

# Enabling in Action

## The Work of the Hastings Urban Conservation Project and Hastings Trust

Presentation by Nick Wates, 1992

Originally prepared as a presentation  
with twin slide projectors for a talk to the  
Old Hastings Preservation Society

Digitised version adapted for PowerPoint, 2016

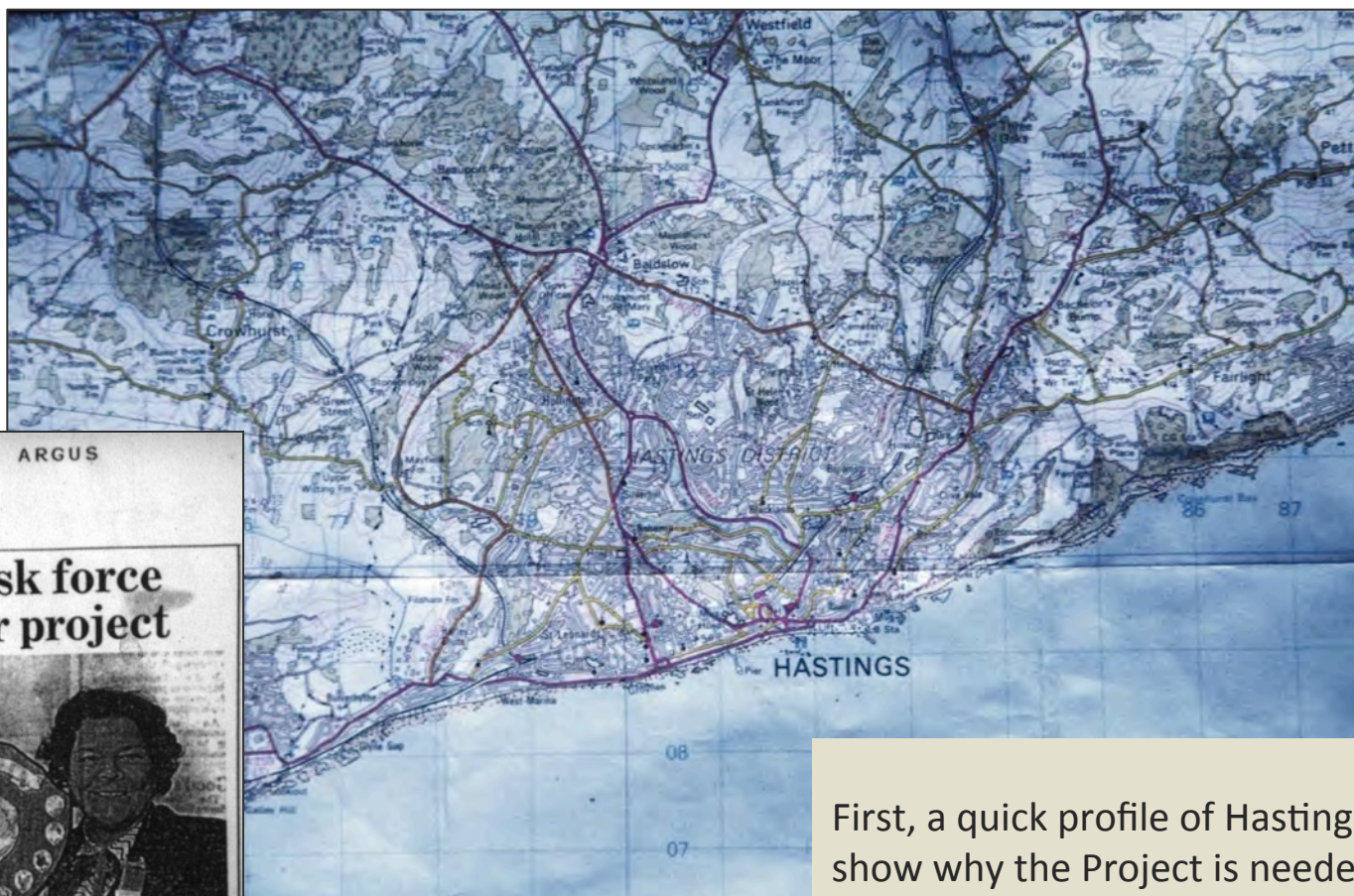
# Enabling in Action

This is a presentation of the work of the Hastings Urban Conservation Project and the Hastings Trust in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It is also an argument in favour of a community-based and participatory approach to urban management; an approach which is totally different from that practised in this country for most of this century, which has been essentially centralised and paternalistic.

The proposition running through this talk, is that by putting a community-based and participatory approach to urban regeneration into practice, the Hastings Urban Conservation Project and Hastings Trust have immeasurably improved the future prospects for Hastings in a highly cost effective way. They also provide an operational model which could be an inspiration for others elsewhere.

# The Place



First, a quick profile of Hastings to show why the Project is needed.

The Borough has a population of 83,100, and is reputed to have been England's 4th most important seaside resort in the 1930s.



# The Place



Filming of BBC2's Songs of Praise on  
Hastings Castle in 1990



# The Place



The annual Fishing Boat Race,  
August 1989

# The Place

Its main claim to fame, of course, is being the site (or at least near the site), of the 'Battle of Hastings' in 1066 which changed the course of English History.

It also has the largest beach launched fishing fleet in the country with 40 boats and colourful traditions and rights dating back centuries to when Hastings was the principal Cinque Port.

More recently, the town has been home to various notable characters, particularly artists and writers attracted by its scenic and cultural qualities.

Last year, most of a BBC television documentary was devoted to the Town on the grounds that it is the country's Bohemian Mecca.

"Its prime characteristic is that of being unfinished" argued presenter Jonathan Meades. "It possesses the randomness, the chaos, the juxtaposition of the sublime and the pathetic - that informs Bohemian lives".

A barbed compliment. But the town does have many attractive sides to it:



# The Place



The Old Town - a townscape and cultural gem, with buildings of all ages and styles nestling in a valley running down to the sea.



# The Place



St Leonard-on-Sea - a town which has grown from a Regency seaside resort for the rich, designed by James and Decimus Burton (the same architects who designed parts of Regents Park in London).



# The Place



St Helen's Woods - one of several green lungs threading through the town, mainly following stream courses.



# The Place



Victorian Hastings - forming much of the town centre as well as some attractive residential areas:



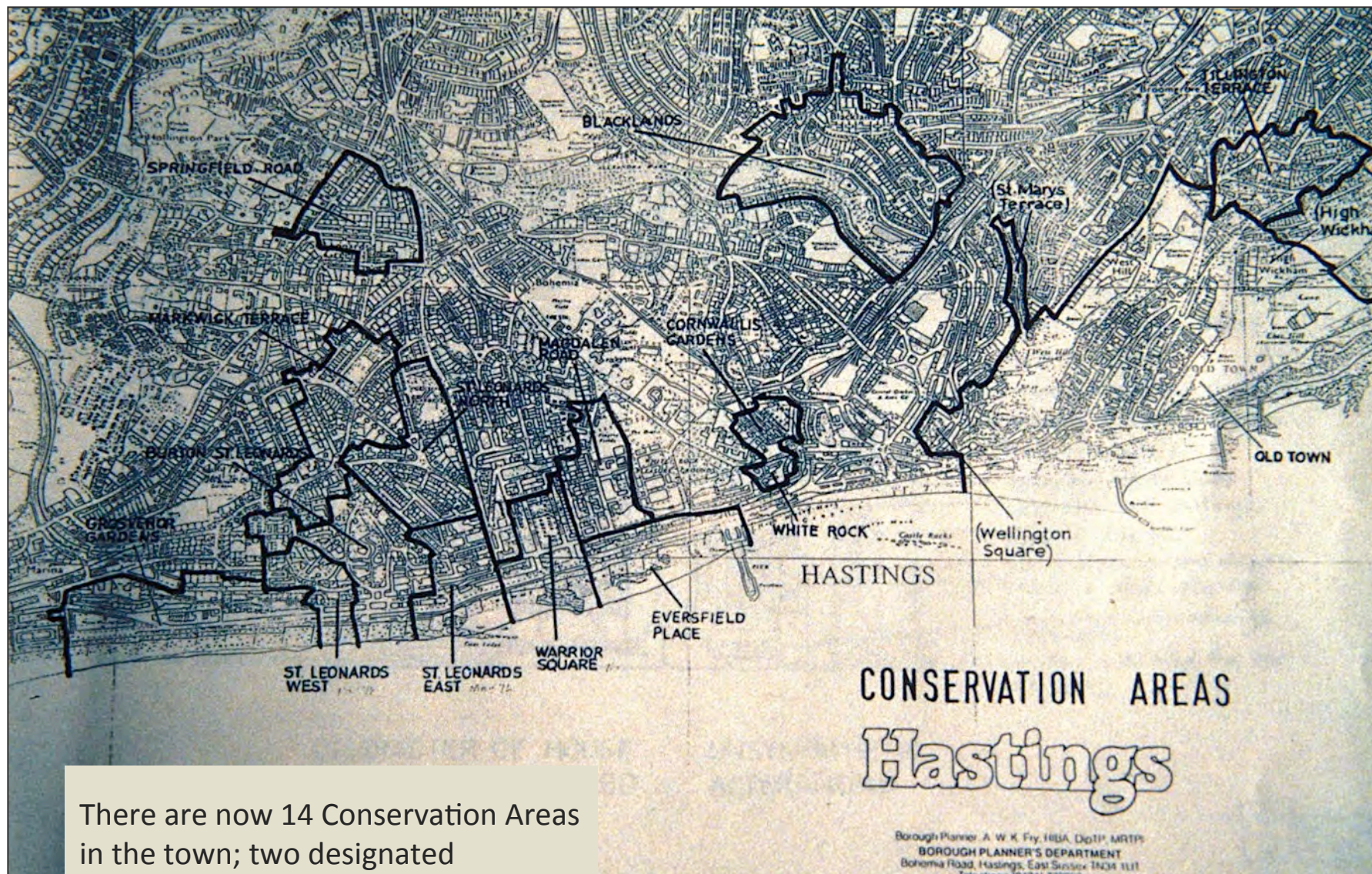
# The Place



Pelham Crescent - the finest Regency Crescent on the South Coast with the magnificent circular church of St Mary-in-the-Castle as its centrepiece.



# The Place





# The Place



But it's not all roses, as a probe in *The Sunday Times* revealed in 1990, when Hastings was picked out as one of the shabbiest resorts in the country.

The town was heavily bombed in the War and many of the buildings erected since then are hideous and inappropriate, destroying the character of several parts of the town.

Increasing traffic has led to the destruction of other areas for road schemes, leaving the familiar bleak and desolate hallmarks.



# The Place

Home to Robert Tressell and the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists at the beginning of the century, poverty has never left the town: Hastings is currently one of the most economically depressed towns in the South East of England with low wage levels and high ratings on most scales of social deprivation.

Despite a growing light industrial sector, employment is still heavily tourism based, resulting in high winter unemployment. Unemployment rose from 4.7% to 7.6% in the last year.

Many of the more recent outlying residential areas are soulless and lack the amenities and townscape necessary for a civilised community life.



# The Place



Many properties are derelict or in a poor state of repair due to lack of investment. And the maintenance battle is made more arduous by exposed coastal conditions, a vernacular style of architecture heavily dependent on short-lived paint and render finishes, and a construction industry lacking adequate skills, training or management.

Many of the public footways, even in the key tourist areas, are beyond belief.

And a great many fine buildings continue to be senselessly demolished because the organisational mechanisms are not in place to find alternative uses.



# The Place



Hastings Pier says it all.

A fine Listed structure, once an elegant centrepiece for the town.

Now a tacky, deteriorating hulk.

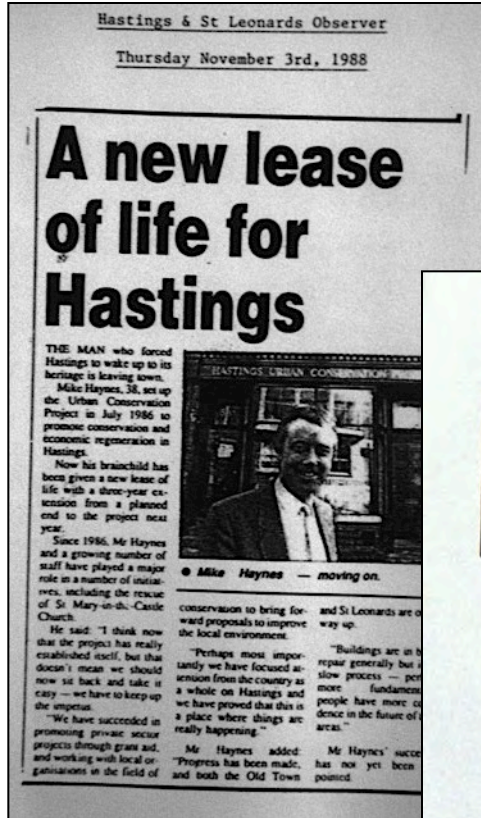
The landing stage, which once made it possible for ships to visit the town, all but gone.

Lack of vision, lack of direction, lack of investment.





# The organisation

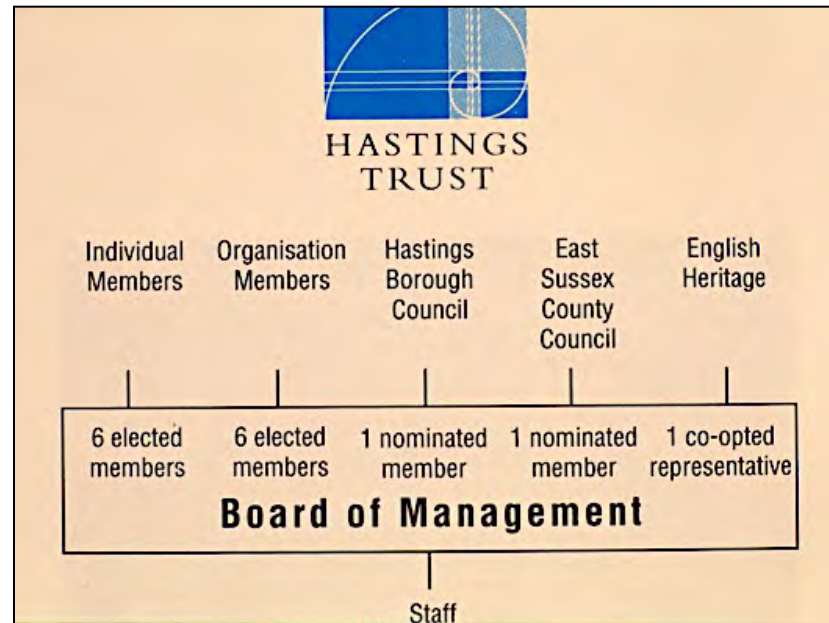
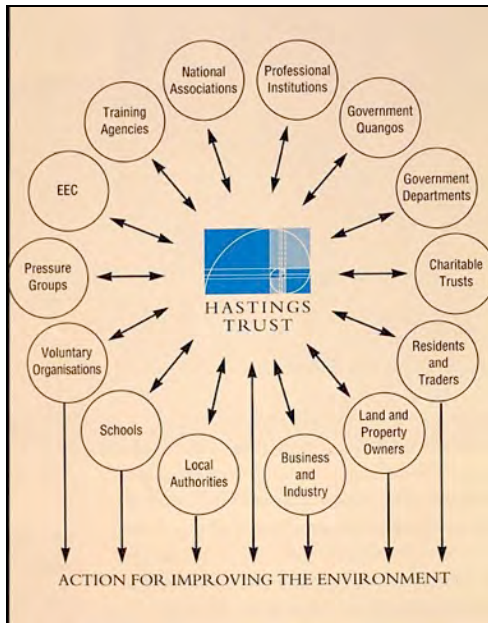


It was to tackle some of these problems that the Hastings Urban Conservation Project (HUCP) was set up in 1986, with a budget of £100,000 per annum.

It was a joint initiative by Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council and English Heritage. This partnership approach was essential; making it possible to draw on the expertise and resources of all three tiers of government while remaining independent, and unencumbered by statutory responsibilities and bureaucratic red tape.

Essentially it was a 'Civic Trust style' project, the first application to a major urban area of the approach successfully pioneered at Wirksworth in Derbyshire.

# The organisation



HUCP was always seen as a temporary initiative. From the outset, the intention was to create a Trust to continue and extend its work.

The transition - from a local authority project to an independent trust - took place on 31st March 1991.

The Hastings Trust is a limited company with charitable status. This opens up opportunities to attract funds and support from the private and charity sectors and to involve a broader cross section of the community; as members, advisors, patrons and board members.

The Borough and County Councils are still represented, as you can see. But the Board also includes individuals from local conservation and amenity groups as well as from the private sector.

*(For the rest of this talk I will refer to the Trust and HUCP interchangeably).*



# The organisation

So what do we actually do? £100,000 per annum is a useful sum, but could easily be swallowed up in a single building or environmental improvement with little overall impact on the town as a whole.

The strategy that has evolved is based on a simple observation. That in Hastings, as in other places - demand for conservation and environmental improvements far outstrips the capacity of those currently charged with delivering them - and will do for the foreseeable future. To make any significant impact, far more individuals and organisations must therefore be engaged in the process, and new and imaginative ways must be found for harnessing resources - both financial and organisational.

To make most effective use of limited resources, we are therefore primarily an enabling organisation. We concentrate on helping

individuals and organisations within the town develop their visions for the future, and assist with implementing them. This means working in partnership with, and creating partnerships between, the public, private, and voluntary sectors. It also means providing information and technical expertise in a broad spectrum of disciplines.

In developing our work it became clear that conservation and environmental improvement cannot be divorced from economic and cultural issues, and that the prime need is for development not dependent on ever increasing wealth and consumption.

We've also realised the importance of exchanging experience with initiatives in other areas and believe that we are well placed to make a useful contribution to improving community regeneration practice generally.

# The organisation

Hastings Trust

## AIMS

1. To **enable** all those who live in, work in or visit Hastings to protect and enhance their urban and rural environment.
2. To promote and assist the **sustainable** economic and cultural development of Hastings and all its inhabitants.
3. To promote and disseminate **good practice** in conservation and community regeneration, regionally and globally.

Our approach is summarised in the Trust's 3 aims:



# The organisation

Hastings Trust

## ACTIVITY AREAS.

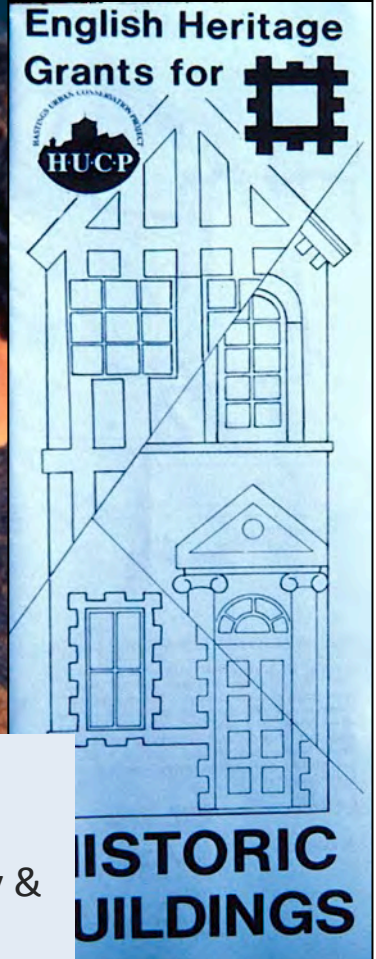
1. Grant Schemes
2. Environmental Improvements
3. Research and Development
4. Property Management
5. Environmental Education
6. Environment Shops

The programme of activities devised to achieve these aims breaks down into 6 main categories:

I'll now look at each in turn and show what was achieved.



# Grant schemes



Grant schemes for building improvements are an excellent way of stimulating building activity and private investment which, if carefully targeted, can then have a snowball effect.

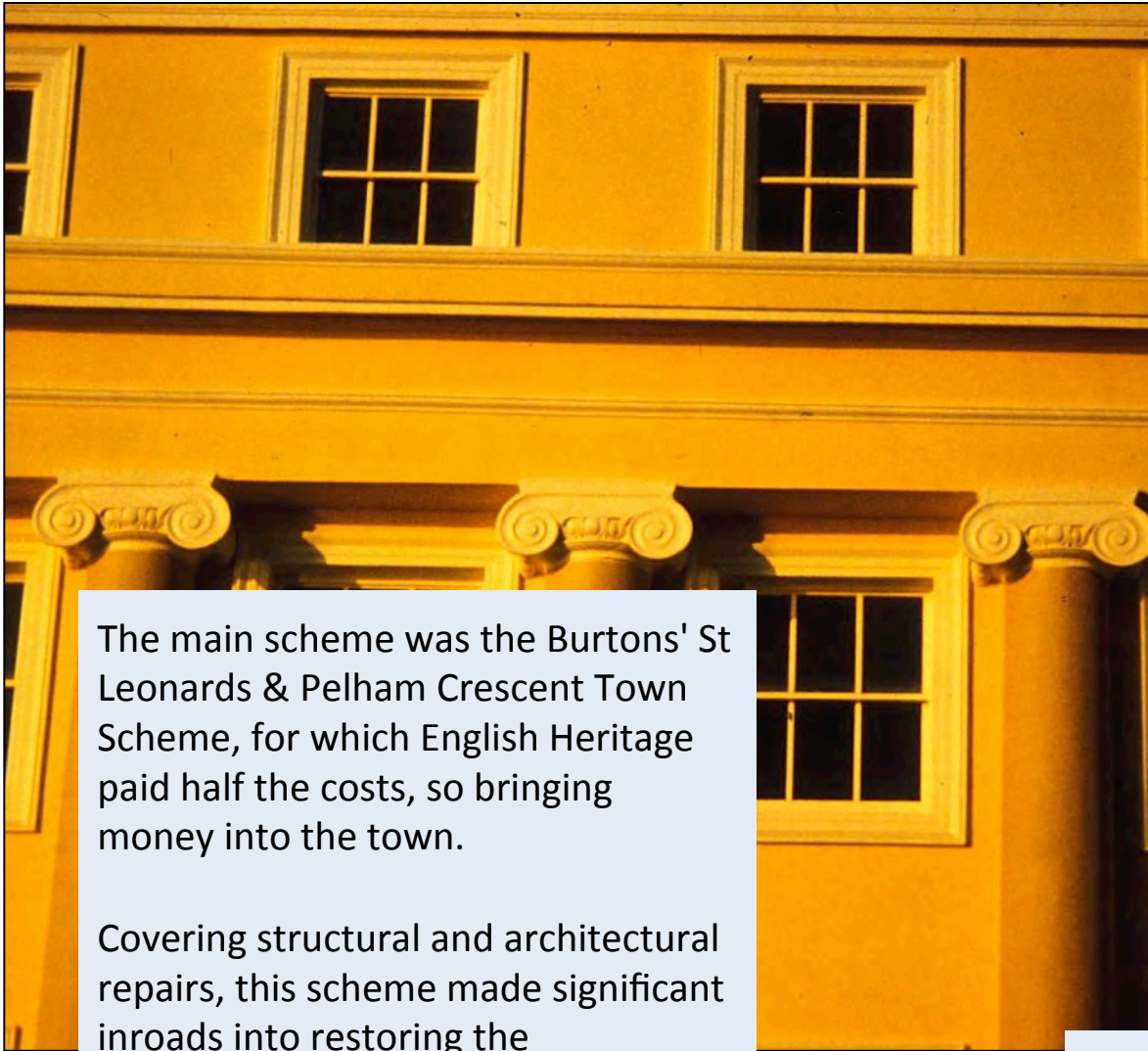
as we can insist on supervision of building work by experienced professionals - in our case the County & Borough Conservation Officers.

They also make it possible to improve standards of craftsmanship and design,

HUCP operated four grant schemes, all of which offered up to 40% of eligible costs.



# Grant schemes



The main scheme was the Burtons' St Leonards & Pelham Crescent Town Scheme, for which English Heritage paid half the costs, so bringing money into the town.

Covering structural and architectural repairs, this scheme made significant inroads into restoring the architectural integrity of St Leonards; and has led to increasing confidence and interest in the area.



Helping restore Conway Court, a Regency set piece on the sea front (during and after).....

# Grant schemes



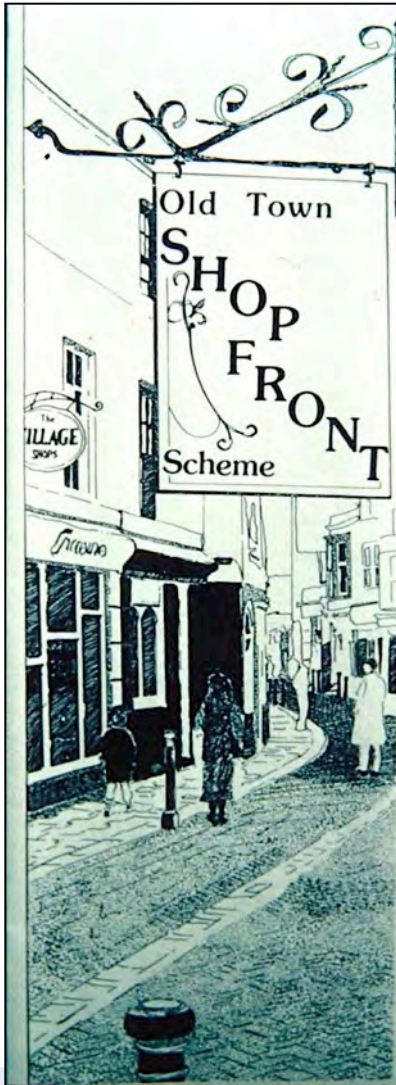
Replacing a felt roof on the Masonic Hall with Welsh Slates....

and restoring an orial window balcony in Maze Hill.

By September 1991, Town Scheme grants to 43 properties had been paid totalling £158,679.



# Grant schemes



The second grant scheme was for shop fronts.

# Grant schemes



Assistance towards the cost of repair and enhancement of existing shop fronts (before and after of 57 High Street).

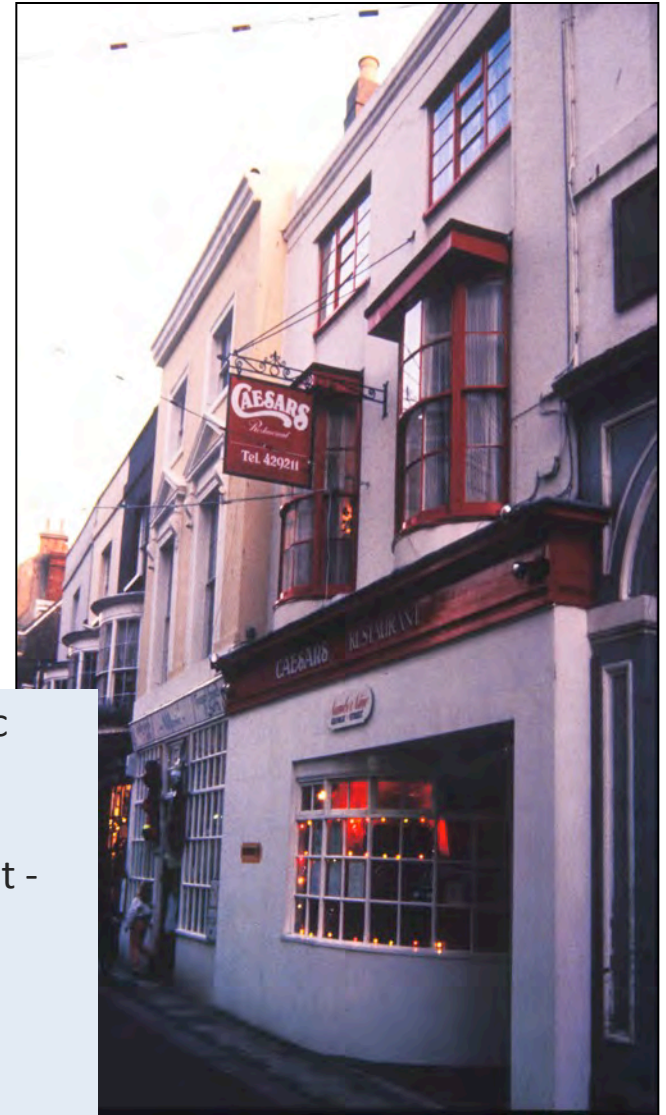


# Grant schemes



Or replacement of unsympathetic modernised ones with more appropriate traditional forms. (before and after of George Street - half way there).

Shop front grants are a highly effective way of improving the shopping environment. Thereby boosting local trade, tourism and morale.



# Grant schemes



Particularly when the cumulative effect begins to change the character of a whole street (George Street above, High Street right).

Grants to 17 shops totalling £13,493 have been paid out, mostly in the Old Town.





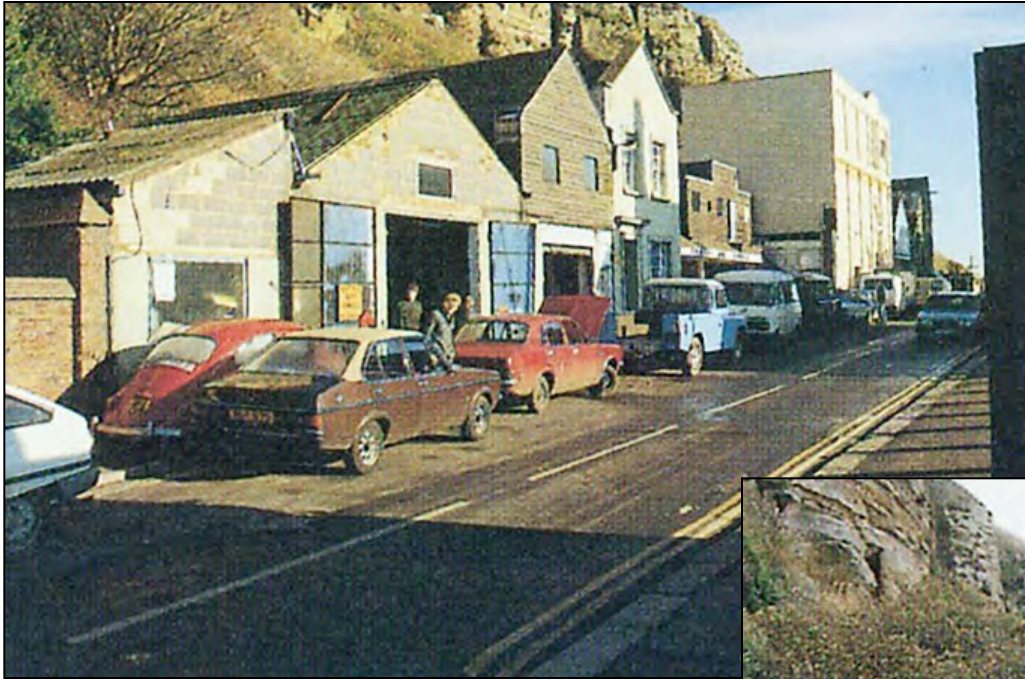
# Grant schemes



The third scheme is for Enhancement Grants - for high profile 'facelift' improvements in key locations, those likely to boost morale and encourage other improvements nearby.

- For instance, painting schemes for buildings at the entrance of rundown streets (West Street, left)
- or small but significant things like repainting a historic hanging sign (All Saints Street, above)

# Grant schemes



New cladding on commercial premises, (before and after of buildings in Rock-a-Nore)



# Grant schemes



Restoring the conservatory of an Old Town landmark (West Hill pottery).

Grants for a wide variety of enhancements to 29 properties totalling £16,346 were paid out by September 1991.

# Grant schemes



And the fourth grant scheme, Over the Shop grants designed to bring empty accommodation above shops back into residential use.

A good way of increasing density and life in trading streets and providing what is usually relatively cheap accommodation, ideal for young people.

Grants can assist by helping provide independent access (often a major problem), sound and fireproofing and providing basic services.

Only 2 grants totalling £4,827 have been made so far including 4-6 Courthouse Street (left).



# Environmental improvements

The second activity area of HUCP is coordinating environmental improvements. I stress 'coordinating' because we don't have architects, technicians or builders in-house. We focus on project conception, development and management - working with local residents and traders to establish what is wanted; liaising with authorities, professionals, funding sources and builders, and then doing whatever is needed to make what is wanted, happen, in the most creative and efficient manner.

Priority is given to:

- projects where an active user-client (residents group or preservation society) exists or can easily be created;
- projects which other agencies are unable to tackle (the things that usually get left out);
- projects likely to provide useful prototypes for replication elsewhere;
- and, increasingly I'm afraid, projects where funding is likely to be available so that we can earn some fees.



Wallingers Walk before and after

# Environmental improvements



Wallingers Walk Garden Project is a good example of how we like to work.

We were approached by local residents, upset about a collapsed stone wall bordering a derelict Closed Churchyard. We helped them organise a public meeting and then to form a new voluntary organisation; the Castle Hill Improvement and Protection Society (CHIPS for short).

We then helped CHIPS carry out a survey of the site and pull together a team of experts and helpers; including a landscape architect, and representatives from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the church authorities and relevant local authority departments.



# Environmental improvements



A Design Day was organised and a design drawn up for a neighbourhood garden - this was actually done partly on site and partly in a nearby church hall.

The scheme was then drawn up in detail by the County Council's landscape team, and grants obtained from English Heritage, the Borough and various other sources.

The Contract work was supervised by the County with all internal landscaping done by residents and volunteers.

# Environmental improvements

A similar formula of creating partnerships, providing technical expertise - particularly in communication and assembling funds has been used to tackle other projects, large and small.

For instance, the replacement of this broken tatty fence in St Leonards Gardens with iron railings. The project was instigated by the Burtons St Leonards Society and funds were assembled from the Parks Department, English Heritage, the Burtons' St Leonards Society and ourselves.

The scheme was opened ceremoniously with the Mayor present in recognition of its effect in changing the whole atmosphere of the street and the park.





# Environmental improvements



East Well - under the cliffs in the Old Town. A project to help the Old Hastings Preservation Society restore crumbling stonework and get the water flowing again.

A year after the photo on the left was taken, the Mayor was back to turn on the new tap.



# Environmental improvements



George Street pedestrianisation. Not a scheme instigated by HUCP, but the Borough's contribution to the Project in its first year, and one that very successfully set the tone.

Before pedestrianisation: a shopping street on the way down, as the retail heart of the town had moved to the Victorian town centre.

Our main role was to liaise between the Borough and local traders and residents during the inevitable upheaval.



# Environmental improvements



Mounting an exhibition explaining what was going on. Producing newsletters, organising the opening ceremony.

And for that occasion, and since then, sponsoring street entertainment. Now a regular feature, whether sponsored or not.





# Environmental improvements



With cafes now able to spill out onto the pavement, a sense of street character and vibrancy has been created by the pedestrianisation hard to match anywhere. And the indications are that trade has improved.

Proof perhaps comes in the form of increasing pressure from traders and residents for pedestrianisation of other streets.



# Environmental improvements

**French flavour in West Street?**

WEST Street residents and traders came a step closer to having their street pedestrianised on Monday. Members of the council's high ways and works sub-committee heard a petition from 31 local people speaking for the pedestrianisation of West Street from Shaft Lane and Carter Lane.

Peter Fuller, speaking for the petitioners, said: "People walking in West Street are in danger because they are not believed to be walking in a totally pedestrianised area."

He showed members a photograph — taken by Hastings Urban Conservation Project chief Nick Wray — of an imaginative pedestrianisation scheme for West Street, but said he was keen to allow access. Detailed plans are allowed between certain times.

He said: "The residents and traders are most concerned about how the pedestrianisation will be and the danger of making the street unattractive to make the street more attractive."

Members heard the scheme was accepted in principle by the council two years ago, but that there is no provision in the capital grant for it.

Councillors asked the borough engineer and surveyor to consult with HUCP and the town council on possible schemes. They also agreed consideration should be given to less expensive schemes like the one proposed by HUCP.

**You are invited to a  
PLANNING MEETING  
to discuss the best way of  
PEDESTRIANISING  
WEST STREET**

5.30pm Tuesday 9th October  
at George Street Hall

Several options will be explored by Council and HUCP officers, local residents and traders, and others at the meeting. If unable to attend please send any comments to the address below using the map overleaf if helpful. Please note that a formal consultation process will take place at a later date.

Organised by the  
Hastings Urban Conservation Project,  
58a High Street, Hastings.  
Tel: (0424) 446373.

**Tonight**

HUCP

HUCPIP900711/1.10.90



A more recent project was coordinating the pedestrianisation, or rather traffic calming, of neighbouring West Street, including raising funds.

# Environmental improvements

A host of smaller projects also fall into the environmental improvement category, where we provide advice, a small financial contribution, fund raising assistance or administration.

Helping the Old Hastings Preservation Society build a new net shop.

Helping the Fishermen's Protection Society by administering a Stade Warden Scheme for cleaning up the fishermen's beach and repairing net shops.





# Environmental improvements



Selecting and erecting a memorial seat in memory of a local resident, using money donated by her friends.



# Environmental improvements



Making a financial contribution towards erection of a decorative gate with a plaque to commemorate the former home of a local artist (57 George Street).

Campaigning and securing funds for restoring natural stone paving material (Post Office Passage).





# Environmental improvements



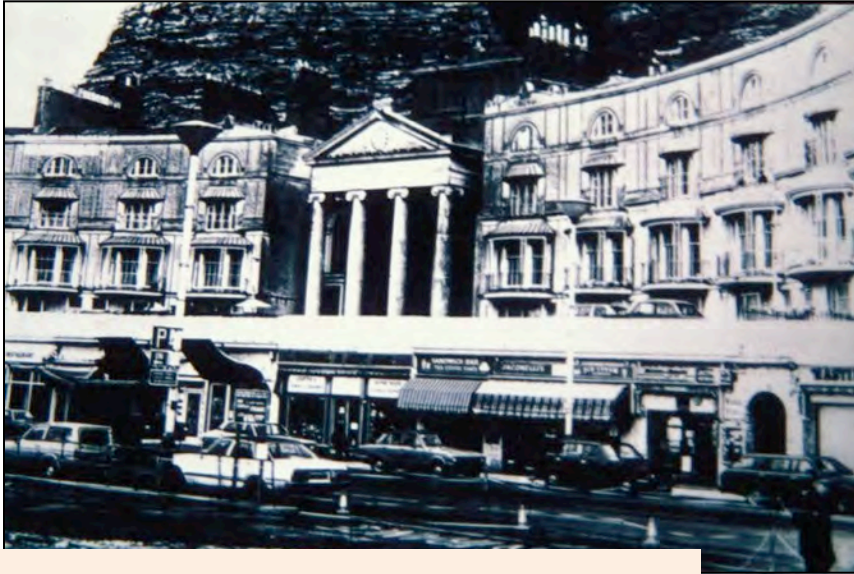
Helping the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group erect a seat at caves they had excavated in Minnis Rock.

And the High Street Traders erect a sign encouraging customers to walk further up the street.





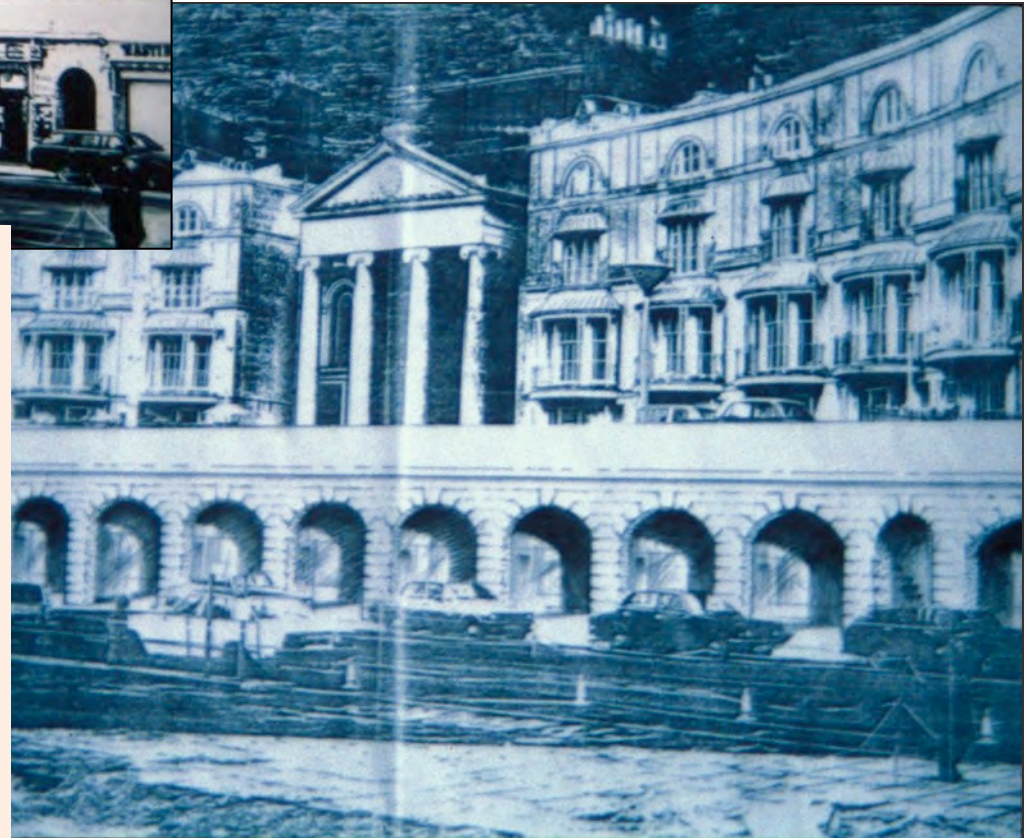
# Environmental improvements



Several larger schemes are in the pipeline including:

Enhancement strategies for Pelham Arcade. As now (above) and how it hopefully will be (right).

For this and similar schemes the project has commissioned designers or other experts to prepare schemes which are then used to attract funding and devise an implementation strategy.





# Environmental improvements



This project... The jewel in the crown is of course, St Mary's in the Castle.

The Project was instrumental in helping save this magnificent building from dereliction by forming a working party, commissioning feasibility studies and securing publicity for a campaign to secure action.

Restoration work is now in progress by Hastings Borough Council to an extraordinary high standard. The next challenge is to find an appropriate use for the building which can attract enough funding to complete and maintain it.

# Property

Property management is the third main area of work, and one likely to play an increasingly important role.

Priority will be given to:

- problem sites or buildings which the public and private sectors find difficult;
- situations where the Trust's special characteristics may help in creating partnerships and assembling finance;
- opportunities for carrying out socially beneficial development while at the same time providing the Trust with revenue and/or assets;
- and buildings or land required for the Trust's own occupation - the area mainly dealt with so far.



# Property

An essential ingredient of community-based regeneration is for professionals to be - physically - in the areas they are dealing with. This is the only way to develop the essential creative working relationship with the local community.

The Project's first proper office was in a shop in George Street at a time when the street was being pedestrianised and was the hub of activity.

This was soon outgrown and a move was made to an empty former chemist shop at the entrance of the High Street.

The restoration of this shop - and indeed the entire block - using enhancement and shop front grants - was itself an important improvement project, because of its key location.



58a High Street before and after

# Property



58a High Street in context - before a facelift, and after with HUCP staff and volunteers.

The property, which is rented, acts as HUCP's main office.



# Property



Similar improvements were made to a rundown Burton building on the seafront at Marina in St Leonards.

The St Leonards Conservation Centre is a joint venture providing us with a branch office and shop, the Burton's St Leonards Society with an HQ and clubroom and the Tourism & Leisure Department with a tourist information point at the St Leonards end of the seafront.



# Property



The George Street Hall is an interesting example of how we can assist with property management. Located, in the heart of the Old Town, the Hall is privately owned, but was unused and on the market - previous attempts to use it commercially having failed.

Convinced that it was important for cultural and economic reasons to keep the Hall available for civic use, the Conservation Project signed a deal with the owner to manage the property, for a trial period of one year.



# Property

A manager was appointed on commission and a letting brochure produced with the result that it has become used for a wide variety of activities including exhibitions, children's puppet shows, therapy sessions, theatre, markets and meetings, including the first Board meeting of the Hastings Trust.

A feasibility study on the potential of the Hall for community and arts use has been prepared, with a grant from the Royal Institute of British Architects Community Projects Fund. This will now be used to attract funds for the Hall's purchase and improvement.



# Property



A similar project was initiated for using the former Riviera Restaurant in Pelham Arcade as a temporary art gallery - a project now being coordinated by the Robert Tressell Workshops. Riviera before (above) and after (right).



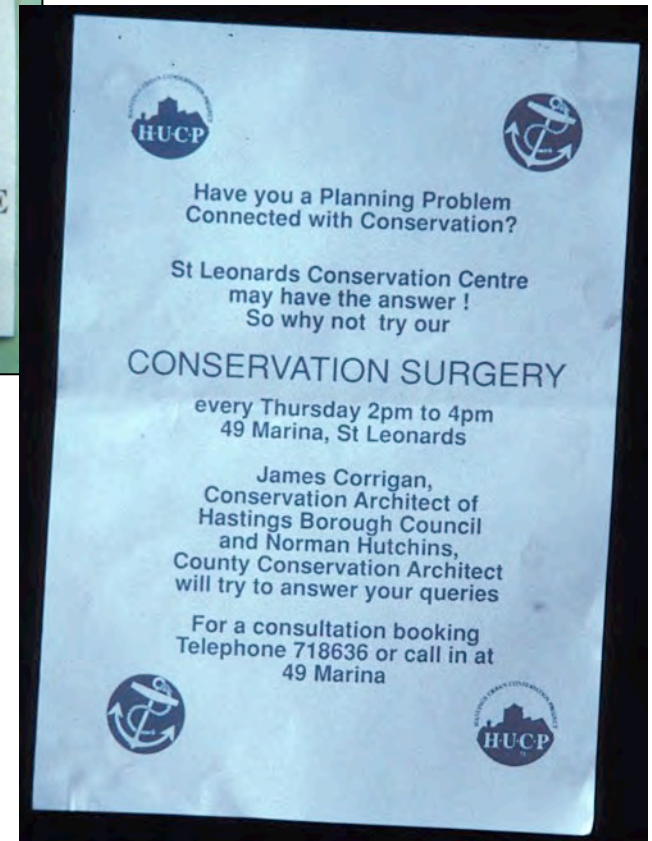
# Environmental education

Environmental Education is the fourth main area of activity, based on the belief that so many of the problems we face are the result of ignorance. A wide range of initiatives have been taken to stimulate interest in environmental matters and spread knowledge.

Exhibitions - on conservation issues generally or on issues of current interest.

Weekly Conservation Surgeries - where the Borough and County Conservation officers are on hand for 2 hours weekly to deal with the public's queries.

Talks and lectures, stalls at local festivals and events.



# Environmental education



Stimulating media coverage - here on badly sited satellite dishes - and by encouraging Songs of Praise to do a programme in Hastings.



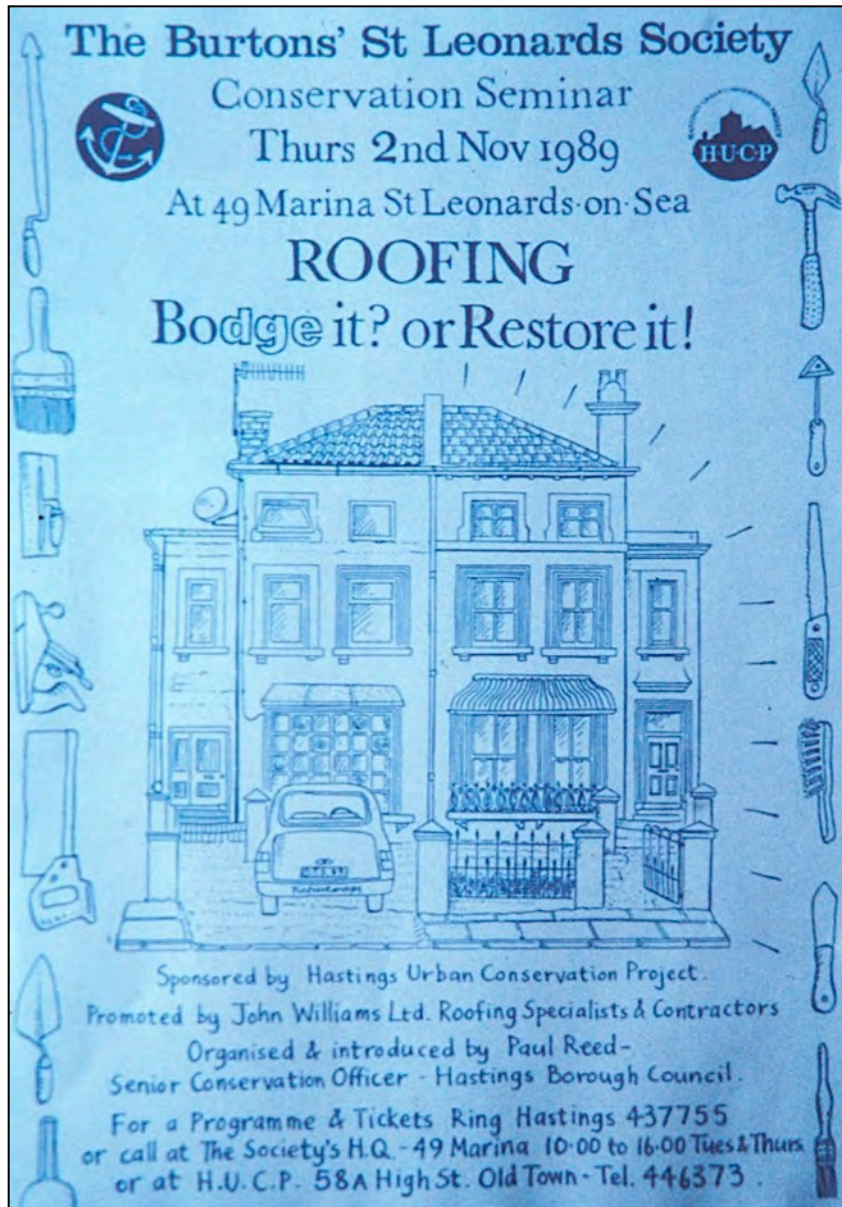
# Environmental education



Publishing or republishing books and reports and a magazine on local conservation.

Postcard production.

# Environmental education

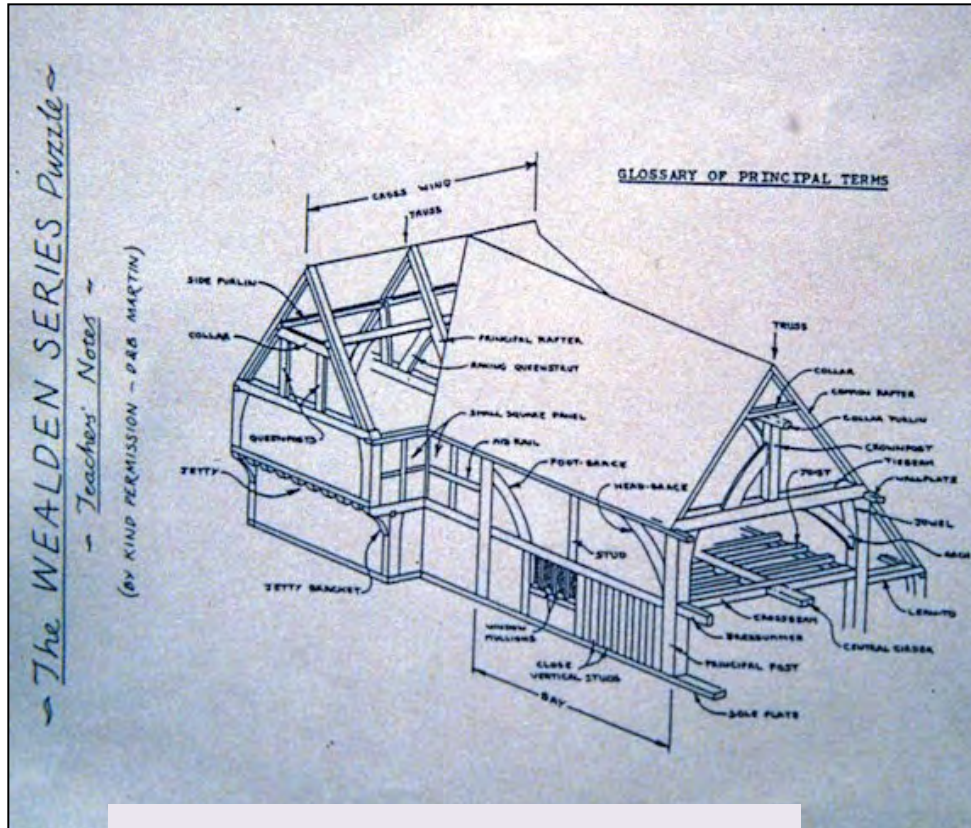


Organising and/or sponsoring Seminars.

On conservation (left) and on Planning for Real (above) - with Dr Tony Gibson introducing the technique for people to plan their own environment to councillors, officers, teachers and community organisations.



# Environmental education



Production of education packs on conservation for schools and educational merchandise - right, a net shops model kit.





# Environmental education



Way marking and production of heritage walk guides (above).

Annual shop front awards - organised jointly with the Old Hastings Preservation Society and the Planning Department (right).





# Environmental education



The high point of the environmental education programme has become the Civic Trust's annual national Environment Week celebration in May.

A Hastings wide programme of events is coordinated by us and has grown from strength to strength. In 1988, 7 organisations were involved, 19 took part in 1989, and over 60 in 1990.

Environment Week is used as an opportunity to focus attention on the local environment and a wide variety of activities are mounted by different groups throughout the town.



# Environmental education



Clearing a woodland pond: Volunteers from Hastings Conservation Volunteers.

Clearing up derelict land by the station: Robert Tressell Workshops.





# Environmental education



Wildflower Walk. St Helens Park  
Preservation Society.

Old Town guided walk. Old Hastings  
Preservation Society.



# Environmental education



Open day at the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group HQ.

Action day; members excavating overgrown caves.



# Environmental education



Creating a community garden on a piece of wasteland. Barley Lane Residents Association.

Best kept garden competition. St Mary's Terrace Residents Association.



# Environmental education



Painting a mural on a drab piece of wall. Before and after, Plynlimmon Road, West Hill.



# Environmental education



As well as events put on by individual groups, the groups join forces under the umbrella of the Hastings Environment Forum, to mount joint events, usually on a theme.

In 1990 the theme 'Hastings 2000: a greener future' was chosen and a major exhibition mounted on the Pier.

49 organisations took stands promoting their work ranging from the Hastings Shelter branch to the Sedlescombe organic vineyards.



# Environmental education



There were also exhibitions of 114 architects' entries for a competition for improving the Pier and of entries for a competition for general ideas on improving the town (of which more later).

The ballroom stage was used for endless presentations and fun events such as juggling workshops (right).





# Environmental education



Outside the pier decks were used for environmental sculpture, sitting in the sun, listening to live music from several of Hastings many talented bands and of course the inevitable face painting (right).



# Environmental education



The next year, 1991, the main focus for Environment Week was the town centre.

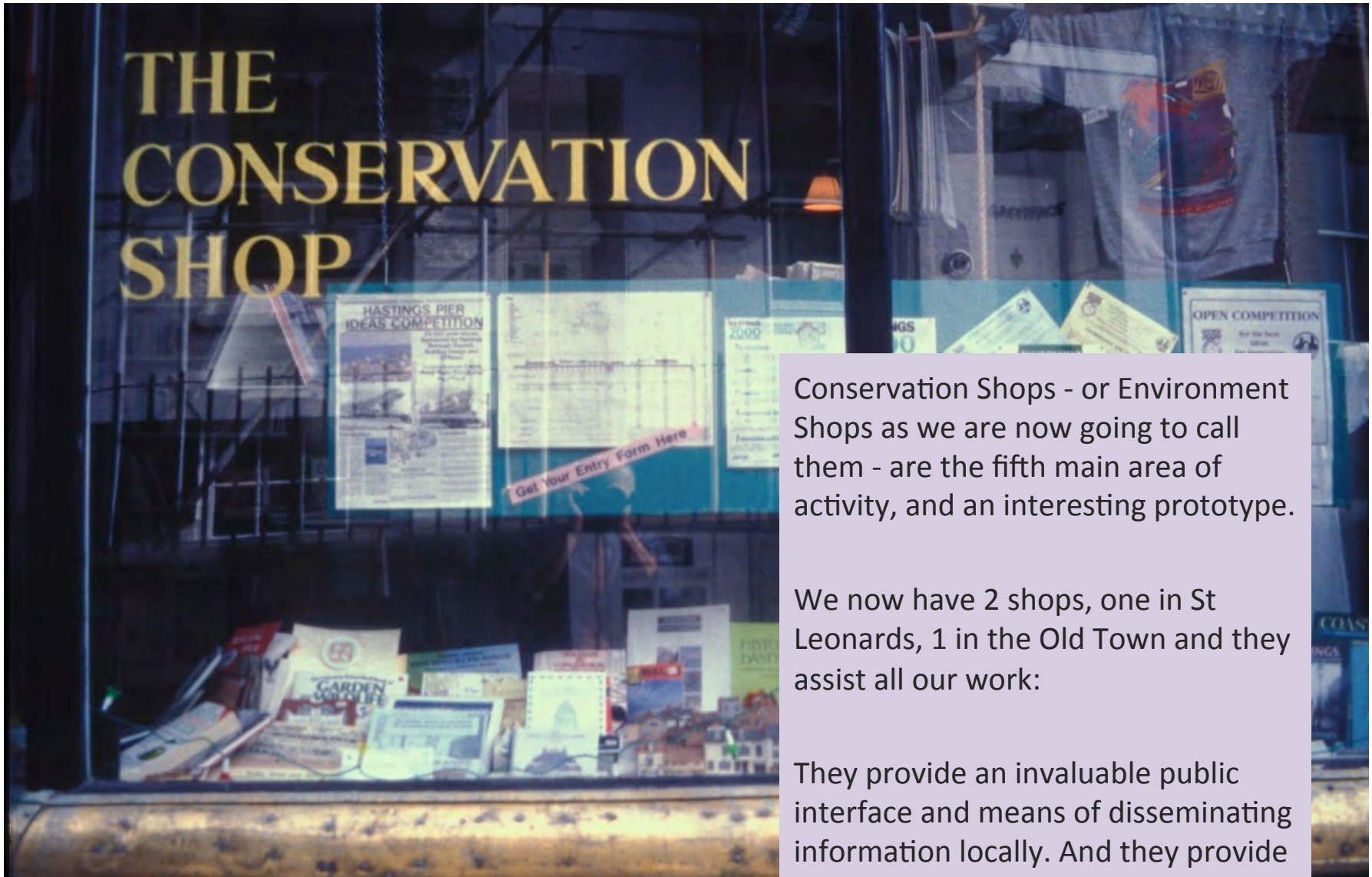


# Environmental education



Planning for Real for the town centre  
in a shop in Queens Road.

# Environment shops



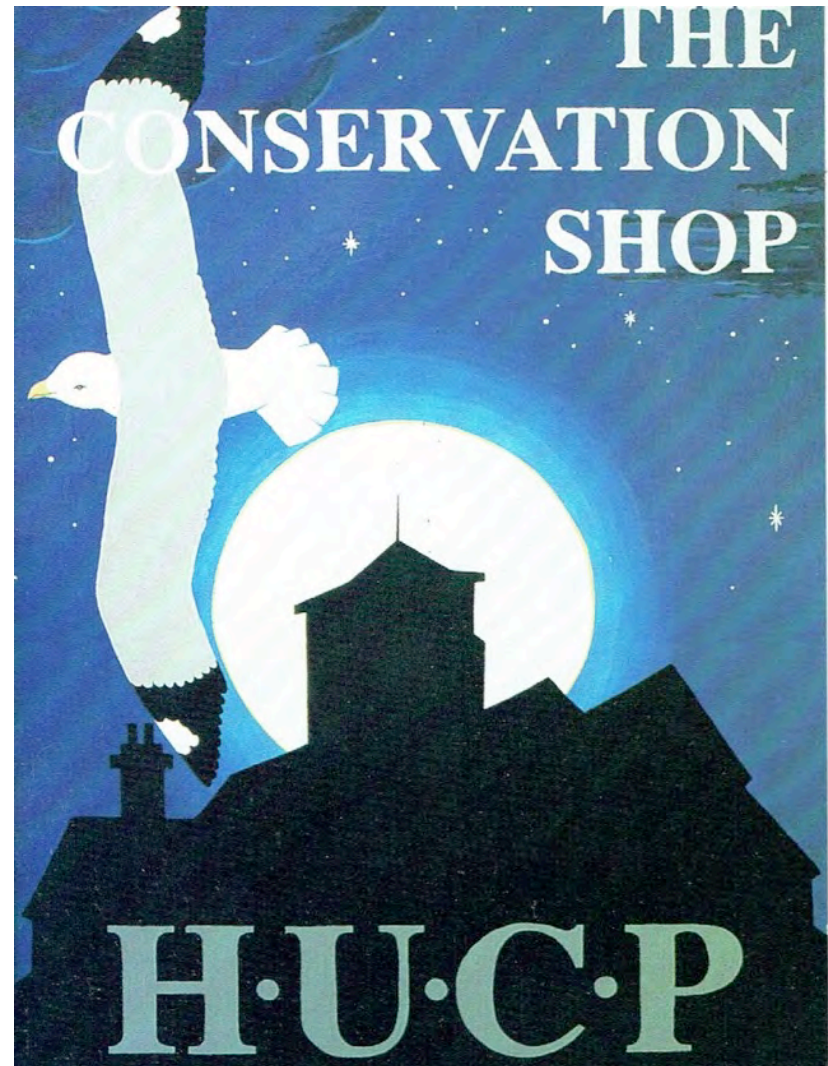
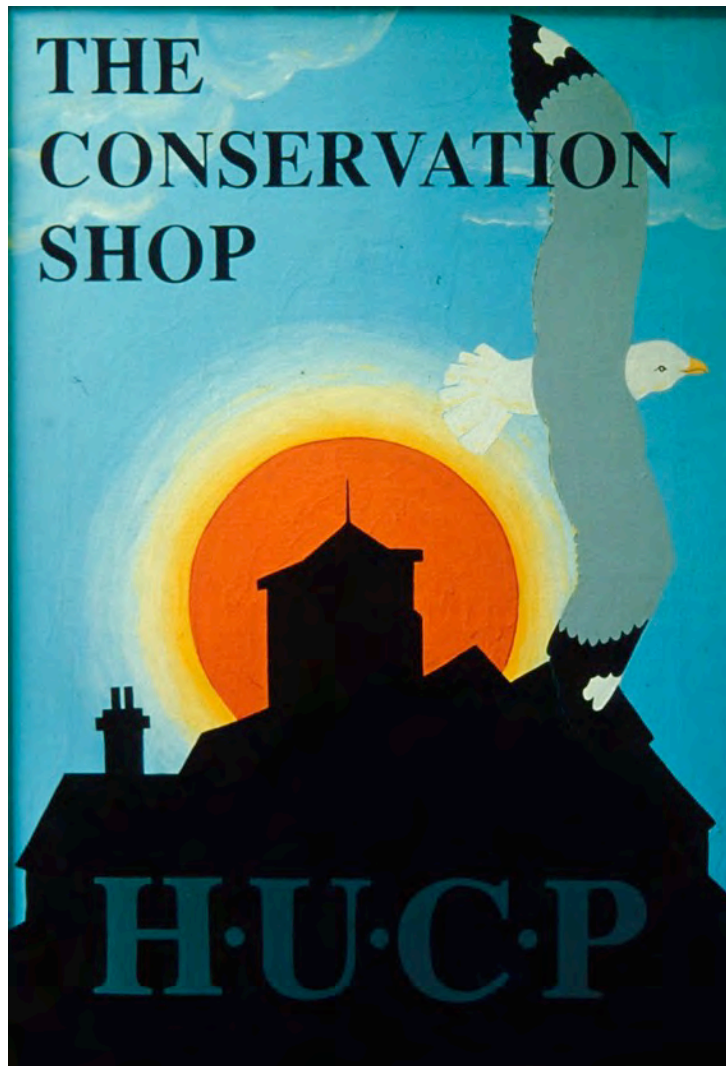
Conservation Shops - or Environment Shops as we are now going to call them - are the fifth main area of activity, and an interesting prototype.

We now have 2 shops, one in St Leonards, 1 in the Old Town and they assist all our work:

They provide an invaluable public interface and means of disseminating information locally. And they provide a source of income, albeit relatively little at this stage.



# Environment shops



Both sides of the hanging sign promoting our Old Town shop in the High Street (by local artist Tracy Jones).

# Environment shops

BOOKS • T-SHIRTS • LEAFLETS • POSTERS • GIFTS • NOTICE BOARDS

Visit our  
**CONSERVATION  
SHOPS**

**For information and advice  
on how to improve your environment**

58a High Street, Old Town  
Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3EN  
Telephone : 0424 446373  
Open Monday to Saturday • 10 am - 5 pm

St Leonards Conservation Centre  
49 Marina, St Leonards-on-Sea  
East Sussex TN38 0BE  
Telephone : 0424 718636  
Open Monday to Friday • 10 am - 4 pm

**H·U·C·P**  
Hastings Urban Conservation Project  
An initiative sponsored jointly by Hastings Borough Council,  
East Sussex County Council and English Heritage

GIFTS • POSTCARDS • GUIDES • WINDOW STICKERS • RESOURCE PACKS • EDUCATION PACKS • VIDEOS

BOOKS • T-SHIRTS • LEAFLETS • POSTERS • GIFTS • NOTICE BOARDS



Photcredit:  
Peter  
Greenhalf

The stock falls into several distinct categories:

- Local interest
- Building communities
- Building restoration
- Green information
- Green merchandise
- Visitor information



# Regeneration consultancy



The sixth and final area of activity is what we describe as regeneration consultancy - practical research and development, both on local development matters, and on good practice in urban regeneration generally.

This is based on the belief that we have an important role as pioneers and innovators in urban management, and that we can offer something to Hastings by bringing in techniques from elsewhere, and assist others by exporting some of our own.



Projects in this category include hosting tours of the Town and the Trust's work for:

- Kevin Knott, Deputy Secretary of the Duchy of Cornwall, seen here with HUCP Chairman, Cllr Pamela Brown (above left).
- the Chief Executive of the Phoenix Initiative, with view to establishing a public/private partnership which would attract private investment with the town in a socially responsive manner (above right).

# Regeneration consultancy



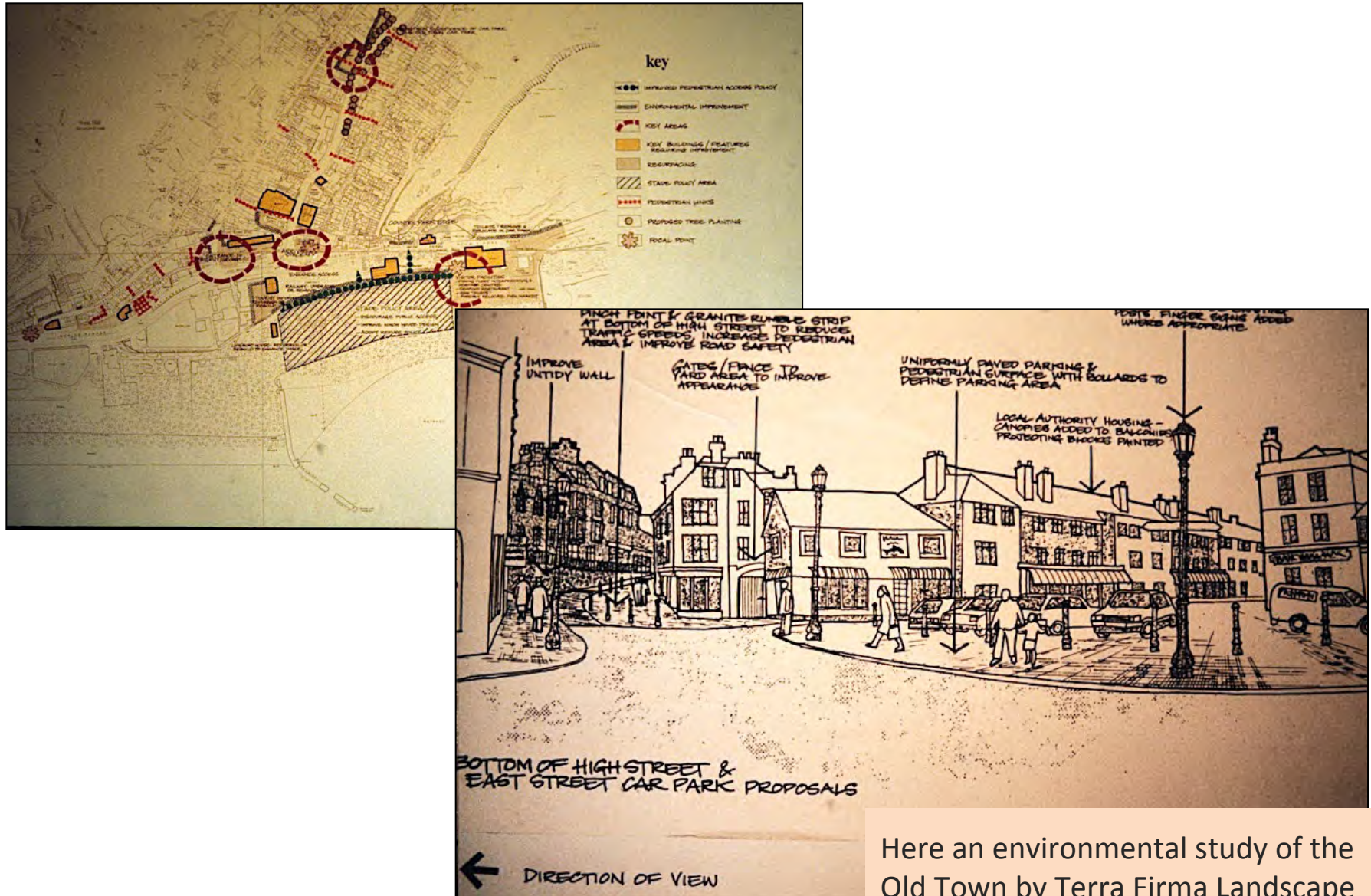
Providing the inspiration and helping with research for, the 'Opera on the Pier', a remarkable community opera on the founding of St Leonards, stage managed by Glyndebourne, which involved several hundred local people.

Undertaking feasibility studies on planning and environmental subjects - in this case assessing the potential of the former Observer newspaper building for a managed workspace, assisted by Mike Franks of Regeneration.





# Regeneration consultancy



Here an environmental study of the Old Town by Terra Firma Landscape Architects.

# Regeneration consultancy

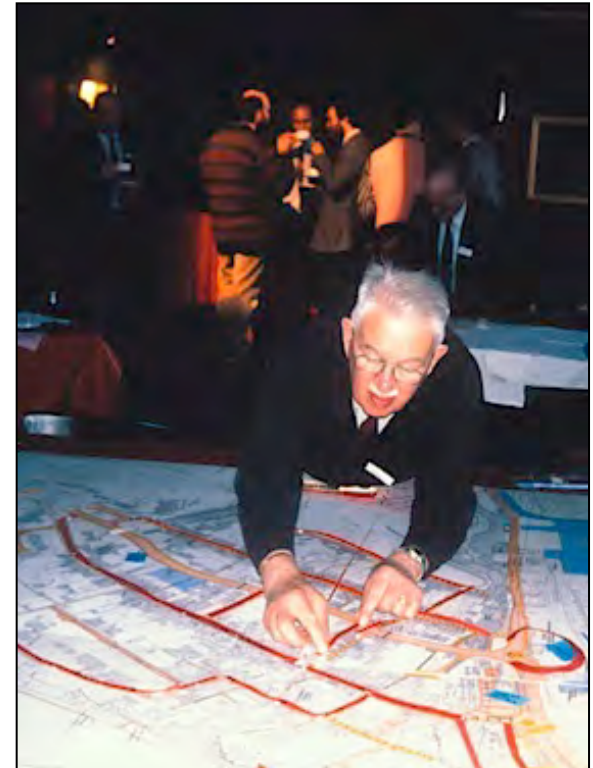
Organising seminars and study days - bringing people together to work out solutions to various problems, using new model-making and participation techniques.

One of the most successful of these 'action planning events' to date was a study day on traffic management in the Old Town organised in association with the Old Town Forum.

All those concerned in any way - residents and traders groups, planners, councillors, the police and so on - were invited to spend a whole day debating the issues round a large table-top plan, with cut-out pieces representing traffic calming measures, tramways, pedestrian crossings, and so on. We employed a traffic calming expert, Dr Carmen Hass Klau, for the day who showed slides of what had been achieved elsewhere.

And the remarkable thing was that at the end of the day, there was almost complete consensus on a range of measures needed.

Some of which have since been implemented.





# Competitions



Finally, competitions. Competitions are an excellent way of stimulating public interest and vision in issues, and channelling that interest and vision creatively towards finding positive solutions.

This one was for a derelict site in George Street in the Heart of the Old Town, known as the Cooper Barnes site. Again, on behalf of the Old Town Forum we organised an ideas competition for ways of developing it. It was only advertised locally but we had 35 entries which were put up on the site hoarding for judging by the public.

Judging lasted all day, on a Saturday and passers by were given 3 coloured stickers for their first, second and third choices.

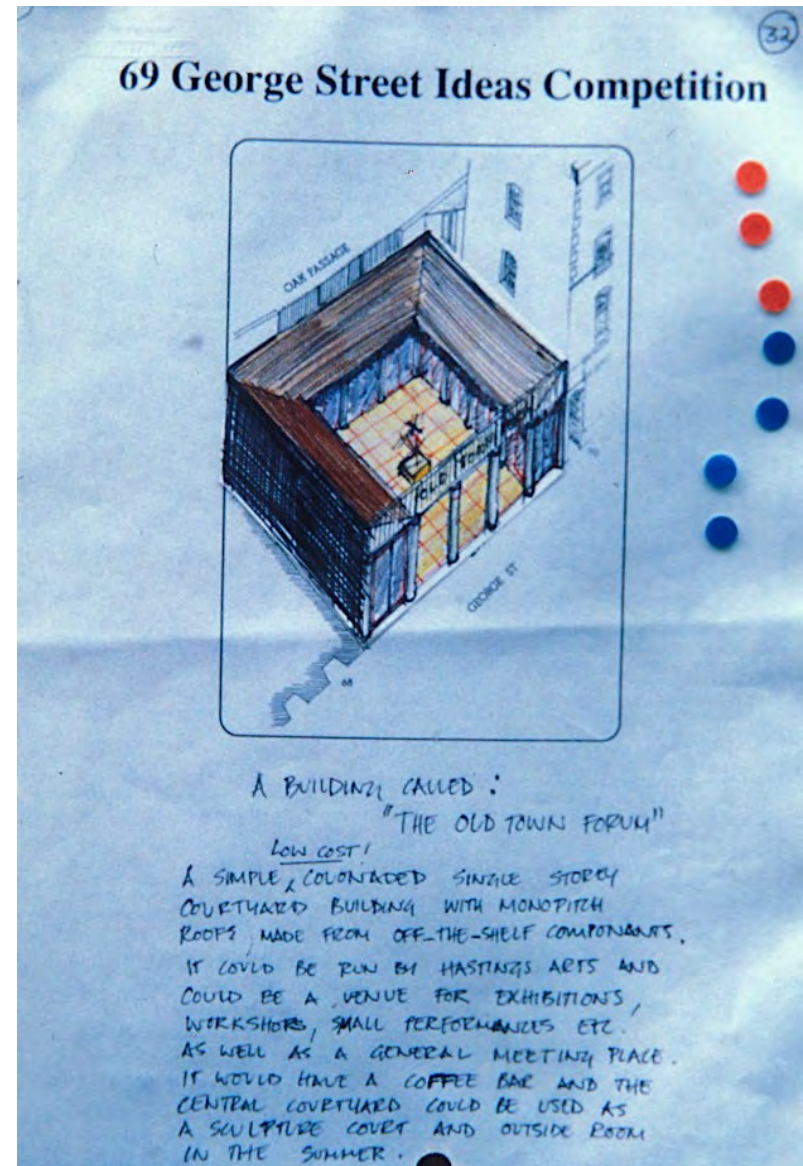
At the end of the day the stickers were counted and prizes awarded.



# Competitions

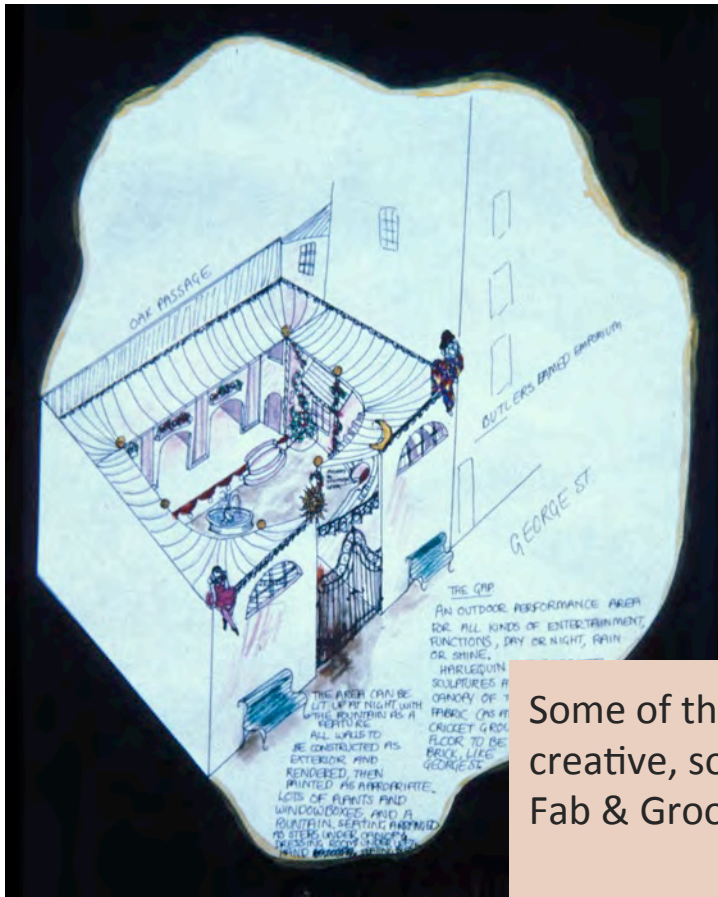


Above is one of the winning schemes by a local resident (Patrick Smith) proposing to build similar buildings to those that were there before. On the right a scheme by a local architect (Jamie Coath) - interestingly using the preprinted form which came with an outline axonometric projection of the site.





# Competitions



Some of the ideas were extremely creative, some mere fantasy. Entry by Fab & Groovy, left, rainforest, right.

This competition created great interest and has already had an effect in determining the nature of the planning application that the Council has granted itself prior to selling the site.

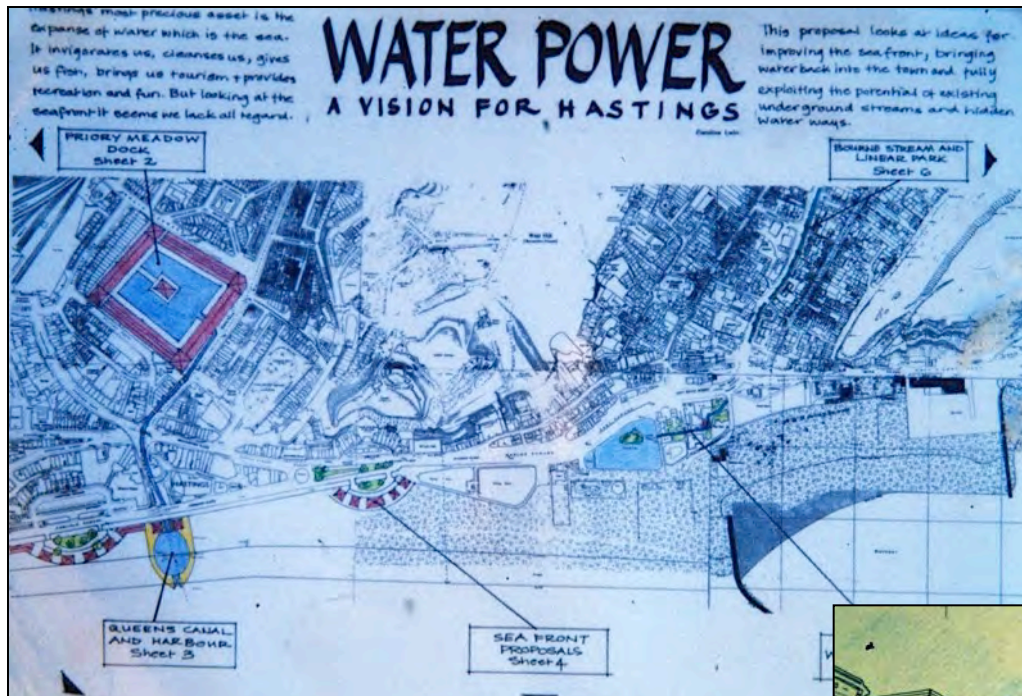
# Competitions

[illegible]

‘Visions for Hastings’ was a broader competition organised with the Hastings Environment Forum to find ‘the best ideas for improving the environment of Hastings and St Leonards. There were over 150 entries, many from children, and prizes were awarded by different environmental groups for the scheme they liked best. There was also a public voting system similar to Cooper Barnes site competition. The overall winning entry (by artist Mike Turner) was a proposed tramway along the seafront.

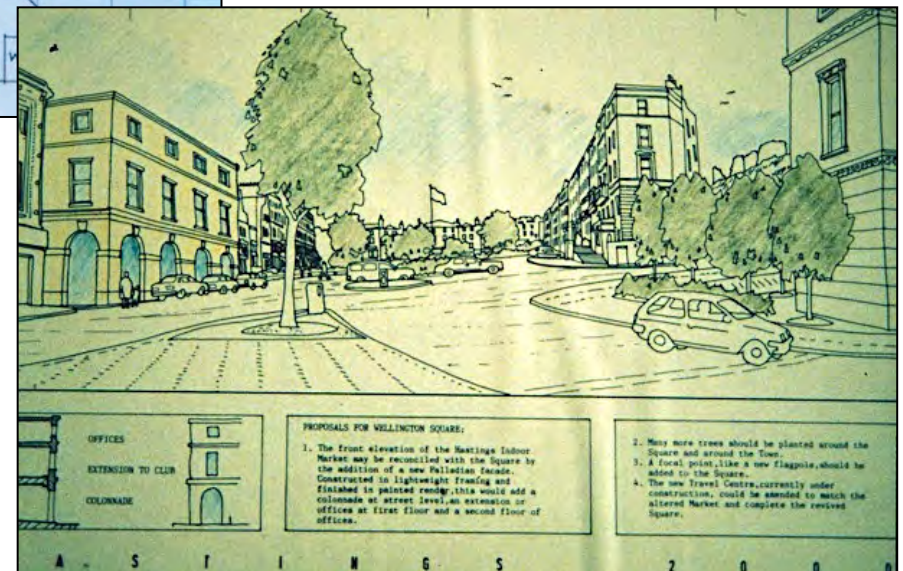


# Competitions

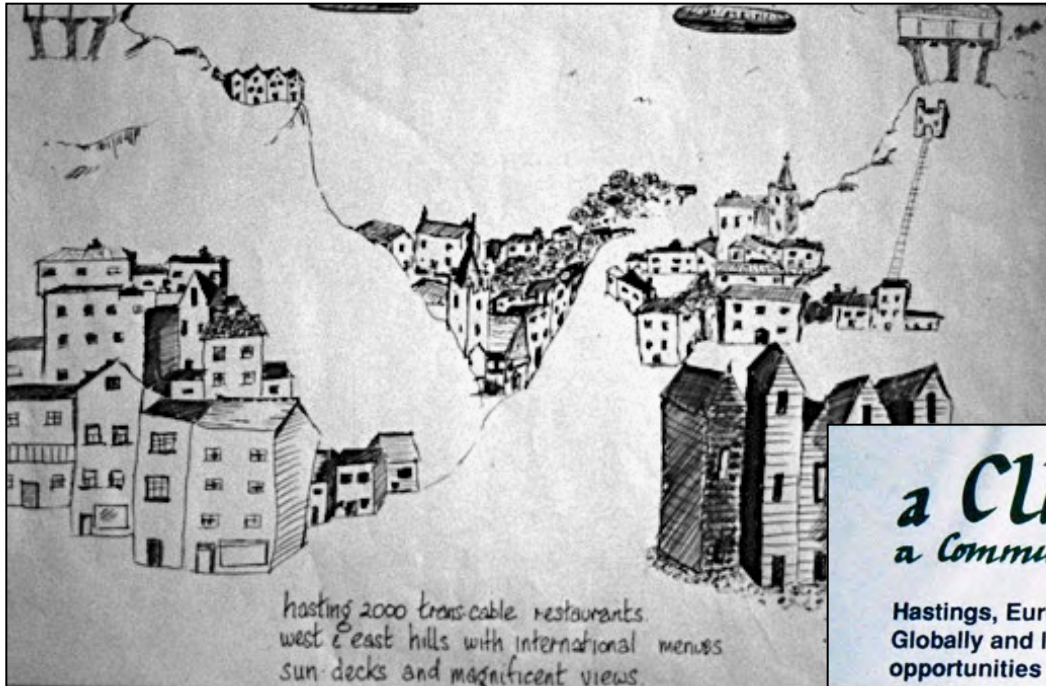


Above, a very popular scheme, voted N°1 by Hastings Arts with former Borough Architect George Adams chairing the panel, was for a scheme for reintroducing water into several areas of the town (by architect Caroline Lwin).

Right, a very practical scheme for replacing an ugly supermarket with something more in keeping in Wellington Square.



# Competitions



Above, a proposal for a cable car linking the East and West Hill.

Right, a purely written proposal for creating a community university of the environment (by John FC Turner).

## *a CUE for Hastings 2000* *a Community University of the Environment open to all*

Hastings, Europe and the world have to develop sustainable ways of living. Globally and locally we are at a turning point. Hastings has unique opportunities to lead through learning by doing. By enabling current and new initiatives to share information and key services, Hastings would become a centre of global learning through local action.

CUE would be a **Network** linking existing and new groups and organisations in all spheres and sectors;

it would work through a **Small Centre** managing pooled information and shared facilities;

the CUE Network Centre would support **Study** and **Action** on locally appropriate forms of sustainable development;

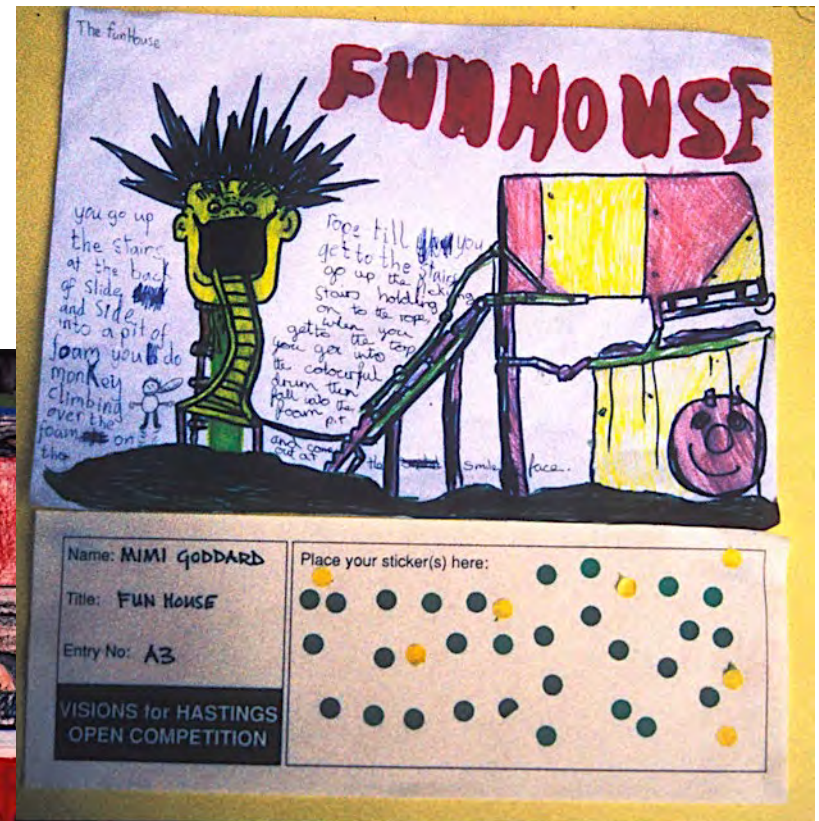
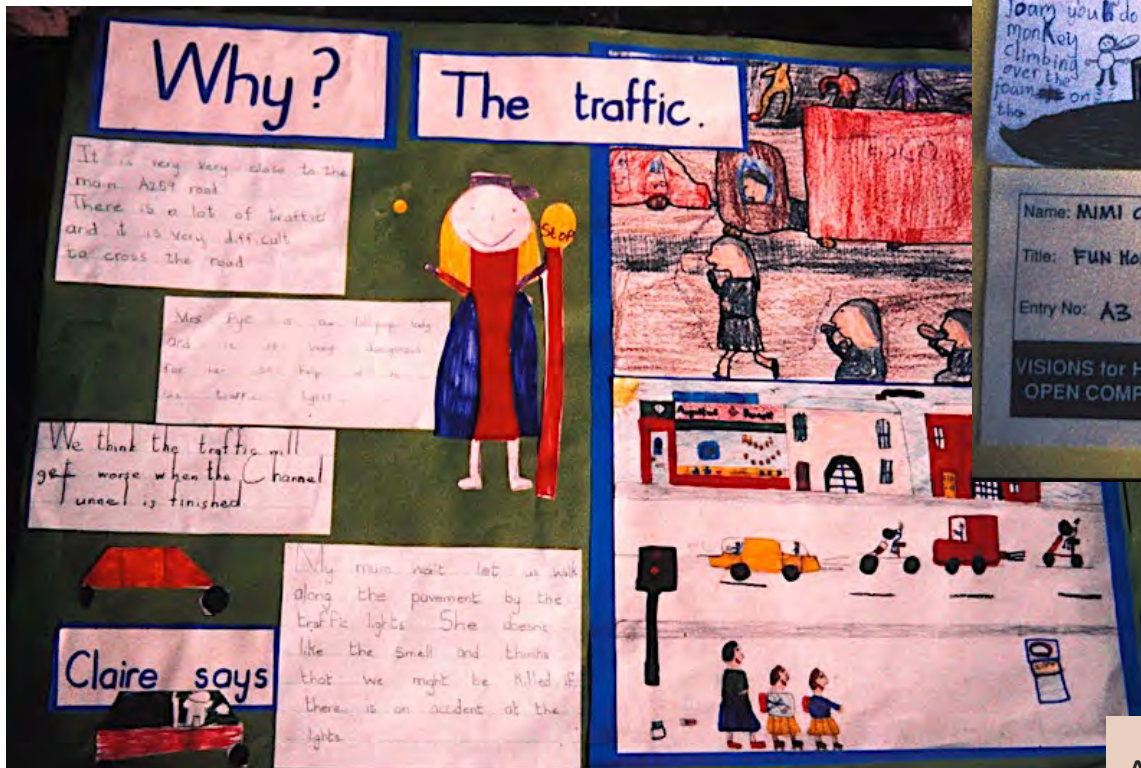
it would recover the true sense and use of a university as "a centre of instruction for all" through **Learning by Doing**.

In this way **more can be done with less** by making better and fuller use of available human, material and financial resources.

*this is the idea that can help the other ideas to happen*



# Competitions



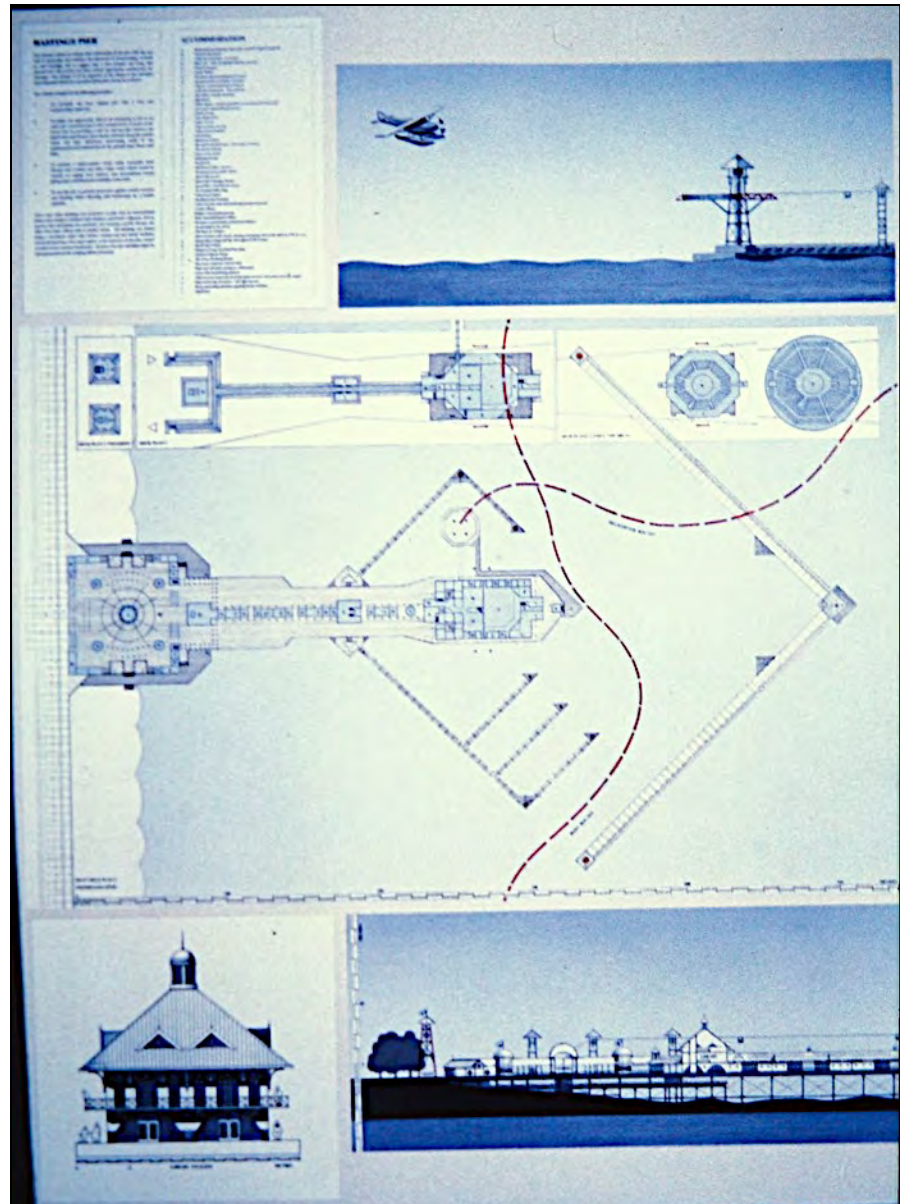
And there were some very perceptive schemes from children.

# Competitions

The Project also organised last year a national design competition, with the Tourism Department and *Building Design* newspaper, for ways of improving the Hastings Pier - a Listed Building and vital feature of the town.

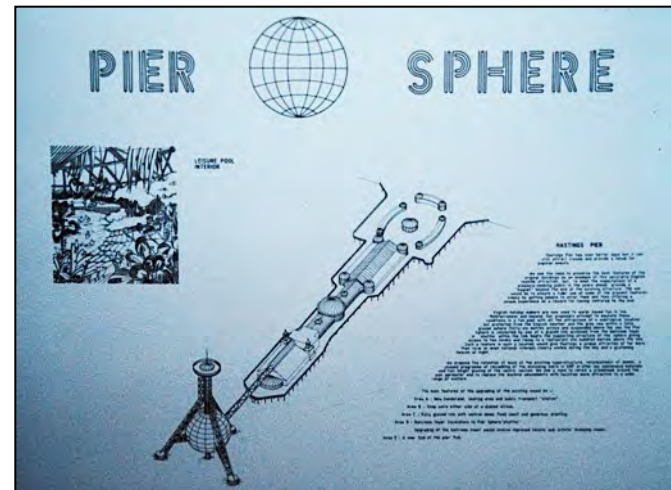
With £5000 in prize money, this attracted 114 entries, many of a very high standard.

The winning scheme featured a wave power electricity generating barrier creating a harbour and a cable car to link up to White Rock.

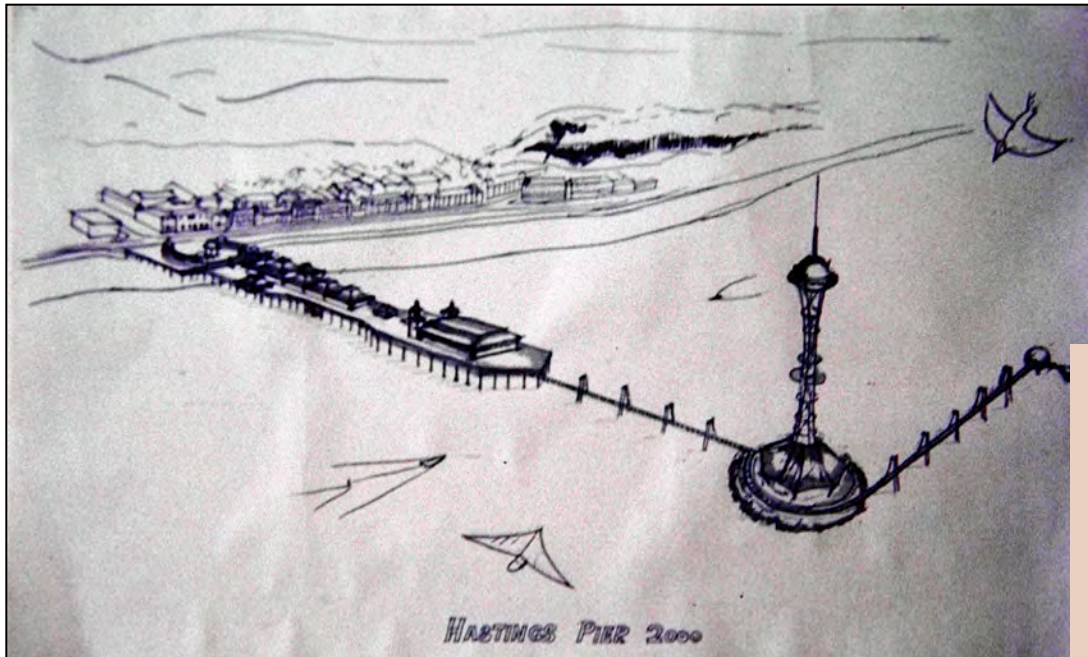




# Competitions



# Competitions

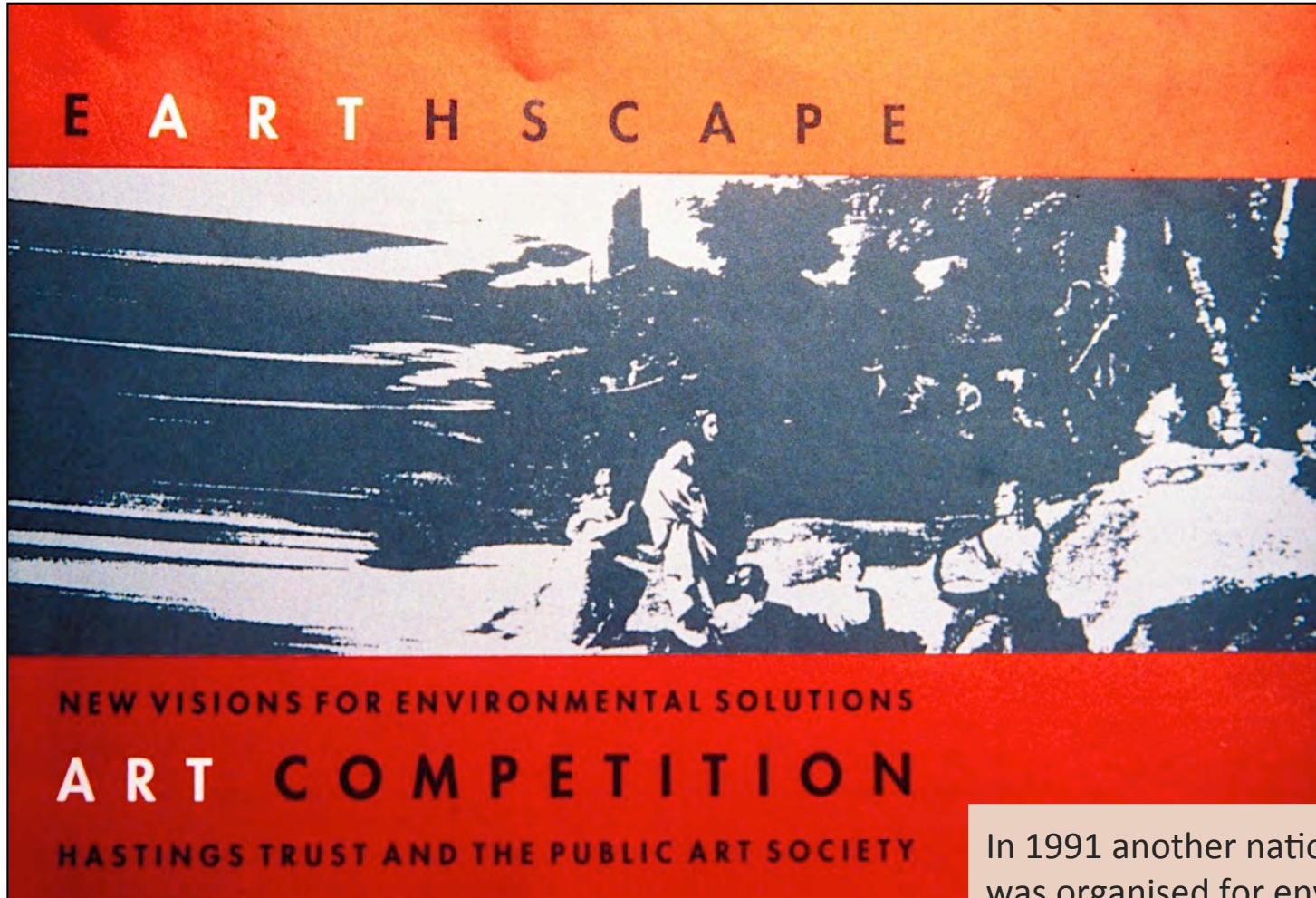


The effect of the pier competition has been to revive interest in the Pier and its very precarious state - unless a way can be found to generate more income on it, it will almost certainly fall into the sea very shortly.

A Pier Preservation Society has been set up and negotiations have started between the Pier Company, the Council, developers and the Trust with a view, possibly, for the Trust to acquire the freehold from the present private owners so as to be able to attract public and charitable funds for its repair and upgrading.



# Competitions



In 1991 another national competition was organised for environment week: Earthscape - New visions for environmental solutions, with the Public Art Society.

# Conclusions

So that is the range of our work. Before concluding, just a word on how we are organised - because it is increasingly clear that systematic organisation is the key to a successful regeneration project.

First, People. A lot of people with a lot of different skills are needed to do all this work.

The Project has only 2 full time salaried staff: A Director and an Assistant.

We work closely with officers in several council departments, but the main source of hands has been the government's Manpower Services Commission, now Employment Training. The work lends itself naturally to training opportunities and many people have gained immensely from being involved in such real and stimulating work.



# Conclusions



Over 25 trainees have worked with the Project for up to a year - between 5 and 10 at any one time. Several of them continue to work with the Project after their training year on a consultancy basis.

Consultants play an increasingly important role. As well as using

consultants for specific projects - architects, traffic experts, landscape designers - we have also found it essential to have consultants for certain core activities such as photography, computer programming, sponsorship, design, environmental education.

# Conclusions

Several of these consultants have effectively become part-time staff, and have started developing separate programmes within the Project which will hopefully provide them with long term employment

In addition, we've relied on the vital services of national consultants, such as Partnership Ltd, Groundwork Associates, UK2000, solicitors Sinclair Taylor & Martin, and the Civic Trust Regeneration Team in providing guidance and assistance on developing the right legal and financial structures and strategy. Without that support it is difficult to see how the transition to a Trust would have been possible.

We also rely heavily on support from volunteers who assist in many ways, particularly in manning the shops at weekends.



# Conclusions



To enable all these people to participate effectively in the running of the Project we have invested a lot of energy in developing open and simple office systems.

We've also begun to rely heavily on computers both for desktop publishing and for information handling.

# Conclusions

The overriding characteristic of regeneration projects is complexity: we have 100s of projects at various stages at any one time, 1000's of files in constant use, tens of thousands of photographs. We deal with 100's of organisations on a regular basis and 1000's of individuals.

To cope with all this we have begun to develop office management systems which may be of interest to other projects elsewhere.





# Conclusions



In conclusion. Urban regeneration is about getting people to develop the vision and implementation capacity necessary to make our towns better places to live and work in, and sustainable.

I think that the Hastings Urban Conservation Project has made a great start on that task in Hastings and St Leonards. I sense a new feeling of hope for the future which was conspicuously absent before the Project started.

Clearly there are many problems ahead and in many respects we've only just started to scratch the surface of what needs to be done.

It remains to be seen whether the Hastings Trust can build on these foundations to help make Hastings the jewel on the south coast which it could undoubtedly be.

# Enabling in Action

## **Enabling in Action; the work of the Hastings Urban Conservation Project and Hastings Trust.**

© Nick Wates, 1992

Photographs by Nick Wates, from the archives of HUCP & Hastings Trust and Peter Greenhalf.

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### **Historical note**

‘Enabling in Action’ was first compiled in 1991 in response to an invitation to give a talk to the Old Hastings Preservation

Society scheduled for 23 February 1991. This event was cancelled but the presentation was then updated and completed in 1992. As was fairly common at that time it was in the form of 35mm colour slides presented using two carousel projectors and screens.

The script for the presentation (with slide numbers) was rediscovered in 2016 and this powerpoint version created. Minor editorial adjustments were made to make the new format work acceptably but no significant changes were made to the narrative or images.

For more details on the work of HUCP and Hastings Trust during this period see *Turning the Tide; Hastings Trust Prospectus and Review 1991*.