

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Environment Committee – 14th November 2024
SUBJECT:	Update on Beach Access for All - Bognor Regis
LEAD OFFICER:	Karl McLaughlin, Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager Joe Russell-Wells, Group Head of Environment and Climate Change
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr Sue Wallsgrove
WARDS:	Felpham West, Hotham, Marine
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: This report supports the following areas of the Corporate vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Champion leisure, culture and the Arts in Arun and encourage our community to embrace healthy and active lifestyles.• Promote and support a multi-agency response to tackle the causes of health inequality in Arun's areas of greatest deprivation.• 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: This report is in response to the Environment Committee request to facilitate a Beach Access Working Party for Bognor Regis. It builds on the success of the working party by laying out a delivery framework that involves engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: An earmarked contribution of 5% of the expected annual incoming from beach hut rental, covering the next 3 financial years, has been agreed by the Economy committee. As projects emerge research for funding opportunities will continue. Match funding may be required to 'unlock' contributions which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Beach Access project against the actions agreed by the Environment Committee 27 February 2023.

- 1.2 This project is an iterative piece of work and outcomes from the project are looking to be extended to other areas of our coastline.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) note the content of this report;
- 2) considers the recommendations from Economy Committee as follows:

“That the principles and agreed objectives (4.3) established by the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party be applied additionally to Littlehampton Beach.”

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 This report summarises the activities of the project since the last update in November 2023. The steps are referenced against the actions agreed by the committee which has been the guiding framework for this project.
- 3.2 A Stakeholder Engagement Workshop was facilitated at The Shed, Bognor Regis in April 2024. The group were provided a presentation by Coastal Partners and then asked to consider the different stages of the access chain and give feedback and suggestions.
- 3.3 A Stakeholder Engagement Group was established by asking interested parties to provide contact details for future correspondence.
- 3.4 In collaboration with The Property, Estates & Facilities Manager and The Group Head of Technical Services, the project has secured an annual contribution of £7,650 covering the next 3 years. This has been achieved through setting aside 5% of Beach Hut revenue.

4 DETAIL

4.1 Background

A report setting out recommendations to improve access to the beach for all was approved in February 2023. The report followed the conclusion of the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party (BRBAWP) and recommendations which came from this work. The report set out objectives and short, medium and longer-term actions. The report can be found at the link under the background documents at the end of this report.

4.2 Beach Access Objectives

The following table sets out the objectives agreed in February this year.

No.	Action	Status
1	Establish and engage with a user / stakeholder group for ongoing dialogue.	Complete
2	Apply the latest national guidance for equality of access to the natural environment.	Ongoing
3	Establish a vision statement and clear project critical success factors / objectives such as <i>what does success look like?</i>	Complete
4	Review seafront amenities and access in conjunction with the solution, such as disabled parking, toilet and changing facilities.	Complete
5	Utilise existing assets where possible coupled with a combination of smaller interventions for 'least restrictive access'.	Ongoing

This report sets out the progress with these objectives and the actions which were identified.

Stakeholder Engagement Workshop

- 4.3 In collaboration with Coastal Partners and Voluntary Access Arun and Chichester (VAAC) a bespoke stakeholder engagement workshop was developed.
- 4.4 It was agreed that as part of the workshop Coastal Partners, together with Arun District Council officers, would give a short presentation reminding participants of the progress to date. The presentation also included an explanation of the content of the workshop, and how attendees were expected to participate.
- 4.5 The workshop was centred around the 4 stages of the access chain giving participants an opportunity to consider and comment every stage. The 4 stages were;
- The Decision to Visit
 - Journey and Arrival
 - On-site Experience
 - The Return Home
- 4.6 The brief and session description provided to participants in advance of the workshops can be found in **Appendix A**.
- 4.7 The attendees provided the project with a huge amount of data to comb through with common themes emerging. Together with VAAC, the raw data was shaped into a specific action plan which can be seen in **Appendix B**.
- 4.8 Notably, there were multiple requests for provisions that already exist. A decision was taken to encompass these as part of an information sharing communication

package. The full list of actions relating to the communication package can be found in **Appendix C**.

Stakeholder Engagement Group

- 4.9 As part of the closing transition of the workshop members were asked to provide contact details to form the “core” engagement group. These would be the representatives responsible for shaping and contributing toward the delivery of the actions.
- 4.10 The engagement group will be responsible for finalising the Vision Statement as this was not able to be agreed on the day. Many great views were collected but due to time pressure the group were not able to ‘wordsmith’ a final statement.
- 4.11 The outcomes of the meeting have recently been circulated to the core group and we are looking to hold a further meeting in accordance with point 4.20.

Season Update

- 4.12 Throughout the entire summer season Arun District Council monitored the ramps and Gloucester Road, Bognor Regis and Blakes Road, Felpham. Our team ensured that they remained clear and free of shingle to facilitate improved access for the public. This small but important step has been well received by the public.
- 4.13 Following multiple reports regarding the navigability of the chicane at the top of the Gloucester Road Ramp; Together with VAAC, we investigated the validity of these claims by running onsite tests. We found no issue for those using mobility aids, demonstrating sufficient space to navigate through the opening.

Secured Contribution

- 4.14 On 12th September 2024, A report was presented to the Economy Committee on Beach Hut Lease Terms & Beach Access Considerations.
- 4.15 The report primarily focused on options for Beach Hut Lease terms. However, during cross departmental discussion, it was identified that it would be appropriate to set aside an annual contribution for improving beach accessibility. The contribution, and eventual delivery, would also support new accessible beach huts recently installed in Littlehampton.
- 4.16 With respect to Beach Access contributions, the Committee resolved that; *“a budget then be established representing 5% of the expected annual income from rental beach huts for the proposed 3-year term, for use towards the agreed beach access objectives at both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.”*
- 4.17 The contribution represents earmarked funds as follows:

Financial Year	Contribution
2025/26	£7,650
2026/27	£7,650 (+ additional income from RPI increase)
2027/28	£7,650 (+ additional income from RPI increases)

Next Steps

- 4.18 The work to improve access will be ongoing and the delivery of several small actions to help as many people as possible access the beach will begin to make a difference. These actions started over this year's summer season and the priority actions identified by the Stakeholder Engagement Workshop in **Appendix B** will progress over the coming winter.
- 4.19 Some of the actions identified in the plan will need to be progressed by partner organisations, such as Coastal Partners. These actions primarily relate to scoping projects and obtaining quotations enabling funding options to be identified.
- 4.20 Over the coming months, a series of meetings will also be established with the core group to discuss and progress the Action Plan. As part of the inaugural meeting of this group the stakeholders will be asked to conclude the Vision statement.
- 4.21 Further to our work on the Action Plan, there will likely be additional examples of initiatives and experiences that Arun District Council can draw on to continue to develop its facilities. One of our key partners, VAAC, is in the process of finalising a piece of work whereby they have independently collected information about Beach Wheelchairs provisions speaking more widely with other service providers. We look forward to incorporating this piece of work within our Action on the provision of Beach Wheelchairs.
- 4.22 Looking further ahead, the work carried out as part of this project will be applied to other beaches along our coastline. It is envisaged that a further report will be returned to the Environment Committee together with any recommendations and request for approval.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Further consultation will take place with stakeholder group to shape and delivering the objectives in the Action Plan.

6 OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

As this report is an information paper, there are no options / alternatives for the Committee to consider.

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

- 7.1 There will be no additional financial impact as operations will be funded through existing budgets and the contributions as identified in section 4.17.

8 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Risk Assessments have not been produced at this stage of the project. Risk Assessments will be produced alongside the exploration of options.

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

- 9.1 The report gives a progress update of the completed objectives and longer-term actions as identified by the Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party of which is in accordance with the terms of reference of the working party. As work progresses Legal Services will assist with any legal aspect where necessary.

10 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 Capacity to deliver the remaining outcomes will be dependent on successful recruitment within the Coastal Engineers and Flood Prevention team.

11 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 Health and Safety impacts will be assessed within the design phase of any project. There will also be ongoing health and safety management responsibilities such as risk assessment, inspection and maintenance that will need to be considered and appropriately resourced.

12 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1 Delivery of improvements to the Gloucester Road ramp will require alterations to general promenade access and negotiation with the affected concessionaires.
- 12.2 Delivery of improvements to existing infrastructure will require consultation with those affected.

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 recommendations. An EIA is attached to this report.

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:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Economy Committee Report 12 Sept 2024

Beach Hut Lease Terms – Beach Access Considerations

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Economy Committee, 12/09/2024 18:00](#)

Environment Committee report 21 Nov 2023

Update on Beach Access for All - Bognor Regis

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Environment Committee, 21/11/2023 18:00](#)

Environment Committee report 27 Feb 2023

Beach Access for All, Bognor Regis – Bognor Regis Beach Access Working Party

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Environment Committee, 27/02/2023 18:00](#)
[\(arun.gov.uk\)](http://arun.gov.uk)

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Stakeholder Workshop Brief

Appendix B – Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes – Action Plan

Appendix C – Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes – Communication package

Appendix D – Minutes of the Special Economy Meeting on 12 September 2024 showing the recommendation to the Environment Committee (Minute 208)

Appendix E – Officer Report to Economy Committee 12 September 2024