

**Agenda Item No: 6**

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 5 January 2015

**Report Title:** Bottle Alley Petition

**Report By:** Virginia Gilbert  
Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure

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### **Purpose of Report**

To respond to a petition requesting the restoration of Bottle Alley

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### **Recommendation(s)**

- 1. That Cabinet acknowledge the petitioners' concerns about the condition of Bottle Alley**
- 2. That Cabinet support the inclusion in the draft budget of a proposed £160,000 capital allocation in 2015-16 for a new lighting scheme and surface concrete repairs**
- 3. That the full cost of a Bottle Alley restoration scheme be considered following the 2015 intensive survey and investigations into external funding possibilities.**

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

The petitioners' request for a full restoration of Bottle Alley is not affordable at this time, primarily due to the cost of extensive waterproofing and resurfacing. Renewed efforts to identify external funding will be required. However, a capital scheme is proposed for 2015-16 that will enhance the appearance and lighting of Bottle Alley whilst funding is pursued for its longer term restoration.

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## Introduction

1. A petition has been received with 769 signatures. The petition states:
2. We the Undersigned are asking Hastings Borough Council to undertake the full restoration of Bottle Alley in order to return it to its original appearance. This will require the removal of all blown concrete and the treatment or replacement of any rusty reinforcement steel followed by replacement rendering to match existing. All other cracks or damage to the concrete to be repaired and made good. We also require the original shutters to be replaced, the bottle wall to be repaired where necessary and cleaned in order to restore the original appearance. All lighting to be repaired where necessary and left in full working order.

## Background

3. Bottle Alley is an integral part of the two-tier promenade between Hastings and St Leonards. It was built between 1925 - 1939 by the Hastings Corporation, under the guidance of Sidney Little, Borough Engineer. It was designed to provide public access at two levels, and was formally opened in 1934.
4. The structural condition of Bottle Alley was considered to be poor in 1999 when it was surveyed and subsequent updates in 2005 and 2011 have confirmed that it is deteriorating at expected rates. The lower tier is currently underused as a subway and suffers from poor lighting even in the summer. During winter months it is deserted and can have an intimidating atmosphere.
5. The structure is tested annually for unsafe concrete, which is then removed. In 2011, an extensive survey provided costs to maintain and repair the structure to extend its life for 5, 30 or 75 years with costs estimated at £40,000, £1.6million and £6million, respectively. The short term repairs were carried out whilst longer term options were subject to further investigation.
6. 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.
7. These options were subject to a public consultation with mixed results. Whilst the Bottle Alley proposal offered a modest opportunity for income, it was not sufficiently high to recoup the expenditure in a reasonable time and was unpopular with some because of the loss of a walking route through the structure.

## Proposal

8. In 2015, there will be an intensive survey of the concrete promenade, including Bottle Alley. This will provide a refreshed estimate of costs for a full refurbishment as well as other maintenance options. The survey will provide the basis for investigations into possible funding options that may become available.
9. The proposed capital programme for 2015-2016 includes an allocation of £160,000 for Bottle Alley. This is intended for the complete rewiring of the structure and introduction of new lighting fixtures with LED lights. It also includes cosmetic repairs to replace missing concrete throughout the structure. Whilst the full restoration, which would include extensive resurfacing and waterproofing of the structure, is not affordable for HBC acting on its own, this project will make a significant difference to the appearance of Bottle Alley. We are aiming to create a more welcoming environment for walkers and possibly limited trading opportunities, subject to planning consent.
10. 2015 will also see the reopening of the Pier as well as the White Rock Baths' transformation into an indoor BMX facility. These new facilities will increase the year-round popularity of the area and add to the case for external investment in Bottle Alley restoration.

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### Wards Affected

Central St. Leonards

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### Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

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### Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	Yes

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### Background Information

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**Officer to Contact**

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