

Policy & Planning Meeting – 18th August 2014

Item 8 – RNLI Boathouse Project – Working Party Report

A meeting attended by Councillors Patrick, Poultney and Bonfield, the Town Clerk, Operations Manager, representatives of the RNLI and their contractors took place at the Angling Clubhouse on Wednesday 13th August.

Following agreement at the Council Meeting on 7th April 2014 to allow the RNLI to take the Boat Park in its entirety as a compound for the works, the Council has received a number of representations regarding the need to maintain public access to the slipway. Lengthy consideration was given to this matter, including whether any alternative launch sites could be identified.

Given the lack of alternative options, it was agreed that it would be best to maintain public access to the slipway. The plan of the Boat Park drawn up by the contractor shows all roadways being left open for access purposes and it was felt that it would be very difficult to effectively prevent public access when the slipway has to be open to use by local fishermen and members of the Angling Club.

The contractors indicated that they did not believe that there would be health and safety concerns over maintaining public access, provided that it was appropriately managed by the Council's boat park attendants. This will need to be subject to a formal risk assessment. The requirement of the Council to employ its boat park attendants will mean that this cannot be seen as a saving in the 2015/16 budgets.

There will be no space available for the storage of trailers or parking of cars at the Boat Park and it was felt that it would not be appropriate, either practically or financially, to cordon off a section of Broad Road car park for that purpose. Instead the possibility has been raised of allocating a part of North Beach car park for trailer storage. The exact location will need to be agreed by the Operations Manager.

It was felt that if Council agreed to maintain access, publicity would need to be given to the proposed arrangements for next summer at the earliest opportunity, and preferably before the forthcoming Bank Holiday weekend. The RNLI kindly agreed to draft a press release and also to develop a webpage providing latest information on the project. It is likely that the slipway will have to be closed for a small number of days at key points in the project and it was felt that this would be best notified to users via a website, Facebook and Twitter.

Some discussion also took place regarding the question of compensation to the Council for the closure of the Boat Park, and whether this might in part be made in kind through improvement works to the Council's jetties. This matter is being explored further and will be the subject of a report to a future Council meeting.

Action required:

To agree that public access is maintained to the slipway throughout the construction works and that publicity be given to the arrangements for next year at the earliest possible opportunity.