

NEWSLETTER 222 July 2007

West Pier AGM – no fights!

What has happened to the West Pier Trust?

Time was when the AGM could be exciting: angry demands to know how much had been paid to the chief executive, queries to the auditors about the accounts, or even pleas to “save our seafront”.

What has changed? It could be that the Trust has finally recognised that the old pier cannot be restored. It has come up with something completely different: the i360. But then there are plenty of people who don't like that idea any more than the previous one.

Perhaps it is just the soothing personality of Glynn Jones, the current chairman, who treats everyone with respect and even gets some humour into the proceedings, for example by serving glasses of wine to “discourage awkward questions”.

Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that West Pier AGMs are now much calmer, and perhaps rather more boring, than they were before.

Two Years to Go

In fact, the 2007 AGM, held last month at the Holiday Inn, may have lacked excitement but was certainly not short on significant news. Building work for the i360 will start on 23 July and continue for about two years.

In the meantime . . .

...we will have the biggest construction site our area has seen in a long time. Much of the work on building the column will be off site, but there will still be lots to be done on our door step.

One problem to be tackled is an old Victorian drain running east-west under the site. This will need to be re-routed, which will involve digging up a part of the pétanque terrain between the pier and Al Fresco.

The building that houses the rock shop will be demolished. However, the plans involve it being re-instated, together with its long vanished western twin.

The land to the east of the pier, where the paddling pool used to be, will be used by the contractors, and the roadway that runs along its southern edge will be kept open, though re-routed further south on the beach.

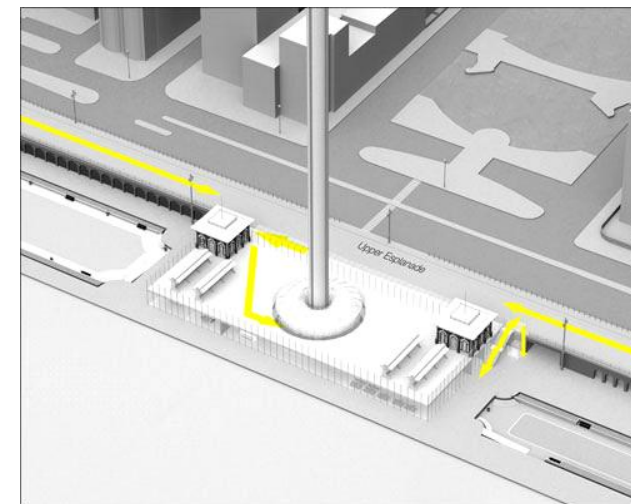
The Trust plans to keep the market stalls in operation, either by moving them onto what remains of the pétanque area, or further south onto the beach.

The work should not have any major impact on traffic along the sea front. But, we can be sure that things will be even busier and noisier than usual at the southern end of Regency Square for the next couple of years.

And then

The July 2009 issue of this newsletter should carry the headline “The i opens”, unless the Argus uses it first. All those who have paid their £10 to be members of the Trust may find themselves invited to take a free ride – or not.

Once the work is complete the areas to the east and west of the site will be “landscaped”, with even the promise of some greenery!



The Trust is still hoping to get some money from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, in spite of seeing the original offer of £15 million snatched from under its nose when St Modwen started to say it would not be enough. The current request is much more modest and, if successful, will be used to create a heritage centre, probably to the east of the i360, to house some of the many artefacts that the Trust still has from the old pier.

And what about the pier?

The Trust still dreams one day of being able to build a pier where the old one stood, though it will need to find a partner with deep pockets to provide the finance.

However, the chairman reminded us at the AGM that “nothing succeeds like success”. So if the i360's “pier in the sky” turns out to be the success its developers are hoping for, maybe a more conventional one nearby will prove to be more than just pie in the sky.

Watch this space!

New on the Society web site:

- pictures, taken during a low tide last year, of the West Pier wreckage lying like a once mighty leviathan stranded on the sand,
- a little known commemorative lamp post on our doorstep (in the Out and About section).

www.regencybrighton.com

Get licensed!

In the last issue we complained about Coffee Republic, on the corner of Clarence Square, blocking the pavement with tables and chairs. We asked the Council if they were allowed to spread themselves in this way, and the answer is no. Council officers have spoken to the management of the café and told them that they must apply for a license to use the footway; a license will only be granted for the Western Road side of the premises.

Belt and braces

We now have two street name signs at the north west corner of Regency Square, at least until someone pinches one of them again.



Meanwhile, the Society has suggested to the Council that they could put one in the

north east corner near the Regency Tavern, for people walking from Russell Square. We have also asked for a sign on Stone Street at the junction with Preston Street.

Email Newsletter

Don't forget, if you want to receive your newsletter by email, send a message to hinton@clara.net, with "RSAS Newsletter" as the subject, saying if you want the email copy to be instead of, or as well as the paper version.

The Gentle Sound of Metal on Gravel

Five society members were at the Pétanque terrain a few weeks ago to try their hand at boules. We had some expert tuition from Ray and Jan of the Brighton and Hove Pétanque club and two people have already signed up to join. There are beginners' sessions each Saturday morning, so it's not too late if you are interested. Visit www.bhpetanque.org for more details.

Science for the sociable

Café Scientifique runs regular evening meetings on scientific topics. Society member Margaret Brisley has become quite a fan and wonders if anyone would like to join her for the next meeting. It will be on 17 July at 7:30 pm at the Branch Tavern, London Road.

The topic will be "**Middle world: the restless heart of matter and life**" presented by Mark Haw of Nottingham University. There are opportunities to ask questions or express views. It's free but a donation towards running costs is welcome. If you're interested in joining Margaret on the 17th, give her a call on 0781 827 1702.

A shorter walk for your stamps

The main Post Office in Ship Street will be closing later in the summer and transferring to a counter in WH Smith's in Churchill Square.

There has been a lot of criticism of this move, not least by local MP, David Lepper. A petition has been presented to Parliament. Concerns relate to the impact on small businesses in the Lanes and North Laine, for whom the new location will be less accessible. There is also a fear about job losses for Post Office staff.

Ironically, it could be an improvement for those of us living or working around Regency Square.

Space enough for everyone?

Think back to those wonderful summer days we were having a few weeks ago, and how nice it was to sit in the sun. Quite a lot of people like to use the grass in the top part of Regency Square to relax on, or let their toddlers have a run around.

But there is a problem because other, older toddlers like to use the area to play football, making it far from the peaceful garden it was designed to be. You can't relax on the grass when there's a risk of a football or a hefty teenager landing on top of you.

Ball games on the top green also result in damage to the bushes. The ball often disappears into the bushes, followed, at speed, by a large and heavy-footed player. keen to get it back on the pitch.

The two lower greens are much more suited for this kind of activity, so it would be nice if the footballers could be persuaded to use them, leaving the top one for those seeking a bit of peace.

One possible way to achieve this would be to put some small bushes in the middle of the top green, thus making it unsuitable for ball games.

We are thinking of asking the Council to do this. What do you think of the idea? Let us know if you can see any objections to it, or if you have any other suggestions. (Contact Roger Hinton ✉ hinton@clara.net ☎ 321794.)

The Brighton Society

The conservation of Brighton's heritage owes much to the Brighton Society and its dedicated secretary, Selma Montford. You can support the society's work by becoming a member. Visit www.brighton-society.org.uk or call Roger Hinton (☎ 321794) who can let you have a membership form.

Days out by coach

A few society members have decided to try out a couple of one-day coach trips organised by Worthing Coaches.

30 July: Kinbury Lock (near Newbury) - £26.50 (OAPs £25.50) including cream tea and a horse-drawn boat ride.

31 August: Houses of Parliament and the London Eye - £37 (OAPs £35) including a tour and a flight on the eye.

Both trips pick up and return to central Brighton.



Contact Ros Boulden if you'd like to come (☎ 323690).

Call now in case the seats sell out.