

# HASSOCKS AMENITY ASSOCIATION

## UPDATE

21st July 2015

Dear HAA member,

**Annual General Meeting.** Our meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> July may one day be regarded as seminal.

The greater part was taken up by group discussions, based on three questions:

1. Should the HAA continue to exist? If so, in what form?
2. How could collaboration between the various voluntary groups in the village be improved?
3. How can the resourcing issues be addressed?

Following a short open forum the Chair drew attention to the four groups' common responses to the questions and emerging themes. He summarised the general views as follows:

- It is timely to address the implications of the changes in lifestyle in Hassocks. Engaging with the younger generations was recognised to be a particular challenge.
- The concept of a volunteer's database was welcomed as long as it could also include less computer-literate members.
- There was support for merging the existing bodies – particularly the HAA and Hassocks Community Partnership (HCP) – to form one umbrella organisation. Hassocks Parish Council should be invited to support this and host the initial meeting of a new body.
- The pooling and sharing of resources between groups should be more actively encouraged.
- The 'fun' element must be present in all activities.

**Follow-up.** We have now had a very helpful meeting with the directors of Hassocks Community Partnership (HCP) when it was agreed that two HAA and two HCP members work on a detailed proposal for merging HAA and HCP into *one village umbrella organisation* to include the Volunteers Database concept. The target is to complete this proposal for consideration by both the HAA and HCP main committees by the end of October.

We should be glad to hear your views on these important developments as soon as possible – just send your thoughts in on our website [www.hassocksamenity.org.uk](http://www.hassocksamenity.org.uk). It would also be good to have your comments on the reasons for the unusually poor attendance at this important AGM. Was it the date (a month later than usual), the venue (not Adastra Hall), the publicity, the subject? We really need to know.

**A very unpleasant train journey.** Recently, one of our rail group members, Peter Gibbons, caught the 20.24 train to Hassocks at St Pancras International. 'All was fine until the train reached Three Bridges when a large group of what can only be described as drunken loud mouthed yobs, boarded the train for presumably a drunken night out at Brighton. These yobs were carrying very large quantities of cheap alcohol, mainly lager and beer plus a red substance in a glass bottle that didn't look like wine. They mixed this all together and dared each other to drink it. The beer bottles were opened using the ceiling hinging to do this, and this resulted in a number of law abiding passengers being sprayed with beer. Not only that, several of these yobs used the disabled toilet on the train to urinate over the floor and internal walls of the disabled toilet, presumably showing off to their "mates".'

We raised this with Govia Thameslink who have undertaken to investigate, and Roger Perkins, Head of Communications, asked us to pass on this advice to our members: 'The best way to tackle these thugs, according to our crime prevention officer, is to immediately text BTP on 61016, detailing the service you are travelling on and a brief note of the issue. British Transport Police will

then get someone out to the train or station. We have posters on our trains advertising this but any help you can give by publicising this to your members would be gratefully received.'

The Rail Group hopes that the appointment of the Rail Enforcement Officers mentioned in the new franchise (see below) will also make such incidents less likely.

**Spitalford Bridge and the new bus shelter.** An enthusiastic crowd came to share in our celebration of the restoration of the bridge and the installation of a new bus shelter. District Councillor Gordon Marples ceremoniously unveiled the plaque:



Maureen Dewdney and Janet Sharman of *Friends and Neighbours* cut the ribbon and declared the new bus shelter open. It was a relaxed, merry occasion with generously contributed refreshments for all. The next stage of the project will now go ahead: providing a green heart to the village. We are joining with HKD Transition, Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Adur & Ouse River Trust to improve the view from the bridge in a way which will encourage wild life and be environmentally friendly. Look out for some wet and slithery work being undertaken in the next few weeks. Our plans are long-term, no immediate miracles, we will be working with nature, but the future is full of promise!

**Rail Services.** Up to now these occasional emails have been full of doom and gloom. Is there now a ray of hope on the horizon? The new Govia Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchise starts on the 26<sup>th</sup> July. We are promised:

- Real improvements in reliability and punctuality on Thameslink and Southern services
- A new timetable in December 2015
- A new maintenance regime
- More flexible management of infrastructure failures
- More qualified drivers
- New Thameslink Siemens trains from 2016

We can also expect:

- A new online ticket facility which will be easier to use and a tap in//tap out smart card ticket facility which gives the customer the cheapest fare
- The introduction of Rail Enforcement Officers to reduce ticketless travel, thereby increasing revenue, and to deal with anti social behaviour
- Greater co-operation between Controllers for Thameslink and Southern trains. For example, when a train has to be fast run (i.e. 'skips' Hassocks) a following train will stop to pick up stranded passengers.
- A greater emphasis on local accountability. David Scorey, is to become Passenger Service Director for the Brighton Mainline. The Group Station Manager at Brighton, Paul Wyborn, will be responsible for stations between Brighton and Coulsdon South. He will have two managers based at Haywards Heath, one responsible for Haywards Heath station and the other for stations between Haywards Heath and Brighton.

It looks as if the Rail Group is going to have a busy autumn, with lots of new people to get to know and to work with. **It will be relying on you for accurate feedback on how the changes are affecting your journeys, for good or for ill.**

For more details of the proposed improvement in train services, see [www.southernrailway.com/improvementplan](http://www.southernrailway.com/improvementplan). To read the debate moved by our MP Nick Herbert in the House of Commons on 8<sup>th</sup> July on the performance of Southern Railway, see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150708/halltext/150708h0001.htm#15070835000593> or check Nick Herbert's website.

Best wishes, Margaret Ford (Chair)