

News from Shotley Pier



Following the publication of a yet another negative article by Derek Davis regarding Shotley Pier, this time about the waste timber pictured above, we feel it necessary to rectify his fake news.

First, it's worth explaining the background to Mr Davis's apparent vendetta against the pier group. It's ancient history to us, but people tell us it seems to be an obsession for Mr Davis.

Mr Davis had been co-opted to the Board in early 2017, but it quickly became apparent his wishes for the pier were rather different to the membership and the Board. Clearly, when someone continually disagrees with others and cannot accept democratically made choices, it is time to part ways. He left in August 2017 with very bad grace, and his subsequent behaviour meant the Board was obliged to issue a parting of the ways letter in December 2017.

Our funders tell us this happens at a lot of community projects, but it is rather sad.

The Facts

We've been making solid progress at the pier, with the first 30 metres (98 feet) renovated, and if not for Covid19, it would by now have been opened for leisurely strolling. That key moment will have to wait until spring as lockdown measures may get ever more stringent.

Our team of volunteers includes our professionally qualified civil engineering team who liaise with our contractors at Amicus, Ashwell Tropical Timbers, and other professional companies. All these relationships are conducted with the primary aim of achieving good value for money in spending grants and funds raised from the public. We have achieved free services where possible and good quotes from tenders. We do not progress with work unless we are sure funds are available.

The materials removed from the pier to date have been huge concrete slabs, stanchions from the railings, and timber. In all cases, we have assessed with the support of our expert contractors what could be used again and offered unwanted elements locally.

The concrete slabs that have been removed have been offered to the cliff repair group and are being stored by us until they need them. These slabs are very large and very heavy. If any other local project is interested in using the slabs, there is still a very large quantity available. Individuals are also welcome to have some, but the practical issue of getting them moved has deterred people.

The stanchions are in a poor state but we have retained them for use later – possibly only for decorative purposes but nevertheless they are being stored.

All the timbers were removed offsite to a local storage area kindly provided by a local farmer at no charge to the pier group, a very public-spirited help to us. After sorting the timbers, those suitable for further use at the pier have been retained. We are aiming for long term suitability, not bodging the job by using worn out materials that won't last long.

We offered the unwanted timbers to the few local people who had expressed an interest, but the difficulty in handling such large pieces proved too challenging,

Amicus Civil Engineering

Dave Gibson, Director at Amicus Civil Engineering, who many of you met while he was on site managing the works, said:

"During the removal of the existing timbers, myself and the pier project's civil engineering team assessed which timbers could be used on the renovation in the next phase. We have held back a considerable amount locally, for future assessment and re-use, but some was inevitably too damaged, too rotten, too short or too full of rusty bolts and large fixing nails to be suitable for long term re-use as part of the continued pier renovation. Ashwell's business model involves reclaiming and improving such waste using their considerable knowledge and experience. They collected a small amount of timber, not suitable for re-use on the pier, at their own cost which will be recouped by reclaiming it rather than the timber being put in a skip".

Ashwells Tropical Timbers

"We were saddened to learn of the news that Shotley pier supporters had been unable to take home off-cuts of damaged timber from their beloved pier.

As the UK's leading timber reclamation specialist so much of our work is about the preservation of memories & protection of architectural history. From our timber yard and mill in Essex, we reclaim hardwoods; repurposing the timber for future use in an FSC® certified process that prevents further deforestation and saves unwanted timber from landfill.

On this project the Shotley Heritage Charitable Community Benefit Society (SHCCBS) invited us to survey existing pier timbers, and to remove those which were found to be too degraded for safe future use on the restoration project. It had been hoped that all of the Douglas Fir in this case could be repurposed and used in

the pier restoration, however, due to many years of neglect our expert timber surveyor found that this was not the case for some sections of timber.

At the request of SHCCBS our team removed the unusable timber, so that it could be repurposed for projects that do not demand the same high levels of strength and durability as a pedestrian pier structure, e.g. garden pergolas etc. We were not party to conversations between SHCCBS and Shotley Pier supporters, nor did we know of any request for sections to be made available.

This story has touched our heart and we would like to help if we can. We are therefore more than happy to make available a selection of Douglas Fir off-cuts, free of charge to Shotley Pier supporters, at our own expense.

Shotley Pier supporters who would like to arrange to visit the yard to collect a piece of timber should email info@ashwelltimber.com and we will contact to arrange during January."

Sponsored Plank Plaques – still time to give a great gift for Christmas

Anyone who would like to sponsor a plank as a last-minute Christmas present has until Christmas Eve to make a payment - BACS or Debit Card by phone, and a gift voucher can be emailed to the recipient announcing the gift to be made and installed in January. Email shotleypier@gmail.com for full details.

The advertisement features a teal background with white text. At the top, it reads "Happy Christmas - your gift is your name on a sponsored plank at this historic pier". Below this, there are two photographs: on the left, a view of the pier's wooden structure extending into the water; on the right, a close-up of a wooden plank being worked on by a person. In the center, there is a white box with the text "Name of Recipient" and a logo for "SHOTLEY PIER 1894" featuring a stylized 'X' shape.

Happy Christmas - your gift
is your name on a sponsored plank at this historic pier

Name of Recipient

SHOTLEY
PIER
1894