

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - FEBRUARY 2013

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GENERAL ISSUES

More tremendous news for the pier this month in its drive towards the matched funding that is part of the offer from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Hastings has welcomed the announcement that it is to receive £1 244 931 from the Coastal Communities Fund. A total of £18m was available nationally for coastal communities to bid for, and Hastings received one of the largest grants in the country. Applications were received for more than ten times the money available. Hastings Borough Council submitted the successful bid of which £750 000 will be a capital investment for the pier project, and will be used to set up the 'Pavilion Restaurant' bistro, cafe and bar. This will be a money-making business run by the pier charity which we hope will open in 2014. The Heritage Lottery Fund grant requires a further £2.5m in additional funding to be raised. It should help sustain the long-term future of the Pier, and will employ apprentices coming through from SCCH, similar to Jamie Oliver's '15' restaurants. In addition to this, another £443 000 will be used for the SCCH to establish a Coastal Industries Academy. This will provide specialist skills-related training for people who wouldn't normally attend a college, and will be available in units which can lead to a formal qualification. The emphasis will be on teaching skills that will directly help people to get a job, and will be designed with employers to provide the skills they need. These two initiatives are complementary, of course. The restaurant will play a key role in the revival of the Pier as a major visitor attraction here in Hastings, so helping to boost the vital visitor economy. The skills academy will help more local people to get the new jobs being created in this growing sector.

Simon Opie, the Chief Executive of the Hastings Pier & White Rock Trust, greeted the news with an enthusiastic welcome saying "This is a massive step forward for the Pier, and will help us meet our funding target and finally start work on the rebuilding project. It is a tremendous endorsement of our plans from central government and reinforces our commitment to making the Pier a gateway to employability for the local community. I really look forward to the

amazing training opportunities that our Pier restaurant will offer, in particular to local young people."

Another issue that is proving of great concern to some tenants outside of the private sector is the introduction of the so called "bedroom tax". This in effect seeks to penalise anyone within certain guidelines who is not in the Government's eyes making effective use of their property. The following link that has been provided by Amicus -Horizon, one of our largest social landlords, offers a simple explanation of how this scheme will operate.

[Under-occupying \(Bedroom tax\) - AmicusHorizon](#)

WARD ISSUES

Certainly the biggest event by far to hit the Old Town this month has been "Fat Tuesday". Fantastic, a huge and growing success, the best ever, and what in Hastings in the middle of February ? all attributed to the riot of colour and music that was this Town's own interpretation of Mardi Gras. The numerous activities spilled over from the Old Town into central Hastings where the Carlisle and the Brass Monkey provided venues, with St.Leonards making its contribution through establishments at Mama Putts and The Roomz, aiding charities like the Seaview Project. Even the weather didn't put off the Fat Tuesday Umbrella Parade with the hardy souls taking shelter and enjoying the music in the Print Works at Claremont. As usual the main problems facing the organisers of this festival are similar to those facing our other festivals, quite simply how do we improve on this for next year ? Not a bad problem to have, and a certain mark of success for this fantastic winter venture into providing a colourful platform for the talent that abounds in this Town of ours.

During the month Dawn and I attended the meeting of the Country Park management Forum which I chair, once again the subject of a new interpretation centre featured high on the agenda following our visit to Ashford. Currently a lot of background work is in place involving the Friends of the Park and TCV, where we are looking for a partnership approach towards making some funding bids, including possible sources in Europe. There is a plan that will shortly be in place to return the herd of Highland Cattle to Sevenoaks as part of the Government's tightened regulations on TB testing in cattle. The Highlands, whilst beautiful creatures to merely observe, play an important role

in the husbandry of the Park whereby their grazing habits have made a significant improvement to the management of the nationally scarce coastal heather habitats in Warren Glen. Our priority is to now to find some suitable replacements to maintain the good work of the Highlands. Unfortunately it has proved necessary to make an increase in daily parking charges in the Park from one pound to two pounds. This will allow the Ranger Service and the quality of the Park to be maintained at its continuing high standard, the cost of an annual season remains the same at twenty five pounds which equates to just under seven pence per day. We continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Green Dog Walker Scheme both in the Park and in Alexandra Park, apart from the obvious benefits that such a scheme can deliver we hope that it reassures the general public that the Borough Council takes dog fouling seriously. Our hope is that we can extend the scheme, and the message that it is intended to deliver. Following the reported problem of ash dieback another potentially invasive and noxious problem has been found on Barn Pond. This is Parrot Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) a plant native to the Amazon but much favoured in aquatic gardens, but in a more natural habitat its prolific growth can shade the water from sunlight causing the native species, and the organisms that feed on them, to die from light deficiency. A programme of eradication is being put in place and I will share the advice developed by the Team with other "Friends Groups" around the Town, whose water habitats may also be threatened.

It was extremely pleasing to see that some progress has been made in the unacceptable practice of discarding of fish stocks that are caught in excess of quota. Unfortunately, it will still be next year before this new EU legislation becomes operable, and will no doubt come accompanied by investment in new equipment and recording technology. Some detail remains to be clarified regarding the abandonment of discards, as indeed does the future direction of the still standing and inequitable system of quotas itself. For your information I append at the bottom of this report one of the letters that I wrote to Maria Damanaki the European commissioner for Fisheries in the hope that further consideration could be given to the principle of discarding, whilst the system of quotas is addressed closer to home.

During the month I also attended the Future Cities Conference held at the Sussex Exchange and attended by a European wide audience. The Future Cities Project, supported through INTERREG IV B funding, seeks to create urban networks that can provide the resilience necessary to face the problems of climate change. These can range from water management projects creating the green-blue corridors of the polluted Ruhr area in Germany, to the eco-retrofit programme applied to a Victorian dwelling in Cambridge Gardens here in Hastings. Both are examples of adaptation part of future proofing against the effects of climate change in Northern Europe. This concept is provided with a tool set to aid adaptation, especially the adaptation compass which guides you through the process of moderating harm and exploiting certain benefits in what will always be a longer term process of mitigation against the effects of climate change.

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

To Maria Damanaki - European Commissioner for Fisheries

THE DECLINE OF THE HASTINGS FISHING INDUSTRY - ITS IMPLICATIONS

Recently, as the Hastings Borough Council Representative, I attended a meeting of all representatives interested in the activities that are pursued on the ancient Stade. The Stade is the ancient landing place of our under 10 metre fishing fleet, and currently supports the largest beach launched fleet in the UK. Apart from discussions on the normal business associated with this part of Old Hastings, the group received an impassioned plea from the Representative of the Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society. Once again this plea was directed towards those who hold the key to saving our fishing industry, and towards those who have the power to change this unacceptable system of quotas that are so unfairly imposed upon our own fleet of small boats. This is not a problem that has been caused by any one British Government, but a situation that has existed because of a succession of weak

governments who have failed to challenge the information that provides the basis for the decisions taken on fish stocks and quotas by the European Commissioner in Brussels. This information should have been based on cognisance gathered from our own fishermen, who have spent their lives in this part of the channel. These fishermen are the finest conservators of the delicate ecological balance that is necessary to support a sustainable fishing industry, why ? quite simply because their livelihoods depend upon the conservation of stocks, and the preservation of the traditional fishing grounds.

The enforcement of these inequitable quotas is draconian, our fishermen are pursued not only on the Stade but also on the high seas. Quite recently one of the trawlers was actually stopped at sea by a French vessel, and boarded by an English officer ! The unacceptable practice of discarding parts of a catch, inadvertently taken in excess of the quota continues. There are strong indicators that this unwholesome practice of throwing dead fish back into the sea is actually disrupting the ecological balance of the ocean. This is evidenced in the proliferation of starfish and other similar echinoderms that feed on this "free lunch", and then continue to disrupt the natural development of the species that provides our nation with the marine contribution to our vital food chain. The species that have been discarded over the past few months include not only cod, but plaice and sole all fish that could provide the healthy balance to our diet, that the nutritional experts continue to advocate for each and every one of us.

Beyond these problems that continue to affect our Town, there are much more serious implications for the sustainability of this traditional industry. The precarious and unpredictable nature of the life of a fisherman has done little to attract the younger generation to follow this way of life. With quotas set at levels that barely allow a living wage to be earned on a good day, no young person could plan a future, raise a family, or take on a mortgage when all of these attributes of normal life are subject to an inequitable system born in a foreign land, yet still allowed to deprive our Town of the perpetuation of its most traditional industry. One of our most experienced fishermen shared with me the fact, that as I write, a further five boats are seriously considering hauling in their nets for the last time. A conservative prediction states quite

clearly that within the next few years the fleet is likely to be reduced to two or three vessels, and after that?

I can only implore you to re-examine this inequitable system that penalises our own small boats, and to understand the reality of what the future holds for the fishing fleet of Hastings, and the consequences of its depletion for the future of the Town itself. I would ask that you share this understanding with those who set this iniquitous differentiation between boats of different sizes, and enforce quota systems that bear no resemblance to the availability of fish stocks, or the requirements of marine conservation. We all live in a town committed to regeneration, which is also the most deprived in the South East of England. Regeneration is a concept that embodies the principles of a package deal where we all move forward together, and that includes our fishermen. This industry is precious to our Town, it is a significant part of our tourism offer, and it provides a vital livelihood for a group of our citizens. It must be nurtured and allowed to move forward with the rest of the community, free of the misguided legislation that seeks to strangle its very existence. Regeneration will never be complete if we fail this traditional industry, and we all arrive at our vision of a renaissance, but without a single fisherman to share it.

John Hodges - Councillor Old Hastings Ward