

Friends in high places

PETRA News

Parkhill Estate Tenants and Residents Association

Number 144, July 2014

Nicola Croden, a senior civil servant from the Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG), recently paid us a visit.

Nicola, along with her colleague Lesley Storer, met committee members and other tenants before touring the estate. She said she had heard good things about PETRA and wanted to see how a democratic and inclusive TMO worked.

Civil servants like Nicola are there to advise and help ministers to formulate their policies.

Nicola said: "The Government wants to promote greater tenant involvement in the running of communities, and visits like this help us gain a better understanding of the challenges you face."

Nicola outlined some of the policies already in place to help tenant management organisations and others take on more responsibilities. She mentioned the Community Cashback scheme, which provides grants for groups to take over additional, specific areas of service delivery.

PETRA is looking into Community Cashback, and other funding possibilities, but we were wary of over-stretching ourselves. PETRA

is run by volunteers after all, albeit with the support of a small staff team.

PETRA has improved this estate hugely, but finding more people like Lesley (see page 4) is one of our biggest challenges. Unless more residents like her come forward to help, PETRA will not be able to continue its good work.

Nicola Croden (below, alongside Mike Davis) meets PETRA volunteers and staff.



Estate votes for new lift lobby floors

We asked you recently to take part in a vote on future estate improvements, to see what residents wanted PETRA to focus on in the next few months.

A big thank you to the 43 residents who voted – your votes have made a real difference. Here are the results:

Provide new flooring to every level in the lift lobby areas in each block, excluding the ground levels.

Total in favour: 24

Paint the stairwells and lift lobby areas on every level in each block

Total in favour: 2

Renew ground level security doors in each block.

Total in Favour: 17

PETRA will now approach the Council to ask for permission to renew the lift lobby floors, at PETRA's expense. Please note the lift lobby floors are not a PETRA responsibility, but PETRA are committed to improving the estate for residents – and to reflecting your priorities.

Chairman
Mike's

SOAPBOX

Goodbye friends

A new chapter

**Special Projects Officer (and bossy boots)
Natasha Cruickshank on why she's moving on**

As most of you will probably know by now, we will sadly be losing Natasha in August. We will miss her terribly but wish her, and her children, all the luck and happiness in the world with her new love and life in Lytham St Annes.

Combined with Natasha's departure, Jimmy is now only working three days a week. Having talked things over with Jim and the committee it was decided that with Jim concentrating on the more practical chores on the estate (grounds maintenance and small repairs), the time was right to appoint a full time office-based manager, combining the former roles of Jim and Natasha.

Time was short, but we managed to draw up a job description, advertise, and have seven applications in by the time of the closing date. On Monday 30 June, with the expert assistance of our consultant Liz Michael, we interviewed three.

Two candidates impressed, but eventually we decided upon the candidate who had 10 years experience of being a TMO manager and who knew Havering Council and how they function.

Our new manager, **Caroline Edwards**, is currently manager of our sister TMO, BETRA, in Harold Hill. We feel we have made a good choice for PETRA and hope that you will welcome Caroline and make her feel at home on our estate.

**Regards,
Mike Davis**

I moved in here in March 2001 with my baby daughter and my ex. I wasn't too sure about the estate as my dad had lived here and I visited him as a kid. But we moved in and got on with it. I didn't socialise much because I had my own friends off the estate.

However, after I'd bought my flat from the Council in 2007, I began to take an interest in PETRA. I had had various bits of literature through the door from PETRA and decided to go to a meeting. I attended just to observe and to see what they were getting up to – as I lived on the ground floor next to the office I often heard stuff going on in the office. Anyway, I had ideas on how the place could be improved and wanted to have my say in things.

Before long, I found myself on the committee and elected secretary! This felt good – I'd not done very well at school and yet this group of people had confidence in me. With a lot of guidance and help from Mike Davis and others my confidence grew. I became passionate about this community and the things we could achieve together.

I helped organise fun days, arts and crafts, football coaching, flower arranging. Still a volunteer, I did an NVQ level 2 in business administration and a level 3 in event management, completing both courses in five months.

In 2011, I separated from my partner, and was struggling to find interesting work. I looked at cleaning jobs, bar work, and hotel maids – all hard graft for a basic wage. I was a bit disappointed not to be using all the things I'd learnt with PETRA.

Then, by chance, the opportunity arose for me to do a short-term piece of work for PETRA, supporting Mike and Jim with an audit they were doing. I must have done ok because when the job was completed the committee asked me to stay on!

Working for PETRA these last few years has been great. I have to thank Mike Davis, Jim, Brad, Jan, and everyone I've had the pleasure of working with and learning from – not least, of course, the committee and residents of the Parkhill and Sunrise Estate.

So why all this gush? It's because I'm leaving. Yes, having fallen in love with a man who

happens to live at the other end of the country, I've had a difficult decision to make: stick with a great job, with great people and a community I care passionately about, or take a once in a lifetime chance and just 'go for it', moving up to Lancashire to be with the man I love.

So friends, I'm moving on. I shall never forget PETRA – and nor should you. PETRA has made this estate a wonderful place to live and bring up a family. Please keep it going and keep involved.



News in brief

Streets in the sky

Free veg!

Colin Roast and his helpers have been doing a great job in the garden, and this year's harvest of vegetables is on its way.

We are giving half the produce away to the residents in the sheltered blocks, but the rest will be available, for residents who ask for it, in the PETRA office. At the time of writing, broad beans are available. From the end of July there will be tomatoes, and later in the summer, carrots, parsnips and much more. Visit the office today for your free bag of organic veg!



Smoking in Overstrand

Some people are making a habit of smoking in the lift and lobby areas of Overstrand House. Please stop this. It is illegal and inconsiderate, even when only cigarettes are involved. Residents who wish to complain should contact the Police via the 101 number. Community wardens will then be sent to investigate.

Good clean fun

It's lovely to see people out on the green enjoying the sunshine, but please make sure you bin your rubbish before going home. Thank you.

Cigarettes are rubbish

A recent fire on a second floor balcony of Parkview House caused damage and created greater danger. It is believed to have been caused by a resident flicking a cigarette butt from their balcony, only for the wind to blow it onto a balcony below.

This is the second incident of this kind in recent months. Please dispose of cigarette butts – and all other rubbish – responsibly.

Letterbox

Lotto

Every month, on the PETRA website, we are giving away three £20 shopping vouchers to residents who spot their flat numbers on 'Letterbox Lotto'. July's numbers are on the website right now, so check to see if you're a winner this month at:

www.petratmo.weebly.com

Smell gas?

We are offering free carbon monoxide detectors to residents concerned about gas. The detectors look like smoke alarms and work in a similar way, indicating when and where gas leakages are present. Visit the PETRA office for your free detector.



'Petratmo' is now on Facebook. In the coming months, we will be developing the use of our Facebook page to keep in touch with you all and to share news. If you're on Facebook, please be our friend!

Jan Davis on the art of communal living

It's a sad fact that many of us don't know our neighbours. Of course we know the ones who annoy us with their noise, rubbish or un-neighbourly behaviour. But how easy it is to ignore the other tenants we seldom see.

Living in a block of flats can be difficult. Thoughtless behaviour can cause suffering to others. You know the sort of thing. Late night DIY sessions, loud music and TV, parties that go on, and on, and on.

The fact is we share these buildings. Unfortunately, some residents fail to recognise or respect this communal home of ours.

The communal home for flat dwellers starts at the entrance to the estate. The security door is our front door. We should expect and demand that friends, family and visitors who come to our flats will treat the communal areas with the same respect as they would our personal homes.

If you don't know your neighbours it's easier to ignore their rights, interests and feelings. So let's get to know one another. The occasional 'Good Morning' or 'Hello' can go a long way. For some people who live alone your greeting might be the only contact with other people they have that day.

Many of us live in flats, not from choice, but from circumstance. It shouldn't stop us from being good neighbours and from taking pride in our homes and our community.

Go creative -

and win ££s!

PETRA's annual photo competition is here. We're looking for pictures worthy of putting on display in the three lobbies.

Your picture should say something positive about life here on the estate. It could be a picture of the grounds, the flats, the landscape beyond your balcony, your new Audi, anything – except people. Please, no photos of babies, children, uncles sleeping in front of the telly, etc.

Winning photos will win £50 and be framed for display in one of the three lobbies. Entries must be of one photo only per person, to be submitted either as a print or as a digital file. **Closing date for entries: 1 September.**

Artists

You too can win £50. We're looking for a picture, no larger than A3 in size, to frame and hang in the PETRA office. Your work should be drawn or Painted, and the theme should reflect life here on the estate in some way. **Closing date for entries: 1 September.**

Young Artists (12 and under)

You too can win a £20 toy store voucher. We're looking for new pictures to display on the waste

bins dotted around the estate. Your picture should be A4 in size and should be a bold, colourful image with the slogan 'Just bin it!' in big letters in the centre. Good luck! **Closing date for entries: 1 September**



Getting involved

New resident **Lesley Marsh** on why she's getting involved with PETRA

"I moved here earlier this year and the first thing I read was the PETRA newsletter. The cover story showed me why I needed to get involved with PETRA – if I didn't the place could go to downhill fast. I attended a couple of meetings and am now thinking about joining the committee. Before I came here I had no idea that residents on an estate like this could achieve so much. I think PETRA has done pioneering work, and I want to be part of it."

Events

Hever Castle day trip
Thurs 21 August

A £2 deposit required to book places. This will be returned on the day. A fantastic day for all the family. Beautiful castle and grounds, with a maze, adventure playground and boats on the lake. Visit the PETRA office to book your places – But hurry, they're going fast!

Arts and Crafts afternoons for under 8s and a parent
Wed 30 July, 1- 2.30pm
Wed 6 August 1- 2.30pm
Wed 27 August 1-2 .30pm

A £2 deposit is required to book your places. This will be returned on the day. Visit the PETRA office for more information on each session and to book your places.

Next PETRA

Committee meetings

All at 8 pm in the office
Monday 28 July
Monday 25 August
Monday 29 September

Contact us

PETRA

Mike Davis (Chair), Natasha Cruickshank (Special Projects Officer), Jim Brett (Estate Manager – Caroline Edwards from September), Bradley Pavey (Repairs and Ground Maintenance Officer) and Naomi Cooper (Bookkeeper) are based at the PETRA office.
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