
MAINTENANCE AND OWNERSHIP OF THE SEAFRONT RAILINGS AT MARINE DRIVE AND MARINE TERRACE, MARGATE

To: **Thanet Joint Transportation Committee 23 November 2011**

By: **District Manager-Thanet**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Margate Central**

Summary: Maintenance and ownership of the seafront railings at Marine Drive and Marine Terrace, Margate.

For Information

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 The railings located between the Turner Contemporary gallery on the B2051 Marine Drive and the junction of the A28 in Marine Terrace with All Saints Avenue are an historic feature of the seafront and date from Victorian times. They are positioned at the top of the seawall and lie within the Margate Seafront Conservation Area. This paper outlines the responsibilities for the maintenance of the railings.

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 There are two forms of railing identified on the Margate sea front between the Turner Contemporary gallery and the junction of the A28 in Marine Terrace with All Saints Avenue. The beach cafe on the seafront provides a convenient demarcation point between both types. In this paper and for ease of reference the railings to the east of the beach cafe have been identified as Type A and those to the west as type B.

2.2 The railings (Type A) are positioned above the seawall and are located between the beach cafe and the Turner Contemporary gallery in Marine Drive. They comprise a single steel rail topping a concrete pedestrian barrier. Seating is incorporated into the barrier along the promenade. The railings are interspersed with 18 concrete plinths supporting decorative lighting units known locally as the Sturgeon Lights. The Oct 2009 issue of the monthly publication 'The Margate Handbook' suggests that the works were originally commissioned by the former Borough of Margate in 1878. Ten of the lighting units and supporting plinths were refurbished by Thanet District Council (TDC) during 1997/98. The lighting units are wholly maintained by TDC. The county council has never accepted responsibility for the maintenance of the railings, plinths or lighting units.

2.3 The railings (Type B) are positioned above the seawall and are located between the beach café westwards to the junction of the A254 Marine Terrace with All Saints Avenue. They are of painted cast iron construction. They are interspersed with similar concrete plinths and lighting units (as described in 2.2 above). The railings were refurbished during 2000 in conjunction with repairs to the seawall. The specification for the works was prepared by TDC. The work was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. A £25,000 contribution from Kent County Council (KCC) was made to help make up a shortfall in funding.

General Inspections have been carried out by KCC since 1996 but ownership has remained with TDC.

2.4 There are differences between KCC and TDC regarding maintenance responsibility for the Marine Terrace and Marine Drive seafront railings. No specific agreement has been identified between KCC and TDC which encapsulates responsibilities for maintenance of the railings and barriers along the seafront in the above area.

It must be noted:-

- The railings prevent falls from the promenade to the beach below. They have not been designed to act as a vehicular safety barrier.
- Considering the slow speed of traffic (30mph) along the seafront and the width of the promenade the highway authority does not require highway barriers along the seawall.
- In practical terms it is extremely difficult for an authority different to that responsible for the seawall to maintain railings which are dependant on the wall for fixity and support.
- Where the highway authority has installed highway barriers in Marine Terrace (adjacent to the Clock Tower) they are intended to direct pedestrians to traffic controlled crossing points.
- KCC only need to maintain the strength/integrity of the railings and not the architectural integrity/ appearance

Table 1 below outlines the current situation for maintenance based on existing practice, past history and available documents.

Table 1-Summary Table

Location	Responsibility	Comments
Sea wall – Turner Contemporary to Nayland Rock	TDC	TDC have responsibility for the seawall supporting the Type A and Type B railings under the terms of their obligations under the 1949 Coastal Protection Act, Note: MAFF coast protection survey of England dated June 1996 defence code 573/475-2. TDC confirmed their responsibility for maintenance in their letter to KCC dated 25 th June 1998.
Type A -Single rail and concrete pedestrian barrier from the Clock Tower to Turner Contemporary including the Sturgeon Lights.	TDC	Appendix 2 to the approval in principal document prepared by TDC consultants Holt Wotton dated 6/2/1997 for refurbishment of the Sturgeon Lights acknowledges TDC as responsible for future maintenance. The incorporation of the seating within the pedestrian barrier indicates the designer's intention that it was to be used as an amenity by passersby and visitors to the seafront.
Type B - Cast iron painted railings from the Clock Tower (Beach café) for 324 lin. metres westwards to the beach ramp in the direction of the Nayland Rock.	TDC	No formal agreement between KCC and TDC exists.
Type B - Cast iron painted railings for 230 lin. metres from the beach ramp towards Nayland Rock.	TDC	This section of railings is a continuation of the above and clear of the adopted highway. It makes no contribution to the safety of highway users and is maintained by TDC.

2.5 From a review of the existing information, documents and practice it appears clear that despite input by KCC technical staff and past financial contributions by KCC towards refurbishment works, the current responsibility for the future inspection and maintenance of the railings and the supporting seawall lies with TDC. The continued management of the seafront railings and seawall by TDC ensures the most efficient and effective means of maintaining the seawall and railings.

3.0 Corporate Implications

3.1 Financial and VAT

3.1.1 The item listed below is the principal financial risk:-

3.1.2 Ongoing lifetime cost of inspecting and maintaining the structures and pedestrian railings along the seafront.

3.2 Legal

3.2.1 Legal advice has not been sought.

3.3 Corporate

3.3.1 The railings lie within the area reported in 2010 for improvement under terms of a Public Realm scheme.

3.3.2 As much of seafront infrastructure throughout Kent has been developed since Victorian times it often is extremely difficult to identify the responsibility of public or private owners for future maintenance. In this context and when agreements are completed in respect of future maintenance there are risks to be accounted for in setting future precedent.

3.4 Equity and Equalities

3.4.1 The railings and seawall support facilities open to all residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

4.0 Conclusion

- TDC has the responsibility for the existing and future maintenance of the seafront railings.

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Annex List

<i>Annex 1</i>	Location of type A and B railings
<i>Annex 2</i>	Photo of railing types