

**WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - DECEMBER 2013**  
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**or 445540)**

## **General issues**

At last signs of real progress are beginning to happen on the pier. A column supporting Hastings Pier has been replaced, marking the very first stage of the restoration of Hastings Pier. During the past five years one column broke at a point below the beach level and collapsed. Because of its location this is a critical column and its replacement was essential. Controlled by the tides, the work had to be carried out pre-dawn during the month, when we had very low water, ensuring that work was stopped in time to get the plant and equipment away before the incoming sea cut off the access. Local specialist, South Coast Structures, carried out the work which involved erecting the steel column (which is nearly six metres in height), bolting to the underside of the main trusses and clamping to the remains of the pile. This pile will have been one of the original screw piles installed by Eugenius Birch in 1869. It was then necessary to concrete around the base of the column with a steel casing around it to form the abrasion protection. This column should now last for at least 50 years. There are two more columns near the promenade to replace which will be completed before the start of the main steelworks in January.

Taking advantage of the same low tide, we also had the local soil investigation company, In Situ Site Investigation, carry out testing to help establish the ground conditions for where we have to install foundations for the new Visitor Centre. After so much work and planning, it is extremely pleasing to see the work of restoring Hastings Pier actually getting underway. It is also most rewarding that local contractors are being used wherever it is possible. Work starts in earnest in January, and will provide an ongoing daily spectacle for all those who traverse the promenade. The two main contracts for restoring the steelwork for everything up to the pier head have now been let, so work will soon commence in this part of the structure. Ultimately costs were reduced by combining these contracts, so they've actually come in well within budget. Demolition of the ballroom now won't commence until next autumn, but will now be part of the last phase: restoring the pier head. Conversion works to prepare the upper part of White Rock Baths are almost complete, although the Pier Trust won't be able to move in until January. This is partly because their final activity plan has yet to be approved by HLF, which to say the least involves some significant level of detail.

Local residents are being urged to buy the 'Fishwives' single and help get the choir to the coveted 'Number 1' slot. The 'Fishwives Choir' includes a number of Hastings ladies, and it would be great if we can get the record to number 1. Please do download it now on iTunes; all proceeds will go to the Fishermen's Mission.

I have recently met with the Economy Group at ESCC where I was asked to declare my perceived priorities in this issue. They haven't changed, it is still jobs. I see ESCC's role as a facilitator in providing the opportunities through making East Sussex the sort of location that is attractive to new employers and free of the barriers that prevent existing businesses from growing. It should use its many powers in providing a springboard for business to benefit from the many advantages that this part of the country can offer, and to address those issues that are holding our development back. We are being listened to, the Baldslow Spur is the highest priority road scheme, whilst the electrification and doubling of the Hastings to Ashford line holds a similar position in terms of rail transport. ESCC are equally keen to fight for a second runway at Gatwick, and its supporting transport infrastructure, such that towns like Hastings can boast of access to a major international airport within an hour.

All of these potential improvements in our current poor communications network can only improve our chances of attracting the businesses that will bring the employment that can change the economic outlook for our Town. I am currently negotiating with this group for further support for another round of cluster fairs hopefully in support of our creative sector which abounds within our Town but so desperately needs a platform upon which to display their talent in front of a commercial audience. Towards the end of the month we also received the very welcome news that both Hastings and parts of Rother had been accredited with Assisted Area Status. This newly won status implies a higher priority for government and EU funding, and allows a higher intervention rate of support to SME's within, or moving into the area. The coverage will be virtually all of Hastings and five wards in Bexhill where there are potential spaces for business expansion when the work on the Link Road is complete. On the back of the success of the first Cluster Fair, held in September, and the potential business opportunities that have been set up during Sarah Owen's recent visit to China, Assisted Area Status provides a huge incentive to expand, or relocate your business to Hastings. We must grab this opportunity, and prepare a strategy to maximise its potential through a partnership of public sector, local business, the full spectrum of the local Enterprise Agency, and academia. We now have everything coming into place

to create a commercial identity for this part of East Sussex, that will sit easily with our successful tourism and language businesses, and build on both our high technology industries and our hugely talented creatives sector that abounds in Hastings.

Well the good news this month has definitely been the retention of the Isabel Blackman Centre as an adult social care centre, with commitment from ESCC to look for the addition of a community hub, and a restaurant that will offer a service to the public. My financial argument that this facility could be retained at a lower cost than providing an alternative model of care for those whom ESCC had a statutory obligation clearly did not fall upon deaf ears. However the fight is not over, as it is important that we offer the same support to the staff who have given loyal service to this facility, and clearly play an important part in its future. Although no contracts have been exchanged as yet, Age UK are the frontrunners to take on the mantle of responsibility but hopefully with full community involvement in the hub and the restaurant. The key to the future of the IBC will certainly be sustainability, and now this service has been saved it is vital that the take up of users starts to rise, and the community look to be close to the heart of the operation.

Not only have I long been an advocate of HS Broadband, but also of the need for the education and understanding of the many benefits it can deliver for society. The Lead Member and a party of Senior Officers from ESCC recently visited BT's Martlesham Heath Research Centre and amongst other developments were given a demonstration of Telecare. This is a development that allows elderly people to remain in their own homes under a digital monitoring system where otherwise they would be in some form of hospital or residential care. I have been advocating the investigation of such a system for some time as it could represent massive savings in adult social care, and shape the strategy and size of our conventional general hospital concepts. This party returned absolutely convinced of the social and economic benefits of such a development. This is just one advance that digital technology can deliver, there are many others emerging from the world of fantasy and finding a useful place in addressing the needs of the community.

Since my last report the world has lost an icon of peace and reconciliation, a man who rose above intolerance, a man who nurtured and practised the belief that common humanity bonds both black and white into one human race. Nelson Mandela embodied the dream of freedom and justice. He will remain not just a figure of struggle for equality for black South Africans

and black people around the world, but a celebrated unifying figure for all. His life brought people of all races together to fight for equality, forgiveness, and peace. I learnt from him the importance of political participation, dialogue, and that no persons' human rights should ever be violated.

I am often asked questions regarding free TV licenses for those over seventy five years of age. In response I would offer the following:-

- TV Licensing is reminding anyone celebrating their 75th birthday in the next 12 months that they will be entitled to claim a free TV Licence.
- Anyone aged 75 or over is eligible for a free TV Licence for their main address. There are currently over four million free TV Licences in force, and with over 4.9 million adults over the age of 75 living in the UK, TV Licensing is encouraging those eligible for the concession to apply online or by phone.
- The free licence will cover all the equipment in the property, meaning family or carers living in the same home will also benefit, even if they are watching on devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones.
- Anyone aged 74 or over can begin planning for the concession immediately by applying for a short-term licence which will last between one and 11 months.
- Eligible people can register online at [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk) or by calling 0300 790 6159.

Hastings Borough Council together with the Access4All group has launched a new access ramp sticker for shops and businesses in the town. The large blue sticker, to be placed in shop windows, has been designed specifically to highlight shops that have access ramps to allow easy access for people who use wheelchairs. Millets Outdoor shop in Hastings' town centre is the first shop to display this new sticker.

## **Local Issues**

I am currently helping residents contest a number of traffic related proposals throughout the ward, where local parking and unimpeded access could be lost in support of an attempt to rectify another problem. In a ward where a population seeks to enjoy a lifestyle consistent with the benefits of the twenty first century, but are constrained by a townscape from the sixteenth century, then compromise rather than solution represents the most acceptable way forward. Fortunately, as the recent citizen's survey tells us, a very high percentage of the residents of Old Hastings do get on with one

another, a huge bonus for such a physically constrained neighbourhood. Hopefully the final version of proposed changes will deliver the optimum solution for all who could be affected.

There has been a number of activities undertaken recently by ESCC including the clearance of overhanging vegetation in several locations where illumination was being reduced, drains inspected and cleared, and a significant number of potholes filled and repaired. All of these activities should happen as a matter of course, but at times through a lack of resources they get missed. Please don't suffer in silence, if you feel that there is an unattended problem in your street then let me know and I will call in the Highway Steward who will ensure that emergencies are dealt with under the highest priority, whilst the routine will go into a works schedule that ensures that it will happen. In terms of pot holes, Hastings alone has many thousands of metres of adopted roads, which produce a significant number of pot holes following a bad winter. Since last winter ESCC has mended over sixty thousand pot holes throughout East Sussex, and in anticipation of more forming through this winter, I append the "rules" that have been adopted for a repair programme. The contact route depending upon the nature of the fault is [online reporting system](#)

We have 12 Highway Stewards who will inspect all roads in East Sussex on either a monthly, three-monthly, six-monthly or yearly basis, depending on the location of the road.

We need residents to report potholes to us as they may not be inspected until the yearly inspections.

Once a pothole is reported to us we will schedule it to be fixed. We give priority to larger potholes:

- 100mm deep and more than 300mm in diameter or more will be made safe within two hours
- 40mm to 100mm deep and more than 300mm in diameter will be made safe within five days
- Less than 100mm will be fixed within six months.

We will aim to fix these potholes when a team is in the area, depending on the location of the pothole. Some potholes can be harder to fix because of their location e.g. a busy A-road on a junction may need to be fixed at night or under a road closure.

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*