

BAY VIEW CARAVAN OWNERS' ASSOCIATION
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Dear Team at Swanage Bay View

Letters which caravan owners consider to be threatening

We have been contacted by an ever- increasing number of SBV owners who have received what they consider to be threatening letters from you concerning alleged outstanding invoices.

These letters have caused considerable concern to your customers and all owners who have contacted us say they consider them to be intimidating and frightening. Some recipients are aged and some have been very ill following major surgery. Time limits for payment which are not consistent with terms and conditions in current licences, or OFT 734, are threatened, along with suggesting commencing possible proceedings towards termination of the licence. This is also not appropriate in our view. It appears that some people may have paid out of fright what you allege is owed, without checking the correctness of your figures.

In other cases the letters received are addressed to people other than those who own the caravan. This is most disturbing from a point of view of customer confidentiality. Obviously it is now not clear who is responsible for the alleged invoices. Also, in a number of cases the invoices are so poorly worded that it is not possible to understand what the alleged outstanding amounts refer to. The 'pre-conversion balance' is unexplained and especially confusing. We also see that the agreed £150 credit does not appear to have been credited to many accounts as yet, as had been expected, thus confusing people. There may be other errors which people have yet to discover. Clearly, and in any event, you cannot terminate any licence in such circumstances as these.

We don't know if the problem stems from a poor accounting system or just errors in administration, or just over-enthusiasm to get alleged outstanding invoices paid. In any case, it would have been much better from a customer relations point of view to have made this approach in a more friendly manner; perhaps pointing out that some invoices appear to have not been paid, possibly because they have been lost in the post, sent to the wrong place, forgotten, or maybe there is some financial challenges that the customer may wish to discuss.

The net result is yet another "own goal" for SBV customer relations. With the increasing number of people contacting us, it seems that this will be a very difficult situation for SBV to recover from.

We are sure that many customers may be contacting you to discuss the letter and invoices, and will be seeking further explanation. We suggest that you prepare for some very unhappy customers seeking further explanation and even apology for your over- zealous and threatening approach. With a suitable apology and further explanation where needed, it may be possible for you to retrieve this sorry situation. We would also suggest that if a Statement had accompanied the letter (a more suitably- worded letter) it may be more helpful and explanatory for customers. Perhaps you will issue a clear Statement to everyone.

Many of these owners have been resident on SBV for many years, and have regularly paid their invoices. They deserve to be treated as valued customers whose business is appreciated and who are respected and treated in a civil and courteous manner.

Please let us know how you plan to recover this situation.

OFT 734

Finally, it seems to us that it may be helpful if you have copy of OFT 734. Darwin have agreed to comply with it. We realise it is a long document but when you read it you will see clearly what is and is not possible for a park owner to do. All members of the Association are aware of its contents and how should be treated therefore. As you can see, termination of a licence is a very last resort, after much discussion, and not to be threatened lightly in such circumstances as you appear to have done.

Yours sincerely

Bay View Caravan Owners' Association

*Attachment: OFT 734

Cc NACO
DTS

*attachment available online here:

<http://bayviewowners.co.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/oft734.pdf>