

**14th February 2024**

**National Coastwatch Institution**

**Dick Daniels**

For our February meeting we were joined by Dick Daniels who explained about the valuable work done by the Felixstowe station of the NCI charity. Following the closure of many coastguard stations and a tragic incident in 1996 at Bass Point in Cornwall when a fishing boat got into trouble the subsequent public outcry led to the setting up of the NCI which currently has 59 stations around the coast sited in a variety of buildings, with plans to open more stations in 2024. The 2,750 NCI volunteers are trained to spot, plot, report and respond. The Felixstowe station which was opened in 1997 operates from the top floor of Martello Tower "P" providing "eyes along the coast" from this vantage point to safeguard a wide variety of people including swimmers, windsurfers, inflatables, groundings of yachts, occasional washed up bombs and also helping locate missing people, especially children, on the shore. At the Felixstowe station the 70 volunteers provide coverage during daylight hours from 9 – 4 during the winter, extending to 9 – 5 during spring and autumn and 9 – 8 during the summer school holidays, with volunteers expected to carry out at least 2 watches or more per month. Dick advised that the number of incidents was increasing year on year and all incidents and traffic along the coast are logged with details available for information on the Felixstowe NCI website <https://coastwatch-felixstowe.co.uk/> Dick also explained how the team, as well as being trained to manually plot, utilise technology with CCTV, AIS, radar and radio available and are able to provide radio checks for fishing boats and yachts and details of tides and weather conditions. There is also the fascinating facility via the two public webcams which run 24 hours a day for members of the public to visit the website and watch the seafront and see weather conditions and how busy it is along the front, especially useful if planning a trip to Felixstowe. One camera is situated on a mast on Cliff lands car park, giving views across the golf course to the Ferry and along to the north side of Cobbold's Point with the other situated on the lookout on Martello Tower P on the south seafront where you can view the promenade from the south side of Cobbold's Point towards Landguard. Future projects included a proposed further camera at the pier to cover a current camera "blind spot" in the bay. Dick advised that the running costs for the station were around £6,000 per annum and keen volunteers, supporters and donations were always welcomed. Training was provided by the local Training Team, no previous experience necessary, together with support of experienced watch keepers whilst on watch. Dick also told us of the opportunity to raise funds for the station when buying on line by signing up for free at easyfundraising <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/felixstowenci/>

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