

## West Pier Trust Newsletter – February 2000

**Introduction:** Since the last newsletter of October 1999 steady progress has been made towards our aim of starting the restoration this summer. As ever, the co-ordination of the many aspects of the project has been complicated; the Chief Executive outlines the main event at the end of this newsletter.

### **The Trust**

We thought it was time to give you a stronger impression of the Trust, its structure and staff. We are aware that it must sometimes appear to be rather a shadowy entity! The Trust began as a pressure group, the 'We Want the Pier Campaign' which was formed in 1975 when the then owners of the pier, AVP Industries, closed the pier for the last time and the Council proposed that, as a dangerous structure, the pier should be demolished. A group of appalled Brighton residents, led by John Lloyd, organised a petition and seafront marches to protest against the proposal. They were successful in halting the demolition plans and out of this group, the organisation that eventually was known as the Brighton West Pier Trust, was born. The campaign had its ups and downs over the subsequent years, with many successes including the purchasing of the pier from the Crown Estate Commissioners (a difficult transaction which took several years to accomplish), the restoring of the root end in 1987, the acquiring of major grants and several very near misses in achieving the complete restoration of the pier. I am currently studying and organising the Trust's archive. There are many fascinating stories to tell about these years, which I am hoping eventually to write up in some form. If any of you were involved in the campaign from 1975 to 1993 and feel you may be able to shed new light on events I would be very pleased to hear from you.

Nowadays the Trust's office is found on the restored root end of the pier in a portakabin. The office is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. At weekends the Information Centre, in the kiosk at the centre of the deck, opens from 10am to 4pm. The Trust is run by a small staff which is responsible to a Board of Trustees. The Board, chaired by Sir Lindsay Bryson, consists currently of 18 members, all of whom were appointed because of their personal commitment to the project. They include very senior figures nationally from the arts, academe, politics, law etc; people ranked highly in accountancy, law, marketing, media etc and local business people, concerned citizens and political representatives. The Trust staff are:

#### **Dr Geoff Lockwood Chief Executive.**

Geoff came to the Trust in August 1995 having retired from the University of Sussex where he had been Secretary and Registrar. He was one of the founding members of the University, joining the staff in 1961. He oversees the management and funding of the Trust and leads the strategy for the restoration of the pier. This involves negotiating with our partners and funding bodies and co-ordinating the many strands of the restoration. His job is part-time, but we try not to tell him that, and he works mainly from home.

#### **Rachel Clark, General Manager.**

I started working for the Trust part time, in June 1993. With the creation of the National Lottery and the very real possibility that we could achieve a major award, the job became full-time. My responsibilities include supervision of the office, press, the museum, I am Company Secretary to the Board and its committees and I am the assistant to the Chief Executive on the restoration project. Currently I work Monday to Thursday.

#### **Maureen Rawlinson, Executive Assistant.**

Maureen joined the Trust in December 1996 having assisted her husband in his architectural practice for many years. She supports Geoff and me in the office, is Membership Secretary and Chief Tour Guide. Maureen works Tuesday to Friday.

#### **Philip Newman, Finance Officer.**

Philip has held this part-time position since November 1996 and is a retired senior partner of a major local accountancy firm. He is responsible for the Trust's finances which includes budgetting and liasing with the funding bodies.

**Roger Bailey, Technical Officer.**

Roger started with the Trust in January 1997 having worked as Estates Manager at the University of Sussex for eighteen years. He is a trained engineer and provides professional advice on the technical aspects of the restoration on a part-time basis.

**Lorraine Lewis, Trust Associate.**

Lorraine has been a tenant of the Trust since 1991, where she runs the Rock Shop and Aljo's Cafe. Since 1998 she has managed the Information Kiosk and is involved with all aspects of the Trust's marketing and trading.

**Events**

This year we are hoping to stage some new Trust events. This will be in addition to our daily tours which are still very popular and are providing the Trust with crucial extra funds.

On Saturday 17th June 2000 the Trust will be hosting the popular French Market on the root end of the pier. Many of you will be familiar with this market which comes annually to the town for the Brighton Festival. A wide range of delicious produce will be available and we hope, if successful, to make it into an annual event.

It's many years since the Trust has held a ball as a fundraiser and we are delighted to announce that the Grand Hotel is hosting the West Pier Summer Ball in its Empress Suite on Saturday 15th July. This will be a very special event for the Trust and the town and we hope that many members will be able to attend. We are able to offer a special price to people taking a whole table. For more details please refer to the enclosed flier or call Lorraine (01273 207610).

The Hove branch of Pizza Express has created a West Pier Pizza and 25p from each one sold will be donated to the Trust. The pizza will be launched at the restaurant on Tuesday 29th February. If you would like to attend the launch, tables can be booked on 01273 770093.

**Miscellaneous**

Included with this mailing is a request for more information about you! If you feel you can spare some time and expertise for the Trust, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

The address for the Trust's website is [www.westpier.co.uk](http://www.westpier.co.uk) It was been designed and is maintained by Sean Woollgar who gives his time free. We are extremely grateful to him for this help. Earlier this year we also benefited from advice and assistance from Trust member Tim Towle. Recent additions to the site have been the press pack and the Trust staff information. We always include the latest newsletter as well. At present our resources do not permit more regular updates but we are hoping that with the start of the restoration and some more staff training we will be able to update it from the office with the latest news on the works.

We had hoped that this would be the first newsletter to be emailed to those members who have supplied us with their addresses. Unfortunately, we have had technical difficulties with our membership database and so we are now aiming at emailing the next newsletter to as many members as possible. Obviously this will save the Trust time and money. If you have recently gone online, do please let us know and we can update our records.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, there is a presence now at the pier seven days a week. We are always pleased to meet our members and to hear your views - do drop in if you are in the area.

**Rachel Clark, General Manager**

**February 2000**

**The Restoration Project**

Progress in achieving the restoration since last autumn's newsletter has been steadily forward. It has not been as speedy and decisive as we had hoped, and worked hard for, but we are still on line for the main works to commence in the first half this year.

The general situation is that

1. we have obtained planning permission and listed building consent for Phase 1, the £14m restoration of the sub-structure and the deck.

2. We have concluded the development agreement with Brighton & Hove Council for the transfer to the Trust of land either side of the pier on the lower esplanade (required for the Phase 3 new development); and for the amount of new commercial square footage allowable on that land.

3. We have submitted to the National Heritage Memorial Fund the new and detailed application it requested in December last in order for its Trustees to consider authorising a grant contract for the further £13.5m funding they agreed in principle in May 1999.

Our private sector partners, Eugenius Ltd (backed by Prestbury plc), have been working hard on their scheme for the restored pier in the light of regular interaction with officers of the Trust and the Council. The lawyers of the Trust and Eugenius are currently negotiating the final text of the joint development agreement and the eventual lease of the pier.

5. The process of selecting the architect for phase 3 is underway. A number of architectural practices have accepted the challenge to put forward their ideas for the crucial design of the new build; and will be held with them over the next few weeks. The architect chosen will then work up the design for a full public consultation.

We try to keep members informed of progress in between these necessarily infrequent (3-4 monthly) newsletters. Locally the Argus carries our news and the special BBC2 TV programme on 20th January was informative. The director of the programme described our project to restore the West Pier as an 'epic battle'. No matter how hard and skilfully your officers work, success is not a foregone conclusion. It has been and is an 'epic battle'; and the winning of it will be all the more satisfying.

**Dr Geoff Lockwood**

**Chief Executive**

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