

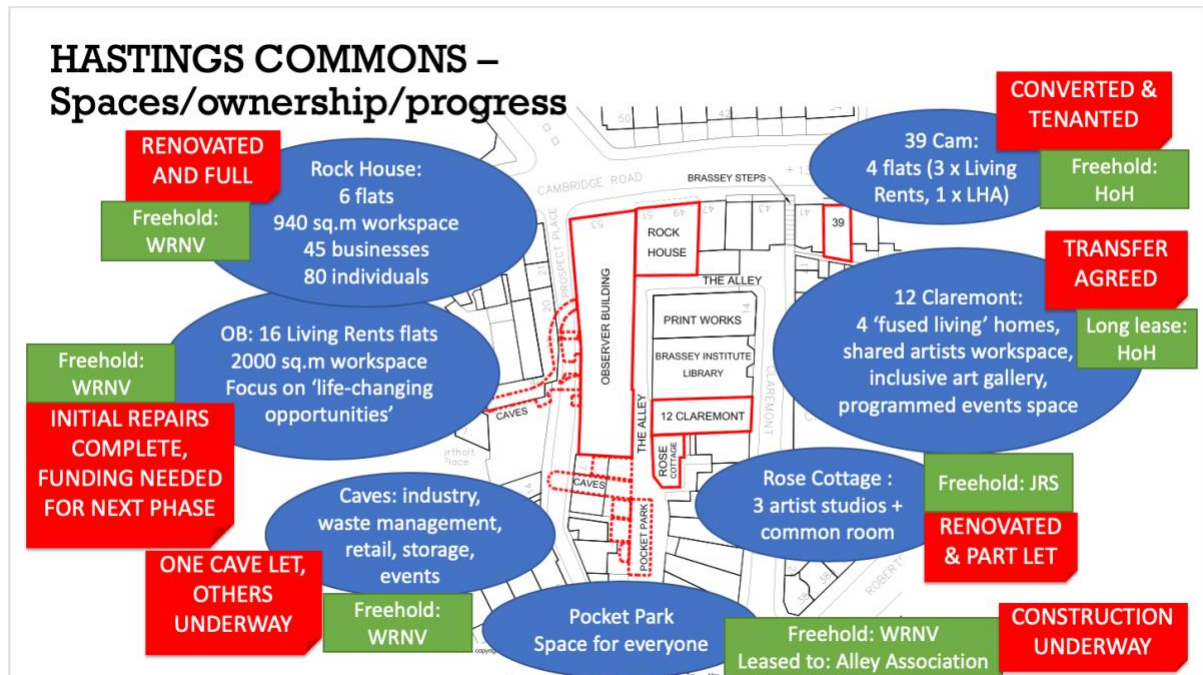
Community Business re COVID-19, Mutual Aid  
 Theme – **Supporting micro-enterprises in your network**  
 Host – **Jess Steele, WRNV**  
 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Rock House is a 9-storey 1969 office block in the centre of Hastings. It was purchased privately by White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures in 2014 and has been successfully converted into a mixed use building with 6 capped-rent flats and a total of 80 micro-enterprises using a range of different kinds of office spaces, plus a community kitchen.

WRNV is a joint venture between Jericho Road Solutions, Meanwhile Space CIC and Heart of Hastings Community Land Trust.

<b>ROCK HOUSE: May 2019</b>				
<b>6</b>	<b>MELODY VR</b>			<b>KITCHEN/ MEETING</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>STUDIO FLAT</b>	<b>1 BED FLAT CAMB Rd</b>	<b>2 BED FLAT</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>STUDIO FLAT</b>	<b>1 BED FLAT CAMB Rd</b>	<b>1 BED FLAT</b>	<b>FIRE CORRIDOR</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>TECHNOLOGY BOX</b>		<b>WAVE &amp; others</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>BBE</b>	<b>TEN66 TV</b>	<b>CASPER CUMMINS</b>	<b>PEOPLE LAB</b> <b>LOVE HASTINGS (BID)</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>OLD BAKERS (8 CREATIVE OFFICES + COMMUNAL SPACE)</b>			
<b>G</b>	<b>GROUND CONTROL</b>		<b>PROJECT SPACE</b>	<b>FOYER</b>
<b>LG</b>	<b>HEART OF HASTINGS CLT</b>		<b>i-ROCK</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>BIKE STORE</b>	<b>HOME GROUND CIC</b>		<b>BINS ETC</b>
	<b>AVAILABLE</b>	<b>SHARED</b>	<b>FULL</b>	

Over time partners in our 'ecosystem' have acquired further buildings, including some caves, a stable-block known as Rose Cottage and the huge, derelict Observer Building.



WRNV itself has furloughed its staff, many are now volunteering for the Hastings Commons which is a wider and more conceptual project. The crisis, terrifying though it is, is also an opportunity to spend time reflecting on our practice, time that is always in short supply in our usual whirl of development. Our ecosystem of organisations makes us stronger because we can lean on parts of the ecosystem that are not furloughed. We are lucky that we have a pool of Hastings Commons volunteers so several furloughed staff are using their time to volunteer with that, while others are focusing on HEART (Hastings Emergency Action Response Team) and Isolation Station Hastings.

Our main concern is for our tenants who have a range of different letting arrangements, from 5-year leases to easy-in/easy-out desk hires.

We conducted a survey of tenants and have so far received 16 responses that demonstrate the range of positions people find themselves in. One third are self-employed, five of them are directors of limited companies. 75% have had work postponed, half have had contracts cancelled and work postponed, half can't win new work, 3 respondents have had their work disrupted by caring responsibilities. For 2 respondents new opportunities have arisen from the crisis. Losses estimated at the start of April over the coming quarter averaged around £10,000 but with some much higher than that. None of them had approached any lenders for a Business Interruption Loan.

The biggest division is between enterprises that are named on the rates bill (53% of respondents), usually eligible for Small Business Rates Relief and therefore now eligible for the £10k government grants, and those that are not – either because they are sub-letting or they are renting a desk in the shared workspace.

The other division is between enterprises that can furlough some or all of their staff (25% of respondents). For many of our tenants it is even more important to keep going at the moment, to protect their business and/or to continue to serve their clients. So the decision of whether to furlough is difficult.

Owners of limited companies are in a particularly difficult position as they usually pay themselves around £800 through PAYE and take the rest of their income in dividends from the company. While they can technically furlough themselves (and still do essential work to legally maintain the company), they will only receive 80% of the PAYE amount from the government.

Only 10 of the 16 answered the question: 'will any of the government measures help you?' Their sliding scale answers ranged from *unlikely* to *maybe* and comments included:

They might help: We have been able to defer VAT payment. The possibility of furlough of some or all staff.

I have furloughed my PAYE staff and keeping on my self employed contractors, as I gave up my London studio in Jan and had to wait until April for larger Old bakers office, i will not be eligible for rates relief so will have to find bank loan to get me through to winter.

The measures may help with self employed wages but will not bring back cancelled member contracts or help build the business back up. Even with taking things online the business has seen losses and still has to pay overheads to landlord.

It would be helpful if we could part furlough some staff- to keep core services going, but protect our income for when the restrictions are lifted and we are able to do all of our activities again

I'm doing fine on my own :)

I am not self-employed, loans do not work for the sector as we do not make a profit and so can't sustain repayments.

Long lead times and minimum of 30 days to receive payments at end of projects... so current business mostly on hold/ cancelled... and when things do pick up again minimum of 6 months until payments come in

Because I have three sources of income 1) salaried part time job 2) zero hours contract job 3) self employed. Self employment is not 50% of my income therefore I can't get government assistance.

Losses of retail markets globally outweighs grants and salary cover

Income (as dividends) as a director of limited company looks not to be classed as income.

Wherever there was an opportunity to provide help or advice, we wrote back individually to respondents which they have much appreciated.