



# Holiday Home Association News

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## House of Lords Report: Next train to Seaminster



The House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating seaside Towns and Communities has published a major report, ***The Future of Seaside Towns*** which comprehensively analyses the decline of some seaside towns and the

### In HHA News 148:

- House of Lords publishes two in-depth reports on the future of seaside towns, and also the rural economy
- Insurance tip of the month
- Refreshing energy deal
- New edition of The Pink Book
- CMA campaign on unfair terms
- New Tourism SuperStar announced

problems they face and makes recommendations.

*Seaside towns must be inspired to regain their pioneering spirit and evolve to meet present day and future challenges*

The report's authors have visited a number of seaside towns and found a wide range of situations ranging from the success of Brighton to the despair of declining towns at the "end of the line" with poor connectivity and even less ambition.

The report highlights the importance of tourism but also deals with education, digital connectivity, housing and other aspects of economic regeneration.

*In some places, we found new thinking and reinvention, in others a litany of regret and a paucity of ambition. Occasionally, we found both at the same time.*

There is an intriguing vision for Seaminster, which is about that town's declining Victorian infrastructure and relatively remote location about an hour and a half's journey from a big centre of population.

Seaminster has done well, despite the decline in its traditional fishing industry and Seaminster Scallops, and the conversion of so many guest houses to low-quality houses of multiple occupation. Businesses and the local authority came together with a nearby University to initiate a whole raft of changes to talk up the town, to start new seasonal events, such as Pirate Day and generate investment in the town's amenities. Seaminster has steadily reversed its decline and is a model for other medium-sized towns.<sup>1</sup>

The British Tourist Authority comes in for some less-than-encouraging comments in this report. National initiatives such as the Discover England Fund are highlighted as largely bypassing the smaller seaside resort, and the tourism body is understandably regarded as mainly working to encourage visits to already-prosperous destinations. Northumberland County Council's views are cited in the report:

*England is now the only part of the UK that does not have a stand alone*

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, you guessed correctly. Seaminster is fictional. Not to be confused with Minster on Sea, Kent.

*national tourist board. This has meant a reduction of focus on England's regions, a reduction in resource and a drop in national marketing . . . In the past the 'thematic' promotions run by VisitEngland gave seaside towns opportunities to be included in marketing activities that targeted the right markets and had a reasonable chance of translating into increases in their preferred visitors.*

Their Lordships state unequivocally that *It is vital for the future prosperity of smaller seaside resorts that they have the opportunity to benefit from national tourism campaigns, and from nationally provided research and support, to help to develop their tourism products.*

It has long been HHA's view that public authorities need to focus on the public realm as an enabler of tourism, and the Lords endorse this view strongly:

*We consistently heard that an attractive and well-maintained public realm—including sea-fronts, promenades, cultural and heritage assets, and parks and gardens—is vital in supporting the visitor economy in seaside towns.*

They recommend that more emphasis be placed by government on public realm and cultural assets in coastal towns and that this be a factor considered in reviews of local authority resources.

The Lords supported the development of the Tourism Sector Deal which would be a government-backed framework for the development of tourism.

There is guarded support for the Cut Tourism VAT campaign in the report. They identify the case for cutting the tax on accommodation, heritage building repairs, and meals in pubs and restaurants, but disappointingly fall short of outright support for this, recommending merely that further research ought to be carried out.

Much is said about transport and the Cinderella status of many seaside towns on the rail and road networks. They recommend that greater priority is given to investment in coastal connections by the Department for Transport.

On Local Enterprise Partnerships, the conclusion is that:

*We recommend that LEPs are given a specific requirement to have regard to the needs of deprived seaside towns and communities, and for supporting regeneration and redevelopment in these areas.*

The Coastal Communities Fund is broadly supported although not without some criticism.

There is much more in this large-scale report than can be summarised here, it is a lengthy, well-researched, detailed and level-headed report full of proposals for improving the lot of the seaside town through tourism, diversification, education and enterprise.

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## And Another House of Lords Report



HOUSE OF LORDS

Select Committee on the Rural Economy

Report of Session 2017–19

### Time for a strategy for the rural economy

Their lordships have been extremely busy this month and have just published another lengthy report relevant to tourism, focussed on the rural economy. Features on two House of Lords reports might be a bit much for one edition of HHA News so we'll report on this second blockbuster in May's edition!

## Insurance Tip from David Morris

### ***Don't forget – un-occupancy***

Hopefully your property has emerged unscathed from the winter and you are geared up well for Easter.

Bookings may temporarily drop off after Easter until the main season starts, so do not forget to comply with the un-occupancy inspection requirement in your insurance policy.

This will ensure that you have full cover at all times, even when there are no holidaymakers. The inspection period will vary between insurers – for a proper self catering insurance it is usually 14 days.

If you are unlucky to have a claim when the property is unoccupied the self-catering insurance provides cover not only for bookings already taken, but for those that are yet to be made. (This is another clear distinction between the wrong type of insurance and a proper self-catering policy!)

*David Morris is the owner of J. L Morris, specialist brokers since 1972 and an expert on insurance for the holiday home industry. [jlmorris.co.uk](http://jlmorris.co.uk)*

## Refreshing your Energy

A company called Refresh Energy has launched into the self-catering market with an unusual approach. The company wants you to sign up for a three-year energy deal with them but they're offering a significant reward in the form of a new A-rated boiler and free LED light bulbs for your property.

They're also offering a free energy audit for properties, free servicing, and free gas safety inspections.



This differs from most of the energy supply proposals (with which we're all bombarded frequently) in that they don't pay lots of commission to brokers but instead provide this free investment in energy-saving hardware.

The company is keen to promote this offer to the self-catering market and they promise an ethical approach to business.



If you are an individual owner interested in this, or an agency interested in discussing a scheme for your owners, your contact is Karen Weech, 0191 605 3780, or [karen.weech@refreshenergy.co.uk](mailto:karen.weech@refreshenergy.co.uk), or see their website [www.refreshenergy.co.uk](http://www.refreshenergy.co.uk)

*Note: HHA has not vetted this company – you will need to satisfy yourself that their offering meets your needs!*

## Pink Book – New Edition

The so-called “Pink Book” is VisitBritain’s guide to the legislative environment for the accommodation sector and it has been republished in a new edition. The book is an overview of a wide range of topics from data protection to the prevention of horrible diseases. It is not free, but can be ordered for £9.99.

Don't forget that many of these subjects are covered in many past articles in HHA/EASCO news, available in the members area of our website, free of charge to members.

<https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/know-your-legal-obligations>

## New Tourism SuperStar

VisitBritain has announced that the winner of the Tourism Superstar competition this year is a costumed interpreter at Beamish

Impeccably dressed in her beautiful Edwardian costume, Emily Hope always goes the extra mile to guarantee every single visitor has an unforgettable day out.

Her roles and responsibilities are varied, including guaranteeing their 764,000 annual visitors have an amazing time at Beamish from the second they arrive to the moment they leave. Emily also leads on developments that will further enhance visitors' experience.

Emily recently volunteered to become a Dementia Friends Champion training more than 100 staff, volunteers, and members of the community, to become Dementia Friends, making a real difference to visitors living with dementia, as part of the museum's health and wellbeing work. She held a Dementia Friendly Café in the Coffee Shop.

The organisation also runs the national Awards for Excellence programme, which has become inaccessible to large parts of the country because entry is channelled through regional competitions that do not exist in every part of England.

## UnFair Terms and Conditions

The Competition and Markets Authority has launched a video campaign to remind businesses that they cannot rely on terms in their terms and conditions documents if

they are unfair. Unfortunately, their videos don't really leave you with much understanding of what terms will or won't be considered fair by a judge. They helpfully also publish 155 pages of guidance on that one!

Generally speaking an unfair term is one that is weighted too heavily against the consumer. It is best to use the HHA standard terms or to get a lawyer to check your terms over, but a certain amount of common sense will go a long way in this. For a start, terms have to be clearly understandable, so if they are written in poor English, legalistic gobbledygook, or otherwise hard for a reasonably intelligent person to comprehend, they are less likely to be enforced by a court.

Examples of the types of terms where an unfair imbalance is likely to arise include those that have the effect of:

- restricting or excluding the consumer's normal legal rights (for instance, saying the consumer has no right to seek damages even if you are at fault);
- constraining customers from seeking the legal remedies (for instance, compelling the consumer to take a dispute to arbitration); and
- imposing on the consumer additional obligations or risks that unreasonably go beyond anything needed to protect your legitimate interests (for instance, imposing excessive financial sanctions for breaching the contract).

In general, if it looks fair, then it probably is fair, but consumers have some specific rights such as the right to compensation if things go wrong – and they are not obliged to give you the chance to put things right at an early stage.