

# Brighton West Pier Trust

## Newsletter to Members

### 1. Introduction

I apologise for the growing gaps between these newsletters, but the cause is the constrained finances of the Trust and not our desire and responsibility to keep members informed. The financing of the Trust is a struggle but we are keeping afloat by various means. We do keep the web site up to date ([www.westpier.co.uk](http://www.westpier.co.uk)) .

### 2. The i360 (Brighton Eye)

The agreement with Marks Barfield (the creators of the London Eye) is firm, and the Brighton Eye will be built. We hoped that the construction of the eye would have been visible this autumn but it is now due to be so in the New Year. The primary cause of that delay is the unique nature of the structure and thus the creative interaction required between the architectural designer and the engineering contractors which is not the case with a more standard building contract.

Much of the past few months has been spent on detailed engineering appraisal of the base of the site to ensure that the i360 will be firmly rooted. Unfortunately, drilling boreholes, studying sewers, examining rock and chalk samples have not been visible to the public so the site work does not appear to have commenced; it has. However, the i360 is now not likely to be operational until early 2010.

The Trust has also faced two legal problems in delivering the site for the i360; both resolvable but they have taken time (and ill-affordable cost). Firstly Mrs Lewis, the lessee of the Rock Shop and the Café, has contested the closure of those leases and is pressing for continued livelihood on site once the i360 is operational. It is quite clear that Mrs Lewis has been told for years that her enterprises would cease once the West Pier was restored or developed; she was given the due six months notice last December, and did not challenge until July. Our lawyers advised that through our efforts to extend her trading season this year we might have negated the termination notice. Thus a fresh six month notice was issued in August, and we are currently attempting to negotiate, with financial compensation, obtaining vacant possession prior to March 2008.

Secondly in the 1930's the West Pier Company leased a track of land running through its site to the Council (mainly through the compound but including the lower esplanade road). In all of the discussion about the future of the West Pier over the past decade it was assumed that the lease would be overlooked (which was the case in the St Modwen scheme) but that has not proved to be the case. Following discussion, it has now been agreed that the Council will surrender that defunct lease with the Trust giving a new lease for the lower esplanade road provided that lease allows the Trust to bridge it in order to recreate the sea-based pier.

Another problem was finding a store, at an affordable cost, for the artefacts on site to be relocated during the i360 works. The Trust's engineer (Roger Bailey) has done an excellent job in securing a remote store for the artefacts in the compound and those which will arise from the dismantling of the landward end.

### **3. Heritage Centre**

The i360 will contain a small heritage centre but the thrust is that the whole of the land area of the i360 will be infused by artefacts and images of the heritage of the West Pier (possibly including the re-erection of an 1866 kiosk).

Discussions on the use of the petanque area for an extension of that heritage display have been conducted with a view to making a project planning grant bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Those discussions have become involved in the Council's consideration of the broader seaside heritage zone either side of the pier and the Trust is represented on the steering panel for that project. One way or another, we are confident that heritage of the West Pier will be reflected and displayed on the seafront.

### **4 Sea-Based Pier**

The Trust, and all other parties, agreed that we should not progress plans for the sea-based pier until the i360 works were underway. In the expectation that the latter would be the case by this autumn, the Trust recommenced discussions with a local partnership (backed by a major international company) which has expressed an interest for years in recreating the sea-based pier. Proposals must

- blend the retention of heritage with high quality modernity (as with the i360)
- be fully funded and with a business plan capable of sustaining the new pier
- retain in the main the historic proportions of the pier itself, but which could include more development on the landing stages areas
- maintain public access to the full length of the pier; and have uses which avoid the 'gambling/funfair' ethos of most piers.

I look forward to May 2008, four years after the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage ditched the prospects of restoring the West Pier, when the i360 works will be more advanced and more visible; when we should have exciting plans to consider for the sea-based pier; and when Council plans for the heritage areas either side of the pier should be available.

### **5. AGM 2008**

The date for next year's AGM is Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July at 6pm.

### **6. Conclusion**

The West Pier Trust is no more than the sum of its members, and we greatly appreciate that so many members have sustained their support through so many difficult years. Thank you.

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