



## **& District Model Railway Club**

Fareham & District MRC  
Fareham Community Centre  
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The Borough Engineer.  
Fareham Borough Council  
Fareham  
Hampshire

12<sup>th</sup> April 2001

Dear Sir.

I write on behalf of the Fareham & District Model Railway Club to thank you for allowing us to erect a banner on Quay Street roundabout advertising our annual exhibition over the last two years.

The feedback we have received indicates that it has had the desired effect in drawing attention to our event and to this end I would be grateful if I could reserve a space for a 10' banner again this year for the period from Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September through to Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> October.

Also, should the much-predicted demise of the Market site eventually happen I would strongly urge you to consider organising a similar site somewhere close to the town centre which will allow voluntary bodies such as ourselves to continue to advertise events in the same way.

Whilst writing, there is another issue that I would like to explore with you: that of the signposting of the Community Centre, the venue we use for our exhibitions. In prosecution of this aim I have prepared a short paper on the subject, which is enclosed herewith. This paper was prepared with the full knowledge of Fareham Community Association. I would welcome your views on the subject, and particularly the proposal that we should formally apply for permission to signpost the Community Centre under Regulation 27 of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981. I would welcome the chance to enter into a constructive dialogue over possible ways of resolving what is for us becoming a major problem.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of the paper and look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours faithfully,

Elliott Cowton  
Chairman/Exhibition Business Co-ordinator

Copies to:  
The Chairman, Fareham Community Association  
Councillor

# The Signposting of Fareham Community Centre

## *A paper by the chairman of the F&DMRC*

### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this paper is to detail a problem which is often encountered by groups who use Fareham Community Centre: that is the standard of signposting the existence and location of the centre.

2. The problem stems from the centre's location in a side road which is unlikely to be discovered by accident. Unless the person to whom the location is being described has a great deal of local knowledge they are unlikely to find the centre and a visitor from some distance away who is unfamiliar with layout of the town will almost certainly be completely unable to locate it.

3. Much of the evidence presented will, of necessity, be anecdotal in nature as it is very difficult to gather hard evidence with a problem such as this.

### **The Facts of the Matter**

4. There are three signposts which advertise the location of the Community Centre.

a. Two are at the junction of Osborne Road and Osborne Road South and invite the traveller to 'follow the one-way system' down Osborne Road South.

b. The third is at the bottom of Osborne Road South and invites the traveller to cross West Street into Kings Road.

5. There are no signs on any of the major approach routes to the town, neither are there any pedestrian route signs from the town centre or the main car parks to the centre.

6. By comparison with the other halls in the borough, the Fareham Community Centre is not a major venue. It has only moderate usage and does not host many major events. It does, however, host the following shows:

- The Annual Horticultural Show.
- The Annual Caged Birds Show.
- One two-day Exhibition and one Open Day for the Model Railway Club.

7. Of these events, the first two tend to be of interest to a restricted group. It is believed that the majority of attendees are likely to come from the local area and will have 'some knowledge' of how to find the centre. Model Railway Club events, on the other hand, receive national and regional press coverage and we know that they regularly draw attendance from as far a field as Littlehampton in the east, Weymouth in the west, and Newbury in the north, there is also evidence to suggest that some pre-Christmas family visits from as far a field as East Anglia are arranged to enable the visitor to take in our show during their stay. They also appeal to a much wider audience than the other two shows and have developed a following of both enthusiasts and 'Mums and Dads' looking for somewhere to take the children. We also know from experience that very often this last group will change the location of their weekly shopping trip specifically to visit our show so that they have an excuse to come to Fareham shopping, at the same time making the excursion more attractive to their children.

8. In summary, F&DMRC shows draw visitors from a wide area and are contributing to the standing of Fareham in the region. Of the bodies that use Fareham Community Centre we are probably the hardest hit by the fact that the signposting to it is very poor.

9. In the past, the club has unofficially made use of temporary signs to help identify the centre but it was made clear to us by Council Officers that this was not an acceptable practice and that it should cease. In view of the benefit from the banner display at the Quay Street Roundabout (and the possibility that this facility might be withdrawn from us) we have complied with that instruction. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that by doing so we risk damaging the good name of the club and the town.

### ***Some Evidence in Support of the Facts***

10. Here are some experiences of groups using the Community Centre which support the views expressed in the last paragraph:

a. The ladies of Trinity Pre-school have stated that on one occasion they were awaiting an official visit from someone in connection with the running of their group. This person was coming from Gosport and thought they knew Fareham. The visitor failed to arrive; a subsequent telephone conversation revealed that the visitor had failed to locate the centre.

b. On one occasion a family arrived at the door of our show quite close to closing time on Sunday afternoon. They had failed to find the centre and after an hour of trying had gone to the Police Station. The officer on duty at the desk had no idea where the Community Centre was and had sent them to the Youth centre in Trinity Street on foot. Fortunately once there they encountered someone who knew where the centre was and they had been re-directed. Their enjoyment of the show was greatly diminished and they had a few unkind words to say about the fact that we had not made the effort to signpost the event ourselves.

c. With the advent of the personal communications network mobile phones we are starting to receive a number of calls at each event we run from potential visitors who are lost and unable to locate us.

d. A large number of visitors at our show make a comment as they come through the door that they have had a lot of trouble finding the venue. By contrast, in the days when we erected our own signs from Quay Street Roundabout we received no adverse comments at all.

e. Once only, fortunately, an abusive phone call was received from an angry potential visitor who had travelled from the north of the county, failed to locate the venue and gone away in disgust. This is one too many, and your author is glad he managed to get to the telephone before his two Junior School aged children!

11. All in all, from the point of view of the club this is an unacceptable state of affairs.

### ***What should be done?***

13. The club has examined the following 7 solutions to this problem:

- a. Do nothing.
- b. Revert to previous practice with the use of unapproved signs.
- c. Increase the advertising to include maps.
- d. Move the show to a different venue.

- e. Ask the council to sign post the Community Centre for us.
- f. Employ the AA/RAC to signpost the event for us.
- g. Apply to signpost the event ourselves in accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981, Regulation 27.

14. Of the options available, the only credible one is the last one. Apart from the do nothing option all the others would more than consume any profit we might make from our annual show, our main source of income to finance our club projects. A detailed account of the consideration of these options is available on request.

15. It is worth noting that the last option is becoming the favoured choice of a number of model railway clubs around the country and because of this the standard insurance policy most clubs take out for their exhibition now includes a £5M liability extension in respect of road signs and advertising material at reasonable cost.

## **Conclusion**

16. The F&DMRC feels that it is up to the challenge of producing and deploying professional standard road signs for the purpose set out above, and would welcome the chance to explore the subject further with Council Officers.