



Historic England

Ms Christine Ward
North Somerset District Council
Post Point 15
Town Hall
Walliscote Grove Road
Weston-Super-Mare
BS23 1UL

Date: 26th May 2020

Dear Christine,

Re: Birnbeck Pier, Weston Super Mare

Birnbeck Pier is one of the most important heritage cases on the South West regions Heritage at Risk Register.

Of the 100 piers recorded at the turn of the 20th Century only 55 now remain. Of these surviving piers 26 are listed structures, with only 1 grade I and 6 grade II* which include Birnbeck Pier. Built in 1867 the grade II* listed Pier is a unique structure connecting Birnbeck Island to the mainland.

It closed in 1994 and successive owners' restoration plans have not proved viable or acceptable in planning terms.

Historic England has been concerned over the condition of the pier for some time. In 1999 we added the structure to the Heritage at Risk Register – the national list of heritage assets which are considered to be at risk from neglect, decay or loss. This focus has allowed us to provide support including technical advice from our in-house architects, quantity surveyors and structural engineers. We also provided a grant of £80k towards the cost of trial repairs in 2008 to help inform overall costs and technical solutions for repairs. These works were completed in 2010 -11. The RNLI continued a presence on the Island until 2013 when it had to relocate for safety reasons. The last repairs were carried out in 2014 to help secure the pier to the landward side but the pier has continued to deteriorate due to a lack of maintenance and repair in the intervening years. Associated buildings and structures have also been subject to heritage crime and vandalism, as the island is accessible on foot at low tide.



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We understand that the pier was sold to CNM Estates in 2014 after a protracted conveyance starting in 2011. Since purchasing a number of development proposals have been informally put forward, none of which have been deemed feasible or appropriate in respect of the Grade II* listed pier and the other five Grade II listed structures and buildings at the site.

North Somerset District Council served a Section 77 Dangerous Building notice on the site under the 1984 Building Act after the partial collapse of the North Jetty during Storm Frank at the end of 2015. Listed Building Consent was then given for the demolition of this structure in 2016 with advice from Historic England. Work was stopped by the Council due to unauthorised works being carried out associated with this demolition in 2017.

Birnbeck Pier Regeneration Trust and Friends Group have played an important role in raising awareness of the plight of the pier and associated structures and have been engaged in local fundraising and support including monitoring the condition of the pier. As an important stakeholder with strong links to the community Historic England has been pleased to help advise and support the Trust to increase their resilience supporting their charitable purpose.

Since 2014 it has become increasingly clear that the developer has not been able to address the conservation of the pier by a sustainable development scheme that was acceptable in planning terms. As a result Historic England has been working closely with North Somerset District Council, providing grant aid to support enforcement action under section 48 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The failure of the owner to comply with a Repairs Notice is regrettable and we have therefore agreed to provide a further grant to assist the Council to proceed to Compulsory Purchase of the pier including any associated land and structures to secure the heritage asset.

Historic England will continue to provide advice on any proposals and studies to secure the conservation of the pier as well as restoring key features to preserve, where possible, the historic character of the pier.

We wish to confirm that we are fully supportive of the Council in progressing towards CPO as we think this may be the last realistic window of opportunity to save and bring back into use the grade II* listed pier and some of the other ancillary listed buildings which will in our view have considerable public benefit to the local community and economy as well as the national heritage.

Yours sincerely,



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