

HASTINGS OLD TOWN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

East Hill House, 13 Tackleway, Hastings East Sussex TN34 3DE

www.hotra.org.uk

Members Newsletter – New Year 2010

INSIDE: The biggest ever investment in the Old Town + Education turns the 1st corner + Social Cohesion a brief explanation

Start of a New Year, New Decade, and a New Chapter in the life of the Old Town.

This Newsletter celebrates the start of an exciting period for all local residents. We will see more changes over the next 18 months than in the whole of the last decade. Hopefully there will be something for everyone to help improve the quality of their daily life.

Pelham Beach Multi Use Games Area

The Foreshore Trust will pay the construction costs of £130,000. The hopes of our young people for a safe space for 5-a-side soccer and Basketball will at last be achieved.

Volleyball – 2 sand courts will be built next to the Lifeguard station. These will be funded by Arnold Palmer Golf Courses.

Outdoor Gym – over 200 have been built around the country. This will complete a range of physical activities for young and old. The hope is to place a set of fitness machines –and perhaps Table tennis – on the grass area next to the golf course. Funding is now being sought. All of this provision will be free.

We are grateful to Chris Richards, golf course operator, for all his help.

Butlers Gap

Leigh Dyer, local artist and metalsmith, is painstakingly creating the sculptures for the chess square. The designs were produced by pupils from Torfield School. They had been inspired by a visit to the Blue Reef aquarium. Most of the work has been funded by Awards for All. Hastings Council has funded other improvements. Due to the scale and complexity of the sculptures, work has taken longer than planned. We hope all will be installed by the end of April. The wait will be worthwhile.

The East Hill Lift

The East Hill lift is scheduled to re open in April. The new carriages will be wheel chair friendly giving long overdue disabled access to this part of the Country Park.

20 mph Speed Limit

East Sussex County Council will run a 20 mph speed limit trial this spring. All roads in the Old Town will be affected except the A259.

Isabel Blackman Centre

The unnecessarily closed Isabel Blackman Centre is supposed to re open in July. It will be operated by the voluntary sector on behalf of ESCC. The plan is to open as a 'Community hub' which should lead to greater use of the building and longer opening hours. HOTRA has well founded concerns about the future for IBC and the quality of services to be offered. It would be great to be proved wrong.

Biggest Ever Investment in Hastings Old Town

The Jerwood Gallery, the public Open Space, the new Community building and space on the ground floor of the EHS Angling clubhouse, the new Billingsgate Fish cookery training kitchen, long awaited Highways changes – what a list of Regeneration successes!

With a total budget exceeding £8.5million there is great cause for celebration. During the construction phase many jobs will be created. After all the works have finished there will be at least 30 and maybe as many as 100 new jobs. (In Hastings in December there were nearly 4,000 people registered as Jobseekers.)

With virtually no vacancies times are very hard for many people. Only a fool would turn away the wonderful package of improvements. Drive along the coast of South East England and you will see many towns that would jump at a chance like this. The Planning decision at Hastings Town Hall had unanimous support from all 3 parties. Once this money is spent there will be no significant investment for many years. The world wide Recession will have changed the pattern of most peoples working lives. Without jobs and training in skills that lead to work the economic future of Hastings will be bleak.

One of the least mentioned developments is the Billingsgate Fish Cookery training kitchen. For Hastings to establish such a strong link with the City of London, which will lead to high quality training for chefs, is an outstanding achievement. The Fishermens Protection Society has put a huge effort into securing this. It will create another outlet for locally caught fish. New investors like Webbes Restaurant will come. Without Jerwood this would not happen.

For HOTRA the prospect of new community facilities is very exciting. A new charitable body will be set up to run the building and the Open Space. We hope that a vast range of indoor and outdoor activities will make this a focal point for the whole town. The Angling Club will also benefit by having better use of their space and passing over some ground floor rooms, and a lift will be installed. So two large Old Town groups will benefit. Without Jerwood this would not have happened.

The Open Space is perhaps the most exciting element of all. Many ideas are in the melting pot, including regular boot fairs, car and collectors markets, exhibitions; special events involving music and dance; commercial events like the Seafood and Wine festival; and cultural moments like theatre, concerts and film shows

The Arts organisations across Hastings will be able to showcase their members work. Without Jerwood this could not have happened.

Well done to all the politicians and HBC and ESCC officers who have got us to this point. You have created a truly positive start to the new decade. Finally thank you to the Jerwood Foundation for their confidence in the future of the Old Town.

Education, Education, Education – turning the first corner

With the opening of Sussex Coast College and the expansion of University Centre Hastings everything is in place for local young people with average and above-average ability. This expansion and the better matching of courses to students abilities is superb news. These 2 campuses will improve choices and open opportunities for many.

In our secondary schools considerable efforts have produced the best GCSE results ever. Sir Dexter Hutt and his team have done remarkably well improving Hillcrest, Filsham Valley and The Grove. Better results at William Parker and Helenswood showed much had been achieved. But for Sir Dexter the next 2 years of the Ninestiles contract will be a harder challenge.

These dramatic improvements for the most able pupils raise more clearly the issue of the lower ability pupils. Are they getting the most appropriate support? Are pupils with Special Educational needs having all the resources provided that will maximise their school performance? Have all Special schools been given matching levels of investment and staff development? It is to be hoped that ESCC Education department have wider concerns than just good GCSE headlines. Interestingly there seems to be a familiar reluctance to share this information with the wider Hastings community.

Well done the pupils and their families, the schools, teachers and support staff who created the good results last August. More of the same and better please in 2010 and 2011. The future prosperity of Hastings depends on it.

2012 will of course see the biggest changes to local secondary education for many years. Huge sums of money will be invested in building the East and West academies. Managing the process and switch to new buildings will not be easy.

Parents will need to be shown that their children's education will not be disrupted.

Key questions remain unanswered.

The sponsors of the 2 academies are Brighton University, BT and ESCC. During the consultation in the autumn it was very clear that many Hastings people have serious reservations about ESCC.

The sponsors need to convince us that the way the academies will be governed will reflect the wishes of parents and the wider community. There is a huge gap in confidence that will not go away. If the new academies are effectively controlled by ESCC then local democracy will have been damaged. The judgment and independence of Brighton University and BT will be questioned. There should be no more than 1 seat for ESCC on the Board of Governors – otherwise little will have changed that lead to the terrible decline in our schools that hopefully ended in 2008. Experience around the rest of the country shows that those old inflexible ties have to be broken if any academy is to flourish.

Community Cohesion – Many Voices, one Hastings

This legislation became effective in 2009. In Hastings a committee has been set up drawn from a vast range of faith and community groups. Public service providers and political groups are also included. In a changing world all of us should be aware of the needs and interests of our neighbours and community. The issues are large, complex, and worth investing our time and energy.

In future any incident that may impact on a community and create tensions should be recorded and examined. People can be affected in a number of ways by unacceptable behaviour which comes in many forms. The key hope is that we are all aware of behaviour that can cause distress to others. Conflict happens between family members, neighbours, communities and nations. To live in Peace is one of mankind's long standing hopes. Whether it is verbal or physical, anti-social or criminal we all gain from the good intentions behind this legislation.

If you are affected in any way then contact Hastings Borough Council in the first instance:

1st floor Aquila House
Breeds Place
Hastings
TN34 3UY

HOTRA website www.hotra.org.uk

If you can access the internet please find time to look at our website. Kim Stallwood looks after it for us. The Agenda and Minutes of the monthly Management Committee meetings give more detail about what is being discussed. It also includes various expressions of the Chairman's thinking. A letter to Cllr Peter Jones ESCC Leader is a blunt record of what happened with the Isabel Blackman Centre for instance.

HOTRA Subscriptions

Having held our rates down for the last couple of years there is no alternative but to increase the levels of subscriptions.

The new rates are £8 for an individual and £10 for a household. Our financial year remains unchanged – 1st April – 31st March but if you pay your 2010 subs now it will help with cash flow. A form is set out below.

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Application for Renewal of Subscriptions.

\$8 Annual individual membership.

Name _____

£10 Household membership. £10. Please enter the names of all adults joining.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Total amount paid in membership: £ _____

Please take this opportunity to make a donation: £ _____

TOTAL £ _____

Please make cheques payable to HOTRA.

Your Address: _____

Email address (please print clearly) _____

Please drop your sub through the Treasurers letterbox at 17 High Street.

Or leave at Butlers Famed Emporium, George St. Please mark your envelope: HOTRA.

Thank you!