

THE ELEMENT NEWHAVEN OWNERS' ASSOCIATION (TENOA)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 3rd September 2019

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

A year ago tonight we looked back on improvements in *The Element* since we picked ourselves up from the brink of disaster in 2015 and began to face huge challenges on a journey which continues, even though owners come and go.

Later an update from our appointed Factors *TEF* on the main features of the past year, including improved contracts for maintenance, negotiating the best deals, regular servicing and replacements of worn out fabric. Inevitable emergencies challenge even best laid contingency plans, but steady modernising continues, just as we all do on a much smaller scale within our own properties, when we replace something worn out. Each of us takes care of things inside our four walls. *TEF*, working with *TENOA's* committee – that's **your committee**, does the same for the building we own collectively on a scale multiplied by 278: which is why our annual budget is a staggering half million pounds.

That includes capital items under the Red fund, as well as the housekeeping Green fund for electricity, insurance, lift maintenance, cleaning and so on. Details later with appropriate decisions regarding the year beginning on October 1st.

I want to prepare you tonight for what's further ahead. This time next year there will be a massive amount of construction work around us of a kind not experienced since the recession halted the development of Western Harbour ten years ago. Look ahead ten years and New Haven will have been transformed into a vibrant community of over 10,000, with a colourful 600 year history but an even more promising future. We who own properties in *The Element* should see the value of our asset increase, perhaps significantly.

But there will be many challenges and over the past year some have begun to emerge. An annual address is the right point to note these and indicate how they're likely to impact. I always paint with broad brush strokes and the detail of the picture will emerge gradually.

Many years ago the *City of Edinburgh Council* negotiated the development of this northern part of its constituency with *Forth Ports Authority*. Don't let the word "Forth" restrict your view. This is an international company: to give an idea of range, it owns London's largest and greenest Port of Tilbury and has 7 ports in Scotland, giving immediate access to 70% of Scotland's population.

What emerged here was a plan to more than double the population of Newhaven on land reclaimed from the sea many years ago, some of which was developed industrially but later to encourage sustainable tourism and provide much needed affordable housing to fit the Scottish Government's commitment, some of which we have seen over the past year in two blocks near Asda and which will continue in the next phase.

Just across the road from this David Lloyd Complex next year a new primary school will be built for 460 pupils plus 80 nursery places, many of which will be taken up by young families living in Western Harbour. Apparently some flat owners of next door *Platinum Point* were affronted by the prospect of a playground outside their windows. They thought they had bought into a retirement village: they obviously didn't study the plan nor their title deeds. Get used to it. It's going to happen. By the same token, it's futile for anyone in *The Element* to complain about cruise ships which, if Newhaven cultivates an opportunity on its doorstep, can boost a tourist industry to our advantage.

There will be a substantial attractive park – the upkeep of which we will have to pay for. Read your title deeds! More on the *Heart of Newhaven* in due course but don't imagine it's irrelevant.

I want to encourage responsibility about where we live by contrasting good and bad: success and challenge. If you've moved here recently one of the things you take for granted is the ease of access to our garden, with security provided so we can go out and in but with the children we see playing absolutely within their rights as residents or visitors, enjoying a safe environment. As funds permit we want to improve it.

But two years ago we faced a challenge of banging fire doors, problems of getting into our garage if a lift was out of service and total lack of external security. What an difference imagination has brought about!

Of course a challenge remains which I'll come to; but I want to register the huge improvement that our attitude towards community has achieved, arising out of one of the aims of **TENOA's** Constitution: "...to foster co-operation and a sense of well-being in the interests of everyone in The Element whether Members, Owners, Tenants and families and visitors of the same."

Even though this year's Summer Garden Fest was rained off there are increasing examples of the benefits of living together: clearing rubbish on the waste land, coffee mornings, evening soirees, taking in each other's post, developing friendships with close neighbours or others in our block, chatting to each other as we go in and out of the garden. I love the occasional cup cakes left outside my door by friendly neighbours! Let's foster this great sense of living together.

But we also experience irritations of thoughtlessness and lack of regard for others that spoil this good feeling. Excessive noise, especially at night if windows are open, unsightly rubbish, the stale smell from smoking and dropped fag ends, careless damage to lifts, doors and floors – all constant threats.

We're trying to address these through your direction at last year's AGM for **The Element Code** and **Living in The Element** – look at our website – to encourage a sense of regard for those around us. But bad things are by no means synonymous with short-term letting (incidentally often incorrectly dubbed "Airbnb"). Some resident owners are guilty too. It's an unfortunate knee-jerk accusation which unfairly tars with a carelessly handled brush some letting owners who actually boost the reputation of **The Element** by offering an excellent service to holiday makers to whom Newhaven is showcased as "the place" to come: good news for all.

So we have to isolate the bad from the good in terms of the way EVERY OWNER manages his or her property, perfectly entitled to live here all or some of the time or to let their property out long term or short term. *It's not our job* as **TENOA** to tell anyone how to manage their flat. *It is our task* together to build up a sense of well-being for all who come and go. That's led your Committee, working with **TEF** on your behalf, to take specific action over recent months to tackle bad practice in terms of letting. More on that later. But it would be unwise, even in a meeting of **TENOA** such as this to go into too much detail. I can, however, assure you that we're pursuing a robust policy to address a major problem with co-operation from our neighbours across the road, also affected.

Many other matters of concern to be aired tonight as we proceed with reports, including the ongoing saga with **NHBC** and the pursuit of owners who persistently fail to settle levied charges for Green and Red funds, although remarkably 98% are up to date, an astonishingly high level which again is tribute to the stewardship of **TEF** on our behalf.

My task has been to offer an optimistic overview of where we are as we look back with pride in what we have achieved together over the last year and to look forward to the next. But I end where I started, looking further ahead.

This time last year the latest plans for Western Harbour had been just been displayed. Soon afterwards there was a public meeting in **Victoria Primary School** on 4th October which developed into a movement called the **Heart of Newhaven** which I Chair and of which I am – more creatively – the *Vision Facilitator*. That simply means doing what I did when I became your chairman, encouraging an imaginative view of the future, maybe ten years ahead when the scene will have changed. Be sure of that.

Between now and then, and in the coming months much will begin to develop. By far the easiest way to keep up to date with the promising future is to register as a member of **HoN** to receive an email update every 20 days, much of it exciting. I've got forms here and it costs nothing. Even though that's another agenda, you **are** part of it, so this is the best way to "mind your own business!" It is your business. Many have already signed up – even easier than becoming a member of **TENOA** and see the benefit of that.

Now to get your paint brushes out – as I've said before – and start filling in the details of the picture as we look closer at the canvas.

Rodney Matthews TENOA Chairman 3rd September 2019

