

INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF TECHNICAL SERVICES	OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	14 MARCH 2023	7

ACCESS FOR ALL BEACH MATTING AT ST ANNES

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

The Covid pandemic created a social environment where more people remained in the UK for their holidays and indeed spent more time visiting and exploring their local area. During the 2021 summer season saw an increased number of visitors to the area. A number of requests were also received regarding accessibility to the beach with some feeling discriminated against in terms of being unable to benefit from the full enjoyment of the beach, with specific reference to grandparents being unable to join their family and enjoy watching their grandchildren play on the beach.

The Technical Services team have explored several options available to improve accessibility to beach for everyone.

In February 2022, the council placed an order with John Preston Medical and Mobility Limited for two lengths of Mobi - Mat measuring 25 meters and 10 meters plus a bespoke piece of equipment that would enable the matting to be easily laid and lifted for maintenance purposes.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Head of Technical Services

WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

To inform how the decision was made to continue with the mat option and how it will be managed.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Background

1. Immediately south of St. Annes Pier there is an existing concrete ramp which connects the main amenity promenade to the deck chair store, and also provides access to and from the beach for pedestrians, maintenance and emergency vehicles.
2. This existing ramp is considered the main access onto St. Annes beach in terms of its location, facilities, shelter and quality of sand. Car parks, toilets, shelters, kiosks, cafes and refreshments are also located nearby.

3. In 2011, concrete steps were constructed to provide compliant access from the ramp to and from the beach, together with a timber ramped boardwalk to provide improved access from the ramp onto the beach. The timber boardwalk suffered from wood rot and was removed in 2019.
4. Following communication from the public regarding improved access onto the beach in the summer of 2021, several ramp options have been explored. One option was for a concrete ramp straight out following the existing line of the slipway. In November 2021 a survey of the whole slipway and associated promenade and beach levels was undertaken. The survey details confirmed the distance off the top end of the slipway to the bottom of the slipway steps was 700mm. The beach then falls away further towards the sea.
5. Using the British Standard guidance a ramp 10m in length, a 2m level landing area followed by a further 10m ramp would be required to gain the height difference and ensure a compliant gradient. This would have required a permanent structure circa 22m onto the beach that at times would be covered by high tides. This council have impacted on the Coast Guard and RNLI operations as well as creating additional maintenance issues.
6. Another option considered was a zig zag design but this would only get people off the slipway onto the beach and would not be offering access for all.
7. Following research and exploring best practise the preferred option that provided the greatest accessibility was to raise the existing beach level 700mm up to the end of the existing ramp to provide a sand platform and then lay matting during the summer season. In February 2022 a trial was conducted using 35 liner meters of Mobi Mat from John Preston Medical and Mobility Limited. This product has been used elsewhere providing access on to UK Beaches – for example along the coast at Bournemouth – see link [Accessible seafront \(bpcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.bpcouncil.gov.uk/accessible-seafront)
8. The matting option was also in accordance with the Councils Corporate Policy to reduce Carbon. The sand scaping and recycled product offer a natural way of providing access without concrete construction.
9. Key design items in relation to the Mobi Mat product include:
 - Nonslip tear resistant, firm and stable surfacing
 - Durable designed for vehicular traffic
 - Environmentally friendly 100% recycled polyester
 - Low maintenance
 - 1.98m wide specification to allow people to pass each other whilst on the mat.
 - A blue finish to assist visually impaired visitors and residents alike.

Next steps

10. Following lessons learnt from the trial, for 2023 it is intended to sand scape the area using compacted 150mm layers of sand in order to make up the levels thus reducing the potential of the sand blowing out.
11. A new designated fixing point will be provided at the junction where the matting meets the existing slip way. The new fixing point would anchor the mat whilst also minimising the risk of a trip hazard and assist with maintenance.
12. The Beach Ranger Team would have training provided on how to use the proprietary piece of equipment supplied with the Mobi-Mat. This is specially designed for laying the mat and rolling the mat up for maintenance whilst quickly relaying and is designed to be done by one person and addresses any manual handling issues.
13. The matting would be checked daily as part of the beach patrol regime and any remedial work undertaken in a quick and responsive way. The matting would be monitored and inspected accordingly after high tides and inclement weather.
14. In the event that access onto the beach has been compromised then the Council Communications team will be informed at the earliest opportunity.