

# Aviva – new name, same old story

(see [www.horshamsociety.org/local/swans0901.htm](http://www.horshamsociety.org/local/swans0901.htm) for updates to this story)



by **John Steele**  
chairman of  
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Society

YOU CANNOT have failed to see the recent TV advertisements featuring famous celebrities who have changed their names.

They are part of an expensive rebranding of the old and trusted Norwich Union as part of an exciting international brand – Aviva.

Why is this of interest to us in Horsham? Norwich Union, now Aviva, is the owner of Swan

Walk shopping centre. It was Norwich Union that promised the return of Lorne McKean's much-loved swan sculpture. That was well over a year ago, yet the situation remains unresolved.

Last summer, after many reminders, the sculpture was returned without its plinth and essential moving water. For some months it has presented a sorry picture perched on an ugly low box. The sculpture is supposed to depict swans landing on water, not a box.

The Horsham Society has tried to establish what is going on. We wrote to Aviva and the Swan Walk management in December to express the concern of our members and ask when the sculpture would be fully restored.

Aviva did not reply. The local manager told us that she had had difficulties in identifying a suitable design for the plinth. Odd you might think, since there was nothing wrong with the original design.

This led us to suspect that Aviva is not going to restore the moving water. A direct question to Swan Walk management about when the sculpture will be fully restored and whether they would confirm that it will include running water has not been answered. Neither has there been any response from Aviva.

Our correspondence with Aviva and Swan Walk can be viewed on our website.

In the scale of things, with markets crashing and retailers closing, one might be forgiven

for thinking this is a relatively trivial issue, but it is not. It is a matter of honesty and trust.

It is a story, all too common I suspect, of absentee landlords with no interest in the communities within which they operate.

Aviva is proud to tell us it is an international company. Swan Walk is managed on Aviva's behalf by Jones Lang LaSalle, another multinational based in Chicago.

They proudly state they are 'in business to create and deliver real value for clients, shareholders and our own people'. No mention, you note, about communities or the public realm.

The current position is untenable and is an insult to the sculptor and the people of

Horsham.

Those with the power to solve the problem, and re-establish faith in their brands, are a long way away and with their multinational perspective Horsham is probably just an irritating pinprick.

But we are not going to let the matter rest until the swans are fully restored to their former glory and past promises honoured.

*The Horsham Society is concerned about the town's past, present and future and seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.*

*For more information and details on how to join visit our website*

*[www.horshamsociety.org](http://www.horshamsociety.org) or telephone 01403 272814.*