

## West Pier Trust Newsletter – February 2002

### **NEWSLETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE TRUST**

1. Introduction I am sorry not to have issued a newsletter since September 2001. Over the past six years we have maintained a policy of informing members about progress at not more than four monthly intervals. On this occasion we delayed beyond that time limit in order to be able to report something positive. My apologies for that delay.

#### 2. The Restoration Project

2.1 This has been stalled for a full year due to the threatened legal challenge to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) by the Noble Organisation (owners of the Palace Pier); as outlined in our September 2001 newsletter. A challenge in which the Trust, frustratingly has not been a party.

2.2 At a meeting on 6th February with the HLF it now seems clear that the long wait will be over by April. We cannot yet announce the details but

2.2.1 the funding for the restoration of the pier, and its enabling development, is now in place from the HLF and St Modwen. It will come on stream as and when we meet specific terms and conditions eg planning permission and listed building consent for the enabling development, obtaining the Harbour Revision Order, completion of the documentation and costing ready to go out to tender.

2.2.2 We expect by April to have reached agreement with the HLF on a major programme of emergency preservation works for this year; principally to secure the structure of the Concert Hall.

2.2.3 The aim is to sign the funding contracts for the full restoration of the pier and the enabling development, this autumn so that the main works can commence by spring 2003.

2.3 In 1994 the Prime Minister, John Major, publicly cited the West Pier as a prime example of a project for which the National Lottery had been created; by 1995 Bryan Spielman had submitted our bid to the HLF. Over the next six years our members and supporters have shown remarkable patience and understanding. In my view the restored West Pier should have been opened as part of the Millennium celebrations.

3. Enabling Development Those of you who live locally will know that the proposals for the enabling development are attracting a degree of opposition. I will not go into the detail in this letter since next month there is to be a full campaign on the matter, including a further newsletter to members. However, I will re-iterate that

3.1 an enabling development is essential to achieve the restoration of the West Pier. A fact backed by several independent studies and all of the public authorities involved. It is not a private sector imposition.

3.2 The enabling development has to be on the site and of the scale proposed. Those who oppose that are opposing the restoration of the pier.

3.3 The design of the enabling development is open for consultation. The Trust has over the past five years seen design concepts from over twenty leading architects, including dramatic structures. Officers of the Trust have had personal opinions on those designs but we have maintained one constant position. Our interest is to achieve the full and authentic restoration of the West Pier with a private sector partner dedicated to that same aim. To fulfil that aim, I am prepared for a design of the enabling development which is acceptable to its funders (St Modwen) and the authorities responsible for planning (Brighton & Hove City Council) and heritage (English Heritage) judgement following full public consultation.

4. The Trust We manage to continue to keep the finances of the Trust in the black. It is getting difficult because of the stall in progress but we will cut our cloth to avoid going into the red.

I mentioned our previous Chairman (Bryan Spielman) earlier in this newsletter I would now like to take the opportunity to impress upon you the importance of the role played by our current Chairman, Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson. Lindsay's experienced determined and pragmatic leadership of the Trust has been vital to us maintaining our aim through difficult troughs and obstacles to achieving that aim. There will be time to state his contribution more fully after he has led us into the restoration.

If you wish to have any further information on the above you are welcome to contact me or Rachel.