just looked like woodland. Years later, I was right here, building my own home," President of the Citizen's Association, Ioni Sanderson said while waving to a truck driver delivering gas to different homes.

She reminisced on the time where the community, which houses over 1500 residents, had its road decorated with cement and maul, a product of their own personal efforts. Barieffe Hall was often avoided by many taxi operators who found the road to be treacherous. Many vehicular front end were victims of the conditions of the surface, as many residents believed it was everything but a road. "When the NHT came in and offered to fix our roads, we were most grateful as we could not afford to do it on our own," Ioni said.

Matthew Felix plays with his toys on the newly constructed bridge leading to his grandmother's home



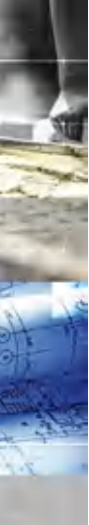
The 45-year-old community was one of the developments selected under the National Housing Trust's Scheme Upgrades programme. The project sees the modification of schemes infrastructure built by the organisation between 1976 and 1986.

The benefit of the rehabilitation of roads and drains in Barieffe Hall can be heard in the echoes of laughter, as young boys ride along the smooth paved road stopping to discuss who was the best cyclist before entering another challenge. It can also be seen as six-year-old Matthew Felix pulls his small tractor with stones at the front of his home. The budding construction worker may never know the challenges his grandmother, Miriam Barrett, encountered before the NHT constructed a bridge from the roadway to her home.

"Whenever it rained, I would experience some flooding, and it was hard to move from my house to the road. I am so happy for the work that the NHT did. People say they are grateful but they do not even understand what that word means. So when I say I am grateful, believe me I am," she said, smiling at little Matthew who made small truck noises in motion with his toys.

The roadways in Barieffe Hall have made the community one to be envied





Since the much needed upgrades, Barieffe Halls sees new residents entering into the community





Ioni Sanderson enjoys the simple pleasures after the much needed improvements to the roadways in the community of Barieffe Hall, St. Mary

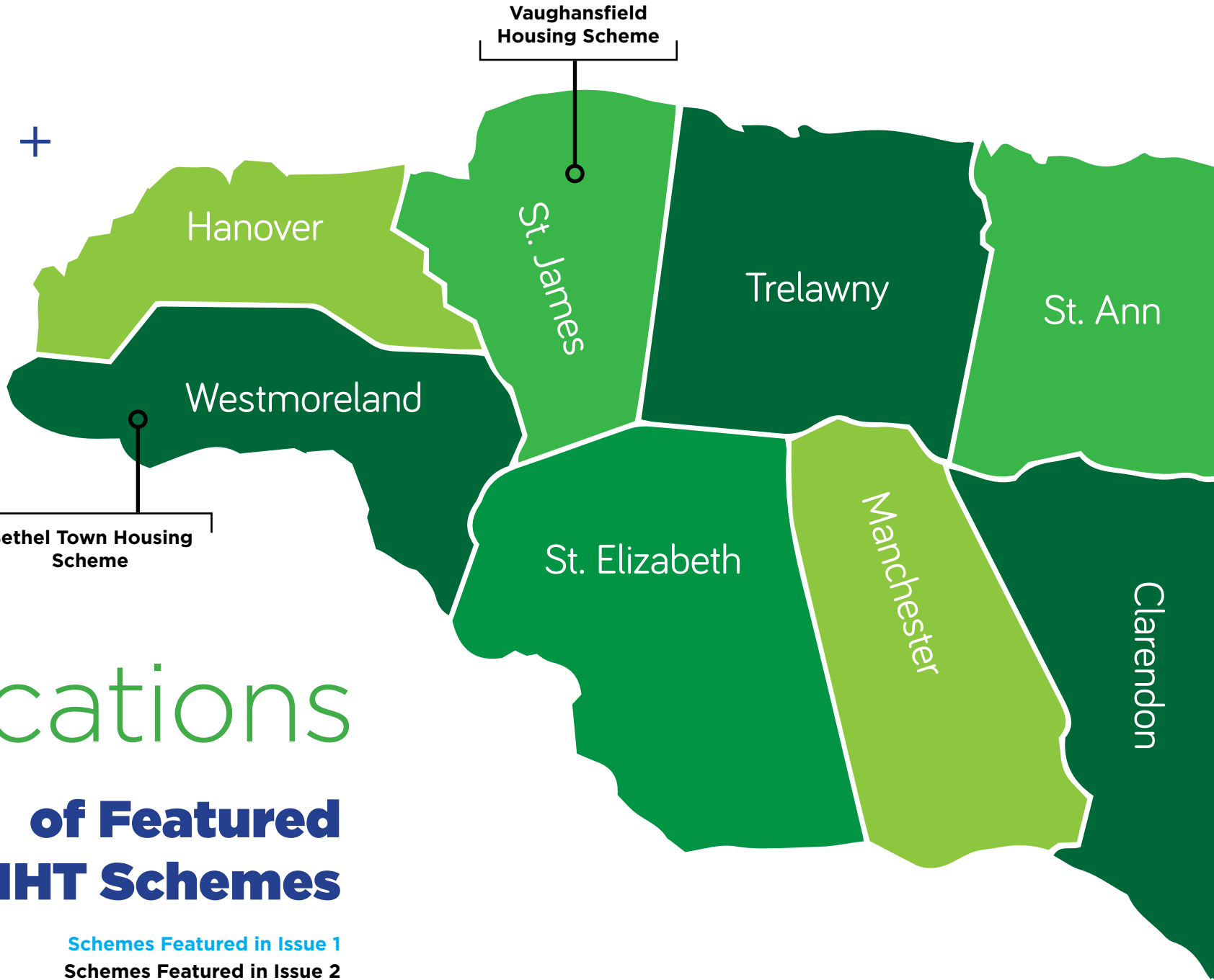


With the improved roads, the community benefits from easier access to water, light and internet services. Since the much needed upgrades, Barieffe Halls sees new residents entering into the community, some for the calm, some for the scenery, some for the access.

"Listen, the Taxi-Men would rather drive through here than the main road, because the road surface is much nicer. It lifts our moral, knowing our road, which was in such deplorable conditions is now rehabilitated so much that other people can come in and use it," Ioni said smiling heartily.

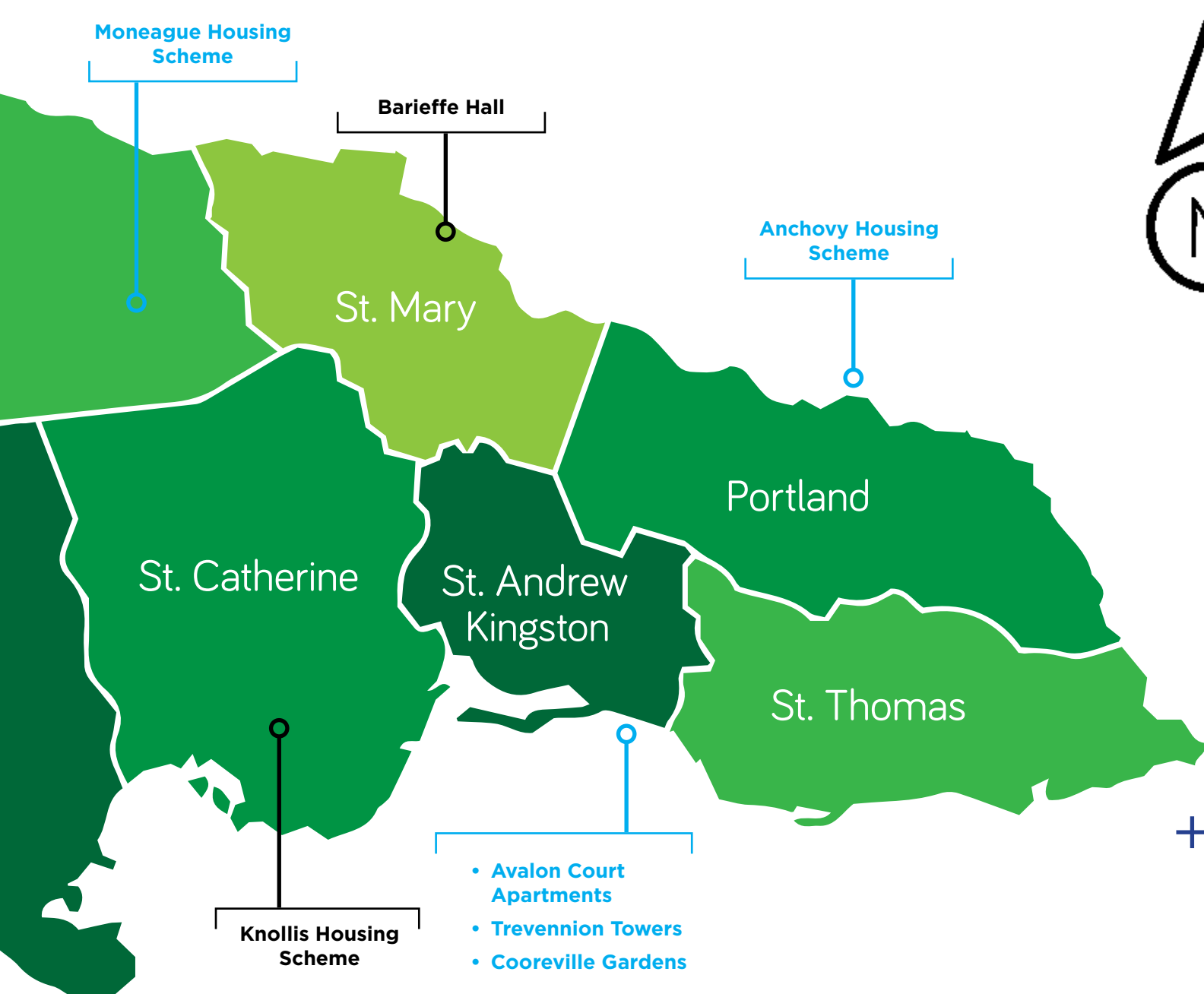
As the smell of fresh cut grass lingered in the air, the quiet cool breeze resting on your face, you begin to realise there is nature all around the city, even inside our homes.





Locations of Featured NHT Schemes

Schemes Featured in Issue 1
Schemes Featured in Issue 2





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