

# HOTRA

## Hastings Old Town Residents Association January 2011 Newsletter

### **2011 – A Tough Year Ahead**

Few would dispute that there will be many unwelcome consequences following the cuts and reorganisation imposed by the Coalition Government. HOTRA is non-political but does get involved in changes that affect local residents. We will continue to hold a watching brief on issues affecting local people and will challenge the appropriate people to justify their decisions. But there are some things HOTRA can do as an organisation. This newsletter looks at some of the depressing news and reports on some good news for the Old Town and the rest of Hastings.

### **HOTRA's plans for 2011**

- A Fitness trail – we have submitted a bid to the Big Lottery Fund Community Spaces scheme. We would like to see a series of Activity points along the seafront as far as West Marina Gardens. The English Table Tennis Association are offering 2 outdoor tables. The site identified is by the Crazy Golf. Nearby will be some fitness machines. All will be FREE to use. If the bid is successful there will be 3 or 4 other sites along the promenade with fitness machines. Anyone will be able to use them – perhaps linked with a training programme including walking, running or cycling. Remember: 2 sand covered Volleyball courts will be built this Spring next to the Lifeguard station thanks to Chris Richards.
- Story Telling Festival – HOTRA is building contacts with individuals and organisations interested in working together to achieve an annual event. This will probably take place in November. Many people – young and old – enjoy listening to stories. There are some talented local story tellers who enthral their listeners. There are some unique venues that could be used. We will try to build a cooperative that will add to the annual cycle of events
- Barwatch and responsible drinking – This national scheme tries to improve public safety, reduce perceived Crime and drink related disorder and strengthen relationships between the Police and the licensed trade. In every other town in Sussex the pubs etc make a small weekly contribution towards the running costs. In Brighton for instance they pay £8 per week. Here in Hastings they pay nothing. Through funding via the Safer Hastings Partnership all premises are offered a short wave radio and an email system to help identify troublemakers. Plastic drinking containers are also offered for busy events. All of these are coordinated by a part time worker. HOTRA is writing to all Old Town licence holders challenging them to 1) be part of the scheme; 2) make a small contribution to the costs; 3) show their commitment to making the Old Town a safe place for responsible drinkers.

### **The Depressing Picture: Cuts, Cuts and More Cuts**

Hastings Council claim that there will be cuts of up to 46% over the next 3 years. In other words their budget could almost be halved. Just before Christmas some HBC employees were told their jobs will end on March 31. From then on it is anticipated there will be further rounds of job cuts. Services will be affected. Some of the

existing functions will be transferred to East Sussex County Council who many local people distrust. New working partnerships will have to emerge with places like Rother and Eastbourne. No one is offering reassurances on issues like the quality of service delivery or equalities matters which are of huge importance in Hastings with so many people with complex needs.

Health services will see the ending of the Primary Care Trusts. About 80% of the budget will transfer to local doctors. The rest to East Sussex County Council. Two concerns have already been raised about these major changes.

- The G.P.s have little experience of running strategic budgets. We saw how difficult it was to resolve the location for Maternity services in either Eastbourne or Hastings. Will local patients with less common illnesses have to travel to hospitals a long way away?
- The age profile of G.P.s in Hastings shows that most are 54 or older. By the time they become fully responsible for most of the budgets they will be approaching 60. *There's nothing wrong with being 60 of course.* But it has proved hard to recruit young G.P.s to the area. Will that lead to more doctors on temporary contracts? Is that what patients want?

The P.C.T. failed to improve Health Inequalities [e.g., Did you know that average life expectancy in Hastings is nearly 15 years less than in Rother?] There is no evidence that this worrying gap will be closed or become a priority under the new arrangements.

Education After many years of poor performance the opportunities for Hastings young people have improved for the 16+ age group. The new Sussex Coast College Hastings and University Centre Hastings will have to reduce the choices that can be offered. The loss of the Education Maintenance Allowance will hit all local families. The support needed by pupils not making progress has been provided by the aptly named Excellence Cluster which will lose most of its funding. In future the most vulnerable pupils will need to compete with other priorities within each schools budget. Thank goodness that the building work on the new Hastings academy will start this Spring on the Hillcrest site. Less certain is funding for the St Leonards academy which means that some pupils will have to use the decrepit Grove school buildings.

Social Services Cuts here need not occur at the same levels as in Hastings Council. We know that ESCC have cut the Day Centre spaces for older people to 25 from 60 which will not meet local needs. HOTRA has raised a series of questions that hopefully will be answered by Keith Hinkley ESCC Chief Executive when he comes to the Town Hall later this month.

### **Better News – A Few Glimmers of Hope**

The Stade – the Open Space and Community building

Building work is progressing well despite the bad weather. The new Community building including the teaching kitchen and public toilets is now weatherproof. As it emerges from the scaffold it is very handsome with the grey/black bricks looking a good choice. By March most of the internal fitting should be complete. The Open space will be largely completed by the beginning of May except for the area next to the Jerwood Gallery. That means that events can start to use this exciting space.

Investment in the East Hastings Sea Angling Club will be completed with internal refurbishment, a new lift and a balcony facing east across the Open space. 2 small rooms will be transferred to the new community group and an office set aside for the Police.

A new charity and company limited by guarantee will be formally set up during the next 3 months. HOTRA has contributed to the working group designing the constitution. Because of the complex legalities mainly around changes to several leases, Hastings Council will provide a skeleton staff for a Transitional period, thereafter the new charity will be managing the Community building and Open space.

The café building which faces up The Bourne valley and across the Open space to the sea should be completed by the end of April. The new lease holders will soon be announced. They will fit out the building and start to recruit staff. If it prospers that could be as many as 40 jobs.

The Jerwood Gallery foundations are complete and the outside will rise rapidly. By the end of the summer the internal fitting will be finished and in the autumn the first exhibition will happen.

#### Fisheries Local Action Group FLAG

Hastings Council have successfully bid for European Fisheries Funding. A new project over the next 3 years is given the task of developing fishing communities. Key aims are

- economic diversification including cultural and eco-tourism;
- local food initiatives
- heritage related activity
- environmental improvements
- improved quality of life.

Phil White will represent HOTRA on the FLAG project. Phil was born in Rock a Nore Road. He has been on the HOTRA Management Committee for 3 years. The groups first task is to create a strategy for sustainable development by the end of April. We will keep you informed as progress is made.

#### **If Wishes Could Only Come True**

There are many things we could hope for in the coming year. Here are a few that might happen.

**Big Wish** – our bid to the Lottery for funding the Fitness Trail will succeed.

#### **Other Wishes**

- Move the Bottle Bank at the start of the High Street somewhere else. That would stop the nuisance caused for people living nearby, get rid of an eyesore and return 1 car parking space.

- Make Courthouse Street fully pedestrianised by installing a barrier. This will help both residents and the traders in Courthouse Street. The inadequate signs in the High Street could then be removed as well
- Get rid of the raised pavement outside the Old Town Hall Museum. This woefully inadequate response to the Disability Discrimination Act is a joke. The floor should be altered inside the door.
- Find an acceptable way to secure the future of the Museum. This will not be easy but many school groups visit – especially foreign language schools. Income needs to be generated perhaps through some retail idea
- Remind ESCC that we have wanted 20 mph limits on the side roads in the Old Town for more than 10 years.
- Complete the installation of a pavement outside John the Cobblers shop so that people can walk safely up and down the High Street. [This was 'deferred' in 2008 ]
- That all premises selling alcohol within the Old Town give strong support to the Barwatch scheme

**Long Term Wish**

That the spending of nearly £10m on The Stade provides the Old Town and all who come here with a vibrant place offering activities and events that appeal to many people.

That lasting jobs will be created and the Jerwood Gallery succeeds in promoting Hastings and its many attractions to visitors from all over the World.

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**Membership 2011**

Please renew / join as soon as possible. Individuals - £8; household - £10

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_ *Please print*

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SAME HOUSEHOLD WHO ARE JOINING

\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Email (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to HOTRA

Post your subs in an envelope marked HOTRA to:

Nikki Port  
 Treasurer  
 17 High Street  
 Hastings  
 TN34 3EY

A receipt will be issued.