

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

Thatched, Higher Wiscombe, East Devon.



Paul Bray GFireE
Fire Safety Consultant
PB FIRE SAFETY

paul.bray@pbfiresafety.com



Fire risk assessment – Small premises with paying guests

Responsible person (e.g. employer) or person having control of the premises:

Alistair and Lorna Handyside

Assessor:

Paul Bray GFireE

Address of premises:

Thatched, Higher Wiscombe Holiday Cottages,
Southleigh, Colyton EX24 6JF

Number of floors:

1 (sloping with steps to higher ground floor level)

Number of bedrooms:

3 (maximum of 6 adults sleeping)

Construction:

This property, known as 'Thatched' is a single-story semi-detached holiday cottage with an open plan kitchen, dining, and lounge area with three ensuite bedrooms.

The footprint is 'L' shaped, with an original thatched part of the building containing the three bedrooms and an extension containing the open living area.

The main building runs at 90 degrees to the owner's residence, connecting to another self-catering cottage known as 'Hanks Annexe',

Thatched is of traditional construction, with stone walls on two elevations, and a mix of cedar timber clad wall with full height glass screens on the main entrance elevation.

The roof of the main building is 'close boarded' thatched. *(A fireproof boarding has proven to be one of the most effective products to limit the damage to property during a thatch roof fire. The fireboards are fitted to the rafters creating a barrier between the thatch and roof timbers.)*

The extension is constructed with a half-height stone wall with timber framed windows on all three sides. The roof is a three-sided slate pitch roof.

There is gently sloping gravel and paving stone access path from the drive of the main complex to the main entrance, giving level entrance to the internal hall.

The three bedrooms are in the main building, two have independent exits through doors to the rear enclosed gated garden. The third bedroom is within two metres away from and on the lefthand side of the main entrance. This room may also be suitable for persons with limited mobility.

Access to the other two bedrooms is to the right of the main entrance and along the glass walled corridor of the front elevation, there are a total of six steps to reach the furthest bedroom. There is a boiler room containing a tumble dryer at the end of this corridor.

Walking straight from the main entrance is short corridor and five steps leading down to the open plan lounge, dining, and kitchen. This contains a small woodburning stove.

There are French doors at end of the lounge area, giving access to the gated garden area.

In the kitchen area is a large fridge/freezer, range cooker with electric oven and gas hob, dishwasher, washing machine. A tumble dryer is housed in the boiler room at the far end of the bedroom corridor.

The main thatched roofed building has a vaulted 'A' frame plastered ceiling, with some of the structural roof timbers exposed as a feature.

The extension, slated roof part of this building has a fully vaulted ceiling with the structural roof timbers exposed as a feature.

All the internal ceilings are plasterboard and plastered ceilings.

The internal walls are predominately plastered with some areas left un-plastered exposing brickwork for decorative effect.

The solid floor is fitted with ceramic tiles in the living areas and the main hallway with carpet in bedrooms.

There is underfloor heating throughout the building.

The overall length of Thatched is approximately 25m (from the boiler cupboard to the French doors) with an average width of 5m.

The premises is provided with mains wired fire alarms.

Carbon monoxide detection has been installed in accordance with the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 (As amended).

Each exit door is fitted with thumb turn locks and lever handles.

Date of fire risk assessment: 27 October 2023

Date of previous fire risk assessment: 30th September 2023

Suggested date for review: 27th October 2024

This report is intended to assist you in compliance with Article 9 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (As amended) (the "Fire Safety Order"), which requires that a risk assessment be carried out.

The Fire Risk Assessment 'A guide to making your small paying-guest-accommodation safe from fire' guide published in March 2023 is the primary source for the standards applied in this holiday let.

Fire hazards and controls

Are fixed electrical installations inspected and tested every 5 years?

Yes / No

Are electrical appliances periodically inspected and tested?

N/a Yes No

Is the use of trailing leads and adaptors avoided where possible?

Yes No

Relevant information

The business owners have a strict policy for guests in respect of;
Use of untested electrical appliances, this is clearly outlined in the general information provided to all guests via the bespoke app. Guests are advised to download this using a QR code.

The information for guests says the following – ‘Under no circumstances are you to bring electrical appliances to Higher Wiscombe, other than laptops and phone chargers, without explicit written permission. This includes air conditioning units. Guest appliances have not been PAT tested and could invalidate our insurance. We will levy a charge if we find they have been operating without consent.’

Trailing leads were not being used at the time of this assessment and are not allowed.

Electrical installations are inspected and tested every 5 years, the last test was completed in December 2022

The last portable appliance tests were completed January 2023.

Are gas appliances inspected and tested every 12 months?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

Gas appliances are inspected annually – the most recent test was 08/03/2023.

Is smoking permitted on the premises?

Yes No

Are suitable arrangements in place for those who wish to smoke?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

The owners have a no smoking policy which is made known on the booking website. 'These are smoke-free cottages, no smoking of any substance including vaping should take place inside any of the properties or by the swimming pool and games room. Buckets are provided outside each of the properties for cigarette butts. Please do not drop them on the ground.'

Are the premises adequately secured to prevent unauthorised access?

Yes No

Relevant information

Access to the site is via a long single-track road, and there is CCTV and good nighttime lighting to deter unauthorised access.

Are combustible materials, waste and refuse bins stored safely clear of the premises or in purpose-built compounds/rooms?

Yes No

Relevant information

There was no external fire loading noted at the time of this assessment.
All combustible storage is kept in defined areas away from buildings and ignition sources.

Are fixed heating systems subject to periodic maintenance?

N/a Yes No

Are portable heaters subject to periodic inspection and used safely?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

Portable heaters or air conditioning units are not permitted to be brought on site by guests. Underfloor heating is provided throughout.
The heating is checked and serviced as part of the annual service.
The last service was completed on 10/10/2023.

Are there adequate fire precautions in the use of open fires and log burners? e.g. regular chimney sweeping

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

There is a log burner in the lounge. The chimney is swept annually. The chimney was last swept in February 2023.

Are adequate measures taken to prevent fires from cooking equipment? e.g. prohibiting deep fat fryers

N/a Yes No

Are filters and ductwork subject to regular cleaning?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

All cookers and filters are subject to a thorough clean at every changeover.
Deep fat fryers are not provided.
Electrical equipment is serviced as part the annual PAT testing.
The last portable appliance tests were completed January 2023.

Is the standard of housekeeping adequate to avoid the accumulation of combustible materials and waste e.g. from tumble dryers?

Yes No

Are combustible materials kept separate from ignition and heat sources?

Yes No

Relevant information

The premises are maintained to an exceptionally high standard.
Tumble dryer dust filters are cleaned at every changeover and guests are reminded to clean the filters after every use.
All spare linen is kept in storage in another building.
All waste is taken away and kept in a suitable storage area away from other occupied buildings.

Is it ensured that all contractors who undertake work on the premises are competent and qualified?

Yes No

Relevant information

All works are completed by authorised and competent persons.

Are suitable measures in place to address the fire hazards associated with the use and storage of dangerous substances?

N/a Yes No

Are there any other significant fire hazards in the premises?

Yes No

Other Significant Fire Hazards That Warrant Consideration

Ignition of thatched roof – permit to work scheme will always be required for any hot works.

Fire protection measures

Are all escape routes kept clear of obstructions to enable people to escape safely?

Yes No

Are all fire exits easily and immediately openable?

Yes No

Are distances to final exits considered reasonable?

Yes No

Do the walls and structures protecting the stairway and escape routes provide an adequate level of fire resistance?

N/a Yes No

Is the fire resistance of doors to stairways and escape routes considered adequate?

N/a Yes No

Where necessary, are doors fitted with suitable self-closing devices that close the doors effectively?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

This is a single storey building, with escape to a place of safety available in two directions. Two of the bedrooms have independent exits through doors to the garden, escape to a place of safety is available. Escape from bedroom the other bedroom will involve a short walk to the main entrance and exit out the single storey building.

Fire doors are not required, the existing doors to the bedrooms are deemed acceptable for this single storey property.

The maximum travel distance from front to back of this property is approximately 25m. The maximum allowable travel distance for a single storey building with two directions of escape is 35m (normal risk). One escape is via the entrance.

In addition to the independent exits from the other two bedrooms, the French doors in the lounge can be used for means of escape.

The French doors leading from the lounge area into the fenced garden is outward opening and fitted with thumb turn and lever handle.

All exit doors are fitted with a thumb turn latch, and handle, which is acceptable, though it is best to check with guests that they can operate thumb turns.

One bedroom has level access and egress via the main entrance, this room is suitable for use by persons with limited mobility.

Internal access to the other two bedrooms via 6 steps, so would be unlikely to be suitable for use by persons with limited mobility. However, if the rooms are used for persons restricted mobility, level egress could be possible via the exits from each bedroom.

Are there adequate levels of artificial lighting provided in the escape routes?

Yes No

Where necessary, has a reasonable standard of emergency escape lighting been provided?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

Emergency hard wired lighting is installed at key points in the property. A battery operated emergency lights/torch is also provided.

This is in accordance with the 'Paying guest accommodation in small premises guide'

Where necessary, is a reasonable standard of fire exit and fire safety signs provided?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

It is not necessary to install fire exit signs throughout this property. Emergency procedure signage is covered elsewhere in this report.

Are smoke and/or heat alarms/detectors provided and is the extent and coverage considered adequate? Consider also CO alarms.

Yes No

Relevant information

The premises is provided with mains wired fire alarms. The provision of fire alarms and detection system is installed to comply with BS 5839-6:2019+A1:2020, Grade D1 LD1 standard.

Is there a reasonable provision of firefighting equipment (fire extinguishers, fire blankets)?

Yes No

Relevant information

Firefighting equipment is not required for self-catering accommodation, however a fire blanket is provided and fixed to a suitable location near the kitchen.

Management of fire safety

Are procedures in the event of fire appropriate and documented?

Yes No

Is the information on fire safety and the action to take in the event of a fire given to guests?

Yes No

Relevant information

There is clear instruction on what to do in case of fire contained in the information for guests which is downloadable when making a booking.

A fire action notice has also been fixed to a prominent location near the entrance.

To ensure all guests can be accounted for and have a safe place to await arrival of the emergency services in the event a fire, as suitable fire assembly point has been provided, in the 'parking barn' towards the rear of the complex, this is outside and away from the premises. The covered open sided garage area provides shelter in the event of inclement weather.

Are any staff members given regular instruction and training on the action to take in the event of a fire?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

Staff are given verbal instruction on emergency procedures and what to do in the event of a fire.

Are frequent checks carried out to ensure exit routes are kept clear and fire exits remain easily openable?

Yes No

Relevant information

Staff complete a thorough check of all fire precautions at each changeover.
All checks that are completed are recorded on a fire safety checklist.

Are periodic checks carried out on fire doors to ensure they remain in good condition and close effectively?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

Fire doors are not required, the existing doors to the bedrooms are deemed acceptable for this single storey property.

Are domestic smoke and heat alarms tested at least monthly? Include CO alarms in testing.

Yes No

Relevant information

Fire alarms are checked at every changeover or weekly whichever is sooner.

Where fitted, are weekly testing and six-monthly servicing routines in place for the fire detection and alarm system?

N/a Yes No

Re – servicing - The fire alarm system is subject to a maintenance regime as required in BS 5839 part 6 2019.

The British Standard for domestic fire alarms (BS 5839 part 6) does not specifically recommend that Grade C, Grade D and Grade F systems are maintained by a competent person, unless identified in the manufacturer's instructions. This says there should be a visual inspection, cleaning, and functional testing.

This should be done as part of a regular maintenance regime.

In self-catering premises, are all smoke/heat alarms (or fire detection and alarm systems, where fitted) tested at every changeover?

N/a Yes No

The owner maintains a changeover checklist where the checking the fire alarms is required by staff.

Where fitted, are monthly and annual testing routines in place for the emergency escape lighting?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

The owner maintains a changeover checklist where the checking the emergency escape lighting is required by staff.

Where provided, are fire extinguishers subject to annual maintenance?

N/a Yes No

Relevant information

Fire extinguishers are not provided, the fire blanket is subject to a visual check as part of the changeover routine.

Are records of testing and maintenance maintained?

Yes No

Relevant information

Records of fire safety arrangements should be kept and available for inspection as necessary, it is understood that testing of fire alarms and checking emergency lighting units/torches is completed at changeover. This is recorded on a changeover checklist.

Records of all testing and maintenance is kept in the health and safety folder.

Other matters

Recommendation

The local fire and rescue service visited the premises several years ago and have an operational plan for dealing with emergencies at this location. It is recommended that DSFRS are contacted to revise their plan to ensure any changes are included.

Risk Assessment outcome

Taking into account the fire prevention measures observed at the time of this risk assessment, it is considered that the hazard from fire (likelihood of fire) at these premises is: **Medium**.

That is – there are **Normal fire hazards** (e.g. potential ignition sources) for this type of occupancy, with fire hazards generally subject to appropriate controls (other than minor shortcomings).

Taking into account the nature of the premises and the occupants, as well as the fire protection and procedural arrangements observed at the time of this fire risk assessment, it is considered that the consequences for life safety in the event of fire would be: **Slight harm**.

That is an outbreak of fire unlikely to result in serious injury or death of any occupant (other than an occupant sleeping in a room in which a fire occurs).

Accordingly, it is considered that the risk to life from fire at these premises is **Tolerable**.

That is - No major additional controls required. However, there might be a need for improvements that involve minor or limited cost.

Action plan

If any of the above boxes are ticked with a 'No', the deficiencies should be described below, along with proposed action for rectification.

There are no outstanding actions for this fire risk assessment.

Item	Deficiency	Proposed action	Timescale	Person responsible
Future Considerations (where appropriate)				
1.	The local fire and rescue service visited the premises several years ago and have an operational plan for dealing with emergencies at this location. It is recommended that DSFRS are contacted to revise their plan to ensure any changes are included.			

Confirmation of understanding of the findings and action required of this FRA.

The above findings and action plan have been discussed with the business owner.



Signed:

Paul Bray GFireE

We, Alistair Handyside, and Lorna Handyside, agree with the findings of the fire risk assessment and will be taking appropriate action to implement changes or improvements, within the timescales as detailed in the action plan.

Signed:



Alistair Handyside MBE

Signed:



Lorna Handyside