

Winter 2013 • Issue 25

A newsletter by Phoenix residents



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Phoenix



The Green Man to open 25 November

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Welcome...

Welcome to your new Community News

We hope you enjoy your winter edition of Community News. As you can see, we've refreshed the design and made some other changes to the newsletter that we hope you like.

Thank you to everyone who completed the feedback form we included with the last edition - your comments will help develop a better newsletter for everyone. The winner of the feedback prize draw is featured in our news round-up on pages 4-5.

Of course, we are always happy to receive feedback on any of our publications - so please let us know what you think of the new look Community News and your 2014 calendar.

Best wishes, from the Residents Communications Group

December & January opening: Tuesday Dec 3 -

full phone service, but The Green Man is closed all day.

Christmas and New Year - there will be closures between Friday 20 December and Thursday 2 January, with a full emergency phone service. Details to be advertised.

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Cover: Maria Ali and her grandson Cassius. See page 10.



The Residents Communications Group, Langthorne Court

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: customerservices@phoenixch.org.uk



Web: www.phoenixch.org.uk



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



Facebook: facebook.com/phoenix.moneymatters for savings tips and benefits information



Visit, from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday:

Until 3pm on Friday 22 November -

Wren Court, 15 London Road, BR1 1DE

From 10am on Monday 25 November -

The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

Please note - we are closed on 3 December

Weekly surgeries: Phoenix Residents Resource Centre, Marton Close, Firhill Road, SE6 3SS, every Tuesday 9-11am and Thursday 3-5pm. (Tuesday 3 December 9am-12 noon)

Monthly surgeries: as advertised, at a community hall near you (please contact Customer Services for details)

Staff training: emergency phone service only, 2-3pm every other Tuesday (from 26 November inclusive)

Phoenix Community Housing Association (Bellingham and Downham) is an Industrial and Provident Society, number IP30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. Homes and Communities Agency number L4505.



Come on in to...

THE GREEN MAN



The Green Man Café.

Enjoy delicious meals, snacks and drinks at the new venue, set to open soon.

Citizens Advice Bureau.

Make an appointment for free and confidential advice on a range of issues.

Lewisham Plus Credit Union.

In search of a safe and reliable banking option, or in need of a loan? Lewisham Plus Credit Union, based at The Green Man, can offer the answer.

Lewisham Training Kitchen.

The training kitchen will provide training and job opportunities through a school catering service run by Lewisham Council and Chartwells.

The Barn, Community Hub and The Square. There are a range of fun events planned for The Green Man, with a Christmas Market coming soon. You can also hire The Barn for private events or functions.

Please see our contact details on page 2.

We're delighted to announce that The Green Man will open its doors to everyone on Monday 25 November.

Our new headquarters will bring Phoenix services to the heart of our housing area – we're coming home!

As well as Phoenix customer services, the new landmark building at 355 Bromley Road will also offer a range of other facilities for you to use and enjoy.

Come on in to find out more about what's on offer. All facilities are fully accessible to disabled people. Please contact Customer Services if you have any special needs, including any transport or parking requirements.

The people speak!

Residents attending this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) took tours of the site. They were particularly impressed with the space, café, facilities and plans to offer training courses, recreational classes and social activities. A few took time to give us their first impressions.

"It gave me a surprise when you enter the building, it's spacious!"
Thelma Daniels

You can see the building and listen to people's views at

www.youtube.com, on our channel 'Phoenix CH'.

The Green Man has already created 17 new jobs and apprenticeships for local people. We'll be speaking to some of them in future editions of Community News.

We've talked about our efforts to make The Green Man as environmentally sustainable as possible. The development has now been confirmed as 'Excellent' through an official sustainable assessment method called BREEAM.

One door closes...

Please note that Wren Court will close its doors at 3pm on Friday 22 November, and the Green Man opens at 10am on Monday 25 November.

See page 12 for news of our Pop Up Christmas Market!



Sebastian Taylor, Head of Customer Experience, talks to resident Vanessa Jenkins about The Green Man, at the AGM. See the video on YouTube.



Phoenix residents and staff on a Ravensbourne clean-up day

A river runs through it

A small neglected park opposite The Green Man will be turned into a riverside retreat after we were successful in bidding for redevelopment funding.

We'll be working around the Ravensbourne river - removing fencing, planting hedges and wild flowers, creating pathways, installing seating and developing a wildlife area.

Our pocket park is part of the Mayor of London's 'Great Outdoors' programme. Residents at our recent Community Gathering voted to name the green space 'Peter Pan's Park' in recognition of the fondly remembered Peter Pan Pool and playground (now the Homebase site).



Phoenix has achieved a 100% gas safety check record, for the third year running, maintaining our position as one of the best housing providers in the country for gas safety. Thank you to all residents who help us to keep up this essential work.

Ade inspires at AGM

Hundreds of residents and dignitaries enjoyed their first chance to step inside our new landmark development at The Green Man at our 6th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September. Around 300 visitors took the chance to take tours of the building.



Ade Adepitan

The Paralympian and TV personality Ade Adepitan delivered an inspiring speech about his life and gave The Green Man a resounding endorsement.

Phoenix Chief Executive Jim Ripley told attendees: "We know we've a lot still to do, but satisfaction with Phoenix has massively increased. We're proud of what we've achieved so far and we're proud that you can come and make this your building."

It was also reported that residents Margaret McCarthy and Peter Lewis had been elected to the Board, and that Phil Newsman and Paul Bloss had been reappointed as independent Board members.

Following recent interviews, residents Anne McGurk and Jay Clahar have been appointed to the Board, and Vanessa Jenkins has been co-opted to the Board without voting rights.

Diversity day



Hundreds enjoyed food from around the world as part of our annual Phoenix Diversity Day at Catford Wanderers in October. Residents had the chance to watch African drumming and dancing, and took part in diversity bingo, karaoke, arts and crafts and competitions.



Round the houses

Complaints process change

Changes to the way that complaints are handled mean that we have reduced the number of stages in our procedure, from three to two. If you would like to send us a complaint or comment, please visit www.phoenixch.org.uk, use the contact details on page 2, or pick up a form from reception.

Help at hand

Do you have a housing issue? We now have a single port of call for most issues relating to your home – your Gateway Local Advisor. You will often see them visiting your neighbourhood, and you should have received a letter recently with your advisor’s details. If you need more information, please see the contact details on page 2.

Feedback prize draw winners

Around 200 residents gave us their views on our 2012-13 Annual Report and the September edition of Community News. Thank you to everyone who took part. The lucky winner of a £100 shopping voucher is Robin Agard of Battersby Road. Wayne Cregan of Riverpark Gardens also won a £50 voucher in our quarterly Customer Satisfaction draw.

Celebrating Steve Biko



Nkosinathi Biko - proud of his father's legacy

The son of the celebrated anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko saw his father’s legacy live on in Lewisham during a special visit to Phoenix.

Nkosinathi Biko, the CEO of the Steve Biko Foundation, saw his father’s name on the street sign of Steve Biko Lane in Bellingham. The street was named by Lewisham Council in the mid 1980s in tribute to the South African student activist who died while in police custody in 1977. Nkosinathi was joined by the Mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock.

Nkosinathi said: “Phoenix Community Housing recognised the contribution of Steve Biko but, more importantly, continues to utilise his legacy and those of other activists, to promote justice and equality.”

Mulalley Makeover winners



We have four lucky makeover winners in the generous Mulalley Makeover draw. Apprentices will redecorate rooms chosen by the winners, and we’ll report back on their efforts in the next edition. Thomas Barrett, Sheila Warr, Julie Deadman and Victoria Wickenden of Bellingham will be welcoming Mulalley and their apprentices soon.



Don't be a money turkey this Christmas



Christmas is a time for giving. But please make sure you don't give yourself a New Year debt hangover. This advice could help you make sure that you and your family can enjoy the festivities without blowing the budget – or being the Grinch.



Cut the gift list

Do you feel obliged to exchange gifts with some people because that's the way you've done it for years? Why not see if you can agree with them not to send gifts this year? Or set a limit on how much you will spend on each other.

Plan ahead

People panic buy at Christmas. If you're out in the shops on Christmas Eve, it's likely that you won't be spending your money wisely. As soon as you can, put together a list of all the gifts you will be buying people this Christmas. Then stick to it.

Food for thought

Do you end up with endless turkey sandwiches up to New Year's Eve? Don't buy more food

than you're realistically going to need. Put together a shopping list that covers all the meals you need and then don't be tempted to buy any more.

Money for nothing

Do you have internet access at home? Will you be buying gifts online? Take a look at cashback sites, which will return to you a percentage of the cost of items from various websites.

Get creative!

Christmas cards are expensive. So are cakes and other goodies. Do you really have to buy them, or could you make them at home? By giving home made items you'll also be giving a much more personal gift than if you've just popped to your local supermarket.

Dreaming of a green Christmas?

We'll be working hard at The Green Man to do more for the environment. You can also help to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and their impact on climate change. And the best thing is that going green can also be a great way to save money!

Here are some ideas for enjoying a greener Christmas this year.



Go cardless. Do you need to send so many Christmas cards? If you and your loved ones have internet access, you could send e-cards instead. You'll save lots of money on cards and postage.



Recycle wrapping paper. More than 100,000 tonnes of wrapping paper are thrown away each Christmas, when they could be recycled and reused.



A Christmas tree isn't just for Christmas! From 28 December 2012 until 27 January 2013, Lewisham residents can take their unwanted real Christmas trees to any one of 12 recycling

points. You can find details at www.lewisham.gov.uk, call **020 8314 7171**, or email recycle@lewisham.gov.uk



Don't chuck unwanted presents. Even if you don't like a gift, someone else will. Take any unwanted gifts to a local charity shop, or you may be able to exchange them through www.freecycle.org



Think carefully about your gifts. Big presents involve lots of packaging and take up space. You could think about buying your loved ones experience gifts instead – West End shows, pop concerts, theatre tickets, whatever they like!



Shark alert



Whatever you do this Christmas, don't be lured by loan sharks. Ready cash may be tempting, but their eye-watering interest rates will eventually make your life a misery.

If you need to make a short-term or long-term loan, then why not think about joining Lewisham Plus Credit Union?

Lewisham Plus is a mutual society that exists for its members, meaning that its aim is to provide the best possible service to its members, rather than to maximise profits.

If you use your Lewisham Plus bank account to pay your rent by direct debit, Phoenix will cover your monthly account fees.

Call them on 020 8778 4738 for more information. And look out for them moving into The Green Man!

Don't forget the rent!

Amid all the other things you need to buy this Christmas, please don't forget to keep up with rent payments.

Without your rent, we can't continue to provide a service!

Don't forget that you could also give us yourself a post-Christmas cash boost by signing up to pay your rent or service charges by direct debit.

Everyone paying by direct debit will be entered into our twice yearly direct debit prize draw, with six prizes of £250 on offer. Contact us to find out more.

Will you be in the Class of 2014?

Don't miss out on our free Phoenix Academy training programme starting in early 2014.



The training will offer you:

- skills and advice that can help you find long-term employment or boost your career
- a better understanding of the world of social housing and how you can contribute
- an official accredited qualification.

The Phoenix Academy will involve two-hour sessions each week over 12 weeks, covering everything from the history of social housing in the UK to the principles of property construction. There will be workshops, discussions and interactive lectures along the way.

Join the Class of 2014! For more information, contact us on **0800 0285700** or **0844 2642844**. You can also email **academy@phoenixch.org.uk** or visit our website at **www.phoenixch.org.uk**



Ask Jess!

Are you concerned that you're not getting all of the benefits to which you're entitled?

Worried about changes to the benefits system?

After advice on making your money stretch further?

We can offer you help through our new online surgery with our very own welfare whizz Jessica Strode. If you have internet access, you won't even need to leave the comfort of your home!

All you have to do is like our Facebook page at **www.facebook.com/phoenix.moneymatters** You can then put any questions to Jessica between 10am and 12noon every other Monday.

As well as the online surgery, you can find a wealth of tips and advice to help you through these difficult financial times.

We'll be posting information on how to switch utility companies, details of new training and employment opportunities, how to save money at the supermarket, and much more!

Find us at:  **www.facebook.com/phoenix.moneymatters**

If you don't have access to Facebook, please contact your Gateway Local Advisor, using the contact details on page 2.



Keep warm this winter

- Do you receive pension credit?
- Could you be defined as a vulnerable household in receipt of benefits, or on low income?

You could be eligible to save up to £130 on your heating bill.

Please check by calling our Sustainable Homes Manager Adam Pope (contact details on page 2). You can also request a Phoenix Energy Advice visit, to help you improve your energy efficiency and save money too.

Phoenix staff will also be contacting vulnerable residents who may need a little extra support during the cold weather, just to make sure that all is well for the winter.

Pets are residents too!

For many Phoenix residents, a home is not complete without their much-loved pet.

Do you have an especially talented, quirky or cute pet? We'd like to hear more, and your prize pooch, cute cat or handsome hamster could feature on this page!

Please contact us at **communications@phoenixch.org.uk** with your photos and a few words to tell us about them.



Looking after your pet

Does your pet need veterinary treatment? Often people are concerned about the size of bills.

The good news is that support is available for owners who receive benefits or for low-income pet owners.

PDSA Vet Care invites owners to make a voluntary contribution for treatment. To check your eligibility or find out more, please contact: The Philippa and George Adams Centre, 6 Amersham Vale, New Cross, SE14 6LD. To speak to a dedicated PDSA advisor, call **0800 731 2502**, weekdays 9am-5pm. More information can be found at **www.pdsa.org.uk**

The Celia Hammond Trust also offers low cost services. Please contact: the Celia Hammond Neuter Clinic & Rescue Centre, 233-235 Lewisham Way, SE4 1UY. Clinic calls - **020 8691 2100**, rehoming/rescue calls – **020 8694 6545**, or email **lewisham@celiahammond.org** Alternatively, visit **www.celiahammond.org**



Winter tips - condensation prevention

Condensation is a common winter problem, as we tend to batten down the hatches. You can prevent the kind of moisture that causes mould with these few simple tips:

- Keep your home well ventilated by opening windows wherever you can, and make sure that fans and air vents are not covered.
- Check that bathroom, cooker, and tumble dryer extractors are working well.
- If you need to dry laundry indoors, use a rack and don't cover radiators or other heaters.
- Leave a small gap between outside walls and furniture to let air circulate.

Linkline reassurance

Are you worried about what could happen to you or a neighbour if you have a fall at home?

If you're worried about getting help quickly in a personal emergency, 'telecare' could be the answer. One press of the emergency button on a pendant round your wrist or neck will ensure help is on its way.

Please get in touch to find out more (contact details on page 2).



My Phoenix – Peter Lewis

1. How long have you been a Phoenix resident?

I used to live in Dulwich, and I moved here 14 years ago to be with Christine. I've lived happily at Avondale ever since.

I first saw a flyer about Phoenix in around 2004, asking for people who wanted to help our local community. It really appealed to me – I've never been involved in politics or that sort of thing, but always enjoyed taking part. I used to be a Scout and a Scout leader. Working voluntarily with Phoenix seemed ideal.

2. What are the main changes you've seen?

The biggest change has been our empowerment as residents to fully participate in developing and managing our own housing and community. Before Phoenix came along we were 'just tenants', but now we're involved in shaping our own future, and I really like that.

No doubt about it, this is a good team at Phoenix – we are so diverse. People are bringing so many different ideas together, all working towards the same aims.

3. What's the best thing about living in the area?

I particularly enjoy Avondale as it has an open garden, and that helps us maintain a good community too. We've won Phoenix In Bloom Prizes here, and I was delighted to be on the judges' panel last year, though of course I couldn't enter!

Gardening is a very friendly activity – you get to know your neighbours better, working

alongside each other on your own little patch, or just chatting as people come in and out.

It's so nice to be part of a real community, and to be involved with looking out for and after other people. One of our residents, Harry, lived to 101 and it was such a pleasure to know him and be there for him as friends and neighbours.

4. What would you change if you could?

Phoenix and many residents have made a huge effort to make the area look better, including the advent of the new Green Man. But sometimes, some people let the side down, and I'd like to encourage them to spruce up and think about how they affect their neighbourhood.

For example, when we were judging Phoenix In Bloom this year, we were admiring a resident's splendid hanging basket of begonias, but her view was ruined by a skip that had been outside her place for two years! We were able to speak to her neighbours and get it moved. Sometimes it's just about talking to people.

5. What are your hopes for the next year?

That Phoenix goes from strength to strength. It's getting better and it can be better still. I feel proud to have been involved since the start, most recently as part of The Green Man project team and as a Board Member.

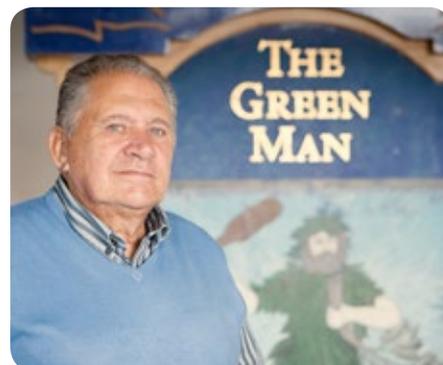
I would like to see even more people getting involved. It's not always easy, but it can be very rewarding.



A well deserved break at The Green Man



Peter's autumn harvest



Proud to be involved



Growing for gold



Maria (right) and the group's secretary Nasima



Pumpkin power!

Four years ago Farmstead Community Garden in Bellingham was a wasteland with a mass of tall brambles, rubble and rubbish.

With help from Phoenix and Groundwork London, local residents have since created a little Eden of fruit trees, vegetable patches, and more.

Now they've gone even further to make a difference to their local community.

Earlier this year Maria Ali, tenant and chair of the Farmstead Community Garden group, was looking through a Phoenix mail-out when she came across an item about foodbanks.

Maria and the Farmstead team realised that they could help bring fresh fruit and veg to people in need. She contacted Phoenix straight away and

was put in touch with a local foodbank, the Living Waters Christian Centre (LWCC) Food Service.

Maria says, "We were donating some veg through local churches anyway, and this just seemed an ideal opportunity to help others with our surplus."

Everyone at the site has contributed surplus produce this year, and it's been a great success.

Pastor David Brown, founder of the LWCC in Brockley, says: "We are very grateful to all 22 allotment holders for getting together like this. Our recipients really appreciate their generosity – it's just so great to have fresh produce on offer."

Future plans for Farmstead include a children's sensory garden and a nature trail.

If you would like to apply for a gardening space or find out more about the group, please call Maria on 020 8461 3153.

Do you need help with food?

If you are in financial difficulty and struggling to feed yourself and your family properly, please contact your Gateway Local Advisor. They will be able to talk to you about a range of options, including the possibility of a referral for foodbank vouchers.

Can you offer help?

Phoenix and Willmott Dixon are also making a collection of donations of tinned and dried goods for the Whitefoot and Downham Community Food Plus Project. If you can help, please bring your donation to the Phoenix reception area.

If you would like to find out more about the LWCC food service, please contact Joy Brown at lwccfoodbank@gmail.com

See page 11 for news of the group's success in our recent Community Chest vote!



Simply the Chest!

Six Phoenix area projects have won almost £100,000 funding after tenants voted through our new Community Chest scheme. The fund will offer £500,000 over five years for schemes that benefit residents.



The first vote

Residents met shortlisted bidders and voted for their favourites at a special Community Gathering event on Saturday 2 November at The Green Man. Over 400 residents attended the event, which included a Victorian fair.

Phoenix has also agreed funding for two projects from smaller Community Chest, and we continue to offer fledgling Community Chest grants for up to £500. For more information on how to apply, see our Community Chest pages at www.phoenixch.org.uk or get in touch using the contact details on page 2.

The successful bidders for the larger grants, subject to final checks by Phoenix, were:

Aspire (to be delivered by Be Totally You): £29,800

Twelve two-week training and development programmes. The courses will include motivational training, goal setting and confidence building. Participants will develop better communication, money management, and job-seeking skills.

Farmstead Road Community Gardens Club House (Farmstead Road/Phoenix): £22,000

A new clubhouse will host a variety of events for allotment users and the community. The clubhouse will include presentation facilities, seating, lighting and a kitchenette.

Summer Fun (Phoenix): £20,500

The Phoenix Summer Fun programme has successfully engaged with thousands of children and families since 2010. Thirteen events in ten locations will be held during the 2014 school summer break.



To Infinity & Beyond (Spoken Aspirations): £12,691

This project aims to take children and young adults out of their comfort zone, in Lewisham and London, beyond their usual stamping ground. Participants will take part in historical and cultural visits, giving them a greater understanding of the opportunities available to them.

Looking After Me Project (Carers Lewisham): £7,332

Phoenix area drop-in sessions for adult carers. Carers will discuss different topics, and enjoy refreshments and alternative therapies. Their aim is to alleviate isolation, build self-esteem, create friendships and help to develop a support network.

Nifty Sixties Fitness Club (Sage): £3,610

Sage will continue to facilitate popular fitness clubs for older residents at Grovehill Court and Hazelhurst Court. The two clubs help keep older residents, from their fifties to nineties, healthy and active. Meeting up regularly also helps to reduce social isolation.



The next round of larger grants will be offered by Phoenix in the summer of 2014.

Your Community Link gatherings 2014

The big Community Gathering will become an annual event, with smaller events to be held for each of the three new Community Links. You will be sent details of your Community Links area and event time in advance. Your first Links gatherings are early next year:

- Orange Link February, Tuesday 18
- Silver Link February, Wednesday 19
- Red link February, Thursday 20

How to get involved at Phoenix

There are all kinds of opportunities if, like Peter on page 9, you would like to get involved with supporting and developing your community. You can find out more at your Community Link gathering in February.



Noticeboard

Pop Up Christmas Market at The Green Man

Tuesday 10 – Friday 13 December, 8am-7pm

Come along to The Green Man for festive fun and shopping. You'll have plenty of stalls to choose from, and a warm welcome in The Green Man café too.



Christmas events and services

Look out for news of community events and services on your local Phoenix notice board, or at The Green Man.

You can also visit us at www.phoenixch.org.uk and follow us on twitter @phoenixtogether and @greenmanhub.

Are you a commercial or community entrepreneur?

Could you make the most of one of The Green Man business pods or market stalls?

The pods are by the main entrance so displays can be seen by passers by. Outdoor stalls are located in the market square with lots of people passing through, and indoor

stalls are in the Hub and Barn, the centre of community activity.

There are two pods of nine square metres each, and several indoor and outdoor market stalls, of varying sizes. These can be reserved on a flexible basis. You can rent space at a set rate, or you can work with us, by negotiation, to deliver services and support for the benefit of the community.

Want to start your own business?

Why not market test your product or services at our Pop Up Christmas Market. Stalls are available from December 10-13, from 8am-7pm. It's a great opportunity to market and sell designs, products and gifts for the festive season.

To book a stall or business unit, please contact Keren Miller or Kasin Beckford (page 2 for contact details).