



**Net project** Trust co-ordinator Helen Fay (second left) with residents Margaret McDonald, Meta McAllister, Chris Ferguson, Jim Brannon, Martin Crainor, and Gordon Stewart Wilson

# Net gains for silver surfers at complex

John Rowbotham

## Sheltered housing connects to WiFi

**Sheltered housing residents in Callander are set to show that age is no barrier to internet use.**

The complex, managed by Trust Housing Association at 15 North Church Street, has just been connected up to WiFi in a move designed to encourage those living there to become 'silver surfers'.

Residents will have access to a 'kiosk' which is a tablet computer about the size of a small television at which they will be able to access the net, skype family and friends and receive tuition on making the most of the web.

They will also be learning

how to book medical appointments online and order repeat prescriptions.

The Callander complex is one of six Trust developments to have WiFi installed as part of a pilot project.

Three are having their lounges hooked up to the net while Callander and two others are to get WiFi throughout.

Trust co-ordinator at Callander Helen Fay said at present about only about half of their 29 residents, who are aged between 60 and 97, have personal internet access.

Helen, 54, from Gargunnoch, and resident Alexandra Russell are the complex's 'digital

champions' having been on a computer course organised by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and also added to their knowledge through online tuition.

"We hope this will increase our tenants' confidence in using IT and help them keep in touch with friends and family," explained Helen.

"In the longer term, we are hopeful that providing services online will allow tenants to do business with Trust in a more effective way and also get connected to their local and wider communities.

"We are hoping it will open up new opportunities for

older people and show that their later years can be fulfilling years."

Alexandra, 70, who previously lived in Stirling, has had an iPad for five years and uses it for emails, iPlayer and accessing the French newspaper from which she obtains material for the French courses she runs in Callander.

"My primary concern is to help fellow residents, particularly those who are confined to their flat," she added.

"That is their world. If they get on to the computer, another world opens up and it

should be a tremendous asset to them.

"As digital champions, we are planning to sit alongside residents who want to learn and help them to do things such as accessing the internet, emails, online banking and keeping in touch with families."

Helen said residents were approaching the internet challenge with a mixture of feelings.

"There's a bit of apprehension among some but a lot of residents think it's a great opportunity," she added.

"I have learned so much and there is so much out there - something for everyone."