

## **WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - AUGUST 2011**

### **COUNCILLOR JOHN HODGES**

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Much discussion continues on the pier for the purpose of agreeing the design, and the facilities that will comprise at least the first stage of the restoration programme. Many of the decisions that we face place us in somewhat of a dichotomy, with the desire to maintain the traditional entertainments of a pier while the need to provide economic sustainability suggests that more state of the art solutions could be the way forward. The Compulsory Purchase Order process continues with considerable effort on the part of the Trust and the Borough Council, being applied to the preparation of a legal document called the "Statement of Reason". The Secretary of State requires assurance that the pier has a sustainable economic future in terms of a "reasonable level of comfort", he also needs to be assured that the existing owners do not suffer any interference under the provisions of the Human Rights Act. It is still the entitlement of every individual to have "the quiet enjoyment of their possessions", and they cannot be deprived of that right, unless it is in the public interest and provided to do so by law. The tortuous legal path that is so necessary to protect the rights of all who are involved continues, side by side with the design of the pier and the development of a robust business plan.

The work necessary to secure a high speed broadband future for our Town continues, and the really good news is that East Sussex has secured a grant of nearly £11m from BDUK. This will be augmented by further investment from ESCC and BT, what is now to be determined is the amount that Hastings will actually receive, and the most effective way that this funding can be applied in providing the optimum solution. I continue to push for a fruitful programme of education to lead the introduction of HSB into our Town, such that those who could potentially benefit from this technology are fully aware of the advantages to be gained for themselves and their businesses.

Earlier this month I attended a lively meeting at the Stade Hall, as part of the consultation process of addressing the traffic flow problems in Rock a Nore. It is a difficult problem as the most likely solution is a no

loading ban during the busiest hours, but this must recognise the needs of the traders and their deliveries, their customers, and the rights of the disabled drivers who use the area. All of these issues were raised during the meeting together with a flip chart full of others, these will be considered and included in a proposal for further discussion with residents and traders alike, before any decisions on change are taken. I also attended a site meeting at the top of The Bourne with HBC and ESCC Officers, Chair of HOTRA, and representatives from the Quality Bus Partnership. The purpose of this gathering was to consider how the length of kerbside given over to the stopping of buses could be reduced in favour of increasing parking spaces, without detracting from the current service offered by the bus companies. Some suggestions and counter suggestions were made, and the proposals are back with HBC and ESCC to consider the respective advantages and costs involved in meeting the requirements of all of our residents.

I continue to push ESCC to complete their promised works at the top of Croft Road in response to the reduction, and hopefully the eradication, of the criminal activity that has blighted this part of Old Hastings. All of the works promised by HBC, the Police and the other agencies that were party to the joint initiative, are now in place. It is likely that we will see in the near future some limited changes in the aesthetics of some of the lamp columns that have previously been replaced in a somewhat unsympathetic manner for a conservation area. This leads on to the whole question of conservation which has again raised its head in Old Hastings, with the use of concrete slabs where previously yorkstone paving was the basic material. In keeping with their use of "blacktop" as a repair material, it is an unacceptable solution in terms of a replacement policy in an area that represents the Town's major contribution to our tourism offer. There is a meeting planned with ESCC to redefine the areas of Hastings and St.Leonards where like for like replacement within the townscape must be observe. This can be considered as part of their contribution towards maintaining the aesthetic charm that attracts so many visitors to our Town.

Once again it has been necessary to pursue ESCC for a completion date for the installation of the box junction at Mount Road, now outstanding for over a year. During the month I also attended a

meeting of the Coastal Users Group, a union of those with an interest in the use of the sea and the shore for business and recreational activities. The funding for this group's proposals to the Charity Committee comes from a percentage of any excess profits made by the facilities owned by the Foreshore Trust, after the necessary costs and maintenance have been met. One of the most important projects for the trust in terms of both supporting the infrastructure of the Jerwood Gallery, and raising additional finance, is the plans to make more effective usage of the current Rock a Nore car park. With a combination of resurfacing and designation it is hoped that a significant increase in parking availability could be effected. Should funding be available then ideally this should be linked into a "pay on exit" management scheme with plasma screen information regarding parking availability available at the western end of Rock a Nore. This would further reduce the traffic flow in this street by removing the necessity for abortive journeys just to discover, what at many times is a full car park.

Work continues on the "Marketing Hastings" campaign and I remain very interested in any of the views that you might have on what is necessary to attract not only visitors, but the inward investment that can help our Town grow its business sector, reduce its unemployment, and hopefully bring some relief to those who still remain in the poverty trap. Probably the highlight of the month in Old Hastings was Old Town Week, a brilliant combination of entertainment and fun, all taking place within the cultural back drop that abounds within this part of our Town. It is sad to report that no longer will the guiding hand of Ian Porter be directing this fantastic event, and much of its continuing success will now fall upon, what I am sure will be the capable shoulders of others. Behind Ian of course there has always been his management committee, a group of talented individuals as diverse as the festival itself, but all equally committed to the continuation of this wonderful week. Within the next few weeks work commences on the conversion of the old Bourne Chapel into three new homes. Inevitably this will create some disruption to the progress of everyday life, but I am assured that it will not impact deliveries to the businesses that operate east of The Bourne, or reduce the effectiveness of the emergency services during this period.

Hopefully the issues with student coaches causing significant nuisance to the residents of Dudley Road has been resolved. The Traffic Management Committee has written to all members of HOSAC, reminding them of their responsibilities, fortunately the vast majority of these operators do not need reminding and continue to operate under a very effective self regulating scheme. I have also written in to the committee responsible for the control of polling stations, and made the point most strongly that with the proposed change of polling station from All Saints Hall to the Stade Hall, a significant section of eastern Clive Vale and Barley Lane remain at an unacceptable distance from a point where this section of the electorate may exercise their franchise. A third polling station in this ward must be considered as vital in the campaign to encourage everyone to exercise their right to vote, and not be discouraged by an onerous journey to the polling station.

Case work continues apace, and I would encourage any of you with problems, whether the solution lies within my gift or otherwise to contact me. I am quite happy to ensure that all issues that affect Old Hastings are addressed by those who hold the appropriate responsibility.

My Kindest Regards, John Hodges