



### The injustice of it all ...



One of the things I do, and have done for a long time, is to have an involvement in SARC – the [Southampton Advice and Representation Centre](#). It is a place that I am enormously proud to be involved with, but also a place which makes me angry, purely because of the excellent work it does alongside some of the most disadvantaged people in the City and how that work is limited and threatened by “Austerity”, that sacred word which represents something which, if we don’t stick to it all rigidly, we will be collectively going to 'hell in a handcart'.

Am I allowed to mention Hell on here? It’s a word I was told off for using when I was a child, but this is a theological place and Hell is a theological concept, or for some an actual place. Whether it is an actual place or just a concept is not a question which occupies a great deal of my time. But it seems an appropriate word to use here, because it describes forcefully the situation that some people find themselves in. These are people, more and more of whom need help, while there is year on year less funding available to help them.

At a recent Trustees' meeting, the Centre's manager reported that we were having to go back to 4 days per week opening. We had gone to 4 days per week opening when funding cuts began really to hit home, the staff of the Centre choosing collectively to take a drop in hours, rather than see redundancies in a relatively small but highly committed staff. They're like that – wonderful people who care deeply about what they are doing, who they are doing it for, and who they are doing it with. All that is more important than what they get paid.

But then we had applied, alongside a number of other advice agencies in the City, for additional funding unexpectedly available to re-expand services, even if only temporarily. This was successful. It covered all too short a period of time, but it did mean that we could help more people more quickly, people who are in serious need. But what sort of people are we talking about. The Centre does two kinds of work:

- Employment tribunal stuff when individuals are taking their former employees to task for wrongful dismissal or similar.
- Benefits Advice, including at the moment representation at numerous appeals over tribunal findings for PIP –Personal Independence Payments and similar.

It is only when you hear of the work in a place like this that you realise firstly just how cynical and manipulative the worst sort of employers can be, sacking people after 1 year and 11 months because you have to be employed for 2 years before a wrongful dismissal case is possible.

On a more pragmatic advice, you also hear of the poor quality of many decisions made by the current range of benefit terminals. It cannot be right that so many decisions are overturned so easily by a sensibly and well-prepared case. It leads one to question the quality of the original decisions, and whether this should be challenged more formally.

We also heard at the last meeting, though, of a coming together of the

Advice Agencies across the City, working towards a proposal for a unified and co-ordinated approach to their work. It is clear there used to be suspicion and poor understanding of each other's operation, but organisations are now co-operating in ways one never might have foreseen. This is one very positive element of the current situation.

*David Wrighton*



# The IBEX AGM

Thursday, 9 June at 7pm

Central Baptist Church, Devonshire Road, Southampton.

# CASINOS!

## Social Evil or Economic Boost?

A licence has been granted to **Aspers** to build a "Large" Casino as part of the Royal Pier Development Project - due to open in 2021.

Is this a good thing?..... Or a bad thing?

With

### RACHEL LAMPARD

- Leader of the Joint Public Issues Team
- Vice-President Designate of the Methodist Conference,
- Former member of the Gambling Commission and Current member of the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board.



## All Welcome!

For further information, please contact David Wrighton -

[tl@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk](mailto:tl@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk)

To Gamble or not to Gamble, that is the question! If it is a question that exercises you, please come along to Central Southampton on June 9<sup>th</sup>, where a very real current situation will be discussed.

When we invited Rachel Lampard, the leader of the JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team), to

come to speak to the IBEX AGM in May, we were aware of two things:

1. That Southampton was one of 8 local Authorities across the Country which had the right to grant a licence for the building of a Large Casino.
2. That Rachel had a great expertise and expertise in gambling as a social issue.

That joined up thinking seems to have reaped dividends in that, over the Easter period, the announcement was made that the licence for the casino had actually been granted, making this again a hot topic locally.

But some words of explanation and thoughts about one or two matters:

- The words “Super Casino” are bandied about a lot, but there is no such thing. One was mooted for Manchester originally, but this was abandoned in 2007.
- What we will see locally is a **large** casino. “Large” mainly indicates the physical size of the facilities, the number of gaming machines allowed, the size of the jackpots, the number of gaming tables and similar. You can check it out [here](#).
- The licence for the Large Casino in Southampton was granted to Aspers over the Easter period. You can visit their website [here](#).
- The Churches in Southampton are concerned about this, but the concern is accompanied by a realism that one will not stop it happening.
- It will be an economic boost to the City, which is constantly striving to be a “Regional Centre”, to attract people for their leisure time from an ever wider area.
- It is not in the interests of Casino operators (or other betting companies) to have to deal with problem gamblers. They are more likely to see a casino as a place of entertainment.

**The European Referendum –  
Something Objective and thoughtful  
to encourage you to think!**



It is the most important decision that will have been entrusted to the British Electorate for many a year, or even decade – more important than any Local or General Election. We tried, in our last edition, to point people towards informed and objective resources.

It is no secret that IBEX is a fan of the JPIT – [the Joint Public Issues Team](#) – which works on behalf of the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches nationally, with the Church of Scotland also becoming involved and interested.

The JPIT had promised a Resource pack on the Referendum issue and the things that we will be deciding about. Here it is. A first glance shows it to be exactly what we hoped – objective and unbiased – and with a number of pointers about things that should be considered in it all from a Christian perspective – to do the right thing in the light of a Christian Faith.

But it doesn't tell you what to do, it presents the question and leaves you to think about it, and to make up your own mind ...

[See for yourself.](#)

**Chaplaincy Get Together**



If you are involved in or interested in chaplaincy, particularly retail chaplaincy or town/city centre chaplaincy, then do come along. Well established, just setting out, or considering the idea and are not sure where to start, other people have been there too.

**Date: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June.**

**Time: 12.15 for Arrivals and Lunch, before a prompt start at 1pm. Finish at 3.45pm**

**Place: The St Peter's Church Centre, Jewry Street, Winchester**

(Well served by the very good Winchester Park and Ride (£3 per car for parking and bus for all the passengers), and within a few minutes' walk of the very well connected railway station)

**Speaker – Nigel Hemming – Pastor at the Vineyard Church in Winchester**

Nigel was heard to mention at a meeting recently that he spends a lot of his time behind a desk in his office, and so he really welcomes the opportunity to go out among the people. He could not help but feel that “it is what Jesus would be doing”.

A light Buffet Lunch will be provided. Donations would be welcome on the day..... but we would rather have you there than worrying about whether you can afford it!

**RSVP to David Wrighton – [tl@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk](mailto:tl@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk) – mainly for catering purposes, and please let us know if you have any specific dietary requirements.**

## “What Shall We Do With our Church” Training Day



IBEX has hosted three of these events so far, and all have been greatly appreciated. Now we are going back to where it started.

**Date: Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June at 10am** (precise timing to be decided.

**Place: Buckland URC, Portsmouth**

The first of these days we led took place at Buckland when it was a Church in desperate need of fund-raising and modernisation – although to be fair much of the fund-raising had been done. Now, **it has been modernised**. Click [here](#) for a taster of what it has become:

We have emphasised in previous events that this is not about “Fresh Expressions”, or out and out “Evangelism”, not that there is anything wrong with either of those things. We sought to address this in our last newsletter.

The day **will** be about reaching out to the Community, about addressing community needs, about becoming a useful, practical and exciting presence in that community, about working with, becoming important to and being used by partner organisations, and about achieving this with a relatively small congregation in a poorer part of one of our major cities.

Although it may not be about Evangelism with a capital E, it brings people on to the premises, shows them it is nothing to be frightened of, shows them it is interested in and cares about them..... so who knows where that might lead.

Please contact David Wrighton - [tl@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk](mailto:tl@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk) – for more information; and it would often be useful to have a small group come from each Church, so don't feel you need to come alone.

**SOLENT DEVOLUTION or HAMPSHIRE DEVOLUTION -**

**Is that a question?**

In our last Newsletter, we mentioned the “Devolution” question – the proposal that had gone to Government about the possibility of a new “Solent” authority, including Southampton, Portsmouth and surrounding areas and the Isle of Wight.

There were already some more vague proposals in the air for Devolution for the whole of Hampshire, and these have now been strengthened and brought back in to play. Given that this would mean major changes on many ways to the area in some ways – for example the idea of an elected mayor, perhaps, for the whole of Hampshire, people might be interested to read about it.

A link to the brand new Hampshire County Council proposals are on their [website](#).

## **Who is IBEX?**

**IBEX – the Church working in the Economy Central South Coast**

IBEX is a Christian organisation relating faith to economic life, in Hampshire and Dorset, mainly Bournemouth and Poole.

We are funded by the URC Wessex Synod, Southampton Methodist District and Baptist Home Mission.

Our main areas of activity:

- Support for local churches serving their communities
- Work with Partner Organisations on Community Projects e.g. local authorities, statutory and voluntary organisations
- Support and development of Chaplaincy

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