



Felixstowe Beach Hut & Chalet Association

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NEWSLETTER No 3

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Dear Members,

We start the latest newsletter in a traditional manner by wishing all our members a belated Happy New Year.

This is the time of year when we don't usually see much of our huts and chalets and long for those sunny summer days, but so far this year has been very different and your Committee has been busy on your behalf over the past few weeks.

Three Committee members met with Councillors Terry-Jane Haworth (who likes to be called T-J) and Ray Herring and other Council officials. T-J has taken over the responsibility for Leisure (which includes beach huts and chalets) from Councillor Geoff Holdcroft. The meeting was timed to take place before the District Council cabinet met to set the rents for 2014/15. Strong representations were made that there should be no increase in rents, considering the huge rise last year - but it fell on deaf ears. We understand that the rise will be 2.5%. This is more than we hoped but considerably less than it might have been had the Association not been formed last year.

The recent weather conditions have had a huge impact on hut owners from Undercliff Road East to Manor End in particular, but chalet tenants have not been untouched. Huts which stand on the promenade over the winter received a mighty bashing in the tidal surge and many were displaced from their positions. A close scrutiny of licences shows that when huts are moved by storm, wind, waves and tides etc. the Council reserves the right to replace the hut in its correct position and charge the owners for doing so. We felt that this was not appropriate under the extreme circumstances as there was so much sand and shingle on the promenade that all huts will have to be moved at some stage in order to clear it away. We didn't want hut owners to be footing some of the bill for the clean-up. Representations were made to T-J and we were very pleased to be told that hut owners would not be charged anything for moving their huts and Suffolk Coastal will cover all the costs. This was very welcome news. There has been a considerable change in the character of the beach which might affect the sites where huts are replaced on the beach and we have been assured that if consideration is given to re-siting any huts from their usual position we will be consulted.

Strong winds ripped the felt from several huts and, where we can, Committee members have taken note of the huts affected. If the owners are members of the Association we have let them know, but where the owners are not members we have passed on the numbers to Suffolk Coastal and they have passed on information to owners. Hopefully this might bring us some new members.

(continued overleaf)

The chalets at Bath Tap also suffered from the winds and the felt was blown from the roof of three of the chalets – two of which are rented by our members. Suffolk Coastal asked their contractors to repair the roof but several days went past and nothing was done. Meanwhile tenant's property was getting soaked and the fabric of the building was deteriorating. We intervened and went direct to T-J asking if she could get things speeded up and within two days the work was carried out. Water has also leaked into other chalets and we have made the point that lack of maintenance of the chalets over several years has resulted in the need for emergency work to be carried out – not to mention damage to property owned by our members.

We appreciate some very generous comments received from members about the results we have achieved so far. We hope that word will spread and that more hut and chalet owners will join the Association this year to add to the 250 members who already belong. The more members we have, the greater will be our collective voice, so please encourage your neighbours to join. Details of the Association is being sent out by Suffolk Coastal with the invoices for rents.

Three of our Committee members attended a Suffolk Coastal cabinet meeting this month and learned that they intend to carry out a complete review of beach huts and chalets in the not too distant future. Mention was made of the possibility of additional sites with huts owned and rented out by the Council. It remains to be seen what the terms of reference of the review will be and we will be keeping a close eye and asking to be kept informed.

As a result of the raffle at our meeting in December we have sent a cheque for £110 to the Felixstowe Volunteer Coastal Patrol and Rescue Service. You may have read in the local press that their boat has since been 'written off' in a road traffic accident as they were on their way to assist in the north of the county following the tidal surge. They are unsure when or if they will be able to resume their service, which is a great pity.

Several of our members have again assisted the Felixstowe Society with a beach clean. We are still in contact with Suffolk Coasts and Heaths with a view to having a section of beach allocated to the Association. The Felixstowe Society are having another beach clean on Thursday 20th March at 9.30am. If you wish to help, meet outside Seagull Cottage (between the Fludyers Arms and Cobbold Point) and you will be made very welcome.

There are now three insurance companies offering beach hut insurance to our members. They are Love Your Hut, Ryan Insurance Group and Towergate. We are also in the process of contacting local businesses to ascertain whether members are able to obtain discounts on purchases. Underwoods Hardware have already offered discount to members (but not on Calor Gas). Details are on our website. If you are unable to access the website, please feel free to contact a member of the Committee to obtain details. When it comes to the renewal of Association membership later this year every member will be issued with a membership card to produce to businesses if they require it.

On Monday 3rd March at 7.30pm the Association will be holding a Quiz Night for our members at the Trades and Labour Club in Walton (where our previous meetings have been held). Just another way of bringing members together. Please feel free to bring relatives and friends and we will have teams of up to 6. Don't worry if you cannot muster additional team members, we will be able to make up teams on the night. Light refreshments will be provided for which we will make a small charge of £1. We hope you are able to attend. Please let our Treasurer, Trevor Mason, know on felixstowehutschalets@gmail.com or **01394 274331** if you are coming.

The days are beginning to get longer which means that it won't be long before we can look forward to spending time at our huts and chalets.

FBHCA Committee