

Nick Lewis

We are delighted to introduce our new Chair of the Board – Nick Lewis. So let's find out a little bit more about him shall we?

Nick went to Comprehensive School in North London before studying engineering at University as he harboured dreams of building bridges like Isambard Kingdom Brunel. His studies included spending several months on a building site setting out levels and checking specifications but in his own words "too much of his time was spent organising the annual charity fundraising events."

Upon leaving University Nick was tempted by the better salaries on offer in the finance sector and trained as an accountant, working for a number of companies in London including Balfour Beatty which he enjoyed as it involved a lot of overseas travel.

At 30, Nick moved down to Devon for family reasons and worked for Devon and Cornwall Housing as Finance Director. When Nick joined it was a struggling charity with 1600 units but with the Government's introduction of private borrowing, the organisation grew over the next 13 years to over 5,000 units – many of them in Plymouth.

Nick left to join the new South West Regional Development Agency which covered the seven south west counties. This was a difficult decision as he had found the business of social housing with its not for profit approach really worthwhile and rewarding work: "I really enjoyed the innovation as we introduced the first Shared Ownership schemes in Devon and Cornwall as well as privately managed schemes."

While at the South West Development Agency, Nick was involved in several high profile projects such as the Wave Hub and the redevelopment of Royal William Yard and the sinking of HMS Sylla as an artificial reef.

In 2012 Nick retired early and took up a number of Non-Executive posts including the Chair of North Devon Homes and Vice Chair of Northern Devon NHS Trust: "Non-executive work is fascinating as you are involved in all the key discussions and once the decisions are made the work of implementing them is down to the Executive Directors and staff so you work together as one big team in the interests of the organisation."

Recently we have decided to relocate to Saltash and I wanted to continue this work when the role of Chair of PCH was advertised and for me, it was a no brainer – PCH was the nearest largest Housing Association with the same customer based approach that I enjoyed working with.

"The interview process was really robust and the first two interview sessions were with Board Members and the Executive Management Team which was fine but the customer session had me on my toes – they really wanted to know about the real me and my reasons and motivations for wanting the post. I was more than happy to oblige and in return received some very useful advice about fishing for sea bass near Saltash!

"My first impressions of a PCH Board meeting confirmed what I already knew – that PCH is a well-run organisation with a friendly and positive style of operation superbly led by Elaine Pellow.

“I don’t see any particular need for any significant changes other than those we all agree may be necessary to respond to the major issues facing us – like the very difficult financial climate.

“The staff I have met to date have all been welcoming and very positive about the work of PCH. The only downside I suppose is that I keep being asked what I think the main things that need to happen are or what changes I think need to be made. The answer is simple – whatever the organisation decide – that’s residents, Board and staff. My job is to keep all this running smoothly and cohesively, ironing out any little wrinkles as they may arise. I hope that if nothing else, over 40 years of experience working in organisations has equipped me to do that.

“I am looking forward to meeting as many residents and staff as possible over the next few years and be warned – I will be asking you what changes you would like to see happen!”