

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - FEBRUARY 2012

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The end of February sees the period given over for repairs to be effected to the structure of the pier, by its current owners, expire. A further twenty one days is allowed for objections, then the CPO process can start in earnest. Progress with the project in terms of our relationship with HLF continues very successfully, with an excellent response to both progress and forward plans indicating their full backing. A decision has been taken to proceed with the application for funding that will allow for the development of the Community Showroom adjacent to the White Rock Baths. This will become a focal point during the construction phase of the pier, and will provide the continuity of a link between the heritage that has been lost, and what the new pier will bring to the community as its development progresses.

During the month I attended the launch of the "One Hundred Apprenticeships in One Hundred Days" initiative held in the council chamber. It was an event that was well supported by local companies, apprenticeship providers, and at a national level through both the organisation responsible for this activity, and our local MP. In terms of Hastings this initiative, we already have thirty five pledges in place, means that it is good for local business, good for the local economy, and good for the Town itself. It must be stressed that this is not a charitable gimmick, it is a real opportunity for our young people to start out in a

profession of their choice with local companies exercising their options to join the scheme purely on the basis of a sound business case.

February saw another meeting of the Olympic Torch Group, its main focus is now to pull all of the teams together who are organising local entertainment. The proposed sites for events are currently Grosvenor Gardens, Warrior Square, Town Centre, Winkle Island, and of course the Stade Community Space where a combination of LOCOG and local organisers will provide varied entertainment to coincide with the arrival of the Torch and the lighting of the cauldron. Much of the activity that surrounds the Torch remains subject to a non disclosure agreement, and the fine tuning of times, routes, and associated activity is unlikely to be in the public domain until some 2 - 4 weeks before July 17th. The council have made the very wise decision of enlisting the help of Roger "The Pirate" Crouch in pulling much of this activity together, and if we can deliver this spectacle as successfully as Pirate's Day, then we are all in for a tremendous round of entertainment.

The second meeting of the combined traders and residents took place at Harris' Restaurant to discuss the proposals that had been previously developed. We were joined by the two Traffic Engineers from ESCC who were most helpful and supportive, and agreed to take away a number of long running problems for further consideration. The main theme of the meeting was the consideration of shared space in the High Street, which is not a condition

that is created by traffic regulations, but a concept of equality within an environment brought about by a mutual understanding of the needs of both pedestrians and motorists. Nothing would be taken away from what currently exists by the introduction of such a scheme, but as a consequence considerable benefits could evolve and a number of current problems disappear. The Traffic Engineers have agreed to come back to us with some costings for the creation of the minimum environment consistent with such a concept. Nothing further will be progressed until these findings have been subjected to public consultation, and a general consensus across the community has been reached.

As chair of the Museums Committee I am very happy to report that considerable progress has been made on establishing a listing of all Hastings related documentation that has been deposited with the County Archivist over many years. The absence of many of these documents has for long been a sore point with local historians, who have at times come to a grinding halt when pursuing information that has left our local museums, and is believed to have been held by ESRO. It is the intention to have available locally a listing of all such transferred information, and eventually full access to it via a digitised record held in the local studies room. There is little doubt that once the new "Keep" opens in Brighton, with an environment created specifically for the preservation of documents, this would become the ideal base for the storage of irreplaceable artefacts. For the main part historians are more interested in the

information contained within these valuable documents, and provided that this can be made available locally in a digitised format, then the original artefacts can be preserved for posterity.

At the February meeting of the full Council I submitted a resolution requesting their support for a small deviation of the route of the Olympic Torch. This resolution was directed towards the Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport and requested his intervention with LOCOG to allow the Torch on the morning of July 18th to visit the Town Sports being held at the William Parker Sports Stadium. Whilst I am the first to recognise the need to adhere to schedules, and to strictly observe security requirements, I have long been conscious that much of the Olympic ideal is being overshadowed by the pressures of commercialism. Yes of course many of the world's greatest sporting events would not be possible without commercial support, but ultimately the Olympic ideal is all about sport, our young people, and their coming together on a level playing field irrespective of their colour, creed, and background. There is no doubt that it is a great honour for Hastings to be selected as a location for the Torch to stop, but on this once in a lifetime opportunity it is essential to the proliferation of the Olympic ideal that every corner of society is included within the celebration, not least the deprived, the young, and those who will carry the message into the future. This resolution received not only the support of every side of the Council Chamber, but that of our MP as well who has now raised the issue on the floor of the House of

Commons. Let us now hope that common sense prevails and a balance is found between the pressures of commercialism, and the need to keep the flame of idealism burning strongly in our Town.

At the end of the month I attended the community consultation at the Stade Hall, presented by a group called Disabled Go. This is an organisation that will survey any number of suggested venues in a town for their accessibility to all grades of disabled people. A web site for each town is subsequently developed and the information gathered by survey is published in a totally non-judgemental format. This method allows disabled people to form their own judgement, dependent upon their own particular disability, on the places that they would be able to visit in previously unfamiliar destinations. Should anyone have a particular venue that they feel should be subject to survey they should visit their website www.disabledgo.com where the process to follow is described, in the case of Hastings and St.Leonards requests should be made prior to March 26th. The actual surveys will commence in our area on June 18th, with the final report going live on August 20th.

February has indeed been a busy month, and I am extremely pleased to welcome the extra day this year. However, please don't hesitate to contact me should my help be required on any matters that fall within the remit of your local council.

My Kindest Regards, John Hodges

