



Felixstowe Beach Hut & Chalet Association

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NEWSLETTER No. 20

December 2020

It has been some time since we have had sufficient news to put in a newsletter, thanks to the coronavirus which has drastically affected all our lives and restricted our enjoyment of our beach huts and chalets with our friends and families. Let's keep our fingers crossed that the vaccines will have worked by next summer and we are able to get back to something near normal.

So, what has been and will be happening?

SAVE SOME MONEY NEXT YEAR

We have been in discussions with East Suffolk Council over the last few weeks. Not unexpectedly there will be an increase of 2.75% next year and the year after. The proposal was for a 4% increase so we pushed hard to get this down a bit, BUT there is a way to reduce the cost for 2021!

When the new licences are sent out you will be asked to sign and return them by 15th February. This will allow East Suffolk Council time to issue the invoices before 31st March. The government has reduced VAT on beach huts from 20% to 5% until the end of March so, if you sign one copy of the licence and send it back to the Council by 15th February (you keep one copy) you will be charged the lower rate of VAT. It is the date the invoice is issued that is relevant, not the start date of the new licence.

When the time comes - don't delay to save some money.

NEW MEMBERS

So far this year (since 1st July) 45 new members have joined the Association. A warm welcome to you all. 15 former members have told us they have sold their huts and we are delighted that many of them have recommended membership of the Association to the new owners. None of the chalets rented by our members have changed hands - no wonder there is a long waiting list of people wanting to take up tenancies. We now have 598 members, 29 with chalets and 569 with huts. If your neighbours don't belong to the Association, please suggest that they consider joining.

SPA PAVILION SITE

After understanding that the plan to construct wooden platforms at the Spa Pavilion site was not viable, we have very recently learned that East Suffolk Council have put 'Plan B' before the Planning Committee and have been given the go ahead to build an experimental platform in one of the bays with concrete blocks holding back the sand and shingle on which huts can be placed. The blocks can be removed and stored each winter ready for the following year. Huts will not be placed on the platform next year just in case it doesn't work! There will also be a platform built without the blocks to monitor how the sand and shingle moves. If all goes well, huts could be back on the beach in 2022. Whether or not the Council will want to pass on any of the cost to hut owners remains to be seen. The Association is being consulted over this project and, although it has taken some time to get this far, we are pleased that East Suffolk is trying to find a solution to this situation for hut owners affected.

If anyone wants to read a newspaper article about the scheme, this the internet link: -

<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/felixstowe-beach-hut-erosion-trial-1-6943480>

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE STEPS AT MANOR END?

The temporary wooden steps to the beach from the prom that are put in place every summer disappeared in a September storm. The Council assure us they will be replaced next year. We were sent a photo of the steps as they sailed away.



Perhaps they turned up at Clacton, Frinton or Southend. Maybe even Holland!

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

Joy and Karen are running the 'Occasional Café' at Grandma's Little Hut at Manor End again this winter, despite the virus. They will be offering a takeaway service using disposable cups, and cakes already in a paper bag, with hand sanitizer and anti-bacterial spray in abundance. There will be some chairs 2 meters apart and Joy and Karen will be wearing pinafores, masks and gloves. There will be tickets for a Christmas Draw, using

the prizes donated for their Easter Saturday raffle which could not go ahead. The café will be open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7.30am to 12.30pm, but they will not be able to be open "whatever the weather" as people are not allowed into the hut. Their charity this year is Parkinson's Research. They'll be pleased to see you.

Our Committee member Barbara, and her partner Alan, will be at their hut over the Christmas period and there is a very good chance that they will have some mulled wine and coffee to warm up passers-by. So, if you are strolling along the prom down at The Dip over Christmas why not drop in and join them for a hot drink, socially distanced and in a disposable cup (of course). Our picture shows them in the Christmas spirit last year.



DAMAGE TO HUTS BY TWO SORTS OF RATS!

Sadly, one sort of the rats involved are humans! There was a spate of mindless criminal damage to several huts at The Dip one Friday night in November. What on earth makes people do this? We know that two of the huts are owned by widows and another by a gentleman who suffers from Parkinson's Disease. The huts are their enjoyment by the sea, but these idiots want to destroy them for no financial gain whatsoever for themselves. Let's hope the Police find out who they were.

Thankfully, members of the beach hut community look after one another and several people rallied round to help with temporary repairs. We also thank Jane Allitt and members of East Suffolk Council who came out on the Saturday morning to offer support and to contact hut owners to give them the bad news. We were also able to contact several of our members whose huts were affected.

The other sort of rats are the furry ones who have decided to gnaw their way into some huts which is very unpleasant for the owners. The Council do carry out some pest control, but it doesn't always seem to get rid of the little blighters. We are sure that our members are sensible enough not to leave food laying around to encourage them, but not all hut owners may be so responsible.

MONEY MATTERS

We are able to report that the Association is still in a healthy financial position. We have spent little so far this year, just on stamps needed to send membership cards to new members. We hold a total of £6200 in the bank or cash. We also have £5300 in a separate 'Fighting Fund' account that, for the information of newer members, was set up in 2017 to pay for legal expenses by engaging a solicitor to represent us in a dispute with the Council over a potential extortionate increase in licences for huts. Members dug deep into their pockets and gave your Committee tremendous support. Thanks to the intervention of our solicitor, we eventually came to an amicable agreement with the Council which means that you are paying much less each year than would have been the case. There was every chance that existing and new hut owners might not have been able to afford a hut. As agreed at an AGM, the Fighting Fund is topped up every year from the subscriptions we receive so that we have good reserves in case we need legal advice again.

As we are in such a healthy position and knowing how much charities have struggle in the pandemic, the Committee decided to donate £1000 from our funds to the St. Elizabeth Hospice 'Be A Star' Christmas appeal. A Felixstowe shipping company, George Baker Group, pledged to double any money donated to the appeal between 1st and 7th December and our donation was made within this window. The sister of our Chairman works at the hospice and her story can be found on the internet at <https://www.stelizabethhospice.org.uk/be-a-star/sarahs-story> We are sure you will agree that this is a worthwhile charity to support as most of will know of a family who have been helped by the hospice.

MORE EVIDENCE THAT MEMBERS LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

A few weeks ago, one of our members found some keys attached to a beach hut fob on the prom near Manning's Amusements. She sent an email to us which we sent out to members and the owner of the keys was found. This isn't the first time we have reunited a member with something they have lost. One of many good reasons to belong to the Association!

AND FINALLY

If you have changed any of your contact details (email, phone numbers, address) please let us know to enable us to maintain accurate records. If we don't currently have an email address for you and you have access to one, please let us know so we can keep you up to date speedily.

Also, if your hut has been moved from the Spa Pavilion site to another location, please let us know as we occasionally send out an email just to members on a specific site if the information is relevant only to that site. We wouldn't want anyone to miss out.



We wish all our members a Happy Christmas and a healthy, virus-free, New Year