

Inside:
Your Pull Out
Guide to What
is Happening
in and Around
Hastings



Reform in Reverse

PAUL MCCLAUGHLIN

Reform UK has withdrawn its threat to report Barry Ashley, the owner of the Grumpy Cook café in Robertson Street, to the police, along with local Labour MP Helena Dollimore. The party, which now controls East Sussex County Council (ESCC), had accused them of “inciting hatred and potential violence” against Council Leader Andy Woolley, following the Council’s decision to scrap summer holiday food vouchers for children. Helena Dollimore had described the Council’s decision as “disgraceful” while Barry Ashley promised to “provide free lunches to those who need them most to ensure that no child goes hungry during the school holidays.”

Local anger over the council decision was picked up by the national media, sparking sharp criticism nationwide. In response, Cllr Woolley addressed the hostility directed at him and his family in an email to Ms Dollimore and Mr Ashley. He pointed out that it was a collective decision by the ESCC Cabinet to stop issuing the vouchers and claimed

“Your continued naming of me personally has led to an increase in on-line abuse of me personally and has now reached a point where you could be responsible for inciting hate and potential violence against me, a political official, and members of my family. You of all people should be aware of the increased sensitivity of these sorts of posts since the sad murder of Ann Widdecombe. As such, I shall be reporting you both to the police and to the Parliamentary Standards Committee.”

Mr Ashley said he was taken aback by the Council Leader’s response to his *Help Feed a Child This Summer* initiative. He has been providing kids with free meals each day to ensure that no child goes hungry during the school holidays and said he never expected this would end in threats of police action.

Initial disbelief over Cllr Woolley’s threatening emails quickly gave way to ridicule across social media, as the Council Leader, an advocate for free speech, was mocked for seemingly opposing it.

Following the backlash, a spokesperson for Reform UK issued a statement clarifying



Seagull fever hits Hastings Old Town Carnival with the inaugural Seagull Squawking Competition



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YOUR DESIGN, OUR COVER
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Details from design@yourhip.co.uk

EDITOR'S NOTE

It ain't half hot ... often unbearably so. Figures from our local volunteer-run weather station reveal Hastings recorded the highest daily minimum UK temperatures in June. Head to the seafront for cool breezes and a coffee in Bottle Alley's morning shade.

In News, the Reform-led ESCC council has decided to withdraw a preposterous threat to report critics of its policies to the police, and we reveal the story behind a small but tragic shipwreck on St Leonards beach.

Ever heard of the creative economy? Our Education section explains how hands-on skills are of increasing importance to the employment market.

Fingers crossed; Hastings Contemporary has reached the last six of the European Art Gallery Award 2026. Closer to home, a chance to join the Hastings Silent Movie Ensemble and provide backing music at showings of classic, black & white silent films. Also in Arts, Hypha Studio's pop-up gallery space in Priory Meadow and a preview of Skinny Sunday, a one-day youth music takeover of White Rock theatre's Studio 17.

In Food, we visit the Prince of Wales, a self-brewing, backstreet community pub with enthusiastic owners dedicated to bringing people together.

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News

Hastings Creative College in Town Centre

ROBERT BOUCNIK

Hastings Creative College (HCC) will take over the second floor of the old Debenham's building from September. The college, formerly DV8 Sussex, Bexhill, provides vocational qualifications at Levels 2 (GCSE equivalent) and 3 (A Level equivalent) in Games Development, Music Production and Performance, and Film, Photography and Creative Media to post-16 students.

HCC has always seen itself as an antidote to bigger and more orthodox further education colleges, with less formality, smaller class sizes and a more supportive, personalised approach. Company CEO Stephen Jeffery explains the impact he expects the new college to have on the local community:

"We think with HCC in the centre of town, we can open up the area to grass roots creativity, e.g. music, art, gaming, as well as accredited and non-accredited education programmes. This we hope will encourage more engagement with local businesses and residents. We are keen to open our facilities for community use, and this is something we will be taking soundings on ... with key stakeholders."

The origins of the new college go back more than twenty years to a



DAVE YOUNG

youth project in Shoreditch, where disaffected local youngsters were taught to DJ, mix and produce music in drum and bass clubs. The youth project moved to Brighton in 2002 and acquired formal status as an education provider under contract to the DfE in 2013, when English and Maths also became part of its curriculum.

After opening a second site in Bexhill in 2017, DV8 was taken over by the London Learning Consortium in 2020 and was rated as 'Good' by Ofsted in 2023. Student numbers have grown rapidly in response to the popularity and success of the organisation with GCSE results in English and Maths exceeding the national average over several years.

Lecturers are grounded in experience from their relevant industries, so work experience and connection with employers has

prepared many students for a successful transition into suitable and fulfilling work.

Stephen Jeffery still heads the London Learning Consortium parent company and believes they have "significant experience of delivering adult education programmes and see this as another aspect of the services we could offer in the town. As in many coastal towns, employment is difficult and insecure for many people, but perhaps even more so for young people. There are several new qualifications and 'routes' being implemented over the next few years and we are planning to use these as opportunities to expand our provision. I am really excited about the new technical pathways being proposed by the DfE, and in tandem with increased devolution we are looking forward to widening our provision and services to both residents and employers."

Although HCC will be on site in September, it will not be open as a college until the new year, and it is hoped the transfer from DV8, Bexhill will be complete by next Easter. Stephen Jeffery explains the plan is to complement rather than compete with the existing colleges in the town adding "HCC focus(es) where main-

stream education has been less successful, with students that need more time, more support, a different regime of learning and thrive less well in larger educational institutions.

We also act as a conduit into accreditation and further education for young people who have been electively home educated. As an inclusive college, we welcome learners who have experienced barriers in their learning journey, whether that is additional learning or social needs, mental health concerns or involvement in offending; all applicants are considered on a case-by-case basis, often in consultation with parents/carers and other services.

Many young people need a different place to learn and a space where they are allowed to be different and show their talents and ambitions. We therefore have a 'niche' and sit within the FE ecosystem in a small but vital area."

It is quite a story from humble beginnings to three thriving sites in Croydon, Brighton and now Hastings. The arrival of Hastings Creative College is a welcome boost for the town centre and for local creatives of all ages in the community who will be able to use its facilities and services.

HASTINGS TIDES						
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET MOON
FRI 14 AUG	H 0:51	L 7:54	H 13:07	L 20:16	5:43	20:21
SAT 15 AUG	H 1:31	L 8:36	H 13:46	L 20:57	5:45	20:19
SUN 16 AUG	H 2:09	L 9:13	H 14:34	L 21:33	5:46	20:17
MON 17 AUG	H 2:44	L 9:45	H 14:57	L 22:04	5:48	20:15
TUES 18 AUG	H 3:18	L 10:13	H 15:32	L 22:32	5:49	20:13
WEDS 19 AUG	H 3:53	L 10:41	H 16:10	L 23:04	5:51	20:11
THURS 20 AUG	H 4:34	L 11:17	H 16:59	L 23:45	5:53	20:09 FIRST
FRI 21 AUG	H 5:34	L 12:07	H 18:14		5:54	20:07
SAT 22 AUG	L 0:41	H 7:01	L 13:11	H 19:42	5:56	20:05
SUN 23 AUG	L 1:50	H 8:23	L 14:27	H 20:58	5:57	20:03
MON 24 AUG	L 3:09	H 9:30	L 15:51	H 21:57	5:59	20:00
TUES 25 AUG	L 4:30	H 10:21	L 17:02	H 22:43	6:00	19:58
WEDS 26 AUG	L 5:26	H 11:02	L 17:49	H 23:21	6:02	19:56
THURS 27 AUG	L 6:07	H 11:36	L 18:28	H 23:53	6:03	19:54

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1 ← that Cllr Woolley was not pursuing a personal complaint against either Mr Ashley or Ms Dollimore. Instead, "was seeking advice through Sussex Police's procedure for supporting elected members who receive threats and abuse." The spokesperson went on to say: "No one should face a police report for simply criticising a decision the council has made."

The spokesperson concluded by saying Cllr Woolley and his family had received a "large amount of highly abusive and threatening messages from other people across the country, well beyond Sussex. The decision to end the vouchers

was taken collectively and has been personalised in a way that a collective decision should not be. Andy has always been clear that he does not hold Mr Ashley or Ms Dollimore responsible for the abuse itself, which has come from others."

Ms Dollimore welcomed "the clarification". She said "politicians and members of the public should be free to comment on and criticise decisions made by their opponents. I know that Reform UK includes 'defence of free speech' as amongst its policies."

Mr Ashley said he would continue to provide free meals to struggling families.

St Leonards Rocks

JAMES ARNOLD-HO

A white sloop met a rocky end on the shoreline of St Leonards beach in the early hours of Wednesday (5 August), despite a frantic rescue effort launched the night before.

HM Coastguard teams from Hastings and Bexhill were scrambled on Tuesday evening after a flurry of 999 calls reported the vessel listing dangerously close to the shore. The Pett Level Independent Rescue Team were also called to help with the emergency.

When the Bexhill crew arrived, they found the yacht had already run aground. Welfare and registration checks were carried out, and the sole occupant, miraculously unharmed, was left aboard to pin his hopes on the rising tide in a bid to re-float the stricken craft.

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, however, the vessel began

taking on water. When Coastguard crews returned to the scene, the skipper had already abandoned the sloop and swam safely ashore. There are unfortunately few specific time-stamps of the incident's progress, besides a callout to RNLI Eastbourne for assistance that occurred at 05:43 on that Wednesday morning.

Hastings Borough Council (HBC) confirmed the vessel washed ashore at St Leonards' Grand Parade. Nearby landmarks include Warrior Square and gardens, alongside the aptly named Goat Ledge – the stretch of rocks along the shore that emerge at low tide, said to have earned its name centuries ago from goats grazing on the exposed seaweed. The sloop is believed to have come to grief on these very rocks.

Local beach-goers and eyewitnesses reported seeing the sloop sailing unusually close to the shoreline in the days preceding it running aground. Regular swimmers at Goat Ledge, accustomed to watching sail-



All that remains of the Maranatha

ing boats and the occasional cargo vessel drift far out on the horizon, said the sightings sparked mild concern. While skippers must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), the Merchant Shipping Act and local coastal bylaws, UK law does

not currently stipulate a fixed minimum distance from the shore for vessels not entering port.

HBC has confirmed it is working with partners and contractors to oversee the cleanup. Parts of the vessel still remain on the beach and will be removed by Monday 10 August.

This unfortunate incident raises questions about navigation practices around St Leonards. The Goat Ledge rocks can be treacherous even for experienced sailors. Whether the wreck will prompt calls for tighter regulation or greater caution remains unclear.

Local Skipper Homelessness Once Again

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

The skipper of the stricken sloop, Maranatha, which ran aground off the Sussex coast, is locally born sailor, Justyn. After becoming homeless in Hastings two years ago, he has lived continuously aboard boats. An experienced mariner, Justyn knows the perils of navigating the English Channel, particularly along the Sussex coast.

Recounting the incident, Justyn explained that he had dropped anchor roughly 500 metres from the

Goat Ledge restaurant and secured his mooring when the wind suddenly changed direction. He now regrets his decision to re-anchor. The windlass mechanism, which is used to safely raise, lower, and secure the anchor and chain failed, forcing him to manually crank the gear by hand. Despite his efforts, the sloop began to drift, and in desperation, he called HM Coastguard.

The coastguard responded promptly. Justyn initially refused to abandon ship, believing he could rescue her at high tide. However, in the early hours of Wednesday (5 August), the sloop began taking on water, and he was forced to bail out.

Coastguard members bravely waded out to the vessel to ensure it posed no danger to other craft or to beachgoers.

The wreck has left Justyn homeless once more. He now sleeps on benches along the Grand Parade's lower promenade, though he managed to salvage some of his possessions – and even the vessel's engine – by rowing them ashore in his dinghy, no small feat given its size.

Justyn is philosophical about the loss, having weathered far greater traumas in his life. He is determined to return to sea, where he feels most at home. He plans to rest for a few days before sailing his dinghy to Rye for some recuperation along the Military Canal.

Friends have launched a GoFundMe campaign to help Justyn get back on his feet: gofundme.com/f/needina-new-home-due-to-weather

Norman Heritage Banner Competition

Hastings Borough Council invites residents, families, and local groups to participate in the Norman Heritage Banner Competition, which seeks creative designs inspired by the town's unique Norman history, landmarks, and stories.

The winning banner designs will be professionally printed and

displayed along a curated trail weaving from Hastings Railway Station to Hastings Castle, via the Town Hall, seafront, and West Hill Lift. Organisers say the vibrant installations will bring the area's rich Norman heritage to life while delivering an unforgettable experience for visitors.

Visitors will be able to scan QR codes to discover local history, stories and information connected to each banner design. A free printed trail map will also be available to help people follow the route and explore the town.

Designs must be created using the official banner template [hastings.gov.uk/content/heritage-trail/Hastings_Banner_outline_template.pdf](https://gov.uk/content/heritage-trail/Hastings_Banner_outline_template.pdf)

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Helena Dollimore

Water Mess

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

The Environment Agency (EA) has published its first comprehensive assessment of England's rivers, lakes and coastal waters in six years. The findings reveal that only 15% of the country's waterways are classified as being in good ecological health, while not a single river or lake passed the regulator's separate test for chemical pollution.

The damning national picture is reflected here in Hastings. In recent years the town has suffered repeated sewage spills, flooding and major water outages due to the failings of Southern Water. Yet, despite its abysmal record, water bills have continued to rise, and public confidence in the privatised company has plummeted.

With every fresh calamity, Southern Water steps up its public relations campaign to convince people

it is turning things around. This week residents received a leaflet inviting them to "dive in" and "enjoy with confidence" the "improving bathing water quality" in Hastings and St Leonards. The leaflet is likely to have caused many of them to raise an eyebrow. As HIP reported in our last issue, frustration at Southern Water's performance has sparked a campaign by residents to withhold part of their water bill in protest.

The Environment Secretary, Angela Eagle, acknowledged that the EA figures "underline the need for wholesale change across the water sector," yet she stopped short of advocating for a return to public ownership of the privatised water companies. While there is broad consensus that privatisation has been an unmitigated disaster, there is no agreement on how best to reform the sector.

The renationalisation of the water companies remains popular with the public and is supported by the Green Party. They argue that the privatised firms are so heavily indebted, that the initial cost of purchasing them from shareholders would be minimal. Critics, however, point out that while the takeover price might be low, the government

would still inherit billions of pounds of private debt, raising serious questions about how that financial burden would ultimately be managed.

Local Labour MP Helena Dollimore has backed an alternative plan she has co-developed with the Good Growth Foundation (GGF), a progressive think-tank focused on economic growth and reform. Their plan calls for the restructuring of water companies into customer-owned, not-for-profit co-operatives.

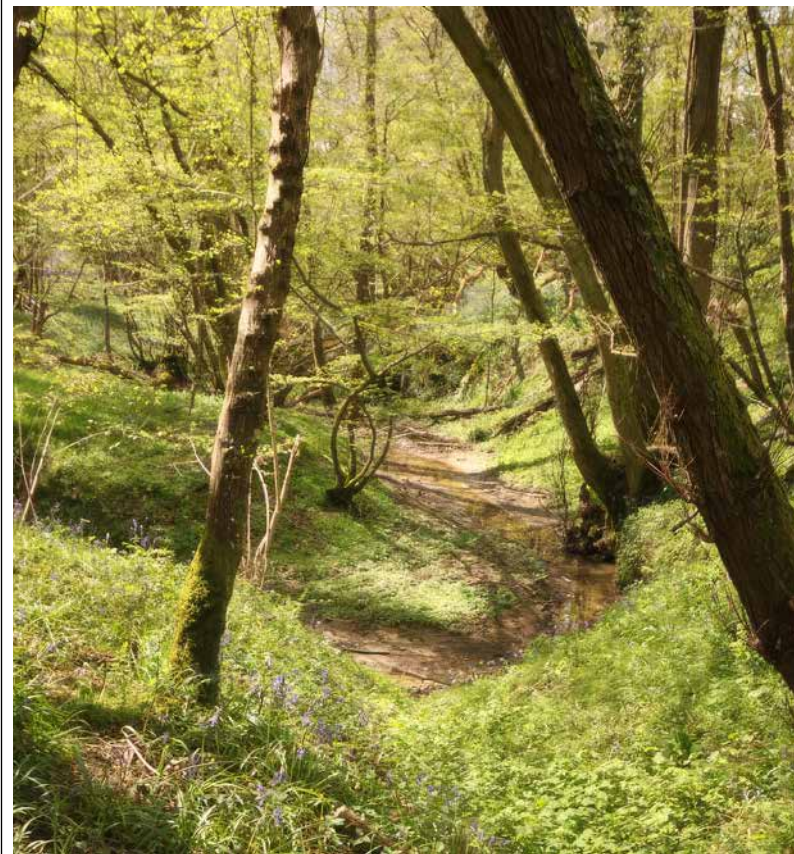
She wrote the foreword to the GGF report: *A Watertight Solution for Public Control*, and the research was based on the water issues she has had to deal with in Hastings and Rye since her election in 2024. These include the repeated dumping of raw sewage along the coastline, the flooding of Hastings town centre on two separate occasions, water shortages that left taps dry twice in less than a year and the release of 300 million plastic beads that washed up on local beaches.

Under the GGF proposals, shareholders and creditors of heavily indebted water companies on the verge of collapse would be required to absorb losses before receiving any government assistance in a potential rescue deal. Any company rescued in this way would then be restructured as a customer-owned, not-for-profit co-operative, rather than sold to the highest bidder – as happened when the banks were bailed out in 2008.

Less indebted water companies would also face tougher regulation, including enhanced monitoring, tighter restrictions on executive pay and a ban on dividends unless they meet strict financial, environmental and customer service performance targets. Any company that failed to do so would be forced into the co-operative model, with ownership shifting from shareholders to customers, and democratic board representation giving bill-payers a direct say in how their water is run.

The GGF argues that this "mutualisation" model offers a route to public control that avoids the crippling costs of full renationalisation, commands broad public support and does so without burdening taxpayers. It also has the backing of environmental groups such as Surfers Against Sewage, the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, and the General Secretary of the Co-operative Party, Joe Fortune.

Whether the future lies in full state ownership through renationalisation, a gradual migration to customer-owned cooperatives or some hybrid model, one thing is clear: the status quo is no longer tenable. The environmental clean-up of waterways will take decades, the financial burden on bill-payers has become unsustainable and public trust has all but evaporated. The question is not whether reform must come, but which form it will take, and how quickly the political will can be mustered to deliver it.



ESCC

Strategy to Halt Biodiversity Decline

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has published a pioneering Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) designed to reverse biodiversity decline across East Sussex, and Brighton & Hove. As the appointed Responsible Authority, ESCC will lead its delivery as part of wider regional conservation efforts.

The strategy has been shaped by input from more than 2,000 local residents. It sets out eight principles, 24 priorities and over 100 practical actions to create, enhance and connect habitats. The plan targets areas where interventions would deliver the greatest benefits for both wildlife and communities.

The key measures include enhancing vulnerable sand dune habitats like Camber Sands, which are considered irreplaceable and among Europe's most at-risk environments. The strategy also addresses the critical decline of water voles, which have suffered over 90% population loss in East Sussex over the past 30 years through bankside management and wetland creation.

Cllr Julia Hilton, Green Party Group Leader at ESCC and Deputy Leader of Hastings Borough Council (HBC), said she "definitely supports" the ambition behind the LNRS. HBC, she noted, contributed to its development alongside many other organisations and individuals.

However, she was critical of the

government's approach, pointing out that "the instruction to create one came with no funding to actually implement any changes" and that the strategy provides no formal protection of land from development. While she acknowledged it was a useful indicator for identifying areas where Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits could be used to improve biodiversity, she added that this mechanism has also been watered down by the current government, with smaller sites now exempt from the BNG requirement.

Looking ahead, she suggested that responsibility for implementing the LNRS is likely to move to the strategic authority following local government reorganisation, and that it was possible the new unitary authority for East Sussex would then allocate some funding.

In Hastings, Cllr Hilton said that HBC has committed to improving the biodiversity of at least 30% of council owned land and are actively exploring setting up a habitat bank so that nature in Hastings can benefit from any offsite BNG that needs to be generated from any development; this would mean that "we and the future unitary council can benefit from the income to help maintain our green spaces."



The strategy is one of 48 being implemented across England and is available at: SussexNatureRecovery.org.uk.



HNB Members and Programme Team Hastings Pride in Place Members and Programme Team

Pride in Place

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

The Hastings Pride in Place Board has appointed eight new community members to oversee how £21.5m of government funding for the town's regeneration programme will be spent. Backed by long-term government investment, the initiative places community involvement at its heart, channelling funding into improvements across education, health, employment, and other vital local services.

The new community board members are: Tony Davis; Darryl Telles; Frenchie (Alex Justin-French); Holly Paramor; Isaac Solomon; Lewis Daden; Malaika Scotney and Yasmin Ornsby.

Kevin Boorman, the Chair of the Hastings Pride in Place Board, said the call for community board mem-

bers earlier this year had attracted more than 120 applicants and the eight successful candidates were selected after a rigorous recruitment process.

He said: "Throughout this programme, we have been committed to ensuring that local people are at the heart of decision-making. These appointments represent an important step in that journey and will help ensure that the voices of Hastings residents continue to shape how this investment is delivered in our town."

The appointment of the new community board members is designed to strengthen the community-led approach at the heart of the Pride in Place initiative. They will work alongside existing board members, including local MP Helena Dollimore and Julia Hilton, the Deputy Leader of Hastings Borough Council, and partners to help oversee the delivery of projects, ensuring residents have a direct say in how the additional £21.5m of government funding is spent over the next decade.

The appointees bring a wealth of lived experience and professional expertise directly to the decision-making table and exemplify the community-first ethos that sits

at the heart of the Pride in Place programme. They include:

Tony Davis, a retired Ministry of Justice civil servant, lives in the Alexandra Park area and believes Hastings has enormous potential to be unlocked. He says: "We need to create something lasting, especially for the young people of the town."

Malaika Scotney works as a Senior Mental Health Practitioner providing mental health and wellbeing support to children aged seven to 17 within Hastings and East Rother schools. She has joined the board as a community member wanting to represent children, young people, families and visitors as people who deserve permanent spaces and experiences that reflect the town's independence, uniqueness and potential.

Lewis Daden was born and raised in Hastings and grew up in the Clive Vale area and went to primary and secondary school in Ore. He owns Fatboy's Barbershop on the High Street in the Old Town where he provides specialised services for children with SEN. As a local, as a parent and as a business owner he says he has a good insight as to what people want to see improved in the town.

Swimmers Raise Jet Ski Concerns

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Swimmers and paddleboarders in Hastings have voiced growing concern over the proliferation of jet skis and paragliders along the shoreline during the recent heat-wave. There have been several reports of dangerous encounters with jet skis, which have been spotted speeding recklessly close to crowded beaches. Adding to the unease, there are complaints about the intrusive noise and the acrid stench of engine oil, which becomes especially pungent on hotter days.

The danger for swimmers is heightened further by the increased numbers of paragliders. The airborne acrobatics can look spectacular but can also pose a grave threat to public safety. With volatile offshore winds frequently whipping up sudden, unpredictable gusts, pilots can easily lose control of their canopies and endanger unaware swimmers below as they hurtle into the sea.

Hastings Borough Council has advised that there are no specific byelaws banning the use of jet skis along the beaches. A spokesperson for HBC said that "while there is no prohibition on the crafts them-

selves, launches are restricted to existing authorised sites, such as the East Hastings Sea Angling Association and the Hastings and St Leonards Angling Association, which require user membership."

Despite the launch restrictions, reports of 'show-boating' and high-speed stunts close to the shore have surged during the recent hot spell.

Edwina Hughes, a year-round swimmer at St Leonards Beach, said "the prospect of jet skis zooming up and down from the pier can feel intimidating, as swimmers sit far lower in the water than the skiers – raising the worry that they might not see us."

HBC confirmed that "jet skis are subject to maritime law and that anyone witnessing the reckless operation of a watercraft particularly where life is at risk should call 999 and ask for the coastguard or police."



Mary Law and Nina Heaton outside Westminster Magistrates' Court just before their arrest

Local Pensioners Face 14-Year Prison Sentences

FERDUSARA ALI

Two local pensioners, Nina Heaton from Hastings and Mary Law from Rother were arrested outside Westminster Magistrates Court on Thursday (30 July), under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act, for publicly saying the words: "I support Palestine Action and I encourage everyone to do the same. Saving lives is not terrorism." If charged and convicted, they may face fourteen-years in prison.

Palestine Action was set up as a nonviolent protest group that campaigned against UK arms sales to Israel. MPs voted to proscribe it under the Terrorism Act at the beginning of July 2025, a decision that made it a criminal offence to express support for the group, to wear clothing that might suggest support, or to publish images of its logo.

The ban received overwhelming support from MPs, including the votes of Hastings and Rye MP Helena Dollimore and Bexhill and Battle MP Kieran Mullan. Since then, thousands of people have been arrested for peacefully defying it.

Ms Heaton and Ms Law were among 152 people arrested at the protest outside Westminster Magistrates Court on 30 July. According to Defend Our Juries, which organised the demonstration, more than 1,500 people had received letters informing them that hearings related to their previous prosecutions would take place at the court that same day. However, rather than being allowed into their listed hearings, the group says: "152 people were arrested outside – some for speaking to the crowd, some for helping put up a

small platform for speakers, and some, they say, simply for clapping."

The arrests took place on the same day that Huda Ammori, a co-founder of Palestine Action, won permission to challenge the ban in the UK Supreme Court. The case is set to be heard in the final quarter of this year and means the more than 3,500 people arrested since the ban was introduced will remain in legal limbo until the legality of the law is definitively resolved.

Nina Heaton says: "The UK government is desperate to silence any who dare to expose the UK's complicity and active participation in Israel's genocide in Gaza. It is desperate to conceal its highly lucrative arms trade with multiple Israeli weapons factories here in the UK. It is desperate to hide the truth from the British public. Sabotaging Israel's machinery of death, weapons that maim, mutilate and murder is not terrorism. Decent people, people with a conscience will carry on protesting because we are right. Genocide is wrong."

Tom Southerden, Amnesty International UK's Law and Human Rights Director, says: "We have long said that the banning of Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation was a grave misuse of sweeping counter-terrorism powers, with serious consequences for human rights. It is a shameful attack on our freedom of speech that those arrested today, for instance, could face very long prison sentences simply for peacefully opposing the government over the ban. We welcome the decision of the Supreme Court to grant permission to appeal, but the Government should end this sorry saga now by withdrawing the proscription."



Heatwave: The Summer of '26

As East Sussex enters its fifth heatwave of the year, the Met Office has confirmed the uncomfortable news that Hastings has set a new UK-wide highest daily minimum temperature record for June, with 23.2°C recorded by the town's weather volunteers on Friday 26 June and exceeding the previous UK record of 22.7°C set on the Isle of Wight in 1976.

It also confirmed July 2026 as the driest July on record for England and Wales in a series spanning 190 years, with Southern England experiencing its driest calendar month ever.

The Hastings Weather Service has been recording and reporting on weather data like this since 1875. Staffed by volunteers, the Weather Service publishes the information locally as well as submitting it to the Met Office each day, where the data is used to validate their forecasting and contribute to the long-term UK climate record (see HIP article: *A Day in the Life of a Weather Volunteer*, 21 September 2018).

But this was not an every-day recording. A member of the weather team points out: "In an era of climate change, this is not a record to welcome but is a sign of the times and possibly what the future holds." And, as Green Cllr Jo Walker says, "Setting a new national temperature record is a reminder that climate change is not a distant issue – it is happening now."

It is particularly uncomfortable news as it confirms on our own doorstep the crisis we are facing as a town, as a country and, indeed, as a planet. This is why Hastings Commons hosted a free community screening and discussion event featuring the climate change documentary *The People's Emergency Briefing* at the Observer Building on August 1. This important film is galvanising people around the country to take action on climate change in the absence of government leadership.

We have also been reminded of how uncomfortable one aspect of global warming can be: high temperatures at night that make it almost impossible to get a good night's sleep, at least under the current housing conditions in which we live.

In the meantime, here are a few tips for keeping cool as night temperatures stay high.

FOR YOURSELF

- Target pulse points: Dab cool water or place a damp cloth on your wrists, neck, or the backs of your knees.
- Wear loose cotton: Choose lightweight, breathable sleepwear or sleep with minimal covers to let body heat escape.
- Chill your pillowcase: Place your pillowcase in a bag in the fridge or freezer for a short time before putting it on your pillow.
- Stay hydrated: Keep a glass of cool water by your bed, but avoid heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol right before sleep.

FOR YOUR SURROUNDINGS

- Ventilate strategically: Open windows only when the outdoor temperature drops lower than the indoor temperature, creating a cross-breeze if possible.
- Position fans wisely: Set a fan facing outward directly in front of an open window to push hot air out or place a shallow bowl of ice in front of an inward-facing fan for a DIY air-conditioning effect.]
- Shift locations: If your upstairs bedroom traps too much heat, consider moving your mattress or sleeping on a lower floor or the lowest level of your home where it is naturally cooler.



Michael Lawless and volunteers of the Hastings Coastguard Rescue Team

Coastguard Station Open Day

The Coastguard Station at Rock-A-Nore opened its doors to the public last Saturday (8 August) as part of the Hastings Carnival Week celebrations. Officer in Charge Michael Lawless told visitors that volunteering with HM Coastguard was "one of the most grounding and rewarding things he has ever done."

Speaking with evident passion, he added: "Coastguarding constantly sharpens skills, whether it's rope rescue, flood rescue, casualty care, or decision-making under pressure. Training and callouts happen

in all conditions – dark, cold, wet, tired – and that's where resilience is really built. You learn to stay calm, communicate clearly, trust your team, and keep going when things are uncomfortable."



HM Coastguard is currently seeking new volunteers to carry out rescues and assist those in distress around our shores. If you are interested, please contact: gov.uk/volunteer-as-a-coastguard

Cancer Support One Cup at a Time

ROD WEBB

Nobody will deny that dealing with a cancer diagnosis on your own is very tough. But you're not alone if you pop down to the Macmillan Information & Support Hub at Hastings Town Hall where, three times per week, you can get free information and emotional support.

The Macmillan team is there to welcome you into a safe, confidential space where they will listen to what matters most to you. They can guide you through the tough days, connect you with financial guidance or link you to local practical help.

Whether you are living with cancer yourself or are caring for a partner, friend or family member, there's always a welcome. No need



to book an appointment, simply drop in whenever you are ready. Opening times are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

If you are looking for shared experiences, the Hub also hosts an informal Macmillan Friends and Family Coffee Morning on the first Thursday of every month from 10.30am to 12.30pm. It's completely free, and there's plenty of tea and friendly faces to help you feel at home. It's a chance to take a breath and chat with others who truly understand what you are going through.

COMMUNITY NEWS IN BRIEF

WALK FOR AL-MAWASI

Hastings has had links with Al-Mawasi, a fishing community in Gaza, for several years. Last year, Hastings Borough Council agreed to make it one of our Friendship Link communities abroad.

Every August since 2024, the Friends of Al-Mawasi group in Hastings have organised a walk to celebrate our link, make it more widely known and raise much-needed funds for the town – which has become a shelter for refugees fleeing from the Israeli Army's attacks all over Gaza.

This year the walk took place on the morning of 9 August. Supporters walked from the Stade along the seafront to Bexhill's De La Warr Pavilion.

Donate via the online fundraiser at chuffed.org/.../184544-hastings-walk-for-al-mawasi

SUNRISE WALK FOR THE SAMARITANS

Volunteers for Hastings & Rother Samaritans will be walking five kilometres along the seafront on Sunday 11 October to raise vital funds for the organisation and support those who are struggling with their mental health.

They invite the public to gather at Rock-A-Nore carpark at dawn to show their solidarity and join in. They say: "By taking part, you'll be helping our amazing volunteers continue to be there for anyone finding life tough. It's a beautiful way to show solidarity, support your own wellbeing, and make a real difference."

Registrations are now open – register or donate at dawnwalk.samaritans.org/branches/hastings-and-rother

EMERGENCY BRIEFING & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE NETWORK

Are your food and energy bills too high? Do you think Hastings is prepared for heatwaves and floods? Hastings People's Emergency Briefing is part of a UK public information campaign featuring a 50-minute film presented by Chris Packham. The film outlines the risks of the climate and nature crisis and the need to build local community resilience and encourage coordinated engagement with local decision-makers and MPs.

The first sold-out screening took place at The Observer Building on 1 August and was followed by group discussions focused on the challenges faced by people in Hastings and St Leonards.

There are two other free screenings in Hastings: at the Electric Palace Cinema, on Thurs 27 August and Sat 29 August, both at 11am. These are hosted and supported by the Quaker Society.

Education

7



181st Street Students: Left to right: Lewis Jones, Olivia Goodwin, Fleur Hazell-Jarvis, Jake Green, Dr Andrew Lumsden-Groom (managing partner at 181st Street), (Front): Sian Conway-Wood (senior managing partner at 181st Street).

Creative Futures are Here

In this edition of Education Update, local creative industries advocate and training provider SIAN CONWAY-WOOD asks 'Who is the creative economy for?'

Following the recent report by Alan Milburn warning that a million young people in the UK have been written out of the employment market, new Prime Minister Andy Burnham has promised to rebuild technical education, creating hands-on skills from the age of 14, with work experience opportunities and routes into real careers.

However, one line in his statement should give residents in Hastings pause for further thought. When the government listed the industries these new provisions will serve, it placed the creative industries "in our cities." Coastal areas apparently get manufacturing and clean energy. That sentence tells a generation of creative young people on this coast the same thing the industry has always told them: the work is somewhere else, and to reach it you must leave.

The creative industries have quietly run on exclusion for decades. The research is unambiguous. The landmark 'Panic!' study in 2018 (see link below) found unpaid work "endemic" with nearly nine in ten creative workers having worked for

free, and half of under-30s having completed an unpaid internship. This compares very unfavourably with the experience of older workers. The Sutton Trust has shown that the privately educated are heavily over-represented across the sector, and working-class young people the least likely to get in at all.

The door has always been wide open to those who arrive with money, contacts, and a London postcode. Hastings by comparison is the third most deprived local authority district in England, and yet this is one of the most creative towns in the country – a place of artists, musicians, makers and independents, with a cultural life that punches far above a town of our size and income. That creativity is real, and it is ours. What we have never had is the ladder that turns it into a living.

Earlier this year, Hastings submitted a bid to be UK Town of Culture on a platform of social mobility and opportunity for young people. We did not make the shortlist. Despite this disappointment, many suggest we should not be

using our creative and organisational energies chasing further titles, suggesting that culture as spectacle – the gallery, the festival, the badge – has never been what would most benefit the area. Rather we need our own young people to be able to build creative careers here and keep the value of them here.

I have spent my career in the creative industries, and I relocated my advertising agency from London's Chancery Lane to Hastings. At the start of this year we made a significant financial investment to renovate three empty units in St Andrews Mews into a dedicated creative studio, purpose-built to train the next generation of creative professionals. We are a delivery partner for East Sussex College's T Levels in marketing and business. T Levels are a recently implemented technical qualification in the UK – a two-year course taken instead of A levels and worth the same as three of them. The course is built around a substantial 315-hour industry placement, so students spend real time working in the field they're training for. We have hosted four 16- to 19-year-old Business T Level students for 150 hours each so far, where they have done real work on live campaigns for national and international brands, in a studio we built for the purpose.

Our training could allow them to access roles such as media executive, content producer, social media manager, account executive, brand strategist or marketing data analyst. Jobs like these are entry roles in a marketing career that runs from roughly £19,200 at eighteen to £40,000-plus for a manager within about five years. The realistic local alternative for a school leaver here (hospitality or retail) pays £17,300 to £22,000 and stays

broadly flat. Hastings' median full-time wage is £26,396, the lowest in East Sussex and 14% below the national average.

Marketing is the exportable part of the creative economy – it can be sold anywhere and delivered from anywhere. As an agency, 85% of our income comes from America, Europe and other areas of the UK. So it arrives in Hastings as new money rather than local money changing hands. Studies indicate that every £1 we earn generates about £2.31 of local economic activity, against £1.30 to £1.60 for a typical service business.

The university route into these jobs now carries around £47,700 of student debt. Those who undertake T levels here are debt-free and do not have to leave town or find money for rent somewhere even more expensive. Several months in, they are producing work I would put ahead of many graduates, and I say this as someone who lectures on MBA programmes at some of the country's leading business schools.

It is a small pilot so far, but it offers a compelling alternative to the model that has locked working-class, state-educated young people out of this industry for a generation. It is proof that the barrier was never the

talent. The talent is here, in abundance. The barrier was always access. Which is why the Prime Minister's omission matters so much. This is the moment the country may at last be rebuilding those ladders. To build them only in major cities and tell seaside towns they can have turbines but not creativity would be to repeat the exclusion that has for decades limited access to our national industries.

Hastings does not need permission to be creative, but the people rebuilding Britain's economy need to understand that a coastal town can grow a thriving creative economy of its own – not just export its brightest young people to build everyone else's. If Mr Burnham's devolutionary instincts are to be proven, new investment should make sure that coastal towns like Hastings and St Leonards are supported as part of our national cultural story.



Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries was released by Create London and Arts

Emergency, see createlondon.org/event/panic-paper

In the Circle

A BI-WEEKLY THERAPY GROUP FOR LGBTQ+ ADULTS

HASTINGS & ST LEONARDS

A confidential, therapist-facilitated space for LGBTQ+ adults exploring identity, relationships, belonging, grief and living authentically.

For people seeking deeper connection, reflection and personal growth.

SATURDAYS
10.00–11.30AM

Sean Kelly

Integrative Psychotherapist MBACP

sean@seankelly.org.uk

07798 740 830

seankelly.org.uk

FIND OUT MORE



SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND OUT MORE

Dutch to Take the VOC Amsterdam Home?

DAVID EP DENNIS

An ever-present reminder of the power of storm and tide for the last 277 years, something sits at St Leonards. At the lowest tides of the year, when the sea retreats from the Sussex coast at Bulverhythe, an extraordinary hulk appears. Dark, ancient timbers, the ribs of a ship long lost, emerge briefly from the sands before the Channel closes over them once more.

This is the wreck of the Amsterdam, a Dutch East India Company ship driven ashore in January 1749. For many in Hastings and St Leonards, it is both a local landmark and a source of fascination. People wonder about what lies beneath – does it still have treasure aboard? In recent years, a persistent rumour has circulated: that the Dutch intend to recover the wreck and take it back to Amsterdam. It is a story that captures the imagination. But how close is it to reality?

A REMARKABLE SURVIVAL
The Amsterdam is no ordinary wreck. Unlike ships lost in deep water, she lies close to shore, embedded in anaerobic fine clay sand and

quicksand that has preserved much of her structure for more than 270 years. At exceptionally low tides, sections of her hull can still be seen. “It’s one of the most accessible historic wrecks in the country,” says a local coastal observer who has monitored the site for years. “But it’s also incredibly fragile. What you see is only a small part of what’s still buried.” The wreck is legally protected under UK law. Yet its visibility and vulnerability have made it a focus of both public interest and archaeological concern.

KNOWN CARGO DISPUTED OWNERSHIP
On its outward voyage, the Amsterdam was carrying silver bullion (approx. 2–2.5 tonnes), textiles, wine, tools, weapons, and domestic goods. The silver alone would be worth millions today, but much of it was recovered or looted in 1749. Immediately after grounding, local people and authorities recovered much of the bullion. Some was looted by smugglers, which authorities attempted to reclaim. Archaeologists believe a very large quantity of material remains sealed inside, including personal belongings of crew and soldiers, tools, weapons, plus ship



Aerial view of the Amsterdam



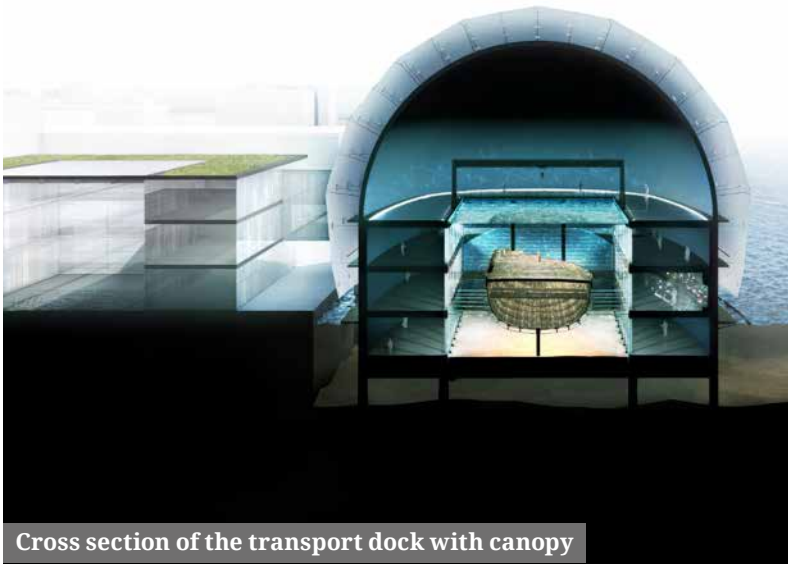
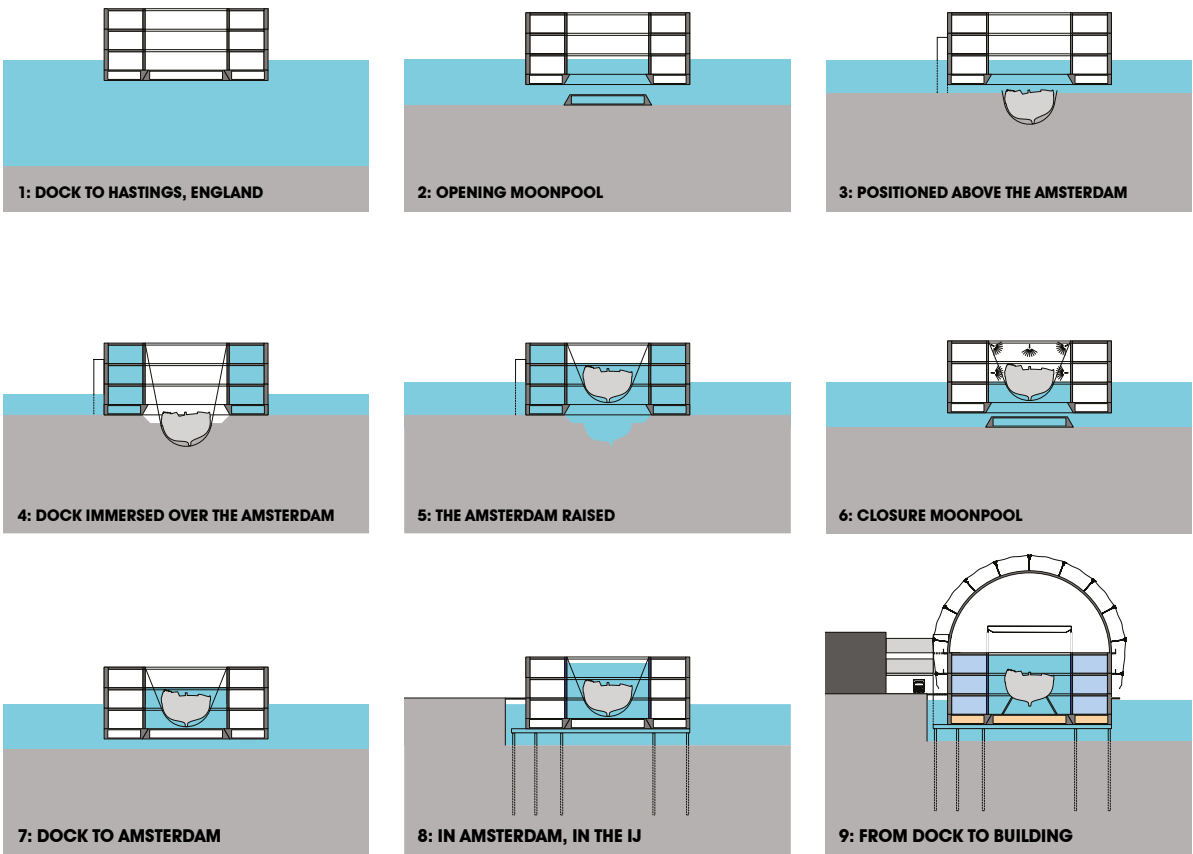
The wreck of the Amsterdam with the excavation facilities in 1984

equipment and cargo items (textiles, trade goods, wine, ceramics). The ship was built for the Dutch Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), the powerful trading company that dominated global commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Amsterdam is considered part of the Netherlands’ national heritage. At the same time, the wreck lies within British waters and has been protected since 1974 as a designated site. This unusual dual status, Dutch ownership but British legal protection, lies at the heart of the debate about its future.

THE RECOVERY DREAM
The idea of recovering the wreck is not new. Dutch archaeologists and heritage organisations have studied the Amsterdam since the late twentieth century, and at various points have explored the possibility of raising it. More recently, proposals have emerged, largely from Dutch



Closed transport dock around the wreck with lifting equipment



academic and design circles, for an ambitious solution. Rather than dismantling the wreck, the plan would involve enclosing it within a massive steel structure, lifting it intact, and transporting it, still submerged, to Amsterdam.

Once there, it could be housed in a purpose-built museum, allowing visitors to view the ship while archaeologists continued to study it by installing it in a glass-enclosed tank museum in Amsterdam. The idea was to create something comparable to the Vasa Museum (Stockholm) or the Mary Rose (Portsmouth), but with a crucial difference – the ship would remain underwater, and archaeology would continue in public view.

“It’s a brilliant idea in theory,” says a local historian familiar with the proposals. “You’d essentially create a living excavation in a museum setting. But the scale of it is enormous.”

RUMOUR VERSUS REALITY

Despite the persistence of local rumours, there is no evidence that such a project is currently underway. No funding has been publicly confirmed. No excavation licence has been granted, and certainly, no engineering work has begun. What does exist is a series of feasibility discussions and conceptual designs that are serious, but still at an early stage.

One of the main reasons for caution is the condition of the wreck itself. The Amsterdam has survived because it is buried in oxygen-free clay sand. This environment has protected the wood from decay. Remove that protection, and the situation changes rapidly. The danger is that once those timbers are exposed to air, the clock starts ticking.

The experience of other famous ship recoveries offers a warning. The Mary Rose, raised in 1982, required decades of conservation

work and continues to be treated today. Sweden’s Vasa, lifted in 1961, remains an ongoing scientific project. The Amsterdam presents additional complications. The seabed at Bulverhythe is unstable, subject to tidal scouring and shifting sediments. Parts of the wreck are deeply buried; others are already exposed and eroding. There’s a real risk that if you try to move it, you could lose more than you save.

A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE

Modern archaeology has increasingly moved towards a principle of preservation in situ; leaving sites undisturbed unless there is a compelling reason to excavate. In the case of the Amsterdam, many specialists believe that the wreck is safest where it is. This view is not universal. Some argue that controlled recovery could secure the ship for future generations and make it accessible to a wider public. But the balance of opinion remains cautious and moving the ship will cost a lot of money.

Even if the archaeological concerns could be addressed, significant legal and political obstacles remain. Any excavation would require approval from UK authorities, as well as cooperation with the Dutch government. Questions of ownership, transport, conservation, and display would all need to be resolved.

SO WHAT NOW?

For the moment, not very much. The wreck remains in place, monitored and protected. Research continues, both in Britain and the Netherlands, and interest in the Amsterdam remains high. In the Netherlands, artefacts recovered in earlier excavations are studied and displayed. In Hastings, the wreck continues to draw attention whenever it appears

on the foreshore.

“It’s part of our coastline,” says a local resident. “People come down to see it when the tides are right – as individual viewers or on guided tours. There’s a real sense of connection.”

The Amsterdam occupies a unique position, physically in England, culturally in the Netherlands, and historically in both. For now, the grand vision of lifting it and returning it to Amsterdam remains just that: a vision. It would take a huge amount of money, political will, and technical confidence. None of those are in place yet.

As things stand, the Amsterdam is not going anywhere. There is no active recovery project, no agreed timetable, and no immediate prospect of excavation. The risks, archaeological, financial, and legal, remain considerable.

For the people of Hastings and St Leonards, that may come as a relief. “It belongs here as much as anywhere,” says a local voice. “It’s part of the story of this coast.” And so, for now, the Amsterdam remains where it has lain since 1749 – hidden in the sands, revealed by the tides, and watched over by those who know where to look.

“DOCKING THE AMSTERDAM”

The proposal – by Dutch architects ZJA – is unusual in that the wreck wouldn’t leave the water at all. Waterlogged wood deteriorates rapidly in air, so the idea would be to keep it in seawater throughout the 250-mile trip in a semi-submerged salvage dock that holds the wreck while being towed across the sea.

On the coast near Amsterdam, the Amsterdam’s whole 131-foot-long remains would be encased in a steel-and-glass capsule that visitors could visit.

The plan has been commissioned by a foundation, helpfully named *Docking the Amsterdam Foundation* led by Amsterdam city archaeologist Jerzy Gawronski. As well as ZJA, Deloitte is involved for funding and grant raising, Mammoet for heavy lifting, Amsterdam Shipyards, and the City of Amsterdam’s Chief Technology Office advising.

There are no published costs for either the preparation work so far, and they don’t include an estimate for how much the plan would cost to implement. There’s a suggestion that the medium and big firms involved are doing this pro bono as part of their community commitment, rather than a commercial project.

In addition, rather than put this plan into action, the Foundation has now implemented a feasibility phase of 2027-2030, which suggests that the plans set out here may not be as worked through as they claim. It looks like the VOC Amsterdam will be with us for a while.

What's in the Air?

A new graphic novel rises

VICTORIA KINGHAM

Artist Jude Montague, ever interested in the history of radio and TV, has produced a lively and sometimes extraordinary graphic novel, detailing the beginnings of radio in Manchester. It's a personal story, featuring (among a cast of dozens) her grandfather Sydney Wright and his wife Marjorie. Sydney was a cellist in a trio (playing in a Manchester picture house) who were recruited to take part in the second BBC broadcast from Metropolitan Vickers, which was the next broadcasting base after Marconi's and named 2ZY.

It was a unique era – four years after the end of the unspeakable carnage of WW1, launching radio all over the country in a year that was, internationally, exceptionally creative in all the Arts, 1922 being an *annus mirabilis* for so many literary, artistic and social pioneers. A handful of



these intrepid innovators broadcast live music, the first children's programs, news, and French lessons, all from a tiny makeshift studio at an engineering works with a dominant, newly-built radio tower.

Montague has re-imagined her grandparents' history in the context of the cultural history of the era, from the crackling of an aerial in 1920, and the birth of experimental wireless stations, to the first long distance 'radio relay' transmission, inaugurated at 2ZY and represented in Jude's book with comparative sketches of the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, and the radio tower at Metropolitan Vickers. Her rapid drawings and text cover the pages in a random format, plentifully interspersed with dream sequences, word associations, vignette sketches of Manchester (a Lowry-like depiction of the entrance to Metropolitan Vickers covers a page, for instance), old train carriages, war tombstones (with a list of first names), a sequence of a woman chatting and cutting her hair into a bob

(so significant for the flappers of the time), woman-to-woman conversations about the replacement of silk stockings and lingerie by exciting man-made nylon fibre equivalents, and the then thriving tailoring business in the North. At one stage the protagonists fly in a biplane – presumably a Vickers.

NO FEAR OF FLYING

It's an unashamed, fascinating, and rather wonderful brain dump, arising out of Montague's undeniable facility with pen, brush and design straight on to the page, and some cogent research. There are scans of newspaper articles and old photos at the back, which for me could have done with enlarging, as they look as though they might help to indicate the trajectory of the narrative, but only the headlines are big enough to read. Even the title has a generous assemblage of meanings – the 'air' as in broadcasting 'on the air', the network, the 'air' as in the surrounding culture, the 'air' as in the general Zeitgeist, the anxiety and exhilaration of creating a New Age. And there's flying in the air too – a proliferation of owls, dreams of flying, and (when listeners started to write in to the station) a reference to a local story about a flamingo lost from the park. There are incidental chats about spiritualism, the opening of a box radiating the 'energies' of jewels (remember crystal sets?), the 'crackle and the static of the air that waits' – 'so luscious – a spirit language', all rapidly and

copiously illustrated. And there's a page on which the rows of Manchester terraces 'seem to know a New Age is dawning'.

The introductions, by broadcaster and radio historian Paul Kerensa and musician Alan Hempsall, ex Manchester band Joy Division (now of Crispy Ambulance), are essential reading. They help to ground the reader in the narrative, which digresses so plentifully (sometimes wildly) through local and national culture of the time. The novel's form, however, exactly echoes the content: it was the age of random and sometimes unintentional discovery, of burial of the past and celebration of the new, of an incorporation of science and technology into art (partly via the Futurists and the Vorticists) and the dismantling of representational tradition and the re-evaluation of Art itself. And if you get slightly confused about who's who in Montague's plethora of characters, and whether the illustrations are about imagined conversations or real social history, well then you're into the moment of creation, as they all were.



What's In The Air can be obtained from Montague Armstrong on 15 Kings Road (open Sats) any time, or online at montaguearmstrong.com. Book launch, readings, and presentations at Hastings Book Festival, 3 September



Bob Log III and Duck

Duck, Toast, and the Sacrament Reimagined

NICK TUCKER

For all of you who have seen Bob Log III live before, you will know he defies description. For any of you who haven't, that makes my job tricky, given that the main purpose

of a review is, largely, to describe what you've seen. And I'm not entirely sure what I have seen.

But it was, certainly, transcendently eccentric. Perhaps as a shorthand, I'll start by describing Bob Log as a cross between late-period Tom Waits – the ragged discordant Tom Waits of *Hoist That Rag* –

and Frank Sidebottom, with his large papier-mâché head swapped for a motorcycle helmet with an alien-looking breathing nozzle. Or maybe Elvis Presley reimagined by David Lynch, dark and impish. Bob wore a glittery one-piece jumpsuit beneath his silver helmet and emitted the frenzied sounds of a carnival barker on acid.

He also had stage props: a giant inflatable duck whom he introduced as his angry stage manager, then later reintroduced as a large yellow inflatable goblet for passing proseco around the crowd – something I would describe as impractical. He also had a yellow working toaster on the corner of the stage, which was

fed sliced bread throughout the show so the audience could listen to his music while enjoying the soft aroma of toast – which brings me to the music.

Without having heard it, you could be forgiven for thinking that everything described so far veers between self-consciously oddball and, well... gimmicky shit. But Bob's special talent is that it doesn't. It works perfectly together with the bizarre stage presence, and if anything, acts as a sleight-of-hand misdirection to show how virtuosic a slide guitar player, and effortless one-man band, he is. His music is all clang and stomp and driving rhythm with the sound of Delta blues mixed with hillbilly electronica, beneath a muffled rasping voice distorting into the microphone down the black funnel of his crash helmet.

INTIMACY AND ENGAGEMENT

The effect of this oddly funny lunacy was unique. I'd seen Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds two nights before in Brighton: they are a force of nature, but so is Bob Log III in a way you're just not going to get from big stadium acts. There was an intimacy and a real engagement with everyone in the room. People were invit-

ed up on stage to be anointed with little gold stickers, or to take selfies sitting on his lap (as long as they had a piece of toast). They shared the sacrament of a giant inflatable duck, and everyone danced and smiled.

There was a rare sense of real joy, an ode to eccentricity and community and fun, that was both about the music and not about the music, yet only really worked because the music was so good and everything was done deftly so that nothing jarred or took you out of the moment. When it was all over, everyone poured out of The Piper into the dark summer night with the kind of smiles on their faces that only come from having shared in the strangeness of what it can mean to be human.



Frank Sidebottom

Contemporary up for Award?

NICK PELLING

Something extraordinary has happened. Hastings Old Town has reached the last six of a European competition. To be more precise, Hastings Contemporary is the only UK gallery selected as a finalist in the competition to win the prestigious European Art Museum award for 2026.

The Contemporary finds itself in illustrious and daunting company. For example, one of the other five finalists is the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which is actually the National Museum of the Netherlands and has a range of works that covers 800 years of Dutch history. The idea of the Contemporary up against the Rijksmuseum in a competition has the feel of a diminutive David up against an art-gorging Goliath. And there are four more finalists, all of which are quite big hitters.

A UNIQUE ANGLE

Amongst the criteria for selection is how the museums or galleries find “innovative ways to engage with issues facing society today”. All of which sounds like the panel of judges will be looking to see if the institutions offer some sort of ‘relevance.’ The Contemporary has arguably seen that its very position perched on the sea amid a working fishing community gives it a unique angle on the world. After all, the

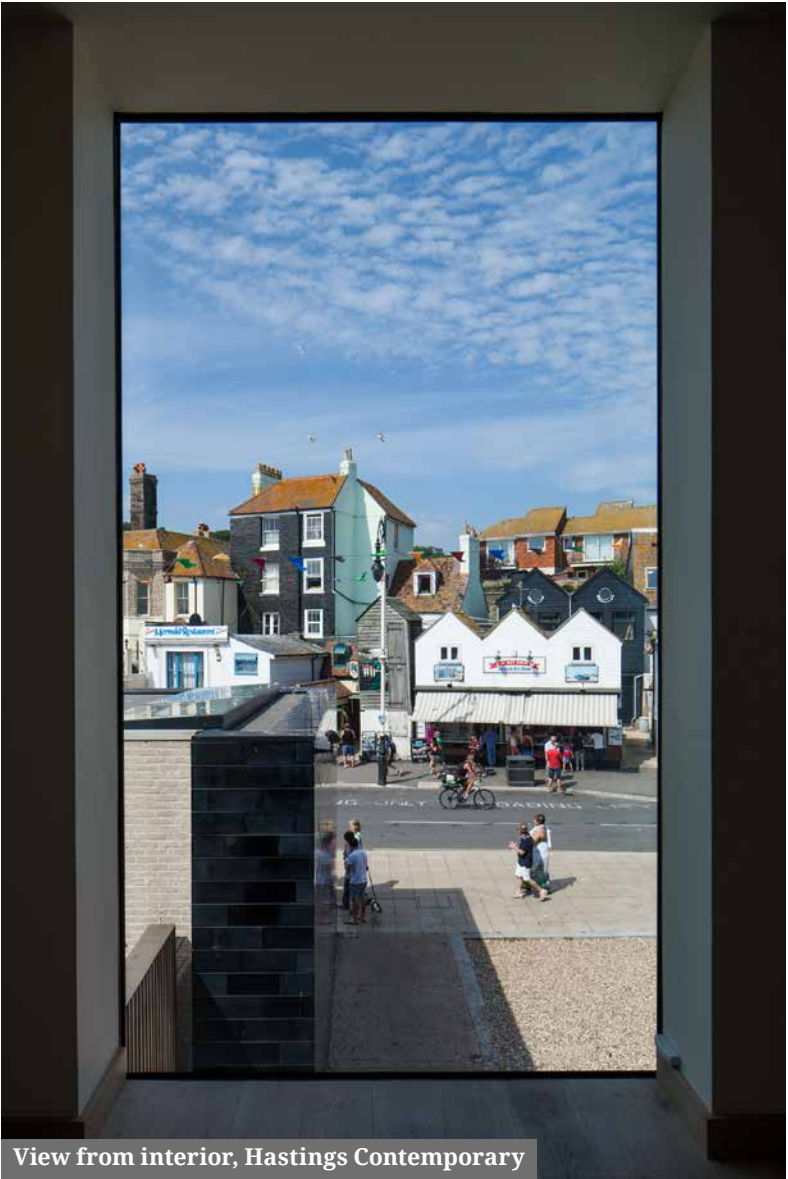
sea is always both local and global: a fun spot and a vast atmospheric engine. Consequently, recent and forthcoming exhibitions have been soaked in sea themes.

The Director of the gallery, Kathleen Soriano, and her team, have pushed hard for this, hoping to bring artists, scientists and fishermen together to explore the sea in all its myriad complexity. The recent *Meet the Fleet* programme (showing until

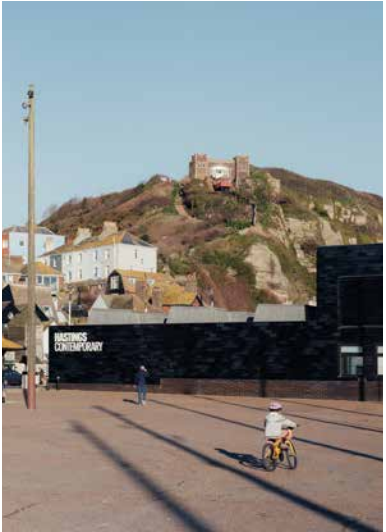
13 September) is undoubtedly an innovative move in trying to engage with the local fishing community.

On top of this, the Contemporary tries in many ways to reach out to the people of Hastings and surrounding areas by offering family days, drawing classes for carers and those they care for and the *Pearls of the Sea* outreach project which works closely with local schools. Also, the Coquina café upstairs, with its delightful view, is now free to access for all. And there’s so much more that there isn’t the space to mention here.

Whether all of this will enable an act of cultural giant-killing, we shall have to wait until late September to find out.



View from interior, Hastings Contemporary



APOLOGY

In Liz Allen’s excellent examination of *Fell*, entitled *Wildfell Hall: Still Relevant* in our last issue, the second paragraph should have referred to the original novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, rather than to the play. You can find the correct version on our web site.



Joan Crawford and Lon Chaney in *The Unknown* (1927)

Silent Movie Ensemble: Musicians Please Apply

A new chapter in the town’s cultural life is about to begin with the launch of the Hastings Silent Movie Ensemble, an exciting new musical organisation dedicated to bringing classic silent films to life through live performance.

Founded by composer, bassist and music educator Luke Hannington, the ensemble will recreate the thrilling experience of the great picture palaces of the 1920s, where silent films were always accompanied by live musicians. Combining newly-composed and reconstructed scores with live Foley sound effects, each performance will offer a unique and immersive cinematic experience.

The ensemble’s inaugural performance will take place next summer, featuring a reconstructed score for the 1927 silent film *The Unknown*, starring Lon Chaney and Joan Crawford and marking the centenary of the film’s original release. The production will feature a live chamber ensemble performing beneath the screen, alongside sound effects by a Foley artist, to recreate the excitement and atmosphere of early cinema.

“We’re delighted to be launching the Hastings Silent Movie Ensemble,” said Dr Luke Hannington. “Silent films were living performances, with musicians and sound effects combining to create an unforgettable experience. Our aim is to revive that tradition for modern audiences while celebrating one of cinema’s greatest art forms.”

As preparations begin for the premiere, the ensemble is recruiting professional musicians to join its inaugural season. Applications are currently invited from players of: flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, violin, viola, and cello. Applicants should be confident sight-readers and be comfortable performing from fully notated scores, in a variety of musical styles. These will be paid professional engagements, with musicians engaged at Musicians’ Union rates.

Dr Hannington added, “We’re looking to build an outstanding ensemble of talented local musicians who share a passion for live performance and silent cinema. This is an exciting opportunity to be part of a unique new cultural venture.”

The Hastings Silent Movie Ensemble aims to become a regular feature of the town’s cultural calendar, presenting classic silent films with live accompaniment and introducing audiences to the excitement, artistry and spectacle of early cinema.

Interested musicians should get in touch, while audiences can follow the project on the website for updates, rehearsal news and performance announcements.

Website: HastingsSilentMovieEnsemble.co.uk. Email: Luke.Hannington@gmail.com; Facebook: [Hastings Silent Movie Ensemble](https://www.facebook.com/HastingsSilentMovieEnsemble)





Skinny Sunday Youth Fest

HANNAH DEEBLE

A fresh wave of emerging talent will take over Studio 27 at Hastings White Rock Theatre on 23 August, as *Skinny Sunday* – the one-day festival curated, produced and run by the young people of the Hastings Fat Tuesday Club – returns with a vibrant line-up of rising regional artists.

Running from 3pm to 9pm, the event showcases the best new bands from across East Sussex and beyond, selected by the club's young musi-

cians as part of their year-round youth music programme.

Supported by Youth Music and Love Hastings, *Skinny Sunday* gives young people hands-on experience in event management, at the same time offering audiences a chance to discover the next generation of local talent.

SNAPSHOT OF RISING ARTISTS

This year's line-up brings together a mix of indie-pop, alt-rock, grunge, synth-driven dance rhythms and fresh songwriting. Amelia & The Housewives are Brighton's shim-



mering indie-pop outfit, currently riding a wave of excitement ahead of their debut album. They are known for sharp wit, chiming harmonies and infectious, sun-soaked songwriting.

Cicadia are a 3-piece alt/indie rock band from East Sussex whose debut EP blends confident riffs, tight musicianship and a growing catalogue of original material. Also from East Sussex, Fresh Air are a Mathrock/Midwest emo 3-piece, formed in late 2025 and already making waves with their debut single released this year. They are known for intricate rhythms, emotive guitar work and a growing

presence on the regional live circuit.

WaveMachine are Hastings' own grunge-punk-surf fusion band, driven by gritty bass lines, high-energy drums and powerful harmonies. From Bexhill, Tellums are an upbeat synth-and-guitar-driven outfit, blending dance rhythms with indie sensibilities to create bright, energetic live performances. Sam Senior is a compelling songwriter whose recent EP showcases raw, emotive alt-folk storytelling. A Platform for Young Creatives

The Fat Tuesday Club Performers are the young musicians who produce *Skinny Sunday*, taking to the stage and presenting original work

developed through the club's year-round programme. *Skinny Sunday* is part of the Fat Tuesday Club's mission to give young people real industry pathways. The event has become a key moment in Hastings' music calendar, celebrating creativity, confidence and community.

Tickets are available now, with free entry for under 18s (ticket reservation required) and £5 tickets for adults, keeping the event accessible for families and young music fans. Tickets at tinyurl.com/SkinnySunday. Contact: Hannah Deeble at hftuesday@gmail.com for more information.

Booth's Dream

MARK WALTER

Colin Booth explores mortality and minimalism in his new exhibition titled *I talked with you in a dream* at Electro Studios project space. Booth is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work explores material transformation and the poetic qualities of objects.

Touching upon fragility and transience (metaphors for our own mortality), Booth's practice turns discarded or found objects into precise, highly-finished conceptual objects, all imbued with minimalism and a touch of humour.

Working across painting, photography, print, sculpture and installation, *I talked with you in a dream* is an eclectic survey of Booth's new work: his recently-completed powder-coated aluminium fragments, interspersed with a number of older pieces – including a painting from his art school foundation year.

"Artists only have one way of working," Booth states. "Their aesthetic doesn't change, even though



the material they work with does. This consistency, in the end, becomes their identity."

The exhibition highlights a career-long dedication to consistency of vision. Influenced by Arte Povera, the collection balances heavy conceptual themes with a lighter touch.

Opening Celebration: Friday 21 August, 6.00-9.00. Galleries open Saturday and Sunday 22/23, 29/30 August, 12.00-5.00 Insta: @electro_studios_project_space, @colin_booth

Hypha Studio Space Relaunch

Following a rather unexpected studio move earlier this summer, mosaic artist Emma Law is now settling into the Hypha Studios space in Priory Meadow (the former Shoe Zone unit), and it has opened up all sorts of possibilities.

Her vision is growing the space into something much bigger than a studio—a flexible, community-led place that could become home to exhibitions, workshops, artist meet-ups, creative projects and, she is hoping, a Scrap Zone: a working reuse store where donated art and craft materials can be redistributed to artists, makers, schools, and community groups.

COASTAL CURRENTS

Emma Law will be exhibiting as part of the Coastal Currents Festival this September, and the space will be opening its doors as one of the festival venues. Enthusiasts can come along, see the exhibition, have a chat,



and take a look at what's beginning to emerge. If you've ever wished Hastings had another space for creative collaboration, she would love to hear your ideas.

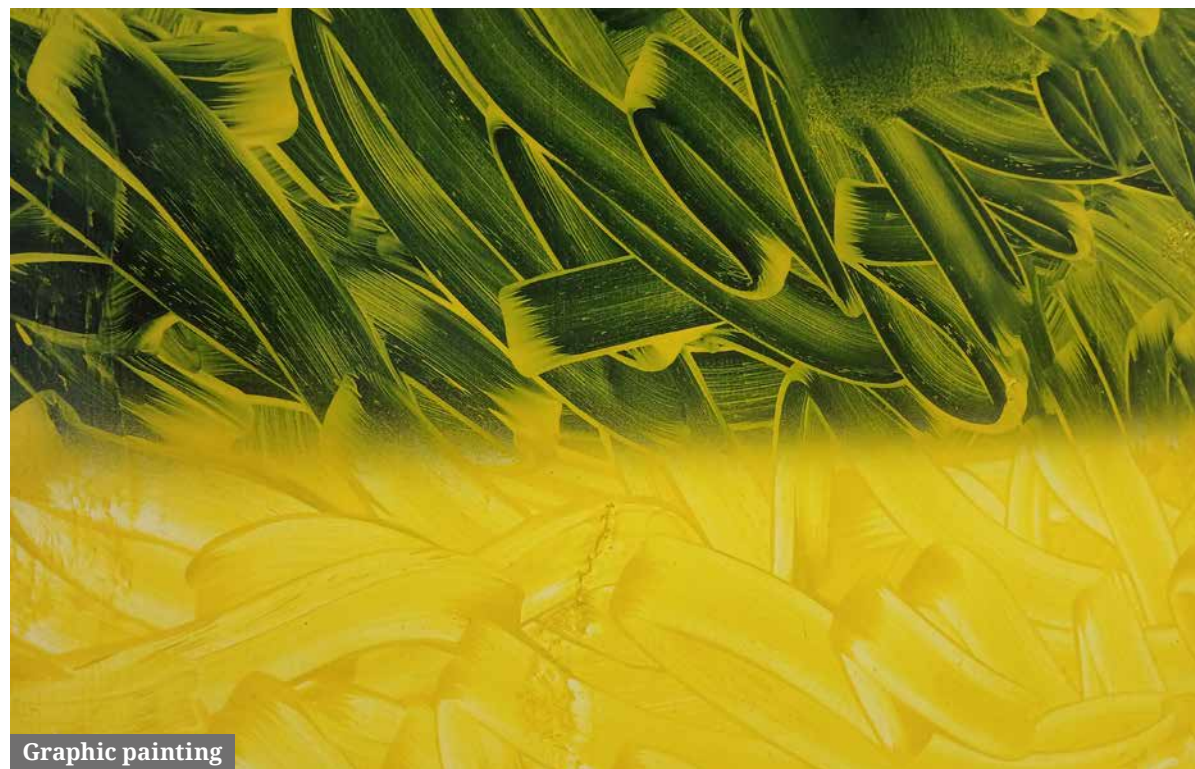
FANCY GETTING INVOLVED?

As the project develops, Emma is hoping to gather a small team of enthusiastic people who'd like to help shape it from the ground up.

She is particularly interested in hearing from people with experience or enthusiasm for: curating exhibitions, gallery invigilation, volunteer coordination, community engagement, marketing and so-

cial media, fundraising and grant applications, administration and project organisation, workshop facilitation, creative reuse and sustainability, and building local partnerships. Whether you can spare a few hours a month or are interested in helping steer the project longer term, Emma would welcome connection.

Artist contact details and studio details: hyphastudios.com/emma-law/. Hypha Studios is a national charity project that works with landlords to match artists up with available spaces. More details at hyphastudios.com.



Graphic painting

The Hybridity of Kim Wan

TOBY BULA-EDGE AND VERA BELL

Electro Studios hosted Kim Wan's new exhibition *Hybridity* on 8-9 August, with an open view the evening before.

Shown to a soundtrack of avant-jazz/hip-hop, Wan's art was perfectly at home in the slightly rustic space that is Electro Studios. He aims specifically to blur the line between fine art and graffiti, something which stems from his having become obsessed, in the 80s, with spray painting – "I just fell in love with big letters on walls," he writes. Later he went on to study at the Winchester School of Fine Art.

The art on display was a mixture of his portraits and his graphic pieces. The portraits (some of which may be seen on his own website) are intentionally distorted. Painted quickly and heavily re-worked later, they move between the traditional and the technological. The process, and that movement, are clearly an integral part of the finished work. He cites Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach and Francis Bacon as influences, with a bit of DC and Marvel comics.

Apart from the feeling of the paint hitting the canvas, there's an even greater sense of movement in the graphic pieces, where the combination of graffiti and fine art is most apparent. Swirling and violent lines sit atop a spray-painted background. The more violent images (one particularly resembled blood splatter) call very strongly to mind Wan's other passion, which is boxing.

Wan is locally based, having fallen "into the underbelly of Hastings, with its artists, musicians and bohemian lifestyle" and completed his art foundation course at Hastings College 30 years ago. Judging by the details on his website, his subsequent career has lifted him from

the underbelly into the art establishment. Nevertheless, the work maintains a surprising rawness and an immediacy that render it absolutely authentic, with a *hybridity* that stems not only from technique and intent but now, like that of his art heroes, the familiar tension between the eccentric and the establishment.

More details of Kim Wan and his work can be seen at kimwanart.com, particularly his extensive CV of exhibitions, films, and performance pieces.



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

TV Pop Up Museum

TOBY BULA-EDGE

A look into the past was on offer on August 8 at the first Television Museum pop-up. The event, run by charity Screen Culture UK, aimed to give the public a flavour of what a TV museum might look like in Hastings. It also gave an opportunity for people to suggest what they might like to see in such a museum.

Hosted at the Tea Museum on George Street, the pop-up featured two reconstructed living rooms: one from the 70s, the other from the 00s. Both had the TV as the centrepiece – a position it has occupied for decades.

A virtual tour of a BBC mobile control van was also on offer. It showed the museum's interest, not just in the cultural impact of TV, but also in the relevant technologies. The van had been used to film the 1966 World Cup Final – which, virtual tour operator Jon reminded us,



TOBY BULA-EDGE

was unfortunately the last time England won the competition.

Children's TV was represented with some classic toys – The Wombles, Kermit the Frog, Noddy and the Teletubbies. The mood of the whole place was set with music – a long set of classic TV themes.

People were eager to get in before the doors had even opened, and a steady stream of people flowed in and around the room.

Another pop-up will take place on 22 August

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Ed Nash and Robbie Ormrod

The Pub That's Bringing People Together

TESSA BOASE

Ed Nash and Robbie Ormrod dreamed of creating a pub with community at its heart. Just five months in, the revamped Prince of Wales is proving that their vision works.

It's hard to believe that The Prince of Wales has been open for only five months. In that short time, this obscure pub has become one of St Leonards' favourite neighbourhood locals. Given the out-of-way location (a steep downhill at the Old England) and the pub's previously, er, sketchy reputation, this is some

feat. Many locals still shudder if you tell them you're off to the Prince of Wales for a pint.

Things changed when Robbie Ormrod, 39, and Ed Nash, 35, took over the dilapidated, vacant building on a ten-year lease. They're in it for the long term, and they have big plans. The building might look small, sitting on the corner of Cross Street and Western Road, but it's full of unexpected spaces. This summer an extra drinking room and a cute back yard were unveiled; upstairs holds a potential performance space.

With British pubs closing at the rate of two a day, this is a brave venture. Robbie hasn't yet given up the



"We brew for Hastings"

day job (he brews for Harvey's in Lewes), but Ed took the leap at the pub's opening, the same month he became a father. Despite all the odds, their unusual business model seems to be working. On opening day, 5 March 2026, there was a queue down the street. On Jack-in-the-Green day the special Full Bloom flew out, while the Wednesday quiz night is rammed.

There are board games, dog treats, Tayto crisps and eight keg and two cask beers on tap. One window still bears the engraving 'Jug Department', from the days when children would arrive with an empty beer jug for their parents, a custom banned in 1902. There is a long history of drinking on this spot – but no venture had been quite like this.

The clue to their difference is painted above the door: "We Brew For Hastings". Four years ago, Ed and Robbie captured our hearts

with The Hastings Project, a venture that brews beer to raise money for local causes. Their dream was always to open a pub and early this year, hundreds of us chipped in to an ingenious crowd-funder that repaid people one-and-a-half times over in beer. How could we refuse? £22,220 was raised in 14 weeks.

It's a dream that's been a long time coming. The pair met ten years ago on the performance circuit: Ed was an actor, Robbie a "silly and self-deprecating" stand-up comedian. For years, they knocked about this idea of owning a pub that was *more* than a pub. A pub where the beer is naturally excellent, but where the community events matter just as much, drawing people through the doors who might not normally come. The Prince of Wales is all about community. Without being evangelical or schmaltzy, Ed and Robbie's intention is to make our local community (not just their pub) a more connected, happier place.

Ed gives an example. On a recent *Pints With Purpose* night – the monthly slot where three local charities talk about what they do – three random blokes found themselves captive in the bar. They hadn't gone in there to listen: they wanted to drink. But on hearing the charities' stories (a ten-minute pitch from each), one made "a large donation", one "was moved to tears when he realised that this organisation could help a family member", and the third signed up on the spot as a volunteer. The charities in question were Little Gate Farm, The Association of Carers, and East Sussex Wildlife Rescue & Ambulance Service. "With a pint in your hand," says Robbie, "it's easier to listen."

These are early days, and their ideas are evolving. They'd like the

space to be used by local groups who need a place to gather, such as Transition Town Hastings' Green Drinks – now renamed the Sustainability Social and hosted at The Prince of Wales. Beach cleans followed by a pint are another successful innovation. Western Road is a very mixed pocket, with potential to develop in a more neighbourly direction. And so, on Mondays and Tuesdays, Ed can be found outside on the pavement, coffee in hand, talking to people. Hearing about their lives. Maybe offering a bar stool and a warm drink; time out from a frequently chaotic environment.

As a result, neighbourhood schemes are already bubbling up. That rubbish-filled lock-up opposite the pub? That could be a community garden. "We're passionate about having an impact on a very local area," says Ed. "Our location is hugely important to us. It's all about building trust."

The pair are also unusual employees, taking great trouble to recruit the right team and support them. "I expect them to leave," says Ed of the six staff, "and will promote them to that point. I want to show them that working in hospitality can be great." All employees happen to be creatives, so watch this space for a home-grown exhibition.

The Prince of Wales shows what's possible when good beer meets a clear sense of purpose. Whether you're drawn by the events, the atmosphere or simply an excellent pint of pale, it's a welcome addition to the neighbourhood.

The Prince of Wales by the Hastings Project, 15 Western Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 6DG. @thehastingsprojectpub

TOP FIVE TIPPLES:

The Hastings Project Helles 4.8% – a more aromatic take on the classic Munich style, decoction mashed for depth, with added spelt for softness and body. £5.90/pint.

The Hastings Project West Coast IPA 6.5% – a nod to old-school West Coast IPAs in high bitterness, but with added Rye and Crystal Rye for sticky sweetness, and a jammy new experimental hop. £5.20/2/3rds.

The Hastings Project NEIPA 6.7% – big hitting tropical notes, soft body, but with a west coast bitterness. £6.60/2/3rds.

Donnie's Nitro Dark Beer 4.3%, Donzoko – technically a lager, it's the house nitro line akin to the more well-known Irish equivalents. Smoother, fuller in body, and lower in bitterness. £5.90/pint.

Taras Boulba, Brasserie De La Senne 4.5% – a modern take on Belgian brewing from brewing legend Yvan de Baets. A focus on drinkability and bitterness coupled with familiar Belgian yeast character. £6 for 330ml bottle.



Full pub for charity quiz night

CRICKET

Team Priory Find a Higher Gear

1 August		
Hastings & St Leonards Priory	231 for 8	
Middleton 184	all out	
8 August		
Roffey	244 for 6	
Priory	201 for 7	

HUGH SULLIVAN

August has proved a more than satisfactory month so far for the cricketers of Hastings & St Leonards Priory, achieving an outstanding victory and then an honourable



Shawn Johnson bowling against Roffey

draw on successive Saturdays against the two leading teams in the Sussex Premier League, Middleton and Roffey. Priory remain eighth in the table, only ten points above the relegation places. But with their bowling attack revving at a higher gear than earlier in the

season, and their batsmen showing resilience in depth, they should approach the final four games with confidence – to be played under limited-over format, each to be won or lost (no draws). At Middleton on 1 August, Priory batted first and were indebted to

opener Alfie Hunter, who made 86 while his top order partners came and went. When he departed, with the score at 159 for six in the 47th over, a more brittle side might have folded. But Ryan Hoadley, playing his first game of the season, hit a bright 34 off 33 balls and, with help from Eddie Finch (18) and Freddie Hulbert (21 not out), boosted the 58-over innings total to 231 for 8. A similar Priory score had been chased down the week before by opponents Haywards Heath for the loss of only three wickets. But on this occasion the Hastings side bowled and fielded superbly, Shawn Johnson leading the way by running out Middleton's opener Toby Barton in the first over before he had received a ball. Adam Barton (no relation), sharing Priory's seam attack with Hulbert, injured himself in his third over and could not continue. But Johnson was a lively replacement, taking two wickets apiece with Hulbert so as to reduce the home side to 86 for five. Spinners Adam Page and Hunter were introduced, and at first struggled to contain a potential batting recovery. But Page had the dangerous Sean Heather caught by Johnson for 52, and wickets continued to fall. Credit to the Middleton tail for at-

tempting to keep up their faltering chase, but Page nailed the final batsman lbw to close out a 47-run victory. Last Saturday Roffey, who had taken advantage of that result to overtake Middleton as league leaders, came to Horntye. Winning the toss and opting to bat, they started cautiously against the seam bowling of Hulbert and Johnson, then found themselves unable to accelerate as they would have liked against the Priory spinners Hunter, Page and Barton (recovered sufficiently to bowl off his shortened run). But a final spurt over the last seven overs, which yielded 57 runs, eventually secured a challenging total of 244. In reply, Priory also batted cautiously. Hunter (22) and Joe Billings (56) gave them a solid start, and Scowen (53) held the middle order together, but they were always behind the required run rate, and when Scowen was sixth out with 69 still needed and less than six overs left, the remaining batsmen chose to see them out judiciously rather than go down with all guns blazing. Tomorrow (Saturday) Priory host bottom-of-the-league Bognor Regis at Horntye. Another win would hugely improve their chances of Premier League survival.

SUSSEX CRICKET LEAGUE - PREMIER TABLE (BOTTOM 4) AS AT 9 AUGUST 2026

	P	W	D	L	A	BAT	BOWL	PTS
HORSHAM	14	4	3	6	1	50	29	216
HASTINGS & ST LEONARDS PRIORY	14	3	4	6	1	60	48	215
CUCKFIELD	14	3	2	8	1	60	43	205
BOGNOR REGIS	14	3	3	7	1	54	37	198

FOOTBALL

Disappointment in Cup Defeats

7 August	
Kingstonian	4
Hastings Utd	1
8 August	
Bexhill Utd	0
East Grinstead Town	3

New player-manager of Hastings United Ronnie Dolan tasted defeat in his first competitive match for the club last Friday, as the 'U's were knocked out of the FA Cup in a preliminary round. Next day Bexhill United suffered the same fate. The Hastings team had a long trip to south-west London to face traditional opponents Kingstonian, who

play these days at the same tier level in the South Central Division of the Isthmian League. Of last season's regulars at the Pilot Field, only four – Harry Haines in goal, Joe Clifford, Freddie Legg and Max Walsh – were included in the starting line-up. However, Ollie Black and Tom Chalmers, who led the 'U's out as captain, made welcome returns. Legg scored in the 21st minute with a shot from the edge of the penalty area after intercepting a misplaced pass from the home team. But they equalised 12 minutes later, went 2-1 ahead shortly afterwards, and scored twice more within 18 minutes of the second half, their 30-year-old striker Eddie Si-

mons bagging a hat-trick. The three-goal lead was rarely challenged over the last half hour as Dolan himself made way for Fin Chapman and the two sides traded other substitutions. Bexhill's tie in the same round was a home game against East Grinstead Town, relegated out of the Isthmian League last season and about to re-start at Bexhill's level in the Southern Combination League (SCL). The West Sussex side proved too good for their hosts on the day, winning comfortably 3-0. Both the Isthmian League and SCL campaigns start tomorrow (Saturday). Hastings will entertain last season's runners-up, AFC Croydon, who are again expected to be among the strongest in the division, then have two away fixtures against local rivals, Eastbourne Town (next Tuesday evening, 18 August) and Ashford United (the following Tuesday, 25 August). These are early days, but Dolan will certainly be hoping for better from his team.

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