

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - APRIL 2014
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General Issues

It is refreshing to know that so many of you take a keen interest in pursuing a healthy lifestyle through active pursuits. This is evidenced by the number of you who have shown their support for HBC's proposed expansion to the Town's network of cycling and walking routes. Referred to as a "Greenway" it provides an alternative, and for the most part a motorised traffic free, means of travelling around our Town. It also addresses many questions of road safety, especially for the young and inexperienced cyclist. Not only has cycling assumed an ever increasing role as a means of alternative transport, but as a hobby and a sport following unparalleled success at an international level. For those of you who extend your sphere of interest into the competitive aspects of the sport, it is most pleasing to see a major cycling event passing so close to Hastings. Britain's biggest professional cycling race will hit East Sussex for the first time as the county hosts part of the penultimate leg of the Tour of Britain. The provisional route for stage seven, on Saturday, September 13, will see the world's top riders enter the county near North Chailey, heading through Uckfield, Horam, Hailsham, Eastbourne and East Dean. The tour then heads west through Seaford, Newhaven and Lewes, briefly re-entering West Sussex to take on the famous climb of Ditchling Beacon before passing through Brighton for the finish. I know that ESCC are delighted to welcome such a high-profile cycling event to East Sussex and look forward to the visitors that this will attract. It will provide a boost for local businesses and support the growing enthusiasm for cycling as a healthy choice for leisure and everyday journeys in the county. After Ditchling Beacon, the provisional route sees the race head into Brighton, passing through Coldean, Lewes Road, Bear Road, Wilson Avenue and Marine Parade before reaching the finish line in Madeira Drive. The stage finish in Brighton will come just over 20 years after the Tour de France finish in the city, and 24 years since the last time a Tour of Britain came to Brighton.

You have all probably seen the work steadily progressing on the pier, as its sorry condition is gradually being transformed into the people's pier. But as the physical work continued, so did the drive to raise the last £500,000 through the community share issue. This scheme proved to be a resounding success. With over 1,600 shareholders, the vast majority coming from the Hastings area

but some coming from offshore , the Hastings Pier Community Share Issue reached its target of £500,000 with a whole day to spare, before the offer closed at midnight on April 5th. In fact it reached almost £600,000 which surely is the finest ringing endorsement that the Trust can receive for the direction that they have taken towards a people's pier. Over £13.7m was initially raised from the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide for the engineering, steelwork and major renovation work needed to the structure. The community share issue will fund the attractions on the pier required to make it financially viable. The purpose of the new pier is to create jobs and prosperity for the town, it can revitalise the seafront and offer locals and visitors alike a real reason to visit the pier again and again. The Hastings economy is already benefiting with around £500,000 having already been spent directly in the immediate area. . For instance, all of the old decking is being used by a local wood recycling company, with the furniture for the new restaurant in the surviving pavilion building being made from recycled decking. The Pier Hub, in the upper part of White Rock Baths, is also proving very popular, with over 4,000 visitors. Children's events have been particularly well attended, especially ones where participants engineered a pier out of chocolate! Whilst of course the Trust has to respect public procurement rules, as well as the economic uplift from bringing the pier back to life. The pier already has more shareholders than any other such scheme in the country, except for two football clubs, and we may well overtake one of those. This fantastic late influx of more shareholders has proved vital in helping to reach what was a huge target, and will certainly play no small part in making the new Hastings Pier as successful as it deserves to be.

During this period the "Hastings Rail Summit" took place at the Town's Sussex Coast College. Rail, as we all appreciate, is vitally important to Hastings, both for our residents who use our three routes for commuting, business, and pleasure, and for visitors who contribute so much to the local economy. It was therefore very encouraging to see so many senior rail industry officials in Hastings, with not just the Secretary of State for Transport here, but the managing directors of the Southern and South Eastern train operating companies, and the route managing director of the South East for Network Rail. It was clear from the discussions that the greatest possibility for improving the service to London would come from the dualling and electrification of the Hastings to Ashford line (the Marsh Link). This is also clearly stated as ESCC's top priority for rail travel in the county. Should this be achieved with the introduction of HS1 Javelin trains travelling to Eastbourne via Hastings, then a 68 minute journey time into London would become a real possibility. It is vital

to the future development of Hastings that it is given the importance it deserves by all rail industry partners. This means that a reliable fast service to Charing Cross, Cannon Street, and Victoria are of equal importance to the Town and its London commuters. We must also not forget the importance of other routes especially to Brighton, and to Gatwick with the possibility of a second runway adding already to its critical nature as East Sussex's major airport. HBC will now work alongside all of its partners in ensuring that this commitment to our future becomes a delivered reality.

You may recall that I recently reported on the initial success of our "Reduce the strength" campaign, aimed at reducing the level and effects of street drinking. Hastings has already been selected as one of twenty Local Alcohol Action Areas This is a new initiative launched in February, the LAAA national scheme involves local agencies, including licensing authorities, health bodies and the police, working in partnership with businesses and other organisations to address the problems caused by an excess of alcohol. The project aims to combat drink-fuelled crime and disorder, and the damage caused to people's health by alcohol misuse. In support of this initiative Crime Prevention Minister Norman Baker visited St Leonards recently to learn more about the work being done locally to tackle the harmful effects of excessive drinking. He expressed his delight to have had the opportunity to visit Hastings and to find out more about the work that the Local Alcohol Action Area Team has been doing. Hastings has already given local areas the power to restrict the sale of alcohol in the early hours, and ensure those who profit from a late night licence help pay towards the costs of policing. We are also pressing the industry itself to take more responsibility for the problems that inappropriate use of their products cause. Hastings has its own initiatives, like our Reduce the Strength campaign whereby off-licenses have agreed to amend their licenses guaranteeing they won't sell beers and ciders over 6.5% - the drink of choice of street drinkers, that others may be able to learn from.

I am often being asked about new street names, I thought that it might be of interest to share with you the latest batch of such names. Four new street names have now been formally confirmed in the borough:

The Russets, St Leonards-on-Sea is a development of 7 new houses being built on land that was formerly an orchard adjacent to 28 Beauharrow Road. The Post Code will be TN37 7FA.

Kempton Way, St Leonards-on-Sea is the new name for the track that runs rear of properties on The Green, Filsham Road and Epsom Close which is accessed from **Ascot Mews**, This track is being upgraded to serve a single new house on land rear

of 29 The Green. The name was chosen to reflect other local roads named after racecourses. The Post Code will be TN38 0FU.

Ash Tree Close, Hastings is a development of 3 new houses to the rear of 410-412 The Ridge. The name was chosen to reflect the name of Yew Tree Close directly opposite. The Post Code will be TN34 2FD

Seacrest View, Hastings is a development of 9 houses on the site of former 191 The Ridge adjacent to Mount Denys. The Post Code will be TN34 2FA.

Perhaps one of the most significant names that will be given to a new development, especially on the centenary of the outbreak of World War One, commemorates a true local hero. A new development on the site of 80, St Saviours Road has now been officially named and numbered, 18 new houses will have new numbers in St Saviours Road and St Vincents Road, but in addition a further 28 new properties will be numbered off a new road which is to be called Claude Nunney Close. Many Local Authorities are making efforts this year to name new streets after those that were awarded the Victoria Cross during World War I in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the start of The Great War. Private Claude Nunney was awarded this prestigious honour for bravery during operations against the Drocourt-Queant line on September 1st and 2nd 1918. Although there are references to him having been born in Ireland, recent research has proven that he was in fact born in Hastings and is believed to be the only recipient of the Victoria Cross during World War I from Hastings.

An exhibition at Hastings Museum from 26th July to November 16th called 'Hastings Remembers.....Local Stories of World War I ', will include more details about Private Claude Nunney.

Should you require further information about any of these new street names, please contact Sarah Stapley on 01424 783260 or email llpg@hastings.gov.uk. Street Naming and Numbering plans are available upon request.

I previously reported briefly on the plans for the landmark roundabout and fountain on Hastings seafront. Work is now underway to create the promised improvements with East Sussex County Council having already removed the original high curved concrete wall and replaced it with lower level kerbing to improve the roundabout visually, and reduce the ongoing maintenance that it has previously required. Work to refurbish the fountain itself at Pelham Place will start in earnest from the end of the month, and this

will involve the repair of the fountain basin and replacement of all the heavily corroded and damaged existing pipe work together with the refurbishment of the dishes before specialist paint is applied. The pumps are also being replaced with more efficient versions that can modify the rate of flow dependent on wind conditions, so saving electricity and water. We are also installing a modern LED lighting system that will illuminate the water, dishes and basin. It is expected that the works to the fountain itself will be complete by early Summer. The area around the fountain will then be planted with Summer flowers to give a colourful floral display for the rest of the year. The bedding will be supplied and planted by our grounds maintenance contractor, The Landscape Group, who have offered to sponsor the maintenance of the bedding for 2014. The council will be working with The Landscape Group to design a more permanent landscaping feature for next year. The refurbishment of the fountain and replanting of summer bedding is an exciting project on a prominent feature of the Hastings seafront. We want it to look its best. We are very pleased and grateful to the Landscape Group for sponsoring the maintenance of the planting, and we look forward to working with them to design the permanent landscaping for the fountain for next year.

For those of you who didn't know, the third English Tourism Week took place earlier in the month, highlighting the significant role that tourism plays in the life of Hastings. Around 100 million domestic overnight trips are taken in England by residents of Great Britain every year, generating a total of £17.3bn in 2011. Some 873 million day trips are made each year with an estimated value of £39bn and England welcomes over 25 million international visitors per year. Tourism in Hastings supports 14.1% of jobs (including self-employed) which equates to an incredible 5,209 actual jobs in the town and it's worth £245 million a year to the town's economy. With the start of the holiday season just around the corner, we are looking forward to welcoming visitors from home and abroad for a fantastic stay with a spectacular mix of attractions and entertainment on offer. Coming at just the right time South Eastern, the train operating company which operates the main line service from London to Hastings via Tunbridge Wells, has announced a special flat fare of just £10 for visitors travelling to the town during May. It is a fantastic offer, and represents a discount of well over 50% on the normal cheap day return ticket from London. I am sure it will be really popular with Londoners wanting to visit and, of course, it coincides with our May Day celebrations, including Jack in the Green and the bikers' rally. It is just what we needed following the months without a decent train service from London, and the Town is very grateful to South Eastern for offering this special deal.

Visit www.visit1066country.com for details of where to stay, attractions and events.

The council's "grotbuster" team along with councillors was out on patrol on the seafront again last week making sure the progress of the last few years in the town's appearance is not undermined. It was agreed that with some exceptions the seafront looked better than it had done since the "grotbuster" campaign started in 2000. Last year was a busy and successful one for the "grotbuster's" campaign, yielding improvements to over fifty buildings across the town, including a number of prominent seafront premises in Eversfield Place and Marina, as well as properties elsewhere including the cinema in Queens Road. This year promises to be equally busy. There is significant work already underway across the Borough. In the Old Town twenty property owners have been approached and in Central St. Leonards over thirty. Undertakings have been received in respect of a number of local eyesores including Devonshire Road and West Hill Road. Grotbusters are also pushing hard for improvements in Caves Road, not least the terrace on the southern side. Councillors and local residents in the Bohemia Road area will be meeting with council officers shortly to assess progress in that area in terms of improving buildings there. Council officers have been invited again to speak to the Government about the success of the campaign and continue to assist other councils across the country, most recently Sevenoaks. To date the campaign has seen 640 premises improved. Clearly there is widespread public support for the work being carried out. If you own a property in our town, especially in such a prominent location as the seafront, you have a social responsibility to upkeep it. If you don't the "grotbusters" will remind you of that responsibility.

Another initiative that Hastings Borough Council is managing is the SUCCESS programme (South-East Urban Coast Creative Enterprise Support Scheme), a regional growth fund providing grants worth over £2m to new or expanding creative businesses in Hastings, Thanet and Tendring, in Essex, and which will create or safeguard over 300 jobs. The programme (launched December 2013 and supported by the Government's Regional Growth Fund) has 26 expressions of interest to date and is currently assessing seven full applications. The first assessment panel is set for later this month. Applicants can apply for grants from £3 000 to £150 000 with eligible businesses providing up to 50% funding of their growth investment plan. This investment needs to be about securing employment, but that can mean creating a new job, or

safeguarding existing jobs in the creative sector. Currently, the majority of the applicants are start-ups and a marketing push is now underway to publicise the scheme and support businesses in applying.

This is a great scheme for local creative businesses, and can provide the extra investment needed for them to grow and flourish. If your business has a creative element – be it arts, music, design, software development, or even creative manufacturing, you could well be eligible, so have a look at the details and see if it's for you. The grants panel is now meeting monthly, so we'll be able to turn applications around fairly quickly. The first businesses to benefit from SUCCESS grants will be announced very soon.

For further information please contact Victoria Conheady, SUCCESS Project Officer - vconheady@hastings.gov.uk (01424) 451014

Local Issues

Is it possible for Hastings to stage yet another festival in our fantastic year round programme ? The short answer to that question is yes! and unsurprisingly the theme is music! It is a different concept for a Town so rich in musical talent, but it sounds like another dimension to add to our cultural offer. The first Hastings Folk Fest starts on Tuesday 6th May, following on from the Jack In The Green weekend. Supported enthusiastically by the Old Town venues who regularly put on acoustic music throughout the year, the festival provides the opportunity to listen to a range of folk and acoustic music, much of it for free. The events include music and song sessions, a showing of the film "A Mighty Wind" and fiddle and guitar workshop. The festival finishes with a show by Barbara Dickson at St Mary In The Castle on Saturday 10th May. Once again this unique Town plays host to a programme of musical entertainment that will hopefully join the annual cycle of events that sets us apart in the delivery of cultural expression in just about every facet of the arts. Full details are available at www.hastingsfolkfest.org.

Just a closing word on the Priscilla MacBean the vintage lifeboat rescued by Deeday White and Tush Hamilton, and becoming yet another local success story. Whilst the band of skilled volunteers work on bringing this historic boat back to life, another part of the group has started on creating a site at the bottom of Old London Road fit for such a heroine of the seas. Planning permission for change of usage of the land, together with the owner's consent is now all in place for this fantastic project to come to fruition some time later

in the year. Donations to the project are always welcome, and the group have plans for a fund raising event over the May Day Holiday on a site beside the boating lake, please give them your support.

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