

# BITS & PIECES

THE BITMO NEWSLETTER FOR BELLE ISLE TENANTS & RESIDENTS



DECEMBER 2020

## Message from CEO Deborah Kelly



Welcome to our December 2020 Newsletter. We hope you, your friends, family and neighbours are safe and well. The past few months have shown us all the importance of community and of people reaching out to help one another, and although it has been hard, the strongest way we all demonstrated that was by staying indoors and staying apart.

Staying safe and well over cold winter months is vital, so doing things like heating your home, washing your hands, eating well, and getting a flu jab- if you're eligible for one- are really important. The NHS offer some great online resources for staying well and we've included some on the back page of our newsletter too.

BITMO's housing services remain open and accessible via telephone, whilst our housing office and GATE remain closed to the public. It's important we look out for one another, so if you have concerns about accessing food, heating, or wellbeing for either yourself or a neighbour, please get in touch with us. We work with a range of local community based organisations so that we can support you to be healthy and comfortable in your home.

During the autumn, we welcomed Andrew Walker as our new Head of Repairs and Investment. We also wished Sarah Mortimer, Rent Accounts Manager good luck in her new job elsewhere, and welcomed Stephen Oldham as our new Income and Tenancy Manager.

We know that lots of organisations are sending you to their websites but that not everyone can access the internet, or knows how to find what they're looking for. We can help you improve your digital skills, so that you can safely and confidently do what you'd like to online. So whilst we're limiting our time outside and staying warm at home, now is a great time to get to grips with technology that can keep you connected with friends and family.

I'd encourage every household to complete our survey on page 2.

We hope that you're able to stay safe and enjoy the festive period.

With well wishes for Christmas and the New Year, on behalf of the Management Board, staff and volunteers.

**Santa is coming to Belle Isle!**

**FREE EVENT**

**21 DEC**

**11AM TO 3PM**

**Monday 21 December 2020**

**11:00am: Winrose Garth**

**11.50am: Belle Isle Parade Shops (Belle Isle Road)**

**12:40pm: Belle Isle Stone- opp. West Grange Sorting Office**

**1.30pm: Broom Road- opp. Broom Garth**

**2.20pm: Manorfield Hall, Newhall Road**

**Santa and his elves will be keeping a safe social distance and we ask that you do too**

For enquiries, please contact [gate@belleislebitmo.co.uk](mailto:gate@belleislebitmo.co.uk)  
call 0113 3782190, or visit [www.facebook.com/belleislebitmo](https://www.facebook.com/belleislebitmo)

# Get online in your own time



The internet can be an exciting place to visit; full of lots of information, entertainment, people you know and even the odd bargain! The internet touches every part of our lives and during this year we've become even more reliant on it, even for things such as being able to home school our children and access health services. Being able to get online can make your life much easier; finding out shop opening times, paying bills, bus times, banking, reporting repairs to us, or connecting with family and friends.

We understand that for some people the internet can also feel overwhelming and a bit frightening, and we often hear that it feels like learning a new language. With more and

more organisations encouraging you to visit their website for information and to use their services, it's important that we're able to help you get online in your own time and in the ways you'd like to.

There's a whole world wide web for you to explore, and even if you're already using the internet for some things, like job searching or social media, we'd really like to help you improve your abilities so you can do more!

We'd like to know what your situation is – do you have a device to use? Access to the internet? How can we help you? **Please complete and return this survey using the FREEPOST envelope we've included with your Bits & Pieces newsletter.**

**1** Do you go online? By online we mean accessing the internet on your phone, laptop, tablet or other device.

☐ All the time ☐ Sometimes

☐ No- never/hardly ever

**2** If you do go online, where do you do this? (tick all that apply)

☐ Home ☐ Community e.g. GATE, library, café

☐ Work ☐ A friend/neighbour/relatives home

Other:

**3** If you don't use the internet, or you go online but don't do as much as you'd like to, what's stopping you? (tick all that apply)

☐ Haven't got a device (smart phone/tablet/laptop/computer)

☐ Haven't got wifi or data

☐ Don't know what to do ☐ Worry something

will go wrong ☐ Don't know what I would use

the internet for

Other:

Name:

Address:

Telephone number:

**4** If you have a device, which device do you use? (tick all that apply)

☐ Phone ☐ Laptop ☐ Tablet

Other:

**5** Do you use:

☐ Your own wifi ☐ Someone else's wifi

☐ Data (3G/4G/5G) ☐ Not sure

**6** Would you like to know more about...? (tick all that apply)

☐ Connecting with others e.g. Zoom or Skype or social media ☐ Shopping safely online

☐ Finding trustworthy information

☐ Basic skills (starting from scratch)

☐ Email ☐ Skills for work

☐ Managing universal credit

☐ Staying safe online

Other:

**Please return using the FREEPOST envelope. All returned surveys will be given priority access and updates to any new equipment we may receive.** You may be contacted for further information, or for us to speak to you about help and support that is available.

**3** | Search Belle Isle TMO on Facebook 

## Photo competition

Thank you to everyone who entered our photo competition. We received some amazing entries that showed off the beautiful views in and around Belle Isle. The winners were Kirsty, Angela and Tina, who each received a £20 shopping voucher and their photos will be used on our website at [www.belleisletmo.co.uk](http://www.belleisletmo.co.uk)

You can see more entries and join in with other competitions, as well as keeping up to date with service changes and local news, by following our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/belleisletmo](https://www.facebook.com/belleisletmo)



## Could you be a BITMO board member?

Our operations are overseen and directed by a Board drawn mostly from tenants, who are elected at our Annual General Meetings held in September each year. There are a limited number of places for people to be co-opted onto the Board if they have particular skills which are seen as necessary. These can be either tenants or non-tenants. BITMO currently has one such vacant space and would like to hear from anyone who has Human Resources or Finance skills which would be relevant to its range of operations.

To give you a flavour of our operation, we currently have nearly 40 members of staff (plus a number of dynamic volunteers helping run our normal operations); our annual revenue costs amount to some £3m to service our range of activities, including: lettings, repairs, tenancy services, rent collection and the GATE outreach programme (Getting Advice, Training and Employment); and we also manage the capital investment programme on the estate on behalf of Leeds City Council.

**If you think that you would be a good representative of BITMO tenants and can offer energy, enthusiasm and skills then we would love to hear from you. Please contact Karen Hoole on 0113 378 2182, or email [karen.hoole@belleisletmo.co.uk](mailto:karen.hoole@belleisletmo.co.uk).**

## Getting to Know You. Introducing Stephen Oldham, BITMO's Income and Tenancy Manager

My main role is to manage the rent collection and arrears management processes. A well rounded life experience is what you need to succeed at that role. A strong moral compass and an objective approach to our customers' financial situation is essential.

I'm 49 years old, married, and I've got a son aged 19 and a daughter aged 17. My son was a twin, but unfortunately Thomas was stillborn. You can imagine how upsetting this was. It changed my outlook on life in that I was more assertive in asking questions in uncomfortable situations. We would have never had a daughter if Thomas was born, so our outlook has been turned from an upsetting situation into a very positive one.

I enjoy trying to keep fit by running (park run distances), and attending boot camp gym sessions. My absolute pleasure is scuba diving. I qualified in my mid-20s and have dived ever since. It sounds really privileged, but diving in the cold North Sea is anything but the James Bond scenario you may imagine!

My parents didn't go to college, and they weren't pushy for me to do that. However, they did want me to pass exams to allow more choice in the job market. Having passed my A-levels, my intention was to go university.

I wanted to work for a year first to save up some money. The policies around student finance and loans then changed for the worse, so I worked for a bit longer. That is where my career with Leeds City Council started, and I didn't go to university.

The purpose of social housing is to provide secure, decent accommodation to people who cannot afford for whatever reason to obtain accommodation at full market price. We aim to give people a home that they can live in for as long as they want to. Unlike private landlords we won't be selling the property out from under the tenant or seeking to put the rent up to maximise our income. We operate on a not for profit basis. Our homes are no frills, but they are homes for life and they are well-maintained and safe.

It's important to me that my team enjoy coming to work and feel supported and valued. I think that is the only way people can do their best work.





## Tips for winter wellbeing

During the colder months it's important we stay warm to stay well. Here are some top tips for winter wellbeing:

- if you're not very mobile, are 65 or over, or have a health condition, such as heart or lung disease, heat your home to at least 18C
- keep your bedroom at 18C all night if you can
- use a hot water bottle or electric blanket to keep warm in bed – but do not use both at the same time
- have at least 1 hot meal a day – eating regularly helps keep you warm
- have hot drinks regularly
- draw curtains at dusk and keep doors closed to block out draughts

Visit [www.nhs.co.uk](http://www.nhs.co.uk) for more about staying well over winter. If you have any concerns about heating your home, you can contact your utility company directly or you can speak to us on 0113 3782188.

## Scams

Unfortunately we've seen an increase in scams over recent months, including people knocking on doorsteps claiming to be from organisations and businesses who can help. Don't feel embarrassed about reporting a scam – scammers are clever and scams can happen to anyone.

You can call the police on 101 if you've transferred money to the scammer in the last 24 hours, but if you feel threatened or unsafe, call 999. Always ask to see identification if someone arrives unannounced at your home.

Action Fraud is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud, and you can report all types of scams to them on 0300 123 2040. You can also forward any suspicious and scam emails to Trading Standards, send them to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)



## Dealing with debt

We understand that this time of year can be particularly difficult when it comes to money and budgeting. With Christmas feeling a little different this year, we might be tempted to spend more than we have to make it feel special. Our advice is always the same – ensure that your priority payments and debts are paid first. Shopping smartly, waiting for sales events and offers can help you get more for your money, and making homemade gifts, which are often cherished, can also help save some money too.

If you'd like some help when it comes to money, budgeting or debt, call our Rents and Tenancy Team on 0113 378 2187.

## Contents insurance

You must have valid contents insurance to cover your possessions against fire, theft and other risks, such as accidental damage. If something happens to destroy or damage your possessions, it can cost a lot of money to replace these items, some of which may be essential.

Belle Isle TMO is able to offer you an affordable insurance policy through Royal Sun Alliance. Policies are simple to set up, you don't have to pay any excess and you can cancel at any time. There are two types of policies so you're able to choose the best one for your home and valuables.

You can apply online via [www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk) or call us on 0113 3782188 for further information and help to apply.

## Christmas Opening Times

Wednesday 23rd December 2020	Open as normal
Thursday 24th December 2020	9.00am to 1.00pm
Friday 25th December 2020	Closed
Monday 28th December 2020	Closed
Tuesday 29th December 2020	10.00am to 4.00pm
Wednesday 30th December 2020	10.00am to 4.00pm
Thursday 31st December 2020	10.00am to 1.00pm
Friday 1st January 2021	Closed
Monday 4th January 2021	Open as normal

## Important Phone Numbers Cut out and keep

Report a repair call **0113 378 2188** or  
**0800 389 5503**

Make a rent payment call **0113 378 2187**

Report anti-social behaviour call **0113 387 2188**

Report issues with bins and bin collections call  
**0113 222 4406** or download the Leeds Bins app



@BITMO\_LS10



Belle Isle TMO