

Salcombe Harbour Board – 10 July 2007**BOAT PARK OPERATIONS****Report of Head of Service Salcombe Harbour****Statutory Powers: Pier and Harbour Order (Salcombe) Confirmation Act 1954**

Financial Implications: None in the preparation of this report other than officer time. However, there will be financial implications for the Harbour Authority and South Hams District Council, depending on which option is chosen for the delivery of the winter storage service.

Purpose

To appraise Members on the issues surrounding the operation of the Boat Park, in particular winter storage, and propose a way forward that improves the health and safety and reduces the risk surrounding this operation, provides a winter storage facility and access to boats for local contractors to service them.

The operation of the Council's car park at Batson as a winter boat park supports the objectives of good jobs (CP2), retention of the district's character (CP3), an accessible council (CP5) and value for money (CP6).

Recommendations**That the Harbour Board:**

RESOLVES to support the proposal to operate the Council's Creek Car Park along boatyard lines for the storage of boats during the winter.

Recommends that the Council advertise for expressions of interest to operate the Creek Car Park as a boatyard for winter storage.

Background

1. The Council's car/boat park at Batson is utilised for winter storage of boats from 1 October to 31 March each year. The overall process is overseen by the Harbour staff, the revenue for storage is collected for the Council's Street Scene Service and a number of different operators lift, launch and maintain the boats.
2. Whilst the boats are ashore in the car park, the area is effectively a boat yard with all of the associated health and safety risks, but it is currently more closely aligned to a car park with boats in it. Despite fencing, the public walk through the boat storage area, exposing themselves to a range of potentially fatal hazards. Owners engage contractors to perform maintenance tasks without any regulation or control. The Harbour is charged with the overall supervision of all storage activities, but as it is not permanently manned they

have little or no ability to regulate activities, the operation exposes the Council and Harbour Authority to significant risk. Indeed a Liability Survey of Specified Water Risks dated 15 September 1999 prepared by the Council's Insurance Company highlighted the storage of boats on Council land as a risk and recommended an immediate review. As far as we are aware, this did not happen.

3. Batson Creek car park represents a substantial development opportunity in the medium to long term and therefore any changes should retain flexibility in order to complement any future development opportunities.

Current Operations

4. Boats are recovered from the water by an unknown number of boat yards and operators, most use the slipway to haul the boats out where they are power washed off before being removed to a remote storage location. The main operators who lift boats for storage on the car park are Winters Marine, who operate a Coles mobile crane, a syndicate of boat owners who hire in a crane for a weekend and a local operator, who has used a tractor winch and a boat trolley for many years but he has recently retired leaving a gap in the service. These three main operators cover the vast majority of all boats that are stored for the winter and they have catered for slightly different markets and requirements.
5. The car park is in two distinct parts. The main car park is utilised by Winters' crane, this is because the crane lifts the boat then travels across the park on its wheels with the boat suspended from the gib and the main car park is reasonably flat and stable. The northern area of the car park is used year round for boating activities but, as it is built on reclaimed land, it is unsuitable for the mobile crane to operate; this area has therefore evolved as the tractor winch operator's patch. The area in between, the prime real estate, has become the area for the syndicate crane as this crane, being a modern mobile, is not capable of travelling with its load so sets itself down and lifts to the limit of its gib radius only.
5. There are three factors which have predicated a need for change:
 - The Harbour Master is uncomfortable with the level of risk associated with the current winter storage operations.
 - Following the retirement of the winch operator, there will be a number of customers who will not be able to recover their boats at the end of the current season.
 - Winters, until recently, operated two similar cranes, one at their boatyard at Lincombe, the other at Batson. During routine operations on 3 May 2007, the crane at Winters' yard toppled over, dropping the boat it was moving into the water. The cause is unknown, however this incident highlights the risks involved with operating this type of crane to lift and move boats and why modern mobile cranes do not operate in this manner.

Way Forward

6. To take this issue forward there are some fundamental questions that need to be answered, these include but may not be limited to:
 - Does the Council wish to proceed with the proposal to operate the car park during the winter months along commercial boatyard lines?
 - If the answer is no, then a decision will have to be made to cease the activity or accept the risk. Accepting the risk is not something that officers are able to recommend.
 - If the answer is yes, then a decision will have to be made over how the service is to be provided and a timeline for implementation. To implement revised arrangements fully for October 2007 is unlikely to be a realistic option. To implement for October 2008 would be more realistic but it would mean the current risk would have to be carried for a further year and potentially not all the regular customers would be able to receive the service during winter 2007/08.

7. Because of the risks involved, the Harbour Master and other Council officers are of the opinion that doing nothing is not an option. There are therefore potentially two courses of action open to the Harbour Authority and the District Council to improve the level of risk associated with winter storage. In broad terms these are:
 - Contract out the operation of the car/boat park for winter storage from 1 October to 31 March to an operator who would run the winter storage operation as a boatyard. This option would require the selected operator to:
 - manage the winter storage operation and own the risk
 - manage access for contractors and ensure compliance with appropriate health and safety legislation
 - satisfy the Council that the operation is safe and efficient
 - provide value for money and competitive prices for services
 - maintain public access to the slipway
 - maintain business access to the fish quay
 - take over and hand back the car/boat park on agreed dates
 - pay a market rent for the land to the Council

 - For the Harbour Authority working with the wider District Council to operate the car park for winter storage. This option would require the Harbour Authority and District Council to:
 - manage the winter storage operation
 - own the risk
 - provide an efficient service at a reasonable price
 - provide value for money
 - maintain public access to the slipway
 - maintain business access to the fish quay
 - take over and hand back the car park on agreed dates

- operate the necessary plant which could include the following depending on the method used:
 - slipway hoist
 - tractor
 - mobile crane
 - fork lift truck
 - boat cradles
 - power washers
 - recruit and train additional staff
 - provide permanent staff presence
8. In order to inform the decision making process and select the most appropriate way to deliver the boat storage service safely and efficiently it is considered necessary to determine if there are any commercial operators prepared to operate the winter storage service and how they would propose to operate it. It is therefore proposed that the Harbour Board recommend that the Council advertise for expressions of interest from boatyards to provide the winter storage service. An outline business plan for the Harbour Authority delivering the service is at Appendix 1.
9. Operators proposing realistic and sustainable solutions could then be invited to participate in detailed discussions with the District Council and Harbour Authority with a view to deciding if a contractor or the Harbour Authority should provide the service and ultimately to agree a contract for the delivery of the service.
11. The overall management of this project should be considered. It is suggested that it may sit within the auspices of the Asset Management Group under the chairmanship of the Head of Property Services.

Value for Money

18. Delivering Value for Money is one of the Council's corporate priorities. The selection of the most appropriate way to provide the winter storage service and to reduce the risks associated with the operation will ultimately directly affect the value for money derived from this service.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Total loss of income from winter storage if winter storage operation is discontinued on Health and Safety grounds.	Offer the service to a boatyard operator to operate on behalf of the Council or for the Council to provide the service. The new service must comply with current H&S requirements
SHDC fail to provide a service that has been provided for a number of years, thus affecting Council reputation	SHDC provide alternative service.
Fatality or serious injury following an accident in SHDC car park whilst it is being operated as a boat park	To improve the safety by following yacht harbours code of practice for boatyard operations. This will involve a radical change in operating practices at the car park during the winter months.

A boat falls over whilst it is stored in the car park. This could have a domino effect and many boats would be damaged.	Cease the practice of chocking boats with makeshift arrangements. Ensure fit for purpose boat cradles are used.
A member of the public is killed or seriously injured whilst walking through the boat storage area.	Stop public access to the boat storage area by fencing it off and operating it as a boatyard for the winter months.
Health and safety.	Boatyard to be operated in accordance with current H&S regulations and all contractors entering the sight would be required to comply with boatyard code of practice.
Corporate activity with an impact on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks, and Sites of Scientific Interest.	The Harbour Authority part fund a Marine Conservation Officer who monitors all activity within the estuary to ensure the harbour Authority fully respects the ANOB and SSSI status of the Estuary. Waste disposal could be monitored more closely in a boatyard with defined fence and limits.
Financial Risks and Impact on Councils Assets	The Council could contract out this service, and set an annual rent which would give an assured income. Alternatively the Council could consider taking the financial risk for the potential long term financial gains. There is always the possibility that this proposal will not be financially viable, however, with a national shortage of boat storage capacity, this is unlikely. To retain the responsibility for the operation of the car park asset will provide better flexibility for the Council in the future should Batson car park be the subject of any future development.

Conclusion

19. The current arrangements for the operation of the Batson car park for winter boat storage are not considered sustainable because of the associated risks. There are three options: stop the service, contract the service out or conduct the service from within Council resources. It is recommended that the District Council advertise for expressions of interest for operators who wish to provide this service along boatyard lines which should, with greater supervision and overall control of the site deliver improved safety.

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Salcombe Harbour Board
10 July 2007

Background Documents:

None

Appendix - Harbour Authority Business Case for Delivery of Winter Storage Service
(Exempt Item)