

Frinton Beach Hut Association

Chairman's Report 2020

This is not the report I was hoping to send out to you all but the Coronavirus pandemic has meant many events have had to be cancelled, and our AMM set for the 2nd of May is one of them.

I am writing this on Easter Sunday and it is strange not to hear the many horse boxes trundling past the house and not seeing cars parked all along the road next to the Greensward. Being over 70 I am classed as a vulnerable person, but I am still allowed to walk once a day to exercise; seeing the beach empty and all the huts closed is such a sad sight. Still, the staff of the NHS, carers in care and nursing homes plus those home carers are doing such a great job looking after people who are ill, and will get us through this horrible time. I am sure we will be able to enjoy our huts once again.

On to business. Your committee has discussed the AMM and we have decided to cancel the meeting for 2020 rather than postpone it, as we do not know when the Government will allow mass meetings. If this is not until later in the summer, as seems likely, I am sure you will all want to be outside in the fresh air rather than being cooped up in a hall.

In view of this we have taken the decision for all the committee to remain in place for another year, and wait until next year before standing again for positions. This allows for continuity on beach hut issues at least, at a time when there is so much uncertainty around. Thank you to all the members of the committee who work on your behalf, and for remaining in place for another year.

In lieu of a meeting, our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Robert Hughes, is sending out the Financial Report, Damage Report and other papers with this note. My thanks to him for his hard work on both of these throughout the year.

As part of this Chairman's Report, as usual I do need to focus on damage to beach huts. This year we had a new member of the committee join us, Jane Watts, who is adept at producing graphs and has done one following the report by Philip Thornton to cover damage to beach hut, and this is included with this note. Thank you to Philip and Jane for this information, and a thank you to the coordinators who report damage to beach hut owners and to those who patrol by day looking for any damage to your huts. At the present time we have had to suspend the day patrol by members, but two of our committee do use their allowance of a daily walk to check on huts as far as they can. If something arises then they will let me know and I will call you to discuss what we can do about the problem.

You will see some interesting results in the graph, in particular that damage by vandalism has nearly halved to 44 against 73 last year which is great news, and is testament to patrols, especially by Community Guard at night and our own members during the day. Community Guard continue to patrol and Stephen Beardsley has made it very clear to me that in addition to this role, he and his staff are ready to help any local hut owners who have problems getting food or other supplies during this current crisis. If anyone needs help, please ring Community Guard on 01255 560060.

Vandalism does seem to be reducing, but carelessness, especially with fire, does show how vulnerable our huts are. The ten huts which were burnt down last summer arose from someone renting one of the huts, and according to the fire officer's report, his actions in changing a gas canister caused this extensive damage, not helped by the high winds that day. This has resulted in TDC agreeing to send out a leaflet to all hut owners, part of which covers hiring out a hut. Please see the leaflet "Protecting Your Beach Hut" which came with the invoice for hut fees. The first two points below cover what is shown in the leaflet; the other 5 points are our suggestions to anyone renting out their hut:

- 1) If you are renting out your hut, you must ensure that you have the correct insurance in place to cover private renting; this may include public liability insurance.
- 2) Whoever rents the hut needs to be fully aware of the licence conditions, especially pertaining to anti-social behaviour. We believe that large parties should be discouraged, as they often cause disturbance to neighbouring huts.
- 3) It is worth noting that if a hut is destroyed, for example, by fire which in turn destroys other huts, liability may not rest with the original owners. Therefore, it is worth considering insuring your hut. Insurance companies are listed on the website.
- 4) Consider the beach where the hut is situated especially if the renter has a dog – is your hut on a dog-friendly beach or not?
- 5) Having a fire extinguisher or fire blanket in the hut is advisable.
- 6) Whilst smoking is not banned at the beach, it would be sensible to deter this habit in the hut, given the wooden structure.
- 7) No BBQ's inside or near the hut; these are a clear fire hazard.

If you hire your hut out through a local estate agent, the hirers will be required to sign a form accepting liability for any damage; this only applies to the hut they are hiring not to neighbouring huts, hence point (1) above is essential. Hopefully these points will help to keep problems to a minimum.

We had decided this year not to have the fun day on the Greensward as last year it seemed to become something more than we had originally embarked on, with more stalls selling items rather than concentrating on the core message of staying safe at the beach but enjoying the day. We had decided to try and bring back the sandcastle/moulding competition in the summer, this obviously when the tide is out all day, but this depends on what is going to be allowed later on this year.

We did have a Tendring-wide beach hut meeting of the associations, with 2 members from each area, to discuss security of huts and other issues. Whilst security continues to be a problem, with Dovercourt suffering fires by vandals, the other areas were less affected. There continues to be a problem with dogs on beaches and horses on the green areas, and some owners extending huts without permission and against the guidelines set by the council. All of these matters are things which the Association committee takes up on a regular basis with the Council on your behalf.

We have decided to produce a half-yearly newsletter to be sent to all members, and will try to get one out to you all later in the year. In the meantime, whilst this lockdown continues, the Council has issued instructions that no one is allowed to use their beach hut for recreation, or to re-decorate, even though you may be practising social distancing. The intention is to deter people from congregating at the beach.

So, once again as the government says:

Stay at Home

Protect the NHS

Save Lives

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