

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Environment Committee - 27 February 2023
SUBJECT:	Beach Access for All, Bognor Regis – Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party
LEAD OFFICER:	Joe Russell-Wells, Group Head of Environment and Climate Change
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr David Edwards
WARDS:	Felpham West, Hotham, Marine
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: Council Vision aims <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote and support a multi-agency response to tackle the causes of health inequality in Arun's areas of greatest deprivation.• Champion leisure, culture and the Arts in Arun and encourage our community to embrace healthy and active lifestyles.• Work with partners to provide advice, support and activities that promote community wellbeing where it will have the greatest impact.• Encourage the development of the district as a key tourist destination, supporting and enabling improvements and activities to increase visitor spend.• Make best use of our natural assets to help drive the economy.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: Response to Environment Committee request to facilitate Beach Access Working Party for Bognor Regis	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: No funding was set aside for this project. The work of the consultant was funded from the vacancy following the retirement of the Engineering Services Manager.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report seeks approval for the recommendations from the work of the Bognor Regis Beach Action Working Party (BRBAWP). The report summarises the activities of the Working Party and presents recommendations and next steps in improving beach access for all at Bognor Regis.
- 1.2. Similar principles of the outcome of this work can be applied to access to all Arun's beaches.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to:

- 2.1 Receive this report and the Minutes of the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party 06 February 2023, and note the course of action as set out under Item 4.6 of this report with the objective of improving access for all to the beach at Bognor Regis.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1. Following the Environment Committee setting up the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party (BRBAWP) the report summarises the Working Party activities. It presents recommendations from the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party to the Environment Committee and next steps for providing practical achievable steps in improving access for all to the beach.
- 3.2. Similar principles of the outcome of this piece of work can be applied to improve access to all of Arun's beaches.
- 3.3. The Committee is asked to approve the recommendations.

4. DETAIL

4.1. Background

Many people who would like to access the beach at Bognor Regis, either to be close to the sea or to be able to access to swim, are unable to due to the challenges of the nature of the beach and the existing access limitations.

Work has previously taken place to review options to provide access. A report taken to the Environment Committee in Sept 2021 proposed 3 options reduced from 8 which had been taken to the council's Cabinet in November 2020. As a result, Members decided to appoint a Working Party with 'task and finish' format and terms of reference in a report to the Environment Committee November 2021.

The Terms of Reference of the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party included:

- (a) To consider the issues surrounding the provision of an access to the beach for all in Bognor Regis and to examine the options available for such an access
- (b) To determine what part of the beach to improve access to (waterline or shingle etc) and to consider options for geographic location

4.2. Bognor Regis Beach Action Working Party

4.3. The work plan of the working party included a series of meetings as set out below:

- **Meeting 1** – 9 May 2022

Agreed the terms of reference, scope, meeting dates and work programme.

- **Meeting 2** – 6 July 2022

Received in person evidence from presentations to the working party

- **Meeting 3** – 16 January 2023

Reviewed evidence and summary of the work to date including a presentation providing direction and recommendations for inclusion within a final report.

- **Meeting 4** – 6 February 2023

Presentation of final report for approval by the working party to be recommended to Environment Committee.

This report represents the summary outcomes and recommendations of the Working Party following the above meetings and sets out a course of action and the next steps to improving access for all to the beach. Links to further works and background documents can be found below.

4.4. Coastal Partners

Following the retirement of the Engineering Services Manager Coastal Partners were appointed to review the information collected by the Working Party.

Coastal Partners are a team of engineers, surveyors, project managers, environment and finance experts who centrally deliver a comprehensive coastal management service which manages the coastal flood and erosion risk across 246km of coastline of 5 neighbouring local authority areas to the west of the Arun area.

The Partnership have experience of '*beach access for all*' from other work they have been involved in across various coastlines and projects. They confirm that the access work Arun is seeking to achieve is similar to other local authorities.

The work Coastal Partners were commissioned to carry out included a review of the work of the Working Party to date which included the presentation of information at Meeting 2, together with other initiatives, and the results of the 'call for evidence' survey carried out in June 2022. From the information presented, and drawing on their own research and experience, they were tasked to present achievable recommendations for the future.

4.5. Working Party Meeting 3 - presentation

The work carried out by Coastal Partners was presented to members of the working party at Meeting 3. This can be seen at **Appendix 1**.

The presentation made reference to the challenges associated with access at Bognor Regis beaches, it reviewed the survey undertaken and identified where additional more specific information concerning users would be beneficial. It also referred to equalities compliance with a review of the latest guidance for access to the countryside and open space sites with the aim of providing practical support for improving accessibility.

The options review included a range of proposals made to the working party from the large to the small scale. It assessed these and other possible solutions against a R (red) A (amber) G (green) rating for capital and operational & maintenance cost.

Following the presentation, Members of the Working Party took the opportunity to seek clarification and have discussion regarding the presentation and the emerging recommendations.

In addition, a brief review of the work at Brighton and Hove Council in delivering beach access was given by the Senior Coastal Engineer. This work was also as the result of a working party set up to provide access to the beach. It had resulted in delivering several small actions to help as many people as possible access the beach.

The discussion of the working party can be seen at the minutes to Meeting 3.

4.6. Course of Action

The following emerging recommendations presented to the working party gained support following the discussion.

1	Establish and engage with a user / stakeholder group for ongoing dialogue.
2	Apply the latest national guidance for equality of access to the natural environment.
3	Establish a vision statement and clear project critical success factors / objectives such as <i>what does success look like?</i>
4	Review seafront amenities and access in conjunction with the solution, such as disabled parking, toilet and changing facilities.
5	Utilise existing assets where possible coupled with a combination of smaller interventions for 'least restrictive access'.

With the establishment of the above overall recommendations the following more specific short to long-term objectives are proposed. These are shown in chronological order and will follow on from the previous step.

The **short-term** steps:

1. Undertake project specific inspections and surveys of existing structures / ramps suitable for possible improvement / repurposing and clearance of shingle.
2. Following the asset survey identified above, clear selected ramps of shingle improving access for all and maintain the cleared surface for the summer season from 2023. Assess the ongoing cost of the clearance work for future budgeting purposes.
3. Seek feedback from, and visits to, working examples of good practice. This will include further research into the use of beach wheelchair buggies and accessible facilities, such as those offered by Brighton and Hove Council, and determine how these could be introduced at Bognor Regis.
4. Review potential funding sources to inform budget/match-funding requirements.

In addition to the short-term steps the following **medium-term** and **long-term** steps are proposed:

1. Monitor the use of existing ramps over the 2023 summer season. Monitoring to be carried out through the Foreshore team in collaboration with user / stakeholder groups.
2. Consider the delivery of additional matting and decking solutions in suitable locations. This to follow user / stakeholder engagement where request have been made.
3. Following the survey of existing structures / ramps establish a project to review adaptation / repurposing of an existing ramp. In addition, include the implementation of any amenity modifications, such as disabled parking bays.
4. As part of the above work undertake a Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) / Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) safety audit on modified assets if required.
5. Identify funding sources for specific projects, whether capital projects or smaller scale, and draft supporting business case/s.
6. Undertake a capital project proposal, such as repurposing an existing ramp, to deliver a beach access project.

7. If funding proposals are successful, implement capital project/s, and undertake an ongoing monitoring plan.

4.7. Next steps

The Working Party has established that the Council is not alone in its objective to improve access for all to beaches. From the evidence presented there are several authorities who are working towards improvements. In addition, it is also clear that there is increasing demand for access to the beach.

Were the Committee to approve the recommendations, work towards implementing these, together with the short-, medium- and long-term objectives, would be commenced.

The work to improve access will be ongoing, the delivery of several small actions to help as many people as possible access the beach will begin to make a difference. There will be further examples to draw on including continuing to work with organisations such as Coastal Partners and their access projects. In addition, the work can be applied to other Arun beaches along the coast.

It is envisaged that a further report will be returned to the Environment Committee together with any further recommendations and request for approval.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. Call for evidence survey June 2022. No further consultation at this stage.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1. To approve the recommendations
- 6.2. Not to approve the recommendation and delay progress in enabling access to the beaches at Bognor Regis.

7. COMMENTS BY THE INTERIM GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1 The current work identified in the report is met within existing resources and has no budget implications in the current year. Any future budget bids will be considered through virement or as part of the annual budget bidding process if revenue; or as part of the capital programme, which will be assessed for affordability as part of the budget process.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. A risk assessment has not been produced at this stage of the project.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1. The recommendations are in accordance with the terms of reference and there are no additional legal implications.

10.HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1. None at present

11.HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1. With the implementation of any project full assessment will take place with the overall objective of making improvement.

12.PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1. Comments have not been obtained for this Working Party report.

13.EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

- 13.1. The overall objectives of the Working Party is to improve the equalities opportunities and social value as a result of the implementation of the recommendations

14.CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

- 14.1. This has not been produced at this stage of the project.

15.CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 15.1. This has not been produced at this stage of the project.

16.HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

- 16.1. It is not anticipated there will be any impact.

17.FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

- 17.1. Sensitive data will be handled in accordance with the GDPR.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Joe Russell-Wells

Job Title: Group Head of Environment and Climate Change

Contact Number:01903 737914

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**Beach Access – Bognor Regis**

16 November 2020 - Cabinet

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 16/11/2020 17:00 \(arun.gov.uk\)](#)

Bognor Regis Beach Access Options Appraisal

23 September 2021 - Environment Committee

[*\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Environment and Neighbourhood Services Committee, 23/09/2021 18:00 \(arun.gov.uk\)](#)

Bognor Regis Beach Action Working Party

17 November 2021 – Environment Committee

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Environment and Neighbourhood Services Committee, 17/11/2021 18:00 \(arun.gov.uk\)](#)

[BRBAWP 09 May 2022 - Minutes](#)

[BRBAWP 06 July 2022 – Minutes](#)

[BRBAWP 16 January 2023 – Minutes](#)

[Report to BRBAWP 09 May 2022 - Working Party Terms of Reference, Scope, Meeting Dates and Work Programme](#)

[Report to BRBAWP 06 July 2022 - Analysis of the results from the Call for Evidence Questionnaire](#)

[Report to BRBAWP 06 July 2022 – Analysis of the results from the Call for Evidence Questionnaire – Appendix 1 - Submitted free text fields](#)

[Report to BRBAWP 16 January 2023 - Beach Access for All, Bognor Regis – An Introduction to the Presentation Due on 16 January 2023](#)

[Bognor Regis Beach Access Summary Brief for Consultant - 16 January 2023](#)

[Report to BRBAWP 06 February 2023 – Beach Access for All](#)

Presentation delivered by Coastal Partners at the Beach Access Working Party on 16 January 2023 – attached as Appendix 1

BRBAWP 06 February 2023 – Minutes – Attached as Appendix 2