

Winter 2013

London Yard Newsletter



Message from the Board

As we bring another year of hard work on our development to a close, we would like to thank you for providing input and support on our various initiatives and look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it at the AGM. Seasons Greeting and we hope you have a rewarding festive break.

The LYMC Board

AGM

Regretfully our pencilled date did not work out due to unforeseen circumstances but we now have a firm date for this: Thursday, 6th February 2014.

Recent Storm Damage

We did not come through the recent bad weather unscathed, with a number of roof tiles being blown off as well as other storm related damage. Our caretaker was very proactive in this, identifying this damage and reporting it through to Parc very quickly and then repairing or making safe what he could himself. We recently had a cherry picker on site to repair the damage externally and our caretaker will continue to keep an eye out for any new damage and monitor the repairs and ensure the affected areas are drying out!

Electricity Supply

We have now re-negotiated the overall electricity rate for us, which we do every year. Given the focus there is on utility costs in particular at the moment and because we did it slightly differently this year, we thought we would share the

details with you. At our usual annual review, six months ago, we were faced with some steep rises: 6 month renewal contract: Increase of 6.77%, 12 month new contract: Increase of 13.68%. Parc recommended we took a 6 month contract and reviewed at the end of that where prices were, to which we agreed. We have just concluded the 6 month review and now have a deal of 10.57% increase over 18 months, which compares favourably with the 13.68% we would have had if we had taken the 12 month contract up 6 months ago.

Security Contract

We are just going to tender on this, the first part of the Section 20 process having been completed with no comments or nominations received from owners. We will be going out to three companies to ensure we get a high quality service for a good price whilst ensuring our current, and excellent, security guard is part of our ongoing service.

Parking

We have identified another supplier who may be able to help us on this and have extra support now from a leaseholder, who wants to help, which we are grateful for. We perceive that one of the increasing issues we have without adequate parking enforcement is the number of abandoned or stored vehicles in our parking spaces. We are now working closely with LBTH to identify and have dealt with or removed these vehicles. If you see vehicles that are untaxed on our development, please email or call Parc, who will additionally notify the relevant dept in LBTH.

Hostile Environment Barrier

This has now been installed to replace the rising bollard. It has taken some time to get in, much of which has been taken up trying to see if LBTH Planning Dept has any interest or comments regarding the barrier. We very much hope that it stops a lot of the antisocial behaviours surrounding our riverside car parks.

Noise Complaints

Over the summer we received an increased level of complaints regarding disturbances emanating from the Mem Saheb restaurant, both inside and outside their permitted hours of occupancy. There is still a BCN (Breach of Condition Notice) against this restaurant from LBTH. We simply want them to be good tenants and neither breach the terms of their licensing agreement with LBTH nor their lease covenants with us and their fellow leaseholders. To date, we have had short term successes but the nuisance level rises again after a short while. If you are disturbed by antisocial behaviours, please call both 101 so the disturbance can be registered in the police database and our security guard on

07889 161615 so he can assess the situation and deal with it/provide support to the police.

Trees In London Yard

We have now identified many of the trees and the tree surgeons are scheduled to attend soon. They have been delayed as the recent storms have generated a lot of unscheduled work for them, making trees safe elsewhere. We are not only looking this time to have the trees we have identified to be pruned but also looking for a five year plan from them so that we can ensure no trees become overgrown as they have done in the past. This should serve both to ensure our trees are maintained in a cost-effective manner and stop them being both a nuisance to owners and, at least in the case of Block 13, a useful bridge for the squirrels to leap across!

Our gardener, Simon, has been relocating some trees which were either planted by squirrels or were too close to property structures and required moving. A cotoneaster tree which was growing very close to a wall has been replanted to the edge of the pond where it should provide berries for the birds in a few years.



Cotoneaster tree near pond

A hazelnut tree, almost certainly planted by a squirrel, was hidden in one of the outside flower beds and has now been transplanted to an empty spot on Van Gogh lawn where it should do a lot better than where it was previously.



Hazelnut tree on Van Gogh lawn

Gardens

We have a winter plan agreed now with our gardener, following input from one of our Board members who has a keen interest in keeping our gardens well maintained and is far more knowledgeable about them than the rest of us!

Foxes

We still have foxes active in London Yard so make sure that when you place refuse in the cupboards in your block that you close the door securely. Last month I was woken at 3am by a fox pulling a refuse sack out of the cupboard below my window which someone had not closed properly.

Pond

The pond has also taken quite a bashing recently, with water levels rising with the tide. It took us a little while to sort as there were no plans left to us of the pond infrastructure. However, it's all done now, thanks to our caretaker, our agents and one of our Board members. We know where the non-return valve for our pond is (near the beach!), its on our caretaker's monthly maintenance list and there is a picture of it below.



Pond non-return valve

Christmas Tree Disposal

Just a reminder about disposing of your used Christmas trees. Tower Hamlets council will collect and dispose of used trees if they are placed in the outdoor storage area before the 10th January 2014. Real trees only please! The storage area is located on the South boundary at the end of a 3 garage block with wooden fencing to the entrance.

Condensation

It's the time of year again when people tend to keep their windows and doors closed which can lead to problems with condensation. We have a document titled "Condensation" on our website which has useful information about the causes and prevention of condensation.

Let's Work Together

ARMA is the only body in England & Wales to focus exclusively on matters relating to the block management of leasehold properties. In an ongoing effort to improve everyone's living environment, we will be highlighting one issue per quarter from their "LAN" documents.



Insurance - the building will be insured by your landlord but you should insure your own contents. Do make sure your contents cover includes cover if a leak from your flat damages the contents of your neighbour's flats because you will be liable. If you will be away from your flat for more than 30 days and the flat will be empty it is normal that your agent will have to inform the insurers. Please let the agent know. If you do not it is likely any claim for damage to your flat will be disallowed.

Application for Take-Away, Amsterdam Road

We have received a provisional planning application for a Chinese take-away within London Yard in one of the empty commercial units in Amsterdam Road. We would however like to canvas your opinion on this so if you have an opinion you would like to share, please email us or Parc. If you do receive a planning letter from LBTH at any stage, you will need to respond to this directly as our review is for our use as a development only, which will not be passed to LBTH planning.

The Leaseholder of the unit is required to obtain a Deed of Consent from LYMC for sub-letting the unit under the terms of the Lease. To date, the Leaseholder is refusing to pay for the work required by the company solicitors to prepare this Deed, which has so far cost the company £600. As part of this process the solicitors have confirmed that the proposed use of the unit is actually against the terms of the Lease and could not be consented in any case.

Amphibious Tours

We have been approached by a company who would like to run these tours with new amphibious craft (rather than the delightful but noisy WWII Ducks). Part of their proposed route would be from the beach up to Manchester Road via Amsterdam Road. They are working very closely with local government, the PLA and many other bodies to see if they can make this work and, if it did, would look to commence service in 2015. If you have a view on this, we would be interested to hear it via our or Parc's email addresses, given at the end of this newsletter.

News On Your Block

All Blocks

As part of the review we are undertaking of the works needed to B3b, our surveyors, Archers, are looking at ways of us capitalising on the free works that the energy companies have committed to as part of the Green Energy tax levied on them. Archers have been successfully involved in these works elsewhere and believe they may be suitable for our blocks. We are only in the early stages of discussion but the outline plan is if we can implement this in B3b at no extra cost, it should even out the hot and cold spots in the building and decrease the costs of heating our apartments in the winter. We would then look to implement this across the rest of our blocks.

Block B1

The lifts are in a poor state at the moment, with spares increasingly hard to find. One major control board is under repair at the moment as no spares can be found given the age of the lifts. We will have a serious problem if it cannot be repaired and just reinforces the point that our lifts are badly in need of replacing. We have completed the first stage of the S.20 process with no comments or nominations from this block but one from Block 3b. We will be tendering for the works very shortly with a view to getting the works

started Q1 next year. We had a blocked downpipe causing us problems but this has now been fixed.

Block B2

The lifts here are in not much better shape than B1 and, as we said above, the works should start Q1 next year. As you know, we are already collecting funds for these works over three quarters. No other major issues reported.

Block B3b

The investigative works came in at £8,094.00 against the project budget of £11,157.30 so we have saved a little there. We now have Archers' report on what these works showed and have discussed this with both Archers and Parc. To clarify a few points however we have just agreed to an additional thermal imaging survey of the block as the weather is optimum for giving us a clear view of the hot and cold spots in this building. We will be starting the Section 20 process for the works themselves in January. This timing should allow us to commence the works in early summer, again optimum time for these works. There will be some impact to the budget of course as these works are out of plan coupled with the fact that the 25-year plan budget underestimated the costs of the lifts by some £14k. We will compensate by revising the works that need to be done in 2015/16 and removing those that can be covered in the works next year as scaffolding will have to be erected. In the interim, we are effecting some temporary repairs in the internal roof space.

Block B4

We have been asked for permission for a leaseholder to add a garage door to their car port. Whilst we have added some restrictions to the construction, use and maintenance, we think this is a reasonable request and so have granted it in principle.

Blocks B5a, B5b, B11a and B12a

The internal works are commencing soon and in line with the finalised tenders. We anticipate the works commencing in December and completing in January. We are just finalising where the site hut should be, as the blocks are quite spread out, but Parc are very good at finding a spot that causes least disturbance and is still effective for the running of the job and, where necessary, the storage of materials.

Block B13

As above except that, following the feedback from the S.20 process, we will be implementing a cut down version of the works. The level of works will be in line with the maintenance and repair clauses of the lease, statutory requirements and will take account of the Leaseholders comments following the completed Section 20 process.

Orienteering Event

The orienteering event in September went well with no reported disruption to us or damage to our property. The

organisers also made a small donation to charity on our behalf for use of our land.

Community Matters

At least one board member attends the monthly Association of Island Communities Voluntary Council (AICVC) meetings which discusses local issues on the Isle of Dogs. Some points from last month's meeting were that burglaries have decreased in the area and this year the council is supplying a 30-foot Christmas tree for the Island which will be erected in Island Gardens and will be lit up on Thursday 12th December at 6:30 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

We also attend the Blackwall Ward Panel meeting each month which covers crime and other problems in the area. Last month's meeting mentioned the problems with people parking and blocking Amsterdam Road when dropping off/collecting children from the school across the road. The council is aware of the problem and are attempting to deal with it.

Christmas Event

Each year in December the LYMC Events Group arranges a Christmas event with mulled wine, mince pies and children's events. Everyone is invited. If the weather is inclement we will shelter beneath the arches next to the cycle store.



Contacts

Mark Plunkett at Parc Properties: **020 7515 3553**
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London Yard Board: lymc@londonyard.net
Parc 24 hour emergency: **020 7537 9394**

All other contacts can be found on the website:
www.londonyard.net