

West Pier Trust Newsletter – September 2000

General Manager's Report

Despite the gloomy weather, it's been a busy summer for the Trust. Tours are still extremely popular and we are now able to take children over twelve onto the pier. We are hoping not to have to suspend the tours during the restoration, but to adapt them so that the public can watch as the pier is returned to its former glory. If that is not possible we will endeavour to mount exhibitions and give talks to explain the restoration and to cover some of the material included in the tours.

The two main summer events held for the Trust by the Information Centre (organised by Lorraine Lewis) were the Dieppe Market and the Summer Ball. The sun shone for the market and it drew good crowds. The Ball was attended by over 300 people and they all appeared to enjoy themselves enormously. It was a great success and we'll certainly ensure the Summer Ball becomes a more regular feature in our fund-raising programme, to be held perhaps on alternate years.

Meanwhile, as you will see from the enclosed flier, on 9th November Bonhams are holding an exclusive pre-sale exhibition of their Christmas sale in aid of the Trust in the Ambassadors Room at the Hilton Metropole. This promises to be an interesting and enjoyable evening. It is a ticket only event and the price will include wine and canapes. For more details and to purchase tickets please call the Information Centre (01273 207610) or Mary Lou at Bonhams (01273 220000).

I'm sure some of you will remember the fund-raising bungee jumping that took place on the West Pier beach in 1992/3. On Sunday 1st October the crane will be back for anyone tempted by the thrill of jumping in aid of the Trust, or just to watch the spectacle. Please call 01273 207610 for details.

Believe it or not it's time to mention Christmas cards! We are delighted that this year's card was painted for the Trust by the well-known local artist, Philip Dunn. The card will be available only from the Trust and the Window Gallery in Ship Street. It is reproduced on the enclosed order form, but you are welcome to drop into the office or the Information Centre to see the actual cards, which are in full colour.

We are also stocking three other designs from 1998 and 1999. You can view all the available designs on our website (www.westpier.co.uk). If you buy 20 or more of this year's design you will be offered the 1998/99 cards at a reduced price of 50p each.

As many of you will know, Gift Aid has replaced the old system of covenants. This makes it much simpler for charities to reclaim tax on donations and subscriptions. At the end of this newsletter is a simple form to complete if you wish the Trust to treat your donation/subscription as a Gift Aid donation.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who helps run the office and Information Centre, but in particular our tour guides Maureen Rawlinson, Charlie Dixon and Anna Kempton whose contribution is so important during the summer months and who are often called upon at very short notice. The feed-back on tours is always very positive and apart from informing thousands of people about the pier's history, the guides are also carrying out an important profile raising exercise for the Trust, demonstrating that despite delays on the restoration there is still plenty of life at the West Pier!

Rachel Clark

General Manager

Chief Executive's Report

At the time of the last newsletter in June progress was being delayed by uncertainties surrounding the private sector partnership. Shortly afterwards those uncertainties were resolved by our second necessary switch of partners. Although the Brighton-based part of

Eugenius remained keen to continue as our partner, the demise of the major national company backing Eugenius holed the partnership under the waterline. The Board of the Trust, therefore, determined to promote the company (St Modwen plc) which had been in reserve for a year into the private sector partner role.

The switch to St Modwen has been smooth and effective with a heads of terms agreement being concluded rapidly. Technical, planning and legal meetings between the Trust and St Modwen have been extensive and positive. St Modwen shares the Trust's perceptions of the restored pier, has a long-term interest (it is not a developer seeking to sell-on) in the pier and the local area, and has expedited progress by accepting much of our previous work (including the architect previously selected for the new build).

However, a new partnership means, under Heritage Lottery rules, a fresh application for grant. After speedy work, that new application has just been submitted to the HLF following discussions between the Trust and St Modwen with English Heritage and Brighton & Hove Council. The application is based on the assumptions that the HLF will renew its agreement to a final £1.2m development phase (as detailed in the June newsletter); that the final development phase will result by late spring 2001 in agreed plans and costings for the full restoration of the pier and for the enabling new build development; and that those plans will (at last) be put into operation later in 2001, with the grand opening of the restored pier taking place 2-2 1/2 years later.

Thus, the past three months has continued the roller-coaster ride which Sir Lindsay, Rachel and myself have been experiencing for over five years now; 'bucking bronco' might be a better simile - but we have not been thrown. All of us feel that the partnership with St Modwen will deliver the hopes of all of the supporters of the restoration of the West Pier since the 1970s. No doubt there will be further hurdles to surmount but all of the signs are positive about eventual success.

What is certain is that we will need your support once we are in a position to announce the plans for the restoration and the enabling development. The Trust will ensure that those plans meet your basic objectives regarding the authentic restoration of the pier with heritage and cultural interests properly balanced with the commercial activity necessary to ensure the long-term maintenance of the restored pier. However, it is easily predictable that there will be objections to the plans from 'flat-earthers' who either prefer the natural elegance of a decaying structure or who think that the restoration can be achieved without the enabling development. I look forward to those discussions and to your support.

Finally, I will be happy to respond to you personally if you have any views or comments about our present situation.

Dr Geoff Lockwood

Chief Executive

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