

Solar Power to the People

message from PETRA Chairman Mike Davis, seen below showing some guests around the estate recently, starting at the top – the rooftop of Parkview House.

Our guests were Jan Hughes, a personal assistant to HSBC's director of finance (that's HSBC at Canary Wharf, not just the local branch!), Alex Germanis, our consultant adviser from Carbon Leapfrog, and Tony Hatch, a senior civil servant in the Government's

Department of Communities and Local Government.

The visitors heard about our energy-saving ambitions, and all appeared keen to help. Jan Hughes said that, where possible, HSBC was keen to support initiatives that benefit local communities. Tony Hatch said the Government wants to encourage TMOs to engage more residents in their work and to consider taking on more powers. Alex Germanis repeated Carbon Leapfrog's commitment to working with us on energy-saving projects.

With the help of people like this, who knows what we will achieve? Solar panels on our rooftops, perhaps? It's a real possibility – and with our energy bills set to go up and up – why not?



Left to right: Mike Davis, Alex Germanis, Tony Hatch and Jan Hughes

PETRA News

Parkhill Estate Tenants and Residents Association

Number 135, January 2013

Anyone for a shower?

Estate Manager **Jim Brett** writes: We have now installed nine showers, with three more due for installation in January. If you have the compatible combination boiler (known as a "combi") and would like a shower, then let us know.

Installation is free to tenants and available at cost price to leaseholders. Unfortunately, at present it is not possible to install them in flats with the old Elson boilers.



Mini library

Did you know we have our own library here at PETRA? Ok, "library" might be pushing it a bit, but the bookshelves outside the office are positively heaving with books donated by our residents.

We have books for all ages and many interests. Come over and take a look sometime. And if you have a book or two that you enjoyed reading recently, why not donate them? The more we share, the better it'll be – for all of us.

Chairman Mike's SOAPBOX

In with the new... windows



The teams working on the two scaffolds got off to a cracking good pace early in December, but then just before we broke up for the Christmas holidays they were pulled away from our estate. Still, I'm confident that by the time you read this, they will be making the time up...hopefully.

Whilst speaking about the scaffolding, it's worth reminding all residents to be very vigilant – especially after dark, when burglars and others might be tempted to climb the scaffold in order to take your bits and bobs.

Two specific issues have arisen. (A) If you have lost or mislaid your balcony door key to the lock, please contact the PETRA office ASAP. (B) We have been given to understand that the contractors will be repositioning residents' Sky dishes onto the scaffold so as not to interfere with your TV reception, but when the scaffold is taken down the Sky dishes will not be put back where they came from. They will simply be given back to residents or left on the balconies.

Finally, on behalf of all the PETRA Committee members and staff, my I wish all our residents very best wishes for the New Year.

Regards, Mike Davis

Ready for the “bedroom tax”?

The Government is making some changes to the benefits system which residents should know about.

These changes include a cap for those in receipt of the highest combined levels of benefit, and for those of working age only, the replacement of all benefits with Universal Credit from October 2013.

Also, if you receive council tax benefit but are of working age and assessed as able to work, you will likely be expected to make some contribution to your council tax bill from April 2013.

The so-called “bedroom” or “spare room tax” is the most controversial change. Unless you are old enough to receive a state pension, the amount of housing benefit you will receive if you are a social housing tenant and you have a spare bedroom could be reduced.

At the time of writing, it is not clear when this last change will be introduced, but it could affect a significant number of PETRA tenants.

For further information and advice, we recommend tenants contact the Citizens Advice Havering Bureau at Hornchurch Library, 44 North Street. Opening times: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 10am to 2pm. Website: www.haveringcab.org.uk

The scaffolding

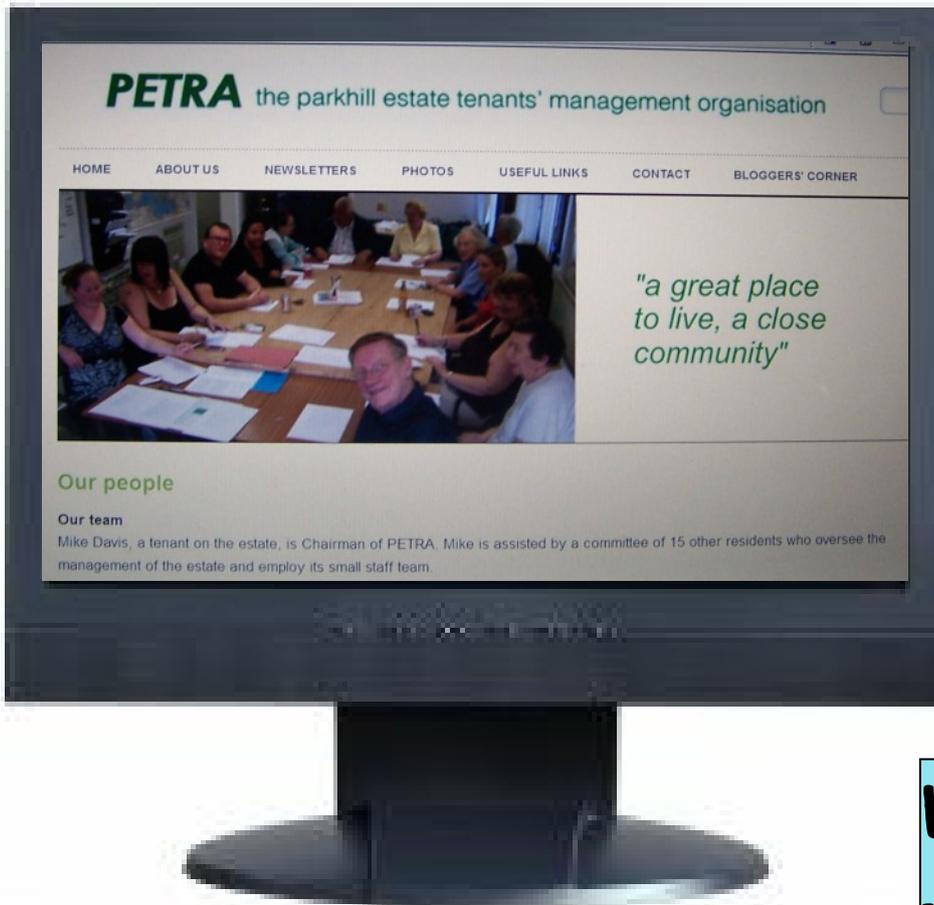
Building sites can be dangerous places, and work on the new windows is likely to continue through to the summer. So if you see anything of concern - poor working practices, loose or dangerous scaffolding - please report it to the office immediately. We will then take the matter further.

Fair rent for all

We reported last time on the Parkview tenant who has been paying £1.64 a week more for his flat than residents living in the equivalent properties in Uphavering and Overstrand.

This might not seem like much of a discrepancy, but these are tough times when every pound counts. That's why, later this month, PETRA Chairman Mike Davis will be accompanying our tenant to a meeting with an adjudication panel of Havering councillors.

We will let you know the outcome of that meeting when we have it.



Any good ideas for improving our website?
Or brilliant pictures of life on the estate that you would like to share?
Well, you know where to find us!

Read all about us online

PETRA's website is improving all the time, as we add new features, pictures and info.

The latest addition is "Bloggers' Corner" – where Chairman Mike and other members of the team will take it in turns to post short snappy articles and opinion pieces. There will be a new one posted every month, so make sure to visit the site regularly.

You can add your own comment at Bloggers' Corner, or send us a

message via the message board, which you will find in the "Contact" section.

Also feel free to use the message board for reporting and requesting a repair, or for making any other comments or suggestions to PETRA.



What is blogging?

Blogging refers to a website or part of a website on which an individual or group of people add articles, often on opinions, information and ideas, on a regular basis.

Blog comments: A section in blog posts (typically immediately following the post entry) where readers can provide their reactions to the content of the post.

Read our first blog post – "Friends in high places", written by Mike – online now at www.petratmo.weebly.com

You can add your own comment at "Bloggers' Corner", or send us a message via the message board, which you will find in the "Contact" section. Also feel free to use the message board for reporting and requesting a repair, or for making any other comments or suggestions for PETRA.

Who to ring after office hours

Mike Davis and his team are a dedicated bunch, but just like the rest of us they value their free time.

PETRA's office hours are from **7-30am to 3-30pm Monday to Friday**. In addition, from 3-30 to 5pm weekdays, a member of staff will answer the phone.

However, if you need to contact PETRA outside of those hours, please do not call Mike, Jim, Natasha or Bradley but instead call the dedicated **out-of-hours service on 01708 756699**. Genuine emergencies will be responded to within four hours.

Thank you.

Natasha's fun run

Natasha Cruickshank writes: "Hello and a happy new year to you all. Thank you to everyone who was kind enough to sponsor me for my recent Santa Fun Run for Great Ormond Street Hospital. I raised £403, which is fantastic.

The run was hard and hilly and as I'm an experienced runner, I was a bit disappointed with my time (not telling you!). But it was a *fun* run after all. The atmosphere was great, and it was an honour to be part of it."



Dates

Moneybox – Living on a limited budget

Wednesday 23 January, 11-2pm, in the Concierge, Parkview House

A free session open to all residents and hosted by a professional advisor, where you can get advice on day-to-day money matters – budgeting, smart spending, and saving.

**PETRA Committee meeting
Tuesday 29 January, 7.30pm
in the office, Parkview House**

**PETRA's Junior Committee meeting
Thursday 21 February (during half-term), 1-2pm in the Concierge, Parkview House**

Contacts

PETRA

Mike Davis (Chair), Natasha Cruickshank (Trainee Manager), Jim Brett (Estate Manager), and Bradley Pavey (Repairs and Ground Maintenance Officer) are based at the PETRA office.
Tel: 01708 475358
Fax: 01708 469530
Email: petratmo@aol.com

Out of Hours: Please call 01708 756699

Homes and Housing, Havering Council
Tel: 01708 434000
Email: homes@haverling.gov.uk