

Appendix H

Birnbeck Pier Timeline (1862 – 2020)

1862	Construction begins The pier was designed for Richard and John Laybourne by Eugenius Birch. Of cantilever construction it was erected by Messrs Toogood from parts prefabricated at their Isca Iron Foundry, Newport, South Wales. The total cost at the time was £67,775
28 October 1864	Foundation stone laid by Master Cecil Hugh Smyth-Piggot, the 4 year old son of the Lord of the Manor
5 June 1867	Birnbeck Pier is opened by Master Cecil Hugh Smyth-Piggot. The admission price is 1d. In the first 3 months of operation, 120,000 people pass the turnstiles. At the end of the summer the admission price is doubled to 2d.
15 June 1867	The first paddle steamer to use the pier, the "Heather Belle" arrives from Cardiff
1872	Addition of a 250 ft. wooden north jetty and a small plunge bath on the island
/1882	First RNLI Lifeboat Station established – the boat was called the "William James Holt", and was slung from davits
August 1884	Building of a pavilion with a large hall and reading rooms. The island was asphalted A tramway opened to transport luggage from steamers
1887	P & A Campbell's paddle steamers first appeared in the Bristol Chanel The switchback ride is now in use
1889	Construction of a boathouse on the north side – there was a second lifeboat also named the "William James Holt"
1890	Fairground added – the amusements included a Theatre of Wonders, Mechanical Models, Alpine Railway, Shooting Gallery, Park Swings and a Merry Go Round
1892	New west low water jetty being built to cope with the large number of steamers.
1893	More facilities added including Tea Rooms, Coffee Rooms, a Bar, a Band, Photo Studio, Bazaars selling souvenirs and a telephone for business men
26 December 1897	Fire damaged the main buildings (including the funfair) on Boxing Day. These were replaced by the structures currently standing (although these have also been altered during the C20th)
1898	Opening of a new pavilion and (July 1898) low water jetty (this jetty was closed from 1903 – 1910 and remained until 1932). The clock tower now has 4 faces instead of 1
1901/2	New lifeboat station built and opened on south of Birnbeck island, to accommodate a larger lifeboat the "Colonel Stock" (which arrived in 1903). Before alterations this had the longest lifeboat slipway in England at 112 m (just under 368 ft.)
May 1902	Weston's tram service started linking the pier with the GWR station
10 September 1903	The Great Gale caused considerable damage
1903 – 1904	Pier closed for eight months to enable repairs to both jetties damaged in the 10/09/1903 storm
1905	Wooden north jetty replaced by steel one extending to 300 ft. (91.4 m) The rebuilding of the west jetty started Opening of Weston's second pier – The Grand Pier in June
1905	Existing North Jetty built The Water Chute is in use (and remained until 1923)
1908	The various amusements now included the Flying Machine (also known as Airships), Helter Skelter, Maze, Bioscope, Waterchute, Switchback, Cake Walk and Zig Zag slide
June 1908	A new 36ft siding brought the promenade tramway to the entrance of the pier's private road
1909	Concrete platform built increasing size of island
1910	Reopening of the west low water jetty (this was still in use in 1916, but not mentioned after 1919)
1933	The opening of a large funfair on the Grand Pier caused the abandonment and closure of Birnbeck Pier's amusements
17 April 1937	Closure of Weston's tramways

Appendix H

1940	As the pier is of continuous girder construction, luckily it did not suffer the wartime fate of other piers around the coast of having a section cut out of it
1941 - 1946	War Service: HMS Birnbeck With the outbreak of WWII, the Pier had a lucky escape as it was due to be partially demolished as an anti-invasion precaution. It was requisitioned by the Admiralty and when the demolition team arrived, they were informed by the Pier Master that as it was a chained – linked construction pier, anchored at one end to Birnbeck Island, it would collapse altogether if any sections were removed. The Admiralty then took on the Pier as it was, and it became known as HMS Birnbeck. A great deal of secret and experimental activities and weapons testing went on there through the work of the Directorate of Miscellaneous Weapons Development (DMWD – known colloquially as the ‘Wheezers and Dodgers’). This included the Barnes Wallis ‘Bouncing Bomb’.
1962	P & A Campbell bought the pier from the Birnbeck Pier Company
1971	The final season of regular passenger steamer services. At the height of the traffic there were 1,000 steamer trips per year carrying 200,000 people. The day trip was especially popular amongst Welsh miners, with most people spending the entire day on the pier. The total number of visitors in a good year averaged 750,000.
1972	The pier was purchased by Mr John Critchley
1974	Several structures Grade II listed on the island
1979	The last ship – ‘M. V. Balmoral’ sails from the Pier
1984	Pier damaged by drifting equipment from engineering work in Sand Bay. Immediate repairs were carried out.
1990	Pier badly damaged by storms
1994	Pier closed to the public for safety reasons
1996	Friends of the Old Pier Society formed (registered charity)
1999	RNLI installed a walkway across the Pier to allow them safe access.
2004	Birnbeck Regeneration Trust formed (registered charity)
2006	September – Pier and Island purchased by Urban Splash
2007	August – RIBA design competition to bring life back to the Pier and Island attracts 95 entries from around the world including – Hong Kong, Canada, Russia and the USA.
2009	Adjacent Royal Pier Hotel sold to Birnbeck Investments Ltd. English Heritage awards £80k to Urban Splash for trial repair works to the pier
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire destroys Royal Pier Hotel site adjacent to pier • North Somerset Council carry out urgent demolition and health and safety works to the former hotel site. • Mann Williams (Consulting & Civil Engineers) carry out the trial repair works to the pier and publish report and recommendations
2011	Urban Splash commences process of setting sells pier to CNM Estates (Birnbeck) Ltd,
2013	After 131 years, RNLI leave their lifeboat station on the pier as deemed unsafe for their staff and volunteers
2014	Urban Splash completed purchase to CNM Estates (Birnbeck) Ltd
2015	December: Partial collapse of North Jetty following Storm Frank
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Somerset 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 • September 2016: Listed building consent application made for partial demolition of the North Jetty to remove walkway and 5 Trestle piers submitted. Historic England response to consultation issued with conditions was – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>No objection. The assessment takes in to account the history of the North Jetty and its significance to the main Grade II* Birnbeck pier. The Jetty itself is Grade II listed believed to have been built in the late 1860's but was extensively repaired between 1903 and 1905. The trestle legs present today date from the turn of the last century. The North Jetty's significance to the main pier is defined as having a historic and</i>

Appendix H

	<p><i>social significance, as this was integral to the success of the pier and represents how many visitors came to Weston. It also has an aesthetic value in connection with view of the main pier. Localised collapse occurred during the stormy weather in the Christmas and New Year of 2015/16, this has been a result of corrosion of the mild steel which is vulnerable in saline environments and excessive load. Historic England fully acknowledge the need to remove the danger from the public, although the removal of the deck will have an adverse impact on both the significant of the jetty itself and the setting of the Grade II* main pier. The clear convincing evidence given in the application shows a clear structural engineering justification for the localised demolition which Historic England support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listed building consent approved with conditions
2017	<p>January: Contractors working for pier owner arrive on site to commence demolition of the North Jetty. North Somerset Council orders work to stop one day later due to unauthorised works being carried out i.e. the creation of an illegal roadway from the top of the cliff down to Birnbeck Island, dumping tons of shingle on the cliff face despite this being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). North Somerset Council advised the pier owners they would have to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove the shingle and materials and return the cliff site to its previous condition (to date this has not happened) Seek advice from Natural England as any impact on the Severn Estuary, which is an SSSI, is subject to a Marine Management Licence and SSSI consent. These consents are dealt with by the Marine Management Organisation and Natural England and will be required for the demolition works for the jetty (no evidence that the pier owners have sought this specialist advice) Submit a separate request for planning permission if demolition works to the North Jetty required land based access (to date no such application has been received) <p>To date, there has been no further action from the pier owner to resolve these specific issues.</p>
2018	High winds and corrosion caused collapse to some of the main bridge's railings, the section of broken and unsafe railings have now been removed and stored at the pier head.
2019	6 August 2019 -NSC sent 1 st warning letter to current owner at x 2 registered addresses re condition of pier and requesting proposals for going forward
2019	21 August 2019 - NSC send 2 nd warning letter to current owner at x 2 registered addresses re condition of pier and requesting proposals going forward
2019	9 September 2019 – NSC issues Repairs Notice to current owner, RNLI (as they have a charge on the property relating to rights of way) and additional person recorded as a charge on Land Registry title deeds. Two month response time allowed by law
2019	11 November 2019 – NSC sent follow up to Repairs Notice additional letter requesting owner respond to Repairs Notice
2019	11 November 2019 – response received from current owner's solicitors
2019	13 December 2019 – NSC responds to letter from current owner's solicitors
2020	<p>February - September North Somerset Council agrees to take forward the issuing of a CPO in respect of Birnbeck Pier (full council meeting of 14 July 2020).</p> <p>July Listed Building Consent application submitted by consultants appointed by current owner - Birnbeck Pier, Birnbeck Island Birnbeck Road Weston-super-Mare BS23 2BN Ref. No: 20/P/1784/LBC Received: Thu 30 Jul 2020</p> <p>Listed Building Consent application for immediate works relating to Repairs Notice consisting of: Section 4 (part)- Ensure appropriate surveys and inspections are undertaken; Section 7 - Arrange for temporary bracing frames to be secured to trestle legs to provide additional stability to trestle legs during repairs. This may include scaffolding construction for temporary bracing frames, subject to contractor design, or</p>

Appendix H

	<p>fabrication of bespoke temporary bracing frames that can be more readily moved between frames as repairs progress; Section 8- Remove deck boards. Cast iron seat components, lamp posts and all associated materials. Arrange for these to be transported to an offsite facility for logging, assessment and repair, or reconstruction depending upon condition; Section 11 (part) - Remove the principal deck level spider bracing; Section 13 - Remove the trestle perimeter and internal bracing member. All trestle bracing should be removed and transported to an offsite facility for repair or reconstruction</p> <p>August Listed Building Consent application submitted by the RNLI - Birnbeck Pier Birnbeck Island Birnbeck Road Weston-super-Mare BS23 2BN Ref. No: 20/P/1933/LBC Received: Mon 17 Aug 2020 Works comprising of physical structural surveys to the trestle legs, pier abutments and foundation excavations of the trestles columns of the listed pier</p> <p>The most recent information re both LBC applications can be found here –</p> <p><u>NSC planning portal search facility</u></p>
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