

Some Facts About Hastings Pier

THE BACKGROUND

Hastings Pier is one of just 55 piers left in Britain and has been declared the 'most at risk'. Built in 1869, the pier was owned and managed by the Hastings Pier Company, set up by an Act of Parliament. It has never been owned by the Council. Whether we like it or not, the pier ended up with a private owner. That owner is Ravenclaw – registered in Panama to avoid prosecution.

WHY DID IT CLOSE?

When they bought the pier Ravenclaw managed to get a mortgage of £1.85 million from the Allied Irish Nationwide Bank! During the early 2000s the pier was making a lot of money – up to £800,000 per year – mainly in cash, from amusements, refreshments, shop rents and ballroom events. But none of this went back into repairs and maintenance of the pier itself. In 2006 a council engineer touched a piece of the substructure and it came off. An emergency survey led to immediate closure for safety reasons. Since then Hastings Borough Council has been waiting for a 'fairy godmother' to arrive.



*YOU MAY HAVE HEARD IT WILL COST
£17 MILLION OR EVEN £50 MILLION...?
BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THAT!!*

OUR PLANS

Hastings Pier & White Rock Trust (HPWRT) has come up with three innovations that completely change the approach so we can repair & reopen the pier for an investment of just £4 million (the same as the estimated cost of demolition). Remember, you don't get grants for demolition!!

Part 1: THE ENGINEERING SOLUTION

Thankfully, the columns themselves don't need replacing. Working with local engineering companies, we would set up a local fabrication unit (the Fab Shop), which would employ a local workforce and apprentices to build a permanent access deck and systematically fit new struts and trusses starting at the land edge. This reduces, controls and spreads the costs, as well as bringing much-needed jobs and apprenticeships to the town and makes sure the Trust will always hold the knowledge of how the pier's engineering works.

Part 2: FOCUS ON THE APRON

The Pier is nearly 1,000 feet long, and is very vulnerable. We are realistic about how long it will take. This is why we are focusing our attention on the Apron. In the past this 40,000 sq ft space was never fully commercialized because owners wanted people to move through it to the rest of the pier. Our approach will intensify both the commercial and community offer on the apron through

- a new multi-purpose building on the promenade-side with activities for local groups, visitor information, education activities, indoor entertainment, and refreshments,
- the Pier Market, a regular fixture with special markets at Solstice, Bonfire Night and Christmas
- restoring and upgrading the Bandstand Pavilions (insulated for all-year use)
- adding a row of Beach Hut style buildings along the back edge to double the retail/catering rental space
- a new central seating area with regular local arts entertainment
- the eastern (shaded) edge will focus on children's activities while the western (sunset) edge will be a more adult-focused space for a beer on the pier, a romantic evening or quiet contemplation.

Part 3: ONE STEP AT A TIME

We know that the rescue of Hastings Pier is a 'Big Plan' and that at present we are a small trust. That's why we're building up our track record one step at a time. Building on our experience of running the Pier Market for a year, we have taken on Arthur Green's, an historic shop on the White Rock facing the pier, as our campaign base and the starting point for our commercial development. As well as rescuing one of the few surviving historic shopfronts in the town and giving the trust a campaign base, this will be a testing ground for aspects of the long-term plan – artist-makers, ebay trading, education workshops, local & visitor information.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

This progressive and intensified commercialisation supports the gradual restoration approach described above. At every stage of the restoration a new commercial/community space becomes available and begins to generate both financial and social returns.

Surpluses will be reinvested so that the Fab Shop team can begin the restoration of the remaining sections of the pier. In contrast, it would be impossible for a private sector interest to take this approach, partly due to

the need to take profits for shareholders but also because the level of risk involved would require rapid and very expensive restoration of the sea-most end of the pier to build a mega-venue to create substantial and immediate returns. This is yet another of the catch-22 dilemmas that have kept the pier in a state of limbo, and that only a community trust can resolve.

LONG-TERM VISION

The Trust is focusing on the Apron because that's the realistic approach. We also have a long-term vision for the rest of the pier, developed with local people over the last 3 years.

This includes extending the leisure, retail, education and entertainment activities for all ages. These could include a tropical solarium, fishing competitions, a glass viewing walkway and possibly an underwater viewing chamber. There will be information on the history and construction of the pier as part of our 'Science You Can Stand On' educational theme. We are exploring with partners the potential for Pier Power – solar, wind and tidal – as part of a renewable energy centre. We would like to restore the landing stage to allow for boat trips, including to the forthcoming Hastings Array of wind turbines.

Once the over-heavy buildings on the end of the pier are removed it becomes a 'platform for investment' and a 21st century People's Pier.

"PROSPECT OF OWNERSHIP"

The urgent task is to sort out the ownership. We need to bring the pier into community ownership forever. Only Hastings Borough Council can solve this. They need to go through a legal process called Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and then hand over the pier to the Hastings Pier & White Rock Trust in a back-to-back deal (in other words immediately). The value of the pier would be set by an independent valuer and in its present state this is likely to be zero. So the costs are only officer time and legal advice.

The £4 million to make the pier safe and restore the Apron could come from national heritage and community funds but they will not even consider the case until the Council show willing by starting a CPO process to give the Trust 'prospect of ownership'.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

Check out the website at www.hpwr.co.uk

Become a member of the Trust

Ask your candidates to sign the Pier Pledge

Write to Councillor Peter Pragnell asking him to start the Compulsory Purchase Order ***now*** before it's too late

Come to the Candidates Debate at 6.30pm on 7th Dec at Blacklands Primary School