



TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 72/19

9 SEPTEMBER 2019

The purpose of this Report is to record the progress to date on the Town Council's plans for the improvement of the High Street/Pier Street main shopping area and agree the move to more detailed planning as the basis for consultation.

NO. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) By Minute 70/17 of its meeting of 10 July 2017 the Town Council agreed unanimously to include the town centre as one of several areas to be included in its Regeneration Plan, because, as the Minute records, it is:
 - critical both for the town's residents and as the core of its attraction as a destination for visitors;
 - the town's future as an attractive tourist resort depends on developing [its] strengths; and
 - the shops, restaurants, cafes and businesses that give life to [it] need increased footfall to ensure their survival and growth.
- b) The Town Council commissioned a Disability Risk Assessment from Isle Access who provided a detailed 36-page Report in May 2018 and a full copy of it is available [here](#).
- c) The fact that Island Roads will carry out its resurfacing of the town's central areas at a yet undetermined time in the financial year 2020/21 provide a once in a 25-year opportunity to include improvement works that will *address* the identified risks.
- d) Discussions have consequently been held with both the Isle of Wight Council and Island Roads about how that can best be achieved; those discussions are still ongoing.
- e) There are three proposals under consideration:
 - A response to the all the identified safety and accessibility issues in the town centre
 - Changes to the management of the Central Car Park
 - A new disability friendly public toilet provision in the Central Car Park
- f) Each of these is outlined in the following sections of this Report.
- g) Once the possibilities have been clearly identified and costed the Town Council will consult fully with both traders and residents.

2) SAFETY & ACCESSIBILITY

- a) The Disability Risk Assessment identifies safety and accessibility issues in all the area's critical features, as summarised in this section.
- b) *Pavements*
 - For people with mobility problems or other access needs, the elderly and parents with buggies, the width of a footway is important. The north side throughout the High Street measures 1370 mm (very narrow). The south side footway measures 1960 mm (allowing two wheelchairs to pass or buggies to turn).
 - North side footway impassable at the bus stop when buses load and unload (i.e. outside Boots).
 - Numerous trip hazards throughout the High Street and Pier Street: Gullies, weather drains, grates, service hatches, bollards, bins, broken paving and non-fixed obstacles.
 - Limited or no adequate drop kerbs in the High Street. Therefore safe crossing opportunities are limited
 - No tactile paving or formal crossing points outside Boots or the High Street. Vehicle visibility when people cross, from or to, Boots is poor. Visibility of people crossing the High Street from footways is also poor.
- c) *Buses*
 - Bus stop next to Boots Pharmacy is on a bend preventing buses aligning parallel to the footway, and often constricted by people parking illegally on double yellow lines
 - Buses that cannot align parallel with the bus stop footway introduce dangers for disabled and vulnerable adults embarking and alighting; and too, damage bus door ramps for those using wheelchairs and mobility

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- scooters, the elderly and those with visual impairments
 - Nearest and unregulated crossing point of the High Street is opposite Hurst's / Post Office. People attempt to cross the road dodging cars, vans, buses and trucks (i.e. highly dangerous and unsafe)
 - d) **Crossing Points**
 - In the highly-trafficked area of Ventnor, accessible and safe and usable crossing points are essential.
 - There are none throughout the High Street except at the traffic lights;
 - For people with mobility problems or other access needs, the provision of appropriate, safe, usable and accessible crossing facilities is essential
 - e) **On-street Parking**
 - Causes difficulties for people alighting from the driver's side into on-coming traffic.
 - Traffic congestion often experienced especially when vehicles are reversing into spaces.
 - Only 12 spaces, and often not used by people with disabilities (i.e. not enough rear space).
 - Vehicles parked often interfere with buses and retail businesses loading and unloading.
 - Passengers alighting onto the north side footway and opening of passenger vehicle doors interfere with people and pushchairs travelling the narrow north side footway.
 - No designated 'blue badge' (disabled) parking bays –but does not preclude disabled vehicle drivers.
 - No accessible pedestrian crossing facilities in the High Street, neither suitable dropped kerbs; and the street is one way therefore only allowing passengers ('near side') to disembark safely.
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3) SAFETY & ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

- a) Isle Access's conclusion to their Disability Risk Assessment highlights the Town Council's duty to do everything possible to respond to the issues identified in (3) above:
The 'Public Sector Equality Duty' of the Equality Act requires public bodies such as VTC to take positive action to remedy any 'non-compliance'.
 - b) We are being advised on the most effective positive actions that can be taken to address the risks by the Isle of Wight Council's Highways Engineer Gary Stretch and Island Roads' Network Manager Kevin Burton.
 - c) Kevin Burton has known Ventnor traffic issues for some 30 years with his previous role as the Island's Highways Manager and has provided us with an initial set of proposals of which the major change is the widening of the north pavement enough to allow two buggies, prams or motorised scooters without either having to go into the road.
 - d) This will mean moving the current short stay parking from the High Street to the Central Car Park, see (4) below.
 - e) The Island Roads' preliminary proposals also deal with modern standard crossing points and moving the bus stop.
 - f) A copy of their preliminary proposals is attached to this Report.
 - g) To date, this work has been done without charge by Kevin Burton and his design team; we now need further work that will give us the necessary more detailed specifications for costings and consultation with traders, their customers and other local stakeholders.
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4) CHANGES TO THE CENTRAL CAR PARK

- a) Clearly, the widening of the north pavement of the High Street requires the moving of the short stay parking to free up the space and remove the other risks presented by parked vehicles and people getting in and out of them.
 - b) The Town Council is proposing to move them into the Central Car Park and we are already in discussions with the Isle of Wight Council about the changes to that Car Park this requires.
 - c) The Town Council has submitted a Business Case for taking over the management of the four car parks it does not currently manage to add to the four it has successfully operated since
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2015.

- d) The proposals will include the provision of at least two loading bays within the overall layout.
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5) PUBLIC TOILETS

- a) The absence of an accessible, disability-friendly public toilet in the town centre itself is something the town is frequently criticised for, given the Marlborough Road Toilet is up a steep slope.
 - b) The Town Council is committed to providing a modern public toilet that combines a disability friendly unit with either one or two uni-sex units in the Central Car Park and is in discussion with the Isle of Wight Council about that development.
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6) FUNDING

- a) The Town Council will have to fund the town centre improvements that are additional to Island Roads' contractual responsibilities and will also need to fund the proposed new toilet.
 - b) This is proposed to be secured through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board with repayments needing an increase on the Precept in the range of 5-10p a week.
 - c) There will be discussions with the Isle of Wight Council about a contribution towards the safety and accessibility aspects of the town centre improvements.
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7) RECOMMENDATION

The Town Council is recommended to:

- i) ask its Town Clerk and Community Development Officer to develop arrangements for consultation with traders and residents; and
 - ii) agree to fund the detailed drawings from Island Roads and a planning application following the consultation in an anticipated total of up to £5,000.
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Preliminary Safety & Accessibility improvements suggested by Island Roads

