

## WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - AUGUST 2013

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

### **General issues**

Well at last the big day arrived and on August 15th the chains securing what was once Hastings Pier were cut. This symbolic event took place in the presence of Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, our local MP, the Leader of Hastings Council, and assembled dignitaries including Carole Souter Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund whose organisation made this venture possible. Under a cloudy sky, brightened only by the mood of the assembled company, the gates were flung open to reveal the full extent of the refurbishment programme that lay ahead. The route to this day, which started at a public meeting in 2006, has indeed been tortuous, littered with obstacles of every variety, but the intrepid band of trustees, volunteers, supported at every step of the way by a committed local council, never lost sight of their destiny. Now the next phase begins, with careful planning in support of the huge engineering task of renovating the Pier's Grade II listed substructure and the refurbishment of the only remaining pavilion left standing. The intention is to use sustainable materials throughout the programme in creating a new pier born out of the restoration of the old one, and delivering an open space for both promenading and providing for family and community celebrations. It will be a twenty first century response to the attractions offered to locals and visitors alike by the traditional English pier, it will be a "people's pier". Once operational the Pier will create forty five direct jobs including ten apprenticeships and another fifteen indirect jobs through the concessionaires. It will be a significant contributor to our programme of regeneration bringing some £1.2 million in spend to the local economy, and perhaps providing the first staging post going west in the development of our front line. It is envisaged that beyond the provision of a restaurant and visitor centre there will be a full digitally enabled heritage experience, and a host of seasonal events. The restoration programme is due to commence very shortly, and that in itself will provide opportunities for local companies to tender for specific work packages. The projected completion date for this phase of the restoration programme is spring of 2015.

We do receive complaints regarding skateboarders in various parts of the Town, and in response an extension is underway to the existing "Boyley Skate Park" in White Rock Gardens. This is no ordinary design, but is based upon a quasi urban concept so appreciated by the exponents of this skill. The extension has been completely designed by local skateboarders and BMXers together with the contractor, Wheelscape. The £61,000 Phase 2 extension has been funded by contributions from Safer Hastings Partnership, Hastings Borough Council, Boyley Trust, Sussex Police and £20,000 from The Veolia Environmental Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund. The new design predominantly consists of a street section with additional features including a jump box and hips. This is a very exciting time and all who follow this sport are looking forward to the completion of Phase 2 and it is hoped in time, that a memorial will be erected at the skate park to commemorate Richard Ball aka 'Boyley' whom the park is named after. During the construction phase the majority of the current skate park will still be available for users to enjoy over the summer holiday. Many thanks must go to all partners for their generous contributions, and of course to the skateboarders and BMXers for their knowledge and input into the design. The Safer Hastings Partnership are hopeful that this new facility may reduce the impact that skateboarders and BMX riders can have in other parts of the town as it will offer a dedicated urban skate environment."

Regular updates on progress at the skate park can be found at [www.hastings.gov.uk/skatepark](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/skatepark) or by emailing [kduly@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:kduly@hastings.gov.uk)

I have been contacted by many residents all expressing their concerns about Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking). The current exploratory contract being pursued in Balcombe in West Sussex has prompted a lot of publicity and certainly raise a lot of concerns. I have followed up this issue with the responsible Director at ESCC who has made the clear statement that there are no planning consents for oil or gas developments in East Sussex. The following points should also be recognised when any site in the UK is put forward.

Licences and consents both make a distinction between exploration and extraction, and each stage is assessed independently. The granting of planning permission for the exploration for the resource does not imply that permission would be granted for the extraction of the resource, as the impacts can be very different.

Any application for planning permission within a licensed area would be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment and as some licences are held in proximity to European Protected Sites. Any such application could also be subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment.

There are currently a small number of licences held for exploration (not production) for oil and gas partially within East Sussex and as stated above, subsequent licences and consents are needed prior to any drilling within these areas. However, no planning permission has been issued by East Sussex County Council in relation to these sites. Indeed, the Waste and Minerals Plan (2013) hydrocarbon policy recognises that any exploration within East Sussex would be within a highly sensitive natural environment which is subject to additional environmental protection.

I hope that the above clarifies the situation regarding Fracking, and should it raise further questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

As I have mentioned previously I have been working for several years on a programme aimed at delivering High Speed Broadband into Hastings and St.Leonards. Broadband itself is merely a pipe down which information can be transmitted, whilst currently the high speed element is possible by the integration of fibre optic transmission into the system, but what is so important are the applications that can be driven by this technology. It is these applications that can help business, provide high quality home entertainment, and now play a significant role in health care. During the month I met with ESCC's Officer who is leading the HS Broadband rollout programme. Much of the information at low level remains commercially confidential outside of the county council. However, the really good news is that there should be no "not spots" in the Hastings and St Leonards area. The majority of Hastings will be serviced by BT's own investment, but as it is not part of ESCC's project, the visibility of where and when is not apparent. Any areas where HS Broadband is not driven by market forces alone will become part of the ESCC contribution to the rollout programme. Whilst the status of the programme at cabinet (mini exchange) level remains commercially sensitive, what we do know is that the commercial rollout will be complete by Spring 2014. As further information emerges I will endeavour to keep you all apprised.

## **Local Issues**

At the beginning of the month I was extremely pleased to be invited to an event at the Jenny Lind in the High Street, home of Carnival FM for the duration of Old Town Carnival Week. Keith the landlord, Carnival FM, and the Hastings Brewery had got together to develop a specially brewed beer, exclusive to the Jenny Lind, and called Carnival FM. It was a superb brew not only for the quality of the product, but very generously Keith was making a twenty five pence donation to St. Michael's Hospice from the price of every pint sold during Carnival Week. The whole evening went off splendidly, with the assembled company enjoying both a buffet supper and a free half pint of this unique brew. I often wonder how many people realise the generosity of the publicans of Hastings and St. Leonards and their customers, I doubt if there is a single one that doesn't go out of its way to support one or more charitable causes. Long may this association between those who are less fortunate than ourselves and the licensed trade continue.

Carnival Week has come and gone and by all accounts it was once again a fantastic week of entertainment, with just about something for everyone. The highlight came with a most colourful carnival procession, but let us not forget the fifty four teams who made up a fantastic pram race, raising some £3,000 for charity in the process. The traditional bike race and sea boot race were there of course, and in the absence of "Happy Harold" a considerable some of money was raised by pulling a pink skip truck instead. There were many other events of a more genteel and non-competitive nature that explored the gardens and the multitude of twittens that define the environment of Old Hastings. These events were organised by an army of private residents and volunteers, and supported by the hardworking and ubiquitous Organising Committee who year on year deliver this colourful pageant of Hastings at its very best.

One of the major issues that continues to blight the ward is parking and general traffic movement. It manifests itself as a continuing shortage in the Old Town, where quite naturally residents and traders alike wish to avail themselves of the benefits of living in the twenty first century, but are curtailed where a transport solution is needed by the physical dimensions of sixteenth century streets. There is no real answer to this particular conundrum, only a series of compromises supported by an understanding that this rare

commodity of free space has to be shared. A lot of my time this month has been given over to an attempt to make common sense prevail at our County Highway's Department who seem convinced that one residential street can become a building site, a main diversionary route for both private traffic and bus services, an access to three schools, and support its car owning residents all at the same time. Hopefully my arguments have not fallen on the stony ground, and some sort of phasing of these activities will bring some sanity into the lives of the beleaguered residents who wish for nothing more than the quiet enjoyment of the area in which they have chosen to live.

As you may know, our new contractor Kier Services started here in Hastings on 4th July. For the first 3 to 4 months of the new contract Kier are providing the same refuse & recycling & street cleansing services that were previously provided by Veolia. Kier are using the same staff & management, the same collection rounds, & largely working to the same systems, albeit with a mostly hired fleet. The idea is that this gives Kier a few months to 'get to know' their new workforce, the area, & to finalise the detailed planning required to implement the new services for refuse & recycling, & street cleansing, & to take delivery of the new vehicle fleet. This approach was also used in Wealden & Eastbourne for the first few months of their contracts which started back in April.

The majority of the service changes to the refuse and recycling services are scheduled to start to be mobilised week commencing 21st October. In the first week of September residents will receive leaflets notifying them that service improvements are on the way. Then in late September/early October they will receive more detailed specific leaflets about the new boxes for glass that twin bin households will receive, and the seagull proof sacks that many people on the weekly black sack service will receive.

On 3rd September the Borough Council are hosting a stakeholder event at the Stade Hall for local community representatives, such as those from residents associations. This event aims to provide these community representatives with the sort of information about the service changes that will be of interest to those whom they represent. They will then have a better idea of what is happening in case they are approached by other residents in their area. They will also provide copies of the publicity leaflets being sent out in early & late September once they have been printed.

It is also intended to ensure that a specially trained 'stand alone' Contact Centre team will be in place by the end of September. The team will be a mixture of permanent Contact Centre staff supplemented by some temporary staff. All will be specially trained before the start of the main changes in October. This will be the primary point of contact for all waste enquiries during the mobilisation of these service changes. Once the mobilisation is completed permanent members of the team will return to the main Contact Centre, and this will help us cascade training on all waste & cleansing issues to the wider Contact Centre team.

Finally we mustn't forget that Kier will also be introducing improved street cleansing services throughout the Autumn. These include a greater emphasis on community cleaners using barrow rounds, & the introduction of a quadbike fitted with a Hoover, which is primarily to be used for clearing dog fouling. It is hoped that some of these new cleansing improvements will start to be mobilised in the second week of September, well ahead of the refuse & recycling changes in late October.

I believe that will do for this month as I do not wish to rival War and Peace, albeit that so much is going on in this Town of ours.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself with any concerns that you might have with regards to the ward, and are within my gift to resolve.

*Kind Regards John Hodges*

