



# Felixstowe Beach Hut & Chalet Association

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## NEWSLETTER No. 12

March 2017

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Since our EGM held at the Orwell Hotel in Felixstowe on 18<sup>th</sup> January it has been a very busy time for FBH&CA Committee Members.

I am writing to provide an update of work that has been undertaken by the Association and to keep you all updated on progress.

### **Meeting with SCDC Councillors**

Shortly after our EGM Julie Downton and I met with the Leader of the Council, Cllr. Herring, and portfolio holder, Cllr. Haworth-Culf. The aim of the meeting was to give an up-to-date overview of Members feelings from the EGM and correspondence received. We also wanted to offer alternative solutions that had also been formed/brought to our attention. Both listened to our case and we now await any new proposals from SCDC.

### **Felixstowe Town Council**

Myself and representatives of the Association attended the Town Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January. We used the opportunity to appraise Town Councillors of the issues with the report and the process SCDC had undertaken. It was evident from this meeting that Town Councillors had not been consulted nor had they seen the full report from SCDC. It is also fair to say that some Town Councillors were not automatically supportive of beach hut owners – this being no bad thing as it allows people to form an informed and unbiased view. During this meeting we managed to convey our points and as a result we were enthused by the overwhelming support by Town Councillors at the end of the meeting. Overall the Town Council is extremely concerned about the impact this could have on Felixstowe. Felixstowe Town Council has since written to SCDC and outlined these concerns as part of the consultation.

### **Consultation**

The so-called consultation period is now over and we await the results of this from SCDC. Circa 700 responses were received and we hope that Members used the opportunity to vent their issues/concerns with the questions raised in this consultation.

### **Association Lawyer Appointment**

£7390 in legal fighting funds was raised on a voluntary basis from our Membership, which we appealed for at the EGM. On 8<sup>th</sup> February Myself, Julie Downton and Trevor Mason of the Association met with Mr. Nick Billingham of Devonshire Solicitors and as a result of this meeting we appointed him to work on legal aspects on FBH&CA behalf. A letter covering all aspects of the review and review paper, lack of initial consultation and inadequate current consultation has been sent to the Chief Executive of SCDC and we await a response to this.

### **New Licence**

SCDC has sent out two new licences, the first one was full of errors so the second is a re-issue but with the errors corrected. This is now a fixed one-year licence taking us to March 2018. The Association consulted with Mr. Billingham on the new licence before advising Members to sign the new licence. In doing so we are making SCDC aware that we are protecting our legal rights, under duress and reserving our rights in respect of future challenge to the issue of a new fixed term licence. This protects our position for the next 12 months during which time we will continue to engage with SCDC to put a stop to the proposals that are currently on the table.

### **Cash Cow Campaign**

Our main Committee has had some campaign committee members join us, Nigel Rea, Neil and Amanda Davidson, Graham Ball and Rachael Williams. Thank you to them for volunteering. This has enabled the Association to undertake some additional work that is vital to our publicity campaign.

We have coordinated several press releases over the last few months and the most recent culminated in a two page spread in the East Anglian Daily Times, which provided stories about people's beach huts and what they mean to them – thank you to Members who supported this with their stories and photographs. We wanted to give the more humane side to the story. This is now being followed up with further press releases to keep our story out there. Special thanks to Rachael Williams who is doing some great work for the Association in this area. In addition to this, BCC Look East and Radio Suffolk continue to show great interest in the story.

We created our Cash Cow logo and many of you have supported and put signs up on your huts, leaflets have also been produced and handed out locally.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am we will protest march from Manor End to The Fludyer's. We are expecting lots of press to be there. Please come along and support, we will have a chant to sing and we would like to see lots of placards/banners. A walk along Felixstowe Prom on a Sunday morning should attract a lot of attention and definitely raise the issue further for us. For any that want to embrace the Cash Cow theme further please dress accordingly!!

We are keeping our Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) up to date with news but we keep the "Member only" information for email/posted letters. Our website is also kept up to date with recent press, events and the Members Stories page has now been added. If anybody would like to contribute further please email the Association.

### **Benchmarking Exercise**

Neil and Amanda Davidson kindly took on updating the benchmarking exercise that was conducted before we formed the Association 3 years ago. They have been in touch with many other beach hut associations and councils up and down the country – in fact well over 7,000 beach huts! The information we have collated in this respect is astounding and will be used in forthcoming press releases. To give a flavour SCDC's proposed lease/licence charges are around 3 to 3.5 times higher than the average elsewhere and change of ownership charge when a hut is sold/passed on 5 to 7.5 times higher than the average.

### **Chalets**

Our Vice Chair, Roy Gray, represents members who are chalet tenants. Recently the tenants of chalets at Cliff House received a letter from SCDC telling them that the electrical wiring was found to be sub-standard and the electricity was disconnected on 14th February, with no suggestion as to when the chalets would be rewired. We immediately raised the matter with SCDC who now advise they will be installing LED lighting only pending a decision as to rewiring. SCDC then issued new licences with a 20% discount to cover the inconvenience of having no electricity. Chalet tenants have also been told that they can only use one electrical appliance at a time – so no chance of having the fridge on when wanting to boil a kettle!! New licences have been issued for the chalets at which have different wording from previous licences. We have asked SCDC for clarification and meanwhile we have passed copies of the licences to Mr Billingham at Devonshires for his view and await his reply, which we will pass on when received. Meanwhile chalet tenants have been advised not to sign and send back the licence.

### **Membership**

Thanks to SCDC our Membership has soared to 541, around a 70% increase from last year – A warm welcome to all new Members.

Huge thanks to Trevor Mason and his wife Gill who have been keeping up with all of the administration of this and the constant flow of emails we get as an Association – they really do such an amazing job for the Association. Julie Downton has attended many meetings, made many phone calls and has led for the Association with the Lawyer, again we owe Julie a debt of gratitude for her time and efforts on the Association's behalf. In addition, thanks also go to Carol Crabb, Joy Reeve and Barbara Grace who have all assisted in liaison with Members, Admin and Press Publicity.

Our AGM is on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017 at the Orwell Hotel in Felixstowe. We have changed the venue to cater for the larger membership that we now have. The AGM will start at 7pm. Please try and attend as this issue will go way beyond June 2017!!

### **Survey of our Members**

Nigel Rea suggested and coordinated the survey of our membership. Thus far 88% of members have responded. We needed this information so that we could substantiate our statistics/claims better, squash any false claims and use the information to move forward in a positive and correct manner for the Association. Thanks to Nigel we now have information that we can use in publicity and quote to Councillors in our discussions with them. We have recently supplied the results of the survey to Town Councillors, District Councillors and Cabinet Members.

I summarise the key information that came back:

Q1 – 44% of Members have had their beach huts for 11 years or more. People clearly are not buying them to keep for a couple of years and then sell on to make money.

Q2 – 85.5% Members confirmed that they viewed their hut ownership as family leisure. Not one single hut owner answered “as a financial investment”.

Q3 – This has split our membership with 32% happy with a 1 year agreement but 38% wanting 10 years +.

Q4 – 78% of Members have confirmed that they are very likely or fairly likely to give up their huts if the £7,000 lease premium is introduced.

Q5 – 72% of Members live outside Felixstowe, which proves the point that beach huts bring many people from outside Felixstowe into the Town.

Q6 – 82% of Members use shops, 70% use cafes, 50% use restaurants, 40% use pubs and 95% ice cream kiosks – huge evidence that the local economy will greatly suffer if people give up their beach huts.

Q7 – 53% of members are age 65+

Thank you to all Members that have shown their support in attending meetings, corresponding and assisting with the press activity.

I hope to see you all on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

Kind regards

Jo Woodward  
Chair, FBH&CA