REPORT TO WYRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Request for support for the refurbishment of North Promenade and Rossall Promenade from Cafe Cove to Five Bar Gate

presented by
Rossall Beach Residents Association

www.rossallbeach.org.uk
Location Plan

This plan shows the location of the new promenade which was completed in 2008 and the area of North Promenade and Rossall Promenade which is covered by this report. Both sections of the promenade are a similar length.
Detail Plan

This plan shows the location of the promenade covered by this report from Cafe Cove at the South end to Five Bar Gate at the North end.
Background

The £20m award winning promenade at Cleveleys has been a huge success – both in terms of sea defence provision and improving the area for tourists and residents and creating significant economic uplift for Cleveleys and Wyre. The inadvertent beaching of the Riverdance Ferry in January 2008 contributed to the increase in tourism, timed perfectly for the completion of the first phase of sea defence works. Many people who hadn’t previously been to Cleveleys came to see the wreck, were surprised and impressed at what Cleveleys had to offer, and have returned in better weather as tourists.

A significant difference has been seen in the number of tourists in the Rossall Beach area since the new promenade opened, and all year round in fair weather the promenade is thronged with walkers. The parking area is packed with cars and weekends see a continual stream of vehicles trying to park, failing and turning to drive off. Thornton Gate is generally parked solidly from the end of the double yellow lines, and cars are spilling over onto Green Drive and adjacent streets.

By complete contrast to the new development, the promenade heading north past the new cafe is the original structure, in desperate need of repair and refurbishment, having not had any relevant updating work done to it since its construction. Unfortunately, the superb quality and finish of the new promenade has only served to make the old promenade look even worse, although it is not just a cosmetic problem and there are also issues of health and safety which ought to be addressed.

Tourists and locals are often heard exclaiming about the state of this promenade, in complete contrast to the new development – asking why it hasn’t been upgraded and commenting on the poor and sorry state of it. When the planned phase of work is carried out to the defences from Rossall Hospital going round to Fleetwood Golf Course, the poor condition of this central patch of untouched promenade will be heightened even further, and it will stick out as a sore thumb in the middle of a refurbished Fylde coastline. Twenty first century sea defences and promenade will stretch from Squires Gate in the South, through the tourist areas of Blackpool and Cleveleys, to Fleetwood in the North, and Rossall Beach will be the only patch in the Wyre which hasn’t been modernised.

It is known and acknowledged that this stretch of sea defences is considered to be safe and not in any danger of breach, and that funds for re-building the promenade wouldn’t be accessible.

There is an acknowledged lack of parking at Cleveleys, and the on-street bays next to the Five Bar Gate are one of the few places where long stay (and free) parking is available, hence people tend to leave their cars there to walk to Cleveleys. A regular and large number of tourists also make the parking area and beach their main destination, and all day, year round the area is busy with all types of visitors – including a continual stream of people eating their breakfast/lunch/tea and a variety of snacks!
Rossall Beach is a quiet dead end with a built in race track for youngsters, and as a consequence it has attracted all kinds of anti-social behaviour for many years. This parking area is a) used by the general public at all times and b) is in the middle of a quiet residential area and closely overlooked by houses – not in the middle of nowhere where no one is affected. Problems suffered include:-

- racing and ‘jumping the hump’ from youths driving at excessive speed, at all times of day and night- gathering of large groups of youths, behaving in an intimidating manner, playing loud music, playing football in the street and generally taking over a quiet area and driving quiet people away

- drinking in public – large groups of teenagers frequently gather out of sight beyond the Five Bar Gate, have parties and get drunk, with the attendant ASB problems caused when they come back down the prom, late at night, blind drunk.- drug taking, ranging from passing joints car to car, to injecting. 20 sharps were recently removed from the beach near to the sea wall

- sex in public places – ‘Dogging’ and inviting people to watch, used condoms are frequently found on the promenade

- urinating in gardens

- playing loud music in the middle of the night

A number of residents had been attending the PACT meetings, trying to enlist Police support in dealing with the issues. It was suggested that we form a Residents Association because we would have a stronger voice as a group, and also that we would be able to apply for funding which local authority wouldn’t be able to access – specifically for a much needed CCTV camera which is, ironically, proving the most difficult thing to address.
About the Association

Rossall Beach Residents Association was formed in August 2008, with a committee of 11, and currently our status is that of a group. We have adopted the Charities Commission Constitution, have clearly defined Objects, and a bank account. When £5000 of turnover has been reached we can apply for Charitable Status and to become a registered Charity. This is one of our main ambitions and will enable us to access more significant funding streams for more significant projects, and any support that can be given to achieve this would be greatly welcomed.

An initial collection for Neighbourhood Watch signs had a tremendous response and raised sufficient funds for signs to be bought for both the promenade and the road at the back of the houses (The Bay) and generated a surplus. Two coffee mornings with draws and raffles have further boosted operating funds, along with a series of note cards produced by Rabbit Design which are on sale, and a programme of fund-raising is currently being worked on.

Lancashire Police have kindly photocopied our quarterly RA/Neighbourhood Watch newsletter without any charge. Our only costs to date have been room hire at the Frank Townend Centre where we hold our regular monthly meetings.

We have been successful with two grant applications to obtain equipment for beach cleaning. £500 was awarded from Green Partnership Awards (Grants for environmental action in Lancashire) A partnership between Lancashire County Council, Environment Agency, United Utilities and the County’s local councils, which we spent on litter pickers (20 x adults and 15 x children). Goods to the value of £250 came from B&Qs One Planet Living Grant which included 2 x wheelbarrows, 2 x shovels, 2 x brushes and 60 pairs of PVC gloves.
Achievements to Date

Our first priorities have been to address issues which have been long standing problems, and so far we have worked with various agencies to put the following in place:

- established a Neighbourhood Watch, had signs erected, and developed links with the Police
- beach access steps have been re-cast and handrails provided
- the benches have been refurbished and re-painted
- new ‘No overnight parking’ signs have been provided
- recycling bins have been provided and hopefully at least one extra grey bin is on order to replace the one which was ‘taken out’ by the last car to crash onto the beach
- unsuitable dog bins have been replaced along with more accessible ones

- Birse Coastal is providing sign boxes for posters/displays
- we have worked with WBC and LCC councillors on the Thornton Gate re-routing scheme to combat the speeding problems and that Scheme is due to be constructed during the summer months
- community beach cleaning has been started with the help of Keith Urwin the Waterfront Ranger, with the first event attracting over 30 people and removing in excess of 70 sacks of rubbish
- we are supporting WBC in ‘Adopting the Beach’ with the Marine Conservation Society.

In addition, we are building a strong community and with the enthusiasm of the residents events are being planned for fund raising, tourism and community engagement. Already, people from surrounding streets and Cleveleys are wanting to become involved, and Associate Membership is offered to anyone, currently free of charge. Our quarterly newsletter is a worthwhile read, including all kinds of information about what’s happening in the area along with news about the Association.

‘Tea on the Beach’ is intended to be a regular summer social event, and a demonstration/tryout Kite Event is organised for 16th August.

We are also entering North West in Bloom for a Neighbourhood Award – which is all about making improvements to your environment and nothing to do with flowers!

Our website, www.rossallbeach.org.uk, is regularly updated and pays tribute to everything we do, holding information on our events, publicity, useful information, links and telephone numbers, and the Grot Gallery is a portal for our successes – a range of ‘before’ and ‘after’ photographs.
Refurbishment of North and Rossall Promenade

It quickly became clear that the environmental condition of the apron, sea defences, and public spaces at Rossall Beach were found to be poor by everybody – residents and visitors alike - and that this should be a major project we should embark on.

Visitors from near and far are repeatedly heard to comment on the poor fabric of the promenade, the contrast of the old promenade with the new, and regularly ask why nothing has been done about it.

You will see from this report that the entire fabric of the pavements, road, promenade and sea defences are in a neglected and poor state of repair. The entire public space is in its original state from when it was constructed and very few repairs have ever been carried out past the junction at the end of Thornton Gate. This has repercussions on:

- public perception, crime and vandalism
- the perception of tourists and their desire to return
- health and safety

1 - Preferred Option

A programme of complete and thorough refurbishment, without complete re-build, would be the preferred option, to bring the rest of the tourist area into line with the rest of the Cleveleys sea front.

This would be a significant spend, but would extend the life of the existing promenade area considerably and negate the need for complete re-build until well into the future.

The Preferred Option would be planned and exercised as a whole, so that a co-ordinated and cohesive programme of refurbishment takes place, producing an appropriate end product that Cleveleys and Wyre can be proud of.

The design to complement the successful sea defence works which have already been carried out at Cleveleys, and to make creative and imaginative but sensible use of the space and monies spent.

- complete and proper refurbishment of the apron
- refurbishment/resurfacing of the promenade walkway to prevent it from holding water
- complete cosmetic refurbishment of the taller sea wall that abuts the road, including improvements to emergency phones
- significant works to the roads and pavements, to include dropped kerbs and marking the hard verge next to the tall wall as unsuitable for pedestrians
- architectural re-surfacing of the seating area next to the car parking
- provision of new street furniture to include bins, benches, tables etc which are all suitable for the weather conditions
- improved access onto and across the beach
- replace the groynes to stop sand movement
- Install CCTV
Refurbishment of North and Rossall Promenade

The outcome of the Preferred Option would be

- an increase in footfall and tourism,
- increased pride in the area,
- cohesiveness with the rest of the main Cleveleys coastline
- reduced vandalism and crime and heightened perception of public safety (if it is nice it stays nice)
- reduction in compensation claims against poorly maintained roads and pavements
- married with the Rossall Hospital to Fleetwood development, it will present the whole of the Wyre coastline as a first class promenade and sea defences

Potential Avenues for Partnership Working

Once Charitable Status has been secured for Rossall Beach Residents Association, we would be a willing and productive partner in both planning a scheme and securing funding for it.

It would make perfect sense that the Seachange project and Cleveleys Seafront Artwork project should tie in with the refurbishment – both in terms of the design and creative use of space, and as a source of funding. Would there be scope within the Multi Area Agreement for Rossall Beach plans to be incorporated, supported and funded.

There is a clear and obvious link with Wyre Tourism strategies, where a) the refurbishment and b) Rossall Beach and its activities could be used as a Tourism initiative to gain recognition on a national scale, and the Association would welcome any support that Wyre Borough Council would be prepared to offer on that front.
Refurbishment of North and Rossall Promenade

2 - Middle of the Road Option

The Middle of the Road Option would be an ad-hoc approach, as and when funds allow.

A little bit of re-surfacing here and there to repair the worst of the areas which are the cause of compensation claims; second hand bits of street furniture found and repaired, but which are inappropriate for the environment; top surface tidying and cleaning which quickly is as bad again, an inappropriate CCTV camera which has no deterrent effect and isn’t fit for purpose.

A disjointed and uncoordinated approach, with a lack of proper planning, that doesn’t get the best result from the money available, with an outcome that could be better.

The danger with this option is that money is spent, and then spent again and again, because the initial solution isn’t adequate – either against the amount of decay which it is trying to combat, or in the face of the elements it has to withstand.

3 - ‘Do Nothing’

If nothing is done with North and Rossall Promenades, the area will quickly decline.

Conclusion

The support of Wyre Borough Council is sought in following the Preferred Option of a complete and thorough, planned refurbishment of North and Rossall Promenades, the beachfront and walkway.

Rossall Beach Residents Association also seek the support of Wyre Borough Council in making both Rossall Beach and the whole of Cleveleys a well resourced and attractive tourist destination for the twenty first century.
Sea Wall

The sea wall is in a very poor state of repair along its entire length from the cafe to the Five Bar Gate (and beyond). The apron is badly cracked in many places and the holes are certainly large enough for children to trap their fingers while climbing.

There is a central stretch of beach which is left mainly dry by the tide, although it does come to the wall in winter storms. The tide does meet both ends, at the gate and cafe, on a regular basis, and the erosion which can clearly be seen will be made worse by continual wear.

Aesthetically, the apron is an eye-sore, made to look even worse when approached from the new development. The whole stretch of promenade is still walked by many visitors – they don’t just stop at the cafe – and they are often heard to exclaim and comment on the state of it, and theorise on how quickly it would be renewed, because ‘they’ll have to do something with it’ (which has often been heard).
Beach Access Steps

There are two sets of beach access steps which do not have any handrails and are dangerous and difficult to use for people with mobility problems and the elderly. Last year, the steps on the main section of Rossall Promenade were recast, with treads and risers of a safe width and height, and fitted with new galvanised handrails. This has made a significant difference to the ease with which the beach can be accessed, and they also look much more appealing.
Seating Arrangements

This is the only seating bench between the new cafe and the on street parking at the far end of Rossall Promenade. This bench is in need of refurbishment and additional suitable seating is also required.

This lone bench is at the back of the wall leading from the parking area to the cafe – an area which is very well used. There were once a number of benches along this stretch – all of which have disappeared and not been replaced – and it was a pleasant place to sit sheltered from the wind. Earlier in 2009, all the benches on the main section of Rossall Promenade were taken away, refurbished and replaced. This was very welcome work and the benches have been exceptionally well used.

If a proper programme of refurbishment is to be carried out, these benches would be better recycled into less obvious areas of the promenade and replaced with more modern and appropriate street furniture.
Road Wall

The sea wall is the original 1970s design which was erected rather quickly as a result of serious flooding along the Promenade. The wall desperately needs cosmetic improvement, perhaps by rendering, to be in keeping with the sea wall on the new section of the Promenade.

This wall is an eyesore – it is tall, dirty and exceptionally ugly. It is a very prominent (but necessary) eyesore that is unmissable from both the promenade and road sides, and serves only to draw attention to the difference between the old and new sections.
The emergency telephone is, although functioning correctly, in need of updating to a more modern and appealing standard similar to the sleek red units on the new Promenade.

There is only one emergency telephone on the old Promenade compared with two on the new Promenade.

Although mobile phones are well used by everyone these days, there are many older people using the area who probably wouldn’t carry a phone, and it is such a potentially dangerous position.
Lifebuoys

There are only 4 lifebuoys on the old Promenade compared with 19 on the new Promenade. With the shifting sands on Rossall Promenade proving to be such an issue for holiday makers who aren’t beach aware, it is vital that there are means of rescue close by.
Drop Kerbs

There is a distinct lack of drop kerbs throughout the whole length of the Promenade making it extremely difficult and dangerous for elderly and infirm pedestrians. Occasionally there is a makeshift ramp in the form of a blob of concrete.

The promenade road is a busy road, especially in good weather, and it is very difficult navigating up and down the pavements with wheelchairs and prams, without dropped kerbs.
Water Retention

Many sections of the Promenade hold water and make it difficult and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

The water collects in extremely long stretches, and is quite deep, and climbing onto and walking along the wall is the only dry way of navigating it. This is a problem for people with mobility problems and children.
Promenade Slab

The Promenade walkway slab is breaking up along the joint lines and is dangerous particularly adjacent to the parking area along Rossall Promenade.

There are many trip hazards along the length of the promenade, added to which someone has (very badly) done some pointing work and in many places made it worse.

The whole area is aesthetically very poor and does nothing to create a good impression in one of the main parking areas of a beauty spot.
Parking Bays

Parking bays are not marked out therefore not making the best use of the space available.

People naturally park as far away from the next car as they can (many at an angle), which is understandable, but it seriously reduces the number of cars which can park during busy times. The lines which were once painted on the road have almost completely worn away.

It is an established fact that there is a serious lack of parking in Cleveleys, and many day-trippers come to this end of Cleveleys to park and walk into town. On sunny weekends there is a continual stream of frustrated motorists driving up and down trying to find a space, and making better use of the space would alleviate the problem.

To avoid people parking in two spaces, they could be marked up wide enough to get a large car in, which would still allow for significantly more cars than currently.
Disabled Parking Bays

Disabled bays do not comply with current recommendations, there is insufficient space between the bays and at the rear of the bay for persons in wheelchairs.

The bays are not clearly marked and consequently non-disabled drivers use these spaces thus preventing disabled drivers from parking. Once a car is parked in the bay, the disabled graphic cannot be seen therefore some drivers are unaware they have parked in a disabled bay.

Are 4 disabled bays sufficient for approximately 85 normal bays? On the new car park adjacent to the Cove Cafe there are 6 disabled bays for 19 normal bays.
Narrow Footway

Extremely narrow footway on the west side of North Promenade, pedestrians have to walk in the road to pass street furniture.

Apparently this is a ‘hard verge’ which is designed to stop cars driving too near to the sea wall and damaging wing mirrors etc.

However, pedestrians regularly use this area as it looks just like a narrow footpath, and often several abreast, spilling out into the road. Should it be marked with hatch markings to indicate that it isn't a safe walkway?
Most of the groynes are in urgent need of repair/replacement, sand and shale shifting noticeably causing serious problems for people using the beach when the tide is coming in.

A number of the groynes are almost entirely buried, and they are all quite badly damaged.

During the tourist season people go out onto the beach, facing the water, and are completely unaware of the tide coming round the back of them, and then have to wade through deep water to get to shore. The depth of the channel alters depending on sand movement, which is increasing due to the poor state of repair of the groynes.
Footways

The footways along the whole of Rossall Promenade are in desperate need of replacement.

There have recently been a number of residents who have suffered injury after falling due to uneven footways.

The footways are not only used by residents they are used by hundreds of visitors to the area every week.
Carriageway

The road is in the same poor state of repair as the pavements, with a substantial section of it still being surfaced in concrete (which we understand is because of the shifting foundations, but doesn’t have to be the surface finish).

The road appears to have been laid in sections, and there are bad fault lines where the road opens up at the joins, with quite deep potholes running the full width of the road. Along the entire stretch of Rossall and North Prom, the edge of the road surface is broken up (along the double yellow lines) which is very dangerous to cyclists who have to ride far enough into the road to miss the dangerous road surface. Plus which the double yellow lines are eroded and not always easy to see.
Street Lighting

Up to the hump in the road there is street lighting on both the promenade and property sides of the road. After the hump in the road there is only street lighting in front of the houses. Consequently, the beach side of the road is quite dark, and it creates a dim area on the high reaches of the beach for trouble to be caused, and is part of the problem with ongoing anti-social behaviour of all kinds.

Should the beach area be developed with boardwalks, extra access etc, and when the Sea Change project creates new developments through the Five Bar Gate area, extra lighting will be essential to dampen down anti-social behaviour.
Illegal Parking

Due to inadequate amounts of parking all over Cleveleys, the Rossall Beach sea front parking is very popular and busy at all times of day all through the year. In peak periods it becomes impossible to park, and motorists resort to parking on the double yellow lines along the sea wall and in front of properties, creating litter, noise, and nuisance. Most of these motorists are parking without Blue Badges and without any authority to do so.
CCTV

The need for CCTV underpins the whole of the regeneration of this section of promenade. It is off the beaten track, isolated, not terribly well lit, and in poor weather is a quiet spot in which all kinds of misbehaviour takes place.

Our Association was encouraged to form by the Police as a way of supporting and acquiring a CCTV camera, and it is one thing which proves entirely elusive.

We have researched different systems and the ways in which they would be monitored and used, and their suitability for our situation and problems.

As a group, we have concluded that a more affordable ‘fixed’ camera which records to a hard drive and isn’t linked to the police station, would provide the best combination of deterrent and evidence. The camera needs mounting on a pole where it is clear and obvious for all to see, along with appropriate signage. Mounted on a shorter pole with a protective metal baffle or with an adjustable winch, we would also be quite prepared to maintain the camera and keep the cover clean.

The exciting developments which are planned as part of the Sea Change funding bid include developing the land just through the Five Bar Gate with beach huts. While this is an excellent idea and will improve the environment enormously, attention has to be paid to the anti-social behaviour that it will attract a) for the preservation of the initial outlay and the ability of them to be used and enjoyed for years to come, and b) for the sanity of the residents who already suffer greatly, particularly near the gate. We cannot see how any further developments can be made in this area unless coverage with CCTV is provided.

At this point, the fixed camera head on our original camera could be swapped for the more expensive infra-red option, which would allow links to be made from Jubilee Gardens, to Rossall Beach, and then along to the Five Bar Gate and beyond by line of sight.