

BITS & PIECES

THE BITMO NEWSLETTER FOR BELLE ISLE TENANTS & RESIDENTS



MAY 2024

In this edition of Bits & Pieces we highlight the difference that tenant management makes when it comes to **listening to tenants and acting on your priorities**. The **More than a Landlord** section gives an update on the brilliant community projects that we support to make Belle Isle a better place. In Starting Young we highlight the **FREE tuition in maths and English** that BITMO provides to primary school children. There's a section on our performance, and we share with you what tenants feel about BITMO and what we can do better. The ballot in September will decide the future of Belle Isle.

We hope you will vote for a **stronger, safer, greener future for Belle Isle**.



Will You Vote Yes for BITMO?

The BITMO Ballot is coming up this year. Every five years BITMO residents are asked to vote YES or NO for BITMO to continue to provide services for Belle Isle. We think the future with BITMO looks very promising, but without it? Well, here is what some Belle Isle tenants say....

"No BITMO means no GATE, and it is a lifeline for so many members of this community"

"If BITMO closes down the school holiday activities will stop, they are a god send for families"

"We'd lose our caretakers, and they do such a good job keeping the estate looking good, but also doing small repairs for people, we wouldn't get that service from Leeds"

"We've put so much effort into the community kitchen and foodbank, it would be a crying shame to lose them"

"With Leeds you have to go into a library or phone a call centre. Here you can walk into the office and see a team of people who are based here and know where you live"

Belle Isle Gala, Saturday 6 July 12-3pm at Windmill School & Parkside. More details inside.

BITMO “more than a landlord”

BITMO doesn't just provide landlord services. Yes, we allocate homes, repair them, and provide support to tenants to live successfully in them, and there is lots of information in this edition of Bits & Pieces about how we do that. BITMO is about much more, it is also about community control, and community development.

We work with the people who live in Belle Isle to run projects that are truly collaborative, and designed with local people and groups. These projects begin with community consultations. Tenants are asked about their priorities, and the areas that they want to influence. The needs identified are discussed and possible responses are explored.

Together, tenants who live in Belle Isle, and our community development team work out the most appropriate response and set about planning a project. Sometimes the projects are concerned with community spaces, as was the case with the Belle Isle Circus project. Sometimes the projects are about health and wellbeing. The Community Garden and Community Orchard projects are designed to bring people together across the generations to grow fruit and vegetables, to get the benefits of gardening as exercise as well as growing food, and spending time with others developing new skills. In the school holidays we provide free food and activities three days a week. This is funded by BITMO's Board, organised by BITMO staff with the food cooked by volunteers and parents and kids are consulted on what food and activities they would like to see.



BITMO caretakers



Free good quality school uniform & winter coats



Belle Isle Community Kitchen volunteers

KIDS SPORTS GAMES, SKILLS & COACHING EVERY TUESDAY

Low Grange View Grass field LS10 3DT 3.30pm	West Grange Road MUGA LS10 3AW 4.45pm
FREE	
Funded by: BITMO	Funded by: Middleton Park Councillors Community Committee Leeds City Council

**GET ACTIVE. MAKE FRIENDS.
TRY NEW SPORTS.**

**HUNSLET & BELLE ISLE
COMMUNITY PROJECT**
REGISTERED CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION (SC042818)
☎ **BEN: 07419 366 058**



COMING SOON

Belle Isle Gala—Saturday 6 July 12-3pm at Windmill School & Parkside

Climbing wall * 4 giant inflatables* Sports taster sessions*
Food stalls * Fire engine * Lord Mayor * Police van
Displays by local gymnasts, majorettes, dance groups

For more information or to enquire about having a stall, call Tracey on 07891 270094 or scan the QR code.

Planning meetings Saturday 18 May and Saturday 15 June, both at 3pm at BITMO's GATE. All welcome.

Know someone who needs help with spoken English?

Open day to find out more Wednesday 6 June 12.15—2.45pm at BITMO's GATE. The course will run on Wednesdays in June and July at 12.15pm at BITMO's GATE. Call Tracey on 07891 270094 or visit BITMO's GATE to find out more.



Starting young! BITMO support for young people

Supporting successful schooling in Belle Isle

Because the BITMO Board is tenant led, what matters to tenants gets priority. We all want the best for our kids, and we want them to do well at school. That is easier said than done though. Young people in Belle Isle don't do as well in key stage tests in maths and English as other young people in Leeds.

Our Board have been supporting primary school aged children to have FREE tuition in maths and English for two years now because they know that if you can succeed in those subjects, the other curriculum areas will be a lot easier, and leaving school with qualifications makes it more likely that you'll get steady work when you leave school. We have a team of tutors who work with children aged 7 and 8 every Tuesday in term time. A free meal is provided for the whole family as well as the tuition and the response to it has been amazing. If your child is in Year 4 or 5 now, or will be in Year 3 or 4 from September and you'd like your child to benefit from FREE help with maths and English get in touch.



Free tutoring at BITMO's GATE



Tree planting with Windmill Primary

Another way we can help is by providing work experience and mentoring for older students. We want to help young people in Belle Isle to unlock their potential and act on the curiosity, talent and passion that they naturally have. We can match your young person with a BITMO mentor who will guide them through a short programme called LIFT OFF. At the end of that programme your young person will be clear about their skills, their strengths, and will have a CV that can help them to make the next step, whether that is applying to college or work.

Belle Isle makeovers

There are some areas on the estate that need a bit of extra love and attention to look their best, and the Board has set aside some funds to make improvements that are tenant led. We will work with tenants to identify priority areas, and work up a project that will improve the facilities or appearance of that part of the estate, that local residents can take part in.

To get things started please talk to your neighbours about areas that could be improved, then get in touch.



To find out more or apply, contact the team in BITMO's GATE—call in during opening hours, phone 0113 378 2190 or scan the QR code.



Interview with BITMO Chair, Leon Kirkham

Leon, you've lived in Leeds a long time, but you're a Cornishman aren't you ?

I was born in a small town in West Cornwall, Hayle, it had 3 miles of golden sands. My dad was a Yorkshireman and he returned to Leeds to work, and I followed him. My parents were council tenants, and I'm proud to be one. The first home I had of my own was a one bedroom house in the Manor Farms. I've brought up my family in Belle Isle, and I've seen the place improve as a result of tenant management. It's not a perfect place but it has a real community feel, and it feels safe, and well looked after.

Your work as a Union Convenor is interesting and impressive, standing up for people, asserting and protecting their rights – is that mindset partly what motivates you to be involved in tenant management ?

It's always important to help people and support them to have their voice heard. That's how I got involved in the first place. I worked for the Council and because of my trade union work I was put on a project group set up to strengthen BITMO. I could see that there was potential for BITMO to offer better services, and give tenants a say in what is happening on the estate, and work in partnership to put the services tenants want in place. There is nowhere else in Leeds where tenants have a direct say every day in the decisions that affect their housing. We have been able to make sure that what matters to the people who live here, is what gets done.



There is a lot more we need to do, and that's why we need people to vote for BITMO in September, and why we need them to get involved. There is a whole swathe of people living in Belle Isle who don't use the GATE, don't come to the groups that are run, don't sign their children up for the tuition, we need to know what will help them to thrive in Belle Isle and put those things in place.

What's the value for you of tenant management?

BITMO provides a more sympathetic understanding way of running an estate, we are a community-based organisation that does the housing management bit really well, but also helps people with the cost of living, with food, with sustaining their tenancy. We provide mental health support, tuition, and loads more.

BITMO will be 20 this year, and when you think about what we should be celebrating after 20 years of tenant leadership it is that tenants have a say here, and we support the whole family and the whole community from an early age right through.

A YES vote in September will mean that we can continue the good work and improve what we do, to give our children the opportunity to thrive - put more resources into young people, to help them, and their families so that Belle Isle and all the people who live here can live well and recognise that there is a group of people that we haven't reached, and find out what matters to them and how we can help them to thrive.

Would you like to be a BITMO Shareholder?

BITMO is an organisation run by tenants for tenants. We are managed by a Board which is mainly made up of BITMO tenants. We always welcome tenant applicants to take part in our Board elections each year and being a shareholder gives you the opportunity to stand for election to the BITMO Board. Shareholders also vote on business at our Annual General Meetings.

It is very easy to become a Shareholder. You need to give your details to BITMO and sign up to the code of conduct. Shares cost ten pence.

To encourage more tenants to become shareholders we are giving away a £25 supermarket gift voucher in a raffle. To enter please send your name and address to karen.hoole@belleislebitmo.co.uk or write to Karen Hoole at BITMO, Aberfield Gate, LS10 3QH, giving a brief description about (1) why you like living in Belle Isle and (2) the most important three services that BITMO provides. We will contact you to ask you to sign up as a shareholder. A draw of all shareholders will take place on Thursday 30 May 2024.

What's the Difference with a TMO?

Housing Law in England gives tenants the right to set up a separate organisation to take on the management of their council housing from the council. Belle Isle tenants did this 20 years ago, and took over the management of the housing in Belle Isle from Leeds council. Tenants have been managing it ever since.

What that means for people who live in Belle Isle is that they can have a direct say in the services that are provided.

We provide winter warmth programmes, financial inclusion services, advice and support for people looking for work, or applying for benefits. Community projects are supported and funded without having to compete with the needs of other areas in Leeds

The people who run the estate live on the estate, they are tenants who care about where they live BITMO has kept its housing office open while Leeds have closed theirs down

We have an enhanced service offer that gives tenants more of what matters to them than Leeds council does

We have a community centre that runs a programme of activities for tenants throughout the year

We have a free food offer 4-5 times a week

We host the food bank

We have a community fund that tenants can apply to for financial help

School holiday clubs keep young ones busy free of charge

All of this is possible because Belle Isle is run by a tenant management organisation.



Elected Belle Isle tenants

Leon Kirkham—Chair, East Granges

Jean Burton, Vice Chair/Secretary, Brooms

Harry Austin—Vice Chair/Treasurer, Aberfields

Julie Rhodes, Brooms

Rose Hodgkinson, Rosedales

Kim Asquith, Town Street

Sharafath Ghafiri, Winroses

John Oddy, Belle Isle Circus

Tracy Morris, Aberfields

Emma Walkley, Aberfields

Who is on BITMO's Board?

Local Councillors

Councillor Sharon Burke

Councillor Wayne Dixon

Co-opted—extra members brought on for their experience

Margaret Brown, Brooms

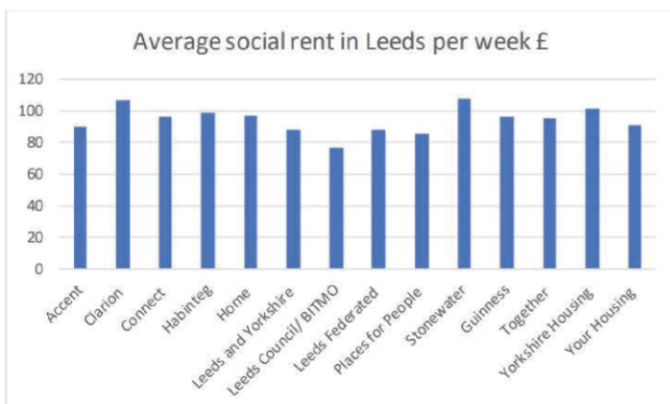
Ashley Knowles, local resident

Paul Truswell, ex-MP & Middleton Park councillor

BITMO Performance

BITMO is well run. The service you get is just as good if not better than in any other area of Leeds. This snapshot of our performance gives you the highlights. If you want to find out more you can find the detail on our website.

BITMO rents are amongst the lowest rents available in any type of rented accommodation. They are set using a formula that is regulated



and are intended to be affordable. The table below shows the average rents charged by social housing providers in Leeds. The average rent charged by Leeds and BITMO is £76.53 per week which is significantly lower than any other social landlord in Leeds.


If you are struggling and need help with debt, or with applying for benefits, get in touch with either Michelle or Mark on 0113 378 2187. They have managed to bring in £300k in additional money for our tenants and they might be able to help you.

You can find out more about BITMO's performance on our website by scanning the QR code.



Tenants whose homes are managed by BITMO are 5% more satisfied than those managed by Leeds on average. There are some areas where we need to do better. The BITMO Board wants to increase satisfaction in all areas to at least 70% and we are working on that. If you'd like to be part of improving what we do, get in touch with us to find out more.

BITMO/LCC-COMPARED-Q1-4-2023-24

Click to view trend 	Leeds City Council	BITMO
Overall Satisfaction	66%	71%
Well Maintained Home	67%	76%
Safe Home	74%	80%
Repairs Last 12 Months	70%	77%
Time Taken Repairs	67%	73%
Communal Areas	64%	79%
Neighbourhood Contribution	60%	75%
Approach to ASB	53%	55%
Safety in neighbourhood	63%	58%
Neighbourhood Appearance	58%	59%
Listens & Acts	55%	62%
Kept Informed	67%	75%
Fairly & with Respect	74%	80%
Complaints Handling	29%	27%
Easy to Deal With	65%	74%
Friendly Approachable	62%	60%
Advice & Support	50%	56%
Good Reputation	37%	54%
Rent VFM	67%	65%

Introducing Jo Wood

Introducing Jo Wood, who runs BITMO's GATE. She has worked in Belle Isle for 22 years and has seen the area develop. We asked her to reflect on her time in Belle Isle.

How long have you worked in Belle Isle and in what roles?

I started working at Belle Isle North Estate Management Board December 2002 when I joined the team at the Winrose Project which supported young people aged 16-24 in their tenancies. We created a community of support and connections between the young people and a listening ear. This was a special time for many reasons being able to support and help young people and also during this time I had my own children. My life changed in many ways.

Belle Isle North and Belle Isle South joined together in this period and Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation was born. When the Winrose Project came to an end I decided to stay at BITMO and took up a new position as a Housing Management Officer. The work was about anti-social behaviour and enforcing the tenancy agreement. I embraced the role and as challenging as it was at times, I was able to use the skills I had developed at the Winrose Project to signpost people to the support they needed.

About 2 years ago I decided to try something new. I now work full time in the Community Development Team and in BITMO's GATE. I am thoroughly enjoying this new stage of my career and though I have worked in Belle Isle for near-

ly 22 years, I very much feel I am still learning and honestly feel as enthusiastic about my work as I did when I joined. Every working day brings something new and I love being part of a team who want to empower people, the community and help to bring about positive change.

How has Belle Isle changed over the years?

When I started working here the Estate was managed in two halves, now it is managed as one, by a Board of tenants. This is definitely a huge positive especially, as at the helm of this, is a Board of Tenants. The "TMO" is the first thing that makes us different. We are a Tenant Management Organisation – we are tenant led. This means the tenants are literally at the centre and the heart of the organisation. I personally think this is integral to the success of the Estate.

The people who live in the area has changed over the years. Belle Isle still has many multiple generations of families living here but we are also welcoming new people to the area who bring different experiences and talents. Belle Isle is a treasure chest of skills and talents and in my current role I am fortunate enough to be able hear about amazing stories of people who contribute so much to the area.

Jo has had lots of experience of working with people who suffer domestic abuse. In the next edition of Bits & Pieces, we'll ask her to reflect on this and let us know how BITMO and the wider community can help.



Jo with Tracey in BITMO's GATE

Coming soon! BITMO will be asking Belle Isle tenants for their view on:

- improvements to the green space at Low Grange View
- What "digital support" you need—filling in online forms and improving your computer skills
- the kind of advice and support you would like BITMO to provide

Vote YES for BITMO in September's ballot

Voting YES in the Ballot in September will mean that Belle Isle will continue to be managed by tenants, voting NO will mean tenant management stops in Belle Isle. It is up to the people who live here to choose how they want Belle Isle to be run in future. Vote YES if you want Belle Isle to continue to be tenant led.

62 % of BITMO tenants are happy that BITMO listens and acts on what they say.

76% of BITMO tenants are happy that we maintain their homes well.

In the last year BITMO spent some £2,050,000 on repairs and maintenance, £370,000 getting properties ready to re-let and over £1,800,000 on improving homes including:

- New boilers £147,000
- New kitchens and bathrooms £209,000
- New roofs £152,000
- Disabled adaptations £232,000

This year we will spend £2,187,000 improving homes. We are increasing the size of the kitchen and bathroom programme, continuing with re-roofing and doing work on reducing heat loss. .

We have developed a garden tool library to help people who don't have access to gardening tools, and we can provide skips to help people if needed.

We've increased how often we clean the communal areas in flats.

In consultation with residents **we have repurposed** the bowling green as a community orchard and **redecorated**, carpeted and furnished the communal rooms in retirement life properties

We have invested in **usable green space**, working with groups of volunteers on the community orchard, community garden, and tree planting across the estate.

We fenced off Belle Isle Circus so it is a safer place, we have increased the planting there and are providing lighting.

We are refurbishing the West Grange "Sport Space" multi-use games area, and have supported a children's sport programme at Low Grange View. **All of this is possible because Belle Isle is run by a tenant management organisation. Please vote YES to BITMO in September.**



Important phone numbers

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

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

Report anti-social behaviour **0113 378 2188**

Report issues with bins and bin collections to Leeds City Council on **0113 222 4406** or download the **Leeds Bins** app

You can find out all the information you need about BITMO on our website:

- ⇒ Repairs
- ⇒ Rent
- ⇒ Help & Support
- ⇒ News from Belle Isle
- ⇒ Information on BITMO's performance



Go to www.belleislelmo.co.uk or scan the QR code

This newsletter is available in large print on request by phoning 0113 378 2188.



@BITMO_LS10



Belle Isle TMO