

## HODGES GAP PETITION

Cabinet	<b>09 March 2017</b>
Report Author	<b>Jean Reynolds, Foreshore Officer</b>
Portfolio Holder	<b>Councillor Suzanne Brim, Cabinet Member for Operational Services</b>
Status	<b>For Decision</b>
Classification	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Key Decision	<b>No</b>
Previously Considered by	<b>Council – 23 February 2017</b>
Ward	<b>Cliftonville East</b>

### Executive Summary:

The Council received a petition in December 2016 regarding access to Hodges Gap promenade car park. This area is currently regulated by Foreshore Barriers and the group who submitted this document is requesting that the barriers remain open at all times.

### Recommendation(s):

The barriers should remain locked unless the concession in situ is open and trading to allow daytime vehicular access to the lower promenade at both Palm/Walpole Bay areas.

### CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

<b>Financial and Value for Money</b>	Keeping the barrier unlocked could result in increased levels of vandalism and subsequent insurance claims for the Council's assets in the vicinity. The Council could incur a cost for the excess on insurance payments and the impact of repeated claims could increase insurance premiums on renewal.
<b>Legal</b>	This fits with the local authority's Seashore Byelaws for allowing access to lower promenades / seashore to authorised vehicles only.
<b>Corporate</b>	The main risks are opening back up the lower promenade areas vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
<b>Equalities Act 2010 &amp; Public Sector Equality Duty</b>	Walking access can be obtained from free parking along the public highway at Palm Bay Avenue at any time. The main access to the lower promenade is available to all users (walkers/vehicles) to the Hodges Gap lower promenade during the day when the concession is open.

	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report. (tick those relevant)✓	
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,	✓
	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	
	Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	

<b>CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓</b>	
A clean and welcoming Environment	✓
Promoting inward investment and job creation	
Supporting neighbourhoods	✓

<b>CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓</b>	
Delivering value for money	✓
Supporting the Workforce	
Promoting open communications	

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council has the responsibility for the safe use of all promenades and took the approach a number of years ago to erect barriers in the interest of public safety in order to restrict unauthorised vehicular access. These barriers should be kept locked at all times and should only be accessed by authorised users, this includes members of the Thanet Water User Group at their various zoned launch sites.
- 1.2 The Hodges Gap barrier includes access to the lower promenade between Walpole and Palm Bay.
- 1.3 The complaints received to date have only been from a few dog walkers and have only related to the barrier to access Palm Bay as it stops them from driving to the beach in this area, no complaints have been received as far as we are aware, specific to Hodges Gap
- 1.4 Palm Bay is an area that includes the concessions and café known as Jet Ski World, this concession is leased. The leased area includes the parking bays adjacent to the café for customers.
- 1.5 Unfortunately, the Leaseholder has experienced a large amount of vandalism and illegal activities (drug dealing, vandalism, theft, fires, illegal boat activity) in this area throughout 2016. This has resulted in a break-in and a great deal of damage to his property such as CCTV cameras, furniture, containers, vehicles along with the security shutters to the TDC owned buildings that are part of the lease. There have also been reports of overnight sleepers, abandoned cars and unauthorised racing and parties.
- 1.6 Kent Police have open investigations into these reports and are working with the premises affected as well as Thanet District Council to obtain statements and access CCTV footage to progress these cases. The Leaseholder is being updated regularly by Kent Police on any progress.

1.7 Following these incidents and on advice from statutory agencies the padlock on the barrier to Palm Bay was changed from a general foreshores barrier lock to a private security lock, keys for this lock were then distributed to those who require access to the area. Since the introduction of this lock there has been a reduction in the number of incidents, gatherings and damage.

1.8 The leaseholder has 7 crime reference numbers for the last 12 months and has provided the following comments

*It has been shown through CCTV footage that all damage has occurred when vehicles have been racing on the promenade, others congregating and watching are the biggest offenders. Since the barrier has been locked this has dramatically decreased.*

1.9 Comments attributed to Kent Police: -

*The leaseholder of Jet Ski World has made several reports of crime ranging from criminal damage to burglary and has, in these reports, outlined several thousand pounds worth of damage. The leaseholder had already implemented many crime prevention methods prior to these incidents which include extensive security lighting and CCTV installation. Indeed the leaseholder has spoken to the police and done everything he has been advised to do. Unfortunately, no matter what efforts he makes the location is somewhat isolated and vulnerable through its location.*

*Whilst it is acknowledged that this business will always present itself as a risk, closure of the barrier to vehicular traffic would dramatically reduce this risk to a more acceptable level. Kent Police would always ask for access to be made for the emergency services, but otherwise, such a closure can only minimise the use of vehicles to and from the location, which, in turn, can only serve as a disruption to any criminal activity in the area.*

## **2.0 Options**

2.1 Barriers to remain closed.

2.2 Open up the barriers.

2.3 Option 2.1 is recommended as this measure is necessary in order to maintain and guarantee the current security of the area as well as being in the interest of public safety.

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<b>Reporting to:</b>	Lee Clark, Interim Open Spaces Officer

## **Annex List**

Annex 1	Byelaws Regulating The Seashore And Promenade In The District Of Thanet (Original)
Annex 2	Byelaws Regulating Vehicular Access
Annex 3	Report to Council - Petition - Access to Hodges Gap promenade car park

## Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	N/A

## Corporate Consultation

<b>Finance</b>	Nicola Walker, Technical Finance Manager
<b>Legal</b>	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer