

WARD REPORT OLD HASTINGS - APRIL 2015

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General Issues



EASTER 2016 Opening Date for New Pier

Hastings Pier is to open for business Monday 21st. March 2016, the start of the Easter holidays, as works complete later this year, “we're really disappointed not to be opening earlier but the storms in February 2014 caused a significant amount of additional damage and pushed back the works three months or more; almost all the work will be finished this year but not completed in time to open the pier during any of the traditional seaside trading months”, said CEO of the Hastings Pier Charity, Simon Opie. The charity has ruled out opening the pier in the winter.

Completion is expected around October this year after storm delays to the build schedule, “that storm, the same one that ripped the railway up in Dawlish, created big problems for us and meant us rethinking the demolition of the old ballroom,” said Opie. A floating barge became necessary as the

storm damage made the pier too dangerous to be used as the demolition platform. “The additional costs weren’t a problem as we’d insured the structure, but the wait time for the barge and the extra work added to the build schedule and we just haven’t been able to catch up.”

But people will get the chance to get on the pier well before next March; Christmas pop-up attractions are planned, including a Christmas fair and possibly a skating rink, as Opie is keen to get the pier being used as soon as possible. “Its vital the pier is financially viable; all the money raised paid for the restoration but once finished the pier must pay its way. And most importantly, its a pier for Hastings, its a local attraction and a local asset for townspeople and visitors alike.”

The total renovation costs will exceed £14m, the lion’s share a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund of £11.4m whilst over 3,000 people, the majority local to the area bought community shares in the company that will own and operate the pier, “ which ensures the pier passes to local, and involved, ownership, a vital step in securing its future,” said Opie.

Kevin Boorman, Head of Marketing at Hastings Borough Council commented, “2016 was always going to be a big year for Hastings, this now gives residents and visitors alike another chance to celebrate (2016 will be 950th. anniversary of the Battle of Hastings). There is massive interest in the pier, and I, along with many other people, look forward to 21st March 2016, a date that is firmly in my diary.”

Full details of the pop-up Christmas attractions, and other opportunities for locals and groups to visit the pier before full opening, will be available September / October this year.

Construction Update

As the pier progresses towards a position where it can be opened to the public, not completed as that is an iterative process, the following is the professional view of the Pier Trust.

Progress in the past month has been good, helped by the spell of clement weather. The six new piles for the Visitor Centre have been installed and trimmed to the required level. Each pile is a 23 metres long, 610mm diameter steel tube filled with steel reinforcement and concrete. Between them, they will support the load of the 600 tonne building. We are now forming the steelwork structure on the piles

which will complete the foundation. Two cranes are being used to aid the construction process. The larger (7.5 tonne) will lift the steel sections whilst the smaller will lift a 'man rider' which will carry the steel erectors out so that they can fix the steelwork into place. The steelwork is high grade, galvanised with fully bolted connections to form the trusses. These trusses are then linked together and braced to form a rigid structure. A concrete slab will be cast at deck level to form the base for the new "cross laminated timber" panelled building.

Elsewhere on the Pier we have continued with the replacement of trusses and deck beams and laying the new Ekki timber decking. We have completed to the end of the central section of the Pier and are now working on the Pier Head. When we have finished the restoration work we will have replaced approximately 350 trusses and 820 deck beams, this is around 3,000 tonnes of new steel. Work on the old Pavilion continues. The roof and construction of the pods is complete and we are now forming the walls and installing the windows and sliding doors. Underneath the Pier we will have a suspended walkway which will provide access not only to install the services and but also for the future maintenance, the first section having now been built.

Portrait of a Pier

Project Art Works (PAW) and Hastings Pier Charity Update

HPC commissioned PAW to make a rich and dynamic film that describes the Pier and its transition, through the sensory investigations of PAW's Tuesday Studio group. The majority of the participants are non-verbal but nevertheless have expansive means of communicating their experience through gesture, sound, behaviour and facial expression. As a direct response to a heightened sensitivity within the group to materials, space, light and the environment, their engagement with the Pier has been explored in a number of filmed investigations. Facilitated by artists and support workers who they know and trust, the edited films explore the emotional, physical and perceptual impact of the Pier in flux on the group.

Alongside more formal filmed investigations on the Pier, The Tuesday Studio group has based itself at the Pier Hub at regular intervals across the year, investigating the pier surroundings from the promenade and beach. These more informal investigations have been documented by the artists and participants as part of the film-making process, as well as being a catalyst for physical works. Some of these works, videos and

images created by the Tuesday Studios will be used to create an exhibition at the Hub in the summer.

Thanks to the brilliant facilitation of the Pier visits by David Spooner, as well as the commitment of Jo McLaughlan and Bea Rapley at the HPC Hub, the project has been a fantastic opportunity for the Tuesday Studio participants to be involved and visible in a public process as well as having exciting backstage access to the pier during its development. Through the film and installation, the work seeks to provide a poetic insight into the issues around accessibility and what that means both physically and perceptually for people with complex support needs. The last filmed investigation will be backstage on the pier after completion and the finished film is set to be shown at the opening ceremony for the Pier.

The Council and University of Brighton Sign Collaboration Memorandum

Hastings Borough Council and the University of Brighton, which has a campus in the town, are collaborating on economic and social regeneration within Hastings and St Leonards after signing a Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC). By joining forces with the University of Brighton and signing the MoC we pledge to build on our existing strong relationships to offer those who live, work, visit and study in the town the best experiences. This collaboration aims to open up a wide range of initiatives for information and knowledge sharing such as identifying how both physical and human resources can be best used to promote joint working, identifying and supporting sectors that will create jobs and provide sustainable economic growth, to improve the student experience and establish Hastings as a university town that can support and benefit from student population growth and to evaluate and secure funding for projects and new initiatives.

There will be a number of joint areas of collaboration including low carbon economy, culture and community-led regeneration, fisheries and the Hastings Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) legacy, housing and urban development, the visitor economy, business engagement, support and inward investment. These joint areas will also include academies and improving educational achievement for young people

and opportunities to improve the skills and employability of university students and graduates. We welcome this opportunity and look forward to working with the University of Brighton to benefit our town and all who live, work and study in it.

Professor Julian Crampton, the University of Brighton's Vice-Chancellor, said: "The University's campus in Hastings is expanding and we and the Borough Council have enjoyed working together on projects of mutual interest for many years. We both enjoy similar aims and beliefs when it comes to involvement in the community and this memorandum seals this excellent relationship."

Local Car Dealership Is Driving Force Behind Mayor

One important aspect of our Town that I don't often comment upon is the Mayoralty. As a Town we have been blessed with a long line of hardworking councillors who have executed this time consuming position to the advantage of Hastings since 1588. Our latest team of Cllr Bruce Dowling and his deputy Cllr Judy Rogers continue to maintain that long line of excellence. These excellent holders of this ancient office are also bound by the same chains of austerity that continue to shackle our Town, and they also have made their contribution.

Local car dealership Birchwood Group is sponsoring the Mayoral Car in Hastings, saving the local authority money by providing the vehicle free of charge. The Mayor of Hastings, Cllr Bruce Dowling, explained :- "We are having to look at all of our costs very carefully, as every penny really does count. We were therefore delighted when the Birchwood Group offered us a new Kia Carens to replace our existing car, which is over three years old. This car will be seen widely not just around Hastings but further afield too, as not only will I be driving it but other colleagues will too. And although it has a standard number plate now, we are in the process of transferring our distinctive DY1066 registration to it, so we will be even more recognisable!"

Group Operations Director of Birchwood Group Pete Parker said : "We

were honoured to be given the opportunity of supplying the Mayor's official car. We have been established in the Hastings area for many years and have been actively working with the council on a number of initiatives. We firmly believe the council's partnership approach to working with local business offers us the ideal conditions within which to successfully trade and expand our operations. The Kia Brand has proved hugely popular so we are sure the Mayor will be delighted with the Kia Carens as it combines stylish design with economy and practicality. We look forward to a working with the council again in the future."

All That Glitters...

The Mayor of Hastings has a new mayoral chain, but only the sharpest-eyed will spot the difference! The Mayor, Cllr Bruce Dowling, explained :- "Our mayoral chain is historic, with the chain itself believed to be over two hundred years old, and the badge over 150 years old. It is also valuable, as it contains a lot of gold. We therefore felt that, for a number of reasons, a replica would be better. This was commissioned from local company JCF Jewellery in Hastings old town, who have done a remarkable job. I certainly feel much more comfortable wearing the replica chain, which looks just as good as the original."

Council Agrees Selective Licensing Scheme

Hastings Borough Council agreed to introduce a selective licensing scheme for privately rented homes in Hastings at its Cabinet meeting last night (Monday 30th March). It is the first selective licensing scheme for privately rented homes in Sussex, and the first on its scale in the whole of the south east. The scheme will cover all privately rented homes in seven of the town's wards :- Braybrooke, Castle, Central St Leonards, Gensing, Old Hastings, Ore, and Tressell. Hastings has a large and expanding private rented sector that is almost double the national average, and covers nearly a third of all homes, nearly 12 000 households, in the town. Ten of our 16 wards have levels of private

renting above both the regional and national averages. We agreed that seven wards should be designated for selective licensing as a result of a comprehensive consultation exercise, and a review of the evidence produced. This has shown that living conditions and management are often well below standard in the private rented sector. There is also evidence to suggest that there is persistent and significant anti-social behaviour from some households within the private rented sector, which is affecting other residents and local communities. The selective licensing scheme will help solve these problems and improve conditions for tenants and local communities. It will help create a private rental sector that as a minimum provides basic standards of condition, management and tenancy arrangements, and will require landlords to help tackle anti-social behaviour from their tenants. We already license many activities, from the sale of alcohol, to late night takeaways, and to taxis, and people know that they can trust things that have been licensed. The conditions where people live are extremely important, so surely it is only right that we license these too. The cost of a licence can be as little as 60p/week, which I am sure every good landlord is a price worth paying for their, and their tenants', peace of mind. We are determined to improve the quality of life of our residents, and we believe this scheme is an important step forward in helping us achieve that.

White Rock Baths

Work has now begun on converting the White Rock Baths into a skateboard and BMX arena. The basic work to make the structure useable is being funded by Hastings Borough Council, The Foreshore Trust, and East Sussex County Council, with The Source (the local company who will be running it) paying for it to be fitted out. The old floor of the ice skating rink will be removed, allowing the skateboard ramps to be placed on the floor of the old swimming pool. As they're indoors, they can be made of plywood rather than concrete, which is more forgiving when you fall off, and will support skaters trying out more difficult moves. The old lounge area will become a BMX shop, and when fully stocked will be the largest in the

UK. The old training pool at the eastern end (which was used as a skate park briefly in the 1990s, and before that as pool where thousands of local schoolchildren first learnt to swim), will very appropriately become a beginners' area, with easier ramps and other learning facilities. There will also be a cafe, and extensive viewing areas. The Source have already been in touch with some of the world's leading BMX and skateboard champions, and have received a very positive response from them about appearing at Hastings, which will be one of the biggest indoor skateboard arenas in Europe. These kind of people do attract very large audiences from far afield, so will bring many new people to Hastings. The Source are hoping to open the new arena before Christmas.

2016 Update on the planned celebrations of the 950th anniversary

Work on the programme of celebratory events for the 2016 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings is well underway, with the programme beginning to take place - there will be a longer programme through the year featuring mostly local artists and performers, plus some more internationally recognised performances during the couple of weeks or so leading up to the anniversary. Details of the programme will be released in due course, but as a taster, one of the 'headlines' is likely to be Chris Levine. His installation will involve large-scale laser projections across the town, of the kind he's done at the Eden Project in Cornwall, which you can see here:

<http://chrislevine.com/collaborations/eden-project/>

Happy 5th Birthday Hastings Street Pastors

The Celebration takes place on Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st May with Revd Les Isaac OBE founder of the International Movement of Street Pastors. On Sunday 31st May Hastings Street Pastors are joining with Wellington Square Baptist Church to hold a Civic Service at 3pm at Wellington Square Baptist Church where the Speaker will be Revd Les Isaac OBE. As a key part of the night economy of our town, we would love you join us for this Service, where we are gathering as Street Pastors and local Christians to pray for and bless those who give so much to our town: the Mayor, Councillors, Leadership of the town, those in education, health, emergency services, and different areas of

society.

On the Saturday night before this, (30th), Hastings Street Pastors are holding a Service of Thanksgiving at 7pm at Holy Trinity Church, Robertson Street, when the Revd Les Isaac OBE will be our speaker, followed by a Street Party outside His Place Church (Robertson Street) at 8.30pm to celebrate the 5th Birthday of the Hastings Street Pastors. There will be a live band (subject to relevant permissions being granted) and refreshments. You and your loved ones are most welcome to join us in this as well. We look forward to seeing you over the May Bank Holiday weekend.

Swan House, Hastings is a Finalist in the 2015 Visit England Awards for Excellence

Swan House, Hastings has been named as a finalist in the Best Bed & Breakfast Award category of the prestigious Visit England Awards for Excellence 2015. As a finalist Swan House now goes forward to the glittering Awards Ceremony which is being held on Monday 11 May 2015 at the Sage Gateshead. The Awards will take place in the North East for the first time, coinciding with an exciting year that also sees Rugby World Cup 2015 coming to Newcastle. The Visit England Awards attracted a total of 345 applications. Swan House, Hastings will have to wait until the Awards Ceremony to find out which award they will receive. All finalists are guaranteed to receive a Gold, Silver, Bronze or Highly Commended Award.

James Berresford, Chief Executive of Visit England said: "It's been another successful year for our Excellence Awards as we've received hundreds of applications of an extremely high standard. That's why all the finalists should be incredibly proud that they've been short-listed against such tough competition. I'd like to congratulate all the finalists who now represent the top five in their category in England and wish them all the very best of luck on Awards night at the Sage Centre in Gateshead a spectacular venue to celebrate the industry's best."

Speaking on behalf of Swan House, Brendan McDonagh said "All the

Swan House team are delighted to learn that we are shortlisted for the Visit England best bed and breakfast award category. To come this far is a real achievement, and as a national finalist, we are proud to be representing Hastings and 1066 Country."

The Borough Council recognise this news as excellent for Hastings. Brendan and his team have built Swan House into really first class accommodation, and have been at the forefront of improving our image. Only recently we were described in a national newspaper as being 'the last word in cool', and the contribution of people like Brendan and his colleagues has been instrumental in helping us to achieve this recognition.

Development Management Plan

I thought that it would be of interest to bring you up to date on the latest status of the Development Management Plan, together with the thinking of HBC and the other agencies affected.

The consultation period on the inspector's main modifications has now finished, and all the relevant paperwork, responses, reports etc have gone off to the inspector, who will now decide whether he wants to stick with his modifications, or withdraw any of them. He could decide to modify his modifications (!), in which case there would be yet another period of consultation, but he seems quite keen to get the plan finished off. We'll expect his report in the next month or so, after which the plan will (hopefully) go to full council for adoption.

The landowners, as expected, put in an objection to the inclusion of the Victoria Avenue site in the Speckled Wood open space, but there were also of course plenty of supporting comments for this proposal, including from the council. We only objected to one of the inspector's modifications, that being the removal of Harrow Lane from the plan as a housing site. That one is of course owned by HBC, and is one of our larger sites (around 140 homes). So we've sent in a very detailed

response, arguing why the site is no longer needed as playing fields, and why the sustainability of the plan could be threatened (in terms of our ability to provide enough new homes) if the site were removed. Sport England (somewhat unhelpfully) put in a response supporting the removal of Harrow Lane from the plan, but had made no comment on anything in the plan previously, at any time during the two years of various consultations. They also objected to Grove School being used for housing, but were too late on that as the inspector has already accepted that proposal.

If the inspector does decide to stick with his modification on Harrow Lane, it's not a huge disaster though, as the site could be brought back in at a later stage through a review of the plan, if insufficient housing is being delivered (which will almost certainly be the case).

When the plan is adopted, we will need, amongst other things, a strategy for dealing with Speckled Wood. The Cabinet agreed to make it a Local Nature Reserve after the plan has been adopted, and there will need to be some work on helping a local trust (likely to be Ore Community Land Trust) acquire the land, which will still be in private ownership. A few bits of the land are in council ownership, so would be transferred to the local trust. The council doesn't have the resources to acquire or manage the land, but we will need to make sure some kind of a 'responsible body' is looking after it, and that it becomes a well-managed, useful open space, rather than just abandoned land.

Hastings Castle

Following a visit to Heritage Lottery by our Lead Member, we have decided to bid for a development grant, to enable us to develop a full, major application for the castle during the next year or so. This will hopefully enable the processes of community involvement as part of the 2016 celebrations. We may need to move on from a project that's just about the castle, and think more like Nottingham Castle did for their successful £14m bid for a sort of 'Robin Hood experience'. HLF were interested in the idea of using the caves as part of the overall

project, to tell a story of 1066 as the birthplace of English culture, and how our culture has been shaped by waves of immigration over the centuries since then. We also have a pretty unusual collection of heritage buildings in Hastings, spanning an almost continuous period from 1066 up to the present, with some good examples of iconic architecture: mediaeval buildings in the Old Town, Tudor architecture, eighteenth century terraces, the quirky pastiche of Burton St Leonards, 1930s modernism, 21st century award-winning architecture, and more - all of which could be used as part of a 'history of English culture' tour, starting at 1066 and the castle.

These are just starting ideas of course, but they seemed to inspire HLF!

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