

The History of NCI Newhaven



The NCI Newhaven lookout building was originally constructed in 1964 for the Maritime & Coastguard Agency to replace a small lookout in Newhaven Fort. When fully operational it was manned by a rostered team of 6 full-time coastguards and 12 auxiliary volunteers.

In the mid-1990s, following a series of cutbacks by the Government, the MCGA was forced to vacate the building. It remained disused until 2002 when it was decided the building was unsafe and should be demolished. In 2003 the NCI decided to take it over and, following negotiations with Lewes District Council helped by the Castle Hill Group, acquired a 20 year lease on the building.

The station opened on the 5th June 2004 with 12 watch keepers, all ex-coastguard officers.



A photo taken just after the original opening

NCI STATION LOG NEWHAVEN		HIGH TIDE 0104 - 1337 LOW TIDE 0822 - 1957		Date 5 JUNE 2004		Intls																																					
11:30	LOOKOUT NOW OPERATIONAL THANKS TO GREAT EFFORTS OF MR DAVE RIGGS! SOLEN G/G INFORMED. 1 ^o OF SMALL CRAFT OPERATING EAST & WEST OF W/O					[Signature]																																					
12:30	SMALL VESSEL OF PIN 1/2 SOUTH BY 2 DIRTY MARKS ON CLIFF BROKEN DOWN - RADIO NOT WORKING - RIB FISING 8m 200HP GOING TO ASSIST SOLEN - CH 67																																										
12:37	MACO 20 VISIBLE FM W/O 220° T. RIB ALONGSIDE.																																										
12:40	SOLEN INFORMED																																										
13:50	OFF WATCH G FEARD					[Signature]																																					
13:50	T. MASON ON WATCH					[Signature]																																					
14:30	ORANGE RIB + 6 P/B (DIVERS) OPERATING INSIDE OF BREAKWATER ARM (SANDY BEACH)																																										
15:15	D. RIGGS ON WATCH					[Signature]																																					
16:40	LOOKOUT NOW CLOSING CEASING WATCH MRSC. inf.					[Signature]																																					
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Time</th> <th colspan="2">Wind</th> <th colspan="2">Sea State</th> <th colspan="2">Weather</th> <th rowspan="2">Sheet No</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Direction</th> <th>Force</th> <th>Height</th> <th>Swell</th> <th>Weather</th> <th>Barometer</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>11:30</td> <td>W</td> <td>4.</td> <td>1</td> <td>SLIGHT</td> <td>12</td> <td>MC</td> <td rowspan="3">001</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13:00</td> <td>W</td> <td>4.</td> <td>1</td> <td>SLIGHT</td> <td>12</td> <td>MC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14:30</td> <td>NNE</td> <td>4.</td> <td>1</td> <td>SLIGHT</td> <td>12</td> <td>MC</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>								Time	Wind		Sea State		Weather		Sheet No	Direction	Force	Height	Swell	Weather	Barometer	11:30	W	4.	1	SLIGHT	12	MC	001	13:00	W	4.	1	SLIGHT	12	MC	14:30	NNE	4.	1	SLIGHT	12	MC
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The first ever logbook entry

By 2005 the number of volunteers had increased to 40 and, thanks to our various recruiting exercises and the training team's efforts, we now maintain an average crew number of 70.

Over the last 16 years over 200 volunteers have served with our station from all walks of life, including airline pilots, engineers, civil servants, teachers, members of the clergy, tradesmen, sailors and even a retired funeral director, (he always carried a tape measure, with him apparently!). Over these years NCI Newhaven has logged on average each year, 10,600 vessel movements, 20 incidents and watched for 7,600 hours.



NCI Newhaven 15th anniversary photo taken with the station surrounded by scaffolding, and a temporary sign, during replacement of the balcony in 2019

Major works to the building over the 16 years have included a new external staircase to replace the 3 vertical ladders, extensive repairs to the external facade of the building, a new roof, new windows, safety railings on the roof, a replacement balcony and a general refurbishment of the interior including a rewire of electrics and communications. The observation room layout was modified with new furniture to house the various items of equipment along with the chart table. Labour costs for these projects were kept to a minimum through the hard work and time of a few volunteers.

Over the years numerous items of equipment have been purchased including radios, radar, AIS*, CCTV, aerials and various visual aids along with IT backup equipment. All thanks to numerous grants, gifts and the efforts of our fundraising teams.



In September 2020 NCI Newhaven received a visit from our Royal Patron, HRH The Princess Royal to help us celebrate our pandemic-delayed 15th anniversary.

The position of the NCI Newhaven lookout, within the Castle Hill nature reserve, affords a purview of just under 500 square miles. The lookout is 175' above sea level and we can see the horizon in the English Channel separation lanes at 14 miles and, on a clear day with tall vessels, have seen as far as 23 miles. Perhaps more importantly, the lookout is adjacent to the entrance to Newhaven harbour and marina, is close to the RNLI station and has detailed views of Seaford Bay and Newhaven west beach which are busy holiday destinations.

The future of NCI Newhaven is assured with a constant flow of new volunteers joining for training.



NCI Newhaven lookout as it is today, 2021

* Automatic Identification System