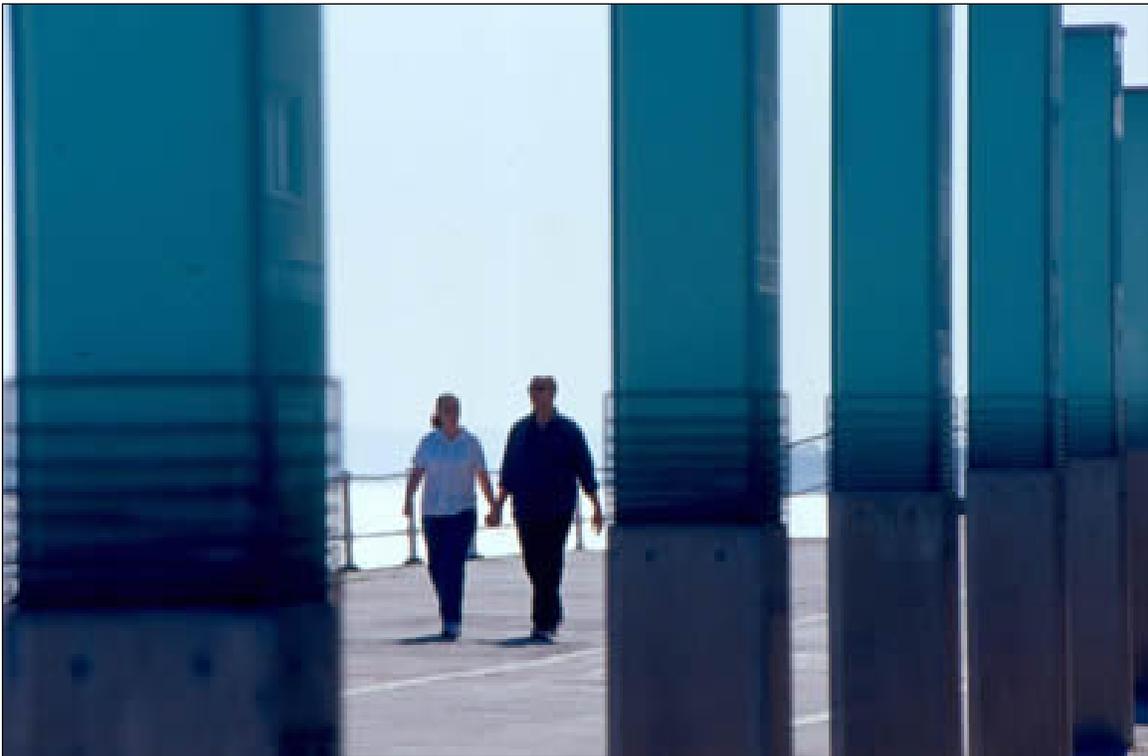


# Hastings Seafront Strategy

## Review and Refresh 2014-2020





# 1. Background

*Leading From The Front*, the Hastings and Bexhill Seafront Strategy, was adopted in 2005. It was developed by Sea Space in partnership with Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, SEEDA, and Tourism SE.

Since 2005, much has changed, including the economic climate and political context. There has been a major recession, Hastings Council has put cultural regeneration linked to the visitor economy at the heart of its economic development planning, Central St Leonards is benefiting from renewal, and the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road will reduce vehicle dependence on the seafront road.

Moreover, much has happened on the seafront itself. Key objectives in *Leading From The Front* have been achieved, including:

- Attracting investment and new employment: for example the Jerwood Gallery opened; the White Rock Hotel (formerly the Yelton) has been modernised; there were improvements around Marine Court; and Marina Pavilion (now Azur) was rebuilt.
- Advancing economic and social development: from 2004 to 2012, the value of the visitor economy was estimated to have risen by 36% to £245m a year. It now supports 5,200 jobs, a rise of 13% from 2004. The seafront is a focus for new activities including the Seafood & Wine Festival, Fish Fairs, Stade Saturdays, and other cultural performances.
- Supporting an inviting urban and seafront environment: the Stade was transformed from a lorry/coach park to public open space, with a new café and Stade Hall community centre; pavements were widened and improved at Marina and Pelham; and the cycle route between Bexhill and Hastings was completed.
- Hastings Pier: the seafront's landmark centrepiece, first closed due to structural deterioration and serious safety concerns, and then was razed by fire. Following the council's intervention and compulsory purchase, and a huge effort by local people, the Pier is now reborn, with significant Heritage Lottery, government, council and community funding for the restoration work that is well underway.

In the light of these changes, a refresh of the Strategy is timely. This looks only at the Hastings and St Leonards seafront (recognising a connection with Rother at Glyne Gap), and considers nodes of activity and connections to the immediate hinterland, including Hastings Country Park, the Old Town, Hastings Town Centre, White Rock Gardens, and Central St Leonards.

# Hastings and St Leonards Seafront



## 2. Introduction

The seafront cannot be transformed solely through a single management structure and long-term spending plan. Much of the recent investment and development has been in response to need (eg the Pier) and opportunity (eg Jerwood). Improvements have been limited by available funding sources – a situation that seems likely to continue. Hence an ambitious but relevant and realistic strategy is an essential touchstone in this complex and evolving context.

The Strategy sets out the principles for a portfolio of projects and initiatives to be implemented as and when private and/or public sector funding becomes available. These will need to be supported by design and investment guidelines in order to avoid a fragmented approach. So a detailed action plan will accompany this strategy, detailing projects that can be undertaken and funded to achieve the aims of this strategy.

The Council will continue to work closely with business and community groups as appropriate in order to realise the vision.

### **The key Aims of this Strategy are to:**

- advance economic and social development
- attract investment and new employment opportunities
- support a unique inviting urban and seafront environment

These Aims will be achieved under four themes:

- i. Organising for Success
- ii. Getting the Basics Right
- iii. Key Strategic Interventions
- iv. Zones of Character

### **Organising for Success**

- **Leadership and Partnership:** The Council will lead delivery of the strategy, recognising that partnerships with other public, private and community stakeholders is essential.
- **Enterprise:** the commercial and employment potential of the seafront will be developed with a range of measures to support enterprise.
- **Community:** it is vital to involve community stakeholders.

### **Getting the Basics Right**

The Council strives for continual improvement through management of:

- **Infrastructure:** Transport, access and parking; public realm; buildings and structures; sea defences.
- **An Environmentally Sustainable Seafront:** seawater quality; reduced carbon- and eco-footprint; biodiversity and natural environment.

- **Events and Activities:** leisure and health/sporting activity; community and cultural use.

#### **Key strategic interventions:**

- **Rebalancing:** to reduce dependence on the Rock-a-Nore / Stade / Old Town hotspot by drawing people and activities westwards;
- **West Marina:** enable mixed-use redevelopment;
- **Central St Leonards:** improving links between central St Leonards and the seafront
- **Bottle Alley:** address its under-use and unsafe image, and enhance the value of the alley itself and the promenade above, including retail kiosks and parking;
- **White Rock:** build on the reopening of the pier in 2015 as a catalyst for further renewal in the White Rock area;
- **Harold Place:** improve the urban realm and linkages between Hastings Town Centre and the beach and promenade

#### **Creating “Zones of Character”**

Four zones are proposed, to be enhanced with a distinctive design approach for each, so that new interventions match the zone’s character and fit within an integrated design strategy covering the whole seafront.

**The Strategy concludes** by looking at the resource implications, public and private finance and investment necessary to bring the changes about, the wider policy and economic context, and ongoing costs of management and maintenance.

**Progress will be assessed** through key indicators (visitor numbers and spend, audience and participant numbers at events, empty commercial units, delivery of sites as set out in the Local Plan).

**A detailed rolling action plan** will be developed and monitored.

### 3. Vision

The seafront is the defining characteristic of Hastings and St Leonards, for residents and visitors alike.

It has the jewels in the crown of our cultural assets such as the pier, the Stade, St Mary-in-the-Castle, and Marine Court. It is the shop window for Hastings as a whole, shaping the town's image and self-image, and serving as a barometer of the wider Hastings economy. Its importance can hardly be overestimated.

We have a vision of a seafront that that rivals any in the country, that provides variety and interest along its whole length from the cliffs at Hastings Country Park all the way to the western end of Bulverhythe.

In between, there will be an ever-richer mix of attractions, shops, restaurants, hotels and other businesses, linked by high quality public open spaces which host vibrant events and activities.

The beach will be filled with bathers and sunbathers. The promenade will be an attraction in itself, enjoyed by families, pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities, culture vultures and fitness fanatics alike.

Visitors will come in increasing numbers, generating business investment, which in turn will draw more visitors. Businesses on the north and south sides of the coast road will prosper all year round.

The seafront will become more than the sum of its parts, and all of our residents will use and take pride in the town's fabulous asset.

# 4. Aims

## The three Aims of the 2005 strategy are retained:

### 1. Advance economic and social development

Hastings and St Leonards seafront is the town's defining asset. It is the reason Hastings and St Leonards developed as resorts, and, with its immediate hinterland, it is the focus of much of the town's cultural activity. It is a meeting place for the town's residents and visitors. The A259 is the primary road along the East Sussex coast, as well as the main east-west route within the town.

For all these reasons and others, the seafront is central to the town's economy and identity, and further development of its potential will have a catalytic effect on the wider regeneration of the town.

### 2. Attract investment and new employment opportunities

Historically, the seafront has been shaped by investment from both the private and public sectors, led by the figures of James and Decimus Burton, and Sidney Little. At their best the two sectors work hand-in-hand, recognising the different responsibilities and mutual benefits of partnership. Further such investment will be attracted to bring about both regeneration and employment benefits all along the seafront.

### 3. Support a unique inviting urban and seafront environment

As the town's largest area of public open space, the seafront is an amenity for residents and visitors alike. The different types of environment – the sea itself and the sea defences, the beach, promenade, amusements, shops and cafes, gardens and open spaces – create its character and function. Seafront developments and initiatives will be supported to achieve environmental, physical and financial sustainability.

These Aims will be achieved under four themes:

- i. Organising for Success
- ii. Getting the Basics Right
- iii. Key Strategic Interventions
- iv. Zones of Character

# 5. Organising for success

## 5.a Leadership & Partnership

HBC will lead the planning and management of the seafront alongside stakeholders, to achieve the aims and objectives of this Strategy. HBC departments will work with other partners as required, including

- businesses, shops, hotels, cafes and bars, attractions and utility companies;
- local residents and community groups;
- other public agencies such as East Sussex County Council, the Environment Agency, the Police, the Arts Council, Tourism South East;
- the Hastings & St Leonards Foreshore Trust.

These partners' strategic objectives in relation to the seafront align with the aims and objectives in this strategy in many respects, and their plans and priorities will inform the Seafront Regeneration Action Plan that will follow.

Regular engagement and consultation is held with stakeholders through the Coastal User Group, which also acts as the formal consultative group for the Foreshore Trust. This is made up of representatives from a wide range of local public and statutory bodies, individual businesses and visitor attractions, and community and voluntary groups.

## 5.b Supporting entrepreneurs

The seafront is the focus for a diverse range of business uses, extending from the north side of the A259 seafront road, and onto the sea itself. They include hotels, hospitality and catering, sports and leisure, retail, creative / cultural, business services and other office-based enterprises, as well as the small engineering and similar businesses at Bulverhythe, and of course the fishing fleet.

The seafront is part of the Hastings and Rother Assisted Area (from 2014), which raises the whole area's priority for government and EU Regional Aid. Funding opportunities through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership could help drive enterprise-led regeneration that brings new commercial life and employment, particularly to the central and western reaches of the seafront. It includes key landmarks that are either development opportunities themselves, or are attractions and access nodes that create footfall around which new micro-enterprise might cluster, such as the White Rock area, and West Marina.

A range of business-focused interventions can be continued and brought forward, such as

- Advice, support, networking and coaching for small businesses, including the high number of black and minority ethnic businesses in the area.

- Investment incentives such as support from government funds, low interest and micro-loans, and the County Council's East Sussex Invest grants and loans scheme.
- Linking investment in culture, environment and attractions.
- Strategic planning guidance as proposed in the Local Plan.
- Infrastructure (transport, broadband), environmental and anti-crime/community safety interventions.
- Skills training targeted at the coastal industries within the zone through Sussex Coast College's Coastal Industries Academy.
- A sensitive approach by licensing and conservation departments, balancing the need for enterprise and jobs growth with the need to preserve and enhance the built environment, protect public safety, and respect the rights of residents.

Business and commercial groups will continue to be consulted on relevant issues.

## **5.c Involving community stakeholders**

As well as the members of the Coastal Users Group, other community, neighbourhood and educational groups and associations are also consulted on plans and issues relating to the foreshore.

## 6. Getting the basics right

The Council strives for continued improvements to the seafront, and works with a wide range of partners on everyday issues of management and maintenance of the seafront. These are essential to keeping up its amenity value, physical structure, and usability, for residents, visitors, commuters and businesses alike.

### Infrastructure

#### 6.a Transport, access and parking

##### Objectives:

- Facilitate access to and along the seafront, by bicycle, bus and car, for residents, visitors and businesses;
- Improve pedestrian connectivity between town centres and the seafront, along the seafront, and across the A259;
- Improve access for people with disabilities;
- Provide and manage parking spaces.

The East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 sets out the transport investment framework for the County with its key priority of supporting economic growth. The transport approach in the LTP for Bexhill and Hastings recognises that infrastructure required to help achieve economic growth in the two towns includes improving pedestrian, cycle and public transport access along and across the seafront corridor.

The completion of the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road in 2015 and the proposed Queensway Gateway link will have an impact on the future of the seafront, with an expected reduction in traffic. When data on actual use has been gathered, it will be feasible to explore further options for making the A259 more pedestrian-friendly, and improving access across it for pedestrians and cyclists. Options could include further pavement widening, removing railings to allow crossing at more places (as well as at designated crossing points), and more radical options such as shared space and lower speed limits.

##### Buses

Bus priority measures on the A259 between Glyne Gap and Filsham Road will be delivered as part of the Link Road complementary package. Further bus priority measures will be considered, together with upgrading bus stop facilities with real-time bus information, better shelters and lighting. Increased bus use will support the existing services along the seafront and may enable an increased frequency of existing services or a new seafront shuttle to come forward. The feasibility of an electric mini tram running along the seafront is being explored.

##### Disabilities

The needs of people with disabilities will continue to be a priority consideration, with drop kerbs, audible real-time passenger information at key bus stops, and low-level bus entry. Better access needs to be provided to the beach and other seafront areas for people in wheelchairs, as well as those with visual impairments.

## **Cycling**

The seafront cycle route will be maintained and promoted as a leisure and commuting option. Bicycle hire (including electric bicycles) will also be promoted.

## **Parking**

Parking is a crucial element of the economic health of Hastings and St Leonards, with car parks used by visitors, shoppers, commuters and businesses. There is a mix of off-road car parks, on-street parking, restricted parking zones, and spaces for people with disabilities. The three largest seafront car parks at Rock-a-Nore, Pelham and Carlisle Parade (underground) are often full during the summer. However, Hastings town centre car parks are often almost empty on busy summer weekends, so a new 'intelligent car park signage' system is being installed, to direct visitors to car parks that have spaces. However, the strategy also aims to generate more activity in St Leonards, so needs to consider the relative shortage of parking west of the pier.. Parking provision will be part of the design and development briefs for the proposed White Rock area study, and for West Marina.

Meanwhile efforts will be made to reduce demand for parking by promoting rail, bus and bicycle travel.

In the short term, improvements to car parking will include improving surfaces, live information about free spaces, and directing drivers to alternative provision. CCTV surveillance will be maintained. There will be provision for cashless payment (for example by phone and online), which also enables hotels to offer guest parking.

Coach parking will be maintained at various points, notably Sea Road and Falaise Road, with drop-off points at various places, including around the Stade area.

## **6.b Public Realm**

### **Objectives:**

- Create a seafront public realm that demonstrates design excellence comparable with the best in Europe
- Build on the intrinsic character of different zones, creating variety along the seafront while preserving a unified identity
- Provide information and directions to encourage people to visit nearby locations and to navigate the seafront, including QR and web links

The seafront is the largest and best-used public open space in the Hastings and St Leonards urban area. It is used for cultural and community activities from festivals to the half-marathon, and is popular with residents and visitors alike.

Hastings is competing not only with other English towns and cities which have invested heavily in creating inviting seafronts, but with continental resorts that set the standards for excellence in urban seafront design and development.

Creating high quality spaces does not generate any direct financial return or new jobs (unlike, say, bringing a building into use). Nevertheless it is vital to recognise that the

seafront public realm is a key part of the image of the town. Improvement must be seen as an investment that yields long term benefits by attracting more visitors and encouraging more spend along the seafront. For example, the investments in play facilities and beach volleyball at Pelham beach draw more people to the amusement and activities in that area.

Continuing change will of necessity be linked to available funding and, in this context, it is vital that development is done according to agreed principles, towards agreed objectives – see Section 8 “Zones of Character”.

The priority public areas for improvement, subject to funding, are the pier entrance and approach, and Bottle Alley.

Designs should bear in mind long-term maintenance and replacement costs – high quality items may cost more to buy and install, but last longer and demand less maintenance.

### **Signage:**

Signage for pedestrians is a key element. It must draw people along to the next zone on the seafront, and into town centres and other points inland. Modern signboards can give maps and directions, and can also provide information via smartphone QR codes linked to apps and web-based information on local heritage, culture, events and attractions.

### **Street clutter**

There is a valid concern to reduce the amount of ‘street clutter’. Often the problem is more about poor design and location, or direction/traffic control signs dominating pedestrian areas.

### **Lighting**

As the town aspires to develop its evening economy, and create a year-round destination, lighting becomes important in creating an appealing and lively ambience after dark. The “Sticks of Rock’ coloured downlighters on the streetlights are programmable, and this facility must be used imaginatively and extensively. Streetlights themselves are the responsibility of East Sussex County Council as the Highway Authority in the area, and they will be encouraged to liaise with Hastings Council to support the design approach as it is developed.

Marine Court and the ‘Stream’ lighting installation opposite are examples of how feature lighting and sensitive decorative floodlighting of key buildings greatly enhances the seafront after dark. Further schemes will be encouraged and supported (bearing in mind the needs of residents).

### **Public art**

Similarly, public art, including sculpture, installations and water features, add hugely to the appeal and interest of the seafront. They can be stand-alone pieces of art, but there is also great value in multifunctional art: for example, sculpture can be designed for play and shelter, water features can be magnets for play, and exercise equipment can be artistically designed. The restored Pelham Fountain has proved to be very popular – further opportunities will be explored.

### **Planting**

Planting is another key element of urban public realm, and doubly so for a seaside resort town. Styles of planting help construct the image of a place. As well as being visually attractive, planting can provide shade and shelter, filter dust and pollution, and screen unsightly views or draw the eye to good ones.

The Council plans to review all of the seafront planting, and this will be done in the light of the 'zones of character' identities as they are developed. Hard landscaping also determines character, and can contribute to overall quality. Plans for physical improvements, such as pavement widening and car parking, will explore options to soften the landscape through trees, shrubs and other planting. In designing new planted areas, consideration will be given to their potential to create micro-habitats to encourage insect and bird-life, while keeping in mind the need for sustainable planting that survives in a harsh maritime environment..

### **Safety**

Seafront public open space is the location for a range of community and cultural events, so access for and safety of large crowds, and the needs of organisers and emergency services, must be considered.

### **Disabilities**

The needs of people with disabilities will continue to be an important consideration, and measures such as rubber matting to enable wheelchair access over the beach, high visibility edgings to steps, dedicated toilets, and well-designed signage will be incorporated into improvements as appropriate.

## **6.c Buildings and structures**

### **Objectives:**

- Maintain and improve publicly-owned properties on the seafront to support the objectives of this strategy;
- Work with the private sector to support the objectives of this strategy, notably to enhance enterprise and jobs on the seafront and in the visitor economy;
- Ensure the improvements to the built environment contribute to the overall quality of the seafront.

Alongside the public realm, buildings create the character of the seafront. Architecturally speaking, Hastings and St Leonards are rich with gems that include the net huts, Jerwood Gallery, St Mary-in-the-Castle and Pelham Crescent, White Rock Baths (especially its hidden interior), the soon to be restored Pier, Marine Court, the Royal Victoria Hotel and Marina Pavilion. And amidst the landmark buildings, the matrix of mainly Victorian and Edwardian residences provides a fine backdrop for most of the seafront.

Recent investments, including the Jerwood Gallery, Stade, and facelifts to Pelham Crescent and the Royal Victoria Hotel, have all enhanced the seafront. These are being followed by the pier and Pelham Arcade restoration, as well as many smaller-scale improvements by private businesses and residents, encouraged by the council's continuing 'Grotbuster' programme to force owners to improve poorly maintained buildings..

### **Publicly-owned property**

The Council and the Foreshore Trust own a great deal of seafront property, and will continue to maintain and improve it, and make every effort to bring redundant or underused buildings and spaces into productive economic use. The White Rock Baths are being repaired for new uses that will complement the Pier and attract new visitors to this part of the seafront. Other priorities include Bottle Alley, West Marina and further improvements to the White Rock area.

### **Maintaining quality**

It is essential that new structures and improvements enhance the overall quality, rather than detract from it. Too often, lowest-common-denominator design goes hand in hand with lowest-cost design. While it is important to support investment in economic activity to enliven the seafront and create jobs, this can be counter-productive in the long-term if it doesn't attract new higher-spending and design-savvy visitors to Hastings, and fails to inspire them to return.

### **Planning powers**

The planning system plays a key part. The Local Plan sets the bar high, with a requirement to take account of "good performance against nationally recognised best practice guidance on sustainability, urban design and place-making, architectural quality and distinctiveness."

The Council will maintain a proactive approach in using planning regulations to improve the seafront, for example with the Grotbuster initiative to enforce improvements to the worst dilapidations, and eliminating estate agents' boards that made the seafront look very undesirable. The Council will also continue to use its Compulsory Purchase powers to bring long-term empty buildings back into use.

## **6.d Sea defences**

### **Objectives:**

- Work with partners to provide effective protection from coastal erosion and risk of flooding;
- Manage and maintain existing sea defences and coast protection assets to maintain and improve standards of protection.

The future of the seafront is fundamentally linked to the consequences of climate change. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2008 and the Coastal Change Adaptation Pathfinder Project 2012 highlighted the potential impact that climate change will have upon our coastline including rising sea levels, heightened risk of more frequent and severe flooding, coastal erosion, and increased frequency and intensity of storms and tidal surges. It is essential to ensure that sea defences and all new developments are designed and built to reduce or avoid the negative impacts of climate change.

Hastings Borough Council is a designated Coast Protection Authority (CPA), and works with the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Environment Agency (EA) to undertake essential work to protect the coastline from erosion and encroachment by the sea, and secure the permanent integrity of the entire urban seafront. This is managed through a strategic Medium Term Plan (MTP) agreed

with the EA. Schemes are reviewed in a regional context with the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee South East Coastal Group.

Protection is provided through a combination of natural features (shingle banks and cliffs) and man-made defences (timber, rock and concrete groynes, sea walls and rock revetments).

### **Groynes**

The immediate priority is to seek grant funding and support for the second phase of the Carlisle Parade scheme for two additional rock groynes and importing additional shingle, to further reduce the risk of waves overtopping the sea wall.

The longer term challenge is the renewal of all of the timber and concrete groynes between Hastings Pier and West St Leonards, which could cost in excess of £20m. In the past there has been 100% grant funding available for eligible schemes, but recent policy changes and pressure on DEFRA funding means that contributions are now required from alternative sources.

### **Harbour Arm**

The Harbour Arm is effectively treated as a groyne by the EA, as it retains shingle on the main beach whilst also protecting the fishing beach from prevailing winds. (The large gap in the Harbour Arm is essential so as not to interrupt the longshore drift of shingle along the coast.) An initial £100k has been allocated for designing repairs and improved protection of the Harbour Arm by 2018.

### **Maintenance**

In addition to the grant-funded MTP, there is also a need to respond to urgent repairs on a day to day basis, funded by HBC. The works are informed by daily visual and detailed quarterly inspections. Coast protection structures can deteriorate rapidly in the harsh environment, and the ability to inspect regularly and respond appropriately is vital to maintain their effectiveness.

## **An Environmentally Sustainable Seafront**

### **6.e Seawater quality**

#### **Objectives:**

- Achieve the minimum sufficient classification under the revised Bathing Water Directive;
- Work with partners to improve bathing water quality and raise awareness of the issues that affect it.

A new quality standard for bathing water means that standards for 'sufficient' and 'excellent' have doubled. They will be implemented in 2015, based upon a rolling four year measurement of the presence of certain pollutants in the water. Failure to meet the higher standard by autumn 2015 will mean that signs must be posted on the beach,

warning bathers of poor water quality (although the water quality is unlikely to have actually deteriorated).

It is therefore vital to continue the long-term process of having ever-cleaner bathing water. An Executive Group (Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Southern Water, The Environment Agency, Office of the MP, Hastings Voluntary Action, Hastings Community Network) will ensure that every possible action is taken, as quickly as is practical, to ensure that Hastings' beaches meet the new standard, and to sustain the water quality consistently in future years.

The action plan will focus on three fronts:

- at the source where foul drainage leaks into system, through surveys and a misconnection campaign;
- de-silting some of Alexandra Park's ponds, and considering further filtration, including naturalised reed beds and 'smart sponges';
- potential end-of-pipe solutions such as cleansing, re-routing or extending the Carlisle Parade outfall, and additional treatment.

### **Southern Water**

Southern Water has brought forward plans and funding for an investigation of the Alexandra Park catchment, and will focus on the private sewer networks it has responsibility for. It has begun by installing new sewers in areas above the park, and made improvements to its seafront treatment plants. Further rectifications will be implemented as problems are uncovered. The EA is also providing funding and technical support.

### **Clean Seas Please**

Community activity and engagement has been supported through the Clean Seas Please campaign being coordinated by Hastings & Rother Voluntary Action. This continues to raise awareness about the causes and impact of poor water quality.

### **Testing seawater quality**

The Council will also ensure that water quality sampling points are taken at the busiest parts of the beach, and encourage beach users to bathe and use the sea away from potential sources of pollution.

## **6.f Reduced carbon- and eco-footprint**

### **Objectives:**

- Reduce the carbon emissions and air pollution arising from seafront transport and activities;
- Reduce business waste and litter.

### **Reducing carbon emissions**

New public transport measures and increasing numbers travelling by public transport, both to the seafront (eg with improved rail links) and along it, will reduce local pollution and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Encouraging local cycling and pedestrian commuting will also have a beneficial effect.

We will work with businesses, landlords and residents to reduce energy consumption from buildings and operations, while also reducing fuel costs.

### **Renewable energy**

Planning policies allow solar water heating and photovoltaic panels where they do not affect the streetscape – the photovoltaic panels installed by the White Rock Hotel are a good example – and the Council will help to facilitate more installations, as well as exploring options on Council-owned properties. Electric vehicles will be encouraged, with charging points in car parks

### **Pollution, waste and litter**

A significant amount of waste is generated from catering establishments, and it is in everyone's interest to reduce this. Good management of waste will also reduce the problem of seagull nuisance.

Takeaway food shops can be a source of unsightly and potentially unhealthy litter, attracting seagulls that spread the litter further. The Council will maintain its bin-clearance and street cleansing operations to ensure the beach and seafront are clean and tidy, and a pleasant place to spend leisure time.

## **6.g Enhance and improve biodiversity and the natural environment**

### **Objectives:**

- Increase the nature conservation value of publicly managed land;
- Work with partners and through the planning system to enhance and improve biodiversity;
- Work with schools, the public and community groups to develop the educational value of the seafront and beach as a living classroom on nature and biodiversity.

The seafront is a rich location for wildlife, both above and below the high-water line. New planting can encourage insect and bird life, and there is potential to do more in Warrior Square, St Leonards Gardens and Grosvenor Gardens, as well as in the smaller planted areas along the promenade.

### **Biodiversity**

Vegetated shingle is a rare habitat which will be protected and encouraged in line with recommendations in the ESCC Vegetated Shingle Management Plan. This is of particular interest in beaches at the eastern end of the shore including the fishing beach. Active management and interpretation boards will be of benefit.

While it is obvious that the sea itself is a rich habitat, there has been no recent ecological study of the intertidal and littoral (shallow water) environment. A study will be undertaken, to include recommendations on protection and enhancement.

The Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society is working with the University of Brighton and Sussex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority on a long-term project involving

fishermen filming marine habitats with underwater cameras and making the film available for students and others through the Classroom on the Coast.

### **Sustainable fisheries**

Hastings' beach-launched fishing fleet has always fished sustainably, and this has been recognised by Marine Stewardship Council certification for the Dover sole, mackerel and herring fisheries here. This long history of sustainable and responsible fishing has been compromised in recent years by the pressures to discard quota species, especially cod, at certain times. Furthermore, recent changes in weather patterns have had a major impact on the seabed which has severely affected the size of the catch.

The Council recognises the added value of the fisheries to the local economy and to the protection of an important marine habitat. The Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) is supported until December 2015, and is consulting on further ways to support the industry beyond the life-time of the currently EU-funded FLAG programme.

This could include the development of a Campus on the Coast with the University of Brighton, promoting teaching and research linked to sustainable inshore fishing. This will build on the Classroom on the Coast, a FLAG funded initiative to deliver educational and outreach activities linked to fishing and the marine environment, fishing industry training, cultural activities, and events and exhibitions. One part of this programme is the provision of a seafood training kitchen within the dedicated Classroom on the Coast space in Stade Hall.

### **Education**

Sustainable local habitats and biodiversity are important in their own right, and local authorities have a statutory duty to conserve biodiversity. We are conscious that our responsibilities as stewards extends to ensuring that the public and future generations are aware of the local environment and the impact their activities have on it.. The Council will work with schools, wildlife groups and other stakeholders to maximise the enormous educational value of the seafront, and encourage knowledge and appreciation of local biodiversity.

## **Events and Activities**

### **6.h Leisure and health/sporting**

#### **Objectives:**

- Develop and promote opportunities to participate in land- and water-based leisure and sporting activities;
- Work with partners to boost the economic regeneration of the seafront using the sports and leisure sector as a catalyst;
- Ensure seafront play areas are high quality and high value by 2019, in line with the Hastings & St Leonard's Play Space Strategy.

#### **Amusements**

Traditional seaside leisure activity in the form of amusements and funfairs will remain a vital part of a mixed offer that attracts all ages and social groups. The offer is unusually diverse, with arcades and funfair alongside a boating lake, go-kart track, miniature railway, and adventure golf, all in a concentrated location. We will continue to negotiate with our leaseholders to enhance and improve these wherever possible.

### **Fitness, games and sport**

Sports and leisure is one of the fastest growing industry sectors in the UK, contributing more than £4bn to the national economy and largely immune to the effects of recession or economic downturn. Handled effectively, growth in the seafront sports and leisure provision, including both commercial and free cycling and running events, health walks, and fitness classes, can encourage residents to participate in a healthy lifestyle, and encourage tourism.

Recent enhancements include seafront fitness equipment, adventure play areas, a multi-use games area, and sanded beach volleyball court. Further similar additions at other locations will be made as funds become available.

By bringing footfall and activity along the seafront, this creates a synergy with new retail and refreshment outlets at various points, drawing more people to the seafront and creating jobs.

### **BMX**

HBC is working with The Source BMX to restore White Rock Baths as a major indoor skateboard and BMX arena, for use by residents and visitors from across the south-east. This will enhance the seafront and build the visitor economy. It will form part of a centre of activity encompassing the Pier, Bottle Alley, and White Rock Gardens. The council's own BMX and skateboard park at White Rock, one of the largest in the South East, will also be maintained and promoted.

### **Cycling**

The cycle route connecting Hastings and Bexhill, part of the large National Cycle Route, opens up safe walking and cycling opportunities along the whole seafront, and links westward towards Eastbourne and eastward towards Rye. Further links will be made to the Old Town, St Leonards, Hastings Country Park and Combe Valley Countryside Park, enabling further exploration by bike or on foot. This includes using digital technologies by reviewing and revitalising pre-arrival information for the seafront and using mobile technology to help visitors navigate the area and participate in activities.

Related plans include piloting a cycle hire scheme based at Pelham Beach from June 2014; adding mile/ km markers to the seafront along with additional fitness equipment; highlighting the locations of drinking water points and showers, and providing regular dog water stations.

### **Water-based sport and leisure**

There are also plans to strengthen and support the water-based sports and leisure sector, including angling, paddle boarding, windsurfing, sailing and rowing, boating and sea-fishing, all of which are growing in the town. A slipway at the West Marina site has been proposed, but a feasibility study found that environmental factors make the costs prohibitive.

There is however scope to develop leisure fishing and boat trips from a landing stage on the Pier, potentially linked to similar offers in Eastbourne and Rye.

## **6.i Community and cultural use**

### **Objectives:**

- Increase local pride in and ownership of the seafront by bringing people and activity to the seafront;
- Enhance Hastings' reputation as a centre for popular and community activity;
- Maximise the educational potential of the seafront.

The seafront is a focus for a diverse range of festivals, cultural activities and family events. They bring local people to the seafront and attract visitors to Hastings – in fact they make up a big part of the culture that makes Hastings the unique place that it is.

They include:

- Seafood & Wine Festival,
- Herring Fair and midsummer fish festival;
- Hastings Bonfire;
- St Leonards Festival; Old Town Carnival events;
- Jack in the Green and biker gatherings on Mayday;
- Stade Saturdays;
- Coastal Currents, and cultural events on The Stade;
- Educational activity, including shoreline habitats, and built heritage;
- Pirate Day;
- Small scale art, cultural and community events funded by the Foreshore Trust;
- Heritage Open Days.

While there is a lot of activity, and even greater potential, there is a need for proactive management and co-ordination to link seafront events with other events on the local calendar, in order to get maximum possible value from joint marketing, and to avoid scheduling conflicts.

The Council will work with event organisers to ensure that venues are as accessible as possible, and that information about accessibility features in publicity and listings.

### **Art**

Hastings is a centre of arts activity, and there is untapped scope for a managed approach to high quality public art, temporary installations, art and craft markets, drama, dance and music. Hastings' Cultural Regeneration Strategy aims to increase the number and quality of events, and keep them accessible to all sectors of the community. The approach will involve regular events such as those listed above, as well as seasonal and temporary interventions utilising empty spaces. The council will be promoting a major festival in 2016 to celebrate the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, which will bring new cultural activities to the seafront.

### **Learning**

The seafront is a wonderful learning resource for the town. Formal and informal education can be delivered by a range of partners, including schools, the FLAG, the Shipwreck Museum, the Burtons' St Leonards Society, and the pier's educational

programme. There are centres of activity such as the Classroom on the Coast Seafood Training Kitchen at Stade Hall, and the Pier Community Hub.

**Heritage**

Signage, blue plaques, interpretation boards and screens at key points, and QR-code linked micro-websites can provide a framework for self-guided tours.

# 7. Key Strategic Interventions

## 7.a Rebalancing

### Objective

- Ensure activity takes place along the whole seafront, by improvements and investment at White Rock and the St Leonards seafront.

The seafront as a whole continues to suffer from the weakness of imbalance, with an over-reliance on the visitor economy in the Rock-a-Nore, Stade and Old Town hotspots. This remains the case in spite of the successes from the 2005 Seafront Strategy such as the cycle route linking Bexhill and Hastings Country Park and the rebuilding of Marine Pavilion (now Azur); new shops and cafes along the St Leonards stretch of seafront; the Beach Café and fish & chip shop by Warrior Square; and fitness structures at various points.

People and activity do not flow sufficiently westwards, a weakness exacerbated by the closure of the Pier in 2006 and the subsequent fire in 2010. Points of interest are too far apart for pedestrians to be drawn naturally along the promenade, while bus companies have never seen commercial value in a continuous seafront route from the Old Town to West Marina and Glyne Gap.

Two important developments now change the landscape: the construction of the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road, and the restoration of the pier.

When it opens in 2015, the Link Road will draw traffic away from the seafront on to the alternative route between the northern areas of the two towns. This has potentially significant benefits for the seafront, and will allow more options and flexibility. Planning constraints arising from high road use can be eased, potentially allowing new developments. A proposed bus lane on Bexhill Road could increase passenger numbers and hence make new routes more attractive to bus companies. The possibility of reducing traffic speeds at certain points can enable better pedestrian and cycle access between town centres and the beach, generating new footfall and creating opportunities for existing and new businesses.

The pier will once again be a major draw, moving the seafront's 'centre of gravity' westwards. It will act as a magnet to people coming from both the Hastings and St Leonards ends, with increased footfall creating a vibrant and varied promenade either side of the pier. The reopening of the White Rock Baths as a major new BMX and skateboard facility will provide another major attraction, drawing even more people to this area.

Further planned and potential actions to improve the east-west connectivity include:

- A review of further potential cultural-led developments in the White Rock area to capitalise on the re-opening of the pier and White Rock Baths;
- Improving links to Harold Place and Hastings Town Centre;
- Redeveloping Bottle Alley, including new car parking adjacent to Bottle Alley;

- Initiatives around Warrior Square;
- Pop-up, temporary and longer-term proposals for West Marina;
- Encourage footfall and activity through traffic calming to improve access to the beach and promenade across the A259;
- Work with bus companies to create a single route from Rock-a-Nore to Glyne Gap;
- Explore alternative, visitor- and leisure-oriented transport options, such as cycle hire and an electric mini-tram;
- Create points of interest and activity at the “cold spots”, such as between Pelham and the pier; between Bottle Alley and Azur; and between Azur and West Marina;
- Create cultural, heritage and environmental trails along the seafront, and linking to points of interest inland;
- Develop shops, cafes, restaurants, bars etc on the north side of the A259 and kiosks on the south side;
- Other actions in the Seafront Strategy that increase the attractiveness and function of the seafront west of Pelham Place.

These are described in more detail under different headings.

## 7.b West Marina

### Objective

- Enable mixed-use redevelopment

Two sites are allocated for mixed use development at Seaside Road and Cinque Ports Way in the West Marina redevelopment area (in the Hastings Local Plan Development Management Plan). These sites provide for 145 residential units and opportunities for commercial and leisure uses.

Given the 2014 upturn in the national economy, and in the housing market in particular, and developer interest, the Council is considering the possibility of marketing the site.

Development coming forward in these locations should accord with the following principles:

- high quality innovative design, taking account of the nearby conservation area;
- maximise views of the sea;
- a promenade created for pedestrian and cyclists.

Large proportions of the sites are within a Flood Zone 3, meaning residential development must be on the first floor or higher. Developments will also have to incorporate flood resilient design, include provision for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) to mitigate surface water flooding, and may have to contribute to sea defences.

Detailed policies are set out in the Development Management Plan, and should be used to guide any future development.

## 7.c Central St Leonards

### Objective

- Improve connectivity between Central St Leonards and the beach and promenade to maximise their mutual benefit

It is important to reinforce the connections between Central St Leonards and the seafront, both eastward to Warrior Square and the Pier/White Rock area, and westward to Marine Court and ultimately to West Marina. There are mutual benefits in making the up-and-coming Central St Leonards streets and the seafront enhance each other, in much the same way as The Stade / Rock-a-Nore area works with Hastings Old Town.

This can be achieved through a seamless flow of shops, cafes and signage – and hence people – along two connecting routes. The first is from Norman Road, down London Road and around the corners onto the frontage of Eversfield Place and Marina. The second is from Western Road to Warrior Square and thence to Bottle Alley and the Pier.

## 7.d Bottle Alley

### Objective

- Address under-use and unsafe image, and enhance its value.

Bottle Alley is the walkway that runs at beach level under the promenade from the Pier to Warrior Square Gardens. In view of the deteriorating condition of the structure and its current underuse, it is recognised that a new role needs to be defined for Bottle Alley that provides environmental improvement, supports the commercial sustainability of the structure, and contributes to the wider regeneration of and linkage between the White Rock area and central St Leonards.

A feasibility study was undertaken in 2012, which considered an integrated package of improvements for the road-level promenade and for Bottle Alley itself, including:

- Creating new parking spaces on the south side of the A259;
- Promenade-level kiosk outlets to animate this long stretch of promenade;
- Improve accessibility from promenade level down to Bottle Alley;
- Beach huts and commercial studio/kiosk space;
- Overnight accommodation pods (to be managed as part of the local hotel offer);
- Boardwalk/boardway at the back of the beach, with foot access by steps over the low sea wall separating Bottle Alley from the beach.

These options and others will continue to be assessed by the Council, especially in the light of the impact of the Pier reopening. New kiosks will be installed on the upper promenade, with the possibility also of re-opening the kiosk in Bottle Alley itself (close to the weather station).

## 7.e White Rock area

### Objective

- Use the 2015 Pier reopening as a catalyst for further renewal in the White Rock area.

The projected opening of the Pier in 2015 creates a catalyst for further regeneration in the White Rock area, attracting more people, and generating further business and employment opportunities. An options and feasibility study will look at a vision, opportunities and priorities, and a framework for achieving them.

The study can take place at two scales: there is a specific focus on the potential of the White Rock area itself, including the Pier, White Rock Baths, White Rock Hotel, and the theatre. At a wider scale, there are relationships between the seafront and the area bounded by Bohemia Road, Magdalen Road and White Rock Road; and the potential of White Rock Gardens and convent site bears exploration. The potential of this area will be reviewed alongside the development of a Town Centre Area Action Plan that will address the retail and cultural needs of this part of the town.

This is perhaps the most exciting area of the seafront for improvement, with a potential to create a balanced package to provide and fund a range of high-quality commercial and leisure facilities, along with enhanced open spaces. The council will work closely with local groups (such as the White Rock Trust and Castle Ward Forum) to develop proposals.

## 7.f Harold Place

### Objective

- Improve the urban realm and linkages between Hastings Town Centre and the beach and promenade to maximise their mutual benefit.

Hastings Town Centre has the highest footfall of any locality in the borough, yet Harold Place is arguably the worst and least welcoming point of access to the beach and promenade along the whole seafront. The direct route entails passing the public conveniences, along a footpath that is ill-defined on one side of the road and lifeless on the other, through a particularly uninviting subway, and emerging up a bleak ramp behind the seawall. There is no pedestrian road crossing at surface level.

Instead, pedestrians heading for the beach are guided primarily along Wellington Street to the roundabout at Breeds Place, and then have to negotiate Pelham car park to get to the beach. The secondary route is westwards along Robertson Street. While these routes must be maintained, the existing crossings limit accessibility across the A259, and the seafront on both sides of the road is almost lifeless between Pelham and White Rock, so does little to draw people from the Old Town end. Neither the Town Centre nor the seafront achieves their potential here.

The issue could be addressed by reconfiguring the pedestrian routes and public realm at Harold Place, with options to create a linear piazza and pocket park linking Havelock Road to Carlisle Parade, improving the public realm at the Harold Place/Carlisle parade junction, relocating the public toilets, landscaping and animation on the beach itself, and “shared space” or other pedestrian-friendly measures. There are opportunities to increase commercial values in this area, generate more economic activity, and create new jobs.

An urban design brief to address this will be developed, but short-term improvements could also be considered, for example by improving the pedestrian underpass with artwork and improved lighting.

# 8. Reinforce and create seafront Zones of Character

## Objective

- Guide the design and installation of seafront features, creating a sense of different seafront neighbourhoods within an integrated overall identity;
- Generate variety and interest along the whole of seafront, encouraging movement along its whole length;
- Provide a framework to support public and private investment.

A large part of the appeal of the seafront is the changes of character at different stretches along its length. At one end is a concentrated mix of the traditional and the modern, of culture and amusement. At the other is the openness and more natural feel of the beach at Glyne Gap. In between are the subtle changes of identity around White Rock, St Leonards, and Marina.

These changes in character can be enhanced by recognising four different “zones of character”. Design approaches will be developed that pick up on local features and styles (eg Victorian, modern, |Art Deco, natural), generating an identifiable style and/or colour theme for each zone. At the same time, common elements such as waymarkers and the ‘Sticks of Rock’ lighting, will be preserved to maintain an overall identity.

The local theme will guide new interventions in an area, to create a sense of seafront neighbourhoods. Improvements to (for example) seating, lighting, signs and planting, will then follow these principles. High quality must be maintained, accepting that it is better to have a smaller number of excellent features, than a larger amount of mediocrity.

It is vital that the zones are seamlessly interlinked with each other, with attention paid to signage and progression, drawing people along the seafront.

The proposed zones of character are:

- a. Old Town: Rock-a-Nore to Breeds Place
- b. Central: Breeds Place roundabout to Warrior Square
- c. St Leonards: Warrior Square to West Marina
- d. Bulverhythe: Combe Haven outfall to Glyne Gap

There is no intention to create a prescriptive design code, and these zones are not formally a part of the Local Plan. Nevertheless it is hoped that private investors will see the benefit to all of following the principles once established.

## 8.a Hastings Old Town Seafront: Rock-a-Nore to Breeds Place

This zone is Hastings' visitor hotspot, having the main tourist attractors including the museums on Rock-a-Nore, the Jerwood Gallery and Stade open space, amusement arcades, funfair, and adventure golf.



The Old Town with its independent shops, cafes, bars and restaurants is a draw in itself, and there are essential links to Hastings Country Park, West Hill and the Castle. The two car parks with a combined capacity of 700 spaces, are the largest parking areas on the whole seafront, and help make this the borough's best-used stretch of beach.

Rock-a-Nore is famous for its maritime heritage, attracting thousands of visitors in its' own right each year. Its beach launched fishing fleet is Europe's largest and the flow between a working fishing beach, maritime activities, Net Huts, Museums and fish shops works well.

While it is economically healthy, the Old Town seafront does suffer from several weaknesses. It is highly seasonal, full to capacity in summer, but under-used in winter. There are areas of poor design, such as around the boating lake, and there are several barriers blocking access to the beach. Some of these issues are being addressed by the operators of the attractions.

The diversity of the area is part of its charm. Although there are no plans for major new interventions, the new lighting scheme and fountain for Breeds Place roundabout has recently been installed, and several further improvements are proposed, subject to public funds and/or private investment:

### Urban realm

- improve signage, including directions to attractions westwards along the seafront, and to the Country Park, Old Town, and the Castle; waymarking a 'fish trail';
- improvements around the boating lake and better, more legible routes onto the beach;
- sustainable planting / trees between Breeds Place and George Street;
- complete improvements to Pelham Arcade.

### Transport and parking

- Review management and layout of Rock-a-Nore car park; provide capacity information.

### Events

- Continue to use the Stade Open Space for community and cultural events and festivals, and to support community-led events and festivals.

### Business and attractions

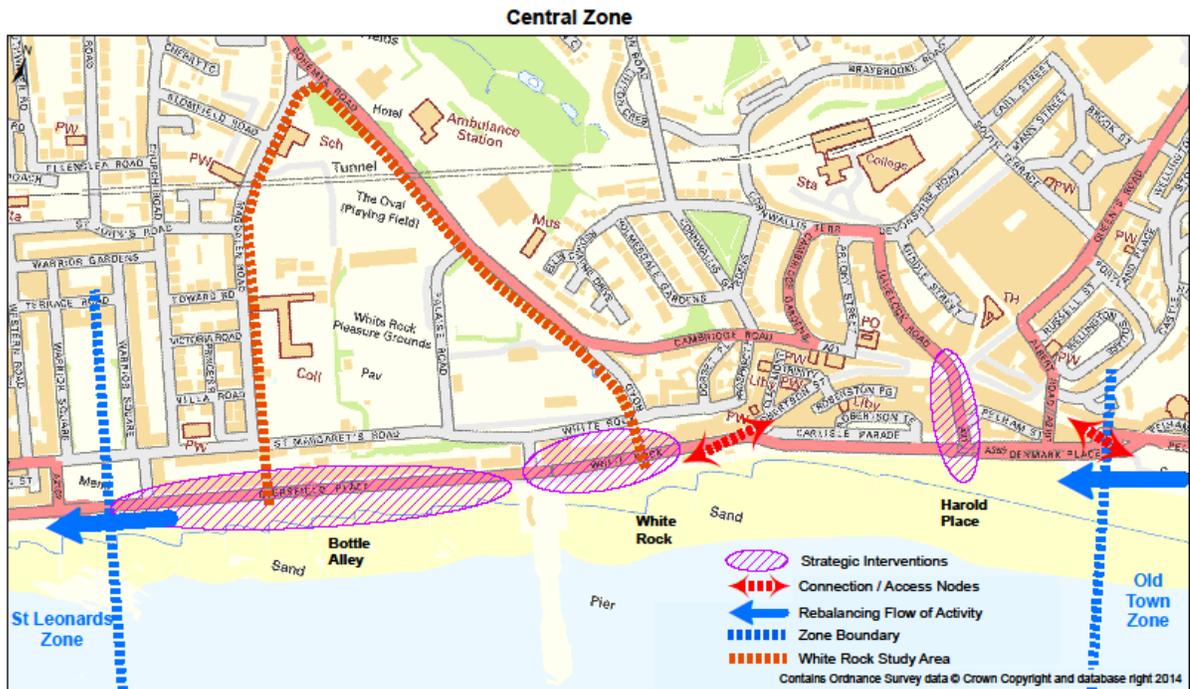
- Maintain the FLAG and other projects to support the fishing industry;
- Explore ways to support new businesses;
- Continue partnerships and cooperation with the Jerwood Gallery, St Mary in the Castle and other venues, and promote Hastings as a cultural destination.

### Buildings and Structures

- Create an attractive kiosk replacing the lifeguard's hut, combining this function with a bike hire facility and retail (subject to review of the conditions in the Hastings Act governing commercial activity on Foreshore Trust land).

## 8.b White Rock Zone – Breeds Place roundabout to Warrior Square

This zone centres on the Pier. The Pier's reopening in 2015 will be a defining moment for Hastings and St Leonards, and will enable the zone to flourish in its own right and as the link between Hastings and St Leonards.



The area is characterised by Art Deco structures and Sidney Little's pioneering engineering and designs. It includes the spaces under the road and promenade for car parking and White Rock Baths, Bottle Alley, and dense residential accommodation in seafront flats. There is a range of businesses, including hotels, the theatre, and numerous shops and bars, but while this zone contains notable destinations, it does not have the sense of place enjoyed by Hastings Old Town or Central St Leonards.

It is in some ways a transition zone, and as such it is the lynchpin for the seafront. If it works well, people will be drawn westwards to the White Rock area, the pier, and onward into St Leonards, so benefitting the whole seafront. Therefore it is the focus for four of the six strategic interventions proposed in this strategy discussed in detail above.

Other initiatives proposed are:

#### **Urban realm**

- Signage to provide information and directions, and draw people along the seafront and into the town centres;
- Improvements around the entrance to the pier, to improve the quality of the space, and to create a sense of place between White Rock Baths and Bottle Alley.

#### **Transport and Parking**

- New parking spaces at Eversfield Place (south side);
- Consider actions to improve conditions for pedestrians crossing A259.

#### **Events**

- Event to mark Pier opening;
- Continue Hastings Week procession and Bonfire, and other events to animate this section of the Seafront.

#### **Business and Attractions**

- Establish major regional BMX / skateboarding arena at White Rock Baths;
- Support Hastings Pier in promoting a range of activities;
- Support business investment in retail, leisure, hospitality etc on north side of A259, and new retail kiosks on the promenade on Eversfield Place (linked to Bottle Alley renewal).

## **8.c St Leonards zone: Warrior Square to West Marina**

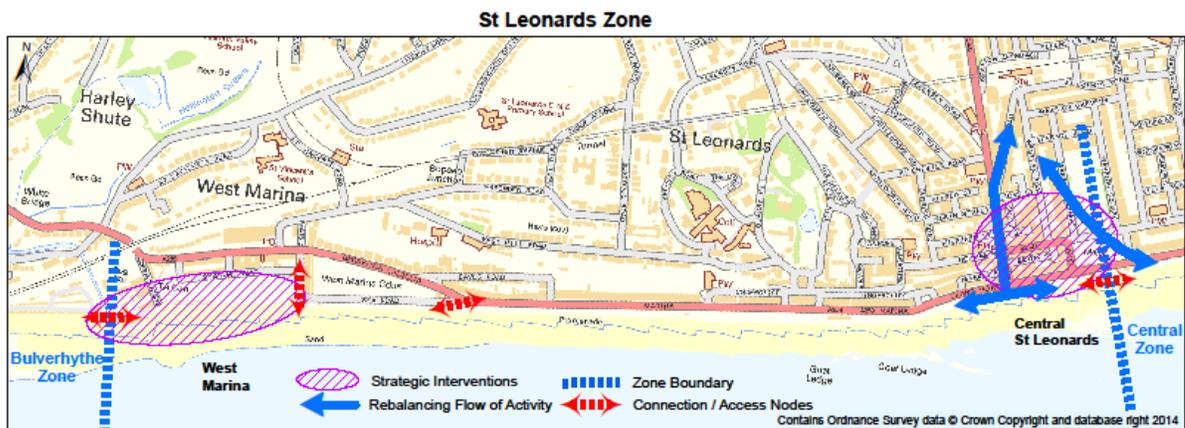
This zone is continuing its revival, along with Central St Leonards. Recent additions of new food outlets and outdoor seating, a new children's play area and the introduction of an adult exercise park are all injecting a new lease of life onto the promenade, while the varied retail and food shops on the north side of the road are increasingly healthy, and are a part of the St Leonards evening economy. The Azur and the Royal Victoria Hotel form strong landmarks, and are the location for business events, and the Royal Victoria Hotel marks the presence of the Burtons' St Leonards conservation area north from the seafront. Warrior Square Gardens and Grosvenor Gardens provide popular attractive green spaces, and locations for events including the St Leonards Festival and Hastings

Half-Marathon. The zone also includes beach huts and chalets at the Marina, West Marina and Solarium, all in high demand.

The area is well served by the 97-space Marina car park and a significant amount of on-street parking on both sides of the A259. The zone also has the distinction of being served by two mainline rail stations, West St Leonards and St Leonards Warrior Square.

The zone also includes the mixed use development site at West Marina (discussed in Section 7).

This area is subject to significant seasonal variations in the level of activity. It benefits from the wide two-tier promenade but is also the most exposed to the elements, particularly in the off-season. The combination of the Azur, the Royal Victoria Hotel, and retail and food businesses in Marine Court do not create sufficient critical mass to reduce the area's dependence on summer trade (this is a problem across the seafront, but is more keenly felt here). The low density of attractions and commercial premises west of the Marina car park, and the empty West Marina sites gives this end of the seafront something of a "poor relation" feel. The A259 also widens significantly within this zone and has limited crossing points, further restricting interaction between the north and south sides of the road. The redevelopment of West Marina is therefore the key to continuing regeneration of this stretch of seafront.



### Transport and Parking

- Capacity information for car parks;
- Review crossing point types and placement across A259.

### Public Realm

- Identify sites for temporary arts installations;
- Add signage to show routes from stations to seafront.

### Buildings and Structures

- Identify sites for seafront concessions including food and drink along the length of the promenade in keeping with the local area;
- Provide a mix of tenure for beach huts and chalets;

- Development site at West Marina provides opportunity for commercial/leisure and residential units.

#### Reduced carbon and eco-footprint

- Further promote the Hastings-Bexhill cycle route as an alternative to road travel;
- Identify sustainable options for regeneration activity (eg mile markers made from reclaimed groyne wood).

#### Leisure and health/sporting

- Add to existing play equipment to improve the play offer;
- Encourage additional event based use of the West seafront for sports and leisure activities;
- Develop Warrior Square as an events space;
- Support sea angling and water-based activities;
- Potential for an additional Designated Bathing Water site at West Marina.

#### Cultural and Community

- Continue to support the St Leonards Town Team to deliver projects to support retail and commercial growth;
- Protect and enhance the potential of Burtons St Leonards as a heritage area and cultural/visitor attraction
- Encourage and enable other cultural and community activity on key seafront sites including Land at West Marina.

## 8.d Bulverhythe zone: Combe Haven outfall to Glyne Gap

From West Marina onwards, the A259 continues onwards slightly inland, away from the promenade as the road and the seafront become separated by the east-west railway line between Warrior Square and Bexhill. The walking and cycling route links through to Cooden Beach West of Bexhill.



The area is served by West St Leonards Station, on the Charing Cross line. The railway makes sea defences a high priority here, but there are still places in this zone where the sea has damaged the cycleway.

This zone contains the only areas of industrial use along the seafront, including rail servicing and engineering sheds, with road access from the A259. These and the railway itself mean the only access to the beach between West Marina and Glyne Gap is the Bridge Way footbridge, which brings people close to the historical site of the wreck of the Amsterdam, a shipwreck site which can be visited on foot at very low tides.

There is foot and bicycle access to the beach under the railway at Glyne Gap, where a single café is the only refreshment outlet along this one-mile stretch.

#### **Public Realm**

- Planting and public art to enhance the cycleway route;
- Review signage and access routes from the A259;
- Add signage at Glyne Gap, Bridge Way footbridge and West Marina, with information and QR codes to enhance the experience for pleasure walkers and cyclists, including the Amsterdam wreck site.

#### **Sea defences**

- Further measures to protect the cycleway.

#### **Reduced carbon and eco-footprint**

- Encourage the use of walking and cycle routes to reduce traffic along the A259 and reduce emissions.

#### **Events and Activities**

- Continue to encourage and support events such as Hastings-Bexhill cycle competitions.

# 9. Resources and funding / finance

## Objective:

- Explore all opportunities for private investment and external funding.

Hastings has high aspirations for its seafront, and ambitious aims and objectives. Building and maintaining a high-quality seafront is undoubtedly costly, and Hastings Council appears likely to suffer from continued cuts to mainstream funding in the short term, with little prospect of additional public funding in the near future.

The Council will however preserve as much as possible of its capital and revenue budgets for improvements and maintenance along the seafront, together with key staff to manage this. Resources can be supplemented by invest-to-save where borrowing can bring benefits as well as generating an income to repay loans.

The Foreshore Trust generates income primarily from its car parks and rents on its land and property. It makes its spending decisions independently from the Council, but there is great scope for joining up where there is a common interest.

East Sussex County Council is responsible for the highway, on-street parking, and some adjacent areas, and may contribute to improvements, as has been the case in the past.

Continuous and sustainable improvement cannot be achieved without private investment in houses, shops, hotels and restaurants. This will occur in a healthy marketplace and in the context of a good physical and social environment, where investors can be optimistic about making a commercial return. While there are several pioneer businesses, the bulk of such finance will follow rather than precede publicly-funded improvements.

Public-Private Partnerships, based on the concept of 'private funding, public delivery', have further potential to finance seafront regeneration. This can occur when a private business has a commercial interest in the success of a public venture, commonly linked to a major development opportunity such as at West Marina.

There may be opportunities to use planning agreements where developers pay for public realm improvements (especially for larger developments such as West Marina), or where the Council or Foreshore Trust can attach obligations to leases in their role as landlords.

The Seafront has benefited in recent years from public funding from the government, and Heritage Lottery Fund, which has gone into such projects as the Stade and net huts, St Mary in the Castle, the pier, façade refurbishments, pavement widening, and Marina Pavilion (Azur).

The Council will continue to bid into competitive funding programmes promoted by the government (for example, the Coastal Communities fund), seek funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership, and will also target EU funding, especially Interreg programmes, placing a high priority on identifying partners to take forward cross-border initiatives, and leading such funding bids where appropriate.

Funds have been raised by the Council, Sea Space and other partners often in conjunction with private and community groups. These successes provide a sound basis for further external funding as opportunities emerge, with the key strategic interventions at White Rock, Bottle Alley and West Marina being the priorities. The Council will also explore smaller funding pots and work with partners and stakeholders to support individual interventions such as signage and public art, as well as creative and community events.

# 10. Policy and economic context

Hastings' seafront operates within a multi-faceted policy and strategic context ranging from tourism to environmental policy and from economic deprivation to transport. It traverses a number of different wards with a multitude of public, private and third sector stakeholders.

## 10.a Hastings Borough Council Corporate Priorities

The Council's six corporate priorities have relevance to aspects of the seafront:

- Economic and physical regeneration;
- Cultural regeneration;
- Intervention where it's needed;
- Decent homes;
- An attractive borough;
- A greener borough.

Notably, the Economic and Physical Regeneration priority is to secure high quality new developments while preserving the best of our heritage, promoting infrastructure improvements, economic growth and employment, particularly in tourism. Cultural regeneration priorities include extending, broadening and promoting the borough's cultural programme and activities to establish Hastings as a nationally and internationally recognised centre for arts and culture. Interventionist actions aim to keep the town safe and attractive, using direct actions to tackle enviro-crime, poor housing, eyesore properties, derelict land, and unauthorised developments. Achieving the decent homes priority will involve facilitating the supply of secure, affordable and well-designed homes through strategic planning policies, planning conditions, regulation of the private rented sector, and work with social housing providers. To achieve an attractive borough the Council aims to create visually interesting, well-maintained, uncluttered, clean and functional urban public spaces, especially along the seafront and in our town centres, integrated with high quality protected green spaces accessible to all. The Council will also promote practices that minimise our carbon footprint, protect and enhance biodiversity, and limit damaging consequences of human intervention on the natural environment.

## 10.b Hastings Local Plan and other strategies

The Hastings Local Plan is the statutory development plan for the town, and provides the strategic framework for land use and development in Hastings and St Leonards to 2028.

The adopted Planning Strategy includes a planning policy for the seafront, with the overall aim of building on the existing tourism economy and continuing to enhance the seafront and public realm. It encourages regeneration of key landmark sites including leisure and residential development at West Marina, White Rock Baths and the pier, and seeks to encourage new visitor accommodation and tourist attractions to provide

permanent jobs. The Plan also provides the policy context for Cultural Quarters that run mostly along the seafront areas, and sets out the Council's intention to promote and encourage cultural uses in these locations.

The draft Development Management Plan (DMP) sets out priorities and proposals for 13 Focus Areas, six of which are coastal. These are reflected in the "Zones of Character" section of this Seafront Strategy. The DMP is currently the subject of an independent examination in public and is expected to be ready for adoption within the next twelve months.

Many other strategies covering open spaces, leisure, environment, housing, and cultural regeneration, have relevance to the seafront.

Furthermore, the Hastings Act relating to the Foreshore Trust land has major implications regarding commercial opportunities and investment in Trust-owned car parking, buildings, and open space.

## **10.c Regional, national and international context**

The Hastings and Rother Task Force has adopted a Six-Point Plan for regeneration in both districts. This covers Urban Renaissance; Connectivity (road, rail, bus, and broadband); Skills; Enterprise growth; Culture-led regeneration; and Image. This wider geography has relevance for the seafront given Hastings' position as the centre of 1066 Country.

East Sussex County Council's Economic Development Strategy includes a priority to "build the visitor profile, its identity, and enhance the quality of offer to become a key destination for visitors". Its vision of a county "widely recognised for its strong tourism, leisure and cultural offer, clear sense of identity, and high value visitor spend both within and out of season". It recognises the need to ensure that public transport responds to tourism needs, as well as encouraging walking and cycling.

The South East Local Economic Partnership's (SELEP) is increasingly relevant to the future development of the seafront, through the Strategic Economic Plan and funding priorities therein. Implementation will be through Team East Sussex under the 2014 federated structure. SELEP's coastal thematic group provides a framework for working alongside other resorts in the region.

The Hastings Fisheries Local Actions Group (FLAG) has benefited from EU funding support, and there is potential for other support under future Interreg and cultural programmes. We will aim to sustain the FLAG as a vehicle to bid into other funding sources, if no further funding is available for projects under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

The whole of the seafront is included among the wards designated by the European Commission as Assisted Areas for 2014-2020, raising its priority for regional aid.

Government policies and spending plans are overarching. Hastings seafront has benefited as part of the wider regeneration support and investment in 2000-2010, and stands to benefit further from planned road and rail improvements, and from specific

funding streams including European funding and the government's Local Growth Fund. However the job of regeneration is not yet done, and the case for continued support for deprived seaside towns will continue to be pressed.

## **10.d Tourism and cultural context**

Tourism is a key driver of economic growth and jobs in Hastings, with the local visitor economy worth £245m a year and supporting approximately 5,200 jobs (14% of the workforce) directly and indirectly. It supports an estimated 400 enterprises in the hospitality and leisure sectors, and visitors are also a key element for the continued health of the town's retail sector.

The numbers and spend of staying visitors have risen in recent years. To attract ever more high-spending visitors, and the hotels for them to stay in, it is vital to raise the quality of the local offer, continuing the transformation begun with the opening of the Jerwood Gallery, and hopefully to be continued with the reopened Pier and White Rock Baths.

Maximising the value of the seafront as a physical asset and amenity, and as a location for events, activities, venues, shops and businesses, is a key part of this effort. By attracting visitors and residents alike, the seafront has the potential to stimulate sustainable development and improvement. Public funding cannot achieve this alone, but must be used strategically to encourage continuing private investment in a growing cultural and tourism economy.

The council's 2016 festival to celebrate the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Hastings will also be used to bring new major cultural activities to the seafront, and promote future enhanced cultural events and programmes in the future. The lack of suitable performance venues will also be considered further, with a study of current venues and their shortcomings, and consideration of how new venues could be provided and funded, and where.

# 11. Indicators of Success

## 1. Visitor numbers

It is important to maintain and increase the numbers of visitors, as this sustains a wide range of economic activities and adds to the liveliness of the town, even if the spend per head of some visitors is relatively low.

## 2. Visitor spend

The greater value comes from higher-spending visitors over the whole year, and Hastings Cultural Regeneration Strategy aims to encourage this, with more cultural visitors, more overnight stays, and more foreign visitors.

## 3. Audience and participant numbers at seafront events throughout the year

Participation figures will help to identify whether events designed to encourage greater numbers of visitors to the seafront area have been successful.

## 4. Number of empty units in seafront Zones of Character

A low number of empty commercial units indicates that the seafront zones of character have vibrant, self-sustaining economies. A well-managed rolling programme of “pop up” shops in vacant commercial premises would contribute towards this indicator.

## 5. Delivery of sites set out in the Hastings Local Plan Development Management Plan

The delivery of the seafront sites identified in the Development Management Plan demonstrates that the area has become desirable to developers.