



Strawberry Vale gas supply: a hard won victory

By Daphne Chamberlain

Strawberry Vale residents have won back their gas supply. The Peabody Trust, which owns the estate, had been refusing to switch the gas back on since 22 January, even though a faulty meter had been repaired and certified safe by the National Grid. They had been due to meet a legal challenge in court from the residents on 4 March, but have now started re-installation.

Missing safety procedures

The legal challenge was not only because the gas had not been re-installed, but also because Peabody Trust had given no satisfactory reason for keeping it turned off. However, it is now appears that the Trust has never operated legally required safety procedures set out in the Gas Safety (Manage-

ment) Regulations 1996.

These detailed requirements cover safe delivery to consumers, dealing with supply emergencies, gas escapes, incidents and gas composition. Failure to comply can result in an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment.

Months of gas connections ahead

Peabody Trust, which owns and manages more than 27,000 homes, stated: "To the best of our knowledge the estate has never had this documentation in place at any point in its history. We are now working to restore the gas supply for cooking as our preferred option for the estate.

"This will mean putting in place a comprehensive set of additional procedures in order to meet all of the requirements. We expect to connect around 25 homes each

week. As there are 267 homes on the estate, this will take around 10-12 weeks to complete."

Compensation

Hodge Jones and Allen, the legal firm representing the residents, are continuing to look at compensation claims, which will be considered individually and heard in court at a future date.

Laurence Williamson, Chair of the Residents Association, said: "We're happy that the Trust has finally come to their senses, but there are serious questions to be raised about their ability to carry out their duties as landlords, given that our properties were being supplied with gas without the correct safety procedures in place. "It is not over until the last house is connected, of course, but right now it feels a considerable and hard won victory."



Memory Lane: The Confections on stage

Bitter sweet swan song for the Confections

For 28 years, members of the Confections singing group have given public concerts and toured day centres and residential homes with their rousing repertoire of music hall numbers and Broadway classics.

But now the small band of singers and musicians has reached the end of the road after founder Ruby Sasin announced that this month's concert at St Mary's Catholic Church, East Finchley, would be their last.

"I'll be sorry to stop but I'm past my sell-by date now," said Ruby, sadly. "It's a lot of work keeping the group going, rehearsing once a week and finding new routines and costumes. I've loved every minute but it's time to call it a day."

Old favourites

The Confections had 12 members at their peak, and more recently have been touring with four women, two men and a flautist. They could perform two or three concert visits a day at residential homes, always in full costume, and made a point of staging a fundraising concert for St Mary's twice a year.

The first half of their show was packed with slightly naughty songs and singalongs from the music hall days followed by favourites from the likes of Gershwin, Sondheim and Rogers and Hart for the second half.

"I've got so many happy memories," said Ruby. "We turned up at an old folks' home for an 8pm concert and they'd forgotten we were coming. They had to get everyone out of their beds to come and watch us. Even the canary had a cover over its cage when we got there.

"And there have been moving moments too. Once I was singing the old song Alice Blue Gown from the musical Irene and a lady in the front row started singing along with me. Afterwards, the matron of the home told me the lady had been there three years and never spoken before that night. That really hit me."

Final performance

Ruby, who has three children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, tried to find a successor to carry on the Confections but without any luck. So be sure to catch them for the last time when they perform at St Mary's Church, High Road, N2, on Saturday 16 April at 7.30pm. Tickets priced £8 and £7 are available on the door or in advance from 020 8440 2817.

Walking group seeks special status

East Finchley's Talkie Walkies group is hoping to achieve Walks for Health status, putting it in line for advertising and support from the national organisation at walking-forhealth.org.uk

Members meet every Monday at midday at the Clissold Arms on Fortis Green and go for a walk together in a local green space, giving everyone some fresh air, company and a chance to discover parts of the local area they may not know.

The group is currently recruiting new members and new lead-

ers to help strengthen the team. Anyone can join, and being a group leader simply means being at an agreed meeting point and having a route in mind. People do not have to commit to every week.

If you'd like to join the Talkie Walkies, contact Lisa Smith at EFAB on 020 3778 0228 or email us@efab.org.uk.

Spurs score for hospice

By Diana Cormack

A two-year partnership between north London's only children's hospice and Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club kicked off on 3 March with the home derby against Arsenal, when the team wore special edition match shirts to be signed and auctioned to raise funds for the charity.

The club aims to raise awareness of the work of Noah's Ark and to drive the recruitment of volunteers via high profile events and the support of first team players. Visit www.ForPreciousMoments.com for further information about their activities.

Noah's Ark also hopes to raise £3.3million for its Building the Ark Appeal, to fund construction of the children's hospice facility for families and children with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions. To donate or for more information visit www.noahsarkhospice.org.uk



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