

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure & Sport Decision Meeting

Subject: Annual Seafront Report

Date of meeting: 23 March 2012

Report by: Head of Cultural Services

Wards affected: All

1. Requested by

1.1 Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure & Sport.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure & Sports on the seafront, including investment, street furniture and the seafront strategy.

3. Information requested

3.1 Splash Pool

After major changes to the filtration system, the splash pool was opened on time for the Easter Bank Holiday. This has been extremely successful and there have been occasions when I have thought it necessary to bring in security because of the very numbers of people that were in the pool. Not to prevent any issues, but really to ensure that the facility was not over populated. The anecdotal reports from parents are that this is a welcome activity centre for the seafront and an excellent new facility.

3.2 Sports Café

The Sports Café in the tennis pavilion opened at the same time as the splash pool.

A lease is currently being prepared which details the financial arrangements between the Tennis Club (including the café) and PCC. It is hoped that this will generate a small income for PCC when the business is fully established.

The toilets are also open to the public and are particularly welcome for use by those using the splash pool, both parents and children.

3.3 Castle Walls

Southsea Castle walls have now been completely cleaned. A new lighting system will be installed shortly so that by early spring the castle will have a new night-time look. This lighting will be sympathetic to the castle and we will also ensure that it does not cause too much light pollution. The proposal is to have soft blue lighting which will shine onto the castellation and show the castle in its best light. These will be installed in quarter 4.

3.4 Promenade

We have had meetings with Jane Tume the Contract Manager for Colas and the relationship has improved tremendously. Colas are very receptive to the needs of the seafront. The Esplanade road has been completely resurfaced and they have replaced 100 metres of the worst section of the Promenade from Blue Reef westwards. We also walked the seafront to look at the clutter and more than 40 of the redundant post are going to be removed. In future all new post that are required will be powder coated in dark blue to match the other street furniture but any new ones will only be installed when absolutely necessary.

3.5 Works carried out on the seafront and its vicinity in 2011

3.5.1 Highways

- Resurfacing of Clarence Esplanade between the two piers using both traditional inlay method for the carriage way and also ralumac surface treatment for the parking bay. Works were followed by the renewal of the white lining as well as the high friction material next to pedestrian crossings.
- Substantial repairs to the promenade opposite the Blue Reef aquarium renewing concrete slabs and overlay with red asphalt to make the promenade safer and enhance its visual appearance.
- Concrete repairs on the promenade behind Southsea Castle.
- White lining maintenance programme on residential roads in Southsea well under way (80% complete).
- War memorial paving has been refurbished (Works commissioned by War Grave Commission and delivered by Colas).

3.5.2 Street Lighting

- Commission of a mould (pattern) of the historical sea front ornate cast iron columns to enable Colas to replace columns damaged beyond repairs. Successful replacement of a column located on Eastney esplanade destroyed during a road traffic accident.

- Painting of the cast iron lighting columns on the promenade and on Clarence Parade.
- Colas secured the 3 years festoon lighting maintenance contract and replaced some of the wires on which the lights are suspended.
- Structural Inspections of 50% existing catenary poles.
- Replacement of navigation lights on Victoria Pier.

3.5.3 Street Cleansing

- Enhance staff level between spring and fall to manage the greater volume of litter on the seafront.
- Colas delivered litter picking services for various events on the common and in Southsea (Great South Run, Heavy Horse Show, Thai festival, Kite Festival...).

3.5.4 Decluttering & Minor Works

- Joint street furniture decluttering exercise with Seafront Services, Highways, Parking and Colas
- Removal of 30 poles including 10 large old catenaries poles.
- Removal of 12 redundant signs.
- Removal of 5 redundant banner brackets.
- Minor works including sign fixing, shelter repairs, railing fixing, weed control, graffiti removal, step repairs & pothole repairs.

3.5.5 Other

- Report on the state and relocation of the historic tram shelter adjacent to Blue Reef issued to PCC.
- Cleaning and repair on the Victorian bus shelter glazing.
- Repairs and painting of the railing located next to Clarence Pier.
- Bench refurbishment programme on the sea front in ongoing.

3.5.6 2012 Programme Major Works

- Refurbishment flood gates.
- Further decluttering following new signing & lining legislation.

- Shelter Surveys and maintenance.
- Street lighting column painting.

3.6 Events

There were a number of new events on the seafront, particularly on Castle Field with the Sunday markets. These were not been as fruitful as had been hoped and the contractor has now withdrawn from future events. This has left it too late to rebook the venue to alternative events. However, as this was only 4 small events on Castle Field it will have little impact. Dialogue has taken place with United Services Rugby Club to bring 'Touch Rugby' to Castle Field and this will replace some of the markets and will have added value attractions on the periphery. The numbers of days that events took place on the seafront were 153 and two of the new events were specifically income generational with the Stunt Show contributing £2,000 and the Fake Fest, a festival of tribute bands, contributed £5,000 to the seafront budget. This is net income as both events paid a deposit to restore the land should it have been damaged during the event. The Heavy Horse show and the Kite Festival were both very successful, particularly when you consider this is the first time the Events Team managed these shows and they did an excellent job. Portsmouth Festivities was well attended with the spectacular Space finale. This show continues to grow a new audience and working with PGS has proved to be a good partnership.

3.7 Parking

The parking team have worked very closely with Seafront Services and we now have a system in place that enables us to re-act to the requirements of the seafront users and open overflow parking only when it is required and only then when most other spaces on the western end of the seafront have been taken. The parking team have proved to be excellent colleagues and not just in parking matters but they have supported us with new signage and enforcement issues, particularly with camper vans.

A new TRO has been submitted for the remaining parts of Southsea Common so that action can be taken on those parking where they should not.

Canoe Lake car park has been resurfaced and reconfigured for additional spaces.

3.8 Seafront Attractions Forum

This forum did not meet during the summer as most of the attendees are running their businesses; however work with the forum continued with a smaller group looking at the marketing of the seafront. 50,000 Beaches leaflets were produced and distributed around the city including hotels, visitor information centres, ferries and other outlets. This leaflet gives information about a variety of different offers on the seafront including food, retail, attractions and museums. It also gives vouchers for discounts at a number of the outlets. The forum changed to Southsea Attractions and Traders Forum (SATF) as of January 2012 with new terms of reference.

SATF now only encompasses those who trade either for, or not for, profit on the seafront from Round Tower to Eastney swimming pool. This includes all attractions, museums, food and other retailing outlets. In addition, it will include Ward Councillors, one from each seafront Wards, a representative of City Centre Management and Southsea Traders. To enhance the position of the seafront, it will also include the lead seafront volunteer.

3.9 Visitors

After a promising start, visitor numbers, with the exception of Southsea Castle, not as good as we would have hoped although the latest reported figures for Blue Reef are they are up 13% up and Clarence Pier up 17%. The RM Museum report they are down on visitors, mainly due to events being cancelled because of the weather. Although numbers are down, September was much busier than 2010 year. The D-Day Museum has picked up since September when it was reported that numbers were down by 12%. The downturn is considered to be part of the current economic climate.

- Southsea Castle 84,143 up 222%
- D-Day 49,822 down 7.8%
- Cumberland House 57,227 down 13% (but closed for 1 week)
- Splash Pool in excess 26,000 based on daily sampling
- Heavy Horse Show 8,000
- Kite Festival 15,000
- Bandstand continues to be a popular venue and the Saturday bandstand is growing in popularity. There are still issues of too much alcohol being consumed and action to resolve this as an issue will be taken in the forthcoming season.

Commentary on other seafront venues :

- Skate Park - considerable upturn and numbers available on 29 November.
- Blue Reef – Down 4% at Easter and unseasonable weather in April but an overall result of 13% up.
- Royal Marines Museum down due to the cancellation of the Outdoor Summer Band Concert in July.
- Pyramids – good result but actual information is not yet available

3.10 Pyramids

I have met with the managers of the Pyramids on a number of occasions and their information to me is that things are improving, that membership is up and daily usage is also up. I remain concerned that the frontage of the building, which is not in good condition and remains a source of local concern.

3.11 Southsea Common Leaflets

A new and improved Southsea Common leaflet with all its attractions was produced in 2011 and has been widely circulated. The aspiration for this document would be to

have the centre spread map enlarged and made into a board that could be installed along the seafront and also in car parks.

3.12 ARTches Project

A project team has been established to move this project forward and the first meeting took place in August. The major planning process of this project will take place in the fourth quarter once electricity has been installed into the Point Barracks and a further planning application will be submitted for a change of use and the barracks will be marketed for use as an arts café. The Round Tower held its first ever exhibition in April to much acclaim and over the two weeks that it was running 6,500 people visited and the income to local artists was £2,500. We are now looking at a different way of hosting these exhibitions whereby an income will be generated that can be put back into the project. This will either be a straight fee or a percentage of artists' income from sales of artwork. Some of the comments have been excellent, such as:

“great art in a great space, we are lucky to get a preview” – visitors from Melbourne

“fabulous” – Nick from Manchester

“great to see such local talent on display in Southsea, should happen regularly” – local residents

“stunning work” – visitors from Moldavia

The walls of Square and Round Tower have now been cleaned using low pressure water and the difference is substantial. The woodwork surrounding the various rooms has been re-painted in a contemporary colour and all the rooms have been cleared of years of debris and rubbish. All asbestos has been cleared and disposed of

The 3 lighting schemes that have been approved for the 18 Gun Battery, Point Barracks and seaward side of the Hot Walls are in the process of pre-installation. The systems have been approved by English Heritage and once they have approved the actual light fittings, installation will commence

As soon as electricity has been installed in Point Barracks we will begin the process of local consultation, particularly those living in Broad Street. This will be in partnership working with Corporate Communications.

3.13 Concessions

The number of concessions this year has increased by three, we had a new gift shop opened at the east of South Parade Pier, the flower and plant outlet opened west of South Parade Pier and we have also had the new Thai food concession opened to the west of the Blue Reef Aquarium.

3.14 Barbecues

Last year's summer was the worst in 18 years and there has been a noticeable reduction in the number of barbecues seen on the common and, in particular, north

of Duisburg Way. The Community Wardens have also patrolled this area and given out leaflets and advice to those barbecuing. The Community Wardens have also supported the seafront policing whereby they have acted on those using kite boards on the common.

3.15 Yellow Kite

This facility opened in May 2011 and has been a success with a trebling of the numbers of visitors to Southsea Castle. This is partly due to the castle being free entry but it is a great new facility and one that enhances the seafront offer. The free entry has only been enabled because of this facility that will make a good contribution to the local economy. The café in D-Day Museum is also run by the same operator and is proving a great success.

3.16 Ship Identification

Four new shipping boards have been installed and these are proving to be a good source of information for our visitors. Additional boards are being considered for The Point and Spinnaker Tower.

3.17 Sea Water Quality

The current regulations on water testing are going to be upgraded under new European legislation and we are likely to have at least one beach where it will not be a recommended as an area where safe swimming can take place. Southern Water have already started to review sewage systems that are thought to be a major contribution to poor water quality near to South Parade Pier.

3.18 Old Windsurfers Shack

This building is now unsafe and will be demolished as soon as the asbestos survey has been completed. This will be prior to the main season starting.

3.19 Beach Huts

All 112 beach huts have been repainted and where necessary have been restored. There are however, 10 huts that need new steps and these will be completed by the start of the season. Since the price increase to non-residents we have had three who have returned their keys but we anticipate that all those non-residents will give up their huts and those on the waiting lists will now be contacted and offered this opportunity. Planning application for new beach huts will be submitted by mid April 2012 ready for installation during the summer but in a way that does not impact on residents or visitors.

3.20 Crime

There has been very little reported crime on the seafront, no problems with damage to the beach huts and no reports of graffiti. The only exception was D-Day Museum

where there were two incidents. The first was an attempt to break into the embroidery gallery through the fire doors. This was prevented by the standard practice of staff there chaining up the fire doors when the museum is not open to the public and access was prevented. The second was a break in as reported in a previous weekly report. The door was smashed and the contents of the Poppy Appeal box were taken, approximately £200.

3.21 New Opportunities

3.21.1 The VIC building was originally marketed locally and there were a number of enquiries. An operator was selected but eventually withdrew their offer. As a result, it was decided to go further afield and market the opportunity for a much broader potential offer. A marketing campaign has been commenced on-line and to external agencies.

3.21.2 A new open top bus service (X25) will start on 4 May running from The Hard to Henderson Road every hour. Initially, the bus will only run at weekends except during the school holidays when it will run 7 days per week. The seafront attractions are using the bus service to market their attractions and support for the service has been very high.

3.21.3 A bid is being prepared for Canoe Lake area to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Parks and Open Spaces category. If successful, this will enable PCC to make considerable improvements to the infrastructure at Canoe Lake, Rock Gardens and Japanese Gardens. Further it will provide funds to develop the area as a specific park.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1** All in all, despite the weather, we had a successful 2011. The maintenance continues, Beach huts have been re-painted and a feasibility study and report took place with regard to constructing 100 new sun huts. We have also now made it quite clear that sun huts are now only available to those residents of Portsmouth that is between PO1 and PO6.

There have been a small number of complaints about noise on the seafront but these predominantly came from one person and this is being dealt with, having said that we must take into account our residents as well as our visitors and wherever possible make it as comfortable for those who live on the seafront as for those who visit and enjoy it from a different stand point. The Saturday bandstands and the Sunday bandstands were successful and, indeed, only a couple were rained off.

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Signed by
Stephen Baily
Head of Cultural Services

Appendices: Nil

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Nil	