

THE JOURNAL OF THE PARK HOME RESIDENTS

ACTION ALLIANCE

PHRAA NEWS

“The uncensored voice of PARK HOME OWNERS”

“TELLS IT AS IT IS”

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL PARK HOMEOWNERS

Well here we are again. We have reached the second edition of PHRAA News without being locked up or thrown in the “Tower”.

May I begin by thanking our readers and members for the wonderful messages of support and encouragement we continue to receive daily for our efforts. May I also give a special thank you to Bob Holland of the PARK HOME CONGRESS for kindly writing a very favourable review of the first issue of PHRAA News which is published on the Congress website www.parkhomecongress.com/reviews. Please believe me when I say that your kind words make our efforts worthwhile. Thank you all from the PHRAA team. Hope you all had a peaceful Christmas Ron.

PS. I must apologise to anyone who may have been wondering why I had not been responding to emails etc., over the Christmas period and the new year. This was because just a few days before Christmas my computer decided to give up the ghost for good which meant I had to buy another which I am still trying to get to grips with. This was not helped by my going down with a very nasty bout of flu which flattened me over the new year period. Obviously this has put me very far behind with PHRAA

work, but hope to catch up soon.
Ron

Thanks for your patience.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER

On the 7th November 2011 as the PHRAA representative I attended the latest meeting of the ALL PARTY WORKING GROUP FOR PARK HOMES held at 3pm in committee room 22 in the Houses of Parliament. Unfortunately as per usual, the meeting only lasted for exactly one hour – 3 to 4pm which is never long enough to allow most of those present, including PHRAA, to raise any issues or voice their opinion on the particular subjects under discussion. This is of particular disappointment to myself who, at considerable expense, have to travel from Wolverhampton by train, a two hour journey, plus a further 45 minutes from my home at Kingswood to Wolverhampton station and 30 minutes from Euston to Westminster by underground, resulting in most of the day being taken up for a 1hour meeting.

The meeting was very efficiently chaired by Annette Brook MP (champion of Park Homeowners rights) standing in for Christopher Chope MP who had other commitments.

It was encouraging to see that around a dozen MP's plus other researchers were in attendance, far more than usual, which we hope is a good sign. The industry was well represented by the presence of no less than Ros Pritchard, Director General of the BH&HPA who no doubt was making sure that the governmental powers that be continue to protect the interests of the BH&HPA park owner membership. (***MORE ON THIS LATER***)

In her opening remarks Annette stated that she had been to see Housing Minister Grant Shapps the previous day who had promised that the Park Home Consultation Document will be issued early in the new year. (*What another one??? What's happened to all the others ? Clogging up the DCLG Shredder no doubt? Ron*) She also said that she believed that there was a firm commitment to do something and drive out the rogues. (*Not when the BH&HPA throws some of their £3.3 million reserve fund to stop it they won't?*)

The most important items on the agenda were the two presentations the first of which was by DCI Mark Colquhoun from West Mercia Police who headed "OPERATION KINGPIN" the first and only successful criminal prosecution against a park owner for

mistreating the helpless residents on that site. This involved the prosecution of a family of rogue park owners for Arson, Harassment and related crimes against the terrified residents of "GLEN PARK" Worcestershire resulting in them being sent down for total of 64 years.

DCI Colquhoun's presentation consisted of an update of progress to date since the case which took place some five years ago. Following the convictions the DCI compiled a "Guidance Document" which he then circulated to every Police Force in the UK., outlining the problems of abuse, harassment, intimidation and exploitation experienced by thousands of elderly and vulnerable park homeowners everyday urging them (Police Forces) to take these incidents seriously and treat them as criminal offences, not as CIVIL MATTERS as they are more usually regarded. We at PHRAA, who have first hand experience due to the fact that we live under the tyrannical regime of one of the UK's worst and well known, examples of a UPO, in common with thousands of other afflicted residents nationally, are disgusted and dismayed by the fact that despite all Marks hard work and continued dedication, his efforts appear to have fallen upon deaf ears in most cases.

A typical example of this occurred on our park within the last few weeks, when our UPO once again severely harassed an elderly and sick couple resulting in their calling the Police for protection. The Officer who attended is alleged to have told the couple that if he were to speak to the UPO regarding his actions against them, the result would be that the UPO would harass them even more in retaliation when he (the officer) had gone. It is then further alleged that the Officer went on to advise them that the best thing they could do to stop the harassment is to walk away from their home and let him, (the UPO) have it! Makes you wonder whose side the Police are on does it not? Unfortunately this is not an isolated incident so it is hardly any wonder that these UPO's have nothing whatsoever to fear from the law. I am sure that many of our fellow park home residents will also have suffered similar experiences? Please let PHRAA know. In complete confidence of course.

It must be soul destroying for Mark, a dedicated Police Officer, realising that despite his hard work compiling and distributing reports and the good practice guide, alerting his fellow Police Forces nationally to the scale of the ever growing problems being endured, very often because of fear of the UPO and his cronies, mainly in silence, nothing much in the way of protection, has changed in the five years since the case which horrified many park home residents throughout the country.

DCI Mark Colquhoun said that since the success of Operation Kingpin he had been contacted at regular intervals by both police officers and park home residents seeking advice and information around dealing with some of the problems on park home sites. He stressed that any views expressed in his presentation were his own and should **NOT** be deemed as representative of West Mercia Police or the police service as a whole. He then proceeded to give an update of “Operation Kingpin” (which is still ongoing) and giving his personal view of the barriers which still stand in the way of park residents gaining proper access to the criminal justice system. As I am sure that most of our readers will be fully aware of the well publicised details of “Operation Kingpin” I need not go into the facts again here.

During his presentation to the meeting, Mark questioned how effective the police were in dealing with park home problems remarking that whether serious criminality was widespread or confined to a minority of sites was a matter for others to judge, but he would be very surprised if there wasn't some degree of serious criminality ongoing within the industry. He also indicated that the elderly and vulnerable people (victims) who suffer as a result want it addressed and the police forces which serve those members of the public have a legal and moral obligation to do just that.

Assuming there is at least some degree of serious criminality ongoing within the industry, Mark questioned how effective the police were in dealing with it as he was not aware of any other police led investigations resulting in the conviction of any site owners for criminal offences against residents since the Kingpin inquiry. This, he went on, may be because crimes haven't been committed in the first place, but based on the constant stream of information he received, he thought this highly unlikely.

“Unfortunately, many of the barriers to an effective police response highlighted in the good practice guide remain undiminished “he said, “and it is because of these that we continue to see a failure to secure convictions, in particular ;-

(a).... The continuing perception that all ‘disputes’ between site owners and residents are ‘civil’ matters and not suitable for police involvement.

(b).... Allocating inappropriate resources to investigate allegations of park home criminality. Without exception, every officer I have spoken to regarding a park home issue has been a member of a local policing team.

“Local policing teams do a fantastic job within our communities, but they are not crime investigators. Where there are allegations of serious criminality, initial inquiries should be carried out by CID Officers to make a *prima facie* assessment of whether

those allegations are borne out. That was the recommendation of the good practice guide, and yet I have seen no evidence of it being put into practice.” He thought that the underlying issue was that for the police service park home criminality remained an obscure and little understood area of business. “Unless the police become better at recognising this type of crime and delivering in response an appropriate form of investigation, vulnerable members of the public will continue to be placed at risk of suffering serious harm”, He said.

Later Mark, stated how proud he is that by through the hard work and dedication of his team of officers they were able to identify and convict those involved. He is also proud that they were able to secure the assets of those offenders, to be able to give something back to the victims who suffered at their hands.

But he went on to say that it took five years from the offence being committed to compensation being received. Some of those victims had lost their homes, their wealth, their community and in some cases gone to their graves without receiving any recompense for what they had suffered.” Some harms cannot be undone. Accepting that prevention is better than cure, is criminal prosecution the best form of future deterrence?” While ‘Kingpin’ demonstrated that substantial sentences are significant, this is only likely to deter an offender if they think that there is a likelihood of being caught. As things currently stand, it’s difficult to believe that a potential criminal within the park home industry would think anything other than that, if careful, they will be able to offend with impunity,”

Mark then went on to make one further very important observation that it was unfair to focus the responsibility for enforcement entirely on the police service. “There are other authorities and agencies who could impact on those offending throughout the industry”, he said, “but none appear to have been particularly effective in doing so. ***(This is the time when Government Ministers, Relevant Local Authority officers and the officers of the park home industry trade associations (BH&HPA) should hang their heads in shame . The BH&HPA claim to be the regulatory body of the Park Home Industry. IT IS TIME THEY REGULATED, NOT ENCOURAGED, THEIR MEMBERS.*** Ron)

“Given the absence of successful prosecutions, it would seem that enforcement of criminal law cannot be relied on to prevent crime within the industry and protect those vulnerable to victimisation.

In DCI Mark Colquhoun’s judgement, aspects of the current legislation and regulatory framework around the park home industry assisted the Doherty’s (Operation Kingpin)

in committing their offences. These same conditions remain unchanged today and are open to abuse by any like minded site owner.....

The corrosive effect of being trapped in your own home, day in and day out, subject to ongoing harassment and intimidation, cannot be over estimated.

“ Prevention of offences within the park homes industry should be a clear priority, and while the police and other agencies have a role to play in delivering that outcome, the biggest single step towards a park home industry free of crime would be reform of key elements of current legislation. “ *(Absolutely true Mark, but its needs to be radical reform, not yet another dose of park owner biased legislation drawn up by the BH&HPA and their very clever legal teams and rubber stamped by a weak government office. Ron)*

Finally I must, on behalf of PHRAA sincerely thank Mark for his excellent and hard hitting presentation to the Working Party Meeting. The report he presented was accurate in every detail and summed up the actual lack of progress towards protecting the lives of park homeowners from the totally unregulated exploitation and abuse metered out with impunity daily by the ever growing number of Unscrupulous Park Owners against their 70,80, 90 + year old victims. He summed up the current situation absolutely spot on. All that's needed now is for those in authority to listen and take appropriate action, but perhaps that is too much to expect. Ron.

The next part of the meeting was a very interesting and encouraging presentation by Maria Battle, Senior Director of Consumer Focus Wales with whom I had already held several conversations over the previous months hopefully assisting her with her ongoing research programme into park home owners problems in Wales and England.

Maria began her address by explaining that Consumer Focus is an independent statutory organisation campaigning for a fair deal for all consumers and are currently engaged in work to identify the issues faced by park home residents, the extent of their problems and how these problems can be best addressed.

Consumer Focus is seeking to develop a robust evidence base in England, Scotland and Wales with which to influence the respective governments, local authorities and other key stakeholders and improve the protection of park homeowners. As part of this is undertaking research to gather the experiences of residents and local authorities in the hope that the research will provide the most up to date and comprehensive analysis of the sites across the UK and the problems that residents face.

(1)..... To identify (as accurately as possible) how many park home sites there are in England, Scotland and Wales and their locations.

(2)..... To identify an approximate number of homes located on each park.

PHRAA's observation on (1) & (2) above..... Several years ago when a certain Mr. Mark Coram was an officer in the Department of Communities and Local Government with responsibility for Park Homes I clearly recall a conversation with him when I pointed out that it was vitally important to establishing the true extent of park home problems, that a full and accurate list of the number of park home sites including the number of homes on each one be compiled. Mr. Coram instantly responded by telling me that he and his department had already compiled a fully comprehensive and totally accurate up to date list of every park home site, complete with the number of homes on each and this was available to them immediately as it was fully installed upon the departments data base. In fact he went on to brag to me that he could download any information on any park at a moments notice. Taking the credibility of the officer concerned into account, I have to assume he was telling me the truth and this database of parks did exist, MAY I NOW ASK WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THAT LIST NOW AND WHY IS IT NOT BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO CONSUMER FOCUS? Perhaps it too, as appears to have happened with much of the reams of adverse comments on the park home industry received by the department from the park homeowners side of the story, accidentally found its way into the shredder. Ron

(3)..... To provide detailed intelligence about park home sites to help identify the extent of problems faced by park home owners, barriers to resolution of these problems and where there are particular problems with site owners.

Phase 1.... All local authorities throughout Great Britain have been contacted and asked to complete an on-line questionnaire. Under the Consumer Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 Consumer Focus has information requesting powers. Where local authorities do not comply with the request for information, Consumer Focus uses its statutory powers to ensure that the information is received. The local authority questionnaires will provide up to date intelligence on the Licensing regime, for example by getting their views on how they think the Licensing regime can be improved.

Phase 2.... Consumer Focus has commissioned IFF Research to conduct telephone interviews with both approved and unapproved resident's associations. 1000 telephone interviews will also be conducted with individual residents.

(If you are contacted please cooperate in full. This is your chance to have your say Ron)

How this information will be used.....

Consumer Focus is seeking to establish a robust evidence base throughout Great Britain which can then be used to feed into the forthcoming consultation in England and assist the Welsh Government in their proposed Housing Bill (as they now have powers to legislate directly in this area). In Scotland the research will be used as part of the evidence base for the introduction of a Scottish Statutory Instrument to amend the Mobile Homes Act 1983. The Scottish Government has postponed the laying of the SSI in order to receive CONSUMER FOCUS findings. The Scottish Government also intends to bring forward a Housing Bill, which will provide the opportunity for Consumer Focus's research to be used as part of the review into the site licensing regime.

In addition, Consumer Focus has been assisting individual park homeowners across Great Britain and meeting with a range of stakeholders including police, trading standards officers, licensing officers, Consumer Direct, Ofgem, the Consumer Council for Water, Civil Servants, voluntary organisations and park home residents, and enabling exchange of information between agencies. On the basis of this research and discussions with stakeholders, Consumer Focus will then propose recommendations for improvements.

DON'T DELAY, MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR SAY Contact..... Parkhomes@consumerfocus.org.uk.

The meeting concluded with Annette Brooke MP thanking those present for attending etc., and after wishing every one a happy new year and expressing the wish that 2012 would be a good year for park homeowners.

However one closing comment from Annette Brooke MP did raise a certain amount of alarm in PHRAA's view, especially as the meeting on the whole had been one of the most positive meetings I and PHRAA has attended over the past ten years. This comment was "that she didn't think that legislation would solve all the problems on park home sites but MP's could work towards "GOOD PRACTICE" within the park home industry". Sorry Annette but So called "GOOD PRACTICE" Guidelines enthusiastically advocated by the industry, namely the BH&HPA, are the reason park homeowners are in the ever growing intolerable mess they are in now. Park owners

and the BH&HPA have had their chance to put things right and abused it in every way. It's the turn of the park homeowner to enjoy proper enforceable protection for a change. To any one not familiar with "GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES" would do well to remember the effects on the vulnerable park homeowner of much abused farce known as "THE PARK HOMES CHARTER" drawn up between the Industry (BH&HPA) and the then national park home residents associations, long before PHRAA came on the scene. Ron.

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IMPORTANT FOOTNOTE TO THE ABOVE REPORT.

After I had finished my report on the Presentation by Consumer Focus detailed above I began to worry that I had perhaps gone into more detail than I should have done bearing in mind, as I learned later, that some of their work is, or was, supposedly being kept quiet for fear that unscrupulous park owners may target the vulnerable residents in order to dissuade them from providing the information vital to the Consumer Focus investigations. I was about to rewrite some of the article as I certainly did not wish to publish anything that could possibly compromise their excellent work.

It was then I realised that also present at the All Party Working Group meeting was none other than THE ROS PRITCHARD MBE or OBE can't remember which, who is no less than the DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE BRITISH HOLIDAY & HOME PARKS ASSOCIATION (BH&HPA) The Park home industry trade association and self professed regulator of the industry and official advisor to the Government on park home law reform. *(More on this in the next issue of PHRAA News)* Any doubts I had about publishing the information in detail totally disappeared, when I realised, with absolute certainty, that all the information disclosed at that meeting, confidential or not, would have been passed to every park owner in the UK., long before I had even got back to Wolverhampton Rail Station at around 10 pm that night. Ron.

NEWS FROM THE HOME FRONT

Update on the ongoing 'Being Buried Alive' story exposed in the No.1 issue of PHRAA NEWS published November 2010.

Those of you who read the original horrific story in the November issue of PHRAA NEWS will wish to know how these poor people are coping and whether any progress has been made towards resolving their terrible plight and obtaining any meaningful protection against the ongoing disgraceful acts of harassment, abuse and intimidation they are forced to endure almost daily from this well known, notoriously bad example of a UPO intent on getting them off his park in order to replace their beautiful, immaculately maintained park home with a brand new one at a vast profit to himself.

Readers will recall that because of the very real fear of vile and abusive acts of retribution by the UPO against this elderly and now frail couple who are already terrified, it was necessary to change their identity and address. So for the purposes of this ongoing saga they are known as Sue and Sid, from 'Golden Beeches Park' somewhere in Staffordshire.

Following robust intervention by PHRAA officers involving a very straight talking letter to the relevant Local Authority, we are hopeful that at last they have come to listen, and as a result of a meeting which took place very recently, requested by the council, between two officers of PHRAA and high ranking officers of the relevant council, some positive action may at last be being taken on residents behalf. This, in PHRAA's opinion, long overdue change of heart has apparently come about because of a change of officers within the council has, they claim, resulted in a new and dynamic team determined to make sure that this UPO operates the park to the letter of the law from now on. We do hope that they will carry out their promises this time as residents of 'Golden Beeches Park' lives depend upon them. Their assurances certainly appeared to be sincere and we did detect a change of attitude from that of the previous regime who we have to say, for the past ten years, despite hundreds of complaints, have been very content to let this UPO do more or less what he wants to both the park and the existing residents, with the result that there are only six of the original residents left on the park, including Sue and Sid. The rest of the original 21 homeowners have been driven off one by one with only a pittance being paid to them for their homes. In some cases this UPO has obtained the homes, valued at many thousands of pounds, for absolutely nothing. Also as a result of this meeting, meaningful dialogue has been resumed between PHRAA, on the residents behalf, and the council officers, which has to be an improvement in the previous untenable situation where we had completely lost faith in them.

Much of what was discussed regarding the council officers proposed action against the UPO has to remain confidential at present for obvious reasons. But rest assured as soon as possible I will publish the details and the, hopefully, positive results. Equally if all this effort comes to nothing, this will be published also. In the meantime, thanks to the officers concerned and they can be assured of the full support and cooperation of PHRAA to bring this UPO to book.

Ron

WHO IS YOUR SOLICITOR REALLY WORKING FOR?

Issue No.1 also featured another article linked to the one concerning Sue and Sid above exposing the ongoing plight of ‘Golden Beeches Park’ resident of 25 years standing, 86 year old Widower and Second World War veteran Charlie. Readers will recall that he too has had the water supply to his home, reduced to virtually a trickle. This has resulted in his not being able to obtain any hot water supply or central heating as the pressure is too low to operate the Combi Boiler. So much so that a heating engineer Charlie engaged to help, refused to touch the boiler stating there was nothing he could do owing to the lack of pressure.

As the UPO site owner refused point blank to restore the supply or connect Charlie’s home to a new supply serving all the new homes he is installing on the park, (having succeeded in driving out all but six of the original residents, as mentioned above,) which is within a few feet of Charlie’s home, and less than an hours work and the local authority and Severn Trent Water at that time, consistently claimed that there was nothing they could do, Charlie reluctantly decided that the only way to get his water supply restored was to employ a Solicitor and take legal action against the UPO.

At first all seemed to be progressing fine. The initial meetings with the Solicitor, where Charlie was accompanied by a PHRAA representative, appeared to be hopeful. The Solicitor stated that he would first write to the UPO owner of ‘Golden Beeches Park’ giving him so many days to restore the water supply to a level sufficient to comply with the regulations governing park home sites.

Following this Charlie was then contacted by his Solicitor, who had, he said, been in touch with the UPO who had put forward the suggestion that Charlie moved out of the park home he has owned for over 25 years into one of the UPO’s brand new park homes, where he could live out the rest of his days until his demise when the home would revert to the UPO. Charlie’s own home would be taken off the park with no

compensation being given. This would release some land where the UPO could install several new homes at a vast profit.

The Solicitor contacted Charlie claiming he had wonderful news and proceeded to relay the UPO's offer of a new home. It appears that without Charlie's permission or prior knowledge his Solicitor had taken it upon himself to negotiate this deal with the UPO.

Needless to say Charlie is absolutely devastated by his Solicitors actions when the only instructions he gave to his Solicitor was to take whatever legal action was necessary to get his unlawfully reduced water supply restored as soon as possible not to assist the UPO achieve his much stated aim to get Charlie, and his home off his park. It appears to Charlie that he is paying his own Solicitor to help the UPO get him off the park for no recompense whatsoever. Charlie is now 86 years old now. He certainly should not be expected to move home at his time of life. There is absolutely nothing whatsoever wrong with the condition of Charlie's home. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever why Charlie should be expected **to** move just to satisfy the aspirations of a rogue site owner. What his Solicitor may not realise that should he be successful in persuading Charlie to move, he will have aided the UPO to profit from his illegal and immoral actions entirely at Charlie's expense.

BE VERY CAREFUL WHEN ENGAGING A SOLICITOR FOR PARK HOME PROBLEMS. BE VERY SURE.

More on this next time.

Ron.

EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IS PERFECT

They say that nobody's perfect, but there is one industry that really thinks it is! Whilst even well known top brands like M&S, Waitrose, Mercedes and BMW come in for criticism from time to time. I'm sure they look on the positive side to redress whatever it is. After all, the customer can only benefit, which will result in even greater sales in the future. So everyone gains by criticism.

Look through most newspapers and magazines, and you'll find consumer ratings for a whole variety of goods and services. Scores are quoted on such things as value for money, build quality and so on. Which? Magazine exclusively concentrates on the

subject, of course. SO WHAT IS THE PARK HOME INDUSTRY AFRAID OF? No need to answer that question is there? It's obvious!

Turn the pages of either specialist magazine or read newspaper features relating to the park home lifestyle, including the homes and park operators, and just about everything is first class! No criticism of any description! Every home on every park has a beautiful view and stunning garden, all the neighbours are perfect. Every picture shows smiling faces. So obviously nothing whatsoever can go wrong. DON'T BELIEVE A WORD OF IT, DO YOU? You pay nearly three quid for a magazine that has to pander to the park home industry it serves. Auto Express, for example, caters for the motoring industry, BUT IT HAS THE GUTS TO CRITICISE WHERE APPROPRIATE.

This demonstrates just how tight a grip 'our' industry has on publishers and the government, unmatched anywhere else, it seems. They don't want the truth because, as the saying goes, the truth hurts. The solution is simple; clean up your act. Nobody else can do it for you. Meanwhile, we have no option but to reveal the truth that others are afraid to expose. Will they ever wake up?
Colin Packman President.

JUST A TALKING SHOP

OK, So there has been reports of late regarding governments half hearted gestures, which merely amount to talking shops. 'Tell 'em what they want to hear, and maybe they'll go away, eh? In other words, all talk and no do. So what is the latest from our beloved government on how best to easily access information on residents rights, and the law in general?
Colin Packman President.

SAVE TREES BEFORE PEOPLES RIGHT TO KNOW.

Well, I'm afraid that when it comes to park homes, the planet comes first. Never mind about 80 year old Mrs. Smith hounded by her park owner, who cannot find out about her rights, saving a few trees is more important now. The mystery of "Where have all the fact sheets gone"? (In reality a set of 4 x A5 booklets) Well you now need to search for them, and have the equipment to do it. But if you don't know what to look for...? Tough. Right up the industry's street, eh? The official word, as told to me recently, is that no more government booklets are to be printed. Instead, everyone

regardless of ability, you have to access them via the internet. You may need to pester someone who has to spend their time searching for that elusive needle in the haystack. When and if you or they find it all, or that soon to be published revision will mean much to you, remains to be seen. Colin Packman President.

WATER CHEEK

Being as every “regulator” has been ‘programmed’ to not regulate when the words ‘park home’ is mentioned to OFWAT, the virtual guarantee is that, where you are forced to buy your water via the park owner, this will cause amnesia. You see, the problem is this; that it is very difficult for a finance director downwards to take a reading of the parks supply meter at the gate, and then divide it accurately between the number of homes on the park. It really is rocket science to them, which is why they’re so often far in excess of what has actually been used by each resident.

I left school with no qualifications whatsoever, but took on this “extremely difficult” task. The water company instantly told me how much they charged for a cubic metre of water (which converts to 220 gallons) I simply divided this figure (£1.44) into the sum demanded. From which it is a simple matter to calculate just how much your park owner is charging you; either by the day, week or month, the choice of calculation is yours in terms of gallons.

By no stretch of the imagination is a single person, for example, going to” consume” 60 GALLONS EACH DAY. But that’s how much, having treble checked it, I am being charged for. There are bound to be worse examples out there. It really is simple to work out with those local figures to hand. Such a request for the cubic metre charge, plus service charge (£21 per annum in my case) does not fall foul of the Data Protection Act. Then once you’re confident your right, but most importantly, you’re entirely satisfied those living in the home could not possibly use X amount of water between you in a single day etc., then I suggest the following scenario is sent to your park owner:

You purchase £30 worth of fuel for your car, but when you go to the till, they charge you, say £40. You say there is a mistake. They explain that the company has conducted a recent survey over a given period, and it works out that, on average, each purchase is £40. But they admit that this includes heavy users, such as HGV’s, right down to the most economical car. This situation is similar to varied water use on a park home site.

Importantly, to charge someone deliberately for more than they have used or purchased. Is *fraud*, but in this motoring example, is naturally unlikely to occur. BUT, the bottom line is that if you can *prove* you are being charged far in excess of what you have actually used, then an act of fraud has been committed! It is worth laboriously measuring all water consumed in a day to aid your case for reimbursement or court action, as appropriate ..

Yet again, the proper solution is easy. For every park home to be fitted with a water meter. The 'smart' version **even** detects leaks as well, which currently, you and I are paying for unfairly. We would like to know how much YOU are being overcharged each day.

Remember you do have the right to request and receive a copy of the park's water bill. Not everyone will be given the chance, so straight away, you become suspicious, and have the right to reduce it until such times as your request is met. Look up the revisions to the Mobile Homes Act effective from October 2006. If you knew nothing about it, there is yet more proof how both government and industry have worked to keep it from you, as detailed elsewhere on this website. Colin Packman President

BAD PARK OWNERS RECEIVE GOOD PUBLICITY.

As a further example of how you cannot trust what you read, it surely cannot be a coincidence that when a bad park owner attracts widespread media attention, there soon follows a glowing magazine article. Many at times I have witnessed this know that serious problems exist affecting usually the whole park. The only sound advice is that, if you are attracted to a certain featured park, you take along the appropriate edition, having first highlighted certain glowing statements made, before knocking on random doors, seeking occupiers' versions. If there is any hesitation, or obvious body language that suggests all is not what is claimed, run away, and don't come back.

Too many people have not done their 'homework' simply relying upon what usually turns out to be carefully selected 'green' residents still at the 'honeymoon' stage of park home living. Yet to discover the wrath that generally follows any questioning of what appears to be 'not quite right' By then it's too late. A little extra time spent on thorough research will save years of turmoil later on. There can be no substitute for

him living on a park home site with an unscrupulous park owner. So this young lad had an electricity problem and as a result has not paid his bill.

So what does this site owner do? He turns up on the lads doorstep with THREE Police Officers demanding his money. He also stated that out of the goodness of his heart, (*What heart? It is more likely to be swinging brick*) he would reduce the bill by 25%. Why? If the young man owed the site owner money fairly, then it would have been paid. But what he did not mention was the fact **that** this young man had already informed the site owner that there was a fault on the meter and until it was repaired he was not prepared to pay. One of the Police Officers who took pity on the young man's plight is alleged to have advised him not to pay until the meter fault is rectified.

But the question I ask is, why did it need three officers to do the job when simple dialogue between site owner and resident would have sufficed? I feel this was a case of harassment as the site owner knew of this young man's illness, but all he was interested was money. If and when, I have more news on this I will tell you. Malcolm Samways Chairman and membership Secretary PHRAA. January 2012.

NEW YEAR SCAMS HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Who'd have thought it? In readiness for the mass of pitch fee rises on New Years Day, that the required 28 day notice sent at the end of November would make the park owner very happy. Not only does it herald a 5.4% rise in pitch fees, and bring tears to your eyes when you learn how they've "struggled" with rising costs, but don't tell you chiefly associated with the creation of new pitches and sitting of homes, recouped immediately on sale, which has absolutely nothing to do with the day to day running of the park. So, what joy does the first day of 2012 bring?

No less than the start of a new round of scams, I wager, if they can get away with the first one. After all with all that booze, they reckon you'll not notice the wording of the pitiful letter I received, for instance, which was psychologically crafted to appear in the usual small print in the very last paragraph. It stated:

"...we will need to monitor the costs of complying with this new legislation (The MHA allows for the review to 'have regard' to the" effect of any enactment which has come into force since the last review".) This is in relation to costs expended in any matters involving the Residential Property Tribunal (RPT). The letter continues: "Where justified, we will need to pass on the costs evenly to all residents". What has the costs relating to one residents dispute got to do with **the** rest of the occupiers?

For the TRUTH is contained within paragraph 19 (2) of Schedule 1 which specifically states, and I quote:

“In the case of a protected site in England, when determining the amount of the new pitch fee, NO regard may be had to any costs incurred by the owner in relation to the conduct of proceedings under this Act or agreement”.

Answers on a postcard please, as to who you believe the two most likely suspects are who tried their luck to protect site owners across the UK from this added “burden of responsibility. Their backs must be aching so much by now. Why not give your site owner a tube of Deep Heat to ease the pain? Most of us though have got a better idea, but one we can’t repeat..... Instead, tell them to take a running jump; after all, it is the year of the Olympics.

Colin Packman

President PHRAA.

JUSTICE: IT’S JUST NOT JUST.

Those of a certain age will have been brought up to trust the justice system; Britain has ‘the best system in the world’, we were told. But what about now? Like the rest of the country, I believe standards have slipped. But it’s not just me. A year or so ago the web site ‘SOLICITORS FROM HELL’ was set up. It’s now crammed with names of solicitors and some barristers who, in the eyes of those whose lives have allegedly been badly effected by their unjust behaviour, on behalf of their clients, now have an effective platform upon which to name and shame. No surprise then, that the Law Society is reported to have closed the site down – but thankfully, only for a few days. Have a good look at it.

Where the legal profession have acted on behalf of the park home industry, it has given them an ‘easy ride’ to victory for a number of simple reasons. The fact they are mostly dealing with those of an age who trusted the content of legal letters as a true reflection of the law, and so acted accordingly to “comply” with the demand made. But for those who questioned such content they were subsequently threatened with court action. ‘Final’ letters claiming their client would win, because he/she was acting strictly in accordance with the law, therefore the resident would be forced to pay the site owners’ costs. This usually brings the matter to a swift halt. The resident does as he or she is told. But often the real facts of the case differ.

But where the matter does go to court, one enters an area where, commonly, the court and those working within it, will mostly be unfamiliar with Mobile Home law. Never mind eh? “help” is at hand. Quick as a flash, once the barrister (nearly always used

by the industry) will step up and “offer to assist the court”, which is gratefully accepted by the Judge or Magistrate, as appropriate. (I have witnessed this) Naturally, in accordance with his duty, being that of having his clients’ interests at heart at all times, he will seize this golden opportunity to actually further secure his clients’ position, regardless.

We all accept that judges and magistrates have a difficult decision to make, especially when, in this industry, countless residents know to their cost that certain park owners are habitual liars, and can be very convincing ones with the help of their lawyers, who appear not to want to exert themselves to double check whether what their client is saying, can be proven to be the truth.

Today, we are left with an ever increasing number of cases that have gone against us. To be fair, it has a lot to do with the way in which the laws that, at first glance, appear to be protecting residents, but have been “ manufactured at birth” with defects (loopholes in other words,) The legal profession love loopholes, it makes their job so much easier. Common sense (**what’s that?**) never comes into the equation. So let me put that straight right now, as it deals effectively with a recent, but common problem.

Changes to the *Mobile Homes Act* effective from October 2006, gave the right to an appropriate reduction in the pitch fee where it could be proven that a loss of amenity since the last review date had occurred. However, this failed to take account of a more serious occurrence, that of fraud,. I suggest, in certain circumstances. Let me explain.

Given that any business, when considering the important question of what to charge, in relation to the pitch fee review, will inevitably consider all the relative costs involved, and reach a figure to achieve the desired profit. Thus when calculating a pitch fee on a park with numerous facilities, such fees will be considerably more than one in the same area with no such benefits as a club house, bar, tennis court, security gates etc. Naturally, when one or more of these facilities are taken away, an appropriate reduction in pitch fees must be forthcoming.

But, both the legal profession and site owners are having none of it, it seems, and are getting away with still charging for facilities that no longer exist! So let us examine how EXACTLY the same move elsewhere constitutes a criminal offence! Take the scenario of a 15 year old boy, who goes into a super market to buy 4 items. One of those items is a bottle of beer, costing £1.50. The remaining three items comes to a total of £4.00, thus, a total bill of £5.50. When he arrives at the checkout, the assistant

questions his age, to which he admits is 15, so the assistant removes the bottle from his basket, and therefore now charges him the now reduced price of £4.00. Had the shop deliberately charged for the beer that had been taken away, it would have committed the serious offence. Of course, this would NEVER happen in practice, **SO WHY DOES IT IN PARK HOME CIRCLES?**

\\There will be those out there who will point to the fact that where, as in this case, the matter has been grinding on since before the review date last year, and before a change of ownership, the law in 2006 does not apply. **But that law was NOT intended to then create a criminal offence in such circumstances!!** The crucial facts remain: That the current park owner has ample evidence that supports the resident's claim they knew the demolition of facilities had occurred, for which NO reduction had been granted, and thus an unresolved issue at the time of their take over. If it is the law, which it is, that a new park owner MUST carry on under the same lawful terms and conditions as previously, then that also must include the continuation of resolving a dispute! Especially when that dispute relates to continually demanding monthly charges for the facilities no longer available to maybe hundreds of residents, right now.

Ironically, one firm of solicitors involved, claim to provide “specialist legal advice for older and vulnerable and vulnerable people”, through their membership of the ‘Solicitors for the Elderly’, scheme. Obviously, that goes out of the window when choosing instead to become their enemy, by supporting the aims of companies seeking sums to which they are no longer lawfully entitled. Isn't this a classical example of solicitors failing to have regard to investigating the precise circumstances of each case offered by the other side. To continue to lead their client along a path of unlawful procedures is unforgivable. Proof that the justice system is not what it used to be in this area of law. No common sense either.

Colin Packman. President.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TURNS GREEN

From the Green Tourism Heritage Guide 2011/12 we find on pages 32/33 a typical upbeat report that claims out of the 3,000 parks in membership of the BH&HPA, the British Holiday and Home parks Association, more than 600 have “earned” the accolade bestowed upon them by the Association's President, Professor David Bellamy. I can hardly contain my excitement.

Especially as they each had the difficult task of finding a local “independent” nature group to come and approve their efforts, BEFORE reporting the fact to Professor Bellamy who, only then would actually visit the park for himself to confirm their independent findings. All above board, then.

But the climate – that the one in which the housing market is in the dumps, is such that our climate – that’s the one relating to our wide changes in weather conditions, that has obviously appealed so much to the sensitive, caring nature of most park owners that own holiday sites. Take, for instance that were ‘giving away’, yes, free caravans, that only cost £4,000 to set up and use for the rest of the season, to then be told you had to pay to have it removed, as it was coming to the end of it’s ten year life. How dare I digress! Back to the haven, where I can almost hear the bird- song as I write..... I know you lucky people can. So no need for that alarm clock any more, is there?

But I must also spare a thought for the park owner. It can’t be easy for some to cope with the inactivity caused by the lack of development and sales, as I witnessed earlier last year on an established holiday site that had but three homes. How to turn all those empty concrete bases into wildlife sites? Neglect an area and its automatic! Homeowners can make a contribution for just £1.98. A bird feeder and the seed is awaiting them at the nearest 99p store. But will they get a sticker for their window, not larger than A4, by order of the Park Homes Charter?

Professor Bellamy stated that “the natural environment was being respected”. I’d like him to be present when the ‘green’ park owner turns red with rage when a resident dares to question something of importance. The heat could set his beard alight!

It proves that so many have open spaces to spare that, for the time being anyway, such areas are being put to good use. But sadly, the colour of money has, in the past, proven that if, or when the opportunity arises, or the market picks up, nature conservation will be on the compost heap. A shame, but true.

Yes, we don’t deny there are some caring and concerned operators out there, but will they too succumb to the ‘call of nature’, human nature, that is? The first sign will be the appearance of a yellow creature moving slowly over the conservation area. Yes, it’s a yellow hammer all right, with the distinctive markings JCB

One park in Ambleside was singled out for “fitting water saving devises to 300 homes”. It doesn’t say meters, though. Let’s hope residents are confident they pay no greater charge than those living in adjacent bricks and mortar. Colin Packman President.

WHEN SELLING YOUR PARK HOME CAN LAND YOU IN A “ CATCH 22” SITUATION

A moving plea from a distressed park home owner, at the end of their tether, who needs to exercise their right under the Mobile Home Act 1983/2006 to sell their home, but has found that, through absolutely no fault of their own, they have unwittingly become embroiled in an absolutely diabolical case of the inescapable situation known as the “Catch 22 “ syndrome, or DAMNED IF YOU DO AND DAMNED IF YOU DON’T, an all too common affliction suffered by an ever increasing number of elderly and vulnerable park home owners trapped under the tyrannical regime of the UNSCRUPULOUS PARK OWNER. With full permission I have reproduced the homeowners own account of the matter to act as a warning to others of what to expect from the rogue element of this industry. TAKE NOTE Mr. SHAPPS Minister of Housing and Mr. Eric Pickles DCLG. This is happening now!!!!

“Help, I am hoping to sell my home, we have had enough with UPO’s. (UNSCUPULOUS PARK OWNERS) My problem is that the Site owner is a b.....d and will almost certainly try everything to block a sale despite the fact he would really like me to be gone. If I am lucky enough to attract a buyer (unlikely) and they ask what the site owner is like, how can I with a clear conscience, answer truthfully? If I am honest and admit he is hell on wheels; buyer gone. If I were to lie and say he was a lovely person, unless the buyer was familiar with the problems on parks, I may be condemning them to a life of hell.

Whichever way I go, I am doomed it would seem. I cannot just make no comment at all, other residents here would not dare make any derogatory remarks about him and would prefer not to comment, which looks suspicious. The Site owner will tell me my extension/sheds/paving/fencing is illegal and I cannot sell my home like that.

I could spend money addressing these so called illegal issues (Council have inspected and told me no problems although the sheds may have to be replaced immediately) But I am convinced it would be a waste as he has his knife in my back and will I suspect make me a pathetic offer which will be the only way I can go. I cannot afford to accept a paltry figure, this is my life investment which I will need for my old age. I don’t think I can just leave it empty like you can with conventional housing and move out as I think he may be able to repossess it. It seems an insurmountable problem, Anyone any suggestions? Thanks.”

This is a dilemma that almost certainly will confront potentially every park home owner in the UK if the time comes when they wish to sell their park home especially if they live on one of the MAJORITY of parks NOW owned by one of the ever increasing number of Unscrupulous Park Owners who has made life unbearable for them and they cannot wait to get away from his evil and money grabbing clutches.

As the resident comments out in the above heartrending statement that “he would really like me to be gone” but although this is no doubt the case, these UPO’s not only want their residents gone, especially those who live in homes over 10 years old, (regarded by the industry as “OLDER HOMES”) or whose owners have the audacity to ask questions or criticise their questionable methods of operation of the site, they want them gone at little or no cost to themselves. The thought of paying a fair price to the helpless resident for their home is absolutely abhorrent to the UPO and if he can get it for nothing, he is over the moon.

As I am sure you will agree the majority of park home owners are elderly, mainly retired senior citizens , who have worked all their lives, paid all their taxes, raised a family, struggled to buy their own home. And many have served in the armed forces sacrificing years of their lives protecting the freedom of our once wonderful country. Indeed some of the 80 plus year olds served in the Second World War fighting to get rid of a ruthless Dictator. Yet here they are in 2012 fighting to rid this park home industry of another batch of equally ruthless dictators, know to us as UPO’s. Unfortunately unlike the previous Dictator, these Dictators are actually helped and encouraged in their ruthless acts of exploitation of the vulnerable park owners by the so called regulators of the industry and the Government on the grounds that it is a £6 Billion industry. It may well be a £6 Billion industry at the moment, but people are getting wise to the uncontrolled growth of the UPO’s wrecking the lives of both innocent and vulnerable park owners and holiday caravan owners with impunity .So how much longer can this corruption ravaged industry survive in its present virtually unregulated form? For the sake of greed this industry and its so called regulators are content to sit back while they kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

Does this Government and those in Authority not realise that the vast majority of park homeowners and their fellow holiday caravan owners, are honest, upright, hardworking members of our society whose only mistake was to believe all the hype and very often deliberately mis-leading information pumped out on a massive scale by this industry, (*See ISSUE 3 or PHRAA News to be published in February with luck*) and to be placed in the disgraceful position of considering that to sell their home they may have to tell lies to a prospective buyer by stating that the park owner is fine and

life on his park is happy and contented. Alternatively, do they tell the buyer that he is a not a very nice man,(to put it mildly) in which case you will certainly lose your sale. Then of course, you could refuse to comment, or even say you don't know. Either of these would almost certainly make all but the most determined or desperate buyer, run a mile.

Besides the moral issue of not being straight with your prospective buyer, which like this resident, is not up for consideration, there are the possible repercussions from a disgruntled buyer, who finding out once they have moved in, providing the site owner has approved the sale that is ,that they have been misled, they may well sue the seller on those grounds, .Either way, The outgoing resident has a problem which could well cost them their life savings. **CATCH 22????** More on this subject in later issues.

If you have a similar story to tell, please let us publish it. Guaranteed Confidentiality.
NO NAMES NO PACKDRILL
Joyce Ron

EVIL TRADERS WHO PREY ON THE ELDERLY.

“Today we report yet another spate of crooked tradesmen preying on the elderly. These are despicable crimes, targeting some of the most vulnerable people. For honest, decent folk, it is impossible to get inside the head of the sort of crook who deliberately seeks out old, frail and sometimes confused people and then robs them of their savings.....”

The above heading and part article quoted above is unashamedly borrowed from our local evening newspaper and I hope they won't mind, but although the crooks referred to deliberate target victims living in usually bricks and mortar properties, the similarity to the crooks that target equally elderly, frail victims living in park homes and often holiday caravan owners is almost the same including the despicable and cowardly methods used on their innocent and defenceless victims.. Unfortunately however, the main difference between these crimes is that the victims reported on in the article are targeted at random and do stand a chance of telling the crooks to clear off, or, either their relatives, neighbours or themselves report these incidents to the Police and/ or the authorities, who will fully investigate these cases, track down the perpetrators, which usually leads to the rogue traders being prosecuted and jailed. Once this is done it is usually the end of the matter and the traumatised victim can usually return to some sort of normal life.

Not so for the park home owner. Because his home, although owned by himself, is sitting on someone else's land, (the park owner) they are trapped with no way to escape from their rogue trader's evil grasp. If they have, or even considered, reporting this rogues ongoing acts of fraud, exploitation, rip off's, robbery or whatever else you want to call it, they face treats, harassment, intimidation and / or violence from the park owner with usually no help or protection from local authorities, Police, even trading standards in most cases. Nobody, especially government, wants to know even to the extent of dismissing reports of such cases as the moaning of a bunch of old codgers who have got nothing better to do than complain about everything and anything, as a park owners Barrister described the many hundred residents of his park owner clients many parks recently. He also added that he could see, if they were not happy, why they did not leave as they were perfectly free to do, a view shared by many others, including those in authority. Unfortunately, as he knows, as do many of those in authority, and certainly distressed long suffering park homeowners, it is impossible to escape these tyrants clutches without losing your home, life savings, health, sanity even your life. Very often the only sure way of escape is feet first, with the vulture, (UPO) sitting on your roof waiting to steal your home from your loved one left behind.

I would like to be told by those in authority why is it that park homeowners are treated totally differently to those in bricks and mortar. Second class citizens Mr. Shapps?

Your views please.

Ron Joyce.

Hope you have found this second issue of PHRAA News informative and please send us your park home/holiday caravan/ chalet stories if you would like them included in future issues. All in complete confidence of course.
Ron.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF YOUR PHRAA NEWS OUT SOON.

WHAT DOES THE BH&HPA DO?

An in depth report on the activities of the BRITISH HOLIDAY & HOME PARKS ASSOCIATION (BH&HPA) Your questions answered.

Many other topical articles and features and new scams exposed.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A COPY OF ANY ISSUES OF PHRAA NEWS IN PRINT THEY ARE AVAILABLE BY CALLING RON, General Secretary PHRAA ON 01902 373462 or Email ronjoyce@phraa.co.uk.

Copies priced to include printing costs, at £2.00 including post and packing. Cheque or Postal Order made out to PHRAA.

PHRAA NEWS. WRITTEN FOR PARK HOME/HOLIDAY CARAVAN OWNERS BY PARK HOME OWNERS.

PHRAA, THE ONLY NATIONAL PARK HOME RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION THAT IS NOT AFRAID TO STICK IT'S HEAD ABOVE THE PARAPET AND "TELL IT AS IT IS", IS RUN ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTEERS AND DOES NOT ACCEPT OR RECEIVE ANY SPONSORSHIP FROM THE PARK HOME INDUSTRY. OBVIOUSLY PHRAA DOES NEED FUNDS TO CARRY ON ITS WORK FOR PARK HOME OWNERS AND SUPPORT PHRAA's' FREE TO ALL TO VIEW WEBSITE SO IF YOU FEEL YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP PHRAA TO HELP YOU, THEN YOU CAN EITHER BECOME A MEMBER FOR AN ANNUAL FEE OF £8 OR SEND A SMALL DONATION TO MALCOLM SAMWAYS. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY PHRAA. 3. SILVER POPLARS, KINGSWOOD, ALBRIGHTON, SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE./ WV7 3AP. Tel. 01902 374 987.

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Thank you and best wishes.

SEE YOU SOON

PHRAA FULLY SUPPORTS THE WORK OF CONSUMER FOCUS. PARK HOME CONGRESS, I LIVE IN A PARK HOME and all other residents groups, individual residents and parks residents associations who are all fighting for a FAIR DEAL FOR ALL PARK/MOBILE HOMEOWNERS, HOLIDAY CARAVAN/CHALET OWNERS. WE ARE THE BREAD AND BUTTER TO THIS INDUSTRY . WITHOUT US, THEY WOULD NOT SURVIVE. IF THE

**GOVERNMENT WANT TO PRESERVE THIS (they claim) £6 BILLION
INDUSTRY, THEY SHOULD GRASP THE NETTLE, SCRAP THE
LOOPHOLE RIDDEN, PARK OWNER BIASED MOBILE HOMES ACT,
AND BRING OUT A BRAND NEW ACT, WHICH INCLUDES US FULLY
INTO THE HOUSING ACT PROPER. SO WHAT IF IT INVOLVES
PRIMARY LEGISLATION? DON'T WE DESERVE REAL PROTECTION?
WE ARE NOT SECOND CLASS CITIZENS WHOSE ONLY ROLE IS TO
KEEP THE ALREADY OVERFLOWING POCKETS OF THE RUTHLESS
UNSCRUPULOUS PARK OWNERS. LET US KNOW YOUR VIEWS
PLEASE. _____ Ron.**

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