

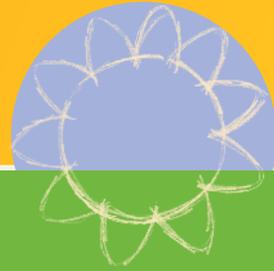
BETRA News

Issue 2, April 2015

BETRA Tenant Management Organisation
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Fancy



some

fun?

We are just weeks away from BETRA's annual Family Fun Day, so if you haven't already, please mark Saturday 2 May in your diary or calendar.

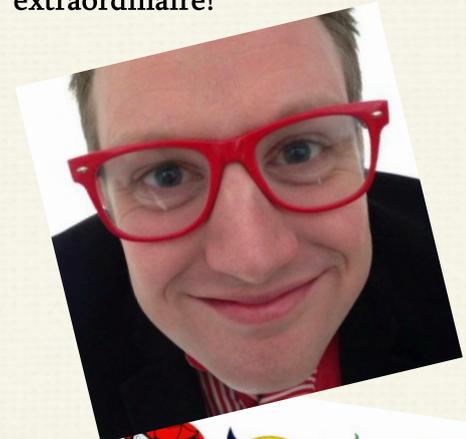
This year's bash promises to be even bigger, and even better, than last year's – which is saying something, because last year's was a blast!

The venue remains the same – once again it will all happen on the lawn to the rear of Oundle House. The fun will start at 12 noon and continue through to 4pm.

Estate manager Lindsey and her small band of helpers are planning an event that includes something for everyone, but especially the kids.

- The fun will include:
- Music
- Delicious food stall
- Bouncy castles
- Trampolines
- Rodeo bull
- Bungee run
- Face painting and glitter tattoos – for mum, dad, and the kids!

- A competition for the best decorated mask (Phantom of the Opera-style, with glitter and sequins, all provided by us)
- And, last but not least, the return of the great Ziggy Zoo, children's entertainers extraordinaire!



Want to help?

Lindsey says, 'Planning for the big day is going well, but if anyone would like to help, either in the run-up to it, or on the day itself, please drop by the office for a chat – your support would be most welcome.'



Bird bother

Several residents have complained recently about people feeding birds – particularly flocks of pigeons and seagulls – in the street. Cars are being splattered with droppings and, understandably, their owners are getting fed up with it.

We know that many residents enjoy seeing the birds, especially at this time of year, and that some of you have feeders in your gardens. This is all fine, but please refrain from feeding birds in the streets – thank you.

Metre makeovers

Gas metres on the outside of buildings have a habit of losing their covers, which leaves them looking untidy and altogether a bit of an eyesore. When BETRA looked into the cost of replacing these covers, we were horrified by the price we were quoted - £150 per cover! So our inventive maintenance team got to work, and made their own. Nice, eh?



Parking palaver

By Lindsey Taylor,

Time management is a tricky business, isn't it? Some days you get loads done, while on others everything grinds to a halt. One issue is resolved with a quick phone call, another takes...forever.

For example, BETRA has been trying to meet with the council regarding parking restrictions being put in place outside Ampthill House and on the corner of Kirkham House and Oundle House since December 2014.

After many, many emails to the relevant department requesting that they meet with us, they finally agreed – but only after we'd involved several councillors and the mayor. Funny, that!

The council says that restrictions have to be put in place so that emergency services can access Montgomery Crescent, and that this needs to be done to comply with regulations.

Fair enough. But as this estate's representative, I have to ask why did it take so long for the council to recognise the need to negotiate alternative parking arrangements for those affected by this change? To coin a phrase, did they think they could just 'park' this issue indefinitely?

The negotiations continue. The council has said they will try to supply us with further bays to replace those taken out, but they cannot guarantee this. We are waiting to see their proposals. If these parking restrictions directly affect you, let me know and I will put you on a list to keep you updated of developments.

I'd like to think this issue will be resolved very shortly. Ever the optimist, that's me!

Regards, Lindsey

BETRA - working for the community

Customer satisfaction survey

A big thank you to all those who completed our recent survey. You will have received a copy of the survey's findings with this newsletter, along with a letter from estate manager Lindsey.

These surveys help us to understand what we're doing well and what we need to improve on. The number of completed surveys was not as high as we would have liked, but the results nevertheless make interesting reading.

The findings show that most people enjoy living here (73%) and appreciate the work that BETRA does (75%). Some 85% say they have noticed improvements made to the estate in the last year, although there are still problems – 35% report being disturbed by noise nuisance and – in what is probably a related issue – 25% report problems with neighbours.

Of those who have at some point made a complaint, 55% said they had been very satisfied by BETRA's response, although curiously only 25% reported



feeling very satisfied by the way they had been treated.

Also difficult to interpret was the response of leaseholders who overwhelmingly thought BETRA had improved the estate (90%). Despite this, only 10% of them felt BETRA offered good value for money.

Other findings showed that those who had bothered to complete the survey were, in the main, long-time residents of the estate (60% having lived here for more than 11 years), and that 25% of respondents would be interested computer training, if BETRA was able to provide it.

All residents who completed the survey were entered into a prize draw, with the winners receiving shopping vouchers. Congratulations, then, to our winners: 1) Mrs O'Connor - £50, 2) Mr Ullugan - £20, and 3) Mr Tinsley - £10.

Management agreement

Negotiations with the Council have been ongoing for some time, but it now looks as if agreement over BETRA's budget for 2015-2018 will soon be reached.

Because of severe financial restraints, all of Havering's TMOs will have a reduction in their budgets, but Lindsey Taylor and Chairman Ken Howson have been working hard to secure the best possible deal for BETRA.

As part of this, we have indicated that BETRA would be willing to take over responsibility for the cleaning of all residential blocks and the preparation of so-called 'voids' – empty flats waiting to be reallocated, providing additional funding was available to cover it.

If this happens, it won't be before June. We hope to report on the outcome of the negotiations in our next newsletter.



Lindsey, still trying to resolve a parking problem



Just foul!

Dog mess fouls the lawns and walkways that help make our estate one of the nicest in the borough. Why should residents have to put up with this?

The answer is they shouldn't. Let's be clear: most dog owners on this estate behave responsibly and dispose of their dogs' mess in the bins provided. But there are some residents who do not act responsibly. These people consistently fail to clear up after their dogs.

This is unacceptable. To reinforce this message, notices have been put up all around the estate.

Why is this important? Well, aside from it being disgusting when you get this stuff on your shoes or worse, there are also serious health risks – particularly to our children – created by this thoughtless behaviour.



The slightest contact with dog mess can leave children vulnerable to contracting Toxocariasis, which causes partial blindness in up to 100 children a year. If the child is lucky enough to avoid loss of vision, they may still be affected by allergic reactions such as asthma.

The police take this offence seriously, and someone in this area has already been prosecuted. So please, if you are a dog owner – do the right thing. And parents, remember: even when you let the children take the dog out, it is still your responsibility to ensure your dog's mess is disposed of properly.

Pets corner

Responsible owners treat their pets as part of the family – with love and care. Please make sure you treat your pets in this way.

This means taking your pet to the vet if it appears unwell. It means not leaving your dog unattended on the balcony for hours on end. It means making sure you take your dog for walks regularly. It also means making sure you dispose of its mess properly, even when that mess is confined to your own garden – neighbours above

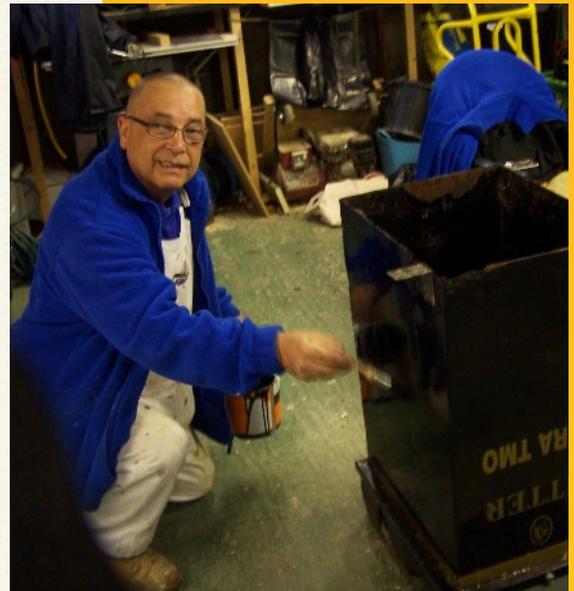
shouldn't have to put up with the sight or smell of a garden turned into a toilet.

Negligence of, or cruelty to animals is completely unacceptable. Any reports of this kind to BETRA will be immediately passed on to the RSPCA, with whom we have close contacts.

Finally, a reminder: if you are thinking of getting a pet, please ensure you gain BETRA's permission first.

Welcome Steve...

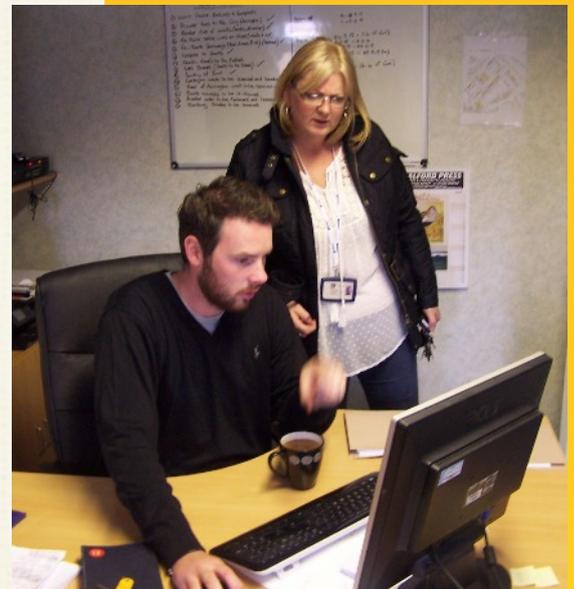
Steve Richardson (right) has joined BETRA as a maintenance officer. Steve worked for our sister TMO, DELTA, for eight years, and was in the building trade for many years before that.



According to Lindsey, 'Steve is brilliant, has a vast amount of knowledge, and brings invaluable skills to BETRA'.

...and Lloyd

Meanwhile, Lloyd Edwards (right, with Lindsey) has returned from his travels to take up the role of housing officer. This is Lloyd's second stint with us, which suggests Lindsey likes him, too!





Adventure Island beckons!

Fancy a day out with the kids during their summer holidays? Providing enough residents are interested, BETRA would like to organise a trip to Adventure Island in Southend.

BETRA will pay for the coach and for your kids' entertainment – a wrist band gives them free access to all the rides and other treats appropriate to their age.

The date of the trip is yet to be decided, but if you are interested, please pop into the office to fill in an application form by the end of April. You can have up to five people in your party, and BETRA will require a £5 deposit from you, returnable providing you turn up on the day.



Vandalism on the rise?

The maintenance team recently repaired a wall, 8ft by 8ft, extending alongside of Alcester House. Renovated, the wall looked rather smart, providing the nearby resident with some privacy. The council agreed, and said it would build a corresponding wall at the end of the building, matching it.

By the next day, the wall had been knocked down. We've no idea who did this, or why. It appears to have been an act of sheer vandalism.

Around the same time, dozens of florescent lights were stolen from the new builds over at Darlington. These lights were then smashed to smithereens. The debris, which represented a health hazard to children as well as to dogs and other pets, could be seen in clusters all over the estate. Our team had to use an industrial hoover (known as a billy goat) to clear up the mess.

These are disturbing developments, and estate manager Lindsey is concerned that these may be the acts of a gang, newly arrived on the estate.

The police will be going door to door asking for information. Lindsey is also available, if you want to talk to her in confidence about what you know or have seen.

Zero tolerance must be our approach. This anti-social and criminal behaviour must be stamped out. It has no place on our estate. 'Not on my patch', says estate manager Lindsey. And so say all of us!



BETRA's Board

We will shortly lose two valuable and highly respected members of our Board. Angela and Darron Colson are leaving the estate to go and live in Harold Wood. They will be greatly missed by their friends and colleagues here at BETRA. Thank you Angela and Darron, for all you have contributed, and best wishes to you both.

Over to you?
Would you be interested in taking over from Angela and Darron? BETRA is always on the lookout for residents who care about this estate and want to help make it the best it can be. If you think you might like to get involved, pop into the office for a chat with Lindsey. As always, she will be delighted to see you.

The next BETRA Board meeting will be held on the 7th May, at 4pm

BETRA

Tenant Management Organisation

- Lindsey Taylor, Estate Manager
- Mark Richardson, Senior Caretaking/Repairs Maintenance Officer
- Michael Hughes, Part-Time Caretaking/Repairs Maintenance Officer
- Brian Pratt, Caretaking/Grounds Maintenance Officer
- Steve Richardson, Maintenance Officer
- Lloyd Edwards, Housing Officer

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