

# News of the Mews



## Designer homes for downsizing tenants

**TENANTS** who agree to move from a home that is bigger than they need are being given the chance to apply for a stunning new flat in a former Islington school.

Any BHA tenant who lives in a property with one or more bedrooms they don't use can apply for one of the homes in BHA's latest development in Eden

Grove, Islington, just minutes from Morland Mews.

Classrooms and corridors in the former Sacred Heart school have been cleverly converted to make the best of use of the original huge windows and high ceilings. Light, sleek designer interiors have been created which combine with the building's Victorian exterior to achieve an

exciting fusion of traditional and modern.

Top quality kitchens and bathrooms, generous room sizes and balconies with panoramic views of London, make these some of the coolest pads around. The new homes will be ready for occupation this Spring.

If you think you may be eligible call into the BHA office for a chat.

# Coppers invite young people to chat

**IN A BID** to improve relations with local youths, Islington police are inviting young people to come and chat to local officers about crime, policing or anything they would like to discuss.

The drop-in sessions take place on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 7pm to 8pm at Connexions, 42 White Lion Street, Islington.



# Are we missing something?

**EVEN** though BHA spends half its income on maintenance, there is never enough money to do everything. BHA is in the process of planning its maintenance and repairs programme for 2008 – 2009 and wants to know tenants' views on which works BHA should consider.

Work currently under consideration includes some replacement entry phones, increased security, a new entry barrier, extra thermal insulation and new estate lighting plus pressing on with the replacement of kitchens, bathrooms and windows.

Write, email or call in to the BHA office with your ideas. Details of the proposed work programme are also available from the office.

# Unauthorised parking on Morland Mews

**INCREASING** numbers of unauthorised vehicles are being parked on Morland Mews. Only tenants who rent parking spaces or garages are allowed to bring their vehicles onto the mews. Measures will be taken against unauthorised vehicles.



BHA tenant Susie Paddock enjoyed a free reflexology treatment at a health day on Saturday Feb 2nd at the Holloway Resource Centre, Islington. The free event was organised by eight local Housing Associations, including BHA, with support from Islington College. Susie said: "My idea of relaxation is sharing a bottle of wine with a group of good pals, but modern life can be so stressful, I am prepared to give this reflexology thing a go."

# BLOCK AND WINDOW CLEANING:

Block cleaning:



Window cleaning:



FEBRUARY				MARCH				APRIL				MAY									
MO	4	11	18	25	MO	31	3	10	17	24	MO	7	14	21	28	MO	5	12	19	26	
TU	5	12	19	26	TU	4	11	18	25	TU	1	8	15	22	29	TU	6	13	20	27	
WE	6	13	20	27	WE	5	12	19	26	WE	2	9	16	23	30	WE	7	14	21	28	
TH	7	14	21	28	TH	6	13	20	27	TH	3	10	17	24	TH	1	8	15	22	29	
FR	1	8	15	22	29	FR	7	14	21	28	FR	4	11	18	25	FR	2	9	16	23	30
SA	2	9	16	23	SA	1	8	15	22	29	SA	5	12	19	26	SA	3	10	17	24	31
SU	3	10	17	24	SU	2	9	16	23	30	SU	6	13	20	27	SU	4	11	18	25	



# New flat means freedom for Louise

**A SEVERELY** disabled Islington woman who spent years feeling like a prisoner in her own home, says a specially designed BHA flat has transformed her life.

43 year old Louise Higgs, who can't walk due to a spinal injury, moved into the newly adapted ground floor Morland Mews flat in November.

Her previous home in Middleton Square, Islington, wasn't accessible by wheelchair, so Louise couldn't get in and out on her own.

"I had to have all my food delivered and if I ran out of milk or anything, I couldn't just pop out and get some. It drives you mad on a sunny day when you are stuck inside looking out at the lovely weather but can't get outside - you're always relying on other people," she says.

Louise's new home was built by extending an existing studio flat into a little used walkway. It is one of two new fully wheelchair accessible homes completed by BHA last year. The other was built by combining a one bedroom flat with a garage.

What impressed Louise most about her new home was the amount of light and outside space.

"I couldn't believe how big the

balcony was," she says. "And there are these huge floor to ceiling windows all round so it's really light and you feel part of the world outside and not hemmed in."

A keen cook, Louise is making good use of the state of the art kitchen, which includes a work surface she can raise or lower at the flick of a switch.

"In my old place I had to prop myself up to cook as best I could

**What Louise appreciates most about her new independence is being able to go and see Arsenal play at the Emirates**

and would often fall onto the floor and have to push the emergency button and wait almost an hour for someone to come and lift me up. Now I can do all the cooking from my wheelchair, it's so much better," she says.

The open plan flat, which includes an extra bedroom for Louise's full time carer, is not only much bigger than most housing association flats,

it has been designed by Islington architects NTA Projects to make use of the latest green technology.

An ingenious 'heat recovery system' captures the energy from warm air that is expelled from the kitchen and bathroom and uses it to heat cold air coming in from outside. So virtually no heat is wasted. The roof uses a special soil like surface that is seeded with plants that will grow to create a natural habitat for butterflies, bees and other wildlife.

Even the taps are specially designed to save water.

But what will Louise appreciate most about her new independent lifestyle? Being able to use her electric wheelchair to go and see Arsenal play at the Emirates stadium. A self-confessed Arsenal nut, Louise last saw her favourite team thrash Tottenham last year and she can't wait to get back.

"I'll never forget that game," she says, "because I sneaked in my friend, who's a Tottenham supporter, into the Arsenal side of the stand. She had her Tottenham shirt on under her jumper and I had to make her promise, not to make a sound if Tottenham scored."

# Green guru's Barnsbury roots

**THE MAN** helping make Islington one of London's greenest boroughs is a former BHA tenant who was making a difference to the environment in Barnsbury long before it was fashionable to be green.

Bob Gilbert, now Islington Council's Assistant Director for Environmental Sustainability, helped plant a wild-flower meadow on the Morland Mews estate after he moved into his BHA flat in Barnsbury Street in 1985.

"I got involved in lots of greening projects when I lived on the estate and the meadow was one way to help make nature and wildlife more accessible to my son and other people living around the estate," he says.

BHA had thrown Bob a lifeline after he and his baby son Joel found themselves homeless following a split from his partner.

"I was kipping with Joel on a friend's floor and was determined to find somewhere where I could bring him up," he says.

Bob heard about BHA from tenants who were students of his on a Wildlife and Nature Conservation course he was teaching at a local college.

"I applied for the flat and was interviewed by board members who included tenants. In those days they wanted you to have a local connection and were very

keen to know if you would be active in the community."

The board members needn't have worried. Bob was soon making strong connections with his neighbours.

"There were lots of other tenants who were parents in my street and we would collect each others' kids from school and baby-sit for one another. We were always in and out of each others' houses," he says.

Bob found out just how good his neighbours were when he returned home one evening to find his flat gutted by fire.

"I had taken Joel to a friends for tea and when we got back a neighbour stopped me before we got to the flat and told me what had happened. The place had been destroyed and the fire-brigade had thrown all our belongings out onto the street."

Four of Bob's neighbours sat up with him that night and shared a drink or two as they helped him come to terms with what had happened.

One neighbour put him and his son up for a few days until they found somewhere temporary to live.

**Bob is something of a renaissance man, having written for the theatre, performed as a stand-up comedian and spent many years teaching.**

Local people even donated cash. "We had no contents insurance and people dropped round anonymous gifts of money – the whole experience enhanced my faith in humanity."

Bob is something of a renaissance man, having written for the theatre, performed as a stand-up comedian and spent many years teaching. But it's his love of what he calls 'urban natural history' which has taken him to the top job with Islington Council.

From working three hours a week at a community gardens project in Crouch Hill, to running environment courses in schools and a residential wildlife field studies centre in Essex, Bob became an Ecology Officer with the council and eventually rose to Assistant Director.

He is especially proud of council's recently opened Green Living Centre at 222 Upper Street where BHA tenants and others can drop in to find out everything they need to know about saving energy costs and caring for the environment.

He is optimistic that this year the council's work on the environment may result in it being awarded the government's coveted 'Beacon Status' for its work on climate change.

But why should people living in Islington care about the environment at all? Because it will benefit both them and their children, according to Bob.

"A green lifestyle results in a happier life," he says. "It means less pollution, more green space to enjoy, more exercise and feeling healthier."

In the longer term, he adds, it means minimising the risk for future generations of freak weather, rising sea levels and other potentially disastrous effects of climate change.