



Felixstowe Beach Hut & Chalet Association

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Secretary: Julie Downton
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NEWSLETTER No 8

July 2015

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 22nd JUNE

We are pleased to welcome Joy Reeve who has filled a vacancy on the Committee, having been unanimously elected at the AGM. Joy has a hut at Manor End and has discovered that she went to school in Eye with our Treasurer. (Several years ago!)

90 people attended and many topics of concern were raised by members, particularly issues around the flouting of bye laws relating to dogs and barbeques on the beach and cycling on the prom. It was agreed that we won't be resorting to violence against offenders, as suggested by one member!!

Committee members had a meeting with Councillors and representatives of their contractors, NORSE, later that week and the majority of this newsletter is devoted to outcome of the meeting.

BYE-LAWS

Councillors were not impressed by our request that they should employ a beach warden in the summer months to ensure that the bye-laws are adhered to. In fact they turned it down flat! In Councillor Holdcroft's words they like to apply a 'light touch' when it comes to the bye-laws. They prefer 'education' to 'enforcement'. They went on to say that it should be a matter for Felixstowe Town Council and they didn't think it was a matter that the Association should be concerned with! We disagreed – of course.

We were told of a group that has been set up comprising Town, District and County Councillors, and representatives from businesses etc. which is called 'Felixstowe Forward' which will be looking into all aspects of how the town can be improved. The bye-laws are something that should be within its remit. The first meeting is in July and we will ensure that the Association is represented there. Maybe we can then make some progress.

We talked about signage along the prom but the Councillors don't see a lot wrong with it. This is something else we will take to 'Felixstowe Forward'. We believe it is important that we are consulted on all things relating to the beach and sea front.

MANOR END

We congratulated Suffolk Coastal on the difference that has been made at Manor End with the provision of a toilet block, play equipment and kiosks. We were pleased to be told that work will start in July to put in a slope down from the prom to the beach to allow better access. Our Committee member, Carol, will soon be able to take her ladder home!

LENGTH OF TENURE

Many of our members wish for a longer period of tenure than the current one year, as they feel vulnerable to the possibility of having their licence cancelled with nothing they can do about it. We were told “be careful what you wish for” as it their opinion that if hut owners had a longer tenure on their plot, their huts would be more valuable and as a consequence Suffolk Coastal would be able to charge a higher rent! We couldn’t see the logic in that and pointed out that Southwold hut owners have a 30 year tenure and pay less per year than our members. They will have a look at the implications, but they don’t really want the work and expense that would go with making the legal changes.

TOILETS

The temporary toilets at Clifflands have been well received and they are being kept very clean. We asked Councillors to consider constructing a permanent block, such as used to be there some time ago. They did not dismiss it out of hand and will monitor the usage before making a decision. If it is to happen it is probably a few years away – but we will keep it on our agenda.

There have been regular problems with the condition of the toilets at The Dip. A major difficulty is that the waste goes into a tank and then has to be pumped uphill to the main sewerage system. The pump is often out of action because inappropriate items such as nappies and cloths are flushed down the toilets (not by our members, of course). However, the good news is that a refurbishment of these toilets is planned for 2017/18, so in a couple of years they should be much better. Bear with it, meantime.

Suffolk Coastal has recently spent £22,000 on a centralised locking system for all toilets in the District. Our experience is that it hasn’t been working too well in Felixstowe as toilet doors have been locked as early as 5pm meaning that members at their huts and chalets during the evening have nowhere ‘to go’. This, we are told, was a teething problem and the toilets should be open later during the summer months and closed at 5.30pm during the winter.

REFURBISHMENT OF THE CHALETS

Chalet tenants (especially at Bath Tap) will not need reminding of the problems with the work recently carried out with undue delays meaning many tenants could not have access to their chalets for long periods. In truth, it was an absolute debacle.

We requested a rebate of two month's rent for those worst affected, but have been told that Suffolk Coastal will only deal with each case on its own merits. Therefore our Committee member, Roy, will be speaking with chalet tenants and advising them on the wording of their applications for a rebate.

We queried why the rear doors of chalets were not replaced and were informed that it was not considered cost effective as it will be cheaper to regularly paint the doors rather than replace them.

FUTURE RENT INCREASES

As you would expect, we have asked that there is no increase in rent next year. Equally, you will not be surprised that is not going to happen. We did float the idea of a flat rate rise for all rents rather than a percentage rise because the difference between those paying the most and those paying the least is continually getting wider in actual terms. That is also unlikely to happen.

We were given an assurance that the rise next year will not be more than the percentage rise for all other fees and charges that Suffolk Coastal levy. We will endeavour to ascertain the likely percentage in due course.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE (LACK OF)

We expressed the dissatisfaction of our members at the amount of vegetation that is encroaching on huts and steps, particularly at Brackenbury Cliffs, Clifflands and Brackenbury Fort. There is, apparently a maintenance plan in place which is weather dependent. Members wishing to bring problems of this nature to the attention of Suffolk Coastal, please use the contact details given at the end of this newsletter.

One of our members has found a newspaper clipping from The Times in 1997, which referred to very similar problems at Felixstowe that we are bringing to the attention of Suffolk Coastal. The article included a reference to the 'now defunct beach hut owners association'. We were not aware that there has previously been an Association, but rest assured that we have no intention of allowing our Association to become 'defunct'. As Jo, our Chairman (or should that be Chairwoman?), told the Councillors at our meeting "we will not be going away".

We were sad to learn of the death of our member Joyce Garood who was well known to hut owners in Undercliff Road East. We are pleased that Joyce's family have taken over her hut and her membership of the Association.

CARNIVAL FLOAT

Work is well under way to enter a float in Felixstowe Carnival on 25th July. A small group of members is on the case. We have acquired a lorry at no charge ('thanks' to Goldstar Transport) and various props are being obtained to produce what we hope might be a prize winning entry. All being well we will be able to put some photos in our next newsletter for those that are not able to be at the Carnival.

WORTH A VISIT?

One of our members has asked us to bring the Christmas tree festival in Stowmarket Church between November 27th and January 2nd to the notice of our members. Over 400 Christmas trees in 3 venues. It's a few months away, but time will soon fly past.

CONTACT NUMBERS FOR SUFFOLK COASTAL

If you want to report any damage, maintenance issues etc.
you can do so on the below numbers:

Office hours (8.45am – 5.15pm Mon to Thurs or 8.45am – 4.45pm on Friday)

01394 444000

Outside office hours (emergencies)

01502 527133

E-mail: scs@ncsgrp.co.uk

If you wish to report anti-social behaviour to the Police – use 101
999 is for emergencies only

AND FINALLY

Let us know if you acquire (or change) an e-mail address so we can quickly keep you informed about what's going on.