

## **West Pier Trust Newsletter – January 2001**

### **Chief Executive's Report**

At the time of the September newsletter, the Trust had just submitted a new main application (our third in five years) jointly with St Modwen plc to the Heritage Lottery Fund. After those five years of multiple analyses and negotiation, we had expected the HLF to respond expeditiously so that the final development funding phase could take place by spring 2001; and thus the full restoration could begin later this year.

Despite our best endeavours, and pressures, we heard nothing from the HLF for two months; then in November, the HLF requested further information or clarification on a series of issues. We responded in early December with a significant supplement to the main application (another 30 pages).

As a result we are to meet with HLF officers and the other parties to the deal with a view to recommendations going to the HLF Trustees this month. Our assumption is that those Trustees will renew in principle the commitment to the full restoration and will approve its 75% contribution towards the £1.2m final development phase. However, a further six months has been lost, the final development phase has been extended in time (on the analysis of HLF advisers) and it is now unlikely that the full restoration will commence before spring 2002.

It is the continuing story of 'almost there' and the delay is sapping energy and confidence; but the big picture remains that

- all parties are still committed to achieving the full restoration;
- the HLF is pursuing its normal procedures and its normal pace for consideration of a new main application, no matter how irksome that is to us;
- the structural work done to the pier since 1996, mainly on HLF funding, has secured the pier through subsequent bad weather and sea conditions. We continue to lose bits of the buildings and decking but the substructure appears to be sufficiently sound to require only minor works to sustain it until the main works can commence.

The better news is that the formal development agreement and draft lease with St Modwen has been signed ie we have a secure private sector partner (subject to us fulfilling the specific partnership conditions stated in the agreement). As a result, St Modwen has given the Trust the £140,000 we need to pay off the interest free loan from Brighton & Hove Council which enabled the crucial Phase 0 works to take place in 1999.

I wish this New Year newsletter could have contained more definite news on the full restoration. Any frustration members feel is more than shared by the officers and staff of the Trust. However, we are almost there, our aim remains alive and our resolve remains firm. I wish to pay tribute to Roger Bailey (our part-time Technical Officer), whom most of you will not know. Roger's energy and expertise have been crucial to our ability to respond to the HLF's queries.

**Dr Geoff Lockwood**

**Chief Executive**

**8th January 2001**

## **The General Manager's Report**

Apart from the activity surrounding the preparation of the HLF supplement that Geoff has already mentioned, the office was quiet this autumn. We are now starting to prepare for the start of the new season at Easter.

Sales of Christmas cards were good and tours have been running on a four day a week winter programme (Friday-Monday). As usual I would like to thank our tour guides (Maureen Rawlinson, Anna Kempton and Geoff Mead) for the great job they do. As you are well aware, the weather has been terrible, but unless it is dangerously windy the tours go on and they have all had to venture out in horrible conditions. They still manage to be boundlessly enthusiastic about the pier to the public and the feedback we get in the office is always excellent.

This is the first newsletter to be emailed to those of you who have given us your addresses. The saving in time and money to the Trust is most welcome. If any of you are online but haven't yet sent us your addresses, we'd be very grateful if you could do so. Our address is at the foot of the page.

Steven Bannister, a member, very kindly gave our website a complete overhaul in the summer. We're very pleased with the result and hope to expand on it gradually. Please be patient with us if it doesn't seem to be completely up to date always. Steven has a full time job and he provides us with this service in his spare time and completely free of charge.

**Rachel Clark**

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