

APPENDIX A: Hastings Heritage Strategy Stakeholder Feedback

1. Workshops
2. Questionnaire results
3. Questionnaire Comments

1. Hastings Borough Council Heritage Strategy Stakeholder Workshops

Facilitated by – Drury McPherson Partnership (DMP) and Hastings Borough Council (HBC) lead member for regeneration and culture and officers.

28 participants in two sessions held on Thursday 1st December including representatives of Friends of Alexandra Park; Friends of St Mary in the Castle; Former Holy Child Convent, Magdalen Road; Town Centre Manager; East Sussex County Council Libraries, Archaeology and Archives; SCC; HOTRA; Heart of Hastings; MSL Projects); Hastings Tourism Association; Shipwreck Museum; HAARG; HFPS; JITG; Bonfire Society; Burton St Leonards Society.

Proceedings:

1. Brief introduction and aim of strategy – HBC
2. PowerPoint presentation with overview of Hastings' heritage and vision, summary of research and issues (DMP).
3. Open discussion and questionnaire lead by DMP and based on themes for action.

Questions and comments raised by persons present:

SESSION ONE

DMP: *Hastings Castle; Should it be developed by a public sector/charity?*

-Who owns it at the moment?

HBC: It is owned by HBC but managed by Blue Reef on our behalf.

Reduced traffic Old Town/Seafront

Signage- Easy to get lost

Parks and open spaces- no particular problems- Anyone have ideas?

Activities- Sites being used to potential?

Participant: Has any money been set aside?

HBC: Nothing so far but we need to get views and priorities beforehand
Castle- may look to do gain funding again.

Participant: Seafront: A road in the middle doesn't help as it makes the town's (Old Town, Town Centre, St Leonards) turn their back on the water.

- Shared space development
- Flow of traffic- slower or few traffic lights

- How much traffic is through traffic? Could we divert it away from the seafront?

HBC: Working with ESCC on a major piece of re-trafficking work, modelling work and options. Of course traffic would have to go elsewhere and it's hard to know what options to take as there is no easy solution. Once data is collected we can see how we can improve traffic on the seafront and connectivity.

Participant: Public transport explanation of routes from the bus company etc. There should be signage as soon as you come into town. There are some places that are impossible to get to via public transport.

Participant: We don't have to get everybody out of their cars. You only need a small percentage to ease congestion. Completely agree with the appalling bus service though. Don't think this is in the council's ability to influence Stagecoach.

DMP: *Net huts and any change in how they should be used?*

Participant: I own a net shop and have asked the council many times to give more money for upkeep but it's not pushed through.

- There was no real answer about whether there should be any change.

Participant: I think the focus of discussion should be on neighbourhoods rather than individual assets. Wants to know progress of conservation area appraisals.

Participant: Intangible heritage seems most important to me and looking at the wider picture- Looking at the historic built environment doesn't take priority for me. Environmental or cultural heritage seems much more important.

DMP: We are looking at four themes. The council is likely to lead on this so what we want from you are your views on what is most important.

Participant: town centre- It used to be where the memorial was- priory meadow etc. was then built. I think it should go back to the way it was- un-think and draw back the notion of the town centre bringing it nearer to the seafront and opening up the roads as it was- old town, seafront, America Ground (joining all bits up)
Castle- Only ruin I know which has got bigger. We've got the Ladies Parlour to view around- Could something be constructed as a viewing platform up there to see what's going on around you?

DMP: *Town centre priorities? There seems to be potential with the town centre and seafront and wayfinding seems important. Do people agree on this are do we need to look at other areas?*
Ambivalence around key site- move on but do want people's views on those topic.

Participant: [Alexandra Park] has some of the oldest heritage in Hastings. Some trees are almost 200 years old and one of the best municipal collections in the county and need to make more of this for visitors. There could also be much more promotion of Alexandra Park and the Country Park and coastal walks.

Participant: Botanical survey of castle if any developments (including castle rocks). Important to people in lots of different ways. We're focussing tourists but I think residents are more important.

DMP: Castle important to people of town- We'll flag up about the planting.

Participant: Was involved in the castle report 20 years ago and it is complex in Hastings. The polyfocal view is definitely important and goes back before the conquest. Looking at the complexity of whole area- settlements between Pevensey and New Romney.
-Communicating the different aspects is a very hard task. When it comes to the castle-, I think that it is the jewel in the crown from an international and national perspective.

Participant: There was a huge Iron Age fort on top of the East Hill but it's never been surveyed.

DMP: If the castle were looked at, I think it would also be great to have proper archaeological research done about the historical settlements etc. There is an awful lot we know but an awful lot we don't know.

Participant: This would cost a lot though- I think it's important but archeology should be focused on.

DMP: *Lots of enthusiasm for environmental spaces. Are there any issues- management, improvement, investment? What are people's views?*

- Going back to key sites-. There is the cathedral on Magdalen Road. The chapel has not been touched or seen by the public in years. It would be good if it can be put in the list.
- Ecclesbourne Glen is difficult but needs to be open.

DMP: Understand it will be as soon as possible

Participant: Making businesses and local people aware of the heritage they've got in terms of parks, including Alexandra Park and Church in the Wood. It should be promoted better. parks- preservation to development- e.g. Queensway Gateway- Not taking care or encouraging pride in these places. Feel it's low on council priority and lack of signage.

-Prioritise open spaces on the local list.

Participant: Would like to know the process and how long it takes to get on the local list?

HBC: The listing is actually going on at this time. There is a separate piece of work around conservation areas. Will get answer for Jess outside of meeting.

DMP: We think conservation appraisals is a very high priority. There is guidance on the website and a panel and will endorse the strategy.

Participant: America Ground- Some buildings being restored around the area built perhaps more importantly is the social side and distinct neighbourhood and business role. This area has really strong economic potential.

Participant: It is also an area at risk. Not in terms of buildings falling down but loss to the social aspect of the area.

Participant: there are a number of things in the BID which can help with this but I am concerned about what message we are getting across. Wants to ensure a spirit of a place and heritage is kept but economy grows.

DMP: *Should the strategy be led by the council and what are the priorities?*

Participant: I'm not from Hastings and didn't know the area. I found it very disjointed and difficult to find my way around. There is an amazing amount of history and character and a great amount of pride and that's what you need to Capitalise on. The main thing I've heard though is about communication and wayfinding.

- Archive now in keep in Falmer. Documentary heritage is still a major part of heritage. Some things specifically donated to Hastings Library but felt the Keep is the best place for preservation.

DMP: *Visitor hub- developments at the castle or museum, visitor hub may not be needed? Is there a need for this/priority?*

Participant: Physical hub- Is that needed?- What about an app- virtual guide to Hastings. This appeals to the younger generation which is what could be encouraged- virtual guide (update of English Heritage style) Looking forward. Don't follow- let's lead.

DMP: Is web based media becoming a greater priority?

Participant: There is seafront Wi-Fi. Has all sorts of applications. Joining things up- More dynamic and accessible.

DMP: Is the council the right body to take this forward?

Participant: Yes

Participant: I disagree. It's about capacity. I think the best way is capacity. I believe strongly that we should collaborate.

Participant: Who gives the lead? Always cautious of non-public lead. A public organisation doesn't ring true. The council should lead as they are publicly accountable.

Participant: Yes, the council needs to be responsible but think charities are better placed to deliver.

DMP: Surely it needs to be collaborative but with shared goals.

SESSION TWO

DMP: *should the Castle be the priority?*

Participant: Certainly one of the biggest priorities

Participant: Can we have the presentation? Rosie to send

Participant: It's so strange- people can't find the castle of smugglers caves, signage needs improvement. Where is the history? Nothing accessible to visitors as to what has happened here. Museum is too separated to show this.

- Castle is high priority

Participant: Falaise have done a wonderful job- great with the app showing how it was etc.

- Should have events in there too.
- It's more than just the castle it spreads across the hill

DMP- *Is there a presentation issue of the castle?*

Participant - It was dead over the 950th weekend. There's all that open space and yet nothing happens. I feel we have missed such an opportunity.

All agree potential is there. Everyone agrees it is a priority in presenting Hastings.

Is this the scheme which should be taken forward?

Participant: Very few towns have castles. I think there should be a bid and I think it should be given to a charity. There is major difficulty finding it too.

- Also it being in the centre of the town is a great opportunity

Participant: More about the quality of the visit and integrity of the history of the castle.

HBC: Have been working on the castle for many years. Tried very hard twice to get funding for it. Both bids have failed. We have never found the money to invest which is required.

Seafront (traffic and impression of buildings)

Participant: Development control – Burton St Leonards. The seafront has a lot of world war two damage; there are some amazing buildings just inland; A lot to be proud of. A lot of simplistic things could be done to improve St Leonards. Would be easy to clear up and make it much more welcoming. There was a particular focus on the colonnades.

The people who occupy these buildings would need to do this.

Differences with Marine Court managed by a company, the rest is owned by various landlords and they have slowed down the work. It isn't lack of pressure. Church is also in dyer straights. The hill is the problem as it is prone to land slips affecting the church.

Much less enthusiasm to go through planning. Section 215 notices not enough. HMO is an issue with this too.

Wider town

Participant: Enforcement should be greater in the town centre. It looks awful. So important that the town looks as good as it can.

DMP: *Is it realistic to give these charges to people?*

Participant: Situation of shops opposite is very fragile. HBC building shops on other side is taking business away. The buildings will die if the businesses aren't doing well.

- Car parking on the beach is crazy. The town needs car parking. It needs park and ride and should be re-investigated. It is horrible and rammed in the summer. People could enjoy the town.

Participant: The biggest problem is it's the main front line east and west (seafront road). Route all the heavy traffic to the bi-pass. Major change of traffic routing and bottle necks without getting to route of problem

DMP: *If Hastings had for HLF Townscape fund- where should this be? Should it be individual buildings or areas? Vote for one or other?*

Town centre a priority? Passing trade. If you don't have parking in the town how much trade would you lose?

-still need to provide parking

-Divert people from Old Town to town centre- message signs which we have and there generally is capacity in town centre.

People like to park on the beach though.

-appalling transport system

Participant: On Sunday's the last bus out of Old Town on Sunday in the summer is 8.10pm.

Brighton buses are really good.

Participant: Often have visitors who complain about parking or want to park in the Old Town, then drive and park in the town centre and again in St Leonards. There isn't a bus going back and forth along the seafront. Visitors won't come back because of this.

Miniature railway along to St Leonards?

Participant: We have looked at it or a mini tram. The trouble is this is expensive (could cover its own costs) but difficult to push through.

Parks and open spaces

- Cycle route through the entire park but needs to be protected.
- A lot of visitors aren't aware of it.
- Country park- fossils of earliest flowering plants in the world. Missing a trick with paleontology and geology
- Info boards and visitor centre on Country Park. Loads of Bronze Age archaeology- a lot more could be done plus flora and fauna and bird potential.
- State of Footpaths in and around town are terrible- would make a huge difference- plus litter.

DMP: *Interested if there's scope for research in Hastings Castle archaeology?*

Participant: We were excluded from a local church in a lottery funded programme- Did not understand why but would be interested in doing something like this is partnership with professionals.

DMP *Old Town Hall? Visitor hub.*

Participant: It is completely lost.

DMP: Virtual hub instead?

Participant: Got to allow for people who don't use phones etc.

- No substitute for info on paper. Need to feel sense of place
- HBC depends on putting too much stuff on social media
- Map but no info.

Participant: Need a heritage officer. There are lots of arts officers but no heritage officers. No full time conservation officer. Creating career path and stops the sharing of jobs around other officers.

Participant: Other countries in Europe put so much into cultural heritage. If we aren't careful we lose it between arts and tourism. There are often so many barriers in the way which makes it hard to have intangible heritage- UNESCO convention.

Leaflets of events with varying quality of maps. I would make a plea for someone to make sure maps are accurate and coordinate a years' worth of programmes and good to have someone to coordinate all the groups.

Umbrella group- meeting once a year to make sure things move forward – promoting other ideas etc. Heritage forum. UPB have a heritage day once a year. If there's a will and resource to do it then it's supported.

UESCO project- Hastings museum and HFPS. Yamsin to send to Rosie

Participant: What about the rubbish on the fishing beach? From fishermen or maybe form people and takeaways. Seagulls don't help.

Participant: It's a working beach and has been cleared up a lot. The seagulls don't help.

2. Questionnaire Results

1 is lowest priority and 5 is highest. Each number below 1-5 relates to how many people gave it that priority.

Key Sites and issues:	5	4	3	2	1
Castle	7	2	1		1

Seafront:	Traffic reduction	4	1	2		4	Old Town
	Parking reduction	3		2	2	5	
	Other						
Town centre	Castle Street/Albert Road		1	2	2	4	
	Other		1				
Central St Leonard's		2	1	3	1	2	
Heritage at Risk		4	3	2		1	
Planning enforcement (Council)		6	3			1	
Building maintenance (private)		2	4	2		1	
Castle							
Should interpretation take in a wider site?		7	1	2			
Is the castle the highest priority for investment?		5			1	2	
Should it be taken into public/charitable management?		6		1		2	
The 'spaces in-between'			1				
Traffic reduction		3	1	1	1	1	
Signage		2	2			2	
Floorscape		1	1	1	2		
Maintenance		1	4	1		1	
Materials, street furniture		1		2		1	
Information and Interpretation		1					
Arrival and wayfinding		4	2	1			
New visitor hub	Town centre	3		1		1	
	Old town	3				2	
	Museum	1				2	
Other location (please suggest)							

Web-based information	4				
Leaflets	3	1			1
Signage	3	1			1
Local/county archives	3		1		
Other					
Leadership and Delivery	1				
Priority of heritage for additional Council funding	4	1	1		
Role of Council: development management	4		1		
Role of Council: Co-ordination	2		2	1	
Conservation area character appraisals	5	1		1	
Development briefs	1	1		1	
Local list	3				1
Conservation area advisory groups	4	1			
Independent heritage co-ordinator	2		1		
Other					
Funding					
Volunteers	1				1
Grants (partnerships)	2				
Business (e.g. BID, tourism levy)			1		1

3. Questionnaire Comments

Key Sites:

(HAARG) Parks & Gardens:

- Information re. heritage, Hastings Country Park info
- Apps and signage
- Hastings Country Park Visitor Centre

(Heart of Hastings)

- Does not think traffic reduction and parking reduction are the right questions
- America Ground is a key site (priority= 5)

- Castle not a high priority and can't see what public/charitable management would achieve

(St Mary in the Castle)

- Other- Net huts, priority= 5

(HOTRA)

- Public transport inadequacy
- Stade to apply for UNESCO status

Participant

- Alexandra Park- best municipal collection of trees in England (compare Bute Park, Cardiff)
- Castle rocks and castle- botanical importance
- Church in the Wood and Church Wood 9best bit of Hastings woodland much valued by local people)
- Respect local feelings for and appreciation of place- do not focus just on visitors/tourism

Participant

- Trinity area/America Ground
- Pigion Chapel Magdalen Road
- Convent site, Magdalen Road
- White Rock neighbourhood

Participant

Castle: Viewing platform

This form is too much like tick-box technology and is not meaningful

Participant

- Preservation and promotion of trees in Alexandra Park
- More investment in running Hastings Country Park
- Castle management should be in the hands of people who care about it

Participant

- In general the focus should be on heritage and tourism- relevant commercial interest will then follow.
- Equal weight should be given to improving the experience of both residents and tourists
- Castle: Hastings outsourcing should not be the way forward- knowledge, passion and experience are lost
- Signage (especially to the castle) is not clear enough
- The "1066" history is largely absent. Focus this on the castle?
- The museum is too separate from the town and seafront

The 'spaces in-between':

Participant

- Connection and communications
- Documentary/archive heritage bring back from Falmer

Participant

- Pedestrianise High Street
- Town map and bus routes at Hastings station

Participant

- Natural environment- all parks and gardens, sites of local conservation interest (used to be SNCI's). Prevent destruction through development, care for them and provide more information for local people about these sites and their importance and direct visitors to them.

Participant

- A 20 mph limit on seafront would reduce fatal accidents and might divert through traffic to use the underused link road

Participant

- Alexandra Park and Hastings Country park should have much better signage

Participant

- Alexandra Park- It's more than just a park
- Country Park
- Smaller green spaces throughout Hastings and St Leonards
- There has been much research highlighting the health benefits of green spaces
- Pier: 180 degree view from Beachy Head to Dungeness

(Friends of Alexandra Park)

- Alexandra Park
- Country Park- Long distance footpath
- Beach
- Artists not been mentioned

- Pedestrian routes especially to the seafront (street-level crossings)
- Enhance seafront facing the sea- these businesses are struggling
- Alexandra Park- Visitors need to find it. Spend more money – Do not run a cycle route through
- Preserve green spaces and woods

Information and Interpretation:

Participant

- Bus delay notices on bus stops

- Talking lampposts focussed on adjacent important buildings

Participant

- Several places to provide information – including station/bus station/ Stade/ town centre- memorial/ pier/ Warrior Square/ St Leonards etc.

Participant

- Many of the town's archive which were in Hastings Library have been moved to the keep in Falmer. It should all be returned (or proper digital copies made online)

Participant

- Not enough web based information but many people prefer leaflets and signage (not just the old)
- Litter situation in all aspects is utterly in need of overhaul and obviously affects every issue raised.

Participant

- There are many caravan sites around this town. How much signage is there to its heritage

Leadership and Delivery:

Participant

- Need to include social character

Participant

- The conservation of the unique Net Shops should be given much higher priority. The buildings are standing in a sea of litter, weeds and dumped items. All this should be removed and their environment should be returned to shingle.

Participant

- There is a proposed civic society which could be an umbrella for much of this

Funding:

Participant

- Build links to local voluntary/community groups

Participant

- Hastings council budget should prioritise heritage more than at present

Participant

- Council should have over-arching and holistic role involving volunteers and business

The responses have been anonymised in line with the Data Protection Act.