



AGM Chairpersons Report AGM March 8th, 2026

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming along to the HIBHA AGM.

It's really good to see so many hutters here this evening. Mind you, not great weather for beach huts tonight!

I would like to start by acknowledging Andy James, who led discussions among concerned beach hut users at two meetings on the seafront last Easter. Those meetings ultimately led to the formation of this Association. I would also like to recognise the contributions of fellow founding committee members Paul Butterworth and Clare Kelly.

For those of you who may not know me, my name is Paul. I have a hut by the disability walkway. We acquired it last year, just before the fee increases were announced. I live with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome, and our beach hut has become a place where I can relax, recharge my batteries and look after my mental health and wellbeing.

I know I'm not the only one here who finds the huts good for the soul. Many hutters value their beach huts not just as leisure spaces, but as places that support wellbeing, relaxation and time outdoors.

In truth, my hut probably deserves a dilapidation notice — it is in rather poor condition, looks more like a disused shed, and certainly lacks the “two coats of gloss paint” that many of the licences require. And yes, that's right — my beach hut is rented.

I'm fairly sure if the council inspection team turned up tomorrow, they might suggest the hut needed more than just two coats of gloss paint.

So if anyone from the council is here this evening, please do come and inspect it — just maybe give me a bit of notice.

The past year has been a busy one for the committee.

This evening I will briefly cover the work the committee has done over the past year, the issues we have been dealing with, and some ideas for the future.

Much of the work has taken place behind the scenes through meetings and discussions with the council and other stakeholders. Nevertheless, it has been important work aimed at protecting the interests of hutters and strengthening HIBHA as your representative voice.

Committee Changes

Earlier this year the committee reduced to the last four founder members — Colin, Irene, Jane and myself — following a period of change within the association. We are committed to working collaboratively as a democratic team.

Since February we have focused on stabilising and rebuilding the association's foundations. During that time we have developed a number of key policies, including preparing a new constitution which we will present shortly.

At that point the priority was simply to ensure the association continued to function and to rebuild the basic structures needed for it to operate effectively. Thanks to the efforts of a small team, HIBHA has been able to move forward and refocus on representing the interests of hutters.

We have also developed a brand new website and rebuilt our membership database following its unexpected deletion. This ensures we once again have a reliable system for communicating with members, alongside a functioning GDPR policy.

I am pleased to report that our membership database has grown from zero on 6th February to 160 members today. Please help us grow further by mentioning HIBHA to your beach hut neighbours and friends. The stronger the membership, the stronger our voice.

Much of this progress has happened quietly in the background, but it has been essential in ensuring that the association is once again operating on a secure and sustainable footing.

As part of putting stronger foundations in place, we have also prepared a formal constitution. This is simply about ensuring HIBHA operates transparently, fairly and with clear governance as we move forward, and we will be presenting this to you shortly.

Licence Fees

One of the biggest issues this year has been the question of licence fees, which was one of the primary reasons the association was originally formed.

The committee challenged the proposed increases and pressed the council to provide clear justification and proper benchmarking for the figures being discussed. We made it clear that any increase should be supported by evidence and accompanied by tangible improvements for hutters.

While the outcome was not what we had hoped for, and the 50% increase remains in place, the committee did challenge the proposals and ensured that two additional proposed increases of 25% were removed from consideration.

This underlines the importance of having a strong collective voice representing hutters.

The discussions are ongoing and we will continue to press for fair and transparent arrangements for hutters going forward.

Whilst the fees set for 2025/26 and 2026/27 (this year and next year) have now been approved by the Council and are therefore difficult to avoid or challenge, we continue to

maintain that the only fair and reasonable way to determine beach hut fees is through benchmarking.

Initially, the Council stated that benchmarking had been used to justify the significant increases. However, this position changed once a more detailed analysis of the data was presented, demonstrating that the proposed increases were too high. Since then, the Council has declined to commit to using comparative data from other sites as a basis for future fee setting.

It is clear from this analysis that a significant number of Hayling Island beach huts are now being overcharged relative to comparable locations. This is a situation we are seeking to address and, with the support of Councilors, we hope to establish a fairer and more transparent mechanism for setting fees for licence holders and the Council in future years.

Supporting Members

Alongside this, the committee has continued to support members directly wherever possible.

This includes helping people navigate council processes, raising issues on members' behalf and sharing information about payment options and other practical matters. We recognise that dealing with official processes can sometimes be frustrating, and one of our aims is to provide assistance wherever we can.

Working With Others

Over the past year we have also begun building a constructive working relationship with council officers and other organisations involved in the management of the seafront.

These relationships will be important going forward, particularly as we begin addressing some of the bigger issues facing beach hut owners on Hayling.

Community

In addition to advocacy and negotiations, we would also like HIBHA to play a stronger role in building a sense of community among hutters.

Beach huts are meant to be enjoyable places and we would like to create more opportunities for people to meet and get involved.

Ideas being explored include an annual HIBHA barbecue or picnic, possibly around the August Bank Holiday, as well as informal "Cuppa with the Committee" sessions where members can come along, ask questions and share ideas.

We are also considering beach clean days and other small events that help bring hutters together while caring for the environment we all share.

Member Involvement

We recognise that not everyone wants to join the committee, but many members may still wish to contribute in smaller ways.

One idea is to create small working groups around specific topics such as licence terms, coastal issues or community events. This would allow members to have a voice and help shape the future without needing to take on the responsibilities of a full committee role.

If there are members here this evening who feel they could help in any small way, please do speak to one of us afterwards — fresh ideas and new energy are always welcome.

Closing

HIBHA is still a relatively young association, but together we are building a stronger voice for beach hutters on Hayling.

Finally, I want to emphasise that HIBHA works best when members are engaged. The committee can represent and advocate, but the strength of the association ultimately comes from the people who make up its membership.

Like most associations, the committee are volunteers who give their time because they care about the future of beach huts on Hayling, and we appreciate the support and encouragement we receive from members.

Whether that means sharing ideas, volunteering for a working group, attending events or simply supporting the association, every contribution helps.

Thank you again for coming this evening and for your continued support of HIBHA.