

Special Newsletter Spring 2016

This year promises to be a very good one for the Old Town and all who live and work here. As part of our commitment to improving information and communication we have set up a new web site www.oldhastings.uk

The aim of www.oldhastings.uk is to act as an online hub for local information that would be useful to residents and visitors - events, shops, restaurants, pubs and organisations will be able to post details all in one place.

We are currently on phase one and will be growing and adapting as we go along. To make it a great website we need volunteers ranging from content updaters to graphic designers and web developers. If you would like to get involved [easy to do and training available for content writers] or would like to promote your gigs or other events please contact satu@oldhastings.uk

ALSO in 2016

- **A new Hastings Lifeboat;** wonderful news that a new Hastings Lifeboat is to begin being built. The current boat is over 20 years old. The new build will take up to 2 years. The boat will cost £2million and its launch trailer £1million. Many people know that Hastings raises amongst the highest funds for the RNLI. The boat, its crew and the wonderful work it does is close to many hearts.
- **A new Old Town surgery** - see below
- **Improved pedestrian safety** by the construction of a new pavement in the High Street between Fagins and John the Cobblers - see page 2
- **new smaller Fire appliance** to be ordered - see page 2.

HOTRA works hard to make the Old Town a place where people matter. Each year we depend on your subscriptions to help fund what we do. [We do not benefit from any Hastings Council grants]

Please renew your subs by paying just £10. Kindly use the payment slip enclosed. Over 80% of our members choose to receive simple alerts which helps to keep you in touch. Our Treasurer Phil White lives at Eight and a Half Exmouth Place. Kindly drop your subs through his letter box or leave them at Nelson House Antiques in the High Street - opposite the Electric Palace. A membership card will be issued in due course.

A new Old Town Surgery

Dr Craig Namvar is a good example of someone showing real commitment to the Old Town. Craig grew up here and chose to return here to work as a G.P. He told our large meeting held in October that the present Robsack building is no longer suitable for current needs. The 1st and 2nd floors are challenging for patients with disabilities.

The growing emphasis from the NHS is for front line services to grow. Thus the facilities have to grow. General practices are expected to expand to meet these new demands. The meeting welcomed all that Craig described. It is hoped that by moving to the Old Ice House the offer to local patients will include more G.P.s, a pharmacy, a dentist, an optician, health visitors and 23 treatment rooms. Added to the picture could be a healthy eating restaurant and a gym to help us improve our fitness levels.

The main hurdle still to be crossed lies with Hastings Planning Committee who

have to approve a change of use. [Originally this part of the Ice House was to be used as a small hotel]. Hopefully sense will prevail and by the end of the year everything will be up and running.

High Street highways works

Over 4 years ago HOTRA organised a petition about Pedestrian safety. Over 620 people signed. Since then East Sussex County Council have consulted widely and in February Stage 1 will commence.

A new footpath will be built from George Street to John the Cobblers. The footpath opposite is narrow and steeply slopes towards the kerb. It is especially difficult for wheelchairs and buggies to use.

It will be necessary to close the High Street for about 4 weeks to vehicles. Any vehicles wanting to access Croft Road or Hill Street will be redirected to use Courthouse Street [the One Way will be reversed] and the High Street past the front of the Old Town Hall museum. Pedestrians will still be able to walk along the south end of the High Street.

During January and early February ESCC will try to contact the shops and households most affected. Yes there will be some disruption but the gain in pedestrian safety is well worth it.

Sadly one High Street trader has lodged an objection to the scheme at this late stage. This could have delayed the works. Fortunately the ESCC Planning Committee just before Christmas decided to 'override' the objection. Thanks to ESCC Tania Charman local democracy has succeeded.

A good place to live and work 'Best Neighbourhood' award

Amidst the reports of recent floods in the North many were proud of the way their communities worked together to help others. Here in Hastings Old town it was good to learn that we had been awarded this title by an independent panel of architects. They assessed us against a range of criteria. See the HOTRA website for more details. Well done all involved.

Fire Safety in the Old Town

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service have moved a step closer to ordering 2 smaller fire appliances. Other places in the country have already taken this step. For the Old Town this is a 'no-brainer'. Following the Marine Parade fire in 2014 [where rebuilding costs will exceed £2million] we requested an in-depth assessment of the challenge of fighting a serious fire here.

It was recognised that the current large appliances are too wide. They cannot access Hill Street, Swan Gardens and Exmouth Place. Ironically it was a serious fire in Brighton where parked vehicles significantly delayed access and response times that persuaded ESFRS that they needed to move forward more rapidly on this issue.

We have asked that 2 appliances are purchased - one for The Ridge and the other for Bohemia Road fire stations. Of course they are expensive but the need is clear. Do you think that Brighton will be given one first ?

HOTRA has every confidence in the dedication of the local fire crews. They do need the best possible kit to protect the public, our buildings and themselves.

Ecclesbourne Glen and Rocklands Caravan Park

This sorry saga should start to be resolved this year. An Inquiry chaired by a Planning Inspector will take place in the Stade Hall and will be open to the

public. The key issues have been much discussed previously.

For HOTRA the loss of the Public Right of Way through the Glen has always been very important. Currently the condition of the ground within and just outside the caravan site remains impassable and has not improved in over 2 years. There is no evidence that this is likely to change in the future.

East Sussex County Council are the responsible body. Whilst much has been said about issues inside the site there has been little mention of the cost and timescale for reinstating or diverting the Right of Way.

It would seem harsh that local tax payers have to foot the bill for a problem caused by others.

Old Town Hall building

For 3 months a local music group will be using the building on a short lease. This helps in many ways.

Anne Scott, of Old Hastings Preservation Society and I are meeting with Cllr Peter Chowney, Leader of Hastings Council, to explore ways in which this building could become a 'Community Asset' and look towards a diverse future. There would be big hurdles to overcome but it has a huge potential for use by the voluntary sector.

Licensed Premises

Hastings Council conducted a review of their Licensing Policy in 2015. HOTRA were the only group to raise serious concerns. Sadly they were dismissed out of hand. HBC argued that the number of incidents recorded by Sussex Police relating to Alcohol misuse were significantly reduced. There are various explanations for this, not least the removal of foot patrols on Friday and Saturday nights. It is not realistic to expect, nor would it be appropriate for a residents group to collect such data.

HOTRA was astounded to be told that the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights did not apply to this review. For residents, especially those who live in George Street, West Street or the High Street it would seem that their right to 'the quiet enjoyment of their homes' is not applicable. Tell that to one lady who lives in West Street. Earlier this year some drunken louts kicked her front door in. Then a few weeks ago in a separate incident someone smashed a window and property was stolen. The common feature was that these occurred after midnight at the weekend.

HOTRA was even approached by one George Street pub licensee concerned about the antisocial behaviour at weekends. They were worried about the impact on their business and their regular customers. Significantly this was done in the strictest confidence for fear of reprisals. This is a well grounded concern.

HOTRA is happy to place on record our appreciation of the quality and community commitment of almost all Old Town pub licensees. For example the Jenny Lind has grown its business, gives employment to more than a dozen people, and tries to play an appropriate part in the life of the Old Town. Many good things can be said about most of our pubs and the licensees.

The problems mostly arise with the bars / restaurants in George Street. The vast majority of these are run responsibly but 2 or 3 seem to want to sell liquor at any time to any one despite the Licensing Conditions.

This is a Hastings Council responsibility. Enforcement of the terms of each licence depends on an effective approach by the Town Hall. They really need to 'up' their performance. Remember Hastings Council collect a fee for administering the whole process.

Failure to change this ugly feature of life after midnight at weekends will eventually harm the businesses themselves. It certainly is causing distress to local residents. If the clear majority of licensed businesses can learn to live with the people around them then those less than thoughtful need to be made aware of the upset that is being caused.

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