

WARD REPORT – OLD HASTINGS – NOVEMBER 2012

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There is little doubt that the most fantastic news to hit Hastings this month features the decision, taken by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to support the Pier Trust's application for £11.4m of funding for the refurbishment of the Victorian structure. The Grade II listed building is just one of the seven remaining Eugenius Birch constructions that exemplify the work of this celebrated pier designer, and this tremendous news will prevent it from suffering the same fate as his West Pier at Brighton. The rebuilding phase of this renaissance will provide much needed opportunities for skills training, including apprenticeships in engineering and construction, together with a significant volunteer's programme. But beyond the delivery of a pier to a receptive seaside town, this whole exercise will create the link that is missing between east and west in the regeneration of Hastings. It is both a staging post, and a catalyst in the reaction that could generate the investment needed to further enhance the western areas of our sea front, from Bottle Alley through to Glyne Gap. This award has come as a result of several years of hard work, interspersed by bitter disappointments, by a group of dedicated citizens of this Town who were not prepared to just let our pier fall into the sea. Instead they persevered, they lobbied, they won the support of both our citizens and a council that really cares about the community and the future of this Town as a holiday destination. It was this support, and the efforts of this tireless Trust that ultimately won the day, and although what was a dream five years ago is now within touching distance, some funding still has to be raised and your continuing support remains as important as ever.

During the month I attended a further public consultation meeting on the trial scheme that introduced the no loading ban in Rock a Nore Road. The generally held view is that it had been successful and most certainly aided the flow of traffic in the area especially at peak times. A few really useful suggestions were made especially concerning the relaxation of this ban during the Winter months when traffic congestion was not a problem. All of the suggestions were taken away for further consideration. With traffic in mind the public review and consultation will commence this month, and yes the point was made on several occasions that traffic density in November is hardly comparable with what occurs during any of the Summer Bank Holidays. However, the review will report back early next year and will inform future plans for more effective traffic movement and greater pedestrian safety around the Old Town. A proposal for the erection of a gated barrier for Courthouse Street, the only potential solution that has passed the public safety audit, will be put to the residents and traders for their approval. A programme of repairs to pavements and kerbing has started in the Old Town, mainly to repair damage caused by oversized commercial vehicles using the footpaths as an extension of the highway. Fortunately I was able to have included within the new waste disposal contract, a clause stipulating that any "waste freighters" used in Old Hastings should be of a size that is consistent with the dimensions found in sixteenth century streets.

November has been a busy month for both of us having attended amongst other things the annual "Let's Do Business" fair at SCCH, met with Eric Pickles the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, attended the East Sussex Strategic Partnership at Uckfield, and supported the Pier Trust at their meeting with the Heritage Lottery Board. Both Dawn and I are members of the Country Park Management Committee, which I have chaired for the last two years, and this month we were joined by Janet Whitman of Natural England who explained the future of the single farm payment which is part of the European

Common Agricultural Policy, and is so important to the sustainability of this wonderful park. A very informative presentation was also provided by the Borough Ecologist on the issue of ash dieback fungal disease, I have ensured that other organisations within the Borough that look after our green lungs are also kept abreast of these developments. We have continued to campaign for the retention of the Ridge Fire Station, with stalls in the foyers of the major superstores, and our own street stall in Butler's Gap. The loss of front line public services, including those from the Conquest Hospital, is unacceptable especially where financial savings can be effected in other areas that do not put public health and safety at risk.

The Story Telling Festival has come and gone, leaving a trail of superlatives about quality in its wake, and its own story of crowds at every event. To say that the popularity of this event has grown on last year's numbers is an understatement. All through the week from Quentin Blake's book signing in Priory Meadow, through to the hugely successful finale at the Stade crowds flocked to be part of it, providing the seal of approval that will keep this event at the forefront of Hastings' festivals for years to come. A tremendous well done to Dick Edwards and his team, who have added a new dimension to our Town's cultural offer. Not to be out done by all of this euphoria emanating from "Fishy Tales", just a week later the tales were left behind and replaced by real fish landed by our own local fleet. The "Herring Fair" was an unqualified success, despite the weather delivering virtually the full spectrum of its meteorological possibilities all in one weekend. Nothing could deter the intrepid procession of residents and visitors alike from marvelling at the skills of Tush and the others filleting herrings and cooking them in front of your eyes, where mere mortals would feel more at home with a magnifying glass and tweezers in the preparation of these delicacies. Herrings were cooked, smoked in pursuit of several varieties , and marinated to produce the delicious roll mops. Locally produced beer and wines were on hand to wash all of this

down to the accompaniment of sea shanties, and a celebration of " Clemmning and Cattening" from the ever ebullient Keith Leech. The more serious side of this wonderful fair brings home the fact that all of this harvest of the sea has a fishing community behind it that makes it possible, but still seeking the help from Brussels and Westminster that is needed to sustain our most traditional industry. One can only hope that similar fairs can be organised to promote other fruits of the sea, but for the success of this year's Fair our grateful thanks must go out to Joy Collins, Yasmin Ornsby and their team of tireless workers.

Whilst our reputation as a Town in celebration of its culture and traditions continues to grow, other aspects of the support necessary for a safe and sustainable community are being eroded away. I refer to the potential loss of one of our two fire stations, and the likely transfer of our stroke unit to Eastbourne. I have good reason to anticipate further losses to facilities that currently exist to support the most vulnerable in the community. The fight to retain The Ridge Fire Station is well established, whilst I with a group of my colleagues, intend to fight for the availability of some form of stroke diagnosis and stabilisation unit to be located at the Conquest Hospital. If ever the maxim "time is of the essence" applied to a medical condition, then the diagnosis and stabilisation of a stroke must be top of that list. Hastings has a hospital, it has a scanner, it is served by High Speed Broadband, so let us concentrate on moving interpretable information on the patient's condition to where the medical expert is located, rather than expose the patient to a 25 mile journey of indeterminable duration until that diagnosis is made and a level of acceptable stability in the condition is assured. We will continue to fight all cuts to front line services where public health and safety is likely to be sacrificed in the pursuit of cost savings that could be made equally well in other places.

Well it's that time of year again and it only leaves us to wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

Please do not hesitate to contact either Dawn or myself with any concerns that you might have, and are within our gift to resolve.

Kind Regards Dawn Poole and John Hodges