



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2018

PORTCALL

Bright lights of Leith

Window Wanderland
takes over the town



Meet the people we're
helping to find work



How satisfied are you
with our services?



Get creative and enter
our competition



KEITH'S MESSAGE

Spring is in the air and we have lots of reasons to feel positive

We are very pleased to share an update in this issue about the difference our employability project, Community Works, is making to people. You can read about how we helped Florin, Paul and Jack to find work on p10-11.

It's also great to report that our tenants are settling in well at Leith Fort and that plans are afoot to set up a residents' group.

This issue also includes the results of our annual tenant satisfaction survey. It's encouraging to see that overall satisfaction levels continue to be strong and that many of our customers would recommend us to a family member, friend or colleague.

We're always keen to hear any ideas you have about how to improve Portcall. Please do share your views by emailing wendy.chan@polha.co.uk.

KEITH ANDERSON
Chief Executive



Isabel and Davina French at the Whaling Days book launch

Memories of whaling come flooding back to Leith residents

Davina French, one of our sheltered housing tenants, has shared memories of her father working as a whaler in a book about this long-lost industry.

Davina French's father worked for Christian Salvesen as a whaler up until the late 50s, and she and her sister Isabel have contributed their personal thoughts about this to *Whaling Days*, a collection of short stories created by Citadel Arts Group.

Davina said: "I had some bits and pieces of my dad's that I was able to let people see, such as a Salvesen's wage slip, whales' ear drums and teeth. I was also able to share memories of when he was away and what it was like at home, and how we all felt when he came home, especially after a long trip.

"It was great to hear

other people's stories too, particularly from the men that were actually out at sea. My sister Isabel was also able to share her memories. Being the older sister, her husband was also a whaler."

Davina's sister Isabel said: "Leith was a very different place back then and it wasn't always easy to get by with the men spending so long working away at sea. Owing to a shortage of housing, families were moved out of Leith and put into temporary accommodation in pre-fab huts based up at Craigmillar. They were cold and cramped with more than one family sharing the small huts. I lived in a one-bedroom flat with my grandparents and two uncles. Thankfully, the housing situation has greatly improved since then."

Tribute to Robert MacPherson

It was with great sadness we learned that our former Board Member Robert MacPherson passed away on New Year's Eve, aged 71. Robert was a voluntary Board Member of the Association for 13 years and more recently had become a Board Member of our social enterprise, Quay Community Improvements.

The onset of multiple sclerosis in his late forties led to Robert becoming a wheelchair user in his early fifties. He went on to be recognised as a highly

respected authority on inequality, injustice and issues facing disabled people.

As a father and grandfather, and tenants' and disability rights campaigner, he was an inspiration to us all. In fact, the important contribution he made through his voluntary work earned Robert a national "Unsung Hero" Award in 2010.

Robert worked hard for the greater good of Leith and Edinburgh. He was a very courageous man, who will be greatly missed.



Robert MacPherson, Board Member for Quay Community Improvements, and former Board Member for PoLHA

New faces and promotions

A big welcome to our new staff member Rachel Stockton, Sheltered Housing Co-ordinator and congratulations to our colleagues who have changed roles.

Alex Burns
Development
Officer



Steph Scott
Repairs Hotline
Assistant



Nikki
Adamson
Maintenance
Officer



CASESTUDY

A life-changing adaptation

Sandra has been a tenant with PoLHA since 2003 and has enjoyed living independently in the same home over the past 15 years

When Sandra received a visit from Assistant Housing Officer, Rosemary, she revealed that she could no longer use the bath due to falling on more than one occasion while trying to get in and out of it. Rosemary was very concerned about Sandra's situation and took steps to look for a suitable property for Sandra to move to.

It soon became apparent that finding a property that would meet Sandra's needs was going to be difficult and the best solution was to make an application to have her bathroom adapted. With help from Rosemary, Sandra had an assessment carried out by an occupational therapist who recommended that a low-level bath be fitted. Andrea, our Assets Administrator, arranged a visit with the contractor to measure up for this.

“I'm so appreciative of what Port of Leith has done for me.”

However, there was a problem because the existing bath was not a standard size. This meant that a low-level bath would not fit in the space.

Andrea contacted the occupational therapist and it was agreed that Sandra's bathroom would be turned into a walk in wet-room and shower. Andrea met with Sandra to pick out colours for wall boards and flooring, and they set the wheels in motion to transform Sandra's bathroom. This adaptation has meant that Sandra can maintain her independence in the home she is happy in for many years to come.

Sandra said: “This has completely changed my life. I couldn't get in and out of the bath because I kept falling - I'm so appreciative of what Port of Leith has done for me.”

Our Assets Administrator, Andrea, who managed the project, said: “It is very satisfying and a pleasure to be able to help our tenants who are unable to carry out basic day to day activities by adapting their home to suit their needs which allows them to live independently.”

Keep Leith beautiful

We love Leith and want it to look its best. The community group, Leithers Don't Litter, has been working hard to clean up the streets of Leith for a couple of years and now it's inviting the people of Leith to sign up to its Adopt A Street initiative.

Under Adopt A Street, residents and businesses pledge to keep their street tidy, and receive free litter pickers and gloves to help them. Get in touch with Leithers Don't Litter at <http://leithersdontlitter.org> if you'd like to adopt your street.

You can also help to keep Leith looking beautiful by following the advice below from the City of Edinburgh Council.

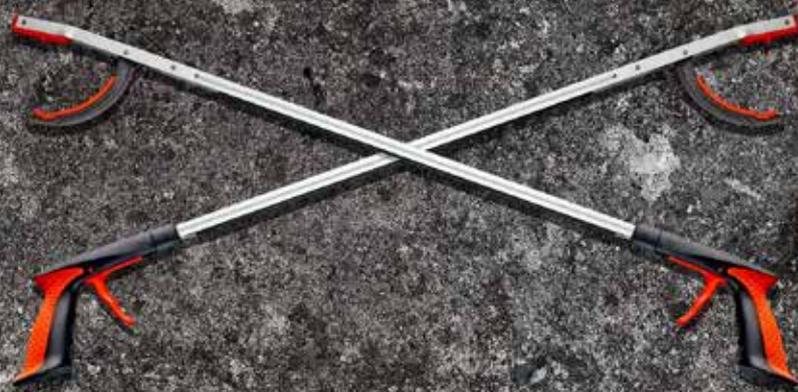
Overflowing communal bins

If the communal bin is full, please don't leave your bin bags and recycling next to it or on the street. Take your rubbish to the next bin and let the Council know the bin is full by reporting it at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/overflowingbin

Bulky items that don't fit in the communal bins

If you wish to dispose of items such as beds, sofas, fridges, tables and chairs which are in good condition and could be used

WEAPONS OF MESS DESTRUCTION.



Help us keep Leith clean. Adopt your street and get a free Litter-picker.
For details, go to Leithers Don't Litter's Facebook page.
Campaign funded by Leith Neighbourhood Partnership.

LEITHERS
DON'T
LITTER.

by someone else, call the **National Re-use Phonenumber on 0800 0665 820** or visit <https://recycleforscotland.com/re-use/donating-charities> and a local charity will collect them for free.

If the items can't be re-used, the Council will pick them up for a fee of £5 per item. Visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/upliftbulkyitem or call **0131 608 1100** to arrange this.

Mattresses, wood, furniture, electrical items and fridges can be taken to the Community Recycling Centre at Fillyside Road, Seafield, and disposed of free of charge.

Appointments with your housing officer

Please remember that the best way to arrange a meeting with your housing officer is to book an appointment in advance. This will avoid the disappointment of your housing officer being unavailable if you drop by the office without an appointment.

To book an appointment, please call us on 0131 554 0403 or speak to a member of our Customer Advice Team at our reception area.

Help us to make Portcall even better!

We are very keen to hear from anyone who has a story idea for Portcall or who would like to write a story or share a photo in the newsletter. If you would like to get involved, please email wendy.chan@polha.co.uk or call 0131 554 0403 and ask for Wendy Chan.

Claiming benefits? Remember to report income changes

Housing Benefit assessors are now able to use a new system based on HMRC (the organisation that collects tax which pays for the UK's public services) data which tells them about any changes in a claimant's income. They will receive an alert when:

- A claimant or their partner has new employment or non-state pensions earnings
- A claimant's (or partner's) employment or non-state pensions earnings have changed

The system is being used to verify new claims, changes of circumstances and reviews of existing claims.

Changes to income affect the amount of benefit that you may be entitled to. If you don't tell the Council or Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about any changes, you may end up being overpaid and you will have to pay this back.

Please tell the City of Edinburgh Council about any changes to your income.

New community forming at Leith Fort

Find out how the residents are settling in

Having originally been created as a military base in the 18th century, Leith Fort was demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Fort House estate, known as 'The Fort'. In 2013 The Fort was knocked down to make way for new affordable housing, including 62 mid market rent homes created by our subsidiary Persevere Developments and 32 homes for social rent by the City of Edinburgh Council.

The latest chapter of The Fort's story started last year when people moved into their new homes. Karen Jane McKenzie lives in one of the mid market rent homes at Leith Fort which has been built on the same spot as her grandparents' home. She said:

"I have very fond memories of the Fort. My grandparents moved there with my mum and her five sisters and brother in the early 70s. They all shared loads of great memories of life in and around the Fort and also in the guardhouses.

"Back then the guardhouses were open for functions. My mum celebrated her 21st birthday in the hall and throughout the years,



Clockwise from left: Tenant Laura Rose meets Ben MacPherson MSP & Housing Minister Kevin Stewart; Canons at Leith Fort; some of the youngest tenants exploring their new home.

Photography: Tom Duda

family engagements and wedding receptions were all celebrated in the guardhouses.

"On Saturdays everyone would get together. All the men would go to The Vine and I'd play with all my cousins - there were 14 of us - in the park in and around the guardhouses.

"The Fort will always have amazing memories I will keep and cherish. I was delighted when I discovered they were re-building it. All the family



came back to The Fort before it was knocked down to take photos one last time.

"I'm now starting my new journey with my family making memories here yet again on the same plot where my grandparents' house was."

Laura Rose, another mid market rent tenant at Leith Fort, is also enthusiastic about building a new community there. Laura said:

"We love our new home. It has made a huge difference to our lives. Our neighbours are amazing and everyone is just so helpful. I think it's made a big difference to the area too. It's pleasant to look at and everyone is so welcoming.

"We've had a few meetings about setting up a residents' group. We are also working on a newsletter and have set up a Facebook Group which all residents are very

Streets of Leith like you've never seen them before

March saw Window Wanderland, which transforms everyday streets into outdoor art galleries, come to Leith for the first time ever.

The event, which was organised by our subsidiary company Quay Community Improvements (Quay), gave Leithers the chance to show off their creativity. Shop fronts and windows in and around the Great Junction Street, New Kirkgate and Constitution Street areas were transformed by eye-catching artwork created by

residents and community groups.

As the event fell on St Patrick's Day, entertainment was also provided by the Irish Dance Academy in Leith.

Clare Halliday, Business & Communities Initiatives Manager at Quay Community Improvements, said:

"We're thrilled that so many people got involved in bringing Window Wanderland to Leith and took to the streets to admire all the fantastic artwork."

welcome to join. Just search for Leith Fort Residents Group on Facebook. Hopefully this will all help to encourage community spirit."

Ripple effect

We're really pleased that the new Leith Fort is already having a positive impact on the community. Cathie Wood, Chairperson of Fort Community Centre situated across the road from The Fort, said:

"I was born and grew up in the area, having played with friends in The Fort. It was a grand scheme with good families when it first opened but sadly, over time, it got a bad reputation and needed to be taken down.

"The new homes are lovely and make such a difference to the area. It was a close community back in the day and I know the new residents are keen to build up that community spirit."



Local artists and community groups worked together to create colourful artwork.
Above: PoLHA office
Left: Tesco on Great Junction Street.
Thanks to the Big Lottery and Greig Avinou for supporting the event.

How satisfied were you with

Communication

90.3% of customers think we are good at keeping them informed about services and decisions (93.5% in 2016)

91% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied that they are listened to, treated politely and with respect (90% in 2016)

92.4% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality and speed of response from us (99.2% in 2016)

87% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied with how the Association listens and acts on what they have said (93.5% in 2016)

Getting involved

78.2% were very satisfied or satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in our decision-making processes (77.9% in 2016)

Customer's comment: "Nobody has told me what's going on & how to get involved."

Our reply:

We have a leaflet (Ways to get involved) which is available in our office. It lets customers know of the different ways to get involved. We want customers to share their views and to give us their feedback. If you are interested and would like to find out more about how you can be consulted please contact Wendy Chan, Communications and Customer Engagement Officer, on 0131 553 8707.

Thank you to the **370** customers who took the time to fill in our **2017** customer satisfaction survey. We received some positive feedback as well as suggestions about how we can improve. Please continue to share your views with us.

Quality of home

90.1% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied overall with the quality of their home (90% in 2016)

Customer's comment: "I would like to see our bathroom replaced and upgraded as no internal improvements have been carried out since 2006."

Our reply:

Major repairs are carried out when property components have reached the end of their useful life. Internal refurbishments are usually carried out on a 15-year cycle and we run a programme every year. Residents whose homes are included in the programme will benefit from new kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems and controls. We will also upgrade smoke alarms, extractor fans, fuse boards and carry out full electrical testing.



Repairs

We asked customers to think about the last time they had repairs carried out, **90.6%** of customers were very satisfied or satisfied with the repairs service they had received (88.4% in 2016)

96.7% of customers said they found it very easy or fairly easy to report a repair (99.2% in 2016)

Customer's comment: "What about being able to report repairs online?"

Our reply:

Repairs can currently be e-mailed to propertyadmin@polha.co.uk. Where the request is sent outside of normal working hours, it will be processed the next working day. The information will be passed on to our contractor who will contact you directly to arrange an appointment for the work to be completed. We will be reviewing our website and looking at how to improve the way customers can report their repairs online.

Handling service complaints

77.1% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied overall with the way their service complaint was handled (77.5% in 2016)

our services in 2017?

Dealing with antisocial behaviour

56% of customers said they were very satisfied or satisfied with the way they were kept informed about their antisocial behaviour case (68.7% in 2016)

55.2% of customer said they were satisfied overall with the way their antisocial behaviour case was handled by staff (65.2% in 2016)

Customer's comment:

"Tenants should be given help with antisocial tenants. In my case it doesn't happen."

Our reply:

We investigate antisocial behaviour complaints and try to help our customers to sort these out through mediation and by warning tenants about their behaviour. Court action can only be taken in cases where there is persistent, serious antisocial behaviour and with involvement from the police. Sometimes, antisocial behaviour can be disagreements and fall-outs between neighbours. In such cases there is sometimes little we can do.

"I could not say anything bad about Port of Leith in any way."

Estate management

73.8% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied with the standard of maintenance of the external areas including grass cutting (78.4% in 2016)

70.8% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied overall with the standard of cleaning of the internal communal areas including stairwells, landings and bin chutes (62.2% in 2016)

Customer's comment:

"Some intervention and education about bins would be helpful."

Our reply:

Estates management and housing staff have been working on flytipping hotspots and we will be extending this to all developments during 2018. We are:

- Working with the Leithers Don't Litter campaign and the City of Edinburgh Council's waste team to address problems with flytipping, bins and refuse

- Planning visits to talk with customers about the importance of keeping communal areas clear of waste and other unwanted items

- Making estate improvements to increase waste provision (for example, altering bin stores to house extra bins)

- Organising extra visits by the Quay cleaners to clear bin stores where required.

Neighbourhood

82.4% of customers were very satisfied or satisfied with the Association's management of their neighbourhood (83.3% in 2016)

Customer's comment:

"Very satisfied in the main, litter & dog fouling on the pavement is a problem."

Our reply:

While the council is responsible for rubbish collection and for addressing littering and dog fouling, we do take action to remind our tenants not to litter or to allow their dogs to foul in public places.

Value for money

89.3% of customers think that the rent for their property represents good value for money (88.3% in 2016)

PoLHA as a landlord

92.5% of customers are very satisfied or satisfied overall with PoLHA as their landlord. (same as in 2016)

Customer's comment:

"I have been with Port of Leith for a long time and I could not say anything bad about Port of Leith in any way."



Meet the people we're helping to find work

Our new project Community Works has enjoyed a very successful first few months of helping people find ways into education, training and work, supporting more than 100 people since last August. Read on to find out more about the difference Community Works has made to some of the people who have used the service.

Florin

Florin, aged 55, has been working in the UK for 11 years in a variety of manual jobs, including cleaning and construction. In October 2017 he became unemployed and was living in a homeless shelter. He found looking for work difficult because he had poor IT skills and little English. Having done mostly casual work, Florin didn't have any formal or British qualifications and all his paperwork was back in Romania.

Florin said: "I met with Rachel from Community Works and we worked together on a plan to help me find work and accommodation. She helped me to write a CV and emailed it to several companies. They also put me in touch with a charity who are helping me to find my own tenancy.

"Shortly before Christmas, Community Works found

out about an agency who were looking for staff to start work the next day. Rachel suggested that I visit the agency and I was offered a contract.

"I'm still working on a temporary contract and it is going well. I have also passed the first part of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme test and I'm bidding for accommodation. When I get permanent work, I'd like to get my own place.

"I'm still meeting with Rachel and I plan to get more qualifications while I search for permanent work."

Paul

Paul has been a Port of Leith Housing Association tenant for 16 years and has been unable to work since 1998 due to ill health. In the past he worked as a store man, waiter and kitchen porter in

a five-star hotel. Paul was eager to find work but due to his long absence did not know where to start. Having seen a poster in his stairwell he made an appointment to see Murray from Community Works.

Paul said: "Murray told me about the training that I could get. We decided that that I would go on a Community Works course to work on my CV and interview skills. It was useful. It helped me update my job search skills and improved my confidence. It was good having something to get up for and having a purpose."

Once he had completed the training, Paul realised that he needed to get





Community Works helped Florin (pictured left) to find work and gain a qualification

some up to date hands-on experience and that he wanted to volunteer.

“I joined the Job Ready Club to find work or a volunteer role. I was happy there and found a volunteer role as a Kitchen Porter. I feel that this will be a huge step in helping me get back to work.

“I have finished the Job Ready Club now but I know that I can always go back to Community Works to get more help. In a month or so I will return to get accredited Food Hygiene and Health & Safety qualifications. Then I can start job hunting again, this time with experience, references and the right qualifications.”

Anonymous, “Jack”

Jack, aged 37, recently came to Scotland from Sweden where he had difficulty finding work in logistics. His English was very good but he didn't have any contacts in Edinburgh and he didn't understand how recruitment works here or who the local employers were.

Jack said: “When I met with Murray from Community Works I explained that I had seven years' experience of working in the logistics sector and the right qualifications, so I could not understand why I wasn't getting any interviews.

“Murray helped me to make my CV relevant to the jobs I was applying for and

to improve the formatting. I also attended a one-to-one session that helped me to improve my writing skills for applying for jobs.

“Within a month I got an interview with Amazon in Dunfermline and was given the permanent role of Logistics Coordinator there.

“I'm really happy with my job and it's great to know that Community Works will be there to help me in the future if I need it.”

If you'd like to find out how Community Works could help you, call 0131 554 0403 or email community.works@polha.co.uk



LAST CALL

Feed four people for under £5!

Our Customer Advisor and resident qualified nutritional therapist, Jenni (pictured above), has shared a delicious lentil bolognese recipe which is suitable for vegetarians, healthy and cheap to make.

Ingredients:

2 onions
2 carrots
200g mushrooms
2 cloves garlic
Tablespoon of vegetable or olive oil
150g red lentils
1 tin of tomatoes
½ teaspoon of oregano or mixed herbs
1 vegetable stock cube
tablespoon of tomato puree
300 ml water
Packet of whole wheat spaghetti

Method:

- Finely chop 2 onions, 2 cloves of garlic and slice the mushrooms. Chop or grate the 2 carrots.
- Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the vegetables. Cook gently for 5-10 minutes to soften them.

- Wash and drain 150g lentils in a sieve.
- Add to the saucepan with a tin of chopped tomatoes, one stock cube dissolved in 300ml of boiling water, a tablespoon of tomato puree and half a teaspoon of oregano/mixed herbs.
- Leave to simmer gently on a low heat for one hour with the lid on, stirring every 10 minutes. You may need to add more water as the lentils will absorb some as they cook.
- Check the seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste.
- Cook the spaghetti as per instructions on the packet – approximately 75g per person.
- You can double the quantities and freeze it for another time.
- This contains protein from the lentils, complex carbohydrates from the whole wheat pasta and at least four of your five-a-day, so it's a healthy, balanced meal.

COMMUNITY POLICE

Letter from PC Niall Corrigan

Five years after the inception of Police Scotland, there has been real progress in terms of community policing. Leith is now served by a dedicated team of 10 Community Police Officers, supported by two Family and Housing Support Officers and overseen by our Sergeant, Niven Bull.

The need for us to operate as part of the wider community is more important than ever. With an average of three community officers on duty at any one time, we also need the support of the wider community. By working together we can make a real difference in our communities.

We are happy to speak to anyone anytime about how we can help to make Leith an even better place to live and work. If you would like to speak to your local community police team, you can call us on 101, email us at edinburghleithcpt@scotland.pnn.police.uk or speak to your housing officer.

PC Niall Corrigan
Leith Family & Housing Support Team

COMPETITION Get creative!

For all you budding artists out there, we are holding a competition and would like you to send in a work of art that represents your home. This can be a drawing, painting or even a sculpture – it's up to you. It's open to people of all ages and each household is welcome to make as many entries as they would like.

Please enter by handing in or sending your artwork to our office (108 Constitution Street) by 15 June. You can also take a photo of your art and email it to info@polha.co.uk or post it up on our Facebook page.

The lucky winner will receive a shopping voucher worth £25 – good luck!