

WHITSTABLE HARBOUR BOARD

18 September 2009

Subject:	Management of pedestrian and vehicle movements within the harbour
Director/Head of Service:	Head of Property Services
Decision Issues:	These matters are within the authority of the Board
Decision type:	Non-key
Classification:	This report is open to the public
CCC Ward(s):	Harbour
Summary:	<i>The report, requested by the Board at the July meeting, outlines some measures that the Board could take to reduce the risks of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.</i>
To Resolve:	That – a) officers hold detailed discussions with tenants of the South Quay with a view to implementing option B, including the realignment of the access to the property occupied by Cardium Shellfish. b) the cost of implementing this solution be met from harbour reserves.
Next stage in process	Discuss with tenants and arrange implementation

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Introduction

Following an incident involving a collision between a pedestrian and a van on the south quay the Board requested a report on possible measures that could be introduced to reduce the risk of this happening again. The situation has arisen from the increasing popularity of the harbour as a place to visit and as a location for successful businesses. This is the first recorded incident of its kind but as visitor numbers continue to grow the Harbour Board must consider whether some action should be taken to reduce the risk of further incidents. People on foot are perhaps inclined to regard the South Quay as a pedestrian zone and while enjoying the atmosphere and activity of the harbour they do not remain alert to the presence of vehicles.

2. Detail

The present layout of the harbour and the location of various activities have evolved over time and have not been planned to group particular types of operation in

designated areas. Consequently industrial operations are situated immediately next to leisure-oriented uses and those going to and from them share the same space. There are no separate servicing areas so goods and equipment are brought through the same area that visitors and customers use. Some visitors come specifically to see the more industrial operations and this mixture of activities is often cited as part of the charm and interest of Whitstable Harbour. The following issues were highlighted at the last Board meeting and should be taken into account when considering the various measures:

- a) The extent to which uncontrolled access to various parts of the harbour can continue.
- b) The rights of access allowed to tenants of properties under the terms of their leases.
- c) The restrictions on hours of operation caused by tides and other factors.
- d) The controls conferred by the byelaws.
- e) The ability to enforce controls.
- f) The extent to which control of access is essential or desirable.
- g) The physical needs of different businesses.
- h) Practical solutions such as physical barriers, restrictions on hours of vehicle access and improved signage.
- i) Possible compromises to the character of the harbour and its relationship with the community.

Several possible measures have been considered and, while not necessarily an exhaustive list, are set out below:

A. Rigorously enforce existing restrictions

The harbour is covered by the Off Street Parking Places Order which controls where people can park and imposes penalties on those who do not comply. In addition the Whitstable Harbour Bye-laws restrict the speed of vehicles to 10 mph and confer powers for the Harbour Master to direct the loading, discharging, manoeuvring and removal of vehicles. However, none of these measures prohibits the access to the harbour or any part of it by vehicles.

Enforcement of the Parking Places Order is currently undertaken by civil enforcement officers who make random visits to the harbour as part of their designated rounds. They are the only people authorised to issue penalty charge notices under that Order. Enforcement of the Byelaws is by harbour staff and a court prosecution where non-compliance continues. There is no permanent staff presence and no restrictions on vehicles driving on to the South Quay other than those contained in the planning consents and leases to Coastal Catering, Kentish Trader and the Chamber of Commerce, where the usage of the premises is limited to 8 am to 8 pm, but loading is only permitted from 7 - 9 am, and 8 - 9 pm. Without a constant presence (which will require the permanent deployment of staff seven days a week) and some physical restrictions, enforcement alone is unlikely to significantly reduce vehicle traffic on the South Quay area. At best it would reduce illegal parking and possibly deter those

who try to park in the 'permit only' spaces at Dead Man's Corner or 'just pop in' to the various businesses.

Comparative figures for the periods 1 January – 11 August show an 84% increase in penalty charge notices issued in 2009 (317) relative to the same period in 2008 (172). This illustrates that car parking enforcement at the harbour is being given proper attention.

As a result of the changing nature of the harbour and its increasing attraction as a visitor destination it may be an appropriate time to review the management of the whole port. There has been a decline in the number of marine operations and an increase in the amount of 'shore-based' business so that the whole operation has become more akin to a commercial centre rather than being predominantly a shipping facility. While the Harbour Board has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient skilled resources to operate the port in a safe and competent manner the demands faced by the Port Manager and Harbour Master and his staff are changing and the emphasis of their duties needs to be altered to address this.

B. Lockable vehicle barrier at the west end of the South Quay

This would control the access of all vehicles to the quay. There is an existing barrier at the eastern end so vehicles would be entirely prevented from driving on to the quay, except when authorised.

This restriction could operate in several ways:

- Control could be solely by harbour staff
- Other authorised people could also have keys for access at agreed times
- The barrier could be automated with access by authorised card holders

The barrier must be robust. A lifting arm was installed in this area at one time and soon became inoperable. A gate or arm would restrict the free flow of pedestrians. Automated equipment may not withstand the salt-laden atmosphere and may be too fragile in this location. It will also require regular maintenance.

The most suitable barrier in this location would be substantial lockable but removable bollards which will not impede the passage of pedestrians.

The bollards could be kept closed permanently or could be closed for part of the day, e.g. 10.00hrs – 17.00 hrs, and then opened to allow servicing traffic to reach the various businesses outside the restricted time. If vehicles are still permitted to have access they will have to turn round or reverse back off the quay. While the bollards are closed businesses (and vessels with berths on this quay) will have to transport goods and supplies to and from their premises by hand or with trolleys. The Harbour Board could purchase one or two hand trolleys and make them available for use by tenants on the quay. However, ensuring that they are maintained, available for use and not stolen or vandalised may make this impractical. One tenant has a forklift truck which might also be made available to others for delivering goods.

If the preferred solution is to prohibit all vehicles from the South Quay (other than in exceptional circumstances such as emergencies or moving heavy equipment) then in addition to the barrier serious consideration should be given to altering the access to

the premises occupied by Cardium Shellfish. At present tractors and trailers, a mobile grab crane and lorries all enter the quay and manoeuvre among pedestrians. Although they are accompanied by banksmen the operation of these large vehicles presents significant risks to pedestrians, many of whom are actually visiting the Cardium premises. An alternative vehicle access might be achieved by removing one line of four car parking spaces so that the delivery of cockles and the subsequent removal of shells and processed fish can be undertaken without vehicles going on to the quay itself. The access to the fishermen's storage area would also have to be altered. While Cardium remain at their current location they will need regular access for large vehicles along part of the quay so the benefits gained by removing other vehicles will be reduced.

Unless an alternative site can be found to replace the parking spaces there will be a loss of four spaces and income from parking will reduce. Permit holders will no longer have access to the spaces at Dead Man's Corner although these will be lost anyway when the seating project is put in place.

Potential costs:

14 No. bollards, supply and install

Realignment of Cardium access

Total £3,500

The permanent loss of 4 car parking spaces might reduce parking income by around £6,000 per year but it may be possible to replace some or all of the spaces elsewhere in the harbour.

The relocation of Cardium Shellfish's operation has been considered in the past but the costs of achieving this have significantly outweighed the financial benefits. The volume of the catch handled by Cardium is such that transporting it manually is not possible and because the timing of movements is dictated by tides the business cannot restrict bulk movements of shellfish to specific hours.

C. Install speed humps on the quay

Installing speed humps at regular intervals will ensure that vehicles do not travel at speed along the quay but although there are reports of drivers exceeding the 10mph limit, speed itself has not been identified as the main risk to pedestrians. The presence of humps could act as a deterrent to drivers who travel along the quay for a speculative purpose or for a 'drop-in' visit.

However, humps will not deter all traffic and could make the movement of equipment such as trolleys or wheelchairs, pushchairs and disability scooters more difficult or uncomfortable unless level gaps are provided. Humps are not welcomed by drivers of emergency vehicles.

Potential Costs:

4 No. speed humps £1,000

D. Provide a through route subject to restrictions on time or use

This would allow vehicles to drive in at one end of the quay and exit from the other, the advantage being that vehicles would not need to turn before leaving. Although traffic flows in both directions at present, because the eastern exit is permanently closed, it would be preferable to operate a one-way system if this option was adopted. To achieve a reduction in risk of conflict with pedestrians it would be necessary to combine this solution with restrictions on times of entry, e.g. vehicles prohibited between, say, 09.00 and 17.00 and physical measures or constant enforcement would be necessary to ensure these are observed.

However, when it is open this may tempt drivers to travel at greater speeds and for the route to be used as a short cut. It would not resolve the issue of operational vehicle movements at Cardium Shellfish which have to take place at varying times of the day because of varying tide times.

Potential costs:

4 No. bollards, supply and install £1,000

E. Install a vehicle barrier half way along the quay

At one time there was a barrier at the eastern end of the south quay warehouse, intended to prevent pedestrians and vehicles from moving along the quay when Bretts were unloading aggregate at this location. However, unless it was staffed it tended to be disregarded.

A permanent barrier at a similar point would have the effect of dividing vehicle traffic between the two main gates and consequently reducing the number of vehicle movements on each half of the quay. This would reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of conflict with pedestrians. Initially there could be 'abortive' movements until people became used to finding the correct entrance for the premises they needed to visit but these would be resolved over time.

Potential costs:

4 No. bollards, supply and install £1,000

E. Alter or restrict pedestrian access points

Potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicles might be avoided if the pedestrian flow was diverted to different routes. At present the majority of pedestrians appear to enter the harbour at the two main gates, the most popular being the west gate. This is also the main vehicle entrance point, for both public parking and for service vehicles. Pedestrians also approach the harbour along the seafront from the west and then cross the roadway leading to the west quay. There is also a pedestrian entrance from Harbour Street adjacent to the Angling Society building, approximately half way between the two main gates, and another beside the toilet block close to the east gate.

Controlling pedestrian flows is not easy because people tend to take the most direct route to their destination and can effectively go wherever a vehicle can go. There are many different routes into the harbour, some being more attractive than others, and it would be very difficult in practice to direct pedestrians to certain routes while allowing effective access for vehicles. The success of the harbour can be judged by the

number of visitors walking around and any measures that had the effect of deterring foot visitors would not be welcome.

F. Create separate protected pedestrian routes

This has already been introduced at the eastern end of the harbour and is successful to a certain extent. The recommended pedestrian route is surfaced in a different colour and marked as being for pedestrians only. Vehicles do have to cross it at points. There are no physical barriers between vehicles and pedestrians but observation suggests that the demarcation is largely respected.

This could be extended along the south quay and around the west gate to try to direct pedestrians along certain routes and to deter vehicles from driving on these sections. A further step could be to introduce physical separation with bollards or barriers.

The effectiveness of such measures will depend on the willingness of people to use them. The Harbour Board will be seen to be taking steps to separate vehicles and pedestrians but total restriction is not physically possible. At the western end of the quay this is particularly difficult because of the number of points where vehicle and pedestrian routes have to cross each other. One of the attractions of the harbour appears to be that people have the impression that they can wander freely and significant restriction could act as a deterrent.

Potential cost:

Coloured surfacing	£4,000
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3. Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents

Corporate health and safety policy.

4. Consultation planned or undertaken

Although discussions have been held with some tenants and users it will be necessary to allow all those who may be affected by the preferred solution(s) to express their views.

5. Options available with reasons for suitability

Option B is likely to have most impact on reducing conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. The other options are not mutually exclusive but offer more limited benefits as well as some significant disadvantages; Option F could be implemented as an additional measure to encourage the separation of vehicle and pedestrian areas at times when vehicles may be permitted to enter the quay.

6. Reasons for supporting option recommended, with risk assessment

The harbour board has responsibility for safety within the harbour, both for marine operations and for other activities and it will wish to be satisfied that it is fulfilling this responsibility.

7. **Implications**

- (a) Financial Implications – as set out against each option.
- (b) Legal Implications – the harbour board and the council have a legal responsibility to ensure that the harbour is as safe as possible. The leases of some harbour tenants give them rights of access over land that will be affected by the preferred option. However, these rights are exercisable at the discretion of the Harbour Master and could be varied by agreement.

Other implications

To be determined

8. **Conclusions**

While the harbour has a very good record for safety, the recent incident suggests that neither officers nor the board should be complacent and it is appropriate to review the current arrangements and risks. While the implementation of any measures is entirely at the discretion of the Harbour Board it will doubtless wish to discuss them with tenants and users in order to maintain constructive relations.

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