

Chairman Mike standing down

PETRA News

Parkhill Estate Tenants and Residents Association

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PETRA founder and first chairman, Mike Davis, is to stand down in September, after 17 years at the helm.

Mike plans to stay on as an ordinary committee member. Nevertheless, given his huge contribution to life on this estate over the years, and the challenges PETRA currently faces, this is a significant moment.

That's why we make no apology for giving over much of this edition of the newsletter to, firstly, acknowledging Mike's achievements, and secondly, to hammering home the message that PETRA desperately needs more of you to follow Mike's example and volunteer some of your time in support of PETRA.

More bad news

Lack of volunteers isn't the only problem facing our organisation. PETRA has also been struggling to secure our Council budget going forward.

After years of negotiation, we came close recently to being able to sign a new management agreement with the Council, outlining our responsibilities and the funding we would receive over the next three years. Then we were told everything was on hold again because the Council's Homes & Housing team need to go through a further cost cutting exercise to save a another £3.5m from their already slashed budget.

What does this mean for PETRA? We were expecting a cut of at least £22,000 from our three-yearly allowance. Now these cuts could be even deeper. If so, this will have a serious impact on the work we do. We will keep you informed of further development as they happen.

Going forward

For PETRA, there is something much more important than money – people. Here's another good reason why you need to show your support for PETRA by getting *actively* involved – **today**.



**Don't forget
PETRA's Family Fun Day!**

**On the green,
Sunday 26 July**

**Bouncy Castle! Ice cream!
Disco! Rodeo Bull!
Side shows! Bungee Run!
Food and Fun!**

Getting involved: Why bother?

The vast majority of TMOs (especially PETRA) deliver a service that is far superior to the service delivered by local councils. Repairs are always done within the target time, and right first time.

TMOs offer local estate-based staff you know by name and who know you, and a local estate office where you can report issues and discuss matters with your estate manager. They can also give local people opportunities to gain skills and experience leading to better job prospects. Remember Natasha? PETRA gave Natasha valuable skills which helped her to get a good job when she moved.

TMOs do a lot more than just provide excellent services. They try to recreate that lost feeling of community spirit. PETRA has been at the forefront of such activities: cooking classes, flower arranging, pamper days, our community garden, our fun days and outings, and supporting our older residents.

Take a look around our estate: well maintained greens, litter-free pathways and roads, clean and welcoming entrance halls. You have PETRA to thank for that.

Finally, did you know that PETRA has used its efficiency savings over the years to make improvements such as decorating our communal areas and estate walls, installing energy efficient lighting, planting annual bulbs, recycling bins and bulk refuse containers, installing CCTV to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, a community garden, new flooring in the lifts, and the three ground lobby areas.

If PETRA folds, all this could be lost. That's why you need to get involved. Volunteering your time for just a couple of hours a week could make all the difference.

Mike's final SOAPBOX

Apathy is no answer

After 17 years of my chairing the PETRA committee, I feel the time is right for me to hand on the baton. I will do so in September, shortly after my 71 birthday. It is, however, my intention to remain as an ordinary committee member for as long as my health stays robust, in order to give any assistance I can to the new chairperson, whoever that might be.

I would like to say a sincere thank you to not only the members of my current committee but also to the many other individuals still living on the estate who have supported PETRA over the years – particularly June Kight, who served as our treasurer since the inception of PETRA over a decade ago.

At this poignant moment, I cannot help but think back to the early days, when we had to fight to establish our TMO. In 1995, the Government brought in the 'right to manage' initiative. I was at the time chair of the Council's housing committee, and I was sceptical. I thought, wrongly, that this new right was just another deception to be inflicted on council tenants.

A year later, after political wrangles forced me and three comrades to leave the Council on a matter of principle, I sat down with Jan – who has supported me through thick and thin – to discuss what to do next.

We swapped roles; she became a new Labour councillor, while I took over her position as chair of what was then called PASTA (the Parkhill & Sunrise Tenants Association).

By the year 2000, many residents were fed up with the lazy caretakers, the dumped and burnt-out vehicles,

the graffiti and growing drugs menace rife on the estate.

Three couples, myself and Jan included, decided to exercise the right to manage the Parkhill & Sunrise Estate.

From the start it was hard work with lots of letter writing, meetings and council-speak to wade through, but finally we were granted the right to manage the estate. The original six were joined by another five and we formed our first committee. With a government grant we appointed a firm to guide us through the regulatory minefield and eventually, three years later, on 1st April 2003, PETRA went 'live'.

Should I be asked, when I get to the pearly gates, or the banks of the river Styx, was it all worth it? I shall say 'Yes! Yes a thousand times!' But the question remains: what now for PETRA?

Now, in 2015, PETRA is in danger of folding. Yes, I do mean collapsing back into the original council estate it grew from, and simply because too few residents seem prepared to get involved.

I do not believe there are many of you who want PETRA to go back to being a bog standard council estate, with drugs, prostitution, graffiti, car crime, and vandalism everywhere you look. I hope you will now prove me right by getting involved with PETRA.

Please, don't delay, get involved today. Or we will all reap the results of your apathy.

**All the best,
Mike**



Right Royal Treat

As reported in our last newsletter, PETRA received an invitation to a Buckingham Palace tea party earlier this year, and on 28 May estate manager Caroline and committee member Jan set off, suitably attired, for their big day.

Chauffeur driven to and from the palace courtesy of old friends Christine and Mick, our duo had, according to Jan, a lovely day from start to finish.

'We walked through the main gates and on through the courtyard to the entrance we always see the Queen using on TV. We passed through rooms full of paintings and display cabinets full of china and glass before walking out into the garden – or rather, park! – beyond.

'We saw the Queen, Prince Philip and several other leading members of the royal family. We listened to military bands, and enjoyed looking at the amazing range of uniforms and outfits being worn by guests from around the world.

'The tea tent was catering for 8000 of us, yet coped very well. There were dainty sandwiches, delicious tarts and cakes, and a selection of drinks, all elegantly served. Paper cups and polystyrene plates were nowhere to be seen! It was a lovely day.'



Tributes to PETRA's leading man

What can I say about Mike Davis, the Chair of PETRA? He has to be one of the most committed, giving, hard-working and inspirational people I have ever met.

One of the founding members of PETRA and the inspiration behind setting up a TMO on the estate, Mike has been at the heart of driving it forward to become one of the best-performing TMOs in the country, providing this lovely, safe and green environment that residents enjoy today.

Mike has given up huge amounts of his time and energy over the years, for which the only reward has been the continuing improvement of the estate and community, and the occasional thanks. He has thought nothing of leaving his home in the middle of the night to go and sort out disputes, even serious anti social behaviour. In some of the more difficult times past, Mike could be found washing blood from the stairs, doors and walls after such incidents, to prevent residents coming across it in the morning.

Mike has also been a key player in the national movement to create more TMOs. He has held key posts in the National Federation of TMOs, most recently as the vice chair. He has travelled extensively promoting the idea of TMOs to tenants on council estates because he believes TMOs deliver and can make a real difference to people's lives. Mike has done more for grass routes communities than many an OBE, CBE or MBE honoured by the Queen.

In the face of Mike's retirement, as residents you owe it to him to keep PETRA going in the wonderful style to which it has become accustomed – providing excellent services, brilliant staff, and a real community spirit.
Liz Michael, TMO Consultant

I met Mike Davis in January 2003. I had applied for a post as a maintenance worker with a new TMO called PETRA. I arrived early for my interview and was taken for a tour of the estate by Mike.

It was not a pretty sight. Stairwell walls covered with graffiti, urine in the stairwell, and evidence of drug abuse. Lobby areas abused, with broken glass in the fire doors, pushchairs and bicycles left lying around, rubbish left in the lobbies and chute rooms. The dust chutes were blocked, with the caretaking staff spending hours daily trying to keep them in working order.

"I saw more rats on my guided tour than I had in my entire life"

The basement area was no better. Pram sheds vandalised and full with unwanted rubbish. Outside was even worse; the bins were in such poor condition that it took two people to move them. The bin sheds themselves were rat-infested – in fact I saw more rats on my guided tour than I had seen in my entire life.

Mike asked what I thought. I replied, 'You have a BIG problem'. Later that day I was informed that PETRA wished to employ me as a maintenance worker. Now it was my problem too.

Since those early days, I have come to admire and respect Mike both as a work colleague and a friend. His tireless dedication to the development of PETRA has to be seen to be believed. Over the years he has dedicated his time to the improvement of our estate, making it a place residents can take pride in.

"his accomplishments are too numerous to mention, it would take a book to pay homage to his achievements"

So yes, it's sad that Mike is retiring as Chair of PETRA – though no one could begrudge him a rest! He has carried out the role diligently since its conception. The list of his accomplishments are too numerous to mention as it would take a book to pay homage to his achievements.

Now it's time for other, younger residents to step forward, as committee members and as general volunteers, to help fill the void left by PETRA's first Chairman. It remains for me to wish Mike well. I look forward to lifting a glass or two with him in JJ's in celebration of all he has achieved.
Jim Brett, Senior Maintenance Officer



Events

Rubbish!

* Food bags are being dumped in the basement next to the bins. They are then being ripped open by the rats, crows and foxes. Please put all bags into bins

* Black sacks are still being put into the recycling bins. Please use the orange bins for orange sacks.

* Rubbish left around the benches on the green spoil our otherwise pleasant environment. When using these benches, please leave them as clean as you found them. This includes taking cigarette dog ends away with you – they are not bio-degradable and need disposing of properly.

* Dogs are being neglected, with them being left for hours on balconies, their barking causing disturbance, and their mess left to stink the place out for days on end. If you own a dog, please take your responsibilities seriously.

* Tyre skid marks on the ground floors of Overstrand and Uphaving Houses, caused by youngsters riding bikes inside are causing Jim and Brad much trouble. If your son is one of them, please ask him to stop it – it is against the rules, disrespectful to other residents, and damaging to the floor.

* The link bridge to Parkview House is becoming a toilet for dog pee, making it smelly and unsightly, especially at this time of year. Please make sure you take your dog off the estate before it does its business.

Better safe than...

PETRA urges all residents to take out insurance. It can be paid weekly within your rent, helping to stretch money a bit further. For more details of a favourable deal on offer from the Council and open to all residents, visit the office.

Conference report

In June, Caroline, Jan and Mike travelled to the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisation's annual conference, held in Stratford-upon-Avon.

These conferences are a chance to meet up with colleagues from other TMOs, to pick up on new legislation affecting us, and share good ideas on how best to run a successful TMO.

Also attending are officers from councils keen to support their local TMOs. These colleagues are also a great source of useful information and encouragement. Sadly, no one from Havering Council attended.

Letterbox Lotto!

Every month, we give away three gift vouchers worth £20 each to residents who go online and spot their door number on our website home page. Play Letterbox Lotto today!

The numbers change every month, so keep checking!

www.petratmo.weebly.com

Mind the bend!

Cars have been speeding round the bend that leads to the basement area, and there have been several near misses. Please be aware that many tenants use the road at the top to cross into the park, often with young children or dogs in tow. Parked vehicles on the bend make it even more hazardous for these pedestrians. When on the estate, please drive slowly at all times.

Sunday 26 July: PETRA Fun Day

Make sure to join us on the green for food, music and fun in the sun

Friday 21 August – Clacton Air Show

Fancy joining us? Pop into the office to book your places.

25 September: Macmillan Coffee Morning

Help raise valuable funds for Britain's leading cancer charity by drinking coffee, eating cake, and chatting with your friends and neighbours – what's not to like about that?!

Friday 9 October – Cockney Night, in the lounge over at Sunrise Lodge

Fancy a good old knees-up, with friends and neighbours?

Next Committee meetings

July 27th

Aug 24th

Sept 28th (*AGM start time 19.30)

Oct 26th

All except* at 8pm in the Concierge

CONTACTS

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