

Friends of Hastings Pier

F.A.Q.s

Background

Q: What happened ? Why did the pier go into administration ?

A: Simple answer It just didn't make enough money to cover its costs. The pier suffered a destructive fire in 2010 and it looked like it would have to be demolished, but with a lot of local support and a compulsory purchase order in 2013 it came into public ownership and was restored by the will of its shareholders (over 3,000) and with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. However the Phase Two part of the design and construction was never accomplished because extremely bad weather delayed Phase One. The pier was left without the wherewithal to make money and the Hastings Pier Charity went into administration in November.

Q: Who are the creditors ?

A: There are several unsecured creditors totalling around £450,000, but by far the most important stakeholder is the Heritage Lottery Fund which has a £12M charge on the pier to protect its grant investment, and the administrators will liaise with them when it comes to making a decision as to whom to sell the pier to. Their opinion is crucial.

Q: What are the Administrators looking for ?

A: In a phone call in early January Adam Stephens of Smith Williamson (The Administrators) said they were looking for a "cash buyer with deep pockets". It was suggested that the buyer would need access to at least two years of operating losses ... possibly somewhere around £1.2m as well, of course as a compelling business plan, in keeping with, and complementing, the existing architecture.

Q: Who will want to buy it ?

A: 'Sheikh' Abid Gulzar the flamboyant owner of Eastbourne Pier, has announced he is in the mix, and it is likely that Luke Johnson the owner of Brighton Pier is also in the running. We know there are other possibilities but don't know the details. That said, we must drive forwards with our bid in the knowledge that there are other competent professionals with 'deep pockets' alongside our bid.

Q: So, what is the plan ?

A: In the short term we need to show that we have equally 'deep pockets' or at least lots of them, and a route to £1.2m, as well as a plan to rival that of the other bidders. Our plan can be found here :- <http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/fohp>. It comes in several parts feel free to read it at your leisure :-

1. Covering letter to accompany our bid to Smith and Williamson - the Administrators
2. Friends Plan for Hastings Pier
3. Creative Content Report – Adam Wide
4. Friends Plan financials
5. dRMM design concepts

Appendix – key biographies

The plan continues to develop. We are now suggesting establishing a new charitable community benefit society rather than bringing Hastings Pier Charity itself out of administration. We will aim to keep this page up to date with new documents as they emerge.

Q: What do we mean by a new ‘charitable benefit society’?

A: The Friends of Hastings Pier Trust will be a brand-new community benefit society, a business that conducts itself for the benefit of the community. This is NOT the same as Hastings Pier Charity, it is being driven by a different set of people and has a completely new business plan put together by a group of experts giving their time pro bono. They will remain involved.

On 25 May 2018, as a temporary measure we formed a company limited by guarantee called Friends of Hastings Pier Trust, which you can find this on Companies House (Co No 11383651). We did this because we need to be quickly incorporated to be able to receive the £300k loan from Igloo Regeneration for our Crowdfunder.

The plan is to change our company structure to a charitable community benefit society as soon as possible. We have agreed that the initial directors / ‘founder members’ of FOHP Trust will be the 5 spokespeople elected on 23 April. We will hold a new election within 6 months of taking the pier. The 1000 existing members of FOHP (community group) will elect the new directors.

We will make a share offer in approx. 12 months’ time to raise funds for the Phase 2 infrastructure. After that, future directors will be elected by shareholding members of FOHP Trust. Once the future FOHP Trust has shareholder members, the existing members of the FOHP (community group) will have the choice of becoming a shareholder, thereby having a vote, or may stay as a supporter, being kept informed. FOHP Trust shareholders will be treated as long-term owners rather than one-off donors. Powers of members are described in the Rules. They will also have a direct involvement in influencing the future of the pier, including opportunities to contribute through Loomio and public meetings.

Q: What happens next ?

A: We have put in our bid (12/4/18) and an updated revision (30/4/18) and are now working frantically to raise the money. We have a meeting with the Administrators to put forward the details of our plan on May 11th. But we need to be able to show not only something that is creative, viable and profitable, but also that we have a direct route to £1.2m. Without the money, our bid is less likely to be taken seriously. The money is crucial for the success of our bid to keep the People’s Pier.

Q: A ‘Happy Ending’ ?

A: The Administrators and the Heritage Lottery Fund are not the ‘enemy’. Like us, they want the best offer to take ‘custodianship’ of the pier for the next few years – and beyond ! They have indicated that we might well constitute their ‘happy ending’. The solution is for us to have the money ... and the best plan as we go forward. We have a brilliant plan ... we now need the money !

We still need pledges to help us get to our target of £1m. We have started a crowdfunder page to raise £500,000, and we are working to achieve the rest through grants, partnerships and other sources. Your donation will sit in an escrow account (held by Crowdfunder) and only be handed over to us when and if we reach the £500,000 target. If we don’t all funds will be returned to donors within 5 days. This is the big push! Thanks for your help :-

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fohp2018>

Q: Why did the Crowdfunder total increase by £300k on 25 May?

A: The £300k that went into the Crowdfunder on 25 May is a short-term, interest-free loan from Igloo Regeneration, which they have helpfully given us in support of our campaign to help us reach our target (huge thanks to them!)

The reason we needed a loan is because the Crowdfunder target was set in haste and is wildly over what we would actually need.

The administrators stipulate that any new owner of the pier would need to 'sustain losses for 2 years' while the new infrastructure is built, estimated at £1.2 million, which includes maintaining, insuring the pier etc. That estimate was based on the last month of trading by HPC before it went into administration, where they lost £50k, so without much profitable commercial activity on it. We used this figure to set the Crowdfunder target from, (rounded down the £1.2 mil to £1 mil and halved it as we can get match funding).

However, with our 2 Year Transition Plan (created after the Crowdfunder was set up) the projected losses come out as just £400k over the two years because of all the profit generating activity, increased foot fall etc included the plan.

So, the £200k raised in the Crowdfunder (hopefully!) with match funding will cover the projected losses for the first 2 years with our transition plan and we shouldn't need to spend the £300k loan from Igloo at all. It is intended purely as a temporary 'leg-up' to help us reach the target.

Q: Why was the deadline extended?

A: The Crowdfunder deadline has been extended to 30 June. We are amazed by the reaction of local residents and Pier supporters who have given so generously and raised over £400,000 in just over four weeks (by 31 May). It would have been a tragedy to get so close and lose it all. We have extended it to give ourselves ample time to demonstrate our financial credibility, not only through Crowdfunder, but also other financing, including grant funding and sponsorship.

Q: What else can we do?

A: As you are probably aware we are an entirely voluntary group with a HUGE uphill struggle We need MORE PEOPLE to join us and be constructive !!

Please come and say hello.... and we can use ANY skills you have Email us on :- friendsofhastingspier@gmail.com and ask to join our 'Loomio' platform - which is an online forum where we discuss work in progress and make arrangements.

Q: Anything I can do NOW ?

A: We still have other ways to help sway the thoughts of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Administrators. Writing to Amber Rudd certainly can only help. As said, the HLF have a massive say in who the successful Bidder will be.

If there are loads of e-mails in her in-box with "Keeping Hastings Pier in Public ownership" as the subject ... now she has a little more time (!) she would hopefully not be able to ignore our pleas for help. She could write to the HLF emphasising the importance of keeping the pier in community ownership. amber.rudd.mp@parliament.uk

The people of Hastings and St Leonards raised £600,000, Heritage Lottery Fund put in over £11.5m, and other public funders the Hastings contributed a further £3m so WE have put in over £14m and like Wembley Stadium, a building WE the people have paid for, the pier could be sold to private business for a fraction of its cost or value ... Let's keep it OURS !!!!



Meeting for shareholders and supporters in the White Rock Theatre April 23rd 2018

At the meeting there were many questions from the floor on the night and some written. These are the written ones answered Please feel free to ask any more

Lessons to learn/accountability

Q: It didn't work last time so what makes you think it will work a second time round?

A: The BIG one first !!

There were two things wrong before: The pier wasn't making enough money to cover its costs. The board weren't communicating openly with shareholders and supporters
From the first successful HLF bid in November 2010 until the massive storms of 2014, there was always due to be a 2-phased approach. Phase 1 would take ownership of and renovate the pier to create stable ownership and a stable platform with an interim business plan. Phase 2 would involve further investment to fully revitalise the pier and make it commercially sustainable for the long term.

That storm did £1M of damage. That was met from insurance, but it also delayed opening by a whole year which had lots of knock-on effects. One of the less obvious but important effects was that Phase 2 was forgotten (or 'de-prioritised'). Simon Opie, the CEO, made valiant attempts to insist that further development was required but, without a compelling narrative, the general feeling was that the pier was complete, 'sorted', and that people would just have to get used to 'the Plank' which after all was officially the UK's Best Building. This crisis has made it very obvious that Phase 2 is essential. So now the question is all about what that looks like.

We believe it is about *revitalising* the pier - which means:

a) footfall - we need to get to 350,000 visitors per year within 3 years and 450,000 after 7 years. (and we will have to count them properly! At the moment there is absolutely no useable data about how many visitors, when, or where from!!!)

b) dwell-time - we need people to stay much longer. There is a rule of thumb that says if they stay half an hour you make a loss, an hour and you break even, after that you make a profit. We want people to love being on the pier, not just for a quick stroll to the end but for a whole afternoon. The fastest way to make that happen is to have loads going on almost all the time - they call it 'soft programming' and it means animators, entertainers, events, buskers, things to watch, things to participate in, places to sit, in other words 'stuff to do'. And, luckily for all of us, Hastings is stuffed-full of great entertainers and extroverts so we should have no trouble filling our 'animator pool' of staff, associates and volunteers.

c) average visitor spend - the key to increasing average spend is partly about dwell-time (keep them there until they're hungry!), but mainly about offering quality spending opportunities (whether that's a climbing wall, a nice dinner or a great club night) and we know this will need a new building. There is lots we can do in the meantime, as shown in our Transition Plan, but we will not lose sight of Phase 2 again!

Q : Since the pier opened a lot of people have criticised the lack of ‘things’ on the pier. Nobody appeared to know there was a ‘Phase II’. Why?

A: There was always due to be a Phase Two, and the pier could never be successful financially without it. This should have been communicated at the time so that people understood that the pier had been renovated but not finished. Several rounds of Coastal Communities Fund have gone past since the renovation was complete.

Q: I know it’s important to look forward but we were told at the first meeting that the restaurant would be the cash cow. That didn’t happen. Why and what can be done to learn for the future?

A: The restaurant could never have made enough money to cover the £230,000 a year it costs JUST TO MAINTAIN AND INSURE the pier. The idea was that it would make enough to keep going while Phase 2 was developed. Phase 2 is the only way the pier can become profitable, which needs more buildings and more ways of gaining revenue. Our job is to try to make sure that they are in keeping with the People’s Pier and its vision.

Hastings Pier Charity

Q: Where have FOHP been in the first two seasons when the first staff employed to run the pier were struggling with no knowledge of the phase 2 being in evidence? They had lots of brilliant ideas for events/activities that were ‘spoiled’ by the weather. They had a very difficult job working within the limits of phase one and were rewarded with redundancy when profits could not be made in the conditions they were given.

A: The Friends of Hastings Pier was only formed in February of this year. We are a group of people just like yourself who were fed up with the lack of official response from Hastings Borough Council, and Administrators whose role is to sell the pier without further losses - rather than keeping it in public ownership. That is their role, they are not evil or adversarial, they are doing their job. Ours is to overcome past mistakes and keep the pier in public hands.

Q: There are a lot of passionate people employed presently working tirelessly to keep the pier running and raise funds. The staff (current) have not been mentioned once. Are they considered? How will you work with us? A very distressing time! Dan Crease, Sous Chef

A: Our Transition Plan is radical and transformational from Day 1. We recognise how difficult this has been for existing staff and want to work with you to make the transition as positive as possible. We asked the Administrators if we could meet with the staff but were told to put all questions through GVA.

Q: What are the plans for the 100+ volunteers long term ?

A: To keep them and cherish them ! They are an indispensable part of the pier.

Q: What organisation or which people have put the pier into the hands of the administrators? Was it done legally under the new rules? Can it be stopped if it was not legal?

A: It was the Hastings Pier Charity Board of Directors who put the pier into administration. We wouldn’t have done it ourselves, and we feel that the shareholders should have been consulted, but our understanding is that it was within the letter of the law.

Q: In the absence of the Pier Membership Scheme, I donate monthly to the pier charity. What will happen to this money now?

A: Any funds you contribute to the pier charity are under the control of the Administrators. If you can donate to our crowdfunder page that would be terrific and it will make a huge difference to our fight to keep the pier in public hands.

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fohp2018>

Business Plan

Q: What experience do FOHP have in compiling their business plan?

A: Jess Steele OBE, has many years of putting together community ownership schemes and has supported dozens of groups of local people across the country to tackle challenging buildings, including co-ordinating the CADO (Community Assets in Difficult Ownership) programme, establishing a "crowd-lending" scheme, allowing residents put in cash to buy buildings and land to keep them community-owned and permanently affordable, and providing long-term coaching to a range of neighbourhood clients on community engagement, social investment, organisational development and property acquisition.

Adam Wide was founder and chairman of Openwide International and has 30 years experience of running entertainment programmes on Cruise ships, in Resorts and in Hotels, as well as being responsible for Cromer and Bournemouth piers. All of his operations made money - including the two piers. He has first hand knowledge of compiling business plans.

Alex de Rijke of dRMM, the original award-winning architects, has donated his services free .. up until planning permission. C/v's :- <http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/fohp>

Q: How much freedom does the operator of the 'top' have once the rent is paid to the 'bottom' - commercial overrides all?

A: If we partner with an external operator there will be a set of guidelines which are part of the contract. The operator then has to operate within those confines, but must be left to make profit in his own way as long as he adheres to the agreement. If we operate ourselves through a commercial subsidiary of course this is not a problem.

Q: How much does Bournemouth pier make and who owns it?

A: It is owned by Bournemouth Town Council who lease out the 'top' - and the figures are not public knowledge.

Q: Who are the audiences or demographics you are looking to attract with future events planning and how will the programme be strategically tailored to reach them effectively?

A: The Entertainment Programme will be designed to appeal to ALL demographics, as you would in a resort hotel, Butlins, Centre Parcs, or a Cruise ship. There are customers well into their 80's as well as kids clubs run for kids as young as 5. The advantage of having a flexible entertainment programme run by people (rather than having slot-machines) means that you can change the programme depending on local circumstance and who is on the pier at any one time.

Q: What is the timescale of the renovation and finding a new operator?

A: As soon as is humanly possible. We need to win the bid first. We have developed a 3-year transition plan to make the transition as smooth and fast as possible over that time.

Q: In respect of the potential partnership approach to ownership and operation, I would like to understand how the business model can be created looking at just the "bottom".

Would the cost / maintenance of ALL structures be included in this or would the commercial operator of the top have to pay that cost? Despite the enthusiastic presentation of content, how easy will it be to find a sympathetic operator when there are many examples of the slot machine approach to the detriment of this **award winning structure**?

A: Both Cromer and Bournemouth piers have the 'bottom' owned by the district council and the 'top' is leased from them. It is also not out of the question that we might employ people to operate the top ourselves. We have the expertise in house, so that is always a possibility.

Q: I have been confused - on the one hand we are told you want to own the bottom and rent the pier to a commercial enterprise, however much of the presentation tonight has been about what you want to do on the pier. So which is it?

A: It depends on who we find to be a partner. We have set out a series of creative ideas which are possible, viable and potentially profitable. The ideas presented form a shopping list of possibilities ... they are not the definitive programme and content. See them more as an 'ideas board' to generate footfall, increase dwell-time and raise average visitor spend. Whatever happens we want VERY much to remain part of the creative process. Should we lose in our bid we have made it clear to the administrators that it would still make sense for the purchaser to listen to us, as we represent the majority of the end users.

Q: Why is the yoga being stopped on the upper deck when it is so successful ?

A: We agree, but sadly we have no control over what is currently happening on the pier.

Q: How many local jobs for local people will the projects and venues on the pier create? You guys Rock - Becky Polain

A: At this stage it is too soon to say. With success would obviously come more jobs. Our Transition Plan in particular will rely heavily on a pool of local labour – paid and voluntary.

Q: Given that half of the businesses in St. Leonards cannot even remain open 4 days a week (including St. Leonards Bar) will these money-spinning ideas just undermine existing businesses? Joan Osbaldestan

A: We hope that by making the pier a destination in its own right, we will attract MORE people to the area to spend in the local shops. Nothing planned for the pier is likely to compete with local shops ... but at the same time once people have come to the pier in larger numbers and for longer periods, then we are then in a good position to promote local businesses and encourage them to spread out and go further afield.

Q: I am frightened by proposals having lots of monitors and TV screens - we really want to keep the pier as a peaceful environment?

A: Any sound would of course be self-contained in the Entertainment hub. Like the White Rock Theatre we would be sound insulated and hopefully not be a burden to local residents or users of the pier. The video screens would similarly be housed indoors. What we can definitely say is that the sounds we make will be controlled and not the constant dings, pings, and klaxons and bleeps that come from slot-machines. We are absolutely committed

to leaving the 'sea-end' of the pier as open as possible to enjoy very much as it is ... for fresh air, wellbeing, fun and romance.

Q: The huts on the pier were a lovely addition and I had hoped they would be filled with local craftspeople etc. How do you intend to fill these in the future? Or do you intend to lose them? Most of the moneymaking plans are focussed on the large, I think we need to remember the small as well.

A: Quite right. Our plan would be to let the huts FREE for the first few months to people who come forwards with proposals that will attract footfall. These might be local small businesses, craft makers, even hobbyists, who may not otherwise be able to afford a shop to encourage good ideas and to attract anyone who might want one. That way we will have a vibrant 'shopping street' of small businesses and customers to enjoy the experience.

Q: What are the implications of pursuing a commercial sponsor? Would this be completely at odds with the principles? Is there a possibility of finding a commercial partner that shares these principles?

A: There are many sponsors who are commercially minded and yet able to conform to community values. Our intention would be to identify them and approach them. Any ideas or leads would be gratefully received.

Q: How will the operator fulfil its corporate social responsibly?

A; By having us breathing down his neck ! And by having a contract with a set of inviolate guidelines for them to adhere to.

Design

Q: Where will the loos be?

A: Too early to say in specific terms. But the architect has done us proud so far and will certainly make sure there are enough for the capacities we are expecting.

Q: How will the structures on the pier withstand 120 mile/hour gales?

A: In the same way that the existing structures do. The architect is responsible for making sure that he takes into account our situation and design them to be "fit for purpose".

Q: Are the architects drawings available to view? I couldn't see the projections from the side of the theatre.

A; Yes, though please understand that these are very much 'ideas' and a style sheet, rather than the ACTUAL designs. The amazing thing is that Alex de Rijke has committed dRMM to do the design for free - up until planning permission. This is a fantastic 'coup' for us, and really strengthens our bid. The designs and other FOHP information can be found here : <http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/fohp>

Q: How can we create a better link through Robertson Street from the town centre to the pier?

A: We are looking into several alternatives, but one thing is clear ... it is needed !

Q: Could you use corrosion resistant structural materials in future repairs (e.g. stainless steel)?

A: Possibly, it is certainly worth investigating the cost. This would be something for the architects and Peter Wheeler the Chief Engineer to decide.

Q: How about a zip wire from the top of White Rock to the pier linking the two? As a statement attraction. Neil

A; Great idea. Or from the pier to the beach. This should be investigated as part of the White Rock masterplan that the council has prepared.

Q: There is a gap under the pier (in the middle, I walked through it). How about a glass underwater bar/café/conference room etc.? With an entrance from the top of the pier. Neil

A: Another great idea if we are successful in winning the bid we will hold a series of "Creative Brainstorms" in which anyone is invited to come and give us their thoughts and ideas .. no matter how fanciful. We will look at them, cost, and if they are viable make sure that they happen. THAT is one of the massive advantages of keeping the pier in public hands.

Creative ideas

Q: Why not have a railway line from the Old Town to the Pier? The company that runs the Old Town miniature railway is willing to run a road train. - Lynda and Colin Foy

A: You are quite right and we understand that Hastings Borough Council are already looking into this

Q: Have we applied to host the Bayeux Tapestry on the pier?

A: This is a little 'chicken and egg'. Since we don't own the pier we are not in a position to apply for it. It is unlikely that the pier would be a suitable place for such a precious and delicate thing. But the coming of the tapestry to the UK will raise the profile of 1066 and offers a great opportunity for Hastings to capitalise on.

Q: Could you re-establish the landing stage (used to take e.g. Waverley)? Could increase income and footfall - Bruce Latimer / **Q: Any plans to re-instigate the landing stage?**

A: Yes, we have talked about this and LOVE the idea. It always came up in the consultation and has been seen as an important part of Phase 2, although not enough on its own.

Q: Is there the possibility of an artificial reef (shallow) for improved fishing? Bruce Latimer

A: Yes there is a possibility. We would need to cost it out, but it sounds brilliant.

Q: Why not look more to the sea? Fishing? Boat trips to Eastbourne or France?

A: Absolutely right. We should take advantage of our geographical location, and the fact that we are over water. Neither Brighton nor Eastbourne nor nearly any of the British seaside piers take advantage of one of their most exciting assets !

Q: Will there be the opportunity for pleasure boat trips from the pier during the summer season? Good way to bring people to the pier, gather a % of the fares for the pier, passengers will spend money on the pier

A: We hope so. We need to build the landing stage first. But this something we are very keen on.

Q: Could you do some events to celebrate the history of the pier? Tribute gigs of the bands that played there. Some sort of retro pleasure boat experience, or festival with period costumes, vintage market, pop up bars and music

A: Absolutely. We love how the people of Hastings and St. Leonards like to 'dress up' and put on a parade ! ... Our plan is to have a year-round entertainment programme, and use events such as you describe to help even out the "shoulder periods" either side of the summer season (Spring and Autumn), and to make sure that the pier is busy for as much of the year as possible ... Christmas Market etc.

Q: Weekly Farmers market?

A: If we can find the farmers - no reason at all why not ... And many other forms of market bedside. All these sorts of events need to build up a clientele and be a regular feature so people get into the habit of using them. There will be a full programme of events which we hope will be published, regular and become part of the 'fabric' and routine of people's week.

Fundraising

Q: Why didn't you start fundraising earlier?

A: We wish we had ! The Friends of Hastings Pier was only started in February of this year, and we assumed that we would have until Sept/Oct to get our funding in place as this is when the Heritage Lottery Fund said they would cover the losses of the Pier. However, the Administrators have accelerated the process to prevent the pier making any further losses than it need. We are now reacting to that situation. The Friends of Hastings Pier need to show that they have enough capital to sustain two years of losses (estimated at around £1.2m), to be able to be credible bidders alongside businessmen with deeper pockets !

Q: Do you have any donors?

A; Yes, and please join us by donating here :- <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fohp2018>

Q: This meeting cost £10k – this is an extraordinary amount. Can you be trusted? Why should I trust you with yet more money? - S Horgan

A: We are pleased to report that the meeting did not cost anything like that amount. The meeting cost, including the facilities, press advertising, fliers and posters around £1,000. £10k was mentioned as the figure that due to our good governance the national funder 'Power to Change' has made available to support the Friends of Hastings Pier. Thanks to us, the meeting didn't actually cost the people of Hastings and St. Leonards anything. So we hope that helps to earn your trust that we are here working on the tightest of budgets and getting as much as we can for nothing !

Q: What will it cost to sustain the pier into the future per annum?

A: It costs around £230,000 pa to keep the maintenance team, undertake repairs and pay for insurance. Our working budgets are to be found here :-

<http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/fohp>

Publicity / media

Q : Approach Sky News to support the pier and tie in with their 'Plastic Tide' campaign? Take advantage of civic momentum the deposit return scheme on plastic / cans etc? There is a lot of awareness about plastic waste especially since blue planet – could this be an ethos of the pier?

A: Great idea ! There are so many outlets that we should be contacting, sadly we are a volunteer organisation with not enough hands !! Would you consider helping us at this crazy time ? Please come and say hello here and we can use ANY skills you have Email us on friendsofhastingspier@gmail.com and ask to join our Loomio platform where we discuss work in progress and make arrangements.

Q: I love the idea about the sustainable energy project – that will draw a loads of people.

A; We like it too. The Pier should be all about fun, creating memories, and protecting our future environment!

Communications to shareholders/supporters

Q: Where can I view the business plan and architectural drawings ?

A: Along with all the other documents, here :-

<http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/fohp>

Q: When are the weekly meetings? Could there be an ideas brainstorming session?

A: The Meetings have so far been held on a Friday on or close to the pier at 4.30pm. They are for 'active and constructive volunteers' and whoever comes is welcome as long as they're willing to get stuck in! To find out about each meeting it is best to join Loomio – send an email to friendsofhastingspier@gmail.com to ask to join.

Q: I knew nothing of your Friday meetings. Could you please advise me of the time and place?

A: Please see above. It has been hard communicating to people without the shareholders lists, but genuinely everyone is welcome and we can always use an extra pair of hands.

Q: Why were we not emailed about this meeting? As a shareholder I find this extremely bad mannered.

A: We completely agree ! But the Administrators have refused to give us the list of Shareholders. To them we are just a group of interested individuals with no legal status. We are residents of Hastings trying to pick up where the old 'Hastings Pier Charity' left off. But we are not the same and don't have access to the e-mail addresses ... which is why we had to raise money to produce the posters and flyers and to take out newspaper advertising to let people know of the meeting.

Q: Why didn't you prepare us on who the candidates are and why they should be representing us? - S Horgan

A: This follows on from above. Of course we would have loved to have done ... but we didn't know who was going to turn up to the meeting. We have no lists, no way of getting in touch with people ... just a passion and a loud voice ! Thanks for caring though ... and if you would like to get further involved please contact us on friendsofhastingspier@gmail.com, we need ALL the help we can get !

Q: Do the shareholders have any say in the administrators decision to withhold our information, i.e who do we complain to about not being kept informed?

A: The administrators are the only people the shareholders could complain to.

Q: How can those who don't have emails be communicated with? Phyllis Hare

A : This is difficult because electronic communication is free whereas posting letters costs money. We will be out and about around the pier over the Bank Holiday weekend so please pop down there and say hello.

Q: Is legal challenge by shareholders to the administrators a possible tactic? Stewart Rayment

Q: I presume the legality of the sale of the pier under the feet of the shareholders has been tested?

A: We took legal advice, and the Charity seems to have done everything within the letter of the law. There is also some confusion as to the protocol for a charitable community benefit society going into administration as this has only been possible since the Cooperative and Community Benefit Society Act 2014 and has not been much tested to date.

Q: If you're a shareholder what happens if one of the other bidders buys the pier?

A: This is really a question for the administrators. But most of us are shareholders too, and our understanding is that our money will be lost, but it is possible that the 'list of shareholders' will be seen as an asset of the defunct charity, and so will pass to the new owner. But this we can't know for sure.

Partners

Q: Do you have the support of the council?

A: Since the Monday meeting and the support for FOHP was so visible, the council have said they would like to do more to help. However this cycle of local elections comes at a terrible time as no promises can be made until they are over.

Q: Could the council be engaged on an infrastructure level to increase footfall to the pier?

A: We hope so and will be seeking their support with this and many other items which we think will help sustain the longevity of the pier to the benefit of the whole area.

Q: A direct walk from the station needs to be well-highlighted somehow with the councils help (down Brassey Steps at mid point – decorate the steps with pier branding !)

A: Excellent idea. If we win the bid this would be something creative and constructive the council could do.

Q: We need an Old Town – St. Leonards tram – is this possible? - Joan Osbaldestan

A: Absolutely. The council have already said they are looking into the possibility.

Q: We need transportation from London – better trains/roads?

A: Good point. Though a little bit outside our jurisdiction. Perhaps a letter to Amber Rudd would help? Write anyway and put some pressure on her – now she has a bit more time on her hands (!) :- amber.rudd.mp@parliament.uk

Q: Has HBC made a pledge to invest in the pier, considering that if successful the pier will generate revenue?

A: No they haven't, in fact the reverse - they have said that there is NO more money for the pier. This is an area where public pressure can only help! Please feel free to write.

Contingency planning

Q: What will you do if your bid doesn't succeed?

A: If we don't succeed we will continue to be a pressure group asking for a say in how the new operator plans to develop the pier. We will continue to put pressure on the Administrators and the HLF to continue to recognise the history ... that this pier has been

built with public money and community effort, and as such should be made available to the public and that all the passion and energy which has made it what it is today is respected.

Q: If administrators go ahead and sell the whole pier to a private owner should there be a community demonstration on the pier?

A: If the pier goes into private hands after all this struggle we think it highly likely that many people would show their despair in many ways A demonstration could well be one of them. However, we have not reached that point yet and we are doing everything in our power to keep our bid viable, comparable to the others, and credible.

We have been given a two hour meeting with the Administrators on Friday 11th May, which is a strong indication that they are taking us seriously. Two hours is a great length of time to put across our vision, our passion, and the fact that not only do we have the people of Hastings and St. Leonards behind us ... but we also have a route to making the pier stable and successful for many years to come, in a way that complements its award-winning architecture. Onwards and Upwards !

Wish us well, and come and join us ... we need all hands on deck!

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