

**WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - May 2012**

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The objection period for the Hastings Pier CPO has now expired with only one objection having been received. It would appear that the nature of this objection is not material to the progress of the order, and as such it is hoped that it will be withdrawn. Should this happen then there are no grounds for a public enquiry and the order could be finalised within a few months. Upon approval of the CPO the council has up to three years to take up ownership of the pier, this being dependent upon HP&WRT having both funding in place and being in a position to take ownership themselves. The good news in this direction is that the Trust has now passed its stage three approval with the HLF, keeping the whole exercise on track. Much work continues on fund raising and will continue to do so until all works are complete and the pier becomes a self sustaining entity. The next move is to progress the application for the community showroom which will be housed in a temporary building adjacent to the western light well, which in turn will eventually migrate to the pier itself.

During the early part of the month both Dawn Poole our new councillor, and myself attended the Annual General Meeting of HOTRA held in the Stade Community Hall. This transpired to be a well attended and well conducted meeting with much lively discussion ensuing over several local issues. This is exactly the nature of what a local society's AGM should be, and it is extremely encouraging to see so many good citizens giving of their time in support of the well being of their Town. All issues that were within my gift have by now been addressed, and I hope that the outcomes will soon become positively transparent. The evening of the AGM was followed by one of the busiest weekends in the social calendar of Old Hastings, with the Biker's Run coinciding with the May Day celebrations led by Jack in the Green heralding the oncoming summer. Fortunately the inclement weather held off for many of the outdoor activities to take place in a wonderfully colourful spectacle that

took in much of Old Hastings and its ancient castle and hill. This whole spectacle took a remarkable amount of planning and implementation by the Jack in the Green organisers, the supporting traders, and of course the group that pulls it all together, Kevin Boorman and his Team.

I attended the celebration of the "Own Grown" initiative that celebrated the objective of securing the pledges for one hundred apprenticeships in one hundred days. I am extremely pleased to say that we failed miserably in this aspiration.....by day one hundred we had actually achieved one hundred and fifty pledges, a remarkable achievement by the Team, the Providers, and the Employers themselves, providing golden opportunities for the futures of these young people.

One problem that continues to blight the Old Town traders in particular is the need to store rubbish, and in the case of restaurants, discarded food. Many of these businesses have developed within early Victorian and Georgian buildings where no yard was included, and no provision made in an age when point of sale material, and current provisions for Health and Safety did not exist. I have been working closely with both the local and county Environmental Health Departments and ESCC's Highways Department in finding a workable compromise, that will allow traders without internal storage facilities for their waste receptacles to continue to use strictly designated and controlled parts of the public realm for the purpose. Whilst we are on the subject of rubbish and litter, the experimental programme known as the "Green Dog Walkers Code" which I commented upon in my last report, will be introduced on a trial basis into both Hastings' Country Park and Alexandra Park. It is a programme that seeks to drive home the message that dog fouling should not be left to turn into a public nuisance and a health hazard.

Another somewhat unheralded, but extremely important group that I support is the Manufacturing Steering Group. This comprises a number of senior people from the area's manufacturing companies, supported by both the Borough Council and SCCH. It is a forum where identifiable barriers to the manufacturing industries are discussed, solutions sought, and information interchanged. Whilst much of the country remains in recession many of this group, and those who operate within the same

industrial clusters, are faced with different problems, those of the need to find larger premises and additional skilled workers. There is no doubt that the various apprenticeship programmes are providing some help, whilst a combination of the Council's refurbishment drive, and the potential new premises that the Link Road will provide, will be most welcome. It is a good problem for a town to have, but only if we can provide a solution that ensures that any wealth generation remains in Hastings. To this end Hastings Council has been very active in leading the development of a programme of support for business. Part of this project involves a bid into the Government's Regional Growth Fund which would establish a local grants programme for businesses investing in job creation. This would address the needs of businesses, constrained by the lack of available funding, not only in the manufacturing industries but also in the cultural and tourism sectors. I am also currently representing Hastings on the SME Commission that covers the whole of East Sussex. This is a group that is committed to finding ways of overcoming many of the barriers that this part of the country is faced with when looking to attract inward investment into the County, or to allow existing businesses to expand. Developing an expanding economy that will support increasing levels of employment is probably the single biggest problem facing us here in Hastings. Without doubt a solution to this issue would also provide the precursor to the reduction and eventual eradication of the economic and social exclusion that continues to blight the most disadvantaged within our Town.

During the month I have picked up several instances of anti social behaviour, the most serious accompanied the May Day celebrations doubtless fuelled by an excess of alcohol, and unfortunately involving a minority of the youngest revellers. Other isolated incidents have been reported and addressed by a combination of the Police and the respective Council Officers. Should further instances occur they should be reported on a specially dedicated line, 07717 490407 that will get you through to a direct Police response. You may already be aware that PC Mark Dicker has moved on from Old Hastings to exercise his undoubted contribution to community safety in Central St.Leonards. We all owe Mark a tremendous debt of gratitude for his record of community service, but we must all wish him well in his new manor. Mark's replacement in Old Hastings is PC Natalie Brill, who both Dawn and myself have met,

and will continue to support in maintaining the high standard of community policing that our ward has come to enjoy.

At the end of this month I attended a meeting of the Hastings Coastal Adaptation Pathfinder Project, it consisted of an excellent presentation on the subject of shingle accretion. Because of the net eastward longshore drift of the English Channel that is interrupted by the harbour arm, the fishing beach at Hastings accumulates a huge amount of shingle. Whilst shingle is an excellent buffer against potential tidal damage, and indeed protects the Town from the ingress of the sea, it creates a major problem for the fishing fleet. The accretion of shingle causes the formation of a gradient on the foreshore, which left unattended would prevent the launching, and subsequent beaching of the fleet. To allow the fishing boats to put to sea a continuous ploughing operation to reduce the steepness of the gradient has to take place, but unfortunately the mechanical power needed for this operation is now down to a single, and very old bulldozer. With the never ending problems of quotas that penalise the under ten metre fleet, the ongoing saga of discards, and a current cod quota of zero, this is just another factor that could contribute to the demise of the fishing industry here in Hastings. The project has developed several options that address the root cause of the problem, but they are all expensive and while the deliberations ensue, funds are still needed for new mechanical aids to buy some respite for the fishing fleet, the community that supports it, and to perpetuate the huge contribution that it makes to our tourism offer.

Wishing you all the very best over the Diamond Jubilee Holiday.

John Hodges & Dawn Poole