

WARD REPORT – OLD HASTINGS – AUGUST 2012

COUNCILLOR JOHN HODGES

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

COUNCILLOR DAWN POOLE (cllr.dawn.poole@hastings.gov.uk or 429968)

The major activity by the Hastings Pier and White Rock Trust during August has been the submission of the round two application for financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The result of this huge exercise, which includes not only aspects of the pier's heritage and its contribution to the development of British social history, but the business planning that will support a sustainable future for a redeveloped pier. Once again I would like to remind you all that demonstrable public support, via a visit to the Pier's web site www.hpwrtr.co.uk, is paramount in selling this project to the adjudicating committee. In parallel with this submission the other very significant task that continues is the development of matched funding initiatives, which are mandatory in securing any grant funding. The result of several years of dedicated effort, by this single minded and hard working group, will hopefully be declared in a positive outcome during this November. The final factor in this exercise lies with the Minister of State who must also be minded to allow the progression of the Compulsory Purchase Order that will allow the programme to start on the delivery of the "People's Pier".

Old Town Carnival Week has come and gone so quickly, providing a tremendous array of vastly differing entertainment and culminating once again in a fantastic carnival procession. Unfortunately a couple of the events attracted some elements of anti social behaviour, and this will be subject to an independent review that will hopefully come forward with some form of future resolution for this unwanted detraction from an otherwise splendid week . There are several reasons for this problem, not a new phenomenon but one that is easily fuelled by freely available

alcohol and exacerbated by reduced Police numbers, which in fairness are allocated against perceived threat assessment, when containment could provide some form of mitigation. There now has to be a demonstration of real will on the part of all stakeholders to eradicate this unacceptable and growing blight on the lives of local residents, before our Town's hard won reputation as a successful cultural venue falls victim to its own excesses. A meeting has been convened for later this month to address the issues that come together to create these recurring problems. It will be attended by all of those, or their representatives, affected by the situation or holding a responsibility for its containment. However I would not like anybody to think that this is the first recognition by the authorities of this particular problem. Already procession routes have been changed by the organisers, whilst the Police have been running an intensive campaign with the schools, directed at the consequences of the misuse of alcohol. I would sincerely hope by next month to report on some positive progress towards an understanding of the root causes, and a potential plan that could lead to the reduction and eventual elimination of these conditions that manifest themselves in the most distressing of symptoms .

In response to the problems that have beset the residents of Alfred Road as a result of a poorly managed development programme, we have put together a proposal for the introduction of a register of licensed developers. This scheme would look to have in place a test for competency, solvency, and a clear title to any land put forward for development. Currently all of these attributes fall outside of existing planning legislation, but the absence of any of them, when a developer is appointed, can contribute to the lengthy problems that have blighted the lives of many of the residents of Alfred Road. The proposal has been forwarded to our MP who has agreed to place them before Greg Clark the Minister of State for Decentralisation and Planning Policy. I look forward to Westminster gaining an understanding of

these problems that should not exist as an outcome of an otherwise correctly applied process.

During the month we attended a meeting set up by Sarah Owen to discuss in an open forum, the question of jobs. A number of local employers, joined by Job Centre Plus, explained to young people what it was that they looked for when interviewing prospective employees. It went beyond just qualifications, or even the ability to carry out the task, it looked at other aspects of a young person that came across during the interview. These attributes could include enthusiasm, aspiring to progression within the post, or quite simply just sheer determination to obtain the job on offer. The session included advice on CV compiling, presentation skills, and the often overlooked inter-personnel skills. A very useful afternoon for young people made so by the presence of those that they will inevitably have to interface with in the eternal search for employment.

Between Dawn and myself a number of significant meetings were attended during the period, one such was the launch of the access guide for disabled people to Hastings. This service is provided by an organisation known as Disabled Go, who provides on line access guides to over 100,000 venues across the UK. This fantastic guide for disabled people who want to plan a weekend away, search for a job, or even find an accessible doctor is invaluable, and Hastings now figures as part of it. This can bring a whole new quality of life to those whose existence had previously been governed by uncertainty. It allows disabled people to plan an itinerary down to the last detail in terms of accessibility. I actually saw an example where a restaurant was noted for the availability of drinking straws, it can provide assurance and comfort to the most severely disabled down to that level of detail. For all who wish to avail themselves of its service just log on to (www.disabledgo.com), it is all there to study. Another meeting that was supported during the month was the

Stade Management Committee, of which Dawn was elected as the new Chairperson. This group deals with all aspects of the orderly management and administration of the Stade, from litter picking around the popular tourist areas, to the ever present problems of vehicular access and ownership of the Net Shops. Many of the issues that are dealt with are very often problematic either to those from the fishing community, such as uncontrolled bonfires on the beach, or to the local residents when a variety of nuisances can occur from any number of sources. The group is supported by the local Police, HBC, and representatives of the Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society a diverse group that has to deal with a wide range of issues that affect this very important part of Hastings life.

Certainly the cultural highlight of August was the first International Composers Festival held over the last weekend of the month. Saint Mary in the Castle provided a superb venue for this event, the first of its kind to focus on modern classical composers, and most certainly drew upon a worldwide pool of talented composers and musicians. I am assured by all of my colleagues who attended that the standard of musical composition was incredibly high, as were the performances of the musicians including our own Hastings Philharmonic Choir. All of this was brought together by Polo Piatti a well known and respected local composer, long may such events continue as a significant part of our cultural regeneration programme.

You may over the last month or so heard a new phrase linked with Hastings and its Country Park, that is "single farm payment". This is a payment made by an agency of DEFRA whereby certain intensive and destructive farming is "set aside" , in the case of Hastings to restore the bio-diversity to our fragile coastal farmland. We are extremely fortunate that the topography of our country park did not over the years encourage development, instead it has left our Borough of some three thousand hectares with almost a third of its total area as either

designated, or a protected habitat. This home to many rare species of flora and fauna has been recovered by the local authority over the past ten years or so through a combination of financial provision provided by the single farm payment, and countryside stewardship funding from English Nature designed to offset the running costs of the Park. The continuation of these payments, and the magnificent support of our Country Park Management Team, have provided us with one of the finest natural habitats in the country. Access to nature for all is the cornerstone of our ecological management plan, and one day it is hoped that the final objective of this plan will deliver national park status to this green jewel in the mosaic that represents what Hastings has to offer to this world.

Once again I would remind you to contact Dawn or myself should you need our help with any local issues that fall within our gift.

Kind Regards Dawn Poole, John Hodges

Your Councillors for Old Hastings