



Local News is our Aim

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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Group action over estate gas crisis

By Daphne Chamberlain

A group of 54 residents on the Strawberry Vale estate are claiming compensation after suffering months without a gas supply through the depths of last winter, leaving them unable to cook and many of them with no heating or hot water.

Law firm Hodge, Jones and Allen is applying for a Group Litigation Order against the Peabody Trust Housing Association at the Central London County Court, which will allow 49 more residents to join the five who have already applied.

Deprived of a basic service

Their gas was cut off in January, when National Grid reported a faulty meter. This was replaced, but the Peabody Trust refused to reconnect the supply until forced to by a High Court injunction.

An estimated 240 of the 270 homes in Strawberry Vale were left without a gas supply. It was not until May that all the homes were reconnected.

Laurence Williamson, chair of the Strawberry Vale Residents Association, said: "A landlord responsible for the

homes of hundreds of people, from families with young children to elderly people living alone, deprived them of their gas supply, a basic service that they depended on to cook with.

"Some families were also without heating and hot water and at one point the Red Cross came to the estate with hot meals for residents. This was all during the winter months, affecting vulnerable people's health and leaving many with considerable debts." Legal proceedings disclosed that the Peabody Trust, which took over the estate in 1998, had not obtained a Gas Safety Case in line with regulations that came into force in 1996. Consequently they had been failing to adhere to health and safety regulations relating to the gas supply. The Health & Safety Executive required them to make necessary changes in March.



Festive spirit: This year, a late-night shopping event will replace the Christmas Festival, shown here last year. Photo by Mike Coles

An evening of festive spirit comes to the High Road

N2 is ringing in the festive changes this year. As we first reported last month, the day-long Christmas Festival is being given a year off and is being replaced with a late-night shopping extravaganza along the High Road.

Organisers say the event on Thursday 15 December will be a chance to do some relaxed shopping, enjoy lots of treats and experience a warm welcome from shops, cafes and restaurants.

Shoppers will be entertained by music and carol singing, and there will be a seasonal trail for the kids, a showcase for local artists, mulled wine, mince pies and the official unveiling of the East Finchley Christmas tree.

Traders are being urged to dust off their decorations,

untangle their tinsel and put on a show by vying to become the most festive shop on the High Road.

So put the date in your diary: Thursday 15 December for a new event with seasonal spirit. For more information contact: eastfinchleyfestival@gmail.com.

Charity cat box stolen

Volunteers at the RSPCA charity shop in the High Road are asking everyone to look out for a cat collection box that was stolen from their premises.

"It was stolen at 11am and we have the thief on CCTV. It was literally picked up from the till, concealed in a bag and carried out of the shop," said manager Emma Prosser.

It's described as a little ginger cat sitting on a green box. Although staff don't expect to see the contents again they would like the box back as it is really old and means a lot to them. They ask everyone to keep an eye open in case it has been dumped.

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