

# Re-action

Hastings & Rother Disability Forum  
Newsletter Autumn 2005—issue 6

## **Closure of Accessible Toilet in Bexhill Town Centre**

As many of you who live in, or visit, Bexhill will know, the toilets in Bexhill town centre have recently been closed. HRDF are particularly concerned around the closure of the accessible toilet, as this means that there is now no accessible toilet in the town centre. This toilet is included in the RADAR National key scheme, so appears in their National Key Scheme guide. We feel that with the closure of this facility, disabled people may re-consider visiting Bexhill given that there is no accessible toilet they can use.

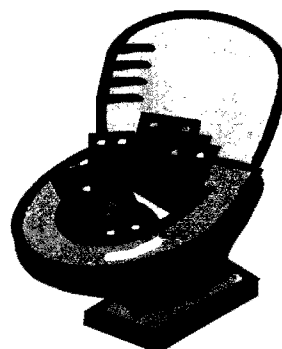
Several disabled and elderly people have mentioned to us that they find themselves in Town Hall Square at the bus stop (after long journeys), needing to use the toilet. We have suggested that in this situation they use the toilets in the Town Hall (which is a public building - therefore its toilets must be public toilets). If the council are unhappy about us promoting this course of action, then they need to consider re-opening the accessible toilet by Sainsbury's.

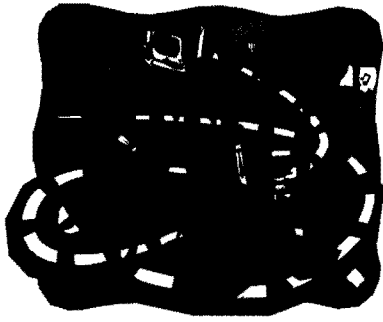
Some members have also suggested to us that, if the decision to close the

toilets has been made to save Rother District Council money, then they could consider implementing a charge for people using the men's and women's toilets to raise the necessary funds for upkeep of the facilities. Please let us know what you think about this issue.

A meeting of Rother District Council is due to take place on Friday, 25 November 2005, where the closure of the toilets is to be re-considered. HRDF has been in conversation with the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce around this issue, and they are fully supportive of our concerns. We eagerly await the decision of the Council meeting at the end of November, but in the meantime are considering holding an open meeting so that members can raise their concerns and discuss the matter with Councillors and Officers from Rother District Council.

Watch this space ...





## Blue Badge Parking Meeting Report

By Theresa Hodge

On Wednesday, 28 September 2005 HRDF members had the chance to discuss recent changes to rules around blue badge parking in Council car parks with officers and councillors from Hastings Borough Council. The changes were introduced in February 2005 and mean that any blue badge holders parking in disabled parking bays can park free of charge for three hours, whereas anyone parking in an ordinary parking space must pay for the entire time they are there. Previously any blue badge holders parking in ordinary parking spaces could also park free for the first three hours.

The meeting was very popular, with around 60 people present. Questions were put to the Council in advance so that the meeting could be interpreted by a sign language interpreter and the meeting was run on a "Question Time" basis, and some additional questions were asked from the floor. The meeting had been advertised widely and gained media interest. Parking is such a hot issue for everyone, particularly for disabled people who cannot use public transport. This was the first meeting we had held about a particular issue, and we felt that it was a good way of getting the views of our members, so this may be the way we conduct our open meetings in the future.

A report has been produced about the meeting, and will be sent to everyone who receives the HRDF newsletter. So ... happy reading!

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### On the subject of motorists and the law:

**The Daily Mail recently reported a story about a pensioner who escaped a drink-drive charge for being drunk in charge of his electric buggy!**

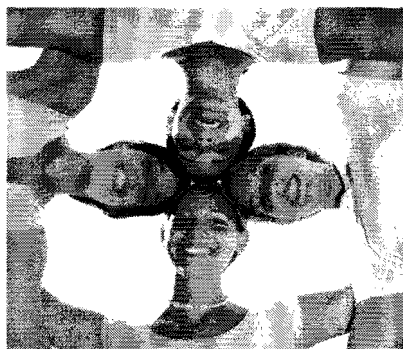


He drank six pints of lager before getting on his buggy, which has a top speed of 8mph and then toppling into a ditch. Lawyers from the Crown Prosecution Service have decided that they can't take action against him because he is protected by law. Under the law, buggies such as this one are not classified as motor vehicles and are thus exempt from road laws.

Prosecutors tried for seven months to find a legal basis on which to prosecute him without success. Apparently, under the 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act he is exempt from prosecution and the lawyers dropped the case, which has already cost around £3000.

(Daily Mail, Saturday 22.10.05)

# Hastings Young Persons Council



Have you ever heard of Hastings Young Persons Council? It could be that you've heard of the 'Youth Council' or the 'Young Persons Council', it could be that you've never heard about us at all! Well, we're sometimes known by all of these names and probably more, but we are only here for ONE thing and that's to make sure that those in power listen to young people in Hastings & St Leonard's.

At the moment we are a group of around 22 people between the ages of 13 and 25 and we regularly get to meet local councillors, politicians and other decision makers to let them know what we think of their plans and to give them our ideas. With nearly twenty five thousand young people living in Hastings & St Leonard's we don't think it should just be us speaking for everyone else! The Youth Council wants to get in touch with many more of you so that together, our voice is stronger and louder than ever before!

If you are a young person with a disability and are annoyed that your voice isn't being heard then why not become a youth councillor? We meet up twice a week (Monday and Thursdays between 6.30 and 8pm.) If you have opinions about the future direction of Hastings & St Leonard's, or simply want to see changes NOW then request information from us by ringing:  
01424 781492 or emailing: [hypc-info@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:hypc-info@hastings.gov.uk)  
Our postal address is HYPC, 38 Wellington Square, Hastings.  
TN34 1PP

**Hastings Young Persons Council is a partnership project between Hastings Borough Council and the Youth Development Service.**



## **‘Alison Lapper pregnant’**

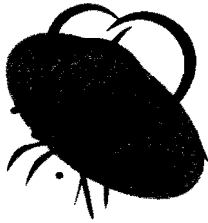
Well, the fuss over Marc Quinn’s statue of Alison Lapper seems, finally to have died down. Occupying a previously empty plinth, it stands approximately 3.5 metres high and is carved from white Carrera marble.

The statue has brought praise and admiration from many disabled people, although some have suggested that perhaps Trafalgar Square isn’t the best place for it, nestling amongst some of Britain’s best known military figures. But perhaps, like Nelson and the others, Alison could be given her place in history as a fighter. She may not have been ‘on the front line’ as it were, but, nevertheless, she has contributed significantly, both through Marc Quinn’s depiction of her as well as in her own work, to changing perceptions of disabled people.

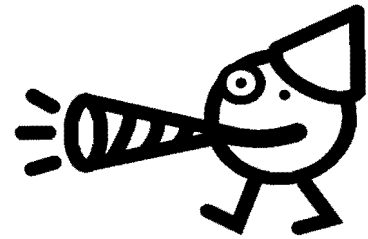
Ironically, there is another reason why the siting of the statue in Trafalgar Square should not be seen as unusual and indeed is entirely appropriate: Nelson only had one eye and one arm—that makes him disabled in my book!!!

Kev Towner

Hastings & Rother  
Disability Forum are  
holding a party



to

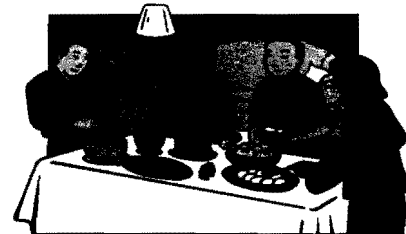


celebrate

International  
Day of Disabled People  
3rd Dec 2005

5.30pm—9.30pm

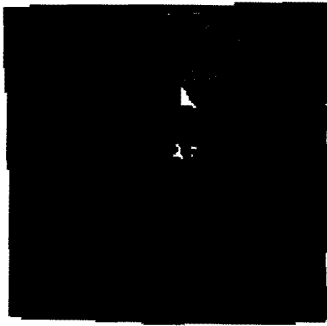
Bring a Bottle  
Buffet provided



Marlborough House Café  
2nd Floor, Marlborough House  
23—29 Warrior Square  
St Leonard's on Sea  
East Sussex.  
TN37 6BG

HRDF is a branch of the East Sussex Disability Association (ESDA).  
Registered address: 1 Faraday Close, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 9BH. ESDA  
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## Beyond Boundaries



Well, who's been watching 'Beyond Boundaries'? By the time you read this, you'll probably already have seen the final episode, so you can make up your own mind.

Personally, I really can't decide what to make of it. What a strange motley crew of participants! On the one hand, there's Ade (the guy with the dreadlocks). You'll probably recognise him from those BBC trailers at the beginning of programmes. Actually, for those who don't know, Ade is an elite wheelchair athlete — no wonder he's got so much stamina!

Then we have Sophie, who hasn't actually been using a wheelchair for all that long. Some of the other participants also haven't been living with their impairments all that long, so trekking across the Nicaraguan jungle can't be very easy.

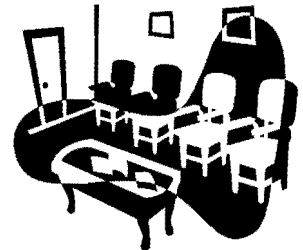
Then of course there's Charlie, the deaf guy, who just doesn't stop whingeing!

Fancy wanting to go home when you're in a canoe in the middle of a huge lake!! From the disabled viewers' point of view, the little 'video diary' style pieces introducing us to the participants doesn't seem to be too helpful. Telling us how they acquired and overcame their disability is merely, I feel, reinforcing those negative 'medical' stereotypes of disabled people and their lives that stop us presenting ourselves in the way that we would like to be seen.

Still, on a positive note, it's got people talking. If you're prepared to put up with a few condescending comments, this sort of programme provides us with an opportunity to challenge people's ideas about us and tell them who we really are.

**Kev Towner**

### **WANTED: Office share**



**HRDF are looking for new office premises. We would ideally like to share an office with another voluntary organisation that has space to spare. We do not use the office on a full time basis so an office share would seem ideal. Alternatively, if anyone knows of a cheap, accessible space for rent locally, please let us know.**