

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - JULY 2014
COUNCILLOR JOHN HODGES (cllr.john.hodges@hastings.gov.uk
or 445540)

General Issues



The Pier refurbishment continues apace, very often in front of an enthusiastic audience gathered at the promenade side of the barriers. But the Pier Trust continues to provide more than just a building site with numerous activities revolving around the Hub, located in the old White Rock Baths, just a few yards along the promenade. Once again I resort to the Pier Charity's own newsletter to bring the latest news on the progress of the project. **We have a fun packed summer ahead. Look out for our new 'Summer Season' leaflet with details of our range of activities: there's something for everyone from under 5s to families and adults. These sessions are all free thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Coming up in July we have our regular Thursday morning 'Pier explorer' sessions for families with under 5s; there's lots of songs, games and craft fun. The sessions take place in the Hub, from 10.30am - 11.15am and there's no need to book.**

This year we are entering the Old Town Carnival and we need your help to build the float! We are running a series of workshops in July, led by Radiator Arts, to create the float which will be inspired by the past and future pier. Come along to contribute to the overall construction of the float and you will also be able to make a souvenir to take home. We also need your help to carry the float on the day of the carnival, Saturday 2nd August. If you aren't able to make the carnival itself you are still welcome to attend one of our workshops. See our [website](#) for dates and venues for the workshop.

We are also running an art workshop every Wednesday in the school holidays starting on 23rd July. Each week we will be using a different art technique to create images of the pier. For those who would like to there will be an opportunity at the end of the summer to display the completed works in the Hub.

To round off July we have a talk on the 'Entertaining History of the Pier' by former pier music promoter and volunteer archivist at Hastings Museum, Andre Palfrey-Martin. The talk on 31st July will look at a wide variety of entertainment on the pier from steam boat trips to rock concerts, penny arcades to fashion parades. To book your place phone us on 01424 435587 or [email us](#).

Midsummer Fish Fest

The first Hastings Midsummer Fish Fest has been declared a great success as thousands of residents and visitors flocked to the event on the Stade open space, in Hastings old town, towards the end of June. The Fish Fest was organised by Hastings Borough Council on behalf of the Hastings Fisheries Local Action Group ('FLAG'), which uses European Union money to help promote the Hastings fishing industry. It was an acclaimed success and it was really good to see so many people enjoying themselves at the Fish Fest. There

was a wide variety of stalls, and some great entertainment. It was especially pleasing to see the Classroom on the Coast being used for the cooking demonstrations, exactly what it was designed for. And nearly all of these had standing room only, so were obviously very popular.

We've already had some very positive feedback about the weekend, especially about the festival's fantastic atmosphere. This buzz extended throughout the old town, which was especially busy. And it wasn't just the Stade open space which had a fishy feel, the town's four wet fish shops doing great business too. So it really was a case of Hastings, famously fresh. Work has already started on our flagship event, the Seafood & Wine Festival, which takes place on the Stade open space over the weekend of 20th/21st September, and our Herring Fair, planned for the 1st/2nd November."

Active street games

Active Street Games in Hastings has been selected as part of a nationwide programme to bring 90 Pop-Up Tennis Clubs to disadvantaged young people around the country. The programme was established by National Sports Charity, Street Games, in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), along with The Wimbledon Foundation. The partnership will enable over 100 young people from Hastings to emulate the excitement of The Championships, Wimbledon and get involved playing tennis this summer.

Last summer, Andy Murray became Britain's first men's singles champion in 77 years and the country exploded with tennis fever. This partnership aims to harness that excitement and help disadvantaged young people get involved by creating clubs that are fun and vibrant. By holding the sessions on their doorsteps, the programme aims to help encourage a sporting habit for life. The programme follows on from the success of the 2013 partnership between Street Games and the LTA where 25 Pop-Up Tennis Clubs were created, engaging 720 young people from around the country. This year, the LTA has backed Street Games to extend the programme so that thousands more will get the chance to play the sport, including 100 members from Active Street Games Hastings.

This partnership is a continuation of Street Games' work to make sport more accessible to young people living in disadvantaged communities. Currently there are 1.6 million young people who live in disadvantaged areas of the UK; recent research shows lowest-income households are most likely to have least active children, with the poorest households spending less than £2 a week on sport. With the help of the LTA, Street Games hope to combat this by getting

young people engaged with Wimbledon and developing a sporting habit. We are incredibly excited to be given a Street Games Pop-Up Tennis Club and can't wait to start introducing our members to the sport. This means a great deal to the community, so we're hoping that Murray Mania will once again spread throughout Hastings and will inspire our members to pick up a racket."

Jane Ashworth OBE, CEO of Street Games said: "Andy Murray's triumph showed how sport can bring the nation together. We aim to take that inspiration and ensure disadvantaged young people can experience it on their own doorsteps. We know that the Pop-Up Tennis Clubs makes tennis fun for all and brings the excitement of Wimbledon to Hastings where we can't get the strawberries and cream on Murray Mound. Babolat, a leading global manufacturer of premium tennis equipment is also helping bring the Nadal touch to the young peoples' lives by supplying rackets, balls and mini tennis nets for the new programme.

Encouragement for electric vehicles

An electric vehicle (EV) recharging post with two charging points has been installed on Hastings' seafront. Hastings Borough Council in partnership with Elektromotive, the UK's leading provider of EV recharging posts are now able to offer free charging to users in Pelham Parade car park on Hastings' seafront. Part funded by Sussex Air Quality Partnership to promote low emissions and better air quality in Hastings, the EV post will be part of the Sussex wide EV network which will eventually be a network for the whole of Southern England. The use of electric cars is on the increase. Sales in the first three months of this year are double to those sold in the first three months of last year. Hastings wants to actively encourage the use of EV's in the town and so are very pleased to have these charging points in such an accessible location. And, in due course we intend to install more. EV owners can now charge their cars for free in the designated bays, although to park, charges will apply. The aim of the scheme is to provide ample charging points across the country to owners of electric cars.

Consultation to cut bus services

Almost certainly you will have heard by now of the significant loss of bus services proposed for the Hastings area. The proposal is currently out for consultation until September 28th, but as in similar exercises my concerns are around the media that are used as channels of communication, will they reach everyone who is affected ?, and do they clearly indicate the consequences to

those residents and businesses whose future will be affected ?. I fear not, and as such I will be addressing the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the various Resident's Associations, the Senior's Forum, disabled groups, and anyone else who will be affected including colleges, interfaith forums, the voluntary sector and various groups of small traders. This is not a negative reaction to change because I believe that there is another way that can address the needs of all the stakeholders that would be affected by these proposals. Quite simply why should we allow private operators to "cherry pick" the profitable bus routes, whilst the public purse picks up that which is deemed as commercially not viable. A Voluntary Partnership Agreement would ensure that it is private gain from the profitable routes that is used to subsidise those services that place a heavy burden on the county's budget. This can be made to work and the note below expresses my fears over this proposal if it is allowed to go forward without considering an alternative solution.

Let everyone have the opportunity to fully understand the implications of these draconian cuts to public transport, without understanding what value does consultation have ?. Please share your knowledge with the elderly or the infirm, who rely on public transport, but cannot always access sources of information especially the internet. One day public transport, trains and buses, will provide a real alternative to the motor car, its consequential and expensive problems of parking, and deliver a green and truly effective means of facilitating everyday life. But it will never become a service to humanity all the time it is driven only on the basis of profit, remember this should be a true service just like the NHS and the Post Office, services should be this nation's birthright not pawns in a political game of monopoly. Basically our arguments revolve around the fact that this consultation is based upon "these are the proposals for a new bus service" unaccompanied by the analysis of who, (resident or business) is affected. Many people will not be able to interpret the complexities of a network, many people won't even have access to the internet. Businesses need consulting, as do resident's associations, community hubs, friends of hospitals, every person who has come to rely upon a public transport service for their life style. Ordinary people, jobs, businesses, public servants, those who need a hospital, are just regarded as so much collateral damage on the way to delivering this unwanted and flawed philosophy of austerity. Our approach is to break down these barriers of denial that enable this administration in Lewes to keep reality at bay. I am deeply concerned that 60% of all, significant cuts affect Hastings, once again this is disproportionate. An economy in convalescence cannot stand more restrictions placed upon it. As a Town we cannot afford the loss of footfall that strives to keep our evening economy afloat. Housebound wives, mothers, and carers must not be denied

the opportunity of employment at weekends and evenings, this proposal is divisive as it clearly affects only the have nots, whilst those who have, once again escape unscathed. How about the Government's own flexible hours working directive, introduced just recently to recognise that not everyone can work around a day time job, or the convenience of the bus operators, this could strangle a progressive piece of legislation at birth. Other authorities are considering effective partnership working, why can't East Sussex (the Newcastle on Tyne case study is available). This is the one way sustainability will work, ESCC's proposal is just cut and slash, fares go up.....next round of cut and slash and further fare increases.....until there is no effective public transport scheme left. A strategic solution is desperately needed that puts people first.

Empty homes

Hastings Borough Council is taking further action on long term empty homes. It agreed at its Cabinet meeting earlier in the month to consider using its compulsory purchase order ('CPO') powers on 27 privately owned empty properties in the town. The empty homes CPO programme is an important part of our strategy for bringing long term empty homes back into use. It supports our vision of making Hastings a place with a decent home for everybody, it increases the availability of good quality accommodation to buy or rent, it brings empty homes back into use, it reduces eyesores, as some of the empty properties look almost derelict, and it helps reduce antisocial behaviour associated with empty buildings, including rubbish dumping, vandalism, arson, and drug taking. It also demonstrates to owners of empty homes that it is not acceptable to leave homes empty for unreasonable amounts of time.

We use it only where we have to, when other approaches have failed, but this rigorous action does work. We started this programme in 2010, and since then - and before this month's decision was made - some 42 homes have had action taken against them, and these properties have now been, or are being, occupied, which has to be good for everybody. I know that our policy is working, and I hope that owners of these empty properties are now getting our message that we will take action if you don't, and the whole community will benefit.

Tec 66 and the Cluster Industries

The dates and the venue for Tec 66 2014 are both in place and confirmed as Monday October 27th at SCCH, with a day on October 24th

allocated to Maggie Aderin-Pocock for work with our young people. My main task at the moment is to set up Tec 66 as a brand that represents all of the industries involved in the East Sussex High Vacuum cluster together with all of the supporting industries within the value chain. I have put together a series of questions that need answering to set up and legalise the organisation, and I have been receiving the necessary advice from Philip Baker the deputy Chief Executive at ESCC. Such a brand will allow a single stall to be set up at the appropriate exhibitions anywhere in the world, and represent both singularly and collectively all of the members who financially or logistically cannot themselves be present. Such a brand will also help to identify this area with its High Vac cluster, it will help to market Hastings, encourage inward investment into the area, and hopefully attract tenants to the new industrial sites at Queensway and at the Link Road. I have now been asked to help set up a viticulture (and vinification) cluster in the more rural areas of East Sussex using the model that I have previously developed. It would appear to be a good project, as viticulture employs upwards of thirty times more people per acre than does the equivalent use of the land for arable or live stock farming. It also exists within a value chain that stretches either side of the actual task of growing and harvesting of grapes.

Local Church Wins Sussex Heritage Trust Award

Hastings Borough Council has been awarded a prestigious Sussex Heritage Trust Award for the restoration of Old St Helens Church in Ore. The award under the Public and Community Award category is in recognition of the work to restore the ruined remains of the church and provide facilities for the community, educational use and public viewing. The Church is an ancient scheduled monument with parts dating back to just after the Battle of Hastings. The restoration project was funded two years ago largely through a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, alongside a grant from English Heritage with additional funding from Hastings Borough Council and other local benefactors. The council took on the care of the church and churchyard after the completion of the conservation and worked closely with the Friends of Old St Helen's Church and Friary Gardeners to ensure its future.

Receiving this award is great news for the monument, one of the oldest and most historically significant buildings in Hastings, and a well deserved reward for all those that have been involved in the conservation and the ongoing care and maintenance. We must thank all the volunteers that

continue to give their time to retain this magnificent piece of history in our town.

Easier Way to Pay for Parking

Hastings Borough Council has installed new machines at Pelham Place and Rock a Nore car parks that accept debit card payments as well as cash for parking. These machines, funded by the Foreshore Trust, will take the hassle out of needing cash to park in our long stay car parks on the seafront. Fewer and fewer people carry cash these days so being able to pay by debit card brings the payment system right up to date and is so much more convenient for residents and visitors to the town. Hopefully this will prevent local traders from continually being pestered for change, and this also represents the first move in exploring the usage of mobile phones in the booking of parking time.

For information about parking in Hastings visit www.hastings.gov.uk

Local Issues

The Classroom on the Coast at the Stade Open Space, Hastings is now complete putting the final piece of the Stade development firmly in place. The Classroom on the Coast and the newly completed seafood training kitchen, initiatives funded by Hastings Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) through the European Fisheries Fund, will offer a programme of educational classes for local people and visitors to the town. Our aim with the kitchen is to provide short courses and classes on sustainable fish and fishing and how to shop, prepare and cook local fish with local and visiting celebrity chefs. We hope that the Classroom will become a show-case for the local fleet and their catch, a centre for fishing industry training for the local area and a place to learn about marine and shore environments, coastal ecology, traditional fishing skills such as net making and repair and more. The kitchen was put to excellent use during the recent Midsummer Fish Fest and we will build on this to provide first class learning facilities for the people of Hastings.

For more information about the Classroom on the Coast and the training kitchen visit www.hastingsflag.org.

More about buses

I thought that you would be interested in hearing a bit more from one of our actual meetings that are now underway across the Town.

During the last week of the month, in the company of Sarah Owen and Cllr Andy Batsford I addressed a large "congregation" gathered at Christ Church Blacklands, in response to the consultation on proposed cuts to the bus service in the Hastings' area.

Such a significant gathering surely indicated the broad spectrum of the community affected by this draconian proposal, and their deep rooted concerns towards its consequences. I learnt of the many different ways in which the loss of a bus service will affect individuals within a community that has a strong bias towards the elderly. It is a community that doesn't boast a high private car ownership, and one that seeks only the flexibility to be connected by public transport with the Town Centre and their local hospital, just the essentials of life.

How can they be denied so little? especially when there is another way of delivering the outcomes that ESCC seek. Let them look towards a working partnership with the bus operators where "cherry picking" of only the profitable routes is discounted in favour of an operation that accepts that no company has an inalienable right to only good business. The rough and the smooth must be taken together, and any financial burden shared between the public and the private purses, in parallel with routes being analysed to understand if there is a better way of organising the network, whilst the essential service is maintained.

Our intention is to build a case against these proposals, where every aspect of the implications for the general public is considered, the views of every individual who comes forward with the loss that they will suffer, and the implications for each business, service, and institution, together with their employees will be placed before ESCC. The arguments for these proposals are based in economics, therefore I would ask every one whose business or life will suffer some form of financial loss as a consequence of these cuts to let me know such that I can put together an economic case in response. This will show the iniquity of expecting a town, whose own financial health, which can most charitably be described as being in economic convalescence, to absorb the needless government driven cuts that could be found in another direction. I would ask you all to respond to the ESCC consultation form found at <https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/economy-transport-environment/organisationsbuschanges> Alternatively sign one of our petitions. Please let me know if you are struggling with the consultation, as I have made the point to ESCC in the council chamber that such a document is meaningless

without an explanation regarding the consequences to both resident and business. It is also disproportionate in its effect upon Hastings with 60% of the most damaging cuts involving buses that serve this Town. And remember there is another way, it is called a true working partnership, and as I write it is being explored in other towns in the UK faced with a similar problem.....why not Hastings !!

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

