

NEW LIFE FOR BOUNDARY SQUARE

Work has started to redevelop Boundary Square, off Buchanan Street, to create a brighter and lighter space for the community to enjoy. In association with City of Edinburgh Council, PoLHA is undertaking a range of work, including flattening the level of the Square, cutting back hedges and trees and using lighter stone. Local residents had complained that the space was too dark, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

Keith Anderson, Port of Leith Housing Association's CEO, welcomed the redevelopment, saying:

"Boundary Square has great potential to be a more attractive and useable open space than it currently offers. We have been liaising with residents living in the surrounding properties for some time now, talking to them about what they would like to see in the Square. Having now secured funding from the City of Edinburgh Council to match funding from PoLHA, we are delighted these plans are now coming to fruition."

Councillor Paul Edie, Community Safety Leader for the City of Edinburgh Council, said:

"Residents have a right to enjoy the community they live in without the fear of anti-social behaviour and any steps taken to make improvements are welcome."

It is expected that work to refurbish the Square will take around four months.



ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

Port of Leith Housing Association's Annual Report 2010/11 will be posted out to you shortly. If you don't receive a copy, call us on 0808 100 0403 (or 0131 554 0403 from a mobile) or read it online at www.polha.co.uk from 25th September.



News

The Annual Tenants' Gathering is on 24th September at Out of the Blue Hall in Dalmeny Street. See Page 5 for more information...

The Association's new development at Coburg Street was Highly Commended in the category "Small Affordable Housing Development of the Year" at the Scottish Home Awards in June...

PoLHA's training programme for young people, Training Opportunities in Lothian (TOiL), has been awarded £170,000 from the European Social Fund. (see story on opposite page)...

PoLHA is currently in the process of drafting a Customer Charter with a focus group of tenants. In the Autumn, we will be consulting all tenants and would welcome your views. The new Charter will come into force in January 2012...



NEW COMPUTER SYSTEM MAY CAUSE DELAYS IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

As part of our ongoing drive to improve our services to you, the Association is introducing a new computer system across our offices.

It is due to go live on 3rd October 2011. It means that during September, all staff will be receiving intensive training on the new system. As a result, it's likely that people may be away from their desk when you are trying to contact them or there may be delays in getting back to you.

In October, your enquiry may also take slightly longer to deal with as the new system beds in. But please be assured that we will continue to answer your enquiries as soon as possible.

So, can we ask for your patience during September and October as we become familiar with the new system?

This new computer system will allow us to be more efficient and provide a better service to you in the future - your understanding as it is introduced would be much appreciated. For more information, call Freephone 0808 100 0403 (0131 554 0403 if you are calling from a mobile).

**Remember -
PoLHA's Out-of-Hours
Emergency Number is:**

0800 783 793

WINNERS! Congratulations to the prize draw winners in July - Mr Brian Balgarnie (New Tenant Survey) and Ms Catherine McKee (Exit Survey), who win £25 Gift Vouchers. For your chance to be a winner, complete and return your surveys, it is as simple as that!

MORE SUCCESS FOR TOiL TRAINEES

Seven young people were honoured at a ceremony hosted by Port of Leith Housing Association (POLHA) in June. Five of the young people had just completed their six month pre apprenticeship placements with local



contractors, and two of the trainees, Janey Shelemy and Lisa Kinnear were given a special award as the first two female TOiL trainees to be offered apprenticeships. Janey has started a plumbing apprenticeship with Castlerock Edinvar Housing Association, and Lisa a painting and decorating apprenticeship with Mitie.

Keith Anderson, Chief Executive of Port of Leith Housing Association, said:

“These young people should all be very proud of their achievements to date as they are now on the path to bigger and better things. The jobs market is difficult, especially for the young starting out, and this programme gives them a way to gain skills, confidence and a helping hand into the labour market.”

Claire Neill currently leads the TOiL programme. She said:

“We are extremely proud of the TOiL programme and the trainees that make it a success. We work hard to help disadvantaged young people overcome the hurdles that can often hold them back from entering the workforce. Well done to all the graduates, we have every confidence in their ability to secure sustainable work for the future.”

The five graduates were Gordon Arnold, Lee Daykin, Jamie Stevenson, Michael Fitzgerald and Daniel Dalziel. Janay Shelemy and Lisa Kinnear were given a special achievement award for being the first female TOiL trainees to gain apprenticeships. TOiL is funded by Priority 5 European Social Fund, Fairer Scotland and Scottish Government Wider Role. It is also a Skills Development Scotland “Get Ready for Work” training provider.

TOiL offers six months paid work experience placements to people aged sixteen to twenty-four who have left school with few or no qualifications. It is backed up by in-house training and career guidance from PolHA. Training placements are with local firms in a variety of trades and businesses. For more information, contact the TOiL team on 0131 553 8754.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Did you know that you can call Customer Services during office hours to give details of a repair, organise repair inspections, get information on the balance of your rent and even make a rent payment? Call them, with your enquiries, on:

Freephone 0808 100 0403

*(you will be charged to use this number from a mobile —
please use 0131 554 0403 if doing so)*

LEITH LINKS GALA DAY OUT FOR PoLHA



Staff manning the PoLHA stand

Port of Leith Housing Association staff manned a stall at this year's Leith Links Gala Day. Luckily the team managed to erect the gazebo just before the heavens opened and rain started. As you can see from the photos, the Association's umbrellas were put to good use!

PoLHA ran a free competition to see who could "guess the number of balloons in the car". Mr and Mrs Corner won 1st prize of a TV with a guess of 158 balloons (Mr Corner is pictured below, right, with PoLHA CEO Keith Anderson), Mr Don Chrichton won 2nd prize of a camera, while 3rd & 4th prizes of a £50 TESCO gift card were won by S Taylor and L Jamieson.

In the course of the day, we gave away 250 bottles of bubbles, 170 biodegradable balloons, 100 pens and 50 PoLHA canvas bags! But we also talked to many visitors to the stall, who wanted to discuss everything from Shared Ownership (buying a new PoLHA house that's partly mortgaged, partly rented) to TOiL, our successful initiative helping young people into work.



NEW FACE JOINS PoLHA



PoLHA is pleased that Mike Beniston has joined us as Corporate Services Manager, which includes HR and communications.

Mike has spent the last 15 years working as an independent management consultant and trainer assisting public and private sector clients to develop their people and processes to improve the way they do business.

Prior to that, he spent 13 years in local government in a range of posts dealing with delivery of services, including housing. Mike said of his new position:

"I am very excited to be taking up this role. PoLHA's twin priorities of supporting staff to provide the best customer service possible, combined with a commitment to ongoing improvement, reflect my own values and views of what a good workplace is all about."

TWO BRONZE AWARDS FOR POLHA AT FIRST ATTEMPT

The Association has scored a double success by being awarded a Bronze Award by Investors in People (IIP) Scotland and a Bronze Award from Healthy Working Lives at the first attempt

The IIP award is given to companies who go beyond the basic IIP standards. PoLHA was commended for the way it involved staff in changes, such as delivering improvements to customers.

The Healthy Working Lives award comes after two years of initiatives by a group of volunteer members of staff, who encouraged their colleagues to adopt healthier working practices.



CUSTOMER CHARTER IS FOCUS FOR FIFTH TENANTS' GATHERING ON 24TH SEPTEMBER

On Thursday 24th September, we are holding our 5th Tenants' Gathering, again in the Out of the Blue Hall in Dalmeny Street. Please note that, this year, it will run from 12 to 2.30pm.

Last year's event was well-attended and this year there will be stalls from PoLHA and a host of other organisations, ranging from Lothian & Borders Police to Changeworks to Saheliya - not forgetting the popular free taster therapy sessions. We are also hoping to tempt last year's fantastic magician back!

The focus for this year's event is our new Customer Charter that we are currently working on. We've had a series of tenants' focus groups meetings to help us shape the draft Charter since March. Our thanks to you if you took part. Now we want to broaden the consultation out and have input from as many tenants as possible. So PoLHA will have a stand and staff on hand to talk you through what's proposed and to hear what you think.

For more information, call 0131 554 0403.



What you said about last year's event....

"... great people and a wide variety of organisations and things to see and do"

"... the accessible nature of the building and event layout - it was possible to see everything and visit the stands"

"... able to meet staff and discuss relevant issues in a relaxed and informal environment"

OPENING HOURS FOR CAB MONEY ADVICE SERVICE

Monday: 9.00am–1.00pm

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Based in PoLHA's office, the Money Advice Service can give you confidential advice on debt issues, energy efficiency, energy bills and the services of Credit Unions and other banking and financial services.

Fiona Neilson, Money Advice Worker, can also help you check your benefits entitlement and advise you about the effect of changes to the benefits system on your income.

For a chat, *in confidence*, please call 0131 553 8745.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL GARDEN FAYRE AT ST NICHOLAS COURT!

Residents and visitors to St Nicholas Court have raised just under £1900 at the complex's Garden Fayre held on Saturday 30th July.

The staggering sum came from raising money at various stalls including a tombola, home baking and refreshments, as well as a raffle.

Maureen Tait, Senior Sheltered Housing Co-ordinator with PoLHA, who manages the complex, was almost speechless at the sum raised, up from £1500 last year:

“The money raised from the Fayre goes towards supporting activities for residents, such as days out and lunch clubs, so it is great news that we've raised so much.

“Given how badly people have been hit by recession, it is unbelievable we did even better than last year. I cannot say “thank you” enough to those who came along and gave so generously, the staff and residents are thrilled.”



GAS CARE — EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Our responsibility ...



As your landlord, we have a legal duty to have all of our gas appliances in your home checked every year by properly qualified engineers. So when we write to arrange an appointment to service your appliances, please act immediately to confirm the date. That gas service check could save your and your family's life...

Your responsibility ...



- * Report gas leaks to TRANSCO on **0800 111 999**
- * Report all problems with PoLHA gas appliances to us immediately
- * Co-operate with the annual gas service check



What's your problem?

“What’s your Problem” aims to help you with queries from housing benefit to tax to general housing queries. If you have a question, drop it in to PoLHA’s office or email it to info@polha.co.uk.



I keep hearing about tenants helping PoLHA - how do I get involved?

First of all, there are lots of reasons why you should get involved. Your input can help us:

- Improve service delivery
- Increase communication between staff and tenants
- Support you to become an informed and knowledgeable tenant with the confidence to influence decisions
- Allow staff and tenants to be more aware of each other’s perspectives, creating an understanding of organisational and financial limitations
- Minimise misunderstandings, help to build trust and mutual respect between landlord and tenant
- Increase tenant satisfaction with their home and their neighbourhood
- Increase job satisfaction for staff
- Improve relationships in the community
- Improve neighbourhoods

We are always looking for participants, so here are the ways you can get involved:

Tenant surveys/telephone surveys/face-to-face interviews: these are done, from time-to-time, to see if what we are doing is right and for tenants to give their suggestions for improvements, where it is required.

Focus/Discussion Groups/Forums: these are set-up when there is a change in a particular area of our work, such as a service or policy review, and we want our tenants involved in the discussion. Everyone gets a chance to have their say and be part of the discussion with senior members of staff. The information gathered can inform the decisions made on changes/improvements that are needed.

Informal/ Formal Tenants Groups (RTOs): these are used to consult with tenants and residents groups about any proposed changes to our service or policies (PoLHA offers support and resources in the running of these groups). You can join an already existing group in your area or form a new group where one does not exist.

Mystery shopping: anonymous people, including trained tenants, are given real-life scenarios to test in order to assess how the service was delivered. The mystery shopper will be shown how to record the information and to give their views on the service they received. This information is used to assist in identifying where training and improvements to our service are required. We are currently looking for tenants who will carry out a mystery shopping exercise in the next few months. PoLHA will pay an allowance and cover any expenses. If you are interested in being a mystery shopper or taking part in any of the other groups, please contact Wendy Chan, Customer Engagement Officer, on 01315538707 or email wendy.chan@polha.co.uk.

GET READY TO WORK THROUGH EDINBURGH COMMUNITY EMPLOYABILITY AND PoLHA

Getting the skills you need to join the world of work can be a challenge. That's why PoLHA is supporting Edinburgh Community Employability by giving the initiative free space on a Wednesday to bring its services to the Association's tenants.

The scheme aims to help people in the EH4 - EH7 areas gain the skills they need to get back into the workforce. It is a voluntary scheme offering tailored support to equip clients with skills such as how to use a computer and the internet. It also can print CVs, provide information on training opportunities and interview preparation. Overall, the service last year found 154 people work throughout North Edinburgh.

Ian McConnachie and Caroline Cooper deliver the service at the PoLHA offices. Ian said: "We really appreciate getting the use of this room for Port of Leith Housing Association so we can continue to provide people with the help they need to get into work.

"We would like to encourage anyone who thinks they might be lacking in certain skills to get in touch. It might be that you are struggling to know where to look for work, how to apply or are worried about having interviews. We can help with these areas and help people fulfil their potential. We work in partnership with the jobseekers and will put in as much effort as the client does to help them secure employment."

In the past year, 100 people have attended the Wednesday's sessions at PoLHA. Of these, 34 found jobs, nine went into training and five into voluntary work. Some are still working with the scheme to increase their employability skills.

For more information, contact ian.mcconnachie@edinburghchamber.co.uk or caroline.cooper@edinburghchamber.co.uk or telephone: 0131 332 5016.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Out of Hours Emergency Number:	0800 783 7937
Customer Services (office hours):	0808 100 0403
<i>(you will be charged to use this number from a mobile—please use 0131 554 0403 if doing so)</i>	
Fax:	031 555 1504
Email:	info@polha.co.uk
Transco (gas emergency)	0800 111 999
Scottish Water	0845 600 8855
Scottish Power	0845 272 7999
Citizens' Advice (Leith)	0131 553 5984
Noise Stoppers	0131 311 3131
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
City of Edinburgh Council	
Main switchboard	0131 200 2000
Council Tax & benefits office	0131 469 5000
Pest Control	0131 666 2623
Special Uplift	0131 529 3030

Port Call Deadlines

If you would like to contribute to Port Call, the deadline for the winter edition is 8th November 2011. Send comments, questions or information to info@polha.co.uk



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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