



Hastings & Rother Disability Forum

Summer Newsletter

Welcome to the summer edition of the newsletter. The main items in the newsletter: Annual General Meeting, regular drop-in sessions for all members, dropped kerbs, a new website and "we want more committee members!", "give us back our pavements", children's play areas, a new accessible cafe in Hastings, polling stations and World class places.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Disability Forum will be held on October 14 at Marlborough House in Warrior Square, St Leonards starting at 3 p.m. in the dining room on the second floor. We will also be holding a brief presentation about welfare benefits. It would be great if as many members as possible come.

Regular Drop-In Sessions For All Members

We have recently received a grant from Hastings Borough Council and the Primary Care Trust to hold regular drop-in sessions which will be open to all members. We want to make these as interesting as possible and would welcome your suggestions for subjects and events . So far suggestions have included holding a session about complimentary therapies such as reiki, hypnotherapy, reflexology, aromatherapy where we can get practitioners to hold demonstrations and explain the possible benefits. The first of these session will be on September 9th about access issues in Hastings and Rother to which we will invite our MPs, local councillors, planning officers etc. The sessions will be held between 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. at Marlborough House in Warrior Square and all members are very welcome to come. Refreshments will be provided. Please try to come along and support these events. You will be made very welcome.

New Website

We have recently updated our website www.hrdf.org.uk
Please have a look at it and tell us what you think. If you would like anything added let us know.

Dropped Kerbs

You may have noticed that all around Hastings and Rother a number of dropped kerbs are being improved and made more suitable. For example the new crossing at Cornwallis Gardens is lovely. However why the crossing in Bohemia Road outside the Pizza Hut cannot be sorted out in the same way is just a mystery.

Dropped kerbs can generally be found at road crossings to help people cross who may use wheelchairs, push chairs or buggies, or for people who just find a raised kerb difficult. Ideally dropped kerbs should be flush/level with the road surface but it is acceptable for there to be a very very small height difference between the road and the kerb. Many people will have noticed that often there is a much bigger height difference which makes things difficult. The Forum would like to congratulate the councils for making improvements. However there are still many examples of where more work needs to be done. If members would contact the Forum and let us know where improvements need to be made will pass these on to the relevant council.

New Committee Members

If you would be interested in becoming a committee member of the Forum please get in touch. We would very much welcome additional members on the committee. You can become a co-opted committee member and then become a formal member at the Annual General Meeting in October. See the Contact Us section at the end of the newsletter for details of how to get in touch.

New Accessible Cafe in Hastings

A new cafe has opened in Robertson Street. It is called Café des Arts. It is beautifully spacious, has an accessible WC, a good menu and is very friendly. It is located in the building that used to be Jones shoe shop before it moved closer to Debenhams.

Give Us Back Our Pavements

Over the last few years, we have seen most of Hastings town centre pedestrianised. This makes it easier for everyone to get around the town. But what happens when a vehicle decides to travel along the road? We are expected to move off the roadway and onto the pavement. This is fine if you can get onto the pavement.

A while ago, we had a campaign to get rid of 'A' boards from the middle of the footpath and this was successful for a while. Now the 'A' boards seem to be returning and we seem to have a new problem.

Cafes and restaurants, that have tables and seating outside, have a limit as to how much of the pavement they may take up. This limit is normally defined by 'studs' put in the pavement, to mark the maximum area allowed. This is done to ensure that a part of the pavement is always free for people to walk on (applied under Highways Act).

If you go along Robertson Street, when a vehicle comes along, you will often have to cross to the other side of the road, as several cafes/bars, place their table and chairs right up to the road, and then fence or rope the area off. Now that summer is here, the crowds will be walking along with you, if you are in a scooter or have difficulty walking, you know how difficult it is to weave through crowds to get onto a crowded pavement to let a vehicle pass.

Let's get the council to look into this, and do something about it.

Children's Play Areas

Hastings Borough Council is currently embarking on a project to redevelop a number of children's play areas within the town. If you would be interested in contributing to the council's plans to help make sure the areas can be accessed by disabled parents or carers and/or disabled children please get in touch with Peter Mead at Hastings Borough Council. He can be contacted on 01424 451385 or by e-mail at pmead@hastings.gov.uk

World class places: The Government's strategy for improving quality of place

The way places and buildings are planned, designed and looked after matters to all of us in countless ways. The built environment can be a source of everyday joy or everyday misery. Its quality is an important influence on crime, health, community cohesion and prosperity. It has a major impact on wildlife and climate change. The government has produced a document which explains exactly how they are going to do this. It can be found at the following web site

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/worldclassplaces>

The government states that to achieve this objective it wishes to include promoting and funding more user engagement in the design of new public buildings. The Forum needs to ensure this happens by us being involved in new developments.

How Easy Is It to Get to the Place Where You Have To Vote?

Many people reading this newsletter will recently have voted in the council and European elections. If you have found that access to your polling station is not good can you please let us know. We would like to put pressure on the council to make access better and easier for everyone so no one is excluded from voting because they can't get to their polling stations because of steps, poor lighting, uneven pathways, doorways not wide enough for wheelchairs etc.

Contact Us

Postal address: HRDF, PO Box 269, Hastings, TN34 9BS

Via e mail: enquiries@hrdf.org.uk

The views or articles in this newsletter are not necessarily those of HRDF or ESDA.