

# **Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy**

## **Appendix 1: Theme 3a Seaside Leisure & Tourism – Folkestone & Sandgate as Seaside Resorts**

**PROJECT:** Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy  
**DOCUMENT NAME:** Theme 3(a): Coastal Heritage: Seaside Leisure & Tourism – Folkestone and Sandgate as Seaside Resorts

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V01	INTERNAL DRAFT	B. Found & F. Clark	25.07.17
Comments – first draft of text. No illustrations, figures or photographs. Some parts that will need expanding have been highlighted.			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V02	RETURNED DRAFT	D Whittington	16.11.18
Update back from FHDC			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V03	CONSULTATION DRAFT	F Clark	29.11.18
Comments – Check through and title page inserted.			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V04			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V05			

### **3(a) Coastal Heritage: Seaside Leisure & Tourism – Folkestone and Sandgate as Seaside Resorts**

#### **1 Summary**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Folkestone was little more than a small fishing village focused around the mouth of the Pent Stream. This was all to change with the coming of railway in 1843 and by the end of the century Folkestone, along with neighbouring Sandgate, had developed into a fashionable seaside resort, with luxurious hotels and seaside amenities. Despite the interruption of two world wars and changing fashions, the town's prosperity as a seaside resort continued into the 1960s. The growth of leisure time, increased disposable income and cheap foreign holidays in the second half of the twentieth century was to change the face of Folkestone. The town, as with many of the country's coastal resort towns entered a period of decline. The story of Folkestone and Sandgate as seaside resorts reflects the national picture of changing seaside vogues.

#### **2 Overview**

##### *2.1 Background*

*“But the sociable will prefer the Leas, the fashionable rendezvous of the town, where excellent bands play morning, afternoon and evening. On wet mornings you can sit in the Leas Shelter, a spacious concert hall formed in the face of the cliff and whilst listening to the Red Band discourse sweet music, you have the panorama of the English Channel and the Straights of Dover. In the afternoon you can visit the Leas Pavilion, and have a delightful afternoon tea to the music of a very good string band composed of lady performers. They also cater for you in the same way on the Victoria Pier”*

Folkestone was not among the first of Kent's seaside resorts to develop, but once established it rapidly developed to become the grandest and most aristocratic. Unlike towns like Margate, which were easily accessible from London by boat along the Thames, Folkestone's development was reliant on the coming of the railways which reached the town in 1843. From this moment on Folkestone's fortunes were changed forever, spurred on by Earl Radnor, who had a vision to develop his estate into a high class seaside resort.

Folkestone rapidly grew to accommodate all the trappings that would be expected in a high status Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort, complete with grand residences and hotels, promenades, pleasure gardens, theatres, bathing facilities, and of course a pier. In the later years of the nineteenth and into the early years of the twentieth century Folkestone was at its zenith, being the haunt of Royalty (including King Edward VII), maharajas, leading politicians and the rich and famous. It was for good reason that the town became known as the 'gem of the south coast'.

In the twentieth century Folkestone would see itself having to adapt to changes brought about by two world wars, but adapt it did. Initially, having been deserted by its Edwardian era aristocratic clientele, it recast itself in the interwar period as a popular destination for the middle classes as a place to

take their families for a holiday. Following the end of the Second World War Folkestone's re-established itself as a sea-side destination, and from the 1950s amusements, beach huts and the bucket and spade holiday ruled. The later years of the twentieth century were difficult ones for the town, as they were for many of our country's seaside resorts. The British seaside holiday industry was one that was in decline; the rise of the cheap foreign package holiday seeming to offer a more exciting prospect, better facilities and crucially with guaranteed sunshine. For Folkestone the decline of its seaside trade, combined with the loss of ferry services following the opening of the Channel Tunnel would be especially challenging for the town.

## 2.2 Key Components

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Survival</i>
<b>West Cliff Estate</b>	<p>Developed by the Earl Radnor from the mid-nineteenth century onwards the West Cliff Estate contains some of Folkestone's grandest buildings and streets. Development of the West Cliff Estate was partly the work of the architects Decimus Burton and Sydney Smirke.</p> <p>A notable feature of the first wave of development on the Radnor estate was the relatively small plot sizes when compared against the size of the dwellings; i.e. despite the scale of the grand dwellings they have relatively small gardens. These small gardens are compensated by the numerous public and semi-public open spaces, which were attractive to Folkestone's wealthy clientele where seeing and (perhaps more importantly) being seen played an essential elements of the town's social scene. This can be contrasted with some of the later Victorian and Edwardian development on the Earl's estate, for example along Grimston Avenue, Grimston Gardens &amp; Earl's Avenue</p>	<p>The estate broadly developed from east-to-west, initially along Sandgate Road and fronting onto The Leas. West Cliff Gardens, West Terrace, Bouverie Place, Bouverie Gardens and Pleydell Gardens were all laid out by the 1860s. There are a handful of Listed Buildings dating from the period 1843-1860, but there has also been much redevelopment and a number of buildings lost. The estate expanded rapidly in the period 1860-1900, principally along the Leas, the Sandgate Road and Bouverie Road West. A number of grand terraces and rows of paired villas survive from this period, a notable example being Clifton Crescent. The broad layout of the Earl Radnor's West Cliffe Estate survives relatively intact.</p>

	<p>where dwellings benefit from larger plot sizes, but still retaining some communal space. The most recently developed areas of the estate (towards Sandgate) are characterised by a mix of Neo-Georgian, Queen Anne Revivalesque and sub-Arts &amp; Craft Architecture, with the houses largely comprising substantial middle-class homes, set in extensive gardens, but without any public squares or gardens.</p>	
<p><b>Hotels</b></p>	<p>To cater for visitors a number of hotels of varying size and status were established in the town. One of the first noteworthy hotels to be established in the town was the Pavilion (later Royal Pavilion). Other notable establishments included Bates Hotel (later the Esplanade), the West Cliff (later renamed the Majestic), the Burlington Hotel, Hotel Wampach and the Queens Hotel. Numerous other smaller residences, mansions, guest houses and hotels also catered for visitors to the town. The town's most famous and recognisable hotels were the Metropole and the Grand, located on the Leas.</p>	<p>Today Folkestone continues to cater for visitors to the town with a number of hotels, guest houses and smaller residences. Of the original Victorian hotels, The Grand and Burlington Hotel survive and continue to operate as hotels. They are both designated as Grade II Listed Buildings. The Metropole building also survives but has now been developed for use as private apartments. The south wing and Marine Terrace entrance to the Royal Pavilion Hotel are still standing but the rest of the building was demolished between 1981 and 1982. The Grand Burstin Hotel now stands where the remainder of the Royal Pavilion Hotel once was. Other hotels such as the Majestic and Queens Hotel have since been lost. Hotel Wampach was sold during the 1970s to Sidney de Haan of Saga but fire damage then led to the resale to a developer and flats now occupy the site of this Victorian hotel.</p>

<p><b>Gardens, Squares and Avenues</b></p>	<p>Parks, gardens, squares and tree-lined avenues can be seen across much of west Folkestone, providing leisure and pleasure spaces where Folkestone's well-to-do visitors could see and be seen. The large open promenades of the Leas and Lower Leas (Lower Sandgate Road gardens) are discussed below. Other notable public gardens included the Marine Parade Gardens, Radnor Park, the Pleasure Gardens and Kingsnorth Gardens. Many of Folkestone's grand residences were built around garden squares, as was the fashion of the time. These were private spaces for the enjoyment of the houses surrounding them. Examples included Bouverie Square, Payden Gardens, Clifton Gardens, Augusta Gardens, Pleydell Gardens, Langhorne Gardens and Grimston Gardens. Many of the town's fashionable streets were tree-lined, providing an ordered and spacious setting for the fine buildings. The tree-lined Castle Hill Avenue, Earls Avenue, Sandgate Road and Bouverie Road West feature as major thoroughfares in west Folkestone. Castle Hill Avenue is particularly notable for its tree-lined central path.</p>	<p>A number of parks, gardens and other green spaces survive throughout Folkestone. Radnor Park and Kingsnorth Gardens were both donated by the Earl of Radnor to Folkestone for use as public gardens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Both are now municipal gardens that are maintained for public use. Other gardens and urban parks that are also still present include Clifton Gardens, Augusta Gardens, Trinity Gardens, Westbourne Gardens and Grimston Gardens. Some gardens have since been lost to development largely for housing and car parking; examples include Bouverie Square, Langhorne Gardens and Pleydell Gardens. Tree-lined avenues continue to play an important role in the local character of Folkestone's main thoroughfares, most notably Castle Hill Avenue, Earls Avenue and Bouverie Road West.</p>
<p><b>The Leas</b></p>	<p>The Leas was created by Lord Radnor as a grand cliff-top promenade with spectacular sea-views to attract well off Victorian holidaymakers. The Leas was designed exclusively for the town's upper class visitors and Lord Radnor employed his own private uniformed police to keep the riff-raff away. In the high</p>	<p>The Leas has remained as a popular and vibrant part of Folkestone that continues to attract large numbers of visitors each year. Its attractive cliff-top promenade still boasts a number of its original Victorian and Edwardian features that would have been highlights for well-off</p>

	<p>season the Leas would be bustling with ladies and gentlemen enjoying a constitutional, nannies taking their charges for some air and the more elderly and infirm making use of bath-chairs to enjoy the sea-views. Bandstands and music halls provided entertainment, whilst winding paths and lifts linked the Leas with the Undercliffe. Set within the cliff itself were various shelters and grottos. The Leas Cliff Hall (opened in 1927) which is accessed from the Leas cascades down the cliff and is located on the site of the Leas Shelter.</p>	<p>holiday makers and visitors during Folkestone's heydays of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These include the Leas Pavilion, Leas Cliff Hall (previously Leas Shelter), Bandstand, Leas Lift and Lower Leas Coastal Park (which will be discussed below). Unfortunately the Leas Pavilion and Leas Lift are both now closed to the public but there are community groups that hope to rejuvenate these assets in the near future. The Leas Lift is a grade II* Listed Building and the Leas Pavilion is a Grade II Listed Building. The Leas Cliff Hall and Bandstand which remain in public use today are both Grade II Listed Buildings.</p>
<p><b>Lower Leas</b></p>	<p>The Lower Leas was created following a major landslip in the late eighteenth century which resulted in a strip of land forming between the beach and the Leas cliffs. In 1828 the Earl of Radnor built a toll road along this coastal strip to link Sandgate to the harbour at Folkestone. The area was further developed by the Radnor Estate in the second half of the nineteenth century when gardens were established along the Lower Sandgate Road, with a series of paths set out, including winding paths up the cliffs themselves linking the Leas and the Leas Shelter with the Undercliff area. Lifts (see below) were added at the end of the nineteenth century to aid visitors. In 1913 the Leas Cliff area was leased to the</p>	<p>Since the extensive regeneration scheme carried out by the District Council on the park from 2000, the Lower Leas Coastal Park has developed into an award-winning space for recreation, wildlife, landscaping and enjoyment of the coast. For example, the park has won the Green Flag Award every year since 2007. The undercliff area has also developed a unique microclimate that supports unusual wildlife for the UK such as migrating birds and insects. A number of events are held at the park throughout the summer that includes concerts, drama performances and children's workshops. The park has been split into 3 broad recreational zones;</p>

	<p>Folkestone Corporation to be used as a public park, with tea-rooms, shelters and woodland walks. In 1921 the 'zig-zag' path was built, complete with a 'false' Pulhamite cliff face, arch and grotto. In the 1950s the park contained a small zoo and miniature railway and in 1973 the old toll road closed to traffic. From 2000 onwards the park has been extensively refurbished and improved with new hard and soft landscaping.</p>	<p>the wild zone, the fun zone and the formal zone. The wild zone runs from the western entrance to the toll house and is informally managed for wildlife and recreation. The fun zone comprises the central area of the park and contains the largest children's play area in the south east. The warden's hut is also located here as well as an amphitheatre, toilet blocks, storytelling area and the zig-zag path. The zig-zag path that is linked by the Pulhamite features built in 1921 is a Grade II Listed Building. The formal zone was opened in 2006 and is designed to reflect the original spirit of the park. It sports formal planting and landscaping with an emphasis on the horticultural excellence of the park that is was known for historically. The District Council continues to plan future developments to the park to further enhance this space.</p>
<p><b>Lifts</b></p>	<p>The steep slopes of the Leas Cliffs presented a challenge to any less able visitors and in the 1880s a local man, John Newman, sought to build a lift at the eastern end of the Leas to connect the cliff top with the west beach below. Newman's lift, which opened in 1885, took the form of a water-balance lift with the lift being operated by a combination of water and gravity. The lift comprised two parallel 5'10" (1.5m) gauge tracks which ran for a distance of some 164 feet (50m) up the cliff-face. Two carriages each</p>	<p>The Sandgate lift closed in 1918 due to war-time shortages, never to reopen and being officially closed in 1923. Little now survives of the lift. The bridge abutments where the Sandgate Lift passed over Radnor Cliff Crescent survive and part of the lower lift station building survives, much extended and altered to form a private dwelling. The Leas and Metropole lifts continued to operate during the interwar period, but both were closed for the duration</p>



	<p>capable of carrying some 15 passengers were provided, with one on each of the tracks. The carriages were connected to each other by a cable, passing around a large pulley wheel at the upper terminal, with the cars positioned so that when one was at the top of the incline the other was at the bottom. To operate the lift water filled a tank on the upper carriage and so that (after releasing the break) the extra weight of the upper carriage pulled the ascending car up the cliff at the same time as it descended. When it reached the bottom the water was let out of the carriage's tank and the process then repeated. Originally fresh water from the town supply was used each time, but in 1890 a storage tank and pumps were added so that the same water could be re-used. The lift proved popular and at the same time as the new pumping equipment was installed an additional parallel set of lifts were added to a similar (albeit not identical) design, the new track being somewhat steeper and necessitating carriages with a stepped design. A second lift was opened at the opposite end of the Leas in 1893 connecting the western end of the Leas with the bottom of Sandgate hill. The Sandgate lift again took the form of a water-balance funicular and featured a bridge partway along its length. Finally in 1904 a third lift was added, known as the Metropole lift and located on the Leas close to the Grand and Metropole hotels.</p>	<p>of the Second World War. Wartime damage and neglect meant the Metropole lift was to never re-open. Little survives of the Metropole Lift although the site of the upper station can still be seen on the Leas. The remaining Leas Lift operated using the 1885 and 1890 cars until the 1960s, when the 1890 lift was taken out of service. The final passengers being carried on the 1890 lift in October 1966. Shortly after the Folkestone Lift Company entered liquidation. The carriages for the 1890 lift were left on site, not being removed until 1985 (one being scrapped, the other taken to the Dover Transport Museum and more recently restored and displayed at the Elham Valley Line Countryside Centre at Peene). The tracks for the 1890 lift were removed in 2013, but the concrete track-bed remains. The 1885 lift survives and is Grade II* Listed. The listing covers the lift, including waiting rooms, pump room, lower station tanks, track, cars, wheel houses, tank room, upper station tunnel and railings. The track-bed and surviving additions for the 1890s lift are included within the listing. The lift is one of only three surviving and working Victorian water balance lifts in the country and is the second oldest of these.</p>
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<p><b>The West Beach, Pier &amp; Marine Parade</b></p>	<p>The west beach was one of the main focal points of Victorian and Edwardian Folkestone. Bathing machines were provided for swimming in the sea, including from the 1870s 'Fagg's Patent Bathing Carriages'. Fagg's carriage comprised a large 'shed' that ran up and down the beach on raised rails depending on the tide and had 20 individual compartments. In 1868 the Folkestone Bathing Establishment was built providing indoor bathing facilities and entertainment. In 1888 the Victoria Pier was to open at the foot of the Leas Lift and adjacent to the Bathing Establishment. The pier, which was some 683 feet long and 30 feet wide, featured a 700 seat pavilion at its end. By the Edwardian period the west beach area could offer a range of entertainment and bathing options, there was theatrical and musical entertainment available on the pier and on the shore, and a switchback railway, an early gravity 'roller-coaster' built in 1888. To the rear of the beach were the Marine Gardens with their own bandstand, behind which were the elegant terraces on Marine Parade and Marine Crescent. In the 1930s an Olympic size, heated, open air swimming pool was built on the beach, followed shortly after in 1938 by the construction of the Rotunda Amusement Park.</p>	<p>Little survives to illustrate how important this area of Folkestone once was. Marine Crescent and Marine Terrace both survive and are Grade II Listed, but otherwise the area is largely open and featureless and awaiting redevelopment. The Switchback Railway was demolished in 1919 and nothing is now known to survive. The Victoria Pier was heavily damaged by fire in the 1945 and then fully demolished between 1952 and 1954. Nothing now survives of the pier beyond a short section of retaining wall where the pier originally anchored to land. The Folkestone Bathing Establishment was demolished in 1966 some 98 years after first opening. The site of the former bathing establishment is now a carpark. The 1930s open air swimming pool was filled-in in 1981 after the seafront area was purchased by local entrepreneur Jimmy Godden. It is currently tarmacked over pending new development.</p>
<p><b>The Rotunda</b></p>	<p>Following the Second World War Folkestone re-established itself as a popular seaside destination. From the 1950s seaside amusements became popular and such facilities</p>	<p>Demolition of the Folkestone Rotunda Amusement Park began in 2003 when the park was sold to developers. Parts of the park were gradually removed between</p>

	<p>were available along the seafront at Folkestone at the foot of the Leas Cliff. The Rotunda Amusement Park at Folkestone was a large site complete with indoor and outdoor attractions such as bingo halls, helter skelter, boating pool and notable rides such as Castle Dracula, Log Flume and the 1922 Runaway Coaster which was installed at the Rotunda in 1998. It was first built in 1938 and remained a popular attraction for the local community and visitors until its last season in 2003.</p>	<p>2003 and 2007. Today nothing survives and the site is still due for redevelopment as part of the wider regeneration of the Folkestone Seafront.</p>
<p><b>East Cliff and The Warren</b></p>	<p>East Cliff, the sandy beaches of East Wear Bay and parts of The Warren make up the East Cliff and Warren Country Park. The Warren is formed from a series of landslips that have occurred over the past 200 years. The last substantial landslip was in 1915. Since then the coast has been stabilised by the construction of sea defences and the Dover-Folkestone railway line. The Warren Halt railway station was once a popular stop in the heart of the Warren but was closed to the public in 1939. The Warren had once been chalk grassland with very few trees. However, in 1924 it was gifted to the Corporation of Folkestone by Lord Radnor with the stipulation that there would be no grazing animals. Chalk grassland needs to be grazed otherwise it becomes invaded by shrubs and trees, and as a result rare wildlife are phased out. Natural England found that the Warren was declining and were required by the Government to bring SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific</p>	<p>The Folkestone Warren is a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its rare flora, fauna and geology. It is a key feature of the Dover-Folkestone Heritage Coast, forms part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and was recognised as one of Britain's most important sites for wildlife in the original Nature Conservation Review (1971). The old chalk grassland is rich in rare wild flowers and invertebrates such as the Grayling Butterfly. Part of the site has been declared as a Country Park, the East Cliff and Warren Country Park, and a Local Nature Reserve. Today, the parts of the park closest to Folkestone town centre feature a Pitch &amp; Putt golf course, bowls club, children's playground and wide open lawns that are all overlooked by the 3 Napoleonic Martello Towers. There are a number of</p>

	<p>Interest) back into active management. Funding through Environmental Stewardships has been offered to start a trial grazing scheme.</p> <p>East Wear Bay is the site of an important Roman Villa that dates back to the first century AD. It was almost certainly built within the confines of a pre-existing Iron Age production site. Successive seasons of excavation have taken place and much information has been gleaned. Along the East Cliff and at East Wear Bay, 3 Martello Towers were then later built between 1804 and 1809 as part of a series of coastal defences during the Napoleonic War.</p>	<p>walking trails through The Warren such as the Saxon Shore Way and North Downs Way that link Dover and Folkestone. The White Cliffs Countryside Project and Green Gym Scheme assisted by volunteers maintain the surviving areas of chalk grassland as well as creating grassy corridors for important habitats along the footpaths.</p>
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### **The rise of Select Sandgate and Fashionable Folkestone**

Eighteenth century Folkestone was a small fishing town, one which clearly did not capture the imagination of Daniel Defoe...

*'From Dover along the sea coast I passed a miserable fishing town called Folkestone, miserable in its appearance.'* (Journey Through England, 1725).

The Napoleonic Wars brought some attention to Folkestone, with a string of Martello Towers being erected along the coast and a major army camp developing above Sandgate at Shorncliffe. Some attempt was made to capitalise on the arrival of the military, with bathing machines being erected at Folkestone to tempt army officers and their families to visit the town. An early reference in the Kentish Gazette in the summer of 1787 notes the presence of two 'elegant bathing machines, genteelly fitted'. Seemingly some officers were lured by the natural beauty and balmy south coast location, and built substantial residences for their retirement nestled in the undercliff at Sandgate.

In the early nineteenth century Sandgate was emerging as a select seaside resort, attracting some notable personalities of the time. Part of the place's lure was the attraction of its healthy seaside air, with people being drawn from London with the prospect of improving their health. Amongst notable early residents of Sandgate were William Wilberforce, the anti-slavery MP, who moved here with his family in 1812 to restore his health and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, widow of the poet Percy Shelley and author of Frankenstein, who moved there in 1832 to avoid the cholera epidemic then sweeping London.

Whilst Sandgate attracted some early attention, the same could not be said of Folkestone, the Duke of Rutland observing in 1805 that "*it appears a dirty town, nor does it seem to possess anything to induce the traveller to stop within it*" (Journal of a Tour Round the Southern Coasts of England). Compared with some of Kent's other coastal towns, such as Margate, Folkestone's development as a seaside resort occurred quite late. Unlike the Thanet resorts it did not benefit from easy access by boat along the Thames and it was not until the coming of the railway to the town in 1843 that Folkestone began to meaningfully attract visitors.

Alongside the arrival of the railway another key factor in Folkestone's rapid rise to prominence was the decision by the then Earl of Radnor to develop his Folkestone Estate. There had been some recognition that Folkestone offered good clean bathing beaches, but what it lacked were suitable seaside residences, lodging houses and hotels for visitors to stay in. This was to all change with the development of the Radnor Estate. Judicious planning by the Earls, who employed notable architects such Decimus Burton and Sydney Smirke, led to the erection of grand stuccoed terraces and paired villas around spacious streets and gracious squares. Many of the town's most notable buildings were erected under the auspices of the Earls Radnor.

One of Smirke's first works for the Earl was a new toll house on the Lower Sandgate Road between Folkestone and Sandgate. To encourage development Smirke issued a prospectus:

*'The genius of Steam, that has already effected so many extraordinary social changes in this country, has been particularly active here. A few years ago this small, secluded town lay unfrequented and little known... We find it now with a Railway direct from London, a capacious Harbour for large ships, a fine stone pier, and an Hotel with a hundred beds... The change in the character of Folkestone has been so wonderfully rapid, that we found it now almost without a house to receive a visitor. A plan is laid down for the proposed arrangement of the building sites: their general aspect will be varied and irregular: it is intended to specifically avoid the dull straight uniformity of most of our watering places: there will be no cheerless crowding together of close tenements, but plenty of air and space, and uninterrupted sea views will be preserved everywhere.'*

The hotel referred to in Smirke's prospectus was presumably the Pavilion Hotel, built in 1843 adjacent to Folkestone's Harbour in close proximity to the beach steamboat pier and Undercliffe. The Pavilion was to expand considerably, being renamed the Royal Pavilion Hotel in the 1850s, reputedly after Prince Albert stayed there following an inspection of troops at Shorncliffe (other sources suggest it gained its Royal prefix following a visit by both Victoria and Albert). The hotel would be extensively remodelled and rebuilt in 1899.

Despite grand intentions development elsewhere in Folkestone was initially slow to take off, but by the 1850s development in Folkestone was booming,

with development occurring across the Earl's West Cliff Estate. At the same time several blocks of grand boarding houses were erected to the west of the Pavillion Hotel, along the newly formed Marine Parade, to cater for ever increasing visitors. At the same time (although perhaps a little prematurely) the decision was taken to build a new shopping centre behind the harbour and extending up the Pent Valley. To facilitate its construction the 'Folkestone Tontine Building Company' was formed. Smirke was again employed to design the street, opting for an elegant Regency Style. A Tontine was a funding model that was part investment and part gambling – each investor being paid an agreed sum into the fund and in return received a share of the annual income in the form of an annuity. As each shareholder dies the value of their shares is dissolved across the other investors, whose annual annuity increases as membership falls until the final investor get the lot – hence the street's unusual name.

The growth of the Radnor Estate continued, mainly focussed along the Sandgate Road and The Leas, with West Cliff Gardens, West Terrace, Bouverie Place and Bouverie Gardens being laid out. A defining feature of the Earl Radnor's West Cliff Estate were its wide tree-lined streets, interrupted with small public and semi-private squares, and gardens. They formed an integral part of west end Folkestone's genteel attraction, providing green space in which leisure visitors could relax and enjoy the town's healthy sea-air. New hotels were established including Bates Hotel (the Esplanade) and the West Cliff Hotel (later the Majestic). In 1868 the Folkestone Bathing Establishment was built adjacent to the Lower Sandgate Road at the base of the Leas Cliff. The establishment allowed all year round safe bathing, with heated sea-water swimming baths. Such baths were not just for pleasure, but the belief was still held in the restorative health properties of sea water. The baths offered warm and cold baths, plunge pools, medicated and 'invalid' baths as well as other genteel facilities including a large saloon, reading, billiard and refreshment rooms. Within the large saloon concerts and balls were periodically held.

The arrival of the bathing establishment marked a period of increasing grandness to Folkestone, which became a fashionable resort. Indeed Folkestone was to emerge as certainly as Kent's, if not the country's, grandest, most fashionable and wealthy resorts. Alongside the bathing establishment traditional bathing carriages were also offered. These were supplemented from the 1870s by 'Fagg's Patent Bathing Carriages'. These unique contraptions comprised a long carriage, divided into individual compartments and mounded on a sloping undercarriage which allowed the whole affair to be hoisted into the sea along an elevated railway track. Thus they allowed safe and secure bathing at all states of the tide. There were two carriages, one for men and the other for ladies and were seemingly unique to Folkestone. Towards the end of the nineteenth century bathing tents for changing were becoming increasingly common, eventually leading to more relaxed attitudes to mixed bathing.

Together with the bathing establishments entertainment was also required for Folkestone's visitors and rapidly all the trappings that would be expected at a fashionable seaside resort developed. At the base of the Leas Cliff along the

Lower Sandgate Road an extensive pleasure ground and promenade were developed from 1876 onwards. Winding paths, shrubberies, gardens and cliffside alcoves and seats were laid out. On the Leas itself a spacious grassed promenade with shelters and bandstands was provided. Private policemen were employed by the Earl Radnor to maintain standards and decorum and to keep the 'socially undesirable' away.

By the 1880s Folkestone was equipped with an array of recreational facilities, including pleasure gardens, promenades, assembly rooms, libraries, music orchestras and excellent bathing facilities. Folkestone's pleasure facilities were enhanced further in 1888 when the Victoria Pier opened. Folkestone's pier had been long in gestation, for a Folkestone Promenade Pier Company had been in existence since 1874, but due to difficulties with the town council and a lack of funding had failed to make any progress. Local businessman George Trent would revive the idea of a Pier at Folkestone through the establishment of the Folkestone Pier & Lift Company. The foundation stone was laid in 1887 for the new pier which was designed by Mr M. N. Ridley. The new pier, albeit incomplete, was opened for the summer season in July 1888 by Lady Folkestone. The pier, with its Pier Pavilion rapidly established itself as a fashionable promenade for Folkestone's well-healed clientele.

A Camera Obscura was located on the beach at Folkestone from around 1886, situated close to the entrance to Victoria Pier and adjacent to the Lifeboat House. Camera Obscuras were a popular late-Victorian form of entertainment, popular at sea-side resorts and essentially comprised a darkened room, with a domed roof in which a lens was set, which allowed a picture to be projected onto a table in the room.

A further attraction to open in Folkestone was the Switchback Railway, which was opened in the 1890s by Thompson's Patent Gravity Switchback Company Ltd. The switchback took the form of an elevated wooden railway that ran parallel to the shore a little to the west of the pier. Standing up to 40 foot high the track of the switchback featured undulating course with steep dips and rises along which six seater trolleys were run. The idea being to provide great excitement and amusement to its riders, although (perhaps in deference to Folkestone's more genteel clientele) the switchback bizarrely also advertised its beneficial properties on the liver. Despite these claims members of Folkestone's 'high society' objected to the ride, being intended as it was for the 'ordinary holidaymaker' and for spoiling the dignity of the town. Despite such objections the switchback found favour with 'Prime Ministers and Princesses'; Herbert Asquith reputedly riding it five times on the recommendation of his wife.

Fashionable Folkestone of the 1880s include fine villas and residences of the West Cliff Estate and promenade atop the Leas, whilst the beach, bathing and sea-bathing facilities and pleasure gardens were located along the Undercliffe. The path between the beach and the Leas was long and arduous however. The solution was the installation in 1885 of the Leas Lift, a water-balance tramway that allowed easy ascent and descent of the cliff. The lift was built by the Folkestone Lift Company (to the chagrin of the Folkestone Pier &

Lift Company whose own intentions were dashed). The lift proved to be immediately popular, increasingly so following the opening of the pier immediately opposite the lift's base station. To cope with increasing demand a second parallel adjacent pair of lifts were erected in 1890.

Also in 1890 the Sandgate Hill Lift Company was formed with the intention of opening a lift from the western end of the Leas to the base of Sandgate Hill. The new lift was most unusual, being a hybrid between a water-balance lift and conventional tramway and featured an ornate iron bridge partway along its track where it passed over Radnor Cliff Crescent. The lift opened in 1893, with its base station near the bottom of Sandgate Hill and its upper station near Martello No. 4. The Sandgate Hill base station was close to the terminus of the Hythe & Sandgate Tramway. A day trip to Hythe and Sandgate via the lift and tramway was a popular excursion for visitors to Folkestone. Sandgate itself had developed into a small, but attractive coastal town, with groups of grand Italianate villas built along the undercliff and taking advantage of fine sea views. The village also served the nearby Shorncliffe Camp with shops and taverns built to entertain the troops garrisoned there. Shorncliffe's attractive sea-side location made it popular with artists and writers of the time.

Music had been an important part of Folkestone's resort scene, with various music halls and hotels offering live music performances, but it was not until the 1890s that facilities in the form of bandstands were provided to offer public concerts. In 1893 the Folkestone Corporation passed an Act giving permission for the erection of bandstands and the first appears to have been erected that same year as part of the laying out of Marine Gardens. A second bandstand followed a couple of years later, being erected opposite the Clifton Gardens in 1895. Folkestone's third public bandstand, which was to be located on the Leas had formerly been erected privately within the grounds of the Metropole Hotel. Unfortunately its position, sited as it was between two wings of the hotel, was found to disturb guests, so it was gifted by the proprietors to Folkestone Corporation. The Corporation duly re-erected the bandstand on the lawns of the West Leas in front of the hotel. The West Leas Bandstand was to become particularly noted for the fashionable crowds that attended performances there.

Other private facilities were provided for bands, including the Leas Shelter of 1894, a concert room that was favoured by military bands during periods of inclement weather. Here an open fronted balcony with glass shelter and adjoining hall accommodated orchestras and allowed patrons shelter where they could listen to music, read and enjoy the spectacular sea-views. Another venture established in the town to entertain its wealthy clientele was founded by the Folkestone Art Treasures Exhibition Company in 1886. Built after the style of the famous Crystal Palace the new exhibition centre was intended to house exhibitions of fine paintings and sculpture. It even benefitted from its own railway connection and was set in extensive ornamental grounds.

The exhibition centre did not prove a successful enterprise and instead the site was converted into a massive pleasure gardens and theatre. The grounds were re-landscaped and were laid out for various genteel sports, including



tennis, croquet and skating. Military tournaments and displays were held there, along with performances by military bands. The main exhibition building itself was converted in 1888 into a theatre, known originally as the Exhibition Palace Theatre, it was better known under its later name the Pleasure Gardens Theatre. The new theatre could seat over 1,000 people and held a varying programme of weekly performances targeted at well-to-do Folkestone residents. Its programme included revues, musical shows, Shakespearian productions, operas and plays.

Folkestone possessed a large number of hotels and residences, but it was at the end of the nineteenth century that two of its most famous and grand were built on the cliffs of the Leas: The Metropole of 1895-7 and The Grand of 1899-1903. By the time of their construction Folkestone had secured its place as the most aristocratic seaside resort in the country, but these massive lavish hotels were to further enhance Folkestone's reputation. The Metropole was built to the design of T. W. Cutler in a grand style and was capable of accommodating some 350 guests. It benefitted from fine dining halls and ball, banqueting and billiard rooms, besides suites of private apartments. The hotel even had its own lift, the Metropole or West Lifts which connected the Leas to the pleasure gardens along Lower Sandgate Road.

The Grand Hotel was built and designed by Daniel Baker, a local builder who allegedly built the hotel in response to his disappointment at not securing the contract for the construction of the neighbouring Metropole. The hotel is built in a similar grand seaside metropolitan style to its neighbour. The hotel featured 'all mod-cons', and its steel-frame construction allowed the use of extensive windows across its elevations to make the most of the hotels cliff-top location and sea-views. The hotel is purportedly one of the first, if not the first building in the world, to have a steel frame in-filled with reinforced concrete. Of particular note is the hotel's projecting ground floor conservatory. The hotel quickly became the place to be seen and it was a favourite of King Edward VII who frequently visited the hotel, not only with the queen, but also entertaining his mistress Alice Keppel there.

The Leas Pavilion opened in 1902 as a high class tea room, indeed a covenant in the lease required that it be used for "the highest class tea and refreshment trade with the view to securing the best class of visitors only". It was built as a single storey building, set within a sunken courtyard, but with a full height basement so as to preserve the right of light of the two hotels which neighboured the pavilion to either side. Designed by local architect Reginald Pope the pavilion features an ornate decorative, moulded terracotta work façade, with ironwork grills and attached veranda; its stained glass windows were in the latest art nouveau style.

A new type of entertainment to arrive in Folkestone in the early twentieth century was the cinema. Folkestone's first cinema, The Electric Theatre opened in May 1910 on the site of a former music hall. The new cinema was such a success that three further cinemas opened in the town in 1912: the short lived Queen's Cinema opening in June 1912 (but proving unpopular due to poor sightlines and closing by 1917); the Playhouse Super Cinema with

Bath Stone façade and a luxurious tea room; and the 900 seat Central Picture Theatre which opened in September 1912.

In the early years of the twentieth century Folkestone had reached its fashionable zenith; it had become the seaside resort of choice for the moneyed elite, attracting wealthy clientele, royalty and prominent public figures of the day. Folkestone would however change suddenly and forever with the outbreak of the Great War and the town's fortunes would never again reach the fashionable heights of the Edwardian period.

### **The changing face of seaside Folkestone**

The First World War would see Folkestone changed for ever. War time Folkestone saw much war-time traffic with a steady stream of troops passing through the town, either embarking to serve on the Front, or returning home either for leave or due to injury. The enormous amount of military traffic, men going off to fight and wartime restrictions took their toll on the place. Many of the town's hotels and guesthouses were requisitioned for the war effort and the town became somewhat unkempt and dilapidated, and by the end of the war was showing much sign of general war-time wear and tear. One casualty of this wartime dilapidation was the Sandgate Lift, already struggling for passengers due to competition from charabancs, the lift was to close in 1918 due to lack of maintenance. However the lift was never to reopen, the cost of doing so being found prohibitively expensive.

There would be no return to the Edwardian excess even following the cessation of hostilities. Rapid social changes after the war, combined with high prices and unemployment provided a new challenge for the town. Folkestone's wealthy clientele, who might previously have spent the winter season on the French Riviera, were now looking to the Côte d'Azur to provide their summer season as well. The 1920s saw the highly appointed *Train Bleu* whisking passengers from Calais to the Mediterranean in first class comfort, where they could join the American 'High Society' set and pursue new pastimes, such as sunbathing a-la Coco Chanel.

The town was still heavily dependent on the tourist trade, and realising that it could no longer attract the aristocratic clientele of the pre-war period had to adapt. Whilst the town may have grown less exclusive it successfully recast itself as a popular destination for the middle classes as a place to take their families for a holiday. Improvements to the town's sewerage were undertaken by the town council, allowing sewage to be discharged further out to sea and opening up the east sands for sea bathing. In the 1930s, to cater for the new family orientated visitor, the foreshore in front of Marine Gardens was redeveloped. In 1926 the town's Council erected the Marine Gardens Pavilion at the eastern end of the Marine Gardens. The Pavilion, which was built broadly in the Neo-Classical style, but with some art-deco influences, had a stage and large dance floor and seated up to 1,500.

Further development of the seafront between the Pier and the harbour occurred in the 1930's, first with the construction of a new open-air swimming pool more suited to the family market, joined shortly afterwards by a new

amusement park. The swimming pool benefitted from being heated, had a diving board and a (for the time) advanced filtration system. Alongside the pool were cafés, changing rooms and 'day villas' for hire. The pool first opened for the 1936 summer season. Construction of the adjoining 'Rotunda Amusement Park' commenced the following year, being completed in 1938. The concrete domed Rotunda was commissioned by Lord Radnor and was reputed to be the largest clear-span self-supporting reinforced concrete roof structure in Europe at the time of construction.

It was not just the beach area that was to be redeveloped however, works were also carried out at the Leas, most notably being the construction in 1927 of the Leas Cliff Hall. The Hall, which was designed pre-war in 1913, was built in the Neo-Grec style. From an entrance on the cliff top on the Leas, the hall 'cascades' down the cliff face in a series of levels, with wide balconies and glass windows making the most of the sea-views. Built in concrete with the lower floors are finished in sand-face stucco, with the two upper floors clad in faience. It was built as a concert and dance hall and replaced the earlier Leas Cliff Shelter. Folkestone had its own small permanent concert orchestra who were resident at the Leas Cliff Hall.

Other improvements at the Leas included the construction in 1921 of a new 'zig-zag' path providing an ornamental, step-free walk between the Upper and Lower Leas. The path is built from Pulhamite, an artificial stone and includes seating bays, a decorative Pulhamite arch and caves and grottos. The construction of the new path helped provide employment following the end of the First World War. Alongside the path, new planting was added across the Leas and tea rooms and shelters were provided for visitors to the park.

In 1924 Lord Radnor gave the East Cliff area and the Warren to the people of Folkestone and improvements were made to the area. A new East Cliff Pavilion was erected to provide refreshments to visitors, new lawns and gardens laid out and improvements made to the beach below. To connect the east sands to the cliff top a new path, with terraced walks and rock gardens was formed at Bakers Gap. In 1935 the Coronation Parade was added along the rear of the sands to provide a new level walk for visitors as well as providing much needed protection to the unstable cliffs. A miniature golf course was provided at Copt Point.

To further enliven the town's attraction new floral displays were added to many of the town's parks and green-spaces. These were to lead to the town adopting the epithet 'Floral Folkestone'. Among the new additions were the Kingsnorth Gardens, a six acre flower garden opened in 1928 and located near the town's Central Station. These new additions to the town in the inter-war period meant that by the 1930s the town had reached a new height in terms of visitor number. Unbeknown to the town's holiday makers was that the spectre of war would soon again bring the town's tourist trade to a halt.

### **The bucket and spade years**

As with the 1914 – 1918 conflict the Second World War would have a very great and lasting effect on Folkestone and Sandgate. Folkestone's position on

the Channel coast meant that it was a ready target for enemy shelling and bombing and the town was hard hit during the war. Folkestone was to become a restricted area and many of the towns inhabitants left, its resident population falling by some 35,000 in the early years of the war (out of a pre-war population of some 46,000). A large number of buildings in the town were destroyed, with many others damaged, with the whole town again taking on a patina of wartime shabbiness. An early casualty of the war was the Metropole Lift which was closed in 1940, having been damaged beyond repair.

During the war Folkestone's Victoria Pier was closed, and a central section of the pier was blown up as a defence measure. This was later replaced with a narrower temporary span in 1943 when a pump was placed at the pier head to allow sea-water to be pumped up to the town to supply water for firefighting. Much of the wooden decking was removed during the war, with the whole structure falling into a very sorry state. The pier's fate would be sealed on Whit Sunday (20<sup>th</sup> May) 1945 when a blaze destroyed the pavilion and sea end of the pier. It would be left in a derelict state in the years immediately following the year, with the Earl of Radnor finally arranging for its demolition between 1952 and 1954.

The immediate post-war period was one of decline in Folkestone, but attempts were made to kick-start the tourist economy at Folkestone, for example through the addition of a miniature railway in the Lower Leas Park and a small zoo (known as Pet's Corner) which held a collection of small exotic and petting animals. The holiday makers did eventually return, with the 1950s being the heyday of the beach hut and the bucket and spade holiday. Folkestone's extensive flora displays were renewed, the Rotunda Amusement Park reopened and for a brief period Folkestone was to regain its status as an attractive south coast family resort.

Whilst the town's popularity in the 1960s and 1970s did not wane its profitability did. The money coming into the town in the high season did not provide the town with enough income to cover its expenditure in the low season. Funds for reinvestment and upgrading of facilities were not available and many of the town's facilities were becoming outdated. The once popular outdoor swimming pool, for example, closed in the late 1970s due to falling revenues and increasing maintenance costs. Folkestone, like many of the country's other seaside towns, was to face a number of economic problems in the later part of the twentieth century. The British seaside holiday industry was one that was in decline; the rise of the cheap foreign package holiday seeming to offer a more exciting prospect, better facilities and crucially with guaranteed sunshine.

Some investment was made in the town however. For example the controversial businessman Motel Burstin envisaged a new focus for Folkestone as a major conference venue and optimistically predicted in excess of some 30,000 conference delegates would visit Folkestone by 1977. In pursuit of his vision for a new Folkestone he built the 250 bedroom Burstin Hotel adjacent to the harbour, with the new hotel built to an imposing design by AT Bacon, resembling an ocean liner. The new hotel was built on part of

the site of the old Royal Pavilion Hotel which Burstin had owned since the 1960s. The remaining part of the old hotel was used partly to service the new hotel, but with most of the site having been converted into retirement flats for the elderly.

The flats in the old Royal Pavilion would quickly gain a notorious reputation – with alleged unsanitary conditions, a massive maintenance backlog and a fear of fire and intruders – they soon gained the nickname the ‘seaside slum’. After much wrangling most of the remaining parts of the old hotel were demolished in the early 1980s and the Grand Burstin Hotel extended to form the hotel seen today. At the same time the Rotunda Amusement Park was bought by local seaside entrepreneur Jimmy Godden, who added a second domed building to the site in 1984. Mr Godden, who would go on to own Margate’s famous Dreamland, eventually sold the site in the early 2000s for redevelopment with works due to start on the site imminently.

### **A new focus**

Folkestone has a long history of adapting and changing to survive. In 1999 following successful funding applications the Lower Leas Coastal Park underwent an extensive scheme of refurbishment and regeneration. The new park is focussed around three zones – the wild zone, the fun zone and the formal zone – offering a range of attractions and activities, from informal walks, to planned gardens and the south-east’s largest outdoor play area. The Leas Coastal Park has held the coveted Green Flag Award, which recognises the country’s very best green spaces. Within Folkestone Old Town the Creative Quarter has been established under the auspices of the Creative Foundation, with the aim of bringing regeneration to Folkestone through the arts, creative industries and education. One of the flagship projects of the Creative Foundation is the Folkestone Triennial, an exhibition of contemporary art that sees around twenty commissioned artworks erected around the town.

Alongside the work of the Creative Foundation, the Folkestone Townscape Heritage Initiative was established through a partnership between the foundation and the District Council and Kent County Council with the aim of enhancing Folkestone’s old town by repairing its historic buildings, bringing empty buildings back to life and through public realm improvements.

The various regeneration projects have helped to start the process of reinvigorating Folkestone and aim to bring new confidence in the town and foster further investment. Folkestone’s seaside heritage has left the town with a wide range of fine historic buildings that should have an important role in the town’s future. The town’s distinctive seaside heritage assets are a lasting reminder of Folkestone’s past as one of the country’s most grand seaside towns.

### **3 Statement of Significance**

A number of the heritage assets relating to this theme are still very much a part of the tourism and leisure offering at Folkestone and Sandgate. They are important evidence of a rich past and are now playing valuable roles in the

regeneration of Folkestone and its seafront area. Each continues to constitute a significant part of Folkestone's identity as a popular and much loved seaside resort over many years and are also testament to its adaptability and resilience in the face of decline. Overall they are a valuable collection of heritage assets and should be considered as constituting **moderate to considerable significance**.

### **Evidential**

Whilst many important heritage assets from this theme still survive today, a number have also been lost. Those that have survived are largely still in active use and have therefore been retained in good condition and continue to reflect their rich heritage. However, the potential for these assets to reveal further information about past human activity is low largely due to the fact that their histories are already well recorded and they do not cover a significant time depth as other themes in this strategy will cover. Where other assets still survive but have currently fallen out of use, such as the Leas Lift and Leas Pavilion, again their histories are well recorded and they still remain in relatively good condition and so further archaeological investigation would reveal little. It should also be noted that the vast majority of these assets are concrete or brick structures and so will inevitably survive well. Again this means that the potential to reveal further information is low as they have largely been retained in their original condition. Some will have had alterations such as the hotels and various estates but again this will have been well recorded.

For those assets that have been lost, largely to redevelopment, very little remains and so again archaeological investigation would reveal little in the way of new information regarding past human activity relating to this theme. Examples include the West Beach Pier, Folkestone Rotunda and some original buildings from the West Cliff Estate. These assets have either been removed completely or the area where they once stood has since been redeveloped for housing or car parking. Extensive archives of photographs, postcards and other memorabilia exists for most of these assets and so again there is little opportunity for future investigation to reveal new information.

### **Historical**

A number of the assets from this theme have great potential to continue connecting people to the rich past of Folkestone and Sandgate as prominent and luxurious seaside resorts. In particular, the built assets such as the hotels, distinctive estate residences and other facilities reminiscent of a bustling seaside resort such as the Leas Cliff Hall, Bandstand and Leas Lift are powerful reminders of a vibrant past. Where many of these assets have also been retained in their original condition or very close where some have had alterations or renovations, they continue to reflect the areas past as a popular seaside resort that was once considered to be "the gem of the south coast".

The assets from this theme are still very much part of the fabric of the town and visitors as well as residents can experience Victorian and Edwardian Folkestone that has been incorporated into a changing and regenerated

Folkestone. For example, the tree-lined avenues and public gardens still play an important role in the local character of Folkestone. Other assets, particularly those on the Leas and other residences around the town such as Clifton Crescent and Marine Parade, are strong visual reminders of the recent history of Folkestone at its zenith. Whilst many assets that would further connect people to the this rich past have now been lost, such as the West Beach and its features including the pier, bathing machines and amusement park, there are still strong heritage assets that can connect people to a time when Folkestone and Sandgate were considered to be among the most popular and luxurious seaside resorts in the county.

### **Aesthetic**

Many of the surviving assets from this theme have particularly strong aesthetic value and provide powerful sensory experiences of the recent past of Folkestone and Sandgate. The original buildings from the West Cliff Estate such as Clifton Crescent and other distinctive architectural design seen in the many town houses are a primary example of this. Not only is the architecture attractive which was the intention when built, but it is distinctive and provides a unique character and heritage offering for the local area. This is further supported by the various urban green spaces, public gardens and tree-lined avenues that were also an important feature of Victorian Folkestone for the wealthier clientele that had previously occupied these estates.

Other areas such as the Leas promenade and the views of the Folkestone coast that are provided from here have also continued to play an important aesthetic role. A number of attractive Victorian or Edwardian features have survived along this area and now constitute a valuable collection of heritage assets which attest to Folkestone and Sandgate's rich past as popular and luxurious seaside resorts. These include the Leas Pavilion, Leas Cliff Hall, Bandstand, The Grand Hotel and the Leas Lift. Unfortunately some of these, namely the Leas Pavilion and Leas Lift are no longer in use and remain closed to the public; however they still have a strong aesthetic significance and make important contributions to the overall sense of place. It is also significant that areas such as the Leas have continued to undergo regeneration work, especially along the Lower Leas Coastal Park, and efforts are made to highlight historical features so that visitors are able to better appreciate the rich heritage of Folkestone as a coastal resort.

### **Communal**

The communal significance attached to many of the assets from this theme is particularly strong. This is illustrated in the many community groups that work to preserve, maintain, enhance and in places reinstate valuable heritage assets such as the Leas Pavilion and Leas Lift. Many of these assets have come to form an integral part in the local character and are highly valued by the community as well as by visitors. A number of the assets that still survive and also from those that have been lost would have been active within living memory of current residents and visitors and so again are highly valued and significant to the sense of place. This includes the Folkestone Rotunda Amusement park, West Beach Pier and the Leas Lift. They were synonymous

with Folkestone's identity as a popular seaside resort and so would have had communal significance as well as a nostalgic value.

#### **4 Vulnerabilities**

There are a number of vulnerabilities that put the heritage assets from this theme at risk. Perhaps the most significant factor that has affected a number of those identified here is development work. This is particularly true along the Folkestone seafront where most of the assets that once constituted the focal point of Victorian and Edwardian Folkestone have now been lost and the area remains today largely featureless awaiting redevelopment. This includes the West Beach Pier, switchback railway, Folkestone Bathing Establishment, swimming pool and Rotunda Amusement Park. Only a short section of retaining wall can now be seen of the West Beach Pier where it was once anchored. The area once occupied by the other assets mentioned has been tarmacked and is waiting redevelopment. Not only is this a significant loss of heritage assets that relate to the rich history of Folkestone as a vibrant and popular seaside resort, but it also has a negative impact on the local character and sense of place.

The Folkestone Seafront Company is due to redevelop the Folkestone Harbour and Seafront area to create a new environment to live, work and visit. Attention is being paid to incorporating heritage assets relating to the Folkestone Harbour; however care must be taken during the development work to this area to enhance the remaining assets such as the Leas Lift, Marine Parade and Marine Terrace that relate to this theme and reflect the local coastal heritage.

Development has also resulted in the loss of green spaces around Folkestone that were important features from its Victorian and Edwardian past. New housing and car parking are the primary contributing factors to this loss and are again significant to the loss of local character. Tree-lined avenues and various public gardens around Folkestone and Sandgate are important heritage assets and are also highly valued by the local communities and visitors here hoping to escape from the urban hustle and bustle. They make valuable contributions to the local character and further care should be taken to preserve those green spaces that still survive.

Another vulnerability that is affecting various heritage assets from this theme is sites falling out of use and becoming neglected. Folkestone and Sandgate as seaside resorts have gone through various periods of popularity and decline and have continually had to adapt to external influences such as wartime. This has often meant the reinvention of the seaside attractions offered here and the audiences that the area appeals to and caters for. Some assets have fallen out of use as a result, such as the Sandgate and Metropole Lift, Leas Pavilion and some of the Victorian hotels. Some of these assets are subsequently completely lost, whilst others now remain closed and at risk of falling into varying states of disrepair. This is perhaps particularly true of the Leas Pavilion and Leas Lift that are important heritage assets for the local character and in illustrating the history of Folkestone as a rich seaside resort.



They are both designated heritage assets but are not currently in use and so are at risk of degradation through neglect or even criminal damage.

## **5 Opportunities**

There are a number of important opportunities relating to the heritage assets from this theme. Primarily there are opportunities to highlight, enhance and incorporate existing heritage assets into the regeneration of the Folkestone seafront area. Many have already been lost, but there are opportunities to enhance those that have survived such as the Leas Lift, Marine Parade and Marine Crescent. The West Beach was the focal point of Victorian and Edwardian Folkestone and so it is important to enhance and incorporate the heritage assets that have survived here into the redevelopment of the Folkestone seafront. It is also an important opportunity to create better cohesion between distinct areas of Folkestone such as the Leas and Folkestone Old Town and create a richer and more accessible tourism and leisure offering. Significant regeneration of the Folkestone Old Town by the Creative Foundation and Folkestone Townscape Heritage Initiative is already ongoing and so it will be important for other areas along the Folkestone seafront to link into this.

Redeveloping the Folkestone seafront will also create opportunities to regenerate an area that has been in decline and large parts have remained featureless for some time waiting for development, such as the site of the Folkestone Rotunda Amusement Park and old swimming pool. This could attract new and wider audiences and revitalise this part of Folkestone. It may also have important opportunities for the local economy and attract new local businesses as well as residents.

The active events calendar that is already in place at Folkestone presents important opportunities for the local community to engage with their local heritage and also to raise their awareness and understanding of the histories that they represent. This also applies to visitors from further afield that are attracted to the area as a popular seaside resort. For example, the Lower Leas Coastal Park, Leas Bandstand and Leas Cliff Hall continue to host a range of events and activities that highlight the coastal heritage as well as enhancing the tourism and leisure offering here. This vibrant cultural calendar will help to raise awareness of the local heritage as well as creating opportunities for the local community to take ownership of their own heritage and work towards its preservation and enhancement.

## **6 Current Activities**

Folkestone continues to host an active calendar of community and private events at its many venues which contributes to a rich tourism and leisure offering. Many of these venues are important heritage assets and have historically provided entertainment for a number of years to the town's local people and numerous holiday makers and visitors. Along the Leas, there is a continued active programme of musical performances held at the Leas Bandstand arranged by Folkestone Festivals and with support from the District Council. Adjacent to the Bandstand is the Leas Cliff Hall which also continues to act as a venue for a number of events and services such as

weddings, conferences and private event hiring. The Lower Leas Coastal Park further boasts a range of public events throughout the summer months such as concerts, drama performances and workshops for children.

Recent development work in Folkestone, namely the regeneration of the Folkestone Old Town by the Creative Foundation and Folkestone Townscape Heritage Initiative, has further provided a vibrant creative scene that supports a number of events that again make important contributions to the leisure and tourism offering in Folkestone and Sandgate. The flagship project of the Creative Foundation is the Folkestone Triennial which is the exhibition of contemporary art installations throughout the townscape of Folkestone and the immediate surrounding area. These works are commissioned by renowned artists and are displayed in various open spaces to be viewed by the public. The event attracts large audiences to Folkestone and highlights the important regeneration of Folkestone through artistic and creative expression.

There also continues to be a number of hotels, guest houses and smaller residences that provide accommodation for visitors and holiday makers to Folkestone and Sandgate. Some of these are valuable heritage assets such as The Grand and The Burlington hotels who provide powerful connections to Folkestone's zenith during the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

There are a number of active community groups that are concerned with the parks, gardens and green spaces throughout Folkestone and Sandgate that continue to make important contributions to the local character. These groups act to preserve, promote and enhance the various green spaces as well as provide a number of communal activities and events to raise awareness and funding for the ongoing maintenance and regeneration of these spaces. These include the Radnor Park Community Group who are currently backing plans to update the upper Radnor play area, drinking fountain and toilet facilities. Previous conservation work by the group and other volunteers from East Kent College has seen the conservation and transformation of the Radnor Park Lodge into a working tearoom. Other community projects include the work to create a Look Out and Remember Garden in the Lower Leas Coastal Park. Local people are working with artists and the District Council to create this unique remembrance space dedicated to those who have been lost before their time.

Important work is currently being done by the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP) and Green Gym Scheme to help conserve and enhance The Warren area and East Cliff and Warren Country Park. The WCCP carry out long-term management of the land at The Warren that has nationally recognised value for its wildlife and landscape. Their work includes natural conservation, working on accessibility for the public and managing a volunteer programme of conservation events. The Green Gym Scheme works with the WCCP at the Warren to maintain and clear footpaths whilst also creating important habitats for rare flora and fauna.

There are also important community groups who are working to reinstate heritage assets such as the Friends of the Leas Pavilion and the Leas Lift

Community Interest Company and volunteers. The Friends of the Leas Pavilion are working to reinstate the Leas Pavilion as an important heritage asset and local business hub. This is an important opportunity for a valuable heritage asset to continue making a valuable contribution to the local character.

Other activities include the upcoming developments to the Folkestone seafront area by the Folkestone Seafront Company. This development will create new living and commercial spaces whilst also connecting important and newly regenerated parts of Folkestone such as the Creative Quarter and Lower Leas Coastal Park. There are also plans to continue enhancing the Lower Leas Coastal Park in ways such as restoring historic features and routes to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the park's heritage as well as providing an active programme of activities centred on music, dance, fashion, architecture and archaeology.

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