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Subject to approval at the next Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party meeting

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BOGNOR REGIS BEACH ACCESS WORKING PARTY

6 February 2023 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillors Worne (Chair), Staniforth (Vice-Chair), Brooks, Chace and Edwards

Phillip King (nominated representative from the Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group) was also in attendance

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Needs.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made under this item.

18. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 were approved by the Working Party. These would be signed after the meeting.

19. BEACH ACCESS FOR ALL, BOGNOR REGIS

[Councillor Brooks declared a Personal Interest during discussion of this item, as he supplied the West Cam (camera), pointing towards Portsmouth]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Environment and Climate Change presented the report to the Working Party. He explained that this report followed the presentation delivered by the Project Manager from Coastal Partners at the previous Beach Access Working Party Meeting. If the Working Party agreed the recommendation, this would be presented at the Special Environment Committee meeting on 27 February 2023.

Members then took part in a discussion, where the following points were raised:

- It was felt engagement with stakeholders had been done to an extent, although it was acknowledged more may need to be done.

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- There was concern around the medium- and long-term steps and how these were displayed in the report. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change agreed that the way the steps were set out in the report would be clarified and further information would be provided. They had learnt from Brighton and Hove that doing lots of smaller things helped a lot more people and gave people choices. He would clarify in the report to Environment Committee that these steps were chronological.
- There was concern that it may seem that matting and decking was all that was going to be done, as this would not assist people in getting down to the water. It was felt this needed re-wording as it was not clear that this was part of a wealth of provisions being looked at.
- There was concern around surveying the ramps already in existence, as it was felt these would be too steep for wheelchair users to use. Flattening the surface could make these ramps more slippery and getting back up would be problematic. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained that he had asked the Project Manager from Coastal Partners to attend the Special Environment Committee meeting on 27 February 2023, so he could answer questions and provide further details regarding potential improvements to the ramps.
- More than matting was required. In the past, 2 metre wide hard metal and rubber track had been installed for 6 weeks at a cost of around £2-3k, which was thought to have been successful and well-used.
- Officers should look at ramps already on-site. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained that the ramps currently covered in shingle would most likely be those hardest to keep clear, so it made sense to look at those not fully covered initially.
- One Member hoped a substantial capital project could be implemented in the future, in the form of a harbour from Felpham Yacht Club to the pier, with a permeable reef.
- There was disappointment expressed that the public had not yet been informed of the survey results, and the reports had not been shared with the Bognor Regis Town Council Access Group. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained that all relevant information would be made public when the agenda for the Special Environment Committee on 27 February 2023 was published. The reason for the delay with this was the retirement of the Engineering Services Manager, who had not yet been replaced.
- It was asked whether the public would be informed when the ramps had been cleared and available for public use? The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained that he would be arranging for a press release explaining the work of the Working Party and the outcomes of this.

- It was asked whether point 6 of the medium-long term steps, repurposing an existing ramp, could be made a short-term step. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained the reason this was a medium-long term step was that repurposing would mean resurfacing, so this would be a larger scale project. It was agreed this should be made clearer in the report for the Environment Committee, and that point 2 of the short-term steps should be expanded to give further information.
- It was understood that point 2 of the short-term steps, 'clear identified ramps of shingle and maintain for the summer season', would be useful in seeing which ramps gave more users accessible access, and identify which ramps could be looked at for point 6 of the medium-long term steps for resurfacing.
- There was concern there was no mention of beach wheelchair buggies in the report, as it was felt these would definitely be required. It was asked when these might be able to be implemented. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained depending on several factors, this may be possible this year, although funding would need to be sought for this.
- How would the trials be monitored? The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change explained that the Foreshores Team would be asked to monitor and assess this. Point 1 of the suggested course of action was to establish and engage with a user/stakeholder group, and it was hoped that much of the information would come from them.
- One Member pointed out that there were 2 cameras installed, which could be useful for monitoring ramp use.
- It was asked whether Officers knew how steep each ramp was. The Senior Coastal Engineer explained that full information and plans for each of the ramps was held by Officers, and they were aware of the gradients etc.
- How did Brighton and Hove fund their project? The Senior Coastal Engineer would find this information out.
- Boardwalks were more successful than matting, particularly for those that just want to get off the prom. The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change told Members that East Preston Parish Council were looking into putting a boardwalk that went out to the crest of the beach.

The Group Head of Environment and Climate Change stressed that by implementing a range of small, achievable steps, it was hoped that many more people would be able to access the beach. The work would be ongoing but would begin to make a difference. He agreed to make alterations to the course of action and suggested next steps to reflect the requests of the Working Party.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Staniforth and Seconded by Councillor Edwards.

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The Working Party

RECOMMEND TO THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

That the course of action and suggested next steps be approved.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

(The meeting concluded at 10.18 am)