

## The History of NCI Wells-next-the-Sea

In 1994 when HM closed down many Coastguard lookouts it left a troublesome gap in safety both at sea and on the beaches.

Wells was quite a late starter as far as NCI history goes. There were a lot of stations opening up on the south and west coast due to the sad fatality of two fishermen off Bass Point on Devon's south coast but along the east coast and especially across north Norfolk there were no NCI lookouts between Mundesley and Skegness.

So, in 2006 when Jon Gifford was looking for possible sites for another lookout, he came across the old Coastguard lookout at the end of the Beach Road in Wells-next-the-Sea. Sitting in a penthouse-like position between the beach huts and the RNLI boathouse it seemed to be a perfect situation for NCI.

It was accessible only by a long flight of steps with a locked gate at the bottom, up from the beach approach. Not to be deterred, Jon found a way up and investigated the small wooden building. It was possibly not in best condition but still solidly built.

After negotiations with the owners of the site – the privately owned by Holkham Estate – NCI Wells-next-the-Sea was born. The nearest station at Mundesley was brought in to assist with the initial opening of the lookout and funds were then jointly held.

There were notices put up on the town's notice board and soon there were upwards of 40 people expressing interest in becoming watchkeepers. The role of watchkeeper was explained and training watches were allocated for the following week (April 2006). Mundesley station volunteers provided initial watchkeeper training and on the 22nd September 2006 a voting procedure was adopted and a management committee was formed to run the station.

Also on 22nd September 2006 an inaugural committee meeting was held when station officer appointments were agreed. At this point bank signatories were assigned to Wells branch from Mundesley.

From those early beginnings NCI Wells-next-the-Sea has maintained a 365 day a year watch during daylight hours since its inception and has approximately forty-eight watchkeepers all helping to keep the station's proud 'Declared Facility Status, and all working to take the station into the future.