

## WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - MARCH 2011

COUNCILLOR JOHN HODGES (cllr.john.hodges@hastings.gov.uk or 445540)

Once again the pier was in the news this month, fortunately for all of the right reasons following the supremely successful "Party on the Prom". Crowds flocked to the White Rock Parade on Saturday March 12th, under a cloudless blue sky bathed in brilliant spring sunshine. To the accompaniment of marching bands and a period of sustained noise, the event was launched with speeches from the Chairman of the White Rock Trust, and the Leader of the Council. We raised a very commendable amount for the Trust, but probably the most successful event of the day was the first public consultation with the appointed architects. The range of uninhibited suggestions for the pier's superstructure was phenomenal, and many of these people posed for the camera holding their suggestions on a large placard. Many of these have been mounted and are now displayed in the window of the old Arthur Green's shop in White Rock.

This exercise forms part of our determination to deliver a true "People's Pier" where we will consult with every community in the Town to ensure that no one is denied the right to have their say in the final design. On March 16th the Trust hosted a most important visit of the Heritage Lottery Trustees, where our case for funding was presented to an audience that could best be described as inscrutable. In this we were ably supported by the Borough Council, but the only commitment that was forthcoming was one of praise for the quality of the presentations. We must continue to wait until April 19th to discover if our efforts for funding have been successful. If they are unsuccessful it will not be for lack of effort on the part of the Trust, or indeed the tremendous support we have received from the Council itself.

The major issue in the ward this month is the continuing problems in the "rural end" of Croft Road. A combination of fly tipping and significant levels of crime has focussed the attention of both the Police and the Borough on this current hotspot. I will be approaching the Safer Hastings Partnership with a request for a special task team to focus on the problems of crime, whilst I continue to support the Council's efforts in cutting back the undergrowth that provides the cover for these activities. Whilst we cannot ignore the need to maintain the delicate ecological balance within the natural environment, we must encourage a solution that will allow for more effective policing.

At a recent meeting of Amicus Horizon that I attended it was confirmed by their local Chief Executive that the promised footpath in Lodge Road that I had long campaigned for, will now definitely be provided. At the same meeting it was also agreed that following the case put by myself, and very ably supported by the Chairman of the Clive Vale Residents Association, the play area in Boyne Road will be retained and funds sought to provide improvements to the facilities.

Unfortunately I can report no progress on the requested improvements to the Sussex Arms Junction, the County Council remains intransigent in its attitude, and inertial in its activity. Once again the Resident's Association has been forced to resort to a petition, which is available for signature in Mount Road Pet Shop. I have signed the petition as the ward councillor, and I would urge all of you to follow suit in a demonstration of the need for a safe solution to this accident black spot. On a similar subject, again involving traffic lights but this time at the junction of The Bourne and Rock a Nore, a safety audit will be carried out to establish if the somewhat misleading green signals for the right turn into Rock a Nore should be modified.

In conjunction with other trustees of Old Hastings House we successfully appealed against the unwanted addition of a London Plane to the planting area around the new car park. The dispute was settled amicably with the Council's arboriculturist agreeing to the planting of a substitute magnolia grandiflora, in an alternative position. It is pleasing to report that during my visit to OHH I was given the opportunity to inspect the excellent progress on the new extension. Despite a late start caused by interminable delays to the planning process, the structure is now well and truly coming up out of the ground.

As the ward councillor I attended a recent meeting of the Coastal Users Group. This body has been reshaped as a group representing all interests along the foreshore, and in conjunction with the newly formed Grants Advisory Panel and The Charity Committee itself will replace the old Foreshore Trust following its transfer to the Borough Council. The function of the group is to provide input into the GAP on considered requests concerning the usage of any excess funds that may be generated through judicious application of the Charity's assets, once the Charity Committee has discharged its statutory and necessary maintenance costs from these generated funds. I was also fortunate enough to be invited to attend the opening ceremony of new Stade Community Hall, it is a magnificent solution to needs of the community in providing a long needed focus for many

of the area's activities. Apart from what it can provide as a facility, the simplicity of its design and its ability to sit unobtrusively amid its more traditional neighbours, certainly created for me the impression that it could well have always been there. Congratulations to the Stade Community Team and Kevin Boorman who have steered this superb addition to such a successful conclusion.

During late March I was accompanied by Dick Edwards and HBC's Planning Enforcement Officer on a "Grotbusters" tour of the Old Town. Our purpose was to identify, under expert supervision, any properties where their structural or cosmetic condition detracted from the general standard of the area. The necessary action will be taken by the Enforcement Officer on behalf of our continual efforts in maintaining an aesthetically pleasing townscape, that both reflects the nature of the Old Town and maintains its significant contribution to our Town's tourism offer. I have also placed a request upon the Community Payback Scheme to provide assistance in the repairs to the lych gate at the Tackleway entrance to All Saints Church, and also for the painting of the railings to The Bourne car park and various lamp posts within the ward. I have been asked, in conjunction with my fellow councillor, to set up a Waste Advisory Group specifically to consider the very special problems of waste disposal experienced in the Old Town. This group will incorporate both the ward's two members and representatives of the residents, and where necessary the traders also. Its purpose is to assist, if it proves possible or indeed desirable, with a level of standardisation that would allow for a seamless and financially beneficial merger with the other districts of East Sussex who are facing similar problems in the cost of economic waste disposal.

Following my correspondence with Brussels over fishing quotas, discarding and other related maritime issues, I did in fact receive a fairly bland response from the Assistant Commissioner, overwhelming in its sympathy but fairly sparse on its commitment to action. Along with others I will continue to fight for justice, and provide what meaningful support I can to those who are even closer to this problem that threatens not only our fishermen, but our heritage itself.

My Kind Regards, John Hodges