

WARD REPORT OLD HASTINGS - JULY 2015
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or 445540)

General Issues



Construction update:

The complex structure of diagonal and horizontal bracing to support the Visitor Centre steelwork is being completed. These struts generally weigh over one tonne each and have to be held in place by the crane whilst a steel worker, in a basket from another crane is lowered down to fix the bolts to the clamps. The clamps in turn are bolted to the six steel/concrete piles which ultimately carry the 600 tonne load of the building.

The next operation will be the forming of the reinforced concrete slab. Constructing the slab will be a complex operation as firstly a troughed steel deck is laid on the steelwork. Then steel bar reinforcement is fixed in place to provide the tensile strength and to tie the slab to the existing Pier steelwork. Finally the concrete. As the Pier is not strong enough to take the weight of a concrete lorry, we will have to pump the concrete from the loading bay on the

Promenade. As you can imagine, this is a difficult operation with well over 100 tonnes of concrete having to be pumped nearly 200 metres along the Pier in one continuous operation. The slab should be completed by mid-July. We will then be ready for the pre-fabricated timber building that will be erected on top to form the Visitor Centre. The replacement of the steelwork to the Parade Extension, Central Access sections of the Pier is now complete leaving only the Pier Head.

We now have access to the end of the Pier and are able to lift the remaining 1000sq metres of old deck boarding. The old deck board will all be recycled either to be made into furniture for the Pier or to be used as cladding for part of the Visitor Centre.

The main structure of the Pavilion is now complete (you will note that the windows aren't permanently blue). The internal fit out of the bar and restaurant will start shortly

Schools update

We have been very busy with our exciting schools programme this summer. Photography and poetry theme days were very successful with specialists coming in to work with us.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the staff of the White Rock Theatre for kindly offering us additional space to work in and help us set up for these days. We would also like to thank our brilliant volunteers – Gill, Jon, Emma, Liz, Graham, Marilyn – we couldn't do it without you!

Over 120 KS1 children found out about the Pier through making tiles and using clay while our Pier Play workshops enabled KS1 children to find out some more about the history and rebuilding of the Pier through exploratory play activities such as dressing up inspired by photographs from the digital memory, drawings of the Pier using chalk and charcoal (burnt Pier!) creating a clay souvenir and collaging fish.

Here are some of the many positive comments we have received from teachers –

A very profitable day and one which will have benefitted all the children in

their writing back at school. I really look forward to taking more children on visits to the Pier. Very engaging. Promoting local interest and enjoyment of poetry. The poetry performance was outstanding. Highly recommended all round.

All activities were practical and engaging for the children. They were all focused. A great educational day which was enjoyed by teachers and pupils. Fantastic – and we'll be back!

Lots of accessible hands on activities but with a good level of challenge. Fast paced – really worked well for my class.

We will be offering further schools workshops and theme days from April 2016 when the Pier reopens and hope to involve all local schools in activities leading up to the Pier reopening – Keep a look out on our website learning page for details!

Some more construction pictures



Council Disappointed at Further Slowing of Trains

Hastings Borough Council has written to train operating company Southeastern to express its disappointment that trains between London and Hastings are to get even slower.

Southeastern is currently consulting on its August 2016 timetable, which sees London Bridge reopening to trains going to/from Charing Cross again, but it appears that the hourly off-peak fast trains from Charing Cross to Hastings, and some rush hour services, will get even slower.

Although the basic timetable appears untouched, we are disappointed to see that the 'fast' journeys are to be even less fast, with an extra minute being added to the standard off-peak times. Some of us who can remember the pre-1986 diesels with their 75 mph top speed know they used to do the journey in a straight 90 minutes, the new electric trains, which currently take 93 minutes on the fast services, will take 94 minutes from August 2016, and this after we have been campaigning for faster journeys, not slower ones.

The peak journey times have also increased, for example the 1717 from Charing Cross to Hastings will now leave earlier, at 1714, but will still arrive here at the same time, at 1855. Even the new late afternoon fast train, introduced with great fanfare only this year, and which currently takes 90 minutes, has had four minutes added to its journey time, so will take 94 minutes from 2016.

We would hope that these journey time increases are only being applied whilst the London Bridge work is being completed, but suspect that is not the case. Given the whole point of that work is to segregate the Thames link trains and try and simplify the track work, and increase capacity on the south eastern side of the station, we don't understand what has led to these further journey time increases.

Although it might seem petty complaining about odd minutes, they do add up, and at a time when Network Rail is investing considerable sums of money to improve journey times elsewhere – and we and our partners are investing

significant sums ourselves to improve Hastings – it really is very disappointing indeed that ‘our’ fast trains are again being slowed down.

We therefore urge South Eastern to look at the Hastings line timetable again to see if the same end to end times as we currently enjoy can at least be maintained, if not reduced :- journey time increases are not acceptable.

Stade Saturdays Reaches New Heights...

Stade Saturdays continued its 2015 summer season earlier this month with two performances of ‘Planetary’, on the Stade open space in Hastings old town.

Planetary is three strangers unlocking the secrets of a brand new piece of aerial theatre equipment.

They arrive with an invitation to solve a giant puzzle, a spinning planet forged from 80 metres of steel pipe. There’s one prize and they want it with every bone in their bodies...but none of them have a clue how to get it!

They solve the problem by spinning, listening, learning, jamming, flying, catching, and probably falling. They’ll hopefully discover its secrets and may be even something about themselves as they fight to be top dog in this tale of aerial daredevil mayhem.

There were two separate performances , and, of course, they were completely free, so please don't miss any of the future shows.

Stade Saturdays continue throughout the summer, every Saturday evening on the Stade open space in Hastings Old Town.

‘Bracken Bruising’ Underway In Hastings Country Park

Bracken bruising is now underway in Hastings Country Park, as Hastings Borough Council uses heavy forestry horses to help manage the threatened habitat and declining wildlife at the nature reserve.

Frankie Woodgate and her forestry horses, 13 year old ‘Yser’ and 9 year old ‘Tobias’ are working in Warren Glen. They spend most of the year extracting

timber from woods around Sussex and Kent but spend the summer rolling bracken.

Using working horses to pull heavy rollers to 'bash' and 'bruise' the bracken is an effective, traditional and low impact way of reducing the growth of bracken in hard to reach areas and avoids the use of chemicals.

It was a tremendous sight to see, and I suspect that few people will have ever seen anything like this before, it was great to see these heavy forestry horses under the careful supervision of Frankie.

Because of the heat earlier this month, which reached over 30C during the afternoons, they started work around 05;00 am so that they avoided the higher temperatures later in the day.

We also have the Exmoor ponies in the same area and have just taken delivery of some rare breed British White cattle to help with our management of the area. There has never been a better time to visit our Country Park.

Crowns and Shillings

A book detailing the history of the May Queen in Hastings, 'Crowns and Shillings' has just been published by Barry and Helen Jones.

Barry is a real sweep, and so vital to a real May Queen event, and has attended the May Queen crowning for twenty years. He has organised it with his wife Helen for the last five.

Barry said :- "The May Queen ceremony is a long-standing tradition in Hastings, but one which few people know about. I have been involved with the event for 20 years now and thought it time to do some research. There was a lot of interest in what I was doing, so I thought it would be nice to publish it.

I was very pleased with the reception we got at the book launch at the Tourist information Centre last Saturday."

Hastings Borough Council has been involved with this event since it started in 1934, and I am very pleased that we have been able to support this event for

over more than 80 years. It is a really interesting book, and copies can still be bought at the Hastings Information Centre for £9.99.

Hastings, Famously Creative

A competition to find an outstanding piece of work has been won by a year 6 student from All Saints CE Junior Academy in Hastings.

Every year 6 student in the town, who leaves their primary schools this summer, has been busy doing a piece of work that they will take with them to their secondary schools in the autumn.

The work involves English, maths and art, and is on the theme of 'Voyages'. Hastings Borough Council has worked in partnership with the Education Futures Trust to employ local artist, Ed Boxall, to work in every primary school in Hastings.

Each of the secondary schools picked the ten best pieces of work from their year 6 pupils, and a panel of judges then picked their favourite pictures from these, at the judging held at Ark Helenswood School last Friday (3rd July). The judging panel included the Mayor of Hastings; Amber Rudd, MP; Sheena Campbell, content editor of the Hastings Observer; Carole Dixon, chief executive of the Education Futures Trust; Mollie Vint, last year's winner; and Kevin Boorman, marketing manager at Hastings Borough Council.

The panel spent some time on their deliberations, and finally voted Ellie Fry, of All Saints, the winner, with Frankie Ann Parish, of Robsack Academy, the runner-up. Both will now be invited to have tea with the Mayor of Hastings in his parlour in the town hall.

We have been pleased to support this project as part of our 'Famously Hastings' initiative. Last year the students produced some fantastic pieces of work, and we were pleased to be able to show everyone, nearly 1,000 in all, at our Seafood & Wine Festival in September.

This year's work has been quite brilliant too :- famously classy, you might say!

All of the work is going to be bound into massive books, which will be on display at the Jerwood Gallery over the Seafood & Wine during the weekend of 19th and 20th September.”

Artist Ed Boxall said :- “I really enjoy this work, especially as I had already started to explore the theme of ‘voyages’ myself. It’s fantastic to go into so many classrooms and work with so many young people. And their enthusiasm is great.”

Carole Dixon, Chief Executive of the Education Futures Trust, added: “This is an inspirational project, and the students produced some exceptional work this year. It really was very difficult indeed trying to choose a winner.

I am very excited that all the work is going to be on display in the Jerwood Gallery.

I’m very grateful to Hastings Borough Council for sponsoring this project, to Ed Boxall for his invaluable contribution in the classrooms, to the judges for giving up their time and to the schools and their students for their enthusiasm in supporting this fantastic initiative.”

Council and NHS to Work Together for Healthy Hastings

Hastings Borough Council is supporting an initiative to work with the NHS to help reduce health inequalities in Hastings.

At its meeting on Monday (6 July) members of the council’s Cabinet voted unanimously to actively support Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group’s (CCG) Healthy Hastings and Rother programme, aimed at improving health and wellbeing locally and addressing long-standing problems of relative poor health in the borough.

It is generally recognised as terrible that there are such health inequalities in Hastings. The life expectancy of men within the town can vary by up to eleven years, simply because of where they live, while life expectancy of women is also below the national average.

The seven most deprived wards in the whole of East Sussex are all in Hastings, and, sadly, this has a real impact on people’s health. Compared to England,

Hastings residents have significantly worse life expectancy at birth, and many lifestyle factors are worse, particularly smoking rates, levels of alcohol and substance misuse, and the risk of obesity related illnesses. There are high levels of many chronic diseases, relatively high rates of cancer and high rates of accidents, injuries and falls, and there is also high mental health need.

Quite simply we cannot allow this to continue, and I am very pleased that Cabinet colleagues tonight all voted to support the developing partnership between the council and Hastings and Rother CCG.

This work will cover a number of areas, including housing, preventing ill health, developing knowledge and skills in staff to promote health and wellbeing; to work with the most vulnerable groups; and to work with local communities to develop options for health and wellbeing centres in existing community venues.

I look forward to this work developing over the coming months and years and, most importantly, to improving the health of some of our most vulnerable and deprived communities.”

The CCG has invested an initial £5m in the Healthy Hastings and Rother programme. It sets out a blueprint for improving access to healthcare, developing better services for certain types of conditions and kick-starting programmes to encourage and enable local people to live healthier lives.

Dr Roger Elias, chair of the CCG, said: “Too many local people suffer poor health compared to other areas. The only way to achieve the changes we need here is to work together with partners, so we are delighted with the support demonstrated by Hastings Borough Council. There are many challenges, but we are determined to work side by side with local people and our partners to achieve real and lasting improvements to local health and wellbeing.”

Reducing Health Inequalities

The July cabinet meeting also considered a report on £600,000 the council has received from the Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a project on reducing health inequalities in Hastings.

Some of the morbidity and mortality statistics, and the contrasts between neighbouring areas, are quite shocking. Within Baird ward, for example, people living in the Pilot Field part of the ward can expect to live on average 12 years

longer than those living in the Broomgrove Estate part of the ward. Incidence of serious, life-limiting disease in the poorer parts of town is well above national averages. These poor health outcomes are related to different interlinking factors, including smoking, alcohol consumption, drug abuse, poor diet, lack of exercise, and poor housing.

The CCG-funded project, to be run by the council, will focus on the areas of town with the poorest health outcomes, and will include:

- ☒ looking at housing conditions and making improvements to poor housing, potentially making use of the council's new private sector housing licensing scheme, as well as reducing homelessness and rough sleeping (see more on this later);

- ☒ Promoting and encouraging lifestyle changes through exercise and fitness programmes, through 'social prescribing' (where doctors prescribe gym sessions rather than medicines);

- ☒ Targeted smoking reduction and healthy eating programmes;

- ☒ Tackling domestic violence;

- ☒ Establishing 'community health and well-being centres' in Hastings and Bexhill, which would focus on preventative healthcare rather than treatment of disease.

One important part of the project will also be monitoring and evaluation - a lot of money has been spent in the past on trying to encourage healthy lifestyles, but to little effect. It will be important to make sure the money is spent effectively, with actual improvements in health in the target communities. We would thank all of those who responded with suggestions as to what inequalities they felt should be addressed.

Rough Sleeping and the Street Community

There appears to have been an increase in levels of rough sleeping and begging in Hastings recently, but this is true of all tourist towns - Brighton and Canterbury in the south east region have been particularly affected. But there are different things going on, for different reasons. Beggars tend to be itinerant, moving from town to town according to where passers-by are most generous. They may be homeless or rough sleepers, but often aren't. There is also often a confusion between rough sleeping and homelessness - most homeless people aren't rough sleepers, and not all rough sleepers are homeless. Rough sleepers are often itinerant too, moving from town to town, often going into (albeit inadequate) accommodation in winter. In Hastings, we also have a street drinking community, of about 50 people. These are often the most difficult to help, having adopted lifestyles involving excessive drinking

and (increasingly) intoxication from 'legal highs'. They may be homeless, but usually have some kind of accommodation. Life expectancies in this group are very short, and deaths frequent.

These communities represent an interlocking, downward spiral. Many rough sleepers and beggars are not drug or alcohol users, and can be helped back into a healthy, settled life. But through contact with the street drinking community, they can be drawn into a more chaotic, drug and drink-fuelled lifestyle that leads almost always to an untimely death.

Hastings Council does fund and provide a lot of services to deal with these issues. The council pays the Seaview project locally for an outreach worker to work with and support members of the street community, the homeless people who sleep on the streets of Hastings. We have also provided funding to pilot a street outreach activities programme operating out of the Seaview Centre. The Council has also provided funding for a drug and alcohol outreach worker, which proved successful and is now funded by the Hastings & Rother Clinical Commissioning Group ('CCG'), part of the NHS. Members of the council's housing options team attend weekly multi agency drop in sessions at Seaview and are working with the CCG to provide additional support to members of the street community. And we are part of a Sussex-wide working group that is coordinating efforts to address rough sleeping across the county. Government funding has been obtained over the last three years to provide a rough sleepers outreach service and to improve joint working and information sharing across all statutory and voluntary organisations who seek to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. In 2014/15 the Council and partners assisted 64 single homeless people off the street and into suitable accommodation.

While it's good that local people want to help homeless people and rough sleepers, any such efforts ought to be properly co-ordinated with the agencies already working in this area, and who have experience of how best to help. The risks of introducing rough sleepers to street drinking and destructive lifestyles are very real, and could be disastrous, and could be a by-product of well-meaning volunteers not understanding the nature of the different communities they're working with.

Algal Bloom Identified in Park's Reservoir

Hastings Borough Council has been in consultation with the Environment Agency today as a bloom of Blue-green Algae has been identified on Harmers Reservoir in the town's award winning Alexandra Park. Algal blooms are a

natural occurrence when temperatures are high and oxygen levels low in waters. It's possible the bloom may remain all summer and it's also feasible it could disappear quickly when the temperature drops and there is an increase in water moving through the reservoir due to rain.

Blue Green Algae can sometimes produce a toxic substance that can affect humans and animals, including dogs, should they come into contact with it. In consultation with the Environment Agency, we have taken the precautionary measure of closing access to Harmers Reservoir until further notice and residents are advised to keep their dogs away from the water. Brown algae is also currently present in the boating lake at the park and whilst it's unsightly, it's not toxic. This will also disappear of its own accord once the environmental conditions change and is of no danger to dogs and other animals.

We will continue to monitor the reservoir and other water bodies in the park and will seek regular guidance from the Environment Agency.”

Alexandra Park is a Grade II Park of Historic Interest and has regularly been the recipient of the prestigious Green Flag Award. This national award, handed out by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, recognises and rewards the best parks and green spaces across the country.

Pupils Get Creative in Business

90 pupils from 4 schools across Hastings and Rother recently had the opportunity to spend half a day with a variety of local creative businesses, finding out about their sector and taking part in practical challenges set by the businesses themselves.

Organised by Culture Shift and funded by Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council, The Creative Café took place at the White Rock Theatre on 02 July, with the aim of connecting young people with business professionals based locally to inspire the pupils' future career choices.

Each participating business had the opportunity to tell the pupils what their job involved and what it was like day-to-day, followed by practical challenges such as designing a chair, designing a structure on a cliff, editing a magazine article, learning how to document events and how to take photographs in different

locations Businesses involved included John Cole photographer, Oaten Architects, Maggie Alderson fashion editor and writer, Otti Albietz musician, Christine Shepherd The Kula furniture, Susan Ward curator at Hastings Museum, Catherine Donaldson film maker, Nikki Leach education programmer at the White Rock Theatre, Nathan Lauder graphic designer and Andrew Harries theatre director. We are very grateful to all these businesses for volunteering their time to inspire the pupils.

Feedback from pupils and the businesses involved was very positive. The businesses were impressed with how quickly pupils got involved with the challenges, the skills they brought to them and their enthusiasm for finding out about the different roles in the sector. The young people enjoyed meeting different local businesses and being able to engage with them informally in a dynamic and fun way.

Enabling young people to have an understanding and experience of different businesses is important to us all and we will continue to work in partnership with Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council to support Culture Shift with this project.

The next Creative Café is planned for October, if you are a tourism, hospitality or catering business and are interested in getting involved, please contact Vicky Jones at Hastings Borough Council vjones@hastings.gov.uk.

Council's New Social Lettings Scheme

The demand for social housing in Hastings far outweighs supply and many local people are finding it increasingly difficult to access privately rented properties that are suitable for their needs and that they can afford.

In response to this Hastings Borough Council has developed a new scheme called Letstart Letting social lettings agency; a new council service that offers a range of housing management solutions to private landlords.

Over the next twelve months we are piloting the Letstart Lettings scheme and will be leasing accommodation from private landlords and making it available for people accessing the council's services for assistance with housing issues and homelessness prevention.

The aim is to help make accommodation accessible and affordable for local households struggling to secure housing. In addition, landlords and tenants will be able to access the council's new quality management service. The scheme will ensure that tenants don't have to pay huge fees to secure accommodation,

that they have suitable, secure homes and are not exploited by rogue landlords.

There is no contractual arrangement between the property owner and the tenant as the council has full landlord responsibility including tenant finding, tenant sign up, rent collection, some repairs and terminating tenancies. We currently have five very happy tenants and five happy landlords participating in the scheme and more in the pipeline.

It would have been impossible for me as a single mum with young children to find a property in my price range and I really faced uncertain times on waiting lists and possibly even homelessness so I am very grateful to be one of the first tenants to be housed under this new scheme. It will mean that my family have secure, comfortable living in a safe environment.” added Letstart Letting tenant, Nicole Morgans.

Hastings Borough Council is keen to hear from Landlords who are interested in leasing their accommodation to them. So, if you are a landlord or a tenant you can find out more about this scheme at www.letstartletting.com or email letstartletting@hastings.gov.uk or telephone 01424 451100.

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

