

Dover District Council

Property Assets

Beach Hut Policy



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dover District Council (DDC) benefits from around 20 miles of coastline within its' district, we currently have a number of beach huts directly under our management in Walmer, Kingsdown and St Margarets. This policy has been written to ensure there is a consistent approach to the use, management and maintenance of beach huts within the Dover District so that they are used in a safe, respectful and sustainable manner and provide a positive impact, whilst helping to preserve the coastal environment. It will also be used to inform residents and visitors of our future plans.
- 1.2 There are currently 56 beach huts either directly owned and managed by DDC or privately owned and situated on our land and under our control. At the end of March 2025 all beach huts will be directly owned and managed by the Council.
- 1.3 Beach huts are an important feature of our unique coastline and support the Council's Strategic Priorities.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy:

'We', 'us', 'ours' and 'the Council' refers to Dover District Council

'Beach hut' refers to a wooden structure with approximate maximum dimensions of up to 2.4 metres wide x 3.2 metres long and 2.6 metres high for use as a beach hut, including but limited to use as a shelter from the weather, changing into and out of swimming attire and all other uses associated with the everyday use as a private beach hut.

'The property' refers to a beach hut.

'Community hut' refers to a beach hut that is leased to a community group (such as a local open water swimming group or angling club).

3. Legislation

- 3.1 The law neither requires local authorities to provide beach huts, nor does it state that if they do, they must do so in a particular way. Beach huts may be provided under section 232 of the Public Health Act 1936 which states: 'A local authority may provide huts or other conveniences for bathing on any land belonging to them or under their control and may make charges for the use thereof.'

4. Policy purpose and scope

- 4.1 This Policy is needed to enable the Council to effectively and fairly manage the provision of beach huts within the district.
- 4.2 The provision of beach huts within our district supports Strategic Priorities within the Councils Corporate Plan.
- Strategic Priority Two – Growing our economy
 - Strategic Priority Three – Protecting our environment
 - Strategic Priority Four – Supporting our communities
- 4.3 This Policy applies to all Council-owned land that accommodates (or could accommodate) beach huts within our district and all beach hut users, tenants and prospective tenants.
- 4.4 This Policy should be used by all Council staff and contractors working on behalf of the Council to maintain effective use, management and maintenance of beach huts in the district (present and future).

4.5 The following documents should be read alongside this Policy:

- Beach Hut Lease
- Beach Hut Equality Impact Assessment

5. Policy aim and objectives

- 5.1 The Policy's main aim is to continue to provide a popular, accessible amenity that enables residents and visitors to enjoy the Dover District beaches and coastline safely, whilst promoting wellbeing. It will aim to provide a consistent approach to the charging, use, management and maintenance of beach huts within the Dover District so that they are used in a safe, respectful and sustainable manner. This Policy will be delivered alongside the Kingsdown & Walmer Beach Local Wildlife Site Management Plan 2024-2029 (approved by Cabinet October 2024), which aims to conserve and enhance the rare, vegetated shingle habitat, and raise awareness about its importance with residents and visitors alike.
- 5.2 The Council will aim to effectively manage the beach huts alongside the provision of boat plots and other amenities and services offered on Council owned land along its' coastline.
- 5.3 Waiting lists for beach huts have been closed for a number of years, some applicants have been on them for decades and are still waiting for a beach hut. Demand for beach huts within the district remains high despite economic pressures. It is the Council's aim to increase beach hut availability by providing new shorter-term leases (3 years) to enable more residents and visitors to benefit from their use and allow the Council to reopen the waiting lists. With a new lease agreement in place any issues around appearance, unauthorised extensions or use can be effectively managed by the Council.
- 5.4 The Council's aim is to receive income through the effective management of the beach huts and to identify potential areas to increase the Council's beach hut stock to allow it to meet demand.
- 5.5 We aim to retain the unique appearance and appeal of the beach huts and ensure they contribute positively to the local area and environment in which they are based. Depending on the location (on a case by case basis) the Council may use the same or differing style of huts and will paint huts using a single or limited palette of colours. This will ensure the huts are in keeping with the local area (which varies by location).

6. Policy statements

Provision

- 6.1 The provision of beach huts is managed by Dover District Council (DDC) through the use of a waiting list. Waiting lists at all locations have been shut for a number of years.

It is the Council's intention to reopen waiting lists and offer a fair and transparent application service. Applicants will be able to apply directly via our website, by e-mail or by phone. Name and contact details will be taken alongside a preferred location. Applicants will be able to go on the waiting list at one location at a time. Application numbers at each location will be limited to 6 years worth of proposed tenants; two terms per location (i.e. there are 23 huts at St Margarets meaning 46 applications will be held).

When huts become available offers will be made to those on the waiting list. The waiting list will be managed on a 'date of application' basis only to ensure it is fair. At this moment in time due to the number of years applicants have been waiting, new applications will only be available to residents who live in the Dover District (proof of primary address will need to be provided).

If a beach hut becomes available and the applicant at the top of the waiting list declines the offer, it will then be offered to the next person on the list and so on. Applicants have a maximum of 21 days within which to accept or decline the offer. No preference for individual beach huts will be allowed.

DDC will prioritise and facilitate improved access (when allocating) for those with mobility issues wherever possible (i.e. give priority access to huts closest to hard landscape/ access points to reduce travel distances where possible). Tenants with mobility issues will be required to hold a blue badge. Wheelchair access will be considerably constrained due to the shingle beach.

From 1st April 2025 all tenants will be offered a 3 year lease term. The beach hut leases exclude the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 sections 24 to 28. Prior to completion of the lease, the prospective tenant will be required to sign a statutory declaration in the presence of a solicitor, a nominal fee is usually charged for this.

Deviation in respect of allocation will be allowed in exceptional circumstances only with reason recorded in writing and made by agreement with the Head of Service or Portfolio Holder (or equivalent) only.

Provision may be provided at each beach hut location for a 'community hut' (as it will serve a greater number of people), on a case by case basis. Community hut locations will be allocated by the Council to ensure the enjoyment of other beach hut users is not affected.

Other coastal areas offer shorter term rentals (such as daily/weekly). This tends to be in locations where Councils have a significant stock and a team to manage this function. The Council will not currently be exploring short term use but it is our aspiration to provide short term huts so more people can benefit from their use.

Fees and Charges

6.2 Fees for beach huts are set by the Council and reviewed annually as part of the Councils standard Fees and Charges process. A number of factors will be taken into consideration when setting the fees such as RPI, neighbouring authority pricing, demand, cost of maintenance and administration and the fact that beach hut provision is a discretionary service.

The Council will charge the same annual fee for all beach huts across the district to provide a fair and consistent approach to beach hut management. Deviation in respect of fee will be allowed in exceptional circumstances only with reason recorded in writing and made by agreement with the Head of Service or Portfolio Holder (or equivalent) only.

Maintenance and Repairs

6.3 The Tenant shall keep the beach hut clean and tidy, including cleaning the inside and outside of any windows at the Property, and shall make good any damage caused by the tenant to the hut during the lease term to the satisfaction of the landlord.

Tenants must report any damage or maintenance issues to the structure of the beach hut promptly and comply with all terms of use within their lease.

The Council is responsible for the major repair and structural maintenance of beach huts and the immediate surrounding area within its ownership (such as any boundary fencing or access paths).

We will carry out regular inspections of beach huts (externally) during Spring and Summer months as a minimum with the aim of maintaining high quality spaces. Whilst we will be inspecting it is the tenants' responsibility to notify the Council of any disrepair to their beach hut.

Business rates (non-domestic rates)

6.4 Beach huts are classed as non-domestic property which means they are liable for non-domestic rates (business rates). A separate national non-domestic rates bill will be sent in addition to the lease charge. Tenants may be eligible for relief on their beach huts.

Parking

6.5 Parking permits are not offered in conjunction with beach huts. Tenants should park according to local parking restrictions (which differ by location).

For St Margarets Bay car park seasonal parking permits (1st March to 31st October) are available to purchase through the Dover District Council website.

Future provision

6.6 The Council is looking at expanding the beach hut provision at our existing sites (Kingsdown has already been identified) and will also look at the possible introduction of new beach hut locations. All proposals will be carefully considered to understand the potential environmental issues and impact on local residents. Full consultation will be undertaken before any planning permission is applied for.

A suggested list of consultees is listed below:

- i. Existing beach hut owners / users and local residents
- ii. Representatives of the local community/ community and disability groups
- iii. Environmental groups as appropriate and Natural Environment
- iv. Parish and Town Councils as appropriate
- v. Portfolio Holder(s), Ward Councillors and Cabinet Members as appropriate

7. Implementation, monitoring and review

7.1 Monitoring is necessary to ensure that the Council delivers the aims and objectives set out in this Policy. The Head of Property Assets will be responsible for ensuring that Council officers are complying with this Policy.

7.2 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or in response to relevant changes in legislation, organisational structure, development of good practice, or to address operational issues.

7.3 Any minor amendments required will be made by Officers of the Council. Any significant amendments required as a result of changes to legislation or regulation, or Council operations, will be approved by the Council's Cabinet. Where significant changes are required, relevant Officers and teams will be consulted before these are implemented.

8. Complaints

8.1 The Council's definition of a complaint is:

"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or a group of residents."

8.2 The Council takes complaints made about any service it provides, officers who work for the Council or contractors who provide our services, seriously. Our Complaint Policy sets out how a tenant, resident or visitor can make a complaint about a service they have received, a Council officer or contractor. More information can be found on our website: If you are unhappy (dover.gov.uk).

8.3 All complaints received will be dealt with in accordance with our Policy and Procedure.

9. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

9.1 DDC is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief, financial status, and any other difference that can lead to discrimination or unfair treatment considering the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and we have aimed to address any matters within the policy that have been highlighted within the Beach Hut Policy Equality Impact Assessment. Please see our [Equality Policy](#) for more details.

10. Data protection and confidentiality

10.1 The Council processes the personal data detailed within this Policy in compliance with data protection legislation including the Data Protection Act 2018 & UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The processing of personal data is necessary for the Council to effectively and fairly manage the provision of beach huts.

10.2 Full details of how the Council uses and shares personal information can be found by viewing our Data Protection Policy and Corporate Privacy Notice at www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/Data-Protection.aspx. If you require any guidance or advice on compliance with this Policy and the handling of personal data, please contact the Council's Data Protection Officer.

11. Version control

Approval date	3rd March 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Policy owner	Property Assets – Owner (Head of Property Assets)
Scheduled review	3 years from date of implementation

Policy controls sheet		
Date	Summary of change	Author and approver
		Author:
		Approver(s):

