

HASTINGS TRUST QUARTERLY

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT - OPTION FOR HASTINGS

The future of Local Government is currently under review and this will directly affect the future for Hastings and the Hastings Trust. Therefore it is vitally important that everyone in Hastings should understand what these changes will mean.

When the Hastings Trust's Board of Management Committee next sits on September 1st, the options for the Future of Local Government in East Sussex will be very much on the agenda. It is at this meeting that the Trustees will discuss the full implications of the alternatives for Hastings and decide on its own recommendations to go before the Commission.

With this in mind, members are being urged to call in at our offices or write in to us with their views so as to assist our Trustees in forming their opinion.

Following the outcome of this meeting you may well wish to know what has been decided prior to coming to any final decision yourself and forwarding your views to the Local Government Commission as an individual. Please bear in mind however you only have until **26th September** to write in to the Commission and make your voice heard.

You should already have received a reply-paid leaflet from the Commission through your door; if not, do contact the Post Office. The Trust also holds the Commission's full report "**The Future Local Government of East Sussex - Draft Recommendations**" copies of which are available for consultation in the office.

The address to write to is:

Martin Easteal
Local Government Commission,
Dolphyn Court,
10/11 Great Turnstile,
Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London WC1V 7JU.

The Commission is obliged to consider all comments, prior to making **formal recommendations** for East Sussex to Central Government, so do please take this opportunity to make your opinions known.

SPORTSFAYRE - WHAT NEXT?

The threat of new leisure developments on the Stade has been averted as a result of vigorous protest by the community. Two public meetings, the first at George Street Hall, which turned out to be too small a venue, and the second two weeks later at the White Rock, left the Council in no doubt about the strength of feeling of those attending.

There was protest at the Council's failing to consult the people until a planning application was received and expressions of horror at the size and general appearance of the proposal and its likely effect on existing Old Town businesses. The threat to the English Heritage grant for promised improvements to the Old Town further enraged the objectors.

The Council had clearly underestimated the public response to the scheme but some of the more extreme views expressed, particularly at the first meeting, seem to have arisen out of a lack of understanding of just what was being proposed and the procedures which had been followed in bringing it this far.

At both meetings, the Borough Planner explained that the Council have invited bids for the site (on the expiry of the current lease), conducting negotiations in confidence, and the first opportunity to raise the matter publicly was when the planning application had been received.

The design and the way it was presented to the people of Hastings demonstrates how not to win support for the development of a prominent and sensitive site. But it has to be said that the Sportsfayre scheme represented real financial investment and was intended to occupy no more land than the existing buildings. The call to 'leave things alone' or to replace them with something "in keeping" must surely raise some anxiety amongst those who are anxious to preserve the best features of the Old Town.

The application has now been refused, and the resolve of the Policy Committee on August 4th was that the Chief Executive be instructed to report to a special meeting of the Policy Committee at the earliest possible opportunity, on "the way forward" based on a "Planning for Real" approach. We now know that the Secretary of State has asked for information on the site and the representations made to the council and we can expect the views of the Trust, among others, to be considered.

The present clutter of poorly designed buildings does nothing for the environmental qualities we profess to value. New buildings, carefully designed, using materials sympathetic to their surroundings, while avoiding pastiche, can complement and enhance the Old Town's very special qualities. There seems now to be an opportunity for advancing those aims. Design professionals, applying skill and local knowledge, while consulting and working closely with interested local groups and individuals, have the chance of avoiding the kind of confrontation we have just seen and producing something to add positively to those qualities to the benefit of the wider community. GFA

HASTINGS TOWN & COUNTRY FAIR

The Trust is taking part again in the Hastings Town & Country Fair. The event takes place between 9.00 am. and 6.00 pm. on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th August in Alexandra Park, and anyone who would like to come along, meet with staff, trustees, members and volunteers, view our display and further discuss the work which we do, can find us on stand 280 near the Boating Lake.

The event has proved particularly successful in past years as a means of promoting our organisation and ascertaining the views and opinions of those living locally. So, do take this opportunity to come and see what we can do together for Hastings.

Members with a few free hours are asked to telephone our office and speak to Heather who will add their names to the rota.

HASTINGS GREENSPACE PROJECT

This is a new initiative to promote and encourage environmental activities within Hastings. The project is supported by:

Hastings Trust, Hastings Borough Council, Hastings Urban Wildlife Group, Hastings Teachers Professional Centre, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Sussex Wildlife Trust, who developed the initiative.

The aims are:

- To encourage and enable people to enjoy, understand and take action in the conservation of the green spaces in the areas where they live.
- To establish a network of organisations, groups and individuals to sustain the project and provide for its continued support, as well as link with other networks in the area.
- To promote awareness of the project to individuals and groups within the Hastings area.
- To co-ordinate environmental activities in Hastings to bridge any gaps in support and avoid duplication of efforts by organisations.

The public launch for the project will be on Sunday 25th September in Hastings Country Park, from 11am to 4pm. The above groups, including the Trust, will have stands promoting their contribution to the project.

We will be promoting our 'Wild Corners' project, work with the 'Smarten Up Hastings' campaign, our recent projects at Hollington Junior School and with the 'TREE' project for Torfield School.

Hollington School have a woodland area developing as an environmental education resource. This was planted about 4 years ago but has suffered through lack of maintenance. Our Community Action team have carried out essential maintenance such as weeding and watering. We worked alongside some of the school children and hopefully this will develop their interest in, and responsibility for, the area. We plan to help them to develop their wildlife areas further in future.

HASTINGS 2000 – THE CIVIC TRUST TOWN CENTRE REPORT

Like the Trust's own 1992 project, *Towards Hastings 2000*, the theme of the draft ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT commissioned by HEDCO, is the regeneration of Hastings.

It proclaims itself as 'A VISION FOR THE TOWN CENTRE'. It should be the task of the Hastings Trust to ensure that it becomes a reality. For this vision is the right vision for Hastings - it reminds us of what Hastings town centre is - a Victorian town still relatively unspoilt, and largely ignored and undervalued, but with enormous potential.

It is very difficult to contain one's enthusiasm for this report. The recommendations it makes should be enlarged and pasted up in every shop window in Hastings - they should be required daily reading for all Council members and Officers. Why?

Because the Civic Trust, in consultation with a wide range of corporate and individual contributors, (including five Hastings Trust Board members) have pinpointed what needs to be done, and what can practically be done, to the existing heart of Hastings. And this requirement is irrespective of the completion of the Boots scheme: if this goes ahead then it is essential to

counterbalance it with a restored and invigorated 'old' Town Centre (which should bring more people into Hastings - surely a prime requirement for any new shopping centre). If the 'market place' decides against Boots, we still desperately need town centre regeneration.

The good, indeed excellent, news is that we start from a base that most towns would give their eye teeth for. David Williams of the Civic Trust, to whom we are immeasurably indebted for the report, has said '... the town centre retains a wealth of this confident (Victorian) architecture which we believe is unparalleled in any other town of comparable size.'

The most vital recommendation of the report is that the Town Centre should be declared a Conservation Area. To quote again, 'some may query the need for yet another Conservation Area, when Hastings already has 15. What is required is first of all, basic protection of the town centre's quality ... The point to stress here is that, if it is conserved into the 21st century, this architectural heritage will become a major attraction in its own right - because of its quality and its scarcity.'

Conservation Areas attract funds - witness the current English Heritage involvement in the Old Town. They were powerless to spend in the town centre because it was not a Conservation Area.

More 'progressive' towns have already destroyed much of their heritage: for whatever reason, we still have much of ours - it makes good environmental and economic sense to capitalise on this heritage, without delay. Yes, it will cost retailers more to bring their shopfronts up to English Heritage standards, but if the end result is that the public come, instead of shun, they will gain in the longer term.

They will gain too if other recommendations made in the report are implemented -

'We believe a comprehensive approach to the town centre is required. To complement the resources and effort already put into Wellington Place/Castle Street and the cricket ground/Boots scheme, any town centre strategy should now focus upon:

- the retail and commercial prospects of the Cambridge Road, Robertson Street and America Ground area;
- and
- the importance of Harold Place and the Memorial as the hub of the town centre, to balance and complement the Boots scheme.'

and there is more, much more, detailed commonsense and encouragement packed into this VISION FOR THE TOWN CENTRE - it should be adopted as Borough Policy without delay.

HEDCO are to be warmly congratulated on commissioning this report - we must all encourage and aid them towards its implementation. DC

WHEELS PROJECT UPDATE

First of all I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support of the WHEELS raffle. First prize of a Hot Air Balloon Ride was won by Mrs G. Spence (pictured opposite with Dave Weller - Wheels Project Officer) of Bevin Court, St. Leonards, with the winning ticket number of 3522. The draw took place at the WHEELS benefit concert held in the Carlisle function room on the evening of Saturday 21st May. The concert itself was a great success with two hundred people thoroughly

enjoying the excellent music and taking advantage of the bar extension. With regard to the music the Trust owes a debt of gratitude to the bands: The Blackman Brothers, The Amigos and The Addled Family, all of whom gave their services free of charge and really did make the evening go with a swing.

The Trust would also like to thank Simon & Richard of Woodbase Joiners for their generous donation of £50 which boosted the final total raised from the raffle and concert combined after all expenses had been paid to £1,123.70p.

Following on from the last newsletter the Trust and the Hastings Police have inspected the Adams Fruit Farm in Ivy House Lane but have discounted it as being too far down the unlit lane for the safety of the young people travelling to and fro. On a brighter note we were invited by the owner to view the land situated between Adams Farm and the Ivy House Lane Industrial estate which caused a great deal of excitement to run through the office. The further we walked over the land the more ideal the site became, it has just about everything we were looking for. The natural contours of the land are ideal for track layout; it has a very good, well lit, easily accessible entrance and the nearest housing is at least a quarter of a mile away. The Trust has since undertaken a site visit with the Auto Cycle Union (ACU) - the governing body of British Motorcycle Sport. They would be responsible for the safe running and upkeep of the Trail Park, and through them we will get insurance cover. The ACU are currently preparing a site plan showing track layout, perimeter fencing etc, for presentation to the owners of the land.

WHEELS FUNDING

On top of the £1,123.70 raised by the Trust itself from the concert and raffle, a further £10,000 has been allocated to the project by Hastings Borough Council. This is by no means anywhere near the amount of money that will be required for the project but is certainly a significant step along the way and a wonderful gesture of support from the Borough.



HISTORIC HASTINGS

Hastings possesses one of the best-known names in the English-speaking world and 1066 is certainly the best-known date in our history, and yet we lack any sort of comprehensive centre about us or the famous event. There have been proposals for various tourist attractions, for example, at the Stade or in St. Mary-in-the-Castle, but where does the interested visitor (particularly from abroad) go to find out more about our intriguing history?

Historic Hastings was formed to explore means of bridging the gap between the commercial provision for the sightseer and the source of information for the inquisitive visitor. What we have in mind is the setting-up of a Resource Centre combining various types of display with means of access to a wide variety of sources of information. Present-day computer technology opens up tremendous possibilities in the presentation of, and access to, all sorts of material. Nor does this material have to be of only local origin, but could be accessed from world-wide sources. What an asset it would be for the inquirer to be able to call up on to a screen artefacts, documents, maps, photographs and drawings, etc, from museum drawers or distant archives.

All this would require funding. First of all to provide a site and a building to house the Resource Centre; then to obtain the right technological equipment and finally to have the staff to run it and to translate the required material into the right form for presentation.

Our object in Historic Hastings is to gather together some expertise to work with the Council and other bodies on an assessment of the parameters necessary for such a Resource Centre and to explore the means of funding available. DR

TERRIERS TENACITY

Once again 'C' Company of the 5th. Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, ran the Hastings half-marathon to raise money for the Trust. This was the Territorial's third run on our behalf, and on a sunny day two weeks ago, Cpl. Terry Spendlove came to the Trust's offices to present us with a cheque for £1,000. Feeling that yet another photograph of the team pounding along the seafront would be a trifle boring, the Trust presented 'C' Company with copies of William the Conqueror's gonfalon and Harold's Dragon Standard as a token of our appreciation for all their hard work on this occasion and throughout the year.

MOVING STORY

12 Wellington Square - which houses the Trust's offices - is up for sale and we have been given notice to quit. This means that we shall have to be on the move again, unless we can raise the finance to buy the building and provide ourselves with a permanent home and asset base. The Trust is seeking advice from Mercury Provident, an ethical lending society, to see if the idea is feasible, but it would mean raising sufficient funds to provide a 30% deposit first.

In the meantime, the Borough Council has stepped in with a generous offer of a portacabin up at Summerfields for 18 months. Unfortunately, it is far too small to accommodate the staff, volunteers, our resource centre and equipment, and is too far from the town centre for ease of access.

Any members who have an interest in the Trust acquiring its own asset base, or who have a property that would be suitable for our offices should call and speak to Christine on 446373.

CAPS

The Trust's first project in the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme (CAPS), the restoration of Hastings Wall, has been delayed, as the money has been reallocated to emergency wall repairs in St. Leonards. However, we are now about to start work on the High Street retaining walls, so you will see the team out and about very soon. The Trust is also starting the research and costings on the Twittens Scheme, to start during the late summer, early autumn.

The Borough's Conservation Unit is already offering grants to properties within CAPS and the uptake looks promising. The environmental enhancement scheme for the entrance to the High Street is currently under discussion and we have been told that interviews for the Project Officer's post will take place on August 15th.

BROOMGROVE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

The Trust has received £1,100 from the Variety Club Childrens' Charity towards the £2,500 needed for Tag City. We are now seeking the remaining funding from other charitable organisations and hope to have all the money raised a.s.a.p. Spare cash gratefully received.

IT'S A WASH OUT!

Despite the grey skies, the intrepid Trust team was up at the crack of dawn on Celebration Day, 21st May, to lay out the tables in Wellington Square. The lads from the Hot Potato turned up and started cooking. Then the skies opened. As we got wetter and wetter and the sky got darker and darker, we realised that, for once, we would have to throw in the towel and cancel the day. We all sat in the office clearing up and feeling

miserable when, much to our surprise, there was a little break in the clouds around noon, and the Cinque Ports Corps of Drums turned up as arranged. Resplendent in their red jackets and braid, they marched through the town centre and gave a marvellous performance in the roundel in Wellington Place. We rattled tins and collected donations from the audience that quickly formed, then dashed for cover as the skies opened again. In the forty minutes we were out, we managed to collect around £50 for the Trust, thanks to the stoicism and fortitude of the Cinque Ports Corps of Drums and their stirring music. A little later in the afternoon, during another little break, Mad Jack's Morris turned up and flung themselves around the town centre, and once again we rattled the tins before the deluge stopped the fun.

MUSIC IN ALEXANDRA PARK

The Kohima Band of the 5th Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment played 2 two-hour sessions of music at Alexandra Park on Saturday, 2nd July. All proceeds were donated to Hastings Trust. This was not as much as we would have liked as HBC were only able to pay the Band £100. We were hoping to increase this sum with collection boxes at the event. Unbeknown to us, however, the deckchairs that the Council arranged to be on site were only available at a charge. We didn't think it fair to go around with collection boxes after people had just paid for a seat. If I had known they were going to charge I could have brought down 200 chairs. No matter, the music was grand and gave a lovely atmosphere to the sunny Saturday in the park, and, after all, the Trust was £100 better off. SH

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Hastings Trust Quarterly exists to provide information on the Trust's activities. We are also keen to include articles which highlight local issues in which the Trust has an interest, though any opinions expressed by individual contributors may not necessarily represent the Trust's considered position.

The Kohima Band of the 5th Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment playing in Alexandra Park

