

May 2016 • Issue 35

A newsletter by residents for residents

# community news



**Have your say Use your vote to award £100,000!**

**Festival Odyssey 70s legends to headline Phoenix Festival**

**Focus on... Rent and service charges**



Welcome...

Looking for our  
contact details?  
Turn to the  
back page!

# Welcome to Community News

**This May edition of Community News is jam-packed with updates and competitions for you.**

Summer is almost here and we're getting ready for the Phoenix Festival on Saturday 14 May at Forster Park. Lots of popular activities will be returning as well as some new and exciting events. These include a Community Parade which will pass through Downham before kicking off the festival! Why not bring your dog to take part in our new dog show too?

At the festival you will also be able to meet the larger projects which have been shortlisted for Community Chest funding. Smaller projects have already been selected by our panel – turn to pages 10 and 11 to find out who was successful. The projects will benefit our whole community and everyone can get involved.

Downham is celebrating its 90th birthday this year and there's more information on Page 10 and 11 about how you can get involved in the celebrations. We also hear from Eileen Hale, a resident who has lived in the same home for 88 years. Her memories of the area really showed us how much has changed over the years. Read her story on Page 9.

We hope to see you at some of the many events happening this summer!

**Best wishes, from the Residents Communication Group**



## WIN! 'Spot yourself!'

If this is you, pictured at our Community Links Gathering in February, please get in touch to claim your £25 shopping voucher.

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## Your photos

We love hearing from you and especially liked this photo sent in by Rory of a rainbow over Primrose Close.

Send in your photos of our community and you could win a £5 shopping voucher if we print it!

The theme for the next edition is the Phoenix Festival. Send us your favourite photos by post, on Twitter (#PhoenixFestival) or by email. Contact details are on the back page.





Phoenix Festival



# Phoenix Festival<sup>2016</sup>

Saturday 14 May 2016 • 11.30am - 4.30pm

Fun fair | Petting farm | BMX track

Archery | Face painting | Graffiti workshop

Circus tent | Street theatre zone

Massage & therapy zone | Beer tent & food stalls

And much more!

**FREE  
ENTRY**

Dog Show

FREE  
dog micro-  
chipping

Join the  
Community  
Parade

Live  
Music

Odyssey  
(13.45 – 14.30pm)



Kele Le Roc  
(11.30-11.50am)



Forster Memorial Park, off Whitefoot Lane BR1 5SD

Call 0800 0285 700 | [www.phoenixch.org.uk](http://www.phoenixch.org.uk) | @phoenixtogether



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**Phoenix**  
Our community in our hands



## Round the houses

# New homes coming!



There's a big housing shortage in London and we want to respond to this by building new homes.

Following consultation with residents we are pleased to announce that we have received planning permission to create 22 new homes for rent next to Forster House. The plans also include improving the outside area and creating new parking spaces.

Building works will hopefully begin later this year, with the new homes completed in January 2018.

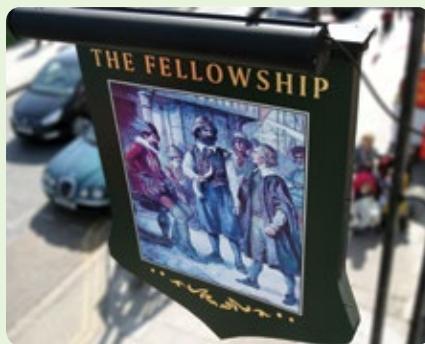
## Plans progress at the Fellowship Inn



Our plans to restore the Fellowship Inn, a semi-derelict 1920s pub, are moving ahead after we selected The Laine Pub Company to manage the venue once the restoration is complete.

Laine's run 47 pubs that are also home to theatres, comedy clubs, music venues, art galleries, microbreweries and even a circus! They will bring this experience to the Fellowship Inn and deliver a cinema, music hub, pub, café, live venue, and a micro-brewery based on the findings of our wide-ranging consultation last summer.

We will work with Laine's as the restoration continues, and hand over the keys once the restoration is complete in late 2017. Visit our website to stay up to date with the project, which is part-funded by the Heritage Lottery.



## £500 up for grabs

Congratulations to Tracey Taylor who won £500 of shopping vouchers in our February Gold Club prize draw.

Tracey said: "I was so surprised, I've never won anything like this before. I'm not sure what I'll spend the vouchers on yet but I'm definitely going to treat myself!"

Not joined the Gold Club yet?

Contact us to sign up and be in with a chance to win too! It's free and is our way to thank residents who pay their rent or service charges on time, keep to appointments or even pay by Direct Debit, all of which allow us to offer a quality service.



Gold Club winner Tracey with Phoenix staff member Yvette Hinds



# Holding us to account

Members of our Resident Scrutiny Panel put our work under the microscope. For their next investigation they have been busy looking at how we support new tenants during the first year of their tenancy with us.

They have interviewed Phoenix staff to find out more, reviewed the information and support that new tenants receive, and even attended a resident induction session. Their findings will be submitted to the Board in May along with suggestions for improvement.

Visit our website to find out more about the panel, and to read about their previous investigation into our emergency out-of-hours service.

We are always keen to hear from people interested in joining the panel. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more.



Inspecting our welcome box for new tenants



Scrutinising our new tenant induction session



Scrutiny panel members interview Phoenix staff

## Welcome aboard

We're pleased to welcome two new residents to the Board.

Mike Boniface joins as a resident Board Member.

Mike is a tenant who cares passionately about the community and our environment. He has been involved with Phoenix since the beginning and is also a member of the Gateway Committee and Resident Communications Group.

Mike said: "I feel proud and humbled to be appointed to the board, and I'm looking forward to the first Board meeting."

Carmen joins as an observer and shadow Board Member.



Mike Boniface



Carmen Simpson

Carmen is a tenant who is passionate about putting residents at the heart of decision making. She has years of experience in resident involvement and housing management in Lewisham and Southwark. Carmen is also a member of the Gateway Committee.

**If you'd like to get involved with Phoenix and help to influence our plans and priorities, please get in touch.**

## Swot up on social housing

We've seen nearly 50 residents graduate as social housing experts from our Phoenix Academy in the past two years. And with this year's sessions gearing up, we hope to create many more.

The Phoenix Academy is an opportunity for residents to get more involved in how Phoenix is run. This year, more than 25 residents have signed up to learn about the history of social housing and current housing issues.

The course consists of ten two-hour sessions at The Green Man and we'll let you know how everyone gets on in future editions.



# Focus on... Rent and service charges



## How are we doing?

We explore a different area of our work and performance in each issue of Community News. Here we look at rent and service charges.

**Did you know rent and service charges are our main source of income and allow us to provide you with services, including repairs?**

Thank you to everyone who pays their rent and service charges on time, and keeps their accounts up to date.

**Tenants:** In the 2015/2016 financial year (1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016), we collected 99.62% of rent and service charges from tenants. This means we still have to collect £1.5million of arrears (rent/service charges which haven't been paid).

**Leaseholders:** In 2015/16 we met our targets for collecting major works charges (this takes into account the opportunity we give leaseholders to pay their charges over three years).

While we still need to collect £3.7million for leaseholder charges, we have repayment agreements in place for £1.5million of these arrears. We also collected over £3million of charges in 2015/16.

### Advice and support

If you do not pay your rent or service charges on time you risk losing your home.

We are here to support you, and we can offer benefits advice directly or tell you about other organisations that can help you with benefits and repayment options.

In 2015/16 we:

- made 368 referrals to the Citizens Advice Bureau



- supported tenants and leaseholders to gain £228,000 of additional income through our financial inclusion advice
- provided energy advice to save residents £20,700 on their energy bills
- helped 115 households to benefit from the Thames Watersure scheme, saving on average £3.38 each week. (See page 7 for more details).

### Last resort

Eviction or applying for a forfeiture of your lease is always a last resort for us.

**Tenants:** In 2015/16 we evicted 20 tenants, compared to 25 in 2014/15. One eviction can cost Phoenix more than £10,000, plus the arrears that were owed.

**Leaseholders:** In 2015/16 we applied for forfeiture of the lease for 9 leasehold properties, and one leaseholder had their home repossessed by their mortgage company.

Remember, we are here to help. If you have any questions about your rent or service charges, or if you are unable to pay, please get in touch.

**Direct Debit**  
*Sign up to pay by Direct Debit today and be in with a chance of winning £250!*





## Money matters

### Changes to your benefits needn't be a 'scary thing'

**Welfare reforms are here, and we can help. The changes include the 'bedroom tax' (introduced in 2013) and a new single benefits payment called Universal Credit which is expected to be rolled out to everyone of working age in receipt of benefits in 2017.**

So far, we know nine tenants are affected by the benefit cap

We're here to help



and 398 tenants are affected by the bedroom tax, which reduces housing benefit by 14% if you are 'under-occupying' by one bedroom, or 25% if you are under-occupying by more than one bedroom.

We can support you to:

- make the most of your income
- find work and training
- get online.

**Did you know  
housing benefit has  
changed? Claims can  
now only be backdated  
for one month so it's  
important to claim  
on time!**

### Don't be a drip!

We've teamed up with Thames Water to help you reduce your water bills by 50%. Since we introduced the scheme in 2014 **we've saved residents £22,040!**

Anyone receiving the following benefits may be eligible if your water rates are more than 3% of your total household income:

- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Employment Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit

Contact us to find out more!

SAVE

££££££££££££££££

### Energy bills discounts!

Summer might be around the corner but it could pay to think about winter now.

A quick phone call to your energy company could save you £140 if you are eligible for the Warm Homes Discount. If you receive Pension Credit you will receive this discount automatically. However if you are in receipt of other means tested benefits or on a low income, then you could also be eligible but you have to apply yourself.

The schemes generally open on 1 April and are available on a first come, first serve, basis, so call your energy company soon to ensure you don't miss out!

### Energy doctor!

Every Monday 10am-1pm.

Our energy advisor Adam Pope will be in The Green Man to offer advice on how to save money on your energy bills!



### One for the road

**Think travel cards are only for the over 65s? Think again! Here are some of our favourite schemes to help you save money:**

#### **Disabled persons Freedom Pass:**

This pass allows you free travel on most public transport in London. You may also qualify for the Taxicard Scheme for subsidised trips in taxis and private hire vehicles.

#### **Under 18?**

Get a Zip Oyster photocard to benefit from free or discounted travel in London.

#### **Apprentice discounts:**

If you're 18+, live in London and are in the first year of a 12 month (or longer) apprenticeship, you could benefit from reduced Travelcards and season tickets.

#### **Looking for work?**

There are discounts available for people looking for work or who have recently returned to employment.

#### **60+ London Oyster photocard:**

If you're aged 60 or over, this pass will allow you to travel for free on public transport in London until you qualify for a Freedom Pass, which is linked to state pension age.

**For more information visit [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)**



## Happy Birthday!

Phoenix Repairs Service was one year old on 1 April and what a year it was!

- We completed **24,011** repairs
- **2,227** were completed as emergency repairs
- **95%** of tenants and leaseholders have told us they were very or fairly satisfied with their last repair.
- It took us an average of **6.35** days to complete repairs compared to **10.16** days the year before.
- **99%** of repairs were completed on time compared to **97%** at the same time last year.

This puts us in the top quarter for performance compared to other landlords in London and the south east.

Thank you to everyone who has given feedback on the Phoenix Repairs Service over the last year – your comments help us to improve!

The way we ask for your feedback on a repair has changed. From Monday 18 April we've been gathering feedback over the phone, rather than sending postal surveys. This means we can get feedback from a wider group of residents in a much more cost effective way.

Calls will be completed by Acuity, who managed our 2015 resident satisfaction survey.



## Pet Corner

**Battersea Dogs & Cats Home rehomes, reunites and rescues over 8,000 animals every year. There are many ways to keep your dog safe, comfortable and happy at home. Test yourself to see how you do on Battersea's pet care quiz.**

- 1) What is the legal age you can own a pet in the UK?
  - a. 12
  - b. 16
  - c. 18
- 2) True or false? It is illegal for your dog to be off the lead on the pavement.
  - a. True
  - b. False
- 3) If your dog is not microchipped after Wednesday 6 April, how much could you be fined?
  - a. £50
  - b. £100
  - c. £500

4) What information should be on a dog's ID tag?

- a. Owner's name and address
- b. Dog's name
- c. Phone number

5) How old should a healthy puppy be before it leaves its mum?

- a. 6 weeks
- b. 8 weeks
- c. 10 weeks

6) How many dogs did Battersea reunite with their owners last year?

- a. 376
- b. 542
- c. 768

Answers are on page 12.

For more information, please visit Battersea's website [www.battersea.org.uk](http://www.battersea.org.uk)



- By law, all dogs in England, Scotland and Wales must be microchipped.
- Battersea will chip your dog for free at its centres.



# My Phoenix – Eileen Hale

Eileen Hale is a Phoenix resident who has lived in Downham for over 80 years. She has many memories of the area which she shared with us.

## How long have you been a Phoenix resident?

I moved from the Isle of Dogs when I was 5, and have lived in the same house for 88 years! I'm the only original left now, but I have wonderful memories of this home, memories of my family and always having great friends over.

## What changes have you seen?

When I moved here the other side of my road wasn't even built. Downham was still surrounded by fields and cows and we had to walk through them to take the tram to Catford before they extended the line to Grove Park.

There was a rag and bone man who lived down the road and used to keep his horse in the kitchen. I guess it kept the house warmer. It used to be so cold in those days, we used to have a large copper kettle which we had to fill with boiling water and pump upstairs if we wanted a bath. The area is unrecognisable now, it's so different.

## What's the best thing about living in the Phoenix area?

I can't get out and about much at the moment so I don't get to see much of the area, but I really like St Luke's Church. It reminds me of my childhood church in the Isle of Dogs. The Curate, Cecil, comes to visit me once a month, and my son and his wife come regularly when they can.



## What would you change?

I'd love to have more people coming to visit me, or find more ways of getting out and about. I used to be a dressmaker for Norman Hartnell and I was a ballroom and Latin dance teacher so I was always on the go! Even when I first retired I used to go out every day, but I'm unable to do so now unless someone helps me. I'd also love to be able to have a dog or be around animals more.

## What are your hopes for the future?

I would hope to hear less about crime and troubles on the news and see our community pulling together more.

Clockwise from top Eileen at home in Downham, with family outside her home, at school, and on the bomb shelter they built in the garden.



## My community

# Downham at 90!

It's 90 years since Downham was built.  
Get involved in the birthday celebrations.

### Join the Community Parade

There is lots going on across Downham, starting with a Community



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Parade, with support from the Arts Council England, on Saturday 14 May 11-12pm which will finish at the Phoenix Festival in Forster Park. Local organisations and schools will all take part, celebrating the past, present and future of the estate.

### Share your story

We are joining with the Working Party Theatre Company to launch a project that will allow a new generation of young people to learn about the community's stories from the First World War.

The project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Over the coming months we will be recruiting community volunteers to help us research and bring generations together to make sure our shared history doesn't disappear.

Keep an eye out for more information!



### YOUR LETTERS



We recently had a letter from Dave Gaffney asking to see photos of Bellingham's outdoor swimming baths. We loved reading your stories about how no one would go in the pool when Jaws came out at the cinema, and that you found out Elvis Presley had died over the radio at the baths. We hope these photos bring back lots of memories for you.



### Celebrate with St Johns

St John the Baptist Church is hosting a number of events to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the church and the estate – get involved!

#### Saturday 14 May

The start of a free two week photographic exhibition of memories of the Downham Estate every day (excluding Saturday 21 May) 10am-4pm.

#### Saturday 21 May

If you are a 1920s music fan, there will be a cabaret evening featuring local choirs and singers. Tickets are £10 including dinner.

#### Sunday 22 May, 4pm

How about a reminiscence afternoon tea, where you can share your memories and hear from a local historian? Suggested donation £5.

For further information please contact Fr Martin Thomas on 07460 257 103 or email: [fathermartinthomas@gmail.com](mailto:fathermartinthomas@gmail.com)

## Would you like 1-2-1 digital training from the comfort of your home?

We are exploring the possibility of offering this as a new service and want to find out how many residents would be interested. Contact us to sign up for more information.

## Bounce back to work

Are you 50+ and looking for employment? We're running our second 'Bouncing Back' course with Opportunity Access – an organisation with lots of experience supporting people into work. In 2014 more than 30 people benefited from the scheme!

Bouncing Back will help you rediscover your confidence and increase your skills and employability. We will work with you to make sure you get the personal support you need to get back into work.

To find out if you are eligible and for more information please contact us.

## Super surfers

We are working with Lewisham Council as part of the year-long Go ON Lewisham project to help everyone get online. Why digital? The average UK customer who is online saves £744 on average every year thanks to the internet!

There are lots of ways we can support you to become confident and increase your digital skills.

- Keep an eye out for our FREE digital training courses.
- Come along to Job Club every Tuesday 10am-2pm to find your next job online.
- We've partnered with Barclays to offer you the Barclays Digital Driving License. For more information on how to get started, get in touch.



## Phoenix in Bloom takes root!

We want to celebrate the residents who brighten up our area with brilliant blooms and dazzling displays! Enter now or nominate a neighbour to celebrate a beautiful garden, balcony or container that makes our area a greener place to live, work and play. Visit our website for more information. The closing date for entries is Friday 29 July.

## Community Chest

Since 2013, our Community Chest has benefited over 6,000 local people!

Every year, Phoenix residents vote to award funding of up to £20,000 to local groups and projects that make a difference to our area and the lives of our residents.

Nine projects have been shortlisted for a large grant in 2016 and you can meet them in person at the Phoenix Festival to find out why they deserve a share of the funding. Phoenix tenants have the final say on which projects should receive support and tenants can vote online, by post or in person at the Phoenix Festival.

Smaller grants have been awarded by our evaluation panel to six local projects. Visit our website to find out more and get involved!

- Bellingham Community Festival: £2,500
- Parent Support Group: £2,460
- Haskins Hall Seniors Group: £783.10



Some highlights from last year's Community Chest projects

- Cheshire Health Nutrition & Fitness: £2,450
- Jelly Babies Yoga & Massage: £2,500
- Good Shepherd Youth Club: £2,100

# Noticeboard

## What's on at The Green Man?

**Monday**

**10am - 2pm**

Monday market

**Tuesday**

**10am - 2pm**

Free Phoenix Job Club

**Wednesday**

**10am - 12pm**

Conversation Club to help you speak English with confidence

**Thursday**

**6.30 - 8pm**

Beginners Tai Chi sessions. Contact Matt on 07989 209 558 for more info.

**Friday**

**10 - 12pm**

Conversation Club to help you speak English with confidence

**12 - 1pm**

Fab Fridays – 60+ social and recreational group. Contact Christina at 60UP on 020 3667 3704

**5 - 6.30pm**

BEAM stands for Beautiful Empowerment and Me. It's a weekly session for girls aged 10-14. Contact 020 3372 5779 or visit [www.belevueuk.org](http://belevueuk.org) for more information.

## Save the date

On Saturday 11th June 11am-4pm, Downham Health & Leisure Centre is hosting the annual Downham Celebrates Summer Fair. The free event will include a farm, climbing wall, Sing along Sally, a fun inflatable, stalls and for the adults, a charity triple fitness challenge!

Quiz answers: 1 - B, 2 - A, 3 - C, 4 - A, 5 - B, 6 - B

## Health and Wellbeing event

Save the date! Saturday 7 May, 12-4pm

This year we will have a therapy zone with massage, reflexology and manicure treatments, dance workshops, nutrition advice, arts and crafts and information stalls.

For more information call 020 3667 3704 or email [info@60up.org.uk](mailto:info@60up.org.uk)

## LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) events

The Lewisham LGBT Officers hold a monthly drop in session at The Green Man. The next one will be Wednesday 11 May, 6-8pm. These drop in sessions can be lots of things – a social gathering, a place to talk about matters important to you, somewhere you can pick up information on other LGBT events or a place to find support.

Contact Lewisham LGBT Officers on 07872 677 947 for more information.



## Meal Deals

Pop in to the café at The Green Man and take advantage of our meal deals such as tea & toast for £1!

**Pass go and collect £200**



Well, not exactly, but we might be able to save you £200!

Take part in **Moneyopoly**, on Friday 20 May, 2.30-4.30pm, for an interactive budgeting event where you can get helpful advice on employability, debt, benefits advice, energy saving and more!

## Stay in touch



**By phone:** 0800 0285 700 from 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday (and for emergency calls at all other times)

**Please note: every other Tuesday, 2-3pm, we have an emergency phone service only as a result of staff training.**



**Email:** [correspondence@phoenixch.org.uk](mailto:correspondence@phoenixch.org.uk)



**Web:** [www.phoenixch.org.uk](http://www.phoenixch.org.uk)



**Twitter:** @phoenixtogether @greenmanhub



**Youtube:** [www.youtube.com/phoenixtogether](https://www.youtube.com/phoenixtogether)



**Visit:** by appointment from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday at The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

**The Green Man will be closed on Monday 2 and Monday 30 May for the bank holidays. Our out of hours emergency phone service will operate on both days.**