

## NEWS RELEASE. 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009

### **Hastings Pier & White Rock Trust responds to 'alarmist claims' made today by Hastings Borough Council officers about the future of Hastings Pier.**

"It seems to us that council officers are trying to scare the councillors and the people of Hastings by talking about the pier's 'imminent collapse' and introducing the ridiculous figure of £50 million" said Jess Steele, Treasurer of the Trust.

Council engineers said the pier wouldn't survive the winter of 2006 – it's still there having made it through this weekend's gales. Neither Giffords who undertook the last survey nor our engineers, who have detailed knowledge of Hastings Pier over many years, believe it is in imminent danger of collapse. The real risk to the pier is further dithering in solving the ownership problem.

The new figure being used by the Council comes from a rough cost estimate of the total restoration of the whole pier all at once and the creation of new tourist attractions. The Trust's costing is £4 million to repair and reopen the Apron section – the same as the cost of demolition. By intensifying use of the Apron the Trust will generate income to undertake the repairs of the remaining sections over a much longer timeframe, working with local engineering and fabrication businesses to create local jobs, training and apprenticeships.

"We have always said that expecting a private sector solution was like waiting for a fairy godmother. The Michaels are quite right that there is no viable commercial case for a private buyer. Our approach is very different for 3 reasons: we don't need to make a profit for shareholders; we don't need to repair the whole pier at once; as a community trust we can access outside funds like the lottery for the restoration and the redevelopment. Most of all, our approach will be long term, not just until the next crisis. We hope, at last, the Council will engage properly with the Hastings Pier & White Rock Trust – it really is the only solution left." said Felix Robinson, Chair Hastings Pier & White Rock Trust.

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