

## RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT SPECIAL:

### Point us the right way

If you think we should change the way we run our services or could manage your homes differently how can you persuade us to change direction? There are already five (and growing) ways for you as a resident to influence and shape our work and decisions

The **resident panel** was set up in 2019 but has had a huge influence on our operation, bringing to the table a perspective only tenants can offer. Read more about the panel and its latest activities on page 6.

**BHA Tenants and Residents Association** is almost as old as Barnsbury HA itself and still going strong. If you're new to BHA TRA, email them on [TA4BHA@gmail.com](mailto:TA4BHA@gmail.com) or go to their Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/TA4BHA> Highbury View also has its own tenants association. For details contact Graham Vine by emailing him on [graham@barnsbury.org](mailto:graham@barnsbury.org)

The **Morland Mews garages steering group** is making sure residents are treated with care and respect while we convert some garages into flats. See page 3.

The **Barnsbury forum** is a new and informal (no meetings!) group that will help us better communicate with you all. One of its tasks is making this newsletter lively and interesting. It also needs people to take part in regular surveys and will be running our policies through 'readability' checks. Read more on page 5.

first prize!!



PICTURE: ROBYN

## BHA GARDENING COMPETITION



Calling all keen gardeners! Inspired by **Robin Don's** richly deserved success winning a gold in **Islington in Bloom** last year, we're launching our own modest gardening competition.

Our judges will visit all entries in early July so hop to it with potting compost and seed packets. If you're new to the game Robin at Pugin Court is happy to give out advice, with a lovely article on page five to get you started.

The categories are:

- ✿ best small garden in a patio or balcony
- ✿ best window box
- ✿ best container garden (win bonus points for repurposed materials)
- ✿ most bee/bird-friendly display of plants
- ✿ most exotic display of unusual plants.



Keep an eye out for more news on the competition in the next issue of *BHA News*.

## ONE FOR THE BIRDS WINNER: ROBYN!

Hearty congratulations to aptly named **Robyn of Barnsbury Street**, winner of our **One for the Birds drawing competition**. Robyn sent in this gorgeous drawing of, naturally, a robin with a flock of birds higher up in a deep blue sky. An Amazon voucher has winged its way to Robyn, along with our thanks.

## COVID UPDATE

We will not be reopening our offices while the risk of cross-infection in enclosed spaces remains high and many of our staff still wait to be vaccinated.

Our caretaking and cleaning teams are out and about keeping the areas around your homes and in shared parts of building clean and safe. Other staff are working at a distance but are keeping an eye out for those of you who want extra support.

One spot of good news is that we've been able to open the Morland Mews football pitch again. Please stick to social distancing rules and use hand sanitiser.

To get in touch email us on [info@barnsbury.org](mailto:info@barnsbury.org) or call ☎ 020 7704 2324 between 9.30am-12pm and 2-5.30pm.

## GREEN DOCTORS DON'T MISS OUT! GOING GOING GONE...

Time is running out if you haven't yet used the free Green Doctors service to find painless ways to cut your household power bills.

### Cut power bills

Our contract with Green Doctors ends in June so call now for free energy saving tips, better power bill deals and help to switch to a better value provider. The service is free for BHA tenants but only until June.

To book your chat with Green Doctors call ☎ 0300 3650003 or email them [greenDoctorsLDN@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:greenDoctorsLDN@groundwork.org.uk)

## HOME IMPROVEMENTS POLICY



# Permission needed for DIY

A. new policy on **improving or altering your home** has been given the thumbs up by the resident panel after we cleared up concerns raised at their February meeting

The changes will we hope bring an end to anyone doing works we later have to put right because they're not safe or not legal. This can be hugely expensive, pushes up costs, and impacts on repairs and planned kitchen and bathroom renewals.

### Written consent needed

The policy makes clear the sort of work that needs our written consent before you go ahead and explains how to go about getting our consent.

We are not stopping you adapting your home but do want to make sure any work is done well, safely, legally, and at no cost to anyone else.

For some work we will also need proof you'll use qualified contractors. This applies especially to works like

electrics, windows and doors.

Before you make any changes please go to [www.barnsbury.org](http://www.barnsbury.org) where you'll find a list of everything that needs written consent. We'll need to know what you want to do and the scale of the works. Contact us if you'd like a copy of the full policy or want an application form.

**The residents panel asked us for reassurance that no one will be penalised for changes they made long before we adopted this policy. We have assured them our top concern is your health and safety. If you have adapted your home please get in touch so we can arrange a friendly visit.**

## You said... so we did



Staff member Mary Mura tells us a lovely compliment has come in from Barnsbury Street, where caretaker Spencer has jetwashed the steps and paving stones. Our caller has said she is overjoyed with the difference he has made by getting rid of the slippery slime. If algae is a problem on your shared steps or paths get in touch and we'll get Spencer over to help.

MAIN PIC: CHARLE ROUNDJENNER

## MORLAND MEWS GARAGES GROUP

# Resident working group secures key guarantees ahead of garage conversion works

Later this month (April) we will again be meeting with the steering group to discuss the building works at Morland Mews, which we expect will begin either later this summer or in early autumn

The garages steering group has been meeting with us regularly to talk through concerns raised by those of you living nearby.



These are some of the things we have agreed with the working group:

- \* Before the works start and through to the end we will send out **timely and relevant news** to all residents likely to be affected, including Barnsbury Street home owners.
- \* Our news will be short, sharp and it will come out often. We will use a mix of letters, email, newsletters and noticeboards to get it across.
- \* **Reasonable work times** will be written into the contract. That means 8am starts on weekdays and 9am on Saturday mornings. Works will stop at 5pm on weekdays and by 1pm on Saturdays.
- \* We have suggested creating a **quiet area away from the site** for residents of Gissing Walk, which is over the garages. They can move there on days when work is noisy. The quiet area might be an empty flat or the new community room.

- \* **Health and safety planning** will take full account of people and vehicles coming and going from the estate, rubbish collections, your parking places and when and how you use storage spaces.
- \* We will do as much work under wraps as we can to limit noise and dust. If windows get obviously dusty we will have them cleaned.
- \* Our contractors must make it easy for any of you to raise concerns and to **respond to any queries** raised with them. It will be easy for you to identify the site manager responsible or another person with the authority to sort out any problems or queries.

We have agreed that those of you in line for a **replacement garage** should get one as close to your home as possible, with priority for age and disability. Anyone whose garage rent is in arrears will not get another. We are drawing up a new policy on garages and storage space and will check with the group and TRA that the policy is fair and open. We have also agreed that our contractors should offer, where reasonable, **work opportunities** for residents or other locals. We are also again talking to residents about **other ways to improve the estate and facilities** for the new community room.



## EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Now things are opening up again we are working our way through the backlog of non-urgent and routine repairs, though emergency and urgent works remain our priority. If you need a repair and have not yet logged it please get in touch.

To report any repair during normal office hours, please call us on ☎ 020 7704 2324.

Outside office hours please report emergency repairs to the service run for us by ISHA:

**Mon- Thurs 5:30pm to 9:30am**  
☎ 0772 530 2389

**Weekends, 5:30pm on Friday to 9:30am on Monday**  
☎ 0300 131 7300.

## Covid safety: keeping everyone safe on home visits

Anyone we send to your home to visit or do a repair will wear a mask and keep their distance.

### Safeguard yourself

There are also things you can do to keep you and our staff safe:

- \* wear a mask
- \* open all windows
- \* try to have no more than one person in your home during the visit. If others can't go outside, please put them in another room and close the door.

### Please let us know before we or a contractor visits if:

- \* you or anyone else in your home is self-isolating
- \* anyone in your home is showing symptoms of Covid-19 or has recently tested positive.



## Immunity unwrapped: natural ways to look after your health

With all the talk of Covid and vaccine immunity you might be wondering if you can fine-tune your immunity naturally, writes **Louise from Morland Mews**. It's a complex area of health but there are several ways to boost your immune system.

- \* One of the most powerful is a **better diet**. Adding five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables should give you all the micronutrients you need. If five is too ambitious, start with two.

### One handful of fruit or vegetables is the size of a single portion.



You can use frozen vegetables, fresh or canned. Why not try them as a stir-fry or make a berry smoothie? Or serve as a soup, curry or salad. Sprinkle with seeds and nuts for extra nutrients and healthy fats.

- \* **Good quality sleep** helps your immune system and mental health. Switch off screens an hour before bed and go to bed 30 minutes earlier as a starting point.
- \* Increase **daily physical activity** by walking, cycling, or do an online workout. You'll also sleep better.
- \* Sunlight! It is a really important source of **vitamin D** and vital to our immunity. Just 15 minutes of morning sun on bare arms or legs, with no sunscreen is enough. You might want to get your levels tested by your GP or a home testing kit. If they are low, get advice on taking supplements from a health professional.

## TOP TIPS: GARDENING ON A BUDGET

# Tickle your senses and lift your spirits



Pugin Court tenant **Robin Don** started his lush balcony garden with one cutting. Here he explains how to create your own little blooming heaven at little cost

As London remains in lockdown it's important to keep our spirits up! Mine were boosted last year when my little balcony was awarded the gold prize for container gardens by **Islington in Bloom**.

It's been my mission through the lockdowns, to keep my neighbours smiling using the power that flowers and foliage cascading from my Pugin Court balcony bring. Even the birds love it. I counted three nests last year.

Most of my plants are evergreen and now well established but I started with one little cutting so, if you or a neighbour need cheering up, these blooms can blow the blues away. **All are easy to grow from cuttings.**



### Roses

Growing flowers and foliage can lower stress and lift our mood.

Velvety, opulent flowers are relaxing and roses in their variety of beautiful colours can have a heady scent. My neighbour's scarlet 'Dublin Bay' bloomed three times last year. A process called chromotherapy uses different colours to stimulate joy but roses are also used by aromatherapists and perfumers to soothe nerves.

### Lavender

Lavender's scent is restful, the flower beautiful and it is rich with healing properties. For centuries it has been used to counter stress, headaches and insomnia.

It is also an excellent air purifier. Ancient Romans infused bath water with it and ancient Arabs prized it for its essential oils. Some already

bloom in Morland Mews but it would be wonderful to have an abundance from end to end.

### Rosemary

Another evergreen favourite is rosemary. Mine has, unusually, bloomed all winter. Bees love it as does roast lamb.



### Hydrangea

The quercifolia variety of hydrangea is almost evergreen and has luscious,

headily perfumed blossoms. Its beauty represents abundance and gratitude for the positives in life.

A young hydrangea can thrive in a planter inside your home before being transferred to your garden to delight one and all!

I hope this list of mood-boosting blooms inspires you. If you have any of these plants why not snip some cuttings, pop them into a pot with rooting powder and pass them on.

If you don't have them, ask around for a cutting or two. It won't be long before they are thrusting skyward and, who knows, you might win gold at **Islington in Bloom** next year.

**If you have any questions about growing plants from a cutting or want gardening advice, email Robin at [robin@robindon.com](mailto:robin@robindon.com)**



## LOCAL HISTORY

# Another dip into the past to find out who or what inspired the name of your street

Delving through Islington's history, it's **Janice Walsh** from Barnsbury Street with more fascinating facts

### EDEN GROVE

...off Holloway Road is home to two small Barnsbury HA estates. One is named after former tenant Jack Claringbull. Number 45, *pictured below*, was built two years ago to replace a derelict school caretaker's house. Eden Grove itself was famous for the pioneering technology of the Electric Lighting Company which was opened by the Lord Mayor on 4 March 1896. It was one of the most complete electric works in England, sporting a magnificent 180-foot octagonal tower. Old photos can be seen in the 24 October 2017 edition of the *Islington Gazette*.



### BELITHA VILLAS

...was built on a new road in 1845 on land previously owned by William Belitha. It was a new road built to create a cut-through from Kings Cross to Highbury. Barnsbury was by now becoming a thriving residential area and the homes were designed to appeal to wealthier residents.

### UPPER STREET

...was in 1735 already a busy thoroughfare, with the map showing where the lower part became High Street and Lower Street became Essex Road. Islingtonians enjoyed wonderful entertainment, like the World Fair at the Agricultural Hall and Collins Music Hall (now Waterstones), where Marie Lloyd and other famous entertainers regularly trod the boards.

No 303, next to the parish church of St Mary's was BHA's office before the move to Cloudesley Road. It now serves as four flats for Barnsbury HA residents but among earlier



BOTH PHOTOS: CHARLIE FOUNO-TURNER

incarnations was once the Islington Dispensary and also a soup kitchen. Before the building was bombed in 1940, locals who 'couldn't afford the prices at Boots' bought their medicine here.

### BARNSBURY PARK

...derives from the medieval 'Isledon Berners' used in the Assize Rolls of 1274. Several important people have lived in these wonderful properties, such as the artist Walter R Sickert.

Our homes in Barnsbury Park were once a vicarage, occupied by the Right Rev Daniel Wilson. He was based in St Mary's but in 1828/29 set about building St John's in Upper Holloway and St Paul's in Balls Pond Rd, then Holy Trinity. He became Bishop of Calcutta and his son took over as 'vicar of Islington', inviting to the church many famous guest speakers including anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce.

There was later a factory here and there still is a large chimney at the back! Just off Barnsbury Park is Beech Tree Close, a name that needs no explanation and home now to a new generation of fascinating residents.

## SIGN UP! NOW RECRUITING TO THE NEW BARNSBURY FORUM

### Have your say!

- BARNSBURY NEWS
- REGULAR SURVEYS
- 'READABILITY' CHECKS
- AND MORE...

We'd love to have more of you getting involved in our efforts to better communicate with all of you. That means making sure we hear your views, tell you about things that may affect or interest you, use clear, easy to understand language and much more. Would you be interested in helping plan and write for **Barnsbury News**? How about

taking part in **regular surveys**? Or, if you have the time, reading through **our policies** to check they are crystal clear and helpful. If you have other suggestions, tell us!

**If any of these sound like they'd appeal to you just drop an email to us at [info@barnsbury.org](mailto:info@barnsbury.org) or call us on 020 7704 2324.**

## ACTIVE RESIDENTS

### WHAT DOES THE RESIDENT PANEL DO?

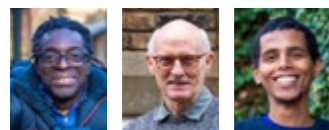
Meets four times a year with senior staff and board members to criticise (constructively!) our work, policies and new plans and proposals.

### WHO SITS ON THE RESIDENT PANEL?

Current line-up includes elected reps from Morland Mews and Highbury View and tenants active on our board and committees. Pictured below are all the panel members we managed to get in front of a camera. From top to bottom: Liam O'Dowd, Dot Gibson, Janice Walsh, Chris Bell, James Cryne, Fenan Emmanuel. Missing from this line-up, but very definitely members of the panel, are Steve Collins, Logan McGeary.



Liam O'Dowd ■ Dot Gibson  
■ Janice Walsh



Chris Bell ■ James Cryne  
■ Fenan Emmanuel

### NEW FRONTIERS FOR DEAN MCGLYNN

It greatly grieves *Barnsbury News* to report that editor Dean McGlynn will be leaving us at the end of April. Dean has been recruited by our trade body, the National Housing Federation, to manage their external affairs operation in east England. We have no doubt he will do the job superbly, bringing to his new role a fine wisdom accrued from working with Britain's smartest and loveliest tenants.

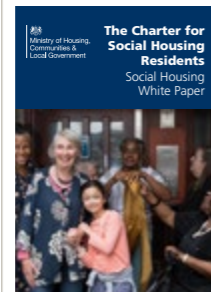
## Meet the resident panel keeping us on our toes

The resident panel has now been going for two years and has eight members. These are the main points from its last meeting with our staff and board members

### Getting you online: wifi and digital technology

The panel was told we have been sent competing quotes for the cost of installing shared wi-fi in some properties. We'll be discussing with the panel whether to go ahead.

We're also surveying those of you with children about difficulties getting online, lack of suitable gadgets, and shortages of basics like pens and paper. This will help us come up with better ways to help and hopefully find other helpful organisations.



### New government Charter for Social Housing Residents

Chief executive Susan French explained that under a new

*Charter for Social Housing Residents* we, like all social housing landlords will have to demonstrate to a newly strengthened regulator that we:

- \* explain clearly matters affecting you, your home and our services
- \* listen to your views and opinions.
- \* properly consult you over any changes we want to make before going ahead
- \* offer multiple ways for you and your neighbours to help improve your area, solve local problems and shape services and policies.

The panel agreed you all need to know about this important new charter. Look out for full details of the residents' rights it sets out in the next issue of *Barnsbury News*.

### Other ways to involve residents in our work

The panel also said we should remind you of the many different ways you can get involved in our work (see this newsletter), and the difference between this and 'engaging' with residents. Panel members are invited to a coming board meeting where resident engagement will be discussed. We will also discuss a survey of panel members asking how well they think the resident panel is working.

### Concerns over new home improvements policy

We have introduced a long overdue policy on improving your BHA home. It explains what you can do to personalise your home, the sort of works that need written permission, and how to go about getting it.

The policy will we hope mean less money is wasted putting right works that put you or others at risk. *The panel raised a concern about the policy. This is reported in our story on the new policy on page 2.*

### Hot topics coming up

The panel meets again this month and will be looking at our new complaints process and the panel's role in it. We'll tell you more on this in the next *Barnsbury News*. It will also discuss resident involvement and engagement, the work we're doing to better deal with cases of antisocial behaviour and our strategy for getting many more of you trained, equipped and connected to fast and reliable online services.

## Recycling your waste: new recycling bins for Morland Mews, and more on the way

New recycling bins are now set up in what was a garage, with special doors so you can post your recycling bags straight into a bin.

### Safety measure

We have had a new light installed overhead for safety. If it annoys any of you we will adjust the settings.

Shrubbery at the topsite where the other new bins will go has been moved. We're still agreeing details with council planners but hope the bins will be in place before June.

### RECYCLING DOS

- \* Please crush any cardboard boxes so they take up less space in the bins.
- \* Use the recycling bags to stop paper/card being contaminated by food waste and liquids, which means they can't be recycled.
- \* If your recycling is not bagged the council can refuse to pick it up. If that happens we have to pay extra to get it taken away, and you pay through your service charges.

## ROUND THE HOUSES: A HELPING HAND

The past year has hit incomes hard. Many of you have fallen behind with your rent and the number applying for universal credit for the first time has risen sharply

### Older people and job seekers: can we help?

We're stepping up measures to help those of you who need to use online services but are struggling with the basics, including the right devices, knowing how to use them, and affordable broadband.

We have been asking parents with young children about digital equipment but know more of you also need help. So we'll soon be talking to older residents and those of you looking for work about practical ways we can help.

### Tenant hardship fund and bursary award scheme

The board has approved the pots of money we will be setting aside to pay for our hardship fund and bursary award scheme this year.

### Tenant hardship fund

We set up the hardship fund last year. If your income has suffered

To contact housing manager Asif Mahmood or housing assistant Priscilla Adjei-Asante [info@barnsbury.org](mailto:info@barnsbury.org) or ☎ 020 7704 2324.

badly because of Covid-19 and you are struggling to pay the bills or something vital like a cooker has broken, ask Asif Mahmood if you qualify for help from the fund.

### Bursary award scheme

Our bursary award scheme might be able to help if you are trying to put yourself or another household member through education or training in the hope of landing a better job. The bursary could help with items like fees, books and/or educational materials or trips. Again, Asif is your contact.

### Struggling to find paid work? Rent in arrears?

If you are trying to claim universal credit, are struggling to pay your rent or have lost work or a job, make an appointment with Priscilla. Priscilla runs our debt and welfare advice and can explain how best to go about getting help.

## Board approves cost of fire safety and greener homes works

In March BHA's board approved our budget for the year ahead, which includes fire safety works to your homes and 'greening' the Barnsbury Street houses.

It also adopted a 30-year plan that will see all your homes made greener and cheaper to heat.

The board agreed we should adopt the National Housing Federation's *Code of Governance 2020* rules. Among other things this commits us to being accountable to you, to providing safe homes, and to being inclusive and diverse.

Our board members are very keen to see more of you actively involved in shaping our plans and services in line with the new rules on governance and the government charter (see left).

## DOMESTIC ABUSE: NEED HELP NOW?

SOLACE IN ISLINGTON  
CALL THE LONDON FREEPHONE

☎ 0808 802 5565

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER  
NOW CALL THE POLICE

☎ 999

If you need help because of domestic abuse, contact Solace in Islington for free, confidential support. Solace helps men and women affected by domestic abuse.

Call ☎ 020 3795 5070 or email [advocacy@solacewomensaid.org](mailto:advocacy@solacewomensaid.org), Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm.

# CUT OUT & KEEP: WHO'S WHO

