Tide turns for Hastings Pier

15/08/2013

A compulsory purchase order on Hastings Pier, derelict after years of neglect and a catastrophic fire, enacted yesterday has returned the pier to local ownership and enabled a £14m renovation project to go ahead. Work will now start this month with completion scheduled for Spring 2015. The project will boost the local jobs market during the reconstruction and will significantly lift the town's visitor numbers. The CPO was put in place by Hastings Borough Council in support of the local 'Save Our Pier' campaign begun in 2008.

Now some £14m has been raised for the project, the lion's share from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and significant amounts from the Coastal Communities Fund, the Community Assets Fund, Hastings Borough Council and the East Sussex Invest fund from East Sussex CC.

Initial works will include renovating the pier's Grade II listed substructure, refurbishing the only pavilion still standing on the pier and the construction of a new visitor centre, which will also serve as an archive and display area for the pier's rich local heritage. From its opening in 1872 through to its closure in 2008, Hastings Pier was the focus of tourism, events and entertainment for Hastings and much of the South of England.

"We want a new pier as well as to restore the old, using sustainable materials wherever we can. We'll provide open space not just for promenading but for family and community celebrations; a real attraction for tourists and a valuable asset for locals and the town," said Simon Opie, CEO of the Hastings Pier Charity, which will oversee the build. "We want to offer a 21st. century take on the traditional English pier and for it to be used often by locals and visitors alike, a Peoples' Pier."

The heritage work includes a sound library of residents' memories of the pier and will house and maintain a permanent record of the pier's history. Once one of the busiest on the south coast, it was created as part of the Victorian seaside boom and evolved with the times, acting as the region's centre for popular culture well into the 1970s and becoming an iconic venue for the post-war music culture, from the early days of rock and roll through to punk.

Cllr Peter Chowney, Hastings Borough Council lead member for regeneration, said: "Three years ago, Hastings Borough Council and the Pier Trust embarked on an ambitious project to restore the derelict and abandoned Hasting Pier. At that time, few believed we'd be successful. But, thanks to a close partnership between the trust and council to raise funding while pursuing a compulsory purchase order against Ravenclaw, it's Panamanian-based owner, we persevered. A bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £11.4m was successful, and match funding was raised.

Now finally, with the transfer of ownership from Ravenclaw to the pier charity, the partnership has realised its goal; the pier is in local ownership and the money is in place to restore it.

So, today is a very important day in the history of Hastings Pier and a real cause for celebration. It's a major step forward in returning Hastings Pier to its rightful place as a major attraction on our seafront.

We are very pleased to have played an essential part in the process of securing the future of the pier and will remain committed to working with the Hastings Pier Charity. A huge amount of work has gone into getting this result, and I would like to thank everyone involved."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: “This is great news for the future of Hastings Pier. We are full of admiration for Hastings Pier Charity and its successful campaign to ensure a much-loved landmark is saved and restored to its rightful place at the heart of the community. This ambitious project will also create jobs, opportunities for new skills to be mastered and provide the perfect environment for local people to get involved as things progress.”

Notes to editors

Further background information and archive materials of the pier including photography are available at the Hastings Pier Charity website.

Further information

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For more information and graphics of the new pier visit the Hasting Pier Charity website media centre. Password: press-pier (case sensitive).