

community news



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**Phoenix gets building** Homes for older people given green light [Page 4](#)

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Welcome...

# Welcome to Community News

**Thank you for picking up this February copy of Community News. We hope you like our new look!**

In the three months since the last issue of Community News, members of the Residents Communications Group have **volunteered more than 100 hours** to improve communications to Phoenix residents. Together, we review hundreds of resident communications each year and help to set priorities for the communications team.

We're always looking for new members and new ways to improve.

If you're interested in how Phoenix communicates with residents and think you can make things better, please use the details below to get in touch!

Best wishes, from the Residents Communications Group

## WIN! 'Spot yourself!'

If this is you, pictured at our Winter Community Links Gathering in December, please contact us to claim your £25 shopping voucher.



Summer Fun on Bellingham Green

## How to keep in touch



**By phone:** from 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday (and for emergency calls at all other times)  
Freephone from your landline: 0800 0285 700  
Standard cost from your mobile: 0844 264 2844



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



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



**Twitter:** @phoenixtogether @greenmanhub for all the latest news and opportunities



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



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

**Staff training:** emergency phone service only, 2-3pm every other Tuesday

Please note, The Green Man will close early at 3pm on Wednesday 11, 18 and 25 March as we get set up for the Community Links Gatherings.

We will be closed on Good Friday (Friday 3 April), Easter Monday (Monday 6 April) and both bank holidays in May (Monday 4 and Monday 25).

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Cover: Happy faces at The Green Man

Phoenix Community Housing Association (Bellingham and Downham Limited) is a Community Benefit Society, number IP30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. Homes and Communities Agency number L4505.



## Our plans for The Fellowship Inn



LOTTERY FUNDED

# Cinema and live venue coming to Henry Cooper pub

We're delighted to have received almost £4million of lottery funding to restore The Fellowship Inn in Bellingham.

The money from the Heritage Lottery Fund will help us to restore the building, preserve many of its original features and safeguard the future of this wonderful building and the existing pub.

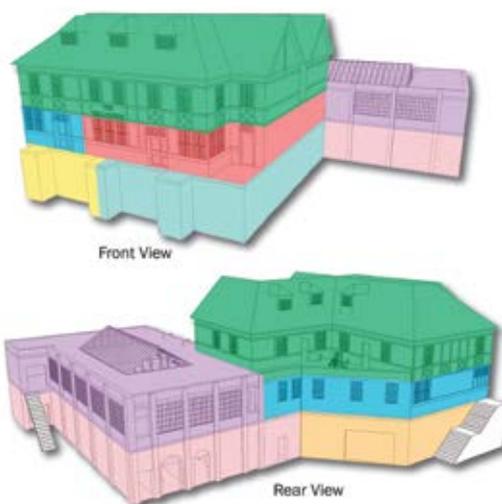
Our plans will create more than 70 jobs and around 200 training and volunteering opportunities for people in our area.



The pub is on Randlesdown Road, right next to Bellingham station

### What's coming...

- a cinema
- live music venue
- community café
- small brewery
- bakery
- artists' studios
- pub restoration



The theatre space at the rear of the pub

### The building's history

The Fellowship Inn was built in the 1920s and was the first ever pub on a London housing estate. It was built along with much of Bellingham as part of the 'Homes for Heroes' development following the First World War.

The pub has an incredible history. It was home and a training base to local boy Henry Cooper, ahead of his 1963 fight with Cassius Clay, and its large hall played host to bands

including Fleetwood Mac and John Mayall and The Bluesbreakers.

While part of the pub is still open, much of The Fellowship Inn has fallen into serious disrepair and large parts of the building are derelict and in urgent need of attention.

### What's next?

Work will start at The Fellowship Inn soon and we will be hosting information sessions where you can find out more. Look out for further updates in Community News.

### Get involved

**We want as many people as possible to be involved with this project! Please contact us or visit our website if you would like to get involved or receive regular project updates.**



## Round the houses

### Building brighter futures

Lewisham's first specialist construction academy opened at The Meadows in January. Delivered by Building Lives in partnership with Phoenix, the new academy will offer training and apprenticeships to more than 100 people each year. DIY taster courses will also be offered at the centre. Contact us to register your interest.

The academy is open to anyone aged 16-64. To register your interest **contact Building Lives on 020 8695 9997 or visit [www.buildinglives.uk.com](http://www.buildinglives.uk.com)**



### Meet your new Gateway Committee



*Some of the members of your new Gateway Committee, left to right: David Cummins, Mike Boniface, Wendy Lines, Lia Green, Chan Mao, Anne McGurk, Husseina Hamza, Margaret McCarthy*

Residents have been given a new opportunity to have their say and influence our future through our new Phoenix Gateway Committee.

Members of the committee, made up of 11 residents and one staff member, will offer advice and give views to our Board. That will ensure our Board can take more resident and staff opinions into account when making decisions.

We will introduce members of the committee in future editions of Community News, or visit our website. There is still a vacancy for a Phoenix leaseholder. Please contact us if you'd like to get involved.

### Green light for new homes



*How the new homes at Hazelhurst Court will look*

Our plans for 60 new homes for older people at Hazelhurst Court were approved by Lewisham Council in January and work will begin on site later this year.

The new homes - our first since our creation in 2007 - will help to tackle the major shortage of housing for older people in our area. They will enable older residents to enjoy living in secure and comfortable surroundings within our community.

The new scheme will also offer communal facilities including a kitchen and dining area, garden room, large communal lounge and a shared courtyard.



## Phoenix Academy 2015. Enrol now!

### Do you want to learn more about housing and gain new skills?

Our second Phoenix Academy will begin at The Green Man in April. Sign up to attend weekly sessions and become an expert on the housing sector, all while developing key skills and improving your CV. Topics include everything from the history of social housing to sustainable development.

More than 20 residents and apprentices graduated from the academy last year and have gone on to pursue

further involvement opportunities with Phoenix.

Eileen Davies, 54, who took part in last year's Phoenix Academy said: "It was great to meet more like-minded people who want to help improve Phoenix. The debates were a joy and it's been an eye-opener for me."

Register your interest now! Call or email [academy@phoenixch.org.uk](mailto:academy@phoenixch.org.uk)



Class of 2014! Residents and apprentices graduate from last year's Phoenix Academy

## Use your vote!

The general election is coming up on Thursday 7 May. Use your vote and have a say in your future!

Register to vote online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

For help and support to use a computer, come along to our IT club on Tuesday's from 12-2pm.

## Bid for a share of £100,000

### Do you have a great idea for a project that will benefit our Phoenix community?

Why not bid for a small or large grant of up to £20,000 from our Community Chest? Applications are now open and will close on Thursday 2 April. Residents will vote and decide which projects receive funding at our Community Chest gathering in June.

So far, £200,000 has been awarded to local projects and 2,000 residents have benefitted. Call us or visit our website for more information.

## How are we doing?

We explore a different area of our work and performance in each issue of Community News. Here we look at empty homes and how we're working with residents to make sure that homes are let as quickly as possible.

If you'd like to know more about our performance in a particular area, please let us know!



### What's the issue?

It's important that our homes are re-let as quickly as possible when they become vacant. This enables us to ease housing need locally and offer a home to people in temporary or unsuitable accommodation.

When a property is empty (known as a 'void') we don't receive any rent and the amount of money that Phoenix earns each month is reduced.

It's in no one's interest to have empty homes when there is such a high demand for housing in our area.

Properties can become vacant when current tenants find alternative accommodation, transfer or when a resident dies. It's our goal to help sustain tenancies but in some instances properties become empty and available for reletting when someone is evicted.

### Latest numbers

In the nine months from April to December 2014 we re-let 175 homes.

- 70 re-let in Bellingham Farm
- 55 in Kestrel
- 50 in Kingfisher

It took an average of just under 28 days to re-let a property - the same as last year. Our performance in turning around empty homes was in the upper half of landlords of our size in London last year.

It takes longer for us and costs more



to prepare a property for new residents when it's returned to us in poor condition.

If we had been able to re-let homes immediately, we could have housed 13 families for a year or saved more than £80,000.

A total of 163 properties became empty between April and December 2014. Most often this was because of a transfer to another property, death or because the tenant found their own accommodation.

**"If you're moving out, please leave your home in good condition."**

Twenty five properties became empty due to evictions for rent arrears, tenancy fraud and antisocial behaviour (ASB).

Of the 163 homes, 18 were let to new residents within a week.

### How you can help

- Please give us full notice in line with your tenancy agreement if you intend to leave your home. This will give us time to prepare the property for new tenants and will help us to let the property as quickly as possible.
- Please let us into your home for a 'pre-void' inspection. This means we assess what work needs to be done as soon as possible and prepare to complete the works as quickly as possible once you have left.
- If you move, please leave your home in a good condition. The better condition your home is in, the quicker we are likely to be able to relet it to individuals or families in need of housing.

If you return your home to us in a good condition, there are benefits for you too. You may be eligible to receive a £250 golden goodbye payment!



## Bouncing back to work

Since January last year our Roots into Work employment and training programme has helped 43 people into jobs. Many residents have also benefitted from FREE training, one to one advice and access to hundreds of jobs online.

Nana had been out of work for three years when she joined our job club in September 2014. In late December she was offered a role at a large legal firm in the City of London.

### Nana Bentil, 51:

“I was made redundant in 2005 when my daughter was two and a half, and I decided to become a full-time mum. But I’d been trying to get back into work for about three years.

“I’d done a couple of programmes that focused on CVs and so on, but the networking seemed much better for Bouncing Back. It’s based on the jobs and opportunities that are actually out there.”



**If you’d like to receive support and training to get into work, like Nana did, please contact our Community Regeneration Team. Our Roots into Work programme is bespoke and flexible to your needs. It includes FREE access to training, one to one support and advice, access to work placements and lots more.**

## Rent increase

Every year we use rules from the Government to set the rents for our properties. The rules aim to make sure that rent setting is fair and consistent for all housing association and council tenants across the country.

From April this year, rents will go up by 1% more than general inflation.

The Phoenix Board has agreed to increase rents by 2.2% from 6 April in line with the guidance received from the Government. (1% more than inflation in September which was 1.2%). Our rents still remain among the lowest of all housing associations in Lewisham.

You will receive a letter confirming your rent increase shortly.

We will be available to talk about rent setting and the rent increase at the Community Links Gatherings in March.



### Looking for employment?

#### The Phoenix Job Fair on Tuesday 24 March

A great opportunity to meet local employers and to get top advice and support to improve your CV, interview skills and employability.

From 10am to 2pm at The Green Man.

Contact us to reserve your space!



## Changes to our repairs service – what it means for you

**Since our creation in 2007, our repairs have been delivered by contractors on Phoenix’s behalf.**

We are pleased that from 1 April 2015 repairs will be brought ‘in-house’ and delivered by the new Phoenix Repairs Service, through a subsidiary company of Phoenix.

There will be no immediate change to the way you report repairs. But the creation of the Phoenix Repairs Service will give us more control over the quality of service

and more flexibility to provide the improvements you want to see.

Residents have been involved in the development of our new repairs service since May 2013. That has included everything from agreeing overall priorities for the service to offering feedback on the new branding and name. We have a Resident Repairs Panel that will continue to meet after 1 April to check the service is meeting expectations.

We will do all we can to minimise any disruption caused by the change



from the current Willmott Dixon contract to the Phoenix Repairs Service, and plan to introduce regular improvements over the coming months and years.

You can give your feedback, views and suggestions over the phone, or let us know what you think by using the contact form on our website.

### Reduce your water bill by 50%

Is your water bill currently more than 3% of your total household income? If so, WaterSure Plus from Thames Water could help to halve your annual water bill.

You are most likely to be eligible for this scheme if you live alone and receive of the basic rate of benefit. Other households may also be eligible, particularly if water rates are high.

Please contact us for more information.

### Changes to leaseholder correspondence

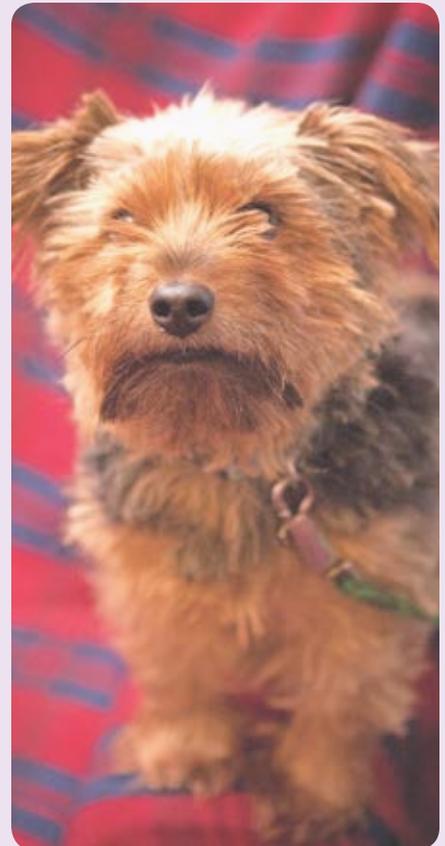
Our leasehold service standards have changed. From 1 April, our home ownership team will respond to all written correspondence within 21 days, though we will always try to respond to queries more quickly where possible. This change reflects the complex nature of some of our leasehold enquiries.

## Pet Corner with Battersea Dogs & Cats Home



**Every year, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home looks after more than 3,000 stray dogs. Would you know who to contact if your pet went missing?**

- Call Battersea Dogs & Cats Home’s Lost Dogs & Cats Line on 020 7627 9245. You can also fill in a lost report at [battersea.org.uk](http://battersea.org.uk)
- Report the loss to the Dog Warden Service at Lewisham Council on 020 8314 2098
- If your dog is microchipped, register your pet as missing with Petlog on 0844 4633 999
- Register the loss on [doglost.co.uk](http://doglost.co.uk)
- Put up posters locally – templates and help are on the Battersea website at [battersea.org.uk](http://battersea.org.uk)
- Contact local rescues and veterinary surgeries





## My Phoenix – Ann Robinson

Ann Robinson lives on Whitefoot Lane with her husband Leroy and her youngest son Reece. She has recently completed a number of Phoenix funded courses and has joined the Phoenix Repairs Panel.

### How long have you been a Phoenix resident?

I've been a Phoenix resident since they took over from Lewisham. I first moved into my property in December 1989 and have raised my four children there. Three of them have now moved out to live in homes of their own close by, one of them being a Phoenix property.

### What are the main changes you've seen?

The happiest time for me was when Phoenix began repairing the property. They fitted double glazed windows, replaced the gas fire with central heating, gave us a new kitchen and a new bathroom. It was so exciting and made us feel more at home.

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

The best thing about living here is the community. The people who live around here are all friendly and have the same expectations of how they want to live and get on within their community. I've been living here for a long time so I know all my neighbours very well. Although I've sadly seen people go, I've met some really lovely new people too.

### What would you change?

I can't think of much that I would change. I genuinely feel as though Phoenix ticks a lot of boxes and provides us with what we need. Community events and gatherings, training opportunities and the



*Ann is congratulated by Mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock as she graduates from the Phoenix Academy*



*Ann at home with her husband Leroy*

chance to get involved and have our say are all great benefits. I have recently completed the Phoenix Academy and a Food Hygiene course and have joined the Repairs Panel. I'm now looking forward to enrolling on a First Aid course with Roots into Work.

### What are your hopes for the future?

I'm a carer for my husband and my brother who both have disabilities. I hope that there will be more support for people like myself and residents who are disabled, through events, workshops or guidance sessions.



## Space Invaders ready for lift off

Thank you to everyone who voted for Space Invaders as part of the People's Millions in November. Our project, put together with adventure learning charity Wide Horizons, was featured on ITV London and received enough public votes to receive £50,000 of lottery funding.

Space Invaders will bring together community volunteers to clear up and revive five unloved green spaces in our area.

Recruitment for volunteers is now underway and we're looking for enthusiastic volunteers and community champions to drive the project forward. You'll receive free, accredited training and the chance to develop your skills while helping to make outdoor spaces in Lewisham better for our whole community.

The programme will run from April to August. To get involved call Barney at Wide Horizons on 0845 600 6567.



## Board approves parking plans

Following consultation with all Phoenix residents last year, the Board has approved plans to introduce new parking controls on our estates. Parking permits will be free, and will ensure that spaces can be used by residents.

The new controls will only apply to land managed by Phoenix and not the public highway, which is managed by Lewisham Council.

There will be prominent signage across estates and a fining system for unauthorised parking. Vehicles will not be clamped. We can issue more than one permit per household provided they are for Phoenix residents who own a car that is taxed and roadworthy. Guests will need to display a visitors' permit and you will be able to apply for a number of these free of charge.

More information about the car parking management scheme will be available over the coming months and we will write to all residents well in advance of the introduction of the new scheme.

To report an abandoned vehicle, call Lewisham Council on 020 8314 2057.

## Join us on a walkabout



Join your Gateway Local Advisor and fellow residents for a walkabout in your area to identify any issues or concerns about communal areas and suggest ways of improving our area. Estate inspections take place on all of our streets and estates four times a year.

Details of estate inspections from April 2015 to March 2016 will be confirmed shortly and available on our website.



## Spring into action

Join together with your neighbours at our Springtime Community Links gatherings in March.

The events are an opportunity to discuss the issues that matter to you and help to make a difference to your area, with lots more to enjoy besides!

We'll also be introducing our new Phoenix Repairs Service (see p8). There'll be an opportunity to meet the team, find out more about what you can expect from our new service and ask any questions.

Plus:

- decorate your own Easter egg
- make your own Easter bonnet
- free advice on how to save energy and money

**Wednesday 11 March, 4.30-7.30pm, Kestrel**

**Wednesday 18 March, 4.30-7.30pm, Bellingham Farm**

**Wednesday 25 March, 4.30-7.30pm, Kingfisher**

Unsure of which Community Link area you live in? You'll receive a special invitation with details of your Community Link and the date for your gathering.



**Spaces are limited! Call us to book your space by Friday 6 March or email [links@phoenixch.org.uk](mailto:links@phoenixch.org.uk)**

## Winter wonderland

The Green Man was transformed into a winter wonderland when Santa, his reindeer and more than 400 of our residents joined together for our Winter Community Links Gathering in December. Thank you to everyone who attended and helped to make the event such a success!



## We're award winners

The Green Man is a national award winner after being named best 'Community Achievement' for 2014 at the 24housing awards in November.

The award goes to show how much can be achieved by residents and staff working together to improve our community.



## Noticeboard



### Save the Date!

The Phoenix Festival returns to Forster Park on Saturday 9 May. More info will follow soon!



#### On your bike!

FREE bike surgery with Lewisham Road and Transport Police every second Thursday of the month from 10am-1pm at The Green Man.

#### Mini Monday market

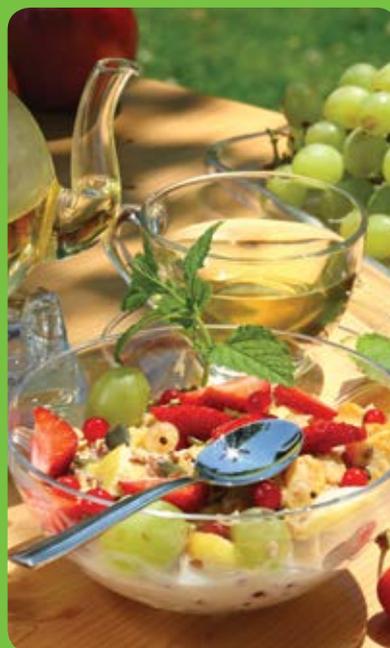
Browse pop up stalls in The Hub every Monday. A range of products are on offer, including cosmetics, candles and handmade jewellery.

#### Green music

A FREE night of jazz and soul at The Green Man on Thursday 2 April from 7pm. Featuring live performances from up and coming artists. Bar open.

#### Plug in to free training

We're offering two free half day training sessions about electrical safety for your home. Dates to be confirmed. Please contact us to register your interest!



### Health and wellbeing event

Join African Advocacy Foundation for interactive workshops and advice on a range of health topics with free food and opportunities to volunteer, develop skills and meet new people.

**Saturday 14 March, 11am-4pm at Goldsmiths Community Centre, 86 Castillon Road, SE6 1QD.**

Funded by the Phoenix Community Chest.

Call Husseina Hamza for more info on 020 8698 4473.



#### Art exhibition

Visit The Hub at The Green Man from Monday 30 March to Wednesday 3 April to view artwork produced by GCSE students from Sedgehill School.

#### Planning a party?

The Green Man is available for hire at reasonable rates with discounts for Phoenix residents and leaseholders. Contact us for more information.

There's always lots going on at The Green Man. Visit [www.thegreenman.com](http://www.thegreenman.com) to sign up to our regular email updates or or pop into pick up a leaflet of forthcoming events.