

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - JANUARY 2012

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

The repairs notice has now been served on Ravenclaw regarding the outstanding work needed to the structure of the pier, we are currently in the middle of the two month waiting period. Assuming that Ravenclaw as expected does absolutely nothing towards honouring their responsibilities, then the CPO process can begin immediately this period has expired. In their true spirit of partnership the Borough Council has provided Simon Opie the new CEO of the Pier Trust with office facilities within the Town Hall. This makes an awful lot of sense especially during the period of CPO negotiations when the two organisations need to be working very closely together. The Trust has now fully vacated the Pier Shop at White Rock and surrendered the lease to the owner. Work as ever continues on our fundraising campaign, and our drive to involve further volunteers in the project. In consideration of the pier's unique position surrounded by the sea, we are exploring the possibilities of utilising the power of the waves and currents together with wind, solar and photovoltaics as natural means of energy generation. Beyond energy generation there are also possibilities of using the area around the structure as a natural power demonstration facility, but all of this work will require considerable research and external funding in support.

During this period a further meeting took place of the group who are considering the possibilities of retaining the Old Town Museum as part of our historical tourism offer. A number of different ideas have been explored and in the mean time the internal rearrangements made by the curator and her staff have proved very successful, with both increased footfall and takings. In mid January I attended the FLAG Exhibition held at the Stade Community Hall, apart from celebrating the success of the project, it drove home some very poignant messages about the fishing industry. The point was made very strongly about the families of those who fish for a living, how the uncertainty of delivering a livelihood that would support a home and children brought about by the current quota system, deters the younger generation from following this traditional career. It recognised the massive support given by the womenfolk to the fishing community, and the need for funding from the FLAG project to help them, the clear message was that a fishing community is far bigger than just the fleet that puts to sea. Ideas abounded for the use of the teaching kitchen, and for the encouragement of the "city break" principles to promote our fishing industry as a major reason to visit Hastings for the short term, or weekend holidays. All in all it was an excellent exhibition, promoting the right ideals, supporting our fishermen, and underlined by the messages that hit hard at the root causes of the problems that continue to beset our most traditional industry.

In response to community wide concerns over the growing usage of alcohol by young people, and the consequences that manifest themselves all too regularly at the various Hastings festivals, a meeting of all interested parties took place at the Stade Community Hall. Chaired by Keith Leech it comprised of a series of short presentations by the emergency services, the Leader of the Council, and a report on the alcohol consumption by young people at UCH in the context of their peer group. Statistically there was evidence of a trend of improvement over the past two years,

whilst it would appear that the more family based events such as the carnival produced fewer alcohol related incidents than events such as "Jack in the Green" and "Bonfire Night". The ensuing discussion explored many reasons for the problem, which is by no means peculiar to Hastings, and it was universally held that there was unlikely to be a "silver bullet" solution to such a wide spread malaise. The conclusions, based upon the excellent work already put in place through the organisers and the emergency services, were to build upon this solid foundation and continue to address the problems through a community wide approach underpinned by regular communications amongst the interested parties.

I was asked to chair a combined group of traders and residents to explore the outcomes of the public meeting that was held to consider what beneficial changes to traffic movement and parking would help the community in general. A number of suggestions were put forward that found consensus with all members of the group, and these will be further explored on a consultative basis at our next meeting in the presence of the County Traffic Engineer. It was an extremely useful meeting with all parties present being quite prepared to understand and discuss the relevance and impact of any proposed changes to both residents and traders alike. A great deal of work has taken place during this period regarding our cultural regeneration strategy. The Borough Council is leading on a seasonal programme of events on the theme of "promenading" involving outside activities that will include music, choirs, and dance. This is a really innovative cultural adventure, featuring performers from other parts of the UK, and focussing on the newly created Stade Open Space. This strategy based upon using cultural activities as a vehicle for regeneration will extend along the length of our front line taking in much of St.Leonards, with its fine selection of shops, restaurants, and its multi-cultural atmosphere. The Town has also produced an excellent events and cultural calendar, it is only when our offer in these particular activities are pulled together in a single document can one appreciate the full extent of what can be provided by Hastings and St.Leonards as part of our tourism offer. All of this activity will support the rebranding of our Town as a major cultural destination, and will hopefully lead to the increased business and employment that such a strategy based upon the development of a successful visitor economy can deliver.

With the re-siting of the bottle bank that was at the bottom of the High Street, the council are left with a problem of what to do with the space that it previously occupied. This space was originally the access to an underground recycling unit that is now defunct, it now provides us with three potential uses. I would ask you to contact me if you have a preference for the particular usage that could be offered, the suggestions are :-

Allow the space to revert to one additional parking bay (cost likely to be £ 6k - £ 7k)

Create a cycle park area (funding possibly available)

Remove the above ground chute and leave as is (low cost option)

Localism at work !

Kind Regards John Hodges