

Re-action

Hastings & Rother Disability Forum
Newsletter Summer 2005—issue 5

Hastings Country Park Access Trail II



As you may know from the local press the second Access Trail is now open. We are pleased with the work that Hastings Borough Council has carried out, but there are still a couple of issues that we have been looking at to make the trail even more accessible. The benches, which are wheelchair accessible, are especially well located, giving beautiful views over the Country Park and sea. If you have not been to the Country Park and wish to see the new Access Trail, then you will need to park in the main car park overlooking Fairlight. At this car park is the first Access Trail, from here go down the road towards the houses and Lifeguard Centre. Before you get to the houses, the Access Trail II is on your right.

STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...

ESDA's OUTINGS WILL CONTINUE...

More on page 4

Time to get Equal

In a recent survey, commissioned by Scope, to mark the anniversary of its 'Time To Get Equal' campaign, 78% of people polled said they thought it was acceptable for a non-disabled actor to play the part of a disabled character. This could help to explain the lack of good role models for disabled people in the world of television.

There are of course, some very good examples of disabled actors playing disabled characters: Luke Hambrill is a wheelchair user and stars in 'The Bill'. Dawn Tzerkezie, also a wheelchair user, appears in the children's TV programme 'Balamory'. Recently, there has been a wheelchair using doctor in 'Holby City'.

Nevertheless, the research suggests that there's a long way to go. Many roles are typecast as medical or tokenistic. Also many disabled actors are NOT members of Equity, the actors' union.

Let's hope that things change!

Kev Towner

JUSTICE!

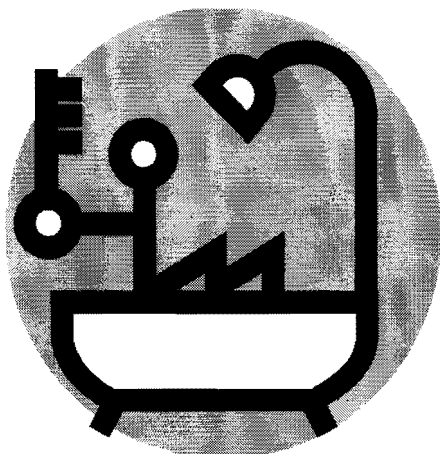
In a recent court case, a non-disabled man was given an anti-social-behaviour order (ASBO) for parking his car in a Blue Badge Bay—justice at last!

Bexhill Caring Community

Following a change in the constitution, Bexhill Caring Community now offers help to all age groups within the Bexhill Community.

We are able to provide helpers for gardening, caring and cleaning. We also have volunteers for shopping, visiting and general help.

Our Dial-a-Ride service is very busy and clients need to book well in advance to use the service. The charge is now £4.00 return. Our Voluntary Car Service is also very busy with journeys to the many hospitals in the area. We are hoping to have a new telephone service in the next few weeks in order to streamline the service.



The Bath Seat Service has been completely overhauled. All seats will now go out on permanent loan. We are in the process of purchasing a number of new seats in order that we can service all requests received. This will enable clients to have a bath whenever they like instead of having to wait for a seat to be delivered. The Bexhill Caring Community will maintain all seats as and when necessary. An initial deposit will be

payable with clients making regular donations towards the service.

We can also loan out a wheelchair on a short-term basis. During the summer we also organise and along with the Bexhill Friends of the Elderly fund, a once a month outing for residents of nursing homes. We are always grateful to receive unwanted appliances in full clean working order which we are able to loan to others: zimmers, wheelchairs, walking sticks, and bath seats, etc.



The Bexhill Caring Community is funded solely from donations and legacies and everyone's generosity is greatly appreciated. We also welcome anyone, whatever age, who feels that they could volunteer to help with one of our services. All volunteers must provide references and a CRB check will be made on all volunteers.

For more information please contact:

Bexhill Caring Community
25 Sackville Road
Bexhill on Sea
TN39 3JD

Tel: 01424 215116

(Registered Charity No 1108312 - Company number: 5312954)

Use it or lose it!



In a recent survey commissioned as part of the Polls Apart Campaign, 66% of polling stations (that's two thirds!!) were not deemed to be accessible. This is a big problem in Hastings, because many community facilities like church halls and community centres are used as polling stations. The Community Strategy has a target related to 'access to a community facility' but doesn't define either 'access' or 'community facility'.

Of course, it's now possible, whether you are disabled or not, to vote online. However, that doesn't mean that disabled people shouldn't have the right, like non-disabled people, to go to the polling booth and vote in person.

Kev Towner

Editorial comment:

I used a postal vote this year and sent it off as instructed about 10 days before the election confident that I had made the right choice in whom I voted for. By the time that polling day came, I had completely changed my mind and would have voted in a completely different way had I voted on polling day. I will not be using the postal voting system again!

Lizzie



New online Yahoo Group

available to help members keep in touch with the HRDF between newsletters. If you are interested in joining or having a look, email Lizzie on: lizziehawke@hotmail.com. for an invitation.



Hastings Railway Station

The Access Group had a very productive site visit with the Manager and new Access Officer at Hastings Railway Station. We looked at some of the issues that disabled people reported when using the Station and accessing the trains.

I feel that South East Trains heard our suggestions very well. Hopefully in the future, improvements will start to happen and new ideas will take shape.

Whilst we were there, we discussed the bridge at Warrior Square Station, and how it could be improved.

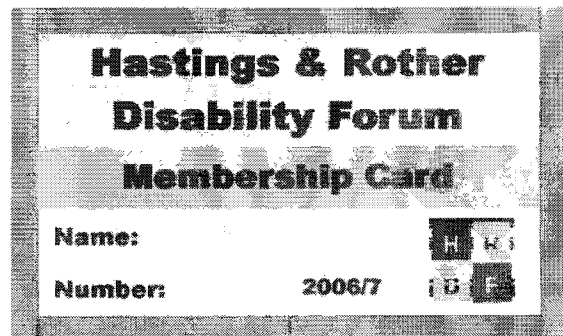
Paul Borthwick
Co chair Access Group

HRDF Membership review

HRDF want to be sure that we have the most up to date information about our members. To that end, we are redesigning the membership form to include more information. The new style form will be issued to everyone currently on our database as well as new members from September 2005.

Please complete this form and return it to the office as soon as possible. These details will then be entered on our new database and a membership card will be issued from now until 2007 when another membership review is anticipated.

If you would prefer to receive a membership form by email, please send your address to: newsletter@hrdf.org.uk and we will reply with a membership form as an attachment. Other formats will be available too. Please contact the office to request another format.





**Forthcoming events organised by HRDF at
Marlborough House Café,
St Leonard's on Sea**

**28th September 2005, 7pm—9pm,
Blue Badge Parking Meeting**

Following (HBC) Hastings Borough Council's decision to levy a charge to Blue Badge Holders parked in non-disabled bays in off street parking sites across the town, HRDF is giving disabled people an opportunity to voice their concerns and complaints about this to those responsible for changing the regulations.

We have invited Councillor Jay Kramer to Chair the meeting. She is currently deputy-leader of HBC and Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership's Equalities Group. Rasoul Shahilow, (Parking Services Manager, HBC), Cllr Godfrey Daniel (Cabinet Member for Environment, Safety, Transport & Forward Planning, HBC) are on the parking panel along with Paul Borthwick from the HRDF Access Group.

**12th October 2005 7—9 pm
Social Services Meeting**

We have invited Claire Debenham who works for East Sussex County Council to speak to a meeting about our experiences of receiving support from Social Services. What has worked for us and what has not, whether you think you are getting a fair service from Social Services or not. Whether you would like to receive Direct Payments and are not and what an improved service would look like to us. This meeting is equally applicable to all people who both are or would like to receive services from Social Services.

At the same meeting, we have also invited Justine Fallis from the East Sussex Disability Association who is currently working with parents of disabled children as well as disabled people in East Sussex to enable them to use Direct Payments as a group. This would share some of the burden of administering the scheme and enable people to pool resources and work co-operatively together and this cut costs and reduce isolation. It would enable personal assistance cover for holidays and sickness from within the group to be arranged.



ESDA's outings will continue...

Following a meeting at County Hall on the 18th July, ESDA members are able to see a future for their outings and trips provided by their local groups.

Historically the ESDA Coach Service was set up to take ESDA members on outings and holidays. ESDA purchased three coaches whilst East Sussex County Council funded vehicle maintenance, driver's salaries and administration costs.

A new service will be commissioned by ESCC from the independent sector. The council will continue to subsidise this service and ESDA's groups can continue with their group holidays, outings, clubs and trips.

Whilst ESDA would have preferred to see no change to the current arrangements, we look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with the council in order to ensure the best possible outcome for disabled people

and the groups that support them. We also need to ensure that charges for the buses do not exclude disabled people from social activities.

We are encouraged by Councillor Bentley's comments recognising ESDA's expertise in supporting disabled people in the county.

**Nick Tapp
ESDA**

Rother Improvement

HRDF is looking to improve its position in Rother.

At present the HRDF committee is made up of people mainly living in Hastings. The Access sub-group has representatives from Rother District Council at its meetings. So the Access Group do discuss issues that directly affect people in Rother. We have the potential to do more in Rother but we need your support and suggestions, so that we know what issues affect you and how we can push to make improvements in these areas.

We are limited because we are a group of volunteers, and therefore cannot attend every meeting, or know the issues that affect people in other areas.

If you are interested in these issues, contact Paul Borthwick at the office.

Contact Details for the Hastings & Rother Disability Forum:

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