

Subject:	Beach Access Update		
Date of Meeting:	5th March 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Tourism Development & Culture (TDC) Committee held on 17th January 2019 the Committee considered a petition referred from the meeting of Full Council held on 13 December 2018.
- 1.2 The petition was signed by nearly 2000 people requesting the council to improve access to the city's beach for disabled people and those with access needs.
- 1.3 The Chair of the Tourism, Development & Culture Committee (TDC), Councillor Robins, acknowledged the challenges facing people with mobility difficulties and noted productive meetings already held between the council's Seafront Team and participants of the Local People projects in Brighton and Hove, supported by Scope the national charity. The Local People programme is a People's Health Trust initiative which involves supporting residents to develop a shared vision for their community and take action on the issues that matter most to local people.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed the opportunity to work together with members of Scope's project team (called the Beach Access Team) to find innovative solutions to improving access across Brighton & Hove seafront and beaches. While all involved recognised the particular challenges the terrain creates in Brighton & Hove with a shingle beach which is constantly moving and steep in many areas.
- 1.5 It was agreed by the TDC Committee that the Committee would receive a report on the matter to a future meeting.

- 1.6 This report provides an update on the subsequent work undertaken by Beach Access Team Brighton & Hove and the council and sets out the plans for further beach access improvements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress already made towards improving beach access in Brighton & Hove.
- 2.2 That the Committee supports the continuation of improvements to beach and seafront access in Brighton & Hove.
- 2.3 That, where appropriate, Transport and other allocations from Section 106 and future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions be used to facilitate beach access improvements as identified by the Beach Accessibility Working Group (BAWG).
- 2.4 That the Beach Access Team (BAT) are established as a key consultee for all seafront infrastructure and redevelopment projects.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Since the TDC Committee meeting in January 2019, regular meetings have taken place with members of Scope's project team and there is now an established Beach Accessibility Working Group (BAWG). This is an Officer working group in which Elected Members are welcome to attend if this is of interest to them.
- 3.2 In January 2019 the BAWG undertook a site visit to establish the possible locations for viewing platforms.
- 3.3 In March 2019, BAWG agreed to work towards the following priorities.
- 3.4 Phase I – January 2019 – April 2020
- Formation of a regular working group (BAWG)
 - One beach wheelchair to be moved to the Hove Seafront Office
 - Improved basic signage
 - Ongoing updates to online resources, maps and information
 - Improved access to seafront traders e.g. awareness-training, basic equipment etc.
 - Purchase of new beach wheelchair
- 3.5 Phase II - May 2020 – April 2021
- Installation of seasonal beach pathway

- Full Access Audit
- Full engineering survey
- Viewing Platforms
- Replacement of current beach wheelchairs
- Further signage
- Volunteer training

3.6 Phase III - May 2021 – April 2022

- Improved lighting
- Accessible Safe Hub, comprising numerous access features. Possibly extended to provide designated accessible beach area and ringed-off swimming area
- To further develop and refine technical proposals concerning permanent access: research project for universities locally as well as seeking regional and national input

3.7 Phase IV

- Permanent access to provide those with access needs, particularly wheelchair users, with year round independent access to the water's edge and into the sea

3.8 In May 2019, Beach Access Team Brighton & Hove (BAT) was formally constituted with the support of the Local People project in Hove, supported by Scope.

3.9 In July members of BAWG attended a site visit to Sea Lanes to discuss potential future collaborations. BAT also made their second appearance at Disability Pride.

3.10 On 24th August 2019, wheelchair trials took place on the beach in Hove involving stakeholders and members of the public. A number of manual and electric wheelchairs were put through their paces to establish whether any were effective in tackling the challenging terrain of the city's shingle beaches.

3.11 Over the same weekend a second public event was held at the Brighton Centre, supported by Brighton & Hove City Council and the Local People project in Hove. The aim of this event was to continue to engage as widely as possible with all interested parties, to illustrate the issues as identified in BAT research to date, to update the public on the plans and potential phased development plan to address the identified access needs, and to draw ideas and support from as many interested parties and potential stakeholders as possible.

3.12 A beach wheelchair was temporarily loaned to the Seafront Office. This supplements the one remaining all-terrain wheel chair available for public use currently located at the Brighton Seafront Office.

3.13 In September 2019 discussions commenced with various university departments concerning possible student involvement. Unfortunately, due to time constraints,

it was not possible to coordinate arrangements to coincide with the students study programme.

- 3.14 Informal discussions commence with local architect & engineering firms concerning possible collaborations.
- 3.15 More recently, preliminary discussions have also begun with significant additional stakeholders, such as the Sea Lanes development on Madeira Drive, and several keen and supportive professionals and possible partners have already come forward to offer their services pro bono.
- 3.16 October-December 2019: various funding applications submitted. Results awaited.
- 3.17 December 2019: ABIR Architects offers to work alongside BAT to address access.
- 3.18 BAT continues to work closely with the Council, with regular meetings of the BAWG.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Beach Wheelchairs

The council has allocated £10,000 toward the cost of purchasing new beach wheelchairs, and BAT has identified 4 different types of chair, and then the most appropriate model of each type, chosen to meet a variety of needs. An electric all-terrain wheelchair, designed in the USA, is currently being optimised for use on our beaches, and will be in place for the start of the summer season. BAT will organise onsite trials to confirm the final models of each of the remaining types of beach wheelchair, and continues to source possible funding, including a possible collaboration with Whizz-Kidz to ensure appropriate paediatric provision.

4.2 Seasonal beach pathway

BAWG has identified an area of beach in front of the Seafront Office to trial a temporary pathway. A heavy but flexible rubber matting will be laid from the top of the beach down to the high water mark to facilitate access across the shingle for wheelchairs, buggies and anyone with mobility difficulties. The matting will be left in place throughout the summer to establish whether this method can be used elsewhere.

4.3 Changing Places

A new Changing Places facility will be opening this summer as part of the new Shelter Hall developments. The facility will be located a few metres away from the ramped subway access from West Street onto the seafront as well as by the seasonal pathway and permanent viewing platform.

4.4 Accessible Safe Hub

As a relatively new idea to emerge from research and user-consultation, this idea still requires significant development. It is envisioned that this would provide a single location to act as a central hub for many of the identified beach improvements. A possible location with an existing seemingly unused building that could potentially be repurposed has been identified, and BAT continues to research into what equipment and services this hub should incorporate. ABIR architects have offered their services to BAT and have already begun work on this brief.

4.5 Permanent Viewing Platforms

The council plans to re-purpose an area of tarmac on the beach which is currently being used as part of the Shelter Hall construction site. This will be converted into a publicly accessible hardstanding area to create a prominent viewing area. This will support wheelchair users to feel more connected to the beach and sea.

In addition to this permanent structure a suitable material has been identified and an approximate quote obtained to install a decked platform. Design ideas submitted by users have been gathered, and a request for a guide price for the indicative design options obtained. Final design, number and location of platforms still to be confirmed by BAWG.

4.6 Permanent Pathway

Beach pathways and access improvements are included within the Planning applications for Black Rock improvement works and Sea Lanes development.

4.7 Potential Funding

BAT will continue to seek further funding opportunities for beach access improvements from local community and charitable grants. The BAWG will work with officers in Planning, Seafront and Transport in order to direct relevant Section 106 developer contributions and future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocations specifically to beach access improvement projects.

4.8 Recognised Consultee

The BAWG will work closely with officers in Planning and City Regeneration to ensure that BAT become a recognised consultee on Planning applications for all seafront infrastructure and redevelopment projects. This is to ensure that beach accessibility is at the forefront of any future developments on the seafront.

5. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 Alternative options to improve beach access have been identified in the body of the main report.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

Consultation with BAT is on-going as part of the BWAG. In addition, over the last few years, BAT has sought to collate a significant evidence-base from those living with, or whose lives are impacted by, disability and additional needs. Various methods have been employed, all of which have sought to answer fundamental questions concerning the access issues experienced by disabled people or those with access needs in Brighton & Hove. BAT has held two public consultation events (May 2018, August 2019) and also held stalls at Disability Pride (2018 & 2019). From these events, and from interactions across various social media platforms, a significant body of evidence has been collated to begin to answer these questions, and to work out the most appropriate steps forward. BAT and BAWG is committed to ensuring all changes are informed by user-feedback, and user-led.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The terrain of the Brighton & Hove seafront presents particular challenges to improve accessibility. However, by working with interested local parties it has been possible to identify a range of improvements that are being progressed.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The recommendations on beach access in this report have no direct financial implications. The investment of £10,000 in beach wheelchairs (paragraph 4.1) is expected to be funded from within existing service budgets. The assumption is that any additional spending or investment will either be funded from existing service budgets or from one-off external funding (CIL/Section 106). This will be reviewed and monitored as part of budget monitoring and setting.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Jess Laing

Date: 14/02/2020

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The BWAG is an officer working group which has been attended by the Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, and Communities & Culture Committee previously. Members may be invited to events in the future but the intention is not to establish a member working group. There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

Lawyer Consulted:

Alice Rowland

Date: 21/2/20

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The focus of this report is to improve accessibility for everyone who visits the beaches in Brighton & Hove.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 The sustainability of proposed improvements has been a key issue, particularly to seek sustainable improvements that are able to withstand the harsh seafront environment.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

