

Tressell Ward councillor's report

from Peter Chowney

6th June 2018



Hastings Issues

Harbour Arm



Over the next few weeks, rock deliveries will arrive to complete the reconstruction of the Hastings Harbour Arm (picture shows the first delivery). This summer, the rest of the work will take place, finally completing repairs to the entire Harbour Arm.

The arm was built in the 1890s, as the first part of a harbour that never happened, as the company building it ran out of money. But the Harbour

Arm became important to protect the fishing beach and make it safer to launch boats during rough weather. It has also changed the shape of the beach, because of the effects of 'longshore drift', with the accumulation of shingle on the western side, making the beach much deeper. Before the Harbour Arm was built, the sea came up to what is now the A259 and Rock-a-Nore. So as well as improving sea defences, it's allowed the creation of seafront attractions and Pelham Place car park. But over the years, the Harbour Arm has been damaged by storms and the Luftwaffe during the war, and has gaps in it. Now, thanks to a £3m Environment Agency grant, Hastings Council is rebuilding it.

The first part of the reconstruction work took place last year, with the landward part rebuilt mostly from existing concrete 'stabits', many of which had fallen away and were lying on the seabed. It was then refaced with 340 cubic metres of concrete. Over the next month, granite blocks will arrive by barge, in 2,000 tonne or 5,000 tonne loads. Originally, the plan was for the granite to arrive from Norway on a ship, to be transferred to barges in the Channel. But the granite is now being supplied from a quarry in Cornwall, so the barges will make the entire journey along the coast. A total of around 25,000 tonnes of granite will be delivered and unloaded from the barges close to the beach, from where it can be moved into place. Unloading takes place at high tide, with the barge coming in as close as possible. Then, at low tide, a mobile crane moves in to lift the blocks into place. This is a more sophisticated process than it might appear, as placement is controlled by the driver directed by an on-board computer, like a giant, 3-D jigsaw puzzle.

In this way, the current gaps in the Harbour Arm will be filled, as well as constructing 'shoulders' to the rest of the arm, to help protect it. Unlike the first part of the arm, the structure will not be faced with concrete. Apart from the obvious difficulties of doing that underwater, the uneven shape of the stacked

granite blocks breaks up the force of the waves better, as well as giving a more natural appearance. When the work is complete later in the summer, it will provide the protection from storms needed by our beach-launched fishing fleet for at least another hundred years, we hope.

Stade Saturdays

Once again, Hastings Council will be putting on a full programme of free Saturday evening and daytime events on the Stade Open Space over the summer. The programme has already begun, with the first event on 2nd June, with performances from the Winkle Club Jazz and Blues Festival. This coming Saturday, the Stade will host events for the 1066 Cycling Festival (see next item) followed by Compagnie Diptic (hip-hop dance) on



16th, and the Midsummer Fish Festival on 23rd and 24th June. Events during the rest of the summer include dancing, folk, jazz, circus, brass bands, theatre, world music, and more, finishing with the Bonfire Procession and firework display on 13th October.

You can pick up a paper programme at the Tourist Information Centre, or the programme will be on the Hastings Council website very soon (just Google 'Stade Saturdays' - the 2017 programme still appears at the time of writing this!).

June Events

On 9th and 10th June, the 1066 Cycling Festival will take place, organised jointly by Hastings and Rother councils.

On both days there's the Savage Skills Stunt team, bike decorating, bicycle powered smoothie making, and a family friendly bike ride with Sustrans. The Source Park trials will be an opportunity to learn from professionals how to ride a BMX bike the right way. On Saturday, activities will take place on the Stade Open Space from 10am to 3pm. The fun continues into Sunday at the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill. You can see an exhibition of 200 years of bicycles from the Classic Cycle Group and join them on a short cycle ride around the town.



On the weekend of 23rd and 24th June, it's the Midsummer Fish Festival, on the Stade Open Space. As ever, there will be stalls selling local fish and fish products, as well as local beer and cider. There will be a selection of food and drink from local restaurants, street vendors, and bakeries. The FILO brewery will be there, as well as other local brewers and wine makers. There

will be exhibits about the local fishing fleet, too, fish cookery lessons and a full programme of music throughout the weekend. Admission is £2 on the gate, £1 in advance at the Tourist Information Centre (under 18s free). Find out more here:

<https://www.visit1066country.com/whats-on/fish-festivals/midsummer-fish-festival>

Then on Saturday 30th June, it's the St Leonards Festival, with a street market in King's Road, and stalls and the music stage in Warrior Gardens, as well as 'fringe' events around St Leonards town centre. And I'll be doing the opening speech, at 12pm.

So as ever, it's a packed summer of events in Hastings ... more next month!

Stables Theatre

I'm very pleased to have been made an 'honorary patron' of The Stables Theatre. I must confess that I've never been a big fan of theatre generally, possibly from being dragged along to overpriced and pretentious West End productions in the past. But I really enjoyed the opening night performance of 'Pride and Prejudice' - amazing that the actors were all local and, of course, non-professional. They were excellent, and I was entirely absorbed by it, completely convinced that these people were all actually from the early 19th Century - although I suppose that is the idea with acting.



Interest in the performing arts is growing in Hastings, as part of our increasing reputation as a creative and cultural centre. There's the 'Hastings Fringe' performing arts festival for example, that takes place at various venues across town during July (more about that in next month's report).

But if you can get along to see 'Pride and Prejudice', please do. As you can gather from the above, I'm no expert, but I thought it was excellent!

You can see The Stables full programme here:

<http://stablestheatre.co.uk/>

Area Action Plan

At the Hastings Council Cabinet meeting on 4th June, the consultation version of the Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Town Centre and 'Bohemia Quarter' was agreed. The AAP will be a formal 'extension' of the Hastings Local Plan, which was approved four years ago. It will need to go through a similar process to the Local Plan before it's adopted: a twelve-week consultation period begins soon.

The plan will identify different areas of land in Hastings town centre and 'Bohemia Quarter', and propose land uses for them - it doesn't mean the areas identified for



different purposes will actually happen, as most of them are privately owned, but it forms a set of policies that any planning application within the plan area would have to comply with.

However, a large part of the land in the area of the plan is owned by Hastings Council – most of the Bohemia Quarter part, which includes White Rock Gardens and the

buildings in it, White Rock Theatre, the museum, the Travelodge hotel, and Summerfields Leisure Centre – an area of land extending from the seafront to Summerfield Woods. So the Area Action Plan will establish planning policies that support the potential redevelopment of the White Rock Gardens/Bohemia Quarter area, which could include refreshed gardens and open spaces, a new leisure centre, housing, and a new performance venue.

The consultation process and ‘public engagement’ phase this summer will include drop-in sessions, workshops, consultation with community groups and businesses in the area, as well as an online consultation.

After this consultation period, the plan will go to full council for approval of a ‘submission version’ that will be the subject of an ‘examination in public’ by a planning inspector, with the final plan eventually adopted in December 2019. It’s a lengthy process, and quite costly, because of the officer time involved. But it’s a process prescribed in law that we can’t vary.

You can see the full report on the Cabinet agenda:

<https://bit.ly/2x17eD6>

Hastings Fish Brand

The Cabinet meeting also approved a report to launch a ‘Hastings Fish’ brand, as part of the EU-funded Fisheries Local Action Group scheme, for which the council is the sponsoring authority.



The fish brand has already been formally recognised by the Marine Management Organisation, giving it the same status as Brixham Fish or Whitstable Oysters – branding that has helped fisheries on those towns significantly.

The brand offers a ‘stamp of approval’ for the fish products landed by the Hastings fleet. We’ll involve fishmongers, the fleet, Hastings Fishermen’s Protection Society, restaurants, and hoteliers in its development to ensure a coordinated and supported product. ‘Hastings

Fish' will brand the fish landed as a premium, sustainable, and local product using a simple and unique logo (above). The marketing will focus on education and understanding of the seasonal and sustainable qualities of the fish, using this as a unique selling point.

Weeds

It's probably not escaped your attention that there are a lot of weeds around Hastings streets. Responsibility for weed removal was not entirely clear, but Hastings Council decided to take on the responsibility for it last year, accepting a payment from East Sussex County Council towards it.



However, this year, we couldn't find a contractor to do the weed spraying. That's now been sorted out, and weed spraying should take place imminently, with a second spray in the autumn. So apologies for all the weeds – they should be gone soon.

However, weed spraying is not a particularly satisfactory process. The only weedkiller left that's authorised for use in a public place is Glyphosate. Glyphosate is slow-acting and can take a couple of weeks before it works. Some weeds are resistant to it (ground elder seems to shrug it off, for example), and it's ineffective if it rains within 48 hours of spraying. Added to that, although it is authorised for use throughout the EU, recent concerns about it being potentially carcinogenic mean the strength that can be used has been decreased, so it's even more ineffective. It has an advantage that it's deactivated as soon as it comes into contact with soil, so doesn't kill plants apart from the ones it's sprayed on. However, some studies suggest that it can be environmentally persistent, and its 'deactivation' on contact with soil isn't complete.

Some councils (eg Bristol) have experimented with natural weedkillers, such as acetic acid (derived from vinegar). But it only kills the top growth, not the roots, and it made the city smell like a chip shop, so they abandoned it.

Next year, when we hopefully realise our aim to bring the street cleansing service back in-house, weed clearance will be easier to organise, by equipping the street cleaning staff with spray packs so they can spray weeds when they see them. However, we'd like to move away from using synthetic chemical herbicides on our streets altogether. So we'd simply get the operatives to grub out the weeds as they see them. That is more labour-intensive and requires more staff, but it seems very likely that Glyphosate will be banned altogether within the next few years, so it seems to make sense to work towards a more environmentally-friendly solution as soon as possible.

Channel 4 bid



Sadly, our bid to be one of the Channel 4 'regional hubs' wasn't successful, we didn't get on to the shortlist. The shortlisted locations were all larger cities with populations above 200,000, all very safe and predictable. Hastings, it seems, was just a bit too creative for the grey suits at Channel 4 ...

Nevertheless, it was a worthwhile process, and I'd like to thank all the people working in the creative and media sectors locally who volunteered to help put the bid together and support it. The connections made there will be useful for other initiatives, and, once again, helped to demonstrate the enthusiasm people in the creative sector have for our town and what we're achieving. And I got to meet Peaky Blinders

director David Caffrey and hold his BAFTA, which made it all worthwhile.

Tressell Issues

The Ore Business Park site has now been put on the market. This follows on from the developer successfully arguing that the houses that had already been developed, at the bottom of the site, should be allowed access from Broomgrove Road, for a 'temporary' period of up to two years. Tania and I opposed this, as we suspected something like this might happen.

From a planning point of view, it all now gets more complicated, because the completed houses won't be part of the site that's up for sale, so it's difficult to see how the planning condition for the access to be only temporary will be enforced. I'm trying to find out from planning officers how this will now work, but we're still determined that permanent access should be through the completed site, and onto Farley Bank, rather than Hurrell Road.

And we've learned that a local developer has bought the Broomgrove Allotments site, on Broomgrove Road - another previously half-finished development of the kind that seems to plague this area. No planning application has been submitted yet, but a requirement for any development would be to (finally) bring Broomgrove Road up to 'adoptable standard', and get it adopted by East Sussex County Council. The road was supposed to be built to adoptable standard by the previous developers of the site, but they went bust, and ESCC decided the road wasn't up to standard so they refused to adopt it (although despite asking many times, we've never been given the reasons why it's not up to standard for adoption).



There have been a few issues with the Little Acres Farm development on Frederick Road too. Piling there has caused damage to some of the neighbouring houses and boundary walls, and the residents did initially have problems getting the contractors to accept responsibility. Although the council technically has no powers to intervene in this and force the contractor to compensate home owners, planning enforcement officers did have a word, and that seems to have been successful. However, if you know of anyone neighbouring the site who is still having problems, get them to contact me.

We're having a short break from our street-by-street newsletters till July, but we'll be out delivering newsletters and knocking on your doors from then on.

You can see all our newsletters at:

www.tressell.org.uk/tressellnews.htm

That'll do for now - if you'd like more information on any of this, email me at

cllr.peter.chowney@hastings.gov.uk.

We also have a Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/tressell

And there's the Tressell Councillors' website at:

<http://www.tressell.org.uk>