

## **Party House Case Offers New Hope**

[This is the text of a letter written by the Chairman of FoBRA and printed in the Bath Chronicle on 25<sup>th</sup> July 19]

The Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FoBRA) welcomes the refusal of the Greenway Party House Appeal ("Party's Over at Holiday House" – Chronicle 18<sup>th</sup> July) and the consequential enforcement order to close it. FoBRA has worked tirelessly over the last two years to encourage the Council to curb the growth of Party Houses in Bath, particularly where they cause nuisance to neighbours, and to urge Avon Fire and Rescue to ensure adequate fire precautions there, as Party Houses often accommodate numbers of not always sober people - an accident waiting to happen.

We have developed and posted on our website a Nuisance Log which neighbours can use anonymously (in case a formal complaint blights the saleability of their own house), and it was used by the complainants in this case.

Our other concern is the loss of long-term housing, which the city is already short of, and the 'hollowing out' of neighbourhoods when houses are occupied only at weekends and left empty all week. By our count, there are now 71 large (7 or more bed) Party Houses in Bath, offering a total of 900 bed spaces.

Importantly, the Inspector turned down the Appeal not only because of the nuisance caused, but also on the grounds of unauthorised change of use, and of undesirable reduction in the long-term housing stock: even better than expected. This has never previously been achieved in Bath so the case sets a very important precedent. If you are affected by nuisance caused by one of these establishments, there is now hope of redress; but you will need to document the impact on you and report it to the Council if they are to take action.

FoBRA is a member of the National Organization of Residents' Associations (NORA), which has been working equally hard on this problem across England & Wales. In regular talks with senior staff at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, on this and on Short Term Letting generally, NORA has been pressing for compulsory registration and mandatory Change of Use application for Party Houses. We call on our Council and our MP to help with this for Bath.

Robin Kerr, Chairman FoBRA