

Wells-Next-The-Sea 2026 Carnival AGM Chairman Speech

By Patrick Weston Chair

Date: 6th October 2026

Location: Gordon Barrett Hall. Wells-Next-The-Sea

“Good evening and welcome to the Wells Carnival AGM

Please see the agenda for tonight.

Have you all read the Minutes from the last AGM?

Any matters arising from the last AGM

Any Apologies from those that were unable to attend tonight.

Any questions

Thank you for coming.

I stand in front of you tonight a very proud Carnival Chairman.

We finished last year's AGM not knowing how this year's Carnival week would pan out, but after a lot of hard work, thinking outside of the box and a little scheming, we truly pulled it off.

We have 45 Committee members and 5 Directors, and one Life President, Suzanne, who is here tonight.

Our aim is to hold a Carnival that respects tradition, keeps all, if not most, events free, promotes the town of Wells and hopes to give away, after all costs, money to help support local charities in the town.

The Carnival Committee have been very busy since we all sat here 12 months ago. Just after last year's annual meeting, we met to book bands for the week and started planning the year, mixing in new events to join in with the old firm favourites.

We started the year knowing our costs, like everybody else's, would be higher. The PA, the hired toilets, logistics, security, first aid cover and many others.

The Committee planned to hold a Carnival similar to last year, pay for it and hopefully give away grants at this meeting tonight.

So additional money was needed. Otherwise, you would all be at home watching *Emmerdale* and *EastEnders* tonight, and I wouldn't be eating cheese and pork pie on a school night.

For the first time, we asked people to come forward and to be a **Fuchsia Carnival Patron**, asking for a donation of £500 or more. In its first year, this has worked very well, and we covered most of the additional costs. With their continued support, and hopefully with new patrons joining, we will be able to carry on.

A big thank you to the new patrons. They again prove how supportive the Wells community is and how much love there is in town for the Committee and the hard work they do. A huge thank you to the local businesses that continue to support the

Wells Carnival. Even in these hard times, people of Wells step up and back us. We simply couldn't do it without them.

In addition, three of the Committee volunteered to hold fundraising events out of Carnival week. Elisa walked a 'few' miles, Gaynor held a quiz night, and Graham, Sue and family held a charity auction. Elisa raised over £2,000 walking 200 miles to pay towards the cost of the toilets, and Gaynor raised just over £400 in just one night.

The auction was quiet for its first year (we think mainly due to it being hotter than the sun!), but we are sure, should this continue, it will grow in future years.

Elisa also called in on our sponsors to say thank you for their support and visited many of the groups that received grants last year, to see where the money was used. Elisa and Fran kept us up to date with social media regarding the walks each day. It was a great way to say thank you, promote our sponsors and raise their profile.

A big thank you, Elisa, Graham, Gaynor and Fran. These events helped raise additional money and kept the Carnival in people's thoughts throughout the year.

So many businesses in Wells sponsor us, but our biggest financial supporter is **Holkham & The Holkham Charitable Foundation**. The Committee so appreciates the continued support we receive. We couldn't put on the week or be able to give the donations tonight without their continued generosity.

Pinewoods help with the bike ride, sandcastle and raffle prizes. They are also a major sponsor, and the Holkham Victoria provides a warm welcome, flapjacks and drinks for the bike ride as well.

A big thank you to all at Holkham.

I must also thank **Black Shuck** for their continued support. This year, as in previous years, Patrick & Sarah have given over £2,000. That's nearly £20,000 over the last ten years. Just amazing, and a big thank you.

I would also like to thank **Nigel Leftley**, who, in addition to **Leftley's** sponsorship, entered us in a competition with Nisa Group, and we won, providing an additional cash boost to help running costs.

Also, a big cheer to Leftleys for doing home deliveries to my dad, whose birthday it is today, 89. They are brilliant!

Also, at this point, thank you to the bus companies that serve us so well. Lynx and Sanders are so helpful in the week, and more so on Carnival Day.

On to the week

What an amazing week, organised by an amazing group of volunteers. They all work very hard for the 9 days. It's hard work and no pay, but the holiday in between each year is very good.

It's my 27th year, and I think the best, the one I have enjoyed the most. The Committee is very strong, but we always need more, and younger people, please!

The current Committee is a mixed bunch of people, different ages, interests and backgrounds, but they all pull together and help each other, before, during and after the amazing week.

They put on the fuchsia cloaks and become superheroes, making sure all goes well and everybody has a good, safe time.

The Committee is very proud of the way the week runs, but we are always making sure we can improve and make all the events safe for all.

I must thank Fran for all the work she does, ref the safety side and red tape. Dealing with councils and safety plans and keeping me in tow!

This year, for example, we stopped the parade vehicles having collection buckets and asked the people walking with the vehicles to carry them and go to the crowd. The aim: to stop the crowd from stepping towards the moving vehicles. No problems in the past, but a concern we saw and stopped.

Other Carnival parades have barriers on the route; we are OK as we are, but need to make sure we have Committee members in the parade and along the route to make sure it runs safely.

Back to the Committee

The amazing group of people meet every 2nd Tuesday of the month in the Edinburgh pub. We were struggling with numbers a few years ago. At that time, we met in this room with no bar, but then we moved it to the pub, and numbers surprisingly grew and have continued to grow.

The Edinburgh is a great place to meet, apart from the flickering lights. We must ask the owner to apply for a grant for a new light bulb. It's even worse as Trevor sits under the lights. His hairstyle doesn't help the people that are sitting opposite. Last meeting, two wore sunglasses.

The Committee is also lucky to have a growing number of **Friends of the Carnival Committee**; we will talk about later.

Before the week

The Committee starts working well before the week commences, putting up bunting, road signs, putting up bunting, placing toilets and waste bins, putting up bunting again, placing road barriers on the top side of the Buttlands (so the lovely yellow trailer can park for the week), and putting up bunting again, erecting information boards telling the world of the pending busy week, siting the marquees in the Gordon Barrett garden and on The Buttlands, and, for the last time, putting up bunting!

Can we apply for a grant for new bunting?

On Tuesday morning at 7am, we all breathe a sigh of relief when the big yellow trailer parks up and my videos start rolling.

The trailer is the one thing in the week that's out of our control and the one thing that would have a major effect on the week. I don't think 4,000 people, a band, a sound system and 6 catering vehicles would fit in the health centre car park – although Shirley would make sure the young men in the band were looked after.

Our concern with the trailer is someone could quite easily park there and go off for the week. There are no parking restrictions in the area opposite the Globe where we site our information banners. However, all was well this year – phew!

A big thank you to **Sara Phillips and One Stop Promotions** for sorting the information banners that are so popular. Sara, along with Shirley Golding, designs the simply brilliant **Carnival Programme**.

A lot of time and swearing, and more swearing from Sara, chasing adverts, filling in words for the events, and more swearing from Sara. They both deserve a massive thank you for the programme and the money it raises.

Going back to the lovely Carnival Committee...

They make Wells Carnival look like a very organised, well-oiled (yes, some of the committees are) event company with fully trained/qualified event organisers.

Carole does a great job with our finances, working closely with our accountant to make sure all is OK there. A taxing job!!

Always enthusiastic, friendly, helpful, working out of the box, always going that extra mile + more. Adapting and caring, wearing a large, sometimes confused grin. If only you knew the thoughts that confused grin was hiding! There must be a Channel 4 programme there.

Possibly called: **I'm a Wells Carnival Committee Member, Get Me Out of Here**

The new members that joined us last year, and this, have fitted in so well. Our big hope is they get more involved and take on more roles to ease the workload on us older ones and consider joining the list of Directors.

If you feel you could help, please think about joining the Committee. It's a lovely group of people. You commit as much as you want during the year and in the week.

As Carnival Chairman, I try to pop into most events in the week to see that everybody is OK and, secondly, to receive all the thanks!

But by doing all of this, you can see the brilliant job they do. At every event, these guys make sure Mum, Dad and little ones are all safe – having a fun time, feeling very special. Everyone attending will leave with great memories and hopefully return next year.

On the live music nights, I have a small wander, always near the catering stalls. You can hear the bands better there, see the entertainers and the crowd. It's just amazing. The crew have put this event on; the night could easily be a £40 concert night arranged by professionals, but no, a schoolteacher, a postman, retired people, shop workers and many more volunteers did this.

So be very proud. I am!

Our store is at Egmore. We store all the merchandise, gazebos and all materials that we need in the week. This was the first year we didn't have Kenny to help with the logistics, but **Podge, Rob, Chris, Paul and Pete** stepped up, and all went very well.

Kenny who? You may say – it's like moving house six times in one week. Fran had to do more lists for the new boys, but Fran loves a list.

The Committee is very lucky to have a growing number of people we call **Friends of the Committee**. Their support is so appreciated. They help by putting up tea tents, erecting the arena, helping Shirley to decorate the trailer stage each night, unloading

the merchandise, loading up the merchandise, helping with the electrics, man/lady the Buttlands barriers on the big days, decorating and laying out the marquee in the garden at each event, helping clear away and keeping the Buttlands tidy.

Marshals for the parade – We are very fortunate to have Carnival friends manning the junctions on The Parade Route around the town.

We have two marshals with barriers on the road junctions to allow the parade to pass safely. This year, we changed how and where the barriers were placed, and the parade crew were in constant radio contact.

This helped, but the start was delayed, meaning the road closure to be longer, causing a little bit of friction. Not ideal, but again, this is all run by untrained volunteers. I think if we employed a professional company, it would come over heavy-handed and cause even more problems. It's for a short time, but needs to be looked at again for 2027.

We did have more signs saying **road closure**, informing visitors to the town on Carnival Day. These earlier signs warned people of the road closure and gave more notice. But some people on holiday, we now know, can't read signs!!

Sunday Fete Day

A lovely family event on the Buttlands. The Lifeboat Crew crowning our new Carnival Queen and her attendants. We were lucky to have Jade Seaman as Carnival Queen. Jade and her attendants went above and beyond their roles, attending most events in the week, giving support and prizes.

Big thank you to Kelly, Steph and to Liz for providing rooms on the day. All went very well.

Local produce, Maypole dancing, running races, brilliant tug-of-war competition, lovely stalls, Fakenham Town Band – a lovely traditional fete day.

Saturday is Carnival Day

I think it was the best in living memory. The events in the arena were brilliant. The parade entries were simply amazing – it was like going back 30 years. Local families joining in. There were great ideas. All homemade. The weather couldn't have been better. The streets were lined with cheering people.

And, of course, there was another amazing creation from Di Pink. This year's Bridgerton-themed float was spectacular, with the imagination, detail and sense of fun we've come to expect from Di and her team. Every year we wonder how she will possibly top the previous year's creation – although that famous pink tank will still take some beating!

Also, a very big mention to Simon Walsingham and his fantastic team. Every year, they have to go to the next level. Elton & Freddie stole the show.

It was just the best day, with just over £5,000 collected in the pink buckets. A big thank you to Moira + Trevor. They kindly counted all the loose change. (They can't be here tonight but send their best wishes from the cruise they are currently on. They left Carnival night, just after counting the money. Barbados!)

Hooray, it's the last event – Classical Concert on the Buttlands

Last Sunday is now a firm favourite, like the first Friday evening event and the raft race. They are all big events for locals.

This year's classical concert was a very hot day. The Buttlands was empty in the middle and people asleep in the shaded area.

A big thank you to Abi and Sue for bringing a buffet over for the crew that were awake, and their help during the week in this hall and garden.

A truly amazing week that brought so much happiness to all, and the best news of the week is the grass is now green!

The Committee should be very proud. I am.

If you wish to join the fuchsia crew, we would love to have you on board. The commitment level is up to you. If you are interested, please give your details after the meeting.

I think that's the end of my report. To summarise: a brilliant year, a brilliant Committee, a brilliant town, brilliant support from businesses,

And a brilliant **CARNIVAL!**

With your support, we can do it all again next year.

Thank you to everyone who attended events, bought raffle tickets, dropped coins in buckets, donated, sponsored and came out to cheer the amazing parade. You made Carnival happen – yes, you. Thank you!

Before we pass out the grant awards tonight, I would like to just say a big personal thank you to the groups and organisations here tonight.

We do a one-week event; you and your committees run the groups all through the year.

Your work covers all the ages, from nurseries and youth clubs to the elderly, residents, maintaining community spaces, sports clubs and essential & emergency services. You truly are the backbone of the community.

The Carnival Committee feels genuinely privileged to play a small part in the important work you carry out every day, and we wish you continued success.

Thank you.

Patrick Weston

Carnival Chairman

2026