

HEATHFIELD PARTNERSHIP TRUST COMPANY LTD CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2007

A very warm welcome to all of our guests at this now well established formal occasion. It is very good to see even more Friends & Allies than we have had attend before and that I hope this is testimony to the harmony of the Partnerships that we, as an organization, are a party to. The Annual General meeting of the Company is where we conduct the formal Governance of the Company, its annual accounts and the appointment of Directors and this now traditional annual account by way of the Chairman's report. I would welcome Alan Staples of Manningtons who acts as our Honorary Auditor, the Chairman of the Parish Council Cllr Ray Bassingthwaite, Vice-Chairman Peter Newnham, County Councillor Chris Dowling and District Councillors, Niki Oakes, Dick Angel, Margaret Kirkpatrick & Ann Newton. I would also like to welcome the President of Heathfield Rotary, Graeme Hird. Parish Cllr John Kerby who represents a number of Parish Councillors, many of whom are involved in critical work on various projects. It is important that we work closely with our democratically elected representatives at all levels and we very much welcome your support and interest.

I would also welcome most of our Directorate; we are missing our honorary treasurer, Tim Hough, who is on duty at a School Board meeting this evening. I think it would be hypocritical of me to voice any challenge to his judgement of School first on this occasion. I would single out Trevor Goldsmith who has kindly allowed us to use his showroom one year on from the dreadful fire that so set him back. Good to see that he has both rekindled his business as well as his health. I would also acknowledge Joanne Aldous who, as our Coordinator, has contributed a great deal to the progress we have seen this year on many fronts, especially the hard yards of research and who has bravely taken on the greatest of challenges, that of trying to navigate my diary, a task others think impossible but she is close to mastering.

That diary this last year has taken me to every operation that we are involved in, be it committee meetings on every project, negotiations with potential partners or funding opportunities and of course the general Executive and Board meetings. The time taken in reflection, in preparing this report while away on what was almost a few days retreat in Kansas, reminded me of the extraordinary energy and enterprise by every volunteer who acts on behalf of, or in conjunction with, the Partnership in one project or several. Sometimes recognized as the third sector, an empire of voluntary organizations that contribute time and raise money for worthy causes that the statutory institutions have either no budget for or inclination to address. The Heathfield Partnership can be very proud of our associates and their effectiveness in bringing about investment in the continuing regeneration of Heathfield.

It is perhaps timely that we talk about that. There was a letter in the Sussex Express shortly before I left for the USA which Trevor Goldsmith saw and called to tell me about. A resident of Framfield (Mr Leader) who was angry at the roadworks from Cherwell Road to the Parade and who did not see the need for any change in Heathfield. It was an inconvenience for him as he travelled to work every day through the Town. He was irritated at the Bureaucrats in the town and their never ceasing tinkering. I was also interested to see the new Uckfield masterplan and its vision. It was flattering to see reference to the regeneration investment in Heathfield come through in the objectives they were setting. I was fascinated to see that the leading vision was for a contemporary market Town with an up-market image. Perhaps with forgiveness from our Friend in Framfield we have still some way to go there.

I will now take a whistle stop tour of the projects we have been involved in during the last year.

Police Local Action Team:-“LAT”

Our newest venture this last year has been to take on the responsibility for the Heathfield Local Police Action Team. Much more than just imagery, has been the deterioration of loutish behaviour which is distressing to all residents and especially Traders and which has further degenerated into criminal activity and significant property damage. The LAT Team have investigated CCTV equipment as an asset to the Policing of the Town and we now have a pilot camera in place. We have also encouraged alcohol licensing sweeps and illegal alcohol approbation by our Police Team. It has become increasingly clear that the behaviour of those involved is fuelled by alcohol and their sources are seemingly never ending. Following a meeting I had in Hailsham with Chief Superintendent, Nick Wilkinson, Chief Inspector, Neil Honnor and Inspector Claire Stevenson, it was pleasing to hear that they had raised the status of importance for Heathfield and it should be acknowledged that the Wealden Police Division has spent more of their resources in recent times adding additional Officers on Friday and Saturday nights to control the problem. The image of the Town and its continuing prosperity is directly impacted upon by this pattern of behaviour. To that end we are to see the Police introduce a dispersal order for the centre of the town providing authority to move groups of young people on or to remove them to their homes in certain circumstances. It was interesting to note that the last bout of gratuitous violence and property damage was conducted by a single individual, aged 19.

The Dispersal Order, Draconian yes but also necessary to bring a halt to this dangerous trend. The Partnership and its LAT Committee immediately endorsed this tactic. I very much appreciate the support that has been forthcoming from the Parish Council and the Chamber especially as a strong collective support for this initiative will be necessary during its 3 month trial period.

Confidence in the Young in our community has not surprisingly taken a sharp decline and this at a time when the Community College achieved an increase of 17% in it's A*-C GCSE results this year (congratulations to Director Alan Powell, Headteacher of the Community College.) The Youth Council, managed by Beata Drury also distinguished themselves in entering into return invitations with the residents of Mary Burfield Court for afternoon teas, both of which I attended and each went wonderfully well with confidence in our young ambassadors being restored.

The Partnership has now secured funding for a new Police web-site to be found on Heathfield.net which will encourage crime and incident reports and projections of the Heathfield police team and their initiatives. I should pay my thanks to Director Colin Williams, for his help and insight into this possible opportunity. P.C. Cathy Codling who has been given the responsibility of Policing Heathfield and who now chairs the LAT has authorized the draft proposals and we hope to finalize that site in time for a joint launch with the dispersal order.

It should be recognized that P.C. Cathy Codling who has made a dynamic impact on her appointment and her Team of now 4 PCSOs is getting to grips with the challenges that face us in the Town. It is going to take a lot of effort but under her management and with full community cooperation we should be able to turn things round. By this time next year I expect to reflect on a massive improvement and increasing confidence in our Town and its safety.

ICT Committee

The Police web-site has jumped ahead of some other projects partly out of prioritization and partly out of successful fund bidding. The youth web-site still has not been realized but is again a high priority in terms of activities for the young and encouragement of use of the Youth centre and its activities. I am pleased to say that with help from Director, Alan Powell, Headteacher of the Community College who is sadly unable to be with us who with his Governing Body, has agreed to release some money from a Trust fund to programme the launch of this venture. A vibrant Youth centre and a web-site to broadcast its wares should help encourage the young in positive and fun things to do. It should also give them a voice of involvement and contribution which may turn some heads at this important time.

One area of feverish activity that has gone ahead with much promise is the active business web-site. A phenomenal amount of work has been put into this by Nick Potter and 21st Century, an internationally renowned firm based in Cross in Hand, to ensure that all of the business listings will shortly be available with map projections for locations and easy search engine access which is much sharper than ever before. I will talk more about that in conjunction with other inward investment initiatives later in this report.

To facilitate the need for a revitalized business web-site service the whole of Heathfield.net had to be redesigned. Teresa Blaxland and her committee have set out all of the objectives and this is being done step by step again by 21st century and it should shortly be available as a much easier programme of buttons of headline activities accessing much more sophisticated services. At that point we will set out to re-launch the web-site and get it into the culture of the community as the place to check out literally anything worth knowing. Stickers in shop and car windows may well be ever-present at some point during the next year.

One feature of the organization has seemingly been stuck in a bygone age and that is the Heathfield Partnership logo. The ICT team among its many activities is now trying to provide a digital mechanism that can be transcribed to anything. This hopefully at minimal expense, the shame of the B.T. hysteria is still remembered with fear.

The progress of the PiP scheme has seen some difficulties which the Committee have battled to deal with. Wi-fi access in the surrounds of a PiP was seemingly a wonderful asset to any businessman with a laptop and on the move. We had not anticipated the difficulty of access to inappropriate material being gleaned using our facilities. We have had to succumb to closing the wi-fi access at the youth centre and library and are looking for improved security in all of our locations. There will be a pilot of an increased technology version at the Wessons site in Horam shortly which may well be spread further depending on its success. The site in the Half-moon Pub at Cade Street has become a roaring success judging by its hits record and proves that the venture once smoothed out, will prove terrific for the Town and its surrounds. We will hope to move the site at Rushlake Green to Broad Oak some time in the next year. Broad Oak stores having at least for the short time withstood the threat of closure as a post office and this would be the perfect location when the refurbishing is completed.

High Street & Transport

The longest running project has been the rejuvenation of the High Street and Station Road. As I have indicated earlier this has both stimulated the envy and admiration of our colleagues in Uckfield and the anger of a resident in Framfield. As Uckfield will find out, it is extremely difficult to find the funding particularly at this time of hardship for public funding in the South East. Earlier this year, Rosemary Mays-Smith and her Committee enabled a more modest improvement scheme of some street furniture and hanging baskets in the Hailsham Road which has pleased the traders. We should also note the excellent efforts of Mark Deacon who represented his fellow Traders on the Committee.

Right now we have seen the completion of the recent stretch from Cherwell Road to the entrance to the new McCarthy & Stone Site. One final phase to go will be the Parade

and the stretch covering the Banks, Library and Post Office. By then the appearance of the Town will have gone through a gradual transition from the drab and the dreary which Mr Framfield still belittles to that of a much sharper, greener and more amenable place. At the same time it will have become considerably safer for the pedestrian shopper and very importantly a Town Centre of excellence for the disabled. For us living here throughout the year it is a slow process, an interesting contrast to those that come each year for the Le Marche experience and note the difference each time. 10 years on and a tough phase still to go but once done, a wonderful achievement for the Town. I would also acknowledge here the very thoughtful initiative of the Parish Council who now keep a check on the wear and tear of the street furniture that has been introduced and keep it well maintained.

One further commendation must be to Director, Jack Hampton who has battled away to secure a new Town sign destined for the Parade. Having struggled seemingly against all the planning elements he would appear to have sorted everything out and a new sign of some considerable elegance should be launched later this month. It is noteworthy that the relationship that has built up with Rotary over these last few years has been one of extraordinary co-operation and long may that continue.

The other project that this committee took on to explore was that of an examination of some form of local bus service. The Partnership Committee managed to persuade the Rural Transport Association (with promised funds from the East Sussex Economic Partnership) to finance an audit survey of the transport needs of the Community. The comprehensive report was completed in the spring but the promised funds from the economic partnership did not materialize and we owe our thanks to Philip Ayers who managed to cover the entire £10,000 cost through the Association. It is also worth noting at this point that the Government grant for the association has been drastically cut back and Philip is no longer with them.

One objective realized by the survey has already been dealt with by the Parish Council and this was the publication of a transport service guide and timetable for all our residents and this is also available on the Heathfield.net website. That was an important job well done. My thanks to Cllr. Kerby and his Committee. In trying to identify necessary services we then entered into discussion with Age Concern, the Rotary and the Red Cross. It would have to be said that these have not proven as promising as first expected. The Red Cross would like to have offered their Crawley based Dial a Ride service which would have cost something like £60,000 per annum to provide which is (since we are in a car showroom) rather like a 17 year old having ambition on a Rolls Royce as a first time car purchase. They have now left the table and the project is now open to the remaining more flexible contributors who have ambition to start on a less grand scale, prove worth and reliability and grow from there. At all times it must be said how impressed we were with the amazing service provided by Age Concern and how it

is important to supplement that and indeed to avoid the lunacy of confronting it. Some further exploratory talks will happen by the end of November with all parties that have vehicles and who offer some service in the Town to see if collectively, the whole could amount to something greater than its parts. A cautionary note should be that at no time do I envisage the Partnership attempting to run a bus company. I will endeavour to keep Colleagues advised of what potential there might now be and what resource might be required.

It would be appropriate to recognize the contribution made by the acting chairman of this project who has now stood down. Sue Hanley put a huge amount of work in and I am hopeful that her efforts will not be wasted. At a time when we are not blessed with Public transport and the private providers are seemingly seeking to take any opportunity to withdraw from existing routes and services, there are a number of vulnerable People in our Community both young and old, who are stranded or isolated far too often. We will look again one more time with our partners and see what might be achieved.

From one part of Rosemary Mays-Smith's empire to the next.

Sport & Leisure Committee

The Swimming Pool project has made huge progress through the year with the completion of two major pieces of work. Firstly the commissioned feasibility study was presented by Consultants, RQA of Chichester. The most important conclusion of this was to identify which type and scale of swimming pool would be viable and where best located. This has now been determined and the Community College site adjacent to the leisure centre has been identified. It has also acknowledged the importance of an associated Multi-Use Games Area and this will be explored in the next phase. Since then the Business plan has just been completed and this was presented to the Leader of Wealden District Council, Cllr Pam Doodles and Director, Mary Claire-Dean by District Councillor Jan Dunk, a Member of this Committee. A great deal of work went into this by all the Members of Rosemary's committee and notably Jeff Hart the Managing Director of Freedom Leisure. Site visits were made to two very different swimming pools in the County to gain reference points.

The next phase will encounter the beginnings of sounding out funding opportunities and planning permission. It is important to note that HADSA have managed to keep the old Lido pool going for another season and with the help of a major donation from the Parish Council for a new Pump which was essential, can see their way forward for a short while yet. This is not sustainable in the long term but this still provides a massively important service to so many young Families in the surrounding area.

Still with a watching brief, this Committee took an interest in the outcome of the W.H. Atkins report commissioned by East Sussex County Council into the route north for the

Avenue Vert or National Cycle Route 21. Atkins have been severely criticized by just about anybody involved in this project for the quality of the resulting report and its disastrous lateness. This will remain with the County Council to resolve and we await a decision by the Lead Member in December as to what might become the preferred route. The key representation made by the Partnership is that it should come into the centre or heart of Heathfield directly from the current end of the cuckoo trail and ideally into the Millennium Green. I understand that Members of the Committee have made representations regarding the route north to Mayfield but as individuals and not on behalf of the Partnership.

Inward Investment & Tourism

The 11 new direction signs were installed as promised last year and all promoting our free car parks and the number of spaces within. The Three new Town signs are now up in all their glory with the correct spelling of Forges les Eaux, one already vandalized but also already cleaned off. I have earlier made reference to the improved service of the revised business web-site and this should be available shortly. Also soon to be resolved will be the 4 Business promotion boards to be completed in the Town. As the material to be displayed will largely result from the web-site there has been a short delay while this is made available. The Boards have been purchased and are ready to be installed and this should stimulate interest and information on what is available and where.

The final piece in the jigsaw is a promotional brochure which will be distributed through the "Heathfield First" publication and be available in all our shops. This whole project has been lead by Trevor Goldsmith and he had already financed the brochure when along came Wealden District Council at the 11th hour who wanted to do the same idea which was great but in their own design which maybe was not. There are a number of ways to approach this and these are being explored. The one essential is that the original concept must be the primary objective and if that proves difficult we will go on alone. The combination of Web-site, brochure and Business site Boards should be a shot in the arm for all of our traders and encourage greater footfall for our Town.

In attending the Chamber of Trade's AGM in July, it was noted that there was more effort on offer from more of the Traders, I would welcome that and I would also compliment Trevor on that outcome.

The Christmas festival was largely put together by Trevor Goldsmith and again was a first class occasion honored by the turning on of the lights by the High Sheriff, a resident of Heathfield & Waldron Parish last year. Master of Ceremonies, Jack Hampton once more did his fine routine and the lights in all their splendour came on with slightly more sophistication this time. It is a fair reflection to say that this now does Heathfield proud over the Christmas season and adds to the appeal of the Town when our Hanging baskets have long been put away. This year's event will be pared down a little from

recent years and the timing is now more sensitive or fine tuned to the needs and requests of the Traders.

Farmer's Market

I have made sure I have got to the Farmer's Market Committee on a number of occasions. This is one of our longest serving endeavours and under its current management, in its finest vintage. Director Colin Williams is meticulous in its organisation and its smooth running. During the last year it became apparent that we would also be losing his loyal assistant, in his son, Roy. This I hasten to say was for very happy reasons as he had just got married and was moving away. I would put on record my thanks to Roy Williams for his unstinting help during the last few years. We now have another assistant in place and Colin advises me this appears to be working well. The venture at the Heathfield Show was more successful than the very damp 2006 and this was partly due to a better site negotiated by Colin and more stalls than before.

The steady increase in stalls and quality products on offer draws market customers from far and wide and this of course is also beneficial to the Co-op, our hosts on site, but also to traders throughout the Town. The attendance of local fish producers is another wonderful asset and gaining recognition. Once more the Farmers Market generated a small profit margin which was used to help invest in ICT services. This is our only source of occasional self generated revenue and very precious it is. Some new marketing ideas are being explored regarding attracting even more shoppers to the market and I have every expectation that this market, seen as the strongest in the area, will go from strength to strength. A new marketing initiative will be launched at the November Market. All Customers entering the Market will be given a free raffle ticket. Two hamper type prizes will be awarded towards the end of the morning.

One of its strengths has been the discipline of its management to stick by the necessary criteria for quality control which had to be exorcised this year and also product type, that it is genuinely locally sourced and by the direct provider. That integrity has lead to a fine reputation with the Farm and Retail Marketing Association, the Sussex Farmer's Union, Environmental Health and customers alike. It is notable how many traders also serve on the working committee ensuring they make a contribution to the programme. The Young Farmers also do all the effort in terms of putting the stalls up at dawn and taking them down which is a great service. A well run organisation in fine shape.

A brief summary of the year's programmes, edited highlights and a glimpse of a multitude of feverish activity that continues headlong into the next year. During talks with the East Sussex Economic Partnership it had been suggested that we should host a regional conference/seminar in March of next year, they are now so keen that this seems be moving forward to January. This would also be an opportunity for our most

significant Partners to share their involvement in the productivity within this journey of rejuvenation of our Market Town.

It is still possible that at short notice we will need to be alert to the demands of significant inward investment and turning that around into a coherent development plan. We continue to move through the hoops of qualification, eventually there may be no more hoop to stand, only a new challenge and a major new dimension to our role.

At all times we need to be aware of the availability of resources and the speed of our projects are wholly beholden to our grant winning successes. One element of our organization structure needed to be addressed because without a published statement of policies we were excluded from some grant opportunities. This has now formally been completed and once more is available on our web-site. It is a cautionary note to say that the recent track record of success may not make life so easy in the very near future. A case in point is the fantastic success we enjoyed in winning our Market Town rejuvenation fund from SEEDA to the tune of £265,000 in 2001. This has subsequently prevented us from returning to that same trough until 2008. We were early in preparing our bids for next year and were ready to set out our stall in the most professional style only to find that the well is already dry and only cancellations might let us back in. We will continue to be alert to any opportunity that may arise. With regard to funding this year we approached our base budget costs in a very different and innovative way. The Service level agreement that we entered into with Wealden District Council for this and next year was generous within the context of all the bids for funding that they were served with. It did however not cover the full share of the cost that we had bid for. I would acknowledge here the extraordinary relationship that we enjoy with our Founding Partner, the Parish Council. The contribution made by the Parish Council this year was for the full share of the cost and with trimming of sails has enabled us to run the operation that is necessary to make this programme of work effective. That is a fundamental truth and the integrity of that relationship and the values that we share continue to be the envy of all market towns in Wealden.

That professionalism has proven successful over recent years and needs to be maintained. Every project that is funded is monitored closely and there needs to be a discipline in the way this is managed and indeed reported. This work has proven to be one of Joanne's skills but that responsibility lies with Directors who are all volunteers and use vast compasses of experience to make the most of their given charges. I need to acknowledge my thanks for their indomitable spirit and remarkable generosity of time and effort.

Two Directors make their mark much more behind the front line. Tim Hough who is tenacious in ensuring that hard earned money is properly accounted for and spending or commissioning is only signed off with grated teeth. John Tolley whose extraordinary

experience in the legal fields of Company governance and strategic management, ensures that Company House and the Charity Commission maintain a purr of ascent at all times.

Two further Directors have managed the Executive, Teresa Blaxland and Colin Williams and I am indebted to their diligence in bringing together so many Partners and their representatives. It is this body which interacts most with the Public and keeps Residents and Traders informed of projects, their targets and their progress. This coming year we may look again at timing and locations for meetings.

Our next engagements are the Christmas Lights opening ceremony at 4pm on Friday 16th November which this year is being done by our M.P. the Rt Honourable Charles Hendry. The Farmers market on the 17th with a win yourself a hamper raffle. The next Executive will be on the 20th November and all are welcome to that in the Union Church. We will also have the launch of the new Town sign and the new Police Website. There will also be a Christmas shopping day with Father Christmas in William Hill Interiors on Saturday afternoon 15th December and this will be completed by Christmas Carols outside of Trading 4 U with Heathfield's Churches Together Choirs accompanied by the Heathfield Silver Band.

In whatever association you have with the Heathfield Partnership I hope that it is a rewarding one and that this coming year will continue to mark a dividend for the People whom we serve. Thankyou

CLLR. RUPERT SIMMONS