

# SEFTON COAST VISITOR TRAFFIC STUDY

*December 2020*

Sefton Council 

wsp



# SEFTON COAST... A TALE OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

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The Sefton Coast is spectacular. With one of the largest dune systems in Europe, fantastic beaches and hinterlands, plus it's close proximity to Liverpool and the wider North West, it is a major recreational resource for millions of people. It is a delicate ecosystem where a balance needs to be continually struck by custodians like the National Trust, who own and manage large areas of it, between access and conservation.

It is also a delicately poised amenity in respect of it's close proximity to key settlements along it and the attractive, primarily residential areas that sit directly adjacent to such natural beauty.

The pandemic of 2020 has been unprecedented, leading to a situation of extremes, between the almost untouched days of total lockdown and what can at best be described as 'mayhem' days that followed release from such regulations, when a demand for access to open space resource combined with long warm days to create a perfect storm of tensions between access and environment, both natural and residential.

2020 is not the first time that the Sefton Coast has come under pressure. Over recent years in particular, popularity of the coast has soared due to a combination of positive media publicity, good weather days and austerity, meaning demand to visit places at lower financial cost has increased and in particular the impact of social media. The latter means that when somewhere becomes known or starts trending it doesn't take long for it to become much busier.

There are numerous environmental concerns that have come to the fore during 2020. Litter, antisocial behaviour and traffic are probably the most documented points of contention, not just between residents and visitors, but also between respectful visitors and those who aren't. Typically, the latter are in the minority, but on some days in 2020, particularly when encouraged through social media channels, numbers became unbearable for many.

The immediate result is for calls for change, ranging from blocking off towns and places to visitors, through to calls for multi-storey car parks. As a result, this independent review has been commissioned by Sefton Council to consider what the underlying issues really are, what the extent of the issue really is and what can be practically done about it taking into account the social, economic and environmental parameters that need to be considered. WSP are honoured to undertake this work, particularly as members of our team know this coastline well, living locally and/or being users of this great resource.

This report in itself is not intended to be 'the solution', instead hinting towards what can or could be achieved, but doing so in a manner that provides a level consideration taking into account key factors that exist. The focus is on Crosby/Waterloo, Formby and Ainsdale. The three key parts of the Sefton Coast which have been affected most during recent years. Southport is not considered, since it represents a different 'traditional seaside' day out, where infrastructure is generally long-versed in accommodating large numbers of visitors. Similarly Hightown and parts of Blundellsands have little attention given to them in this report, because they simply aren't impacted on in such extremes as the other 'honeypot' locations, this being felt to be primarily due to a combination of being slightly lesser known, having less access to the beach (in the case of Hightown restricted by the River Alt and Rifle Range), and in particular being less accessible or obvious when travelling from the strategic road network.

We hope this report is both informative, balanced and most importantly helps take the next tender steps towards the continual improvement that is already in action by key stakeholders.

# CONTENTS

<b>Study Area - The Sefton Coast.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key Issues.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Location Specific Issues.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Data and Evidence.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Natioal Trust.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Enforcement.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Examples: Recent Responses to Visitor Traffic and Best Practice.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Solutions Commonly Forwarded.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Summary of Issues and Opportunities.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Solutions and Ideas.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Summary and Conclusion.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	
<b>Summary Action Plan.....</b>	<b>51</b>





# **T**HE SEFTON COAST

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# 1 STUDY AREA - THE SEFTON COAST

The study area focusses around three key areas of Formby, Crosby/Waterloo and Ainsdale within the Sefton Coast, which is around 25km in length. The key features of this coast are shown in the diagram on the next side.

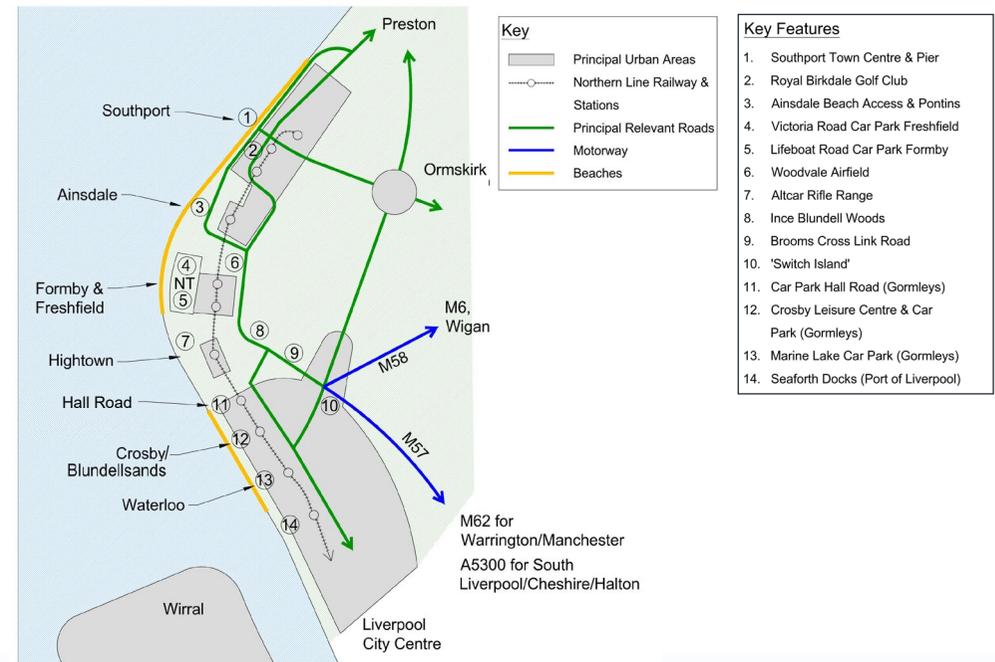
The Northern Line Railway led to expansion of places like Formby and Ainsdale as principally commuter towns for Liverpool, meaning large residential areas are west of the Railway, close to beach access points. Southport at the north has been the 'mass market' seaside destination along the coast and has the infrastructure to cope with this.

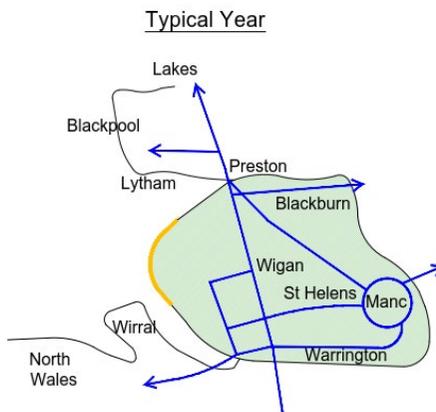
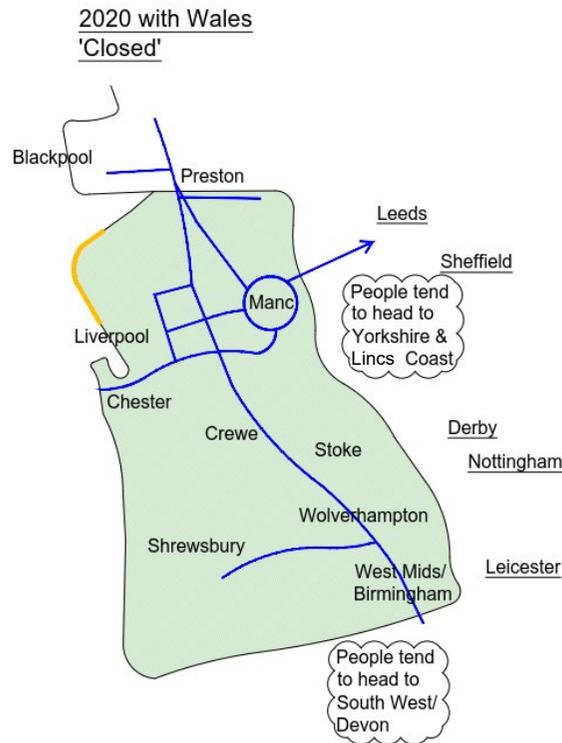
Despite having Pontins adjacent to the beach Ainsdale is focussed primarily on the wide open sands and accessed via Shore Road. Historically it has had parking on the beach itself, although this was closed for much of the early post-lockdown period during 2020. The village centre is around 1.75km east of the beach, with the station slightly closer.

Attraction at Formby focusses around two key parking areas both under the control of the National Trust. The most popular is to the North, at the end of Victoria Road in the Freshfield Area. This has both access to the beach and the pinewoods area, famed for its Red Squirrels. Lifeboat Road around 1.6km further south focusses primarily towards the beach and dunes, and has less amenities at present. There are other access points to the beach in Formby, notably Blundell Avenue (a private road), and pedestrian routes at locations such as Wicks Lane, Range Lane and from St Luke's Church Road, although there is no off street public parking at these. Both Formby and Freshfield Stations are around 2-2.2km from the beach, with around half of this residential and half within the pinewoods and dunes.

Hightown falls between Formby and Crosby/Waterloo. It has less access to the beach and the River Alt, combined with Altcar Rifle Range, form barriers to access. The road links to Hightown are less direct and developed. It is therefore not as attractive as a destination for visitors.

The beach at Crosby/Waterloo has been made more 'famous' by the Antony Gormley 'Another Place' statues set within it. At the Northern end Blundellsands and Hall Road are larger dwellings, with wider roads and the primary parking point being Hall Road Car Park. South of here the area around Crosby Leisure Centre provides parking and marks a point of residential transition into more dense housing areas of Brighton Le Sands and Waterloo. South of here Seaforth Docks (Port of Liverpool) commences. While there are stops on the railway at Hall Road, Blundellsands and Crosby and Waterloo, the gap between the latter two stations is relatively large. The beach at Waterloo includes the Crosby Coastal Park and Lakeside Adventure Centre, with parking close to the Marine Lake.





The plan to the right shows what is felt to be the 'typical year' catchment for the Sefton Coast, focussed primarily from Merseyside (except Wirral, which has its own beaches), parts of Central, West and East Lancashire, and the towns of Greater Manchester, especially those to the west

like Wigan and Bolton. Parts of North Warrington fall naturally within this catchment, the maximum drive time for which would be around 1 hour. North of Preston, the Fylde Coast and Lake District start to provide alternatives, whereas south of and along the M56 corridor the Wirral and North Wales Coasts would typically be more attractive, particularly with tolls across the Mersey at Runcorn in place.

During 2020, with North Wales 'shut' to visitors anecdotal evidence suggests that the catchment expanded substantially (as shown on the left diagram), particularly southwards towards places like the Potteries and the North side of the West Midlands. This drive time became up to 2.5 hours, and the population of such a catchment significantly more (perhaps at least doubled). The M6 corridor helped feed this attraction.

These diagrams are not an exact science, however they are felt to reflect the impact during 2020. Anecdotal evidence has some visitors coming from places like Sheffield, the South East and in one case Bridlington (for a different seaside!) for day trips.

Combined with discouragement of use of rail (which typically brings many of Merseyside's visitors to the coast), social media and better ease of access than ever facilitated by the Brooms Cross Link Road this led to the substantial additional demand for road access on 'extreme' days. With the lack of foreign holidays the proportion of people within each catchment wanting access to UK beaches also rose substantially leading to major conflicts along this coastline.



# 2 KEY ISSUES

## Media



Over recent years positive messages on popular shows such as Coronation Street and in newspaper articles on 'best coastlines' have created increased awareness and attraction. Social media in particular has grown including, as demonstrated by certain so called 'influencers' many negatively interested additional visitors, clashing with resident needs.

## Limited Enforcement Capacity



Creating extra capacity for unpredictable numbers and timings of demand is - and will - remain virtually impossible. Having properly trained staff is critical to relations and getting enforcement right. Extreme events in particular are so unpredictable that creating extra capacity is not realistic for such days. Using what we have to the best of our ability should be the key focus as should be avoiding the need to get to a point where enforcement is the answer.

## Catchment



As is discussed further elsewhere in this document catchment during 2020 substantially increased, as did demand with lack of foreign holidays and welsh resorts shut. Furthermore use of rail was deterred increasing parking demand further. Generally appeal of this coast has grown over recent years.

## Peaks and Troughs



Demand can be classed into typical, busy and 'extreme' days. Busy days occur perhaps 10-20 times most years. Extreme days typically occur once or twice (normally the early bank holiday/first very warm day). During 2020 the number of extreme days grew substantially, often focussed over several days. Extreme and peak days are often unpredictable, with weather playing a major part in attraction. Capital and revenue investment has to be focussed around typical, and at most the lower end of 'busy' days, but cannot be justified for extreme days.

## Dynamic Signing Plans



Although some variable message signing was used during 2020 this tended to be close to the points of issue and generally set up in reaction to events as they emerged. The Brooms Cross Link Road in particular has changed the ability to access different parts of the Sefton Coast, making Crosby Beach and Formby more simple to access for many visitors. Lack of ability to use signing and messaging along the coast in a co-ordinated manner (as happens in a linked signal network) is felt to have contributed towards uneven access patterns. Furthermore, the substantial distances that people were travelling during 2020 means that more messaging on the Motorway/Strategic network could have helped distribute visitors elsewhere or using different routes from it to within the study area.

## Parking Capacity for Extreme Days



There are several key car parks along the coast notably, Marine Lake Waterloo, Crosby Leisure Centre, Hall Road Blundellsands, Lifeboat Road Formby, Victoria Road Freshfield and Ainsdale Beach. These are more than adequate on 'typical' days, generally full but reasonable in line with overall demand on 'busy' days (although not evenly spread leading to issues at Victoria Road and Crosby Leisure Centre when there is capacity elsewhere) and wholly inadequate on 'extreme' days. Some additional informal capacity is created on busy/extreme days (there have been charged plots opened on Victoria Road and Greenloons Farm (Kirklake Road) without permission) and car parks like Freshfield Station used by visitors (particularly to Fishermans Path). Economic (cost/revenue) and ecological issues make opening substantial new build capacity extremely difficult, even if desirable.

## Enforcement 'Acceptance'



During the peak days of post-lockdown enforcement was effectively being ignored by some. Evidence points to two key things happening. Firstly, some people had travelled a long distance or hadn't had a day out in open space for months. The cost of the parking fine for parking illegally was therefore not a deterrent and many were willing to accept a fine (whether they subsequently paid or not is not known). Secondly it was observed that some visitors were taking tickets from other people's already illegally parked cars, illegally parking their own and placing the ticket on their own vehicle to make it look as though it had already been ticketed. Enforcement measures used on such extreme days were clearly not enough of a deterrent for some, but at the top of the typically usable list of tools available to Sefton Council.

## Keeping Key Corridors Clear



A fundamental problem that has emerged over recent years is that of blockage of key corridors. This is most acute at Victoria Road, Freshfield, where on busy days parking queues into the National Trust site start to accumulate mid-morning and often stretch towards Freshfield Station by lunchtime. This does create problems of access for buses and residents. Restrictions are not usually ignored and emergency vehicles retain a reasonable, albeit slightly delayed route. A particular issue is that of residents needing local access driving along the outside of parking queues to access their properties (i.e on the wrong side of the road). During 2020 enforcement issues (meaning key access routes had parking on both sides) and 'spread' of traffic into areas such as Mariners Road Crosby and Wicks Lane/Woodlands Road Formby led to particular issues with emergency and local access that had not occurred to any problematic level before.

### Queues Creating a Barrier in Themselves



One key point to note is that during 2020 queues on Victoria Road became so substantial they stretched eastward back to Freshfield Road and Gores Lane. Lack of permeability west of the railway from Victoria Road into residential areas between Freshfield Station and Harrington Road 'saved' many areas from being even more negatively impacted (e.g. places like Vicarage Road). While queuing created issues at the Freshfield Level Crossing many people left cars on roads like Argarmeols Road and Freshfield Road and walked instead. These represented areas of new impact, but stopped others being impacted upon. Anecdotally many people were prepared to sit in cars for 1-2 hours to queue, while their families got out and walked to the beach.

### Resident vs Visitor Conflicts



Proximity of residential areas to coast access demand creates conflicts in terms of queues and delays plus parking nuisance in particular. This is often compounded by inconsiderate littering and other antisocial behaviours. This is particularly problematic on busy and extreme days, with particular problem points around Mariners Road Crosby, Brighton Le Sands, Kirklake Road Formby and Victoria Road/Harrington Road area Freshfield. Many routes passed through to get to coastal areas are residential in nature (the exception being at Ainsdale). Some residents found visitors parked on their private drives or land with no ability to move them. This leads to conflict and upset. Another key issue was inconsiderate footway parking, often blocking footways and access to drives for an often elderly population

### Lack of Return for Local Businesses



Compounding some of the traffic and access issues is the point that there are very few points along the coast where local businesses gain trade from visitors. While some local shops may benefit (for example Spar, Harrington Road or those around South Road Waterloo) most are simply too far from where people park to gain any economic benefit. This perpetuates the issue of 'pain without gain' from visitors.

### Resident Nuisance from Further Parking / Loading Restrictions



Most restrictions run from 1 April to 31 October, typically covering the core season and 7 of 12 months. Expansion of such restrictions typically moves demand elsewhere, requires enforcement, maintenance of signing/lining and creates further impact on the wider neighbourhoods. The areas affected by typical and busy days (such as Larkhill Lane, Freshfield, Kirklake Road, Formby or Shore Road, Ainsdale) tend to have restrictions already. Creating further restrictions requires further resource, would be likely to affect more residents and would only be of any value on extreme event days.

# 3 LOCATION SPECIFIC ISSUES

## Crosby

- Poor signage from the strategic network
- Lack of visible signage on key routes and decision points on the highway network
- Existing signage from the motorway directs traffic to Burbo Bank
- Satellite navigation focusing issues around Leisure Centre (Mariner's Road) and residential streets
- Parking occurring on residential streets obstructing footways
- Underuse of parking at the coastal park
- Limited offering at the coastal park e.g. toilet facilities, food, cycle hire
- Poor wayfinding to Crosby Beach and Another Place that does not give a 'gateway' feel to visitors



Residential Parking, Crosby



Car Park, Crosby

## Ainsdale

- Lack of off-beach parking of any substantial scale at present
- Space available around the Promenade with potential for wider immediate regeneration
- Good, simple road access with little interference with local residents ('Coast Road/Formby Bypass')
- Very simple walk to/from beach (no major movement over Dunes)
- Primarily focussed around area of Shore Road – very concentrated
- Relatively few residents affected (although during 2020 some around Pinfold Lane/Kendal Way, Woodvale and around Westminster Drive/Chatsworth Road were affected)



Shore Road, Ainsdale



Signage, Ainsdale

## Formby

- Regular queuing and access problems on Victoria Road
- Substantial areas of conflict within residential housing estates close to Victoria Road (e.g. Proctor Road/Squirrel Green/Tower End)
- Substantial areas of restrictions around Victoria Road/Harrington Road/Larkhill Lane and local residential streets, plus around Kirklake Road area. Some shifting of parking to other residential roads
- Regular parking spots such as St Luke's Church Road, Kirklake Road, Larkhill Lane regulated by restrictions and generally adhered to
- Relative underuse of Lifeboat Road Car Park
- Confusing visitor signage between Lifeboat Road & Victoria Road car parks
- Different 'offers' to visitors (Lifeboat Road – beach/dunes, Victoria Road pinewoods, beach, dunes)



Larkhill Lane, Formby



Queues to Victoria Road

# 4 DATA AND EVIDENCE

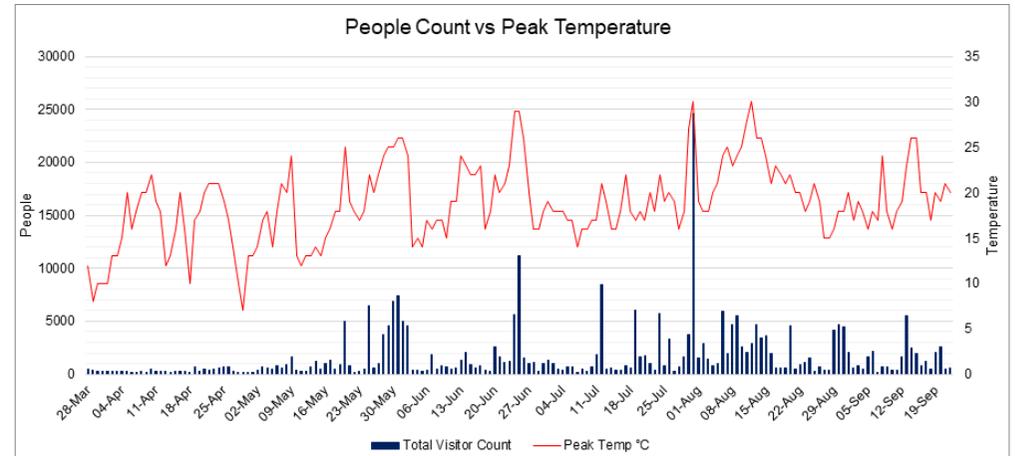
WSP has been provided with a range of data by Sefton Council and the National Trust to inform this study. This data comprises people counts at key locations along the coast, car park usage data, and pedestrian counts. However, this data is not exhaustive – information for each of these categories was not available for this study for all locations. It does however provide an insight into the scale and nature of the issues experienced along the coast and allow for comparison between areas, specific locations, and between previous years. A range of outputs is presented within this section, along with commentary detailing its relevance to the study and its implications for its conclusions and recommendations.

## People Count Graphs

**Figure 1** presents people counts at Southport and Ainsdale during Summer 2020. As the figure demonstrates, there is a clear correlation between peak temperatures and visitor numbers. Friday 31st July saw an extraordinary level of demand; likely fuelled by the warm, sunny weather during the school summer holidays – the first since the relaxation of lockdown restrictions in early July. Overall there are approximately around eight events during the year that could be described as ‘extraordinary’; days where visitor and traffic volumes are significantly higher than daily averages.

Please note, these people counts are a snapshot of estimated headcounts, and do not reflect actual total volumes of people in these locations at these times. They do however provide a picture of the relative volumes of visitors across the period.

**Figure 1: People Count (Southport and Ainsdale) vs Peak Temperature**



## Car Park Usage Graphs

### Crosby

**Figure 2** presents the number of users recorded at the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre and Burbo Bank Car Parks in Summer 2020. Despite each car park having a similar number of car parking spaces (approximately 250 and 225 respectively), Burbo Bank experiences much higher usage than the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre car parks. This demonstrates the underuse of the available parking, particularly when the overspill parking areas at the CLAC are taken into consideration. It is therefore considered that there is scope to increase trips to the CLAC area as part of this plan.

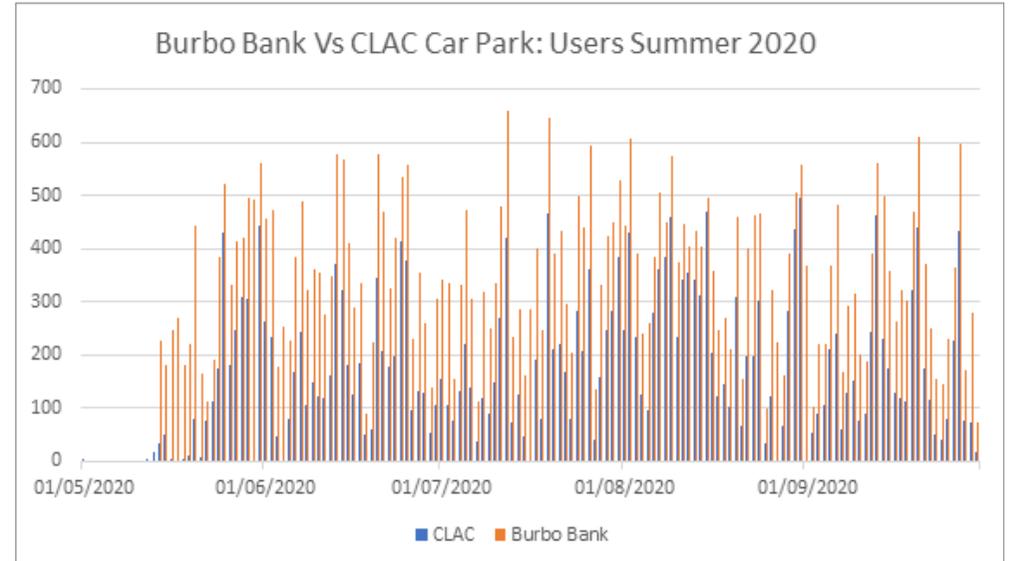


### Formby

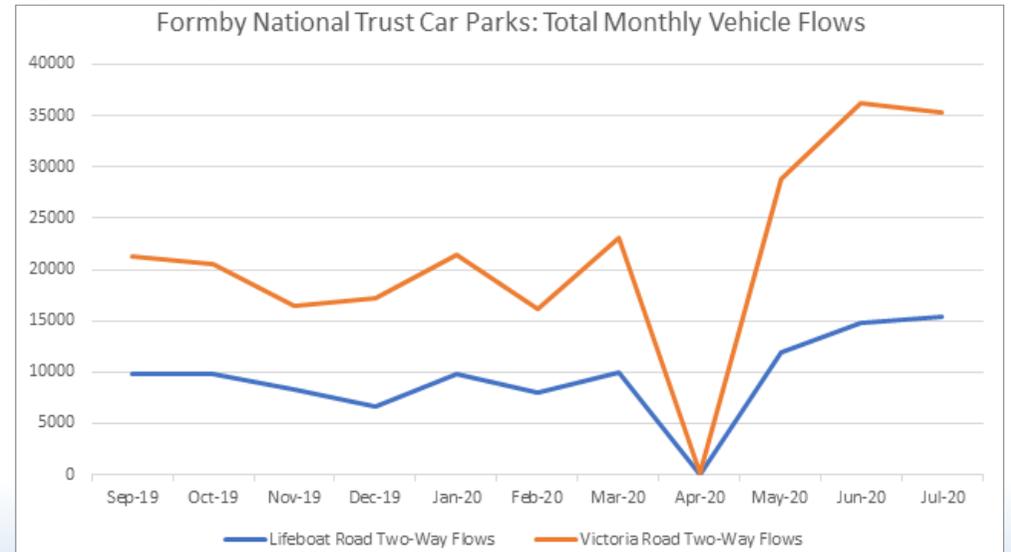
**Figure 3** presents the vehicular flows at National Trust's Lifeboat Road and Victoria Road car parks in Formby. The graph demonstrates the swift recovery following the relaxation of lockdown measures in May 2020. Both car parks closed in late March when the stay at home order was imposed by Government.

**Figures 4 and 5** overleaf provide a comparison between July and August data for 2019 and 2020; due to the availability of data these are the only months where a direct comparison is possible. In any event the total monthly flows demonstrate the increase in use of each car park this year.

**Figure 2: Burbo Bank vs CLAC car park**



**Figure 3: Formby National Trust Car Parks**

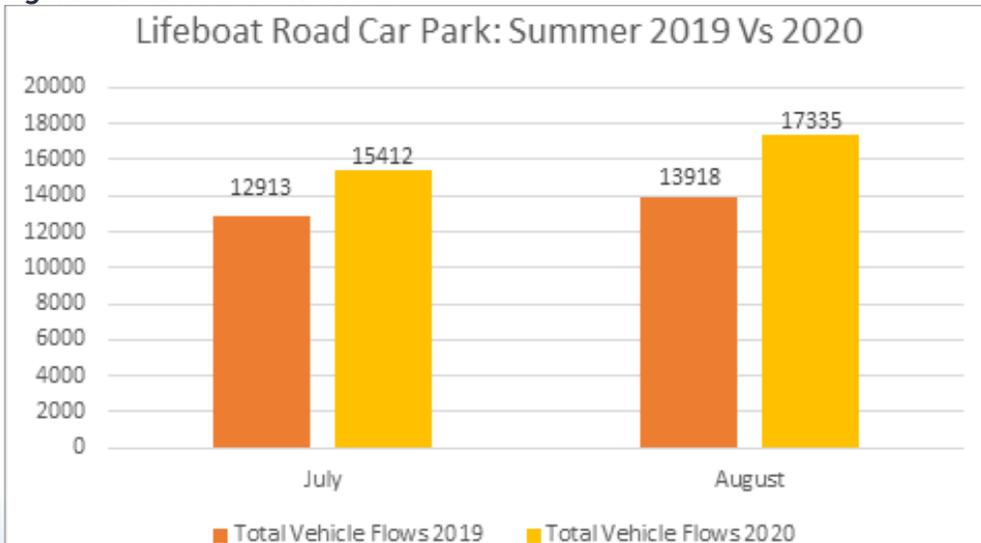


**Formby**

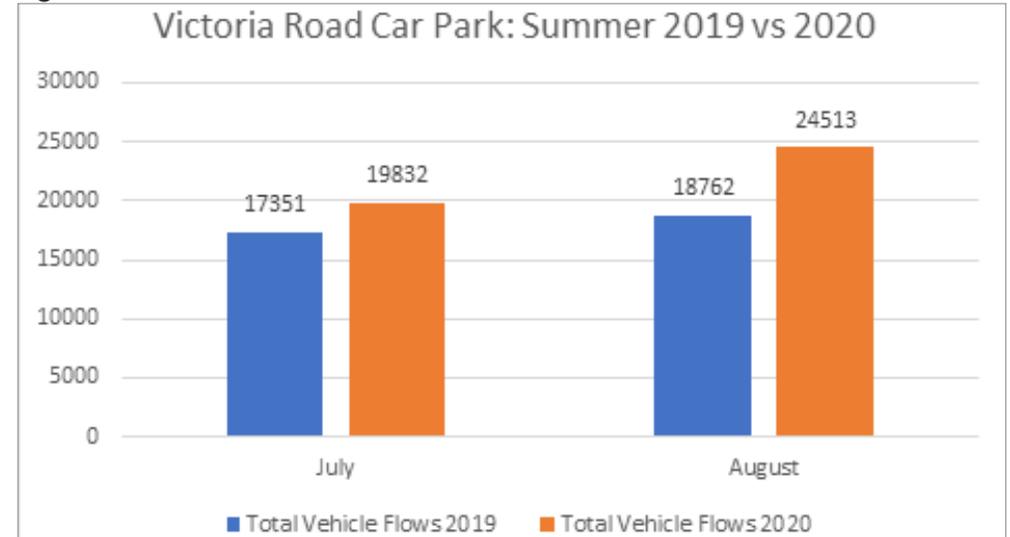
**Figure 6** presents the total monthly vehicle two-way flows between September 2019 and August 2020 by hourly period. Once again, it demonstrates that Victoria Road is much the busier car park.



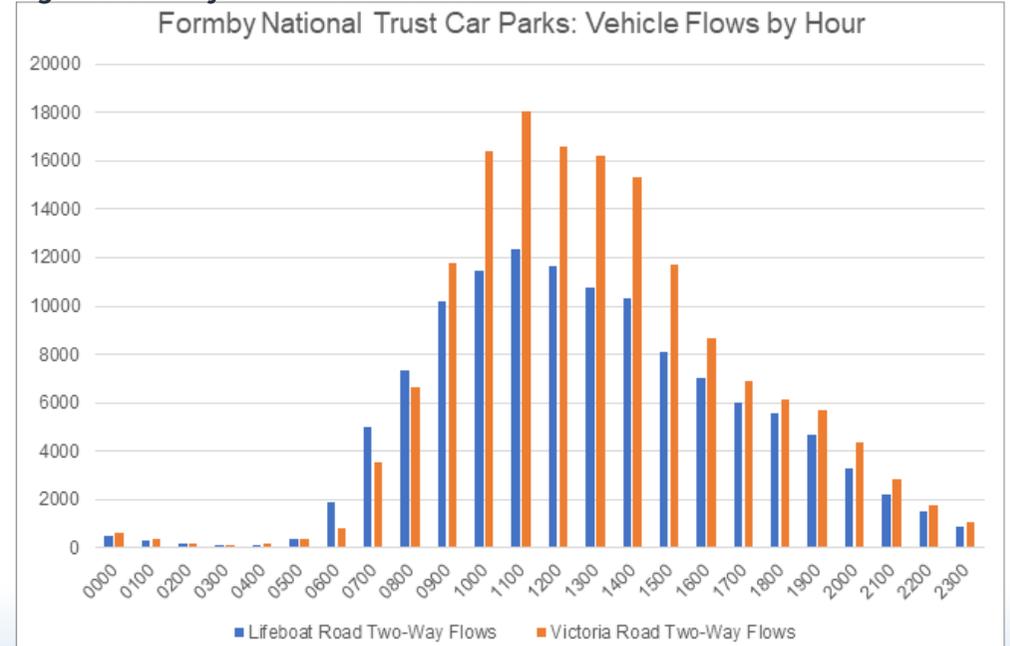
**Figure 4: Lifeboat Road Car Park**



**Figure 5: Victoria Road Car Park**



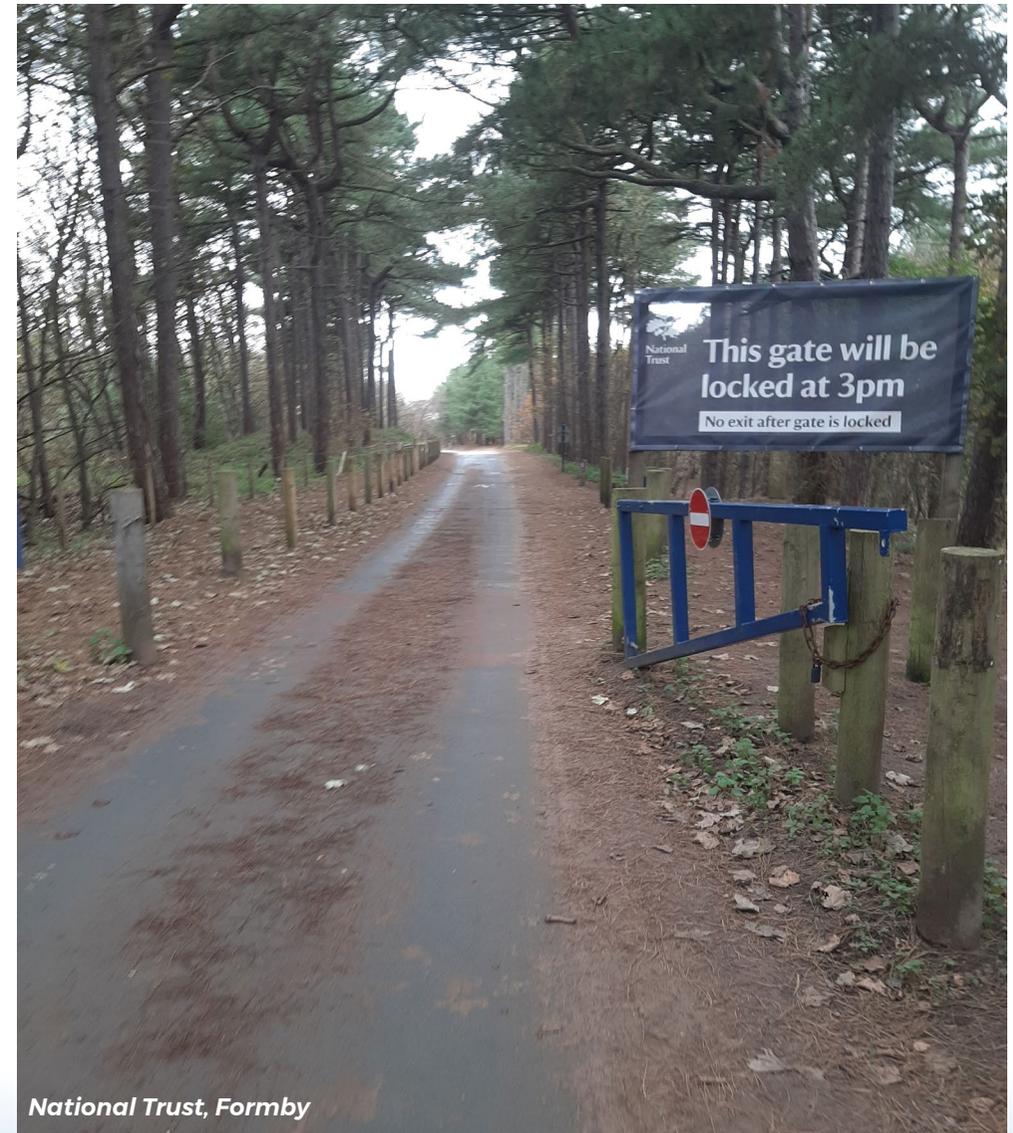
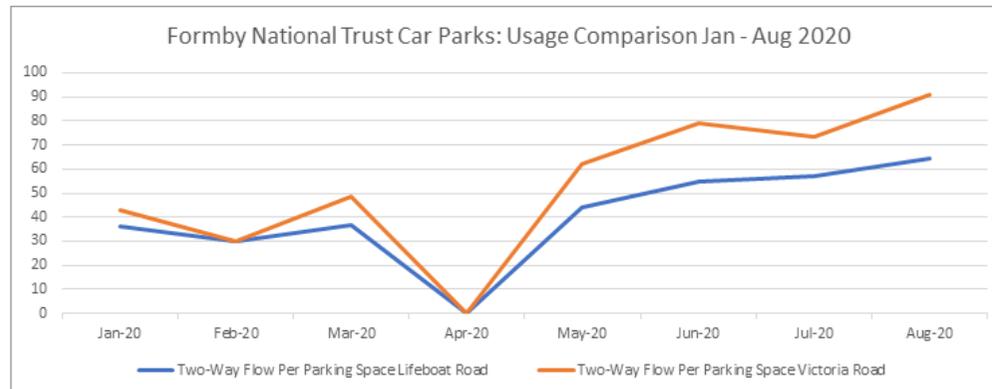
**Figure 6: Formby National Trust Car Parks**



## Formby

**Figure 7** presents the two-way flows per parking space at the Lifeboat Road and Victoria Road car parks in Formby. Previous graphs have noted that in absolute terms, Victoria Road is the more popular of the two car parks. The above figure demonstrates that even with a more direct comparison, based on per space two-way vehicular flows, Victoria Road is the better-used site; even taking into account the slightly higher levels of available parking here (300 spaces at Victoria Road vs 270 spaces at Lifeboat Road).

**Figure 7: National Trust Car Park Comparison**



National Trust, Formby

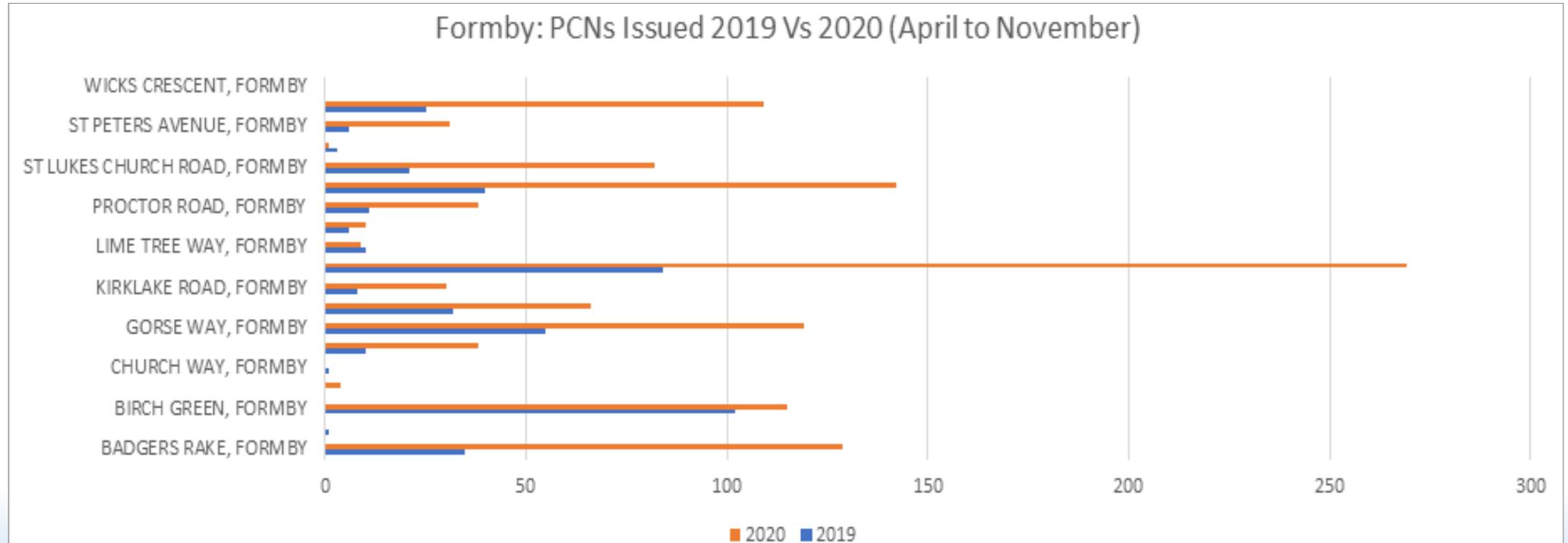
## PCN Data Graphs

### Formby

**Figure 8** presents the total number of PCNs issued on key streets in the Formby area in 2019 and 2020, in each case for the period of April to November inclusive. The streets selected are informed by local enforcement officers views of the locations where issues occur in those streets where parking restrictions apply. As the figure demonstrates, 2020 has seen a dramatic increase in enforcement in these areas versus the same period in 2019.



**Figure 8: PCN Issued, Formby**



## Ainsdale

**Figure 9** presents the total number of PCNs issued on key streets in the Ainsdale area in 2019 and 2020, in each case for the period of April to November inclusive. The streets selected are informed by local enforcement officers view of the areas where most observed parking issues occur. Similar to the trend in Formby, 2020 has seen a considerable increase in enforcement in Ainsdale versus the same period in 2019.

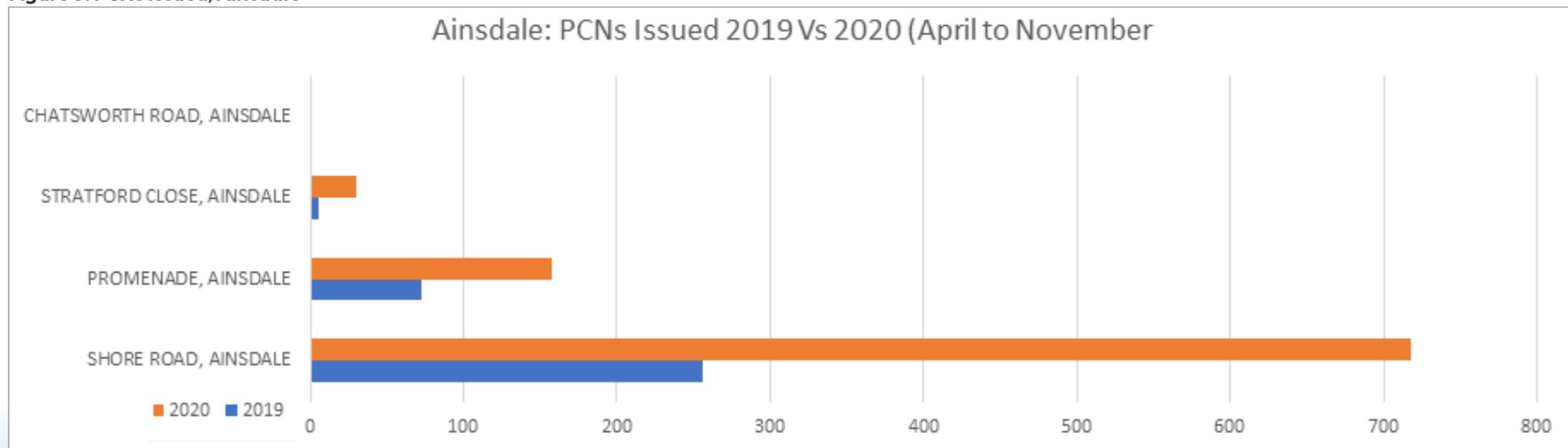


Ainsdale



Shore Road, Ainsdale

Figure 9: PCNs Issued, Ainsdale



### Conclusion of the Evidence

- Very peaked nature of demand on 'extreme' days, with substantial numbers of busy days being much lower in terms of visitor numbers
- Extended extremes (over several days rather than one/two) during 2020
- Extended catchment during 2020, exacerbated by covid issues
- Notable increase in the number of PCNs issued, and across wider geographical area
- Underuse of parking at the Crosby coastal parking versus Burbo Bank, for example.



# 5 NATIONAL TRUST

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## **The National Trust - Formby**

During this study WSP undertook key conversations with the National Trust to understand matters of key relevance. Their role is a delicate balance between being custodian on the nation's behalf of the natural asset of the Sefton Coast around Formby and allowing and encouraging appropriate access. A key issue is that they have little influence over the network beyond the site boundaries, yet the 'asset' is the principle attraction. The attraction in essence creates the offsite problem for Sefton Council and it's residents, but the nature of the attraction and relationship is not like a commercial attraction where substantial enforcement can be placed upon how the 'business operates' by the authority.

National Trust have around 260 car parking spaces at Victoria Road Car Park and around 300-350 at Lifeboat Road (exact numbers are not possible to ascertain since they are not marked bays and depend to an extent on how people park). All visitors are directed to these, although there are other pedestrian entrances at places like Wicks Lane, Range Lane and St Lukes Church Road that tend to be of more attraction to those that know the area or are local. The National Trust believe that Lifeboat Road and Victoria Road should remain the primary visitor accesses to the coast, but given coastal change, Lifeboat Rd has a key role. They are committed to trying to provide appropriate visitor facilities at Lifeboat Rd with a view to be able to manage and balance visitors across the coast and have consulted about this on a number of occasions. Blundell Avenue is a partially private road that the National Trust have looked at in terms of potential for further parking and access, yet covenants and other concerns mean this is not currently an option (concerns include those such as drawing traffic further through the residential area around Dunes Drive, the impact on St Joseph's, spreading their limited resources more thinly, degradation of the environment around that location and impact of additional visitors into this area of the coast.)

National Trust believe that in the face of coastal change and given the designations across the site maintaining the current parking capacity on site will be difficult. While not ruling it out, have concerns about increasing the capacity;

- It will degrade the sensitive environment they operate within further;
- It will lead to increased attraction not necessarily curing the issues of parking;
- The capacity is more than adequate for typical days and most busier days. Extreme days will never be possible to accommodate and they would prefer to encourage other modes or more sustainable solutions;
- They are considering altering the Victoria Road Car Parking arrangement, aim to upgrade amenities at Lifeboat Road and therefore seek to rebalance use from the former towards the latter.

A key conservation and operational issue for the National Trust is the current car park at Victoria Road which has a capacity of 200 of the 260 cars that can be accommodated at that site. With coastal change at around 3-4m/year the size of the car park is steadily decreasing and rubble from the car park base falling onto the beach. In line with the Shoreline Management Plans and to allow for "managed realignment" of the coast, the Trust are considering the feasibility of relocating car parking possibly closer to the current entrance and some initial consultation on this has been undertaken. Such a project is likely to be challenging and has some way to go, but should it be possible there will be a need to focus more amenity at Lifeboat for those accessing the beach.

Most of the National Trust interfaces of concern in relation to parking happen along Victoria Road, since it is where queues occur. Lifeboat Road access although narrow has more 'stacking' capacity away from residents, although care is needed not to impede access to the Caravan Park there.

The car park at Lifeboat Road is inefficient in layout, with substantial amounts of circulation road for the numbers of spaces provided. It is felt by the National Trust and their advisors to have a relatively low intrusion in the landscape against any more efficient yet 'larger block' of parking (even if numbers were the same). The sweet spot for this will need to be investigated further as development of amenities at Lifeboat Road area created to make it more attractive as an alternative to Victoria Road.

Overall while there is not a desire or ability to expand volumes of parking at the expense of the natural habitat there is some rebalancing to be undertaken, both internal to Victoria Road site and between it and Lifeboat Road. There may be the need or ability to shift some parking from the former to the latter, the National Trust stated they need to develop further their Lifeboat Rd proposals before they could advise on the size of the car park, however both will remain an attraction and therefore we assume that volume of shift would be likely to be around 50 maximum in number.

While National Trust have been keen to help solve wider issues, even considering adding off site help/enforcement staff, there is a limit to their ability to influence and control in the wider area. Within their site matters such as pre-booking of spaces have been considered but would be difficult to make work, bearing in mind access queues and 'on the day' nature of decisions to attend made due to weather. Additionally matters such as dynamic pricing (to potentially charge more on extreme or busy days) could be considered further to help upgrade ability to fund traffic/access support, although care is needed to make sure that the ethos of access for all is maintained.

National Trust are particularly keen to work with partners to further look at ways of encouraging active travel to and from the site, plus how promotion of rail and bus as access means can be pursued further.



National Trust Entrance, Formby

# 6 ENFORCEMENT

WSP spoke to Sefton Council's parking enforcement contractors during compilation of this report. This included both operational and management staff. There are several key points emerging from the discussion;

The events of 2020 represented unprecedented levels of demand along the coast and stretched the ability of the team to respond. Targeted approaches were therefore needed. It needs to be intrinsically understood that enforcement officers are heavily trained for two principle reasons;

a) There is a need to be accurate in their issuing of tickets and therefore a thorough knowledge of the rules, regulations and restrictions, as well as the 'patch' being covered is needed. Without this disrepute and disregard for the system occurs;

b) There is a need to be trained in dealing with members of the public in a clear, fair and firm manner, yet never step over the line to being unprofessional. Officers need to be trained to avoid risk and de-escalate or deal with potential conflict situations. During 2020 the need to do this in a socially distanced manner was imperative, adding to real difficulties at places like Victoria Road or Mariners Road where pedestrian volumes were extremely high and sometimes challenging to deal with.

In short it is not easy to 'scale up' operations as many people would ideally like, even with warning. The beginning of busy and extreme events tend to be particularly unpredictable due to weather.

During 2020 the additional challenge was an ignoring of the systems in place – as previously mentioned in this report, an increased willingness to accept a parking or loading fine as a 'cost' of a visit. Lack of capability to deal with the extremes and impacts of this as well as a need to maintain the council's aim that parking enforcement is not seen as a revenue driver made challenges more exceptional than ever.

Several opportunities were discussed with enforcement officers, some of which translate into recommendations later in this report;

- More officers to ticket vehicles (difficult to supply for such events due to training needs, cost and un-predictability);
- Clearer signing from access points to car parks to influence decision making (examples of Formby were given where Lifeboat Road is seen by many as 'overflow' not core);
- The risks of placing substantial further restrictions -which by nature spread parking issues further. The aim should be to enforce what we have better;
- The problem of time taken to issue parking tickets (typically the observation window of 5 minutes means that to issue 1 parking ticket takes 6 minutes). This leads to a significant reduction in ability to issue tickets efficiently and can place officers at risk while observing. To be able to issue loading ban tickets instead requires minimal observation time and would be much more efficient, yet throughout the areas restrictions do not always apply;
- The issues of being able to remove obstructing vehicles was discussed. The authority or it's contractors do not currently have access to such a vehicle. As well as the cost of running such a vehicle other barriers such as management of a compound would present problems, but this could act as a realistic deterrent if used and promoted properly in such a manner. It is unlikely that the authority could merit such cost at all times therefore a 'call-on' arrangement with another provider may be worth exploring.



# 7 EXAMPLES: RECENT RESPONSES TO VISITOR TRAFFIC AND BEST PRACTICE

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In 2020 the United Kingdom has seen an unprecedented surge in UK holiday and leisure trips domestically. The August bank holiday was forecast to see an additional 1.8 million car journeys compared to 2019 levels for the same weekend.

The following section presents some examples of coastal areas that experience periods of extraordinary visitor demand, and examples of how they have responded. Whilst there may be some principles that could be adopted in Sefton, many of these may not be well suited, and instead highlight lessons learnt as well as the common issues experienced in similarly beautiful coastal locations.

## **St Ives, Cornwall**

In response to the pressures of visitor traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic, St Ives has introduced an 'Emergency Safety Plan'. This includes a restriction on access for non-residential traffic at stated hours; using a permit system in operation during 11am to 4pm over the summer. This ensured that unmanageable volumes of traffic were not able to enter the town centre, with the exception of residents and essential users. Visitors were directed via marketing and tourist information to use public transport and to park in locations away from the centre. Whilst banning traffic to certain areas would not be appropriate across Sefton, the principle of directing traffic to more suitable or underused parking locations and supporting walking, cycling from these areas – whilst providing clear communications and tourist information – may be more suited to the particular issues in Sefton.



### **Giants Causeway, Northern Ireland**

The Giant's Causeway attracts more than a million visitors each year and has seen continued growth in popularity due to the area's appearance in the television series 'Game of Thrones'. Whilst a significant supply of parking is provided at the visitor centre, a park and ride service is provided from the nearby town of Bushmills. Furthermore, from the visitor centre, visitors are offered a range of walking routes along the coast before reaching the Causeway itself.

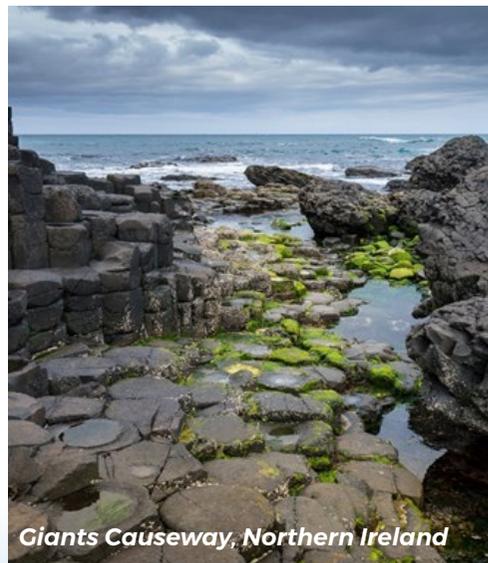
Visitor information available on the website highlights the availability of these alternative modes, and encourages visitors to use Park and Ride, Bus, Rail, and Walking and Cycling and discounted entry is provided for those who have travelled by non-car modes. Whilst circumstances in Sefton are different this does highlight the opportunities to create a 'hub' providing information and parking with strong walking routes, that will encourage people to use these areas – something that the Crosby Coastal Park for example, has opportunity to recreate.

The area has, however, seen a limited success in managing traffic impact in some areas historically. The 'dark hedges' – made famous by their appearance in the 'Game of Thrones' TV series resulted in the road being closed to traffic in 2017. However, despite signage and the threat of significant fines., issues continued to be seen as visitors ignored signs. A lack of enforcement was also said to have contributed . This demonstrates that tourist issues cannot always be 'solved' by one method, and are instead about an overall balance of measures that minimise the worst impacts of visitor traffic. It also shows that extensive increases in traffic regulation may simply cause an enforcement issue and spread already stretched resources over an increasingly wide area. It is clear that a cohesive, dynamic and varied approach is required.

### **Lulworth Estate, Dorset**

Lulworth Estate is home to Lulworth Cove, Durdle Door and Lulworth Castle on the Jurassic Coast in Dorset, England. As with the Sefton Coast, it is a very popular 'honeypot' coastal destination that has experienced extraordinary demand in recent months.

In response to the extraordinary demand on the estate, it has implemented a parking booking system. This requires all visitors to book their parking space in advance of their planned visit to the coast. Alongside this, they have also introduced a range of other traffic management measures including an increase in marshalling and civil enforcement officers to enforce parking restrictions and issue fines. Whilst a booking system would not be appropriate to the locations in Sefton, it does demonstrate that there can be a role to play for marshalling and enforcement at peak times.



*Giants Causeway, Northern Ireland*



*Lulworth Estate, Dorset*

# 8 SOLUTIONS COMMONLY FORWARDED

As with any traffic management or access issue many solutions are put forward by a range of stakeholders in good faith with the intention of easing or solving the problems. As with most technical matters there can be particular reasons why such are not likely to be viable options for Sefton Council to take forward. This section is not intended to reduce the importance of stakeholders putting forward ideas, but instead to give our view on measures, so that focus can be directed towards those that are recommended to be considered further.

## Park and Ride

This is often forwarded as an option for honeypot sites, yet rarely works outside major historic city centres, with constant trade, readily interceptable demand, reliable journey times and fundamental constraints on parking volumes. The Sefton Coast does not have a significant constraint on parking volume, except on the most extreme days – it is the interface with residential amenity that such on-street parking creates which is the challenge to manage.

Ultimately without creating area wide parking restrictions (explored below) and enforcing them there will not be a constraint and therefore substantial demand on most days. The fixed costs of such a service (land that is available, available buses and drivers) mean that they cannot be run occasionally with any success. Even if only run at peak weekends, unpredictable weather creates challenges for patronage certainty.

Frequency of buses has to be high and journey times short to be attractive. Finding sites to intercept visitors to the Sefton Coast would additionally be difficult since such land tends to be either taken or valuable. Park and Ride is not felt to be a viable option and focus should be towards park and rail, using the excellent car parks provided along many Northern Line stations. As an example even as far afield as Liverpool South Parkway there is accessible parking that could be promoted at weekends in particular (when it's use for commuting is low) for Sefton Coast access.



## Area Wide Parking Restrictions

While it may be appealing to suggest that an area (say West of the Railway in Formby or Crosby) has area wide parking restrictions applied this would be a substantial undertaking to sign, line and maintain, let alone enforce. Any restrictions would create problems for the substantial numbers of residents within them, which are likely to far outweigh the numbers of days of nuisance occurring at present for the majority of them. Focus should be on maintaining and upgrading enforcement of what we have not expanding it further.

There may be localised exceptions, such as around corners of problematic junctions, although throughout the area most of those affected on typical or busy days are felt to be addressed already. Indeed recent increases in coverage of restrictions have led to some displacement of traffic into areas it never previously occurred. It is unlikely that the costs of such parking could be passed to residents acceptably, since the majority are not affected enough for enough of the time to be supportive.

A further issue with such zones is that unless they are significant in size there can be substantial increases in parking around the periphery. As an example in Crosby if a parking zone were implemented around Brighton Le Sands or streets around Mariners Road it would be likely to shift parking toward Blundellsands. The challenge is where to stop. Similar issues occur around Football Match Day Parking zones, where the problems and locations of them are much more predictable and therefore manageable.

There may however, be a role to play for the introduction of parking restrictions. For example the proposed examples in the Crosby area that are presented later in this report.



*Existing residents parking scheme, Waterloo*

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### Use of school and other car parks

Considering encouraging parking on areas of land which may appear attractive and simple to use rarely is. There are several schools across Formby and Crosby/Waterloo which may appear interesting to use for parking. It would appear that parking could be an attractive revenue source for schools at first glance. The challenges occur however when dealing with a range of other issues. These include;

- Being able to secure the rest of the school from access by outsiders;
- Predicting there is enough demand in advance to open up to visitors (this is not like a football match where visits happen even it is raining!);
- Having relevant insurances in place;
- Having staff on hand to be able to manage the site (and take revenue);
- Having the ability to clean up efficiently afterwards (using appropriately trained cleaners);

In addition to this any amenity has to be in a place where it can intercept traffic without causing extra nuisance to residents, and have a car park of a scale worth signing and opening. As an example there are several schools in Formby which at first glance may appear attractive;

- Woodlands Primary. But which has access to it's car park on a bend, and which is distant from either 'honeypot' location, not on the typical routes. It's car park is relatively small.
- St Jerome's. Where the car park is used by the adjacent Church at weekends (clashing with most peak days for coast access). To get access would need access via the Greenloons estate – meaning nuisance and that given the potential to pay to park many may see on-street parking available and park there instead.

- Range High. This is in a residential area, which already has substantial issues from drop off/pick up times at school start/end. Additional use is unlikely to be popular with residents, would lead to pressure on a point of the coast that is particularly sensitive environmentally and is away from the honeypot locations.

It is unlikely there are many locations of scale where 'pop-up' style parking can be supplied. Although one is identified in the potential solutions later in this report.

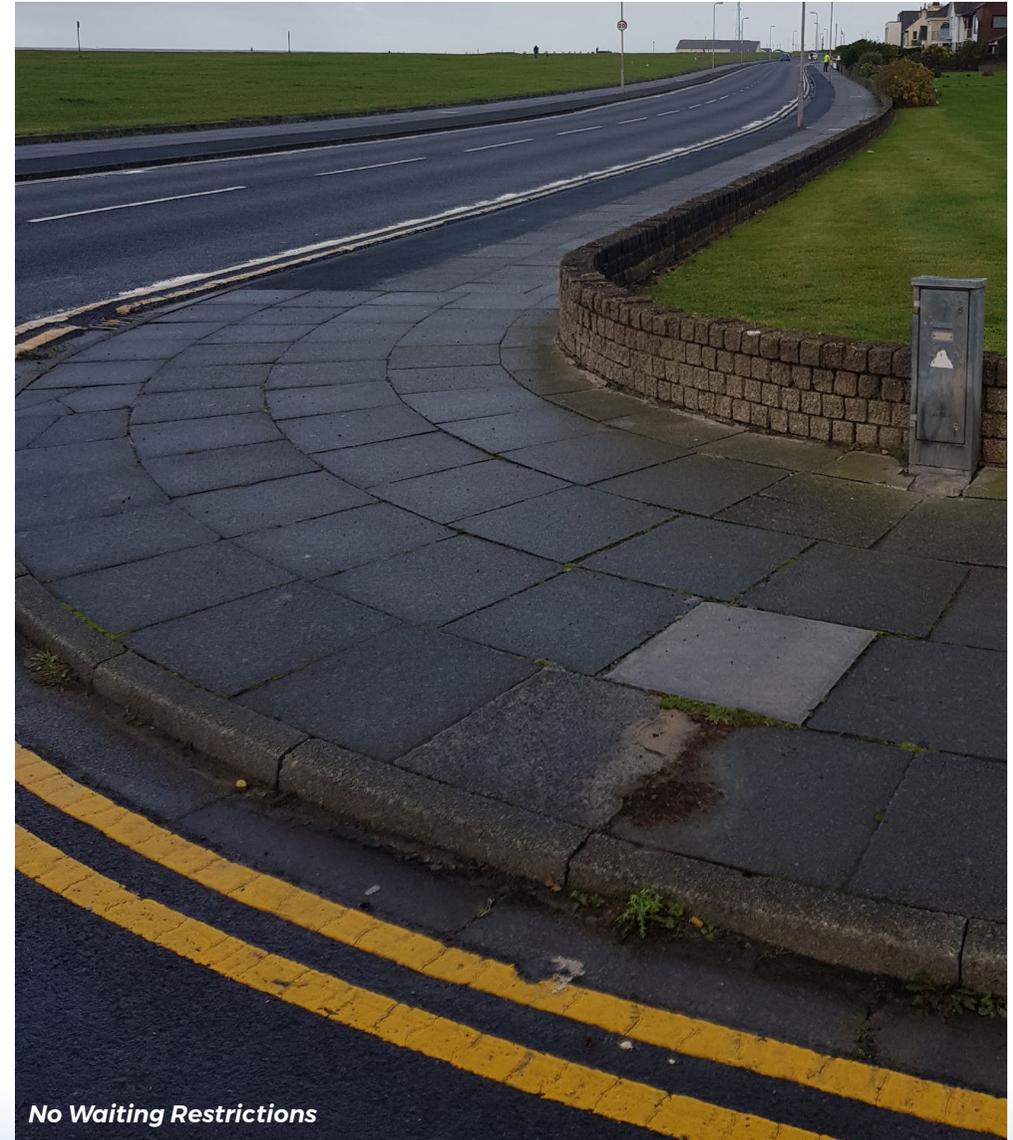


Source: Google Earth - St Jerome's

### **One Way Streets and increased Traffic Management**

The nature of the issue is that it does not occur regularly enough to merit major traffic management changes. Temporary plans are virtually impossible to implement due to the unpredictable nature of 'extreme days'. This is not like a football match day parking plan, where major events occur often enough at a scale to merit intervention, or like a major city centre event where there are alternative modes or messaging possible and for which planning can occur in advance.

Additionally changes to movement affect locals on a day-to-day basis, with regular small disadvantages outweighing the irregular days that benefit may occur. Add to this the cost of implementation and enforcement it is not felt that substantial traffic management controls will have significant impact or benefit. One exception is highlighted in the potential solutions section for further exploration in the Lifeboat Road area, although this in itself has compromises to be made.



**No Waiting Restrictions**

## Major New Car Parks at the Attractions

Most areas of the Sefton Coast are extremely sensitive environmentally. To provide substantial new parking without compensating elsewhere for it is likely to be difficult. While the National Trust are considering parking options at the Victoria Road area, this is for an environmental management reason not to expand spaces.

The current parking stock is felt to be adequate for most typical and busy days, albeit with adjustment to where visitors are directed to maximise its use. Proposals at Ainsdale (referred to in solutions) will allow further redirection of parking to an appropriate place, where land is not used fully or as sensitive. In that case it can help create a better overall environment, particularly if beach parking is stopped.

Expanding the amount of physical footprint that car parks take from the coastal areas is likely to be unacceptable. Exceptions may occur in the more built up Waterloo Lakeside area. While building decked or even multi-storey car parks are often demonstrated as examples— for example at Giants Causeway in Northern Ireland, these are in different situations with more constant demand and different surrounding pressures. Indeed, a key risk of building a multi-level car park at upwards of £8000-£10000 a space is that it would not be used because other nearby parking is free or more convenient. Even on typical or quiet days places like Larkhill Lane or St Luke's Church Road have parking used by 'regulars' or those not willing to pay to park at all.

At Lifeboat Road there may be opportunity to create a few more spaces by making the layout more efficient. In effect this would be reducing circulation space of created by the roads that interlink the current smaller car parks, and providing say 3-4 slightly larger car parks themselves. This would not necessarily take more overall footprint.

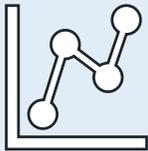
Whilst existing overspill areas are felt to be adequate at the Crosby Coastal Park for the time being, there is scope to provide additional overspill on grassed areas in the future, if required.



# 9 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Having been through the evidence we summarise the key issues and opportunities for the area;

## Fundamental Issues and Challenges for the Sefton Coast Access



Unpredictable peaks and troughs of demand, with extremes being fewer than perceived;



Conflicts between visitors and residents due to proximity of the latter to areas of attraction;



Poor spreading of pressures between honeypots, and potential increasing underuse of Southport as an amenity;



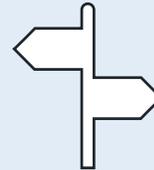
Lack of ability to enforce restrictions we have on extreme days.



Growth in media increasing demand and the need to use this better to help management;



Apart from rail, generally poor access by non-car modes to areas of attraction;



Lack of historic strategic signing and traffic management strategy for coast as a whole, with under-provision of technology led solutions;



Conflicts between 'provide more' and 'manage the environmental sensitivity of the coast';



Lack of 'give back' to local residents and businesses by visitors.



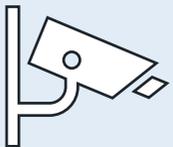
## Fundamental Opportunities for Sefton Coast access



Enhanced use of technology led and other signing to influence decision making at strategic level;



Movement of key queues from residential hotspots to less residentially sensitive locations such as Ainsdale or Lifeboat Road;



Creation of easier ways to enforce parking restrictions;



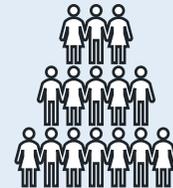
Use of stricter measures to enforce the most intrusive parking;



Using amenities hubs as a 'carrot' to attract people to where we want to;



Creating parking alternatives at appropriate and viable places;



Increases in use of media, including social media;



Minor traffic management changes, not substantial schemes.



# 10 SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS

## Strategic Signing including VMS

We recommend that a strategic signing review is undertaken for the principal access points to the Sefton Coast. This needs ideally work with Highways England, to consider messaging on 'extreme' days from potentially as far away as the M6/M62 junction at Croft (near Warrington) (for traffic from South and East) or the M65/M6 junction near Farington (Leyland) (for traffic from North and East Lancashire) to allow route decisions to be made about Sefton Coast or alternatives. Whilst such extreme events are rare having plans in place with Highways England would allow a degree of dynamism and could be linked to other locations including Southport, Blackpool and the Lake District.

The nature of any closer signing on the Motorway Network would be less about re-routing and more about information, particularly along the M58 and M57. This is similar to the way in which the different parts of Blackpool's Shoreline are signed from the M55, or sub-elements of the Lake District are described when approaching M6 Junction 36 from the south (which partly redirect some users to Junction 40).

As catchment discussion earlier in this document highlights the primary approach to the coast is likely to be via Brooms Cross Link Road. Signing of options early on this (e.g. Crosby/Formby/Ainsdale/Southport), followed by the use of increased VMS signing to allow dynamic messaging to specific places would be useful for subsequent final approaches.

Purchase of both fixed and moveable VMS signs to supplement those already available would be advantageous for this. The latter in particular could additionally be used for other events in the borough such as Southport Air or Flower Shows.



Source: Google Earth - Strategic Signing, Cheshire Oaks

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## **Car Park Arrangement and Balancing Victoria Road / Lifeboat Road**

As the National Trust consider options for car parking at Victoria Road, related to changes in Coastline, there is the opportunity to help change happen by balancing car parking demand and use between Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road. The latter of these is less utilised and perhaps less known by non-locals, or less regular visitors. This is partially about signing, but also about being supportive towards the concept of amenities and improvement at Lifeboat Road. There may be opportunity for a small number of spaces to be relocated between the car parks in future (perhaps up to 50 in our view) and this is likely to be worthy of consideration.

Care will need to be taken in promotion of Lifeboat Road in that although there are less immediate interfaces with residents, and the route to it from St Luke's Church Road includes more potential for queueing to be stacked, emergency access will need to be retained, as will access to Formby Point Caravan Park. Local widening may be required, although two vehicles can generally pass along the route to the car park.



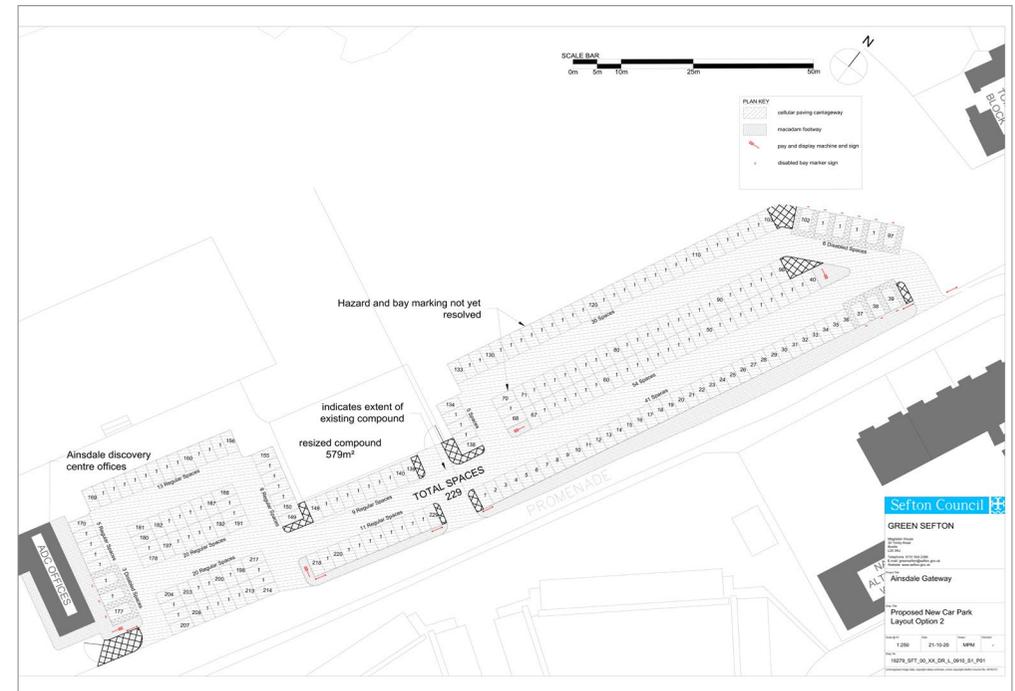
## Ainsdale Car Park

Sefton Council have plans to implement car parking at Ainsdale Beach on land at The Promenade. These include several hundred spaces and will provide the potential to move parking from the beach itself and regenerate the buildings adjacent. Ainsdale Beach tends to be less well known by occasional visitors to the coast than Crosby or Formby, yet allows better access for those wanting immediate access to the beach.

While some parking did occur on residential streets around the Westminster Drive and Chatsworth Road areas during the extremes of 2020 the beach has typically been able to absorb demand in previous years. There is a very clear and direct link from the core road network via the Coast Road and Shore Road to this location, which has very little interrelationship with residential areas. In our view the car park proposals (and ideally associated amenities) should be developed as priority, but also promoted through wider messaging and signing as opportunity to balance pressure between Ainsdale and Formby in particular.

The plans for the new car parking will substantially help rejuvenate the area around the Promenade and amenities could add value to visitors to adjacent Pontins, and also assist in future regeneration of lost businesses such as the Sand Public House, adjacent to the Coast Road roundabout.

Figure 10: Ainsdale Car Park Plan (Source- Sefton Council)



## Clear Routes in to Formby

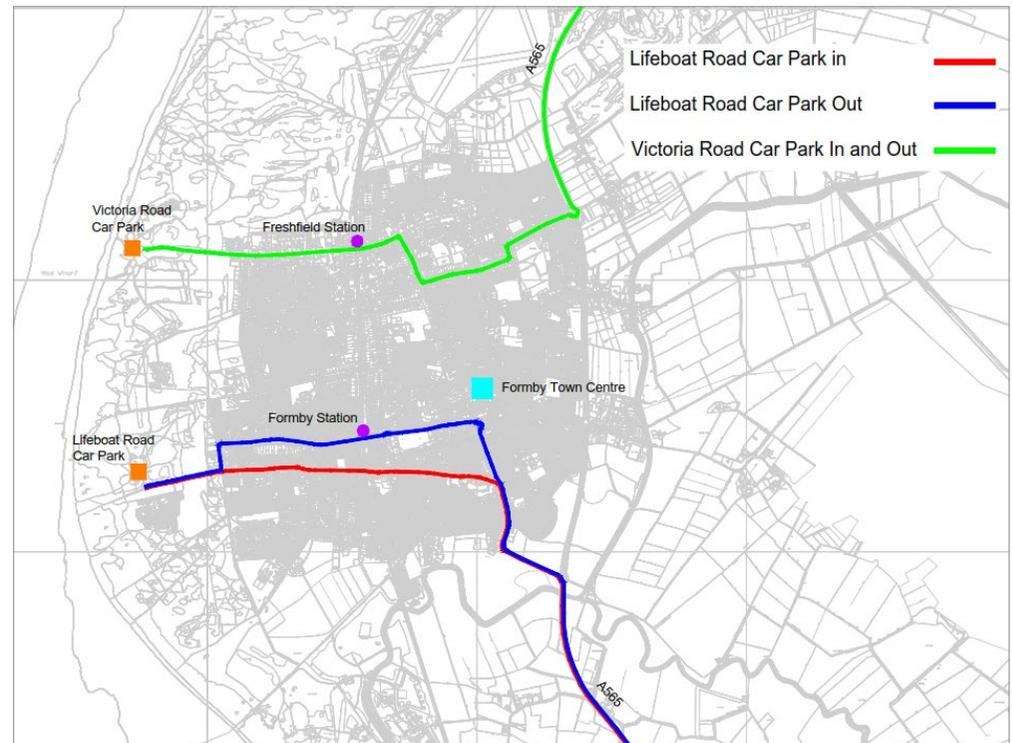
A key point raised during consultation with enforcement officers has been that the signing tends to lend itself towards visitors moving towards Victoria Road rather than balancing between Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road. This is partially felt to be due to signing. Traffic moves towards Formby from three routes;

- A565 South (felt to be the majority of longer distance visitors from M57/8 and those from Liverpool area)
- A565 North (felt to be relatively local and some from Central Lancashire)
- B5195 Altcar Road (some from Lancashire, using the road 'over the moss' to access the town, but felt to be relatively low in volume and local, e.g. Ormskirk area)

At present signing within Formby from the south commences with a sign at the Ravenmeols Lane/Liverpool Road junction showing a National Trust Logo and 'Lifeboat Road'. This is felt to lead to a view that this is a secondary car park and that many users do not understand this is the beach area.

We suggest that a re-signing exercise (combined with the next proposal) could simplify signing to highlight the Ravelmeols Lane/Bushby's Lane route as 'Beach' and promote this from the South to rebalance demand towards Lifeboat Road (particularly if amenities there are improved), and that those from the North could be signed 'Pinewoods' and directed to Victoria Road. We do not feel there is any need to sign from Altcar Road due to the more local and lower volume nature of this route. Such signing would also help reduce mileage to get to the beach and reduce unnecessary through traffic within Formby.

Figure 11: Strategic Diagram of Formby



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## Freshfield Station Bus Turnround

Earlier in this report we discussed how car parking at places such as schools is often highlighted as a potential solution, but that we feel that this should generally be discounted due to practical challenges of doing so. Having considered parking options in the area one location that is understood to be in public ownership (Merseytravel) is the bus turnround area at Freshfield Station between the junctions of Victoria Road with Montagu Road and Argarmeols Road. This is a significantly underused amenity, since even during rail replacement times buses use Formby Station bridge to stack, with rail services terminating at Formby not Freshfield. At other times very limited numbers of buses use such an amenity. Even when Freshfield Station level crossing was closed and replacement bus service were provided either side these vehicles parked closer to the station while waiting.

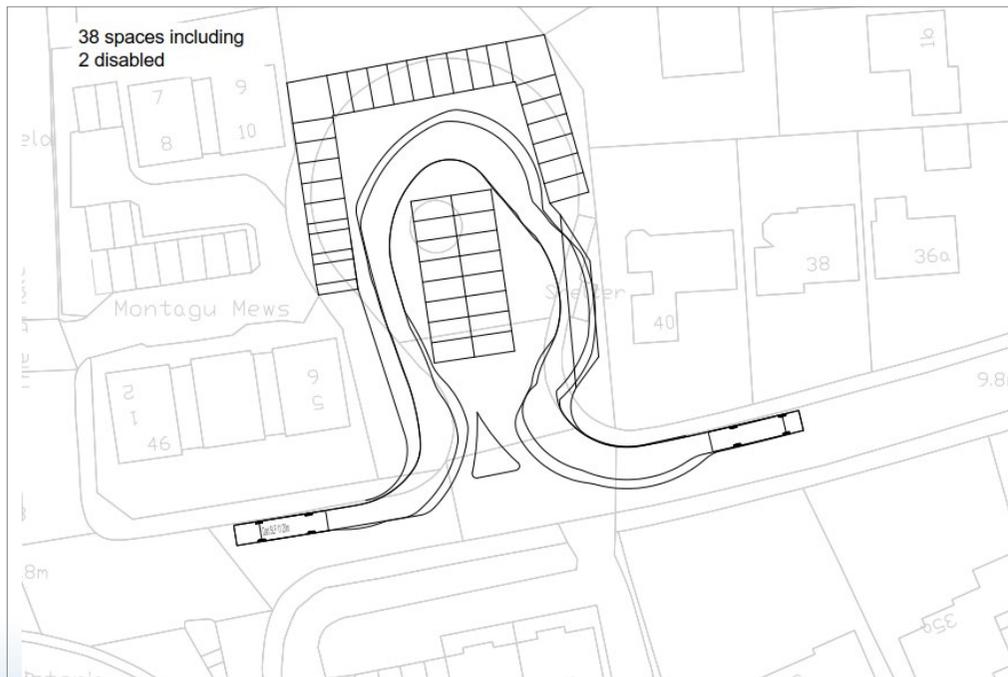
The sketch plans that follow highlight how even with retaining a bus turnround amenity at least 40 car parking spaces could be accommodated here, and that without around 70 could be accommodated. These plans do not take into account trees, etc, but to balance that we have also not undertaken a detailed design that would undoubtedly make layouts shown more efficient.



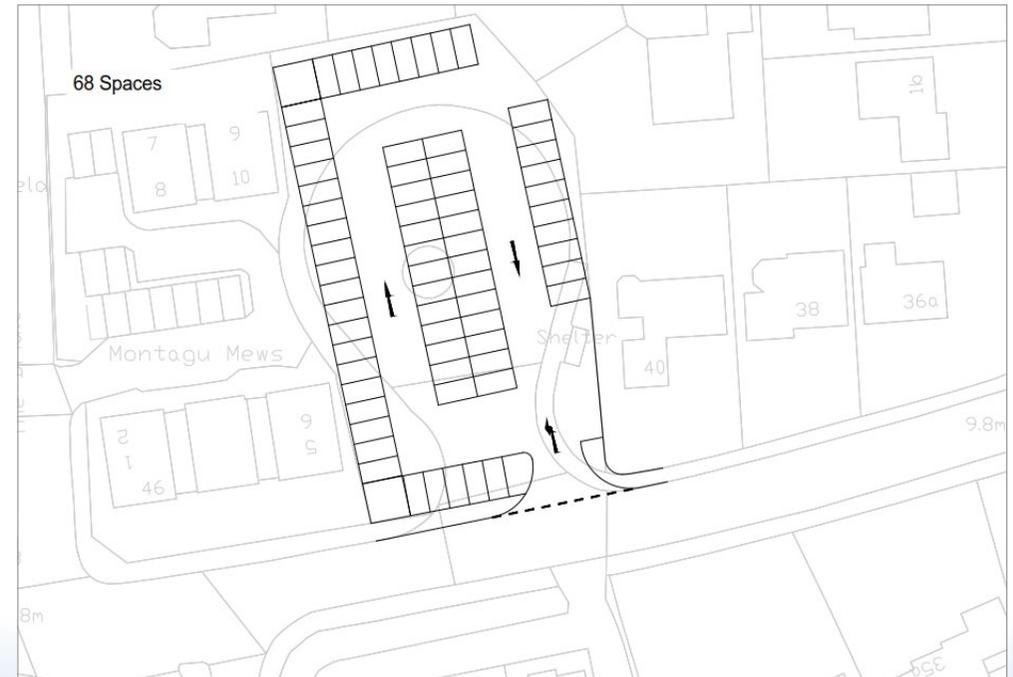
*Freshfield Station Bus Turnround*

A key point in relation to this is that on busy and extreme days this location is in an ideal location to intercept people who would otherwise queue and wait on Victoria Road, providing them a 'park and walk' alternative. It was noted that during extreme days in 2020 some users did park here anyway, rendering the bus facility unusable. With the advent of pay by phone parking and a change in layout it could be relatively simple to create an additional parking resource on peak days that could be opened/closed as needed and create additional revenue. We recommend this is considered and investigated further.

**Figure 12: Freshfield Station Turnround Car Park Plan**



**Figure 13: Freshfield Station Turnround Car Park Plan**



## Coastal Hubs

Traffic and transport needs to be seen in the context of the wider visitor offer. Encouraging use of sustainable modes will be critical for both climate change and visitor management reasons in the future. The ultimate creation of cycleways from Southport to Otterspool and beyond within the Liverpool City Region mean that there could in effect be cycle links of good quality the whole way from Southport to much of the population of the city region, and indeed beyond into Warrington and towards Manchester.

The Sefton Coast also has the asset of the Northern Line Railway, with stations generally within 1-2km of the key visitor attractions.

Increased consideration of the setting up of a series of hubs at each 'honeypot' location along this coast should include core amenities such as toilets and cafes, but also offer the potential for bike hire and storage. It could also link effectively with rail ticketing to offer people choices and linked alternatives to the car. Ainsdale is felt to be a good place to consider this type of amenity, adding to its strategic attraction and with the ability for a hub to also correlate with both Pontins and other amenities in Ainsdale Village itself. A series of interrelated hubs could act as focal points.

In Crosby the provision of improved cycling hire facilities and infrastructure, and tourist information could attract greater visitor numbers, and expenditure, in this area of the coast and support the expansion and the ongoing refurbishment of the CLAC.

Any changes in the offering elsewhere within the Crosby Coastal Park area should complement, and not compete with the proposed improvements at the CLAC.

The development of a hub could:

- Transfer trips towards the coastal park area, making the most of existing car parking;
- Transfer trips, and parking, away from residential streets and reduce congestion around other car parks; and
- Encourage spending by visitors, contributing to the local economy



## One Way St Luke's Church Road

We are generally not recommending traffic management measures in this report, since they tend to restrict local movements or activity all year to provide benefits on a few critical days. One exception, combined with the above could be to create a very local one way circulation around St Luke's Church Road area. This would have some implication for residents of the Albert Road area, Church users, 'Shorrocks Hill' site and Caravan Park, but would not change movements for the vast majority of residents of this side of Formby.

What it would do is make sure that traffic flows with less conflict into and out of Lifeboat Road car park. It could also allow a priority for cyclists using contraflow amenities and importantly a circulation route that encourages access via Bushby's Lane and out via Kirklake Road/Duke Street could have greater chance of attracting visitors to also visit Formby Village centre after their visit to the beach.

This option would need to be considered in relation to any impact on bus services, Church movements and on any potential for increased local rat-running along St Lukes Drive in particular (which does already have some related to school drop off at Range High School, avoiding Ward Avenue). It is however felt to have potential for wider strategic benefit and create a smoother flow of movement in this critical area around St Lukes Church Road.

Figure 14: Diagram Concept Layout



## Loading Restrictions as Standard

A critical point made during consultation has been the ability to enforce restrictions effectively and efficiently. A key point made has been that the observation time needed for waiting restrictions (at 5 minutes) severely reduces the volume of tickets that can be issued by one operative during a shift, and at the same time leads to them being exposed to risk for longer (by virtue of the fact that they are having to wait). Loading restrictions do not have such a lengthy observation time and allow quicker ticketing of vehicles and for the operative to move on.

While the objective is not to create revenue, restrictions need to be backed up by effective enforcement. Ticketing is a deterrent to many, particularly during early hours of parking demand accumulation. If tickets are issued quickly early as problems start to arise they lead to others being deterred. If they are not, and illegal parking occurs unhindered others will think regulations are not being enforced and 'take a chance'.

There is an inconsistency in regulation across the area, with some routes having loading restrictions (signified by yellow markings on the kerb) and others not. We suggest that increasing or adding 'as standard' loading restrictions to match parking ones would provide the ability to enforce more effectively on busy and extreme days as problems occur.

Clearly off-peak this may create challenges for some loading activities, however wardens are able to use discretion where appropriate and where no impact is occurring or the loading activity is genuine.



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## Explore Vehicle Removal Trucks

During 2020 there were unprecedented numbers of people willing to accept parking fines as a result of illegal parking on residential streets in the area. The price of a parking fine (if paid), particularly between 4 or 5 occupants was deemed a reasonable cost to be absorbed for a day out, especially as many had not been able to have any such trips for several months. Other anecdotal observations emerged of people switching tickets from previously ticketed vehicles to their own to make it look as though they had already been ticketed. While 2020 was extreme there have been a history over recent years of vehicles being willing to be ticketed to park 'at convenience' rather than spend more time hunting for legal space.

Parking and loading restrictions are primarily provided to ensure both road safety and that the primary purpose of the highway (movement of traffic) is maintained. Parking is in this respect 'not a right' but allowed. Significant concerns were raised by a variety of operators during 2020 that irresponsible parking led to significant slowing or in some cases blocking of movement. This includes numerous instances of parking on public footways (which are covered by adjacent Traffic Regulation Orders), reducing access for the mobility impaired in particular, but also forcing general members of the public into the carriageway, creating danger.

When parking restrictions are not observed clear action is needed to deter such behaviour. At present this is difficult due to lack of any ability to remove offending vehicles quickly. Sefton Council and it's contractors do not have their own vehicle removal truck or associated compound to remove vehicles effectively and create a more significant deterrent than a parking or loading fine. Without such it is likely that similar problems could occur in future.

While the cost of a permanent resource of this nature is likely to be prohibitive it is recommended that investigation of a 'call on' capability for extreme days is investigated further. While numbers of vehicles that can be removed by

one removal vehicle are low (particularly if any compound is distant) it is the deterrent to others that will help stop or reduce a culture that has emerged over recent years. This could be particularly effective if social media is also used to highlight this.



## Harrington Road / Woodlands Road TRO

While we are generally not recommending significant expansion of Traffic Regulation Orders across the area (since they will act to spread parking into adjacent residential areas rather than 'cure' the key problems) a particular problem occurred with access to a large area of Formby during 2020. This created road blockage and real dangers of access for emergency services and residents during that time period. This is a key artery for what we estimate to be around 25% of Formby's population, or potentially around 8000 residents, particularly when Victoria Road is queued.

Typically parking has previously only occurred related to the beach on the section of Harrington Road between Barkfield Road and Victoria Road. The eastern side of Harrington Road has therefore been regulated with traffic orders over this length. During 2020 such parking continued on both sides of this route from Barkfield Road to south of Wicks Lane (near Woodlands School). This section of road includes several junctions where visibility can be challenging, notably Wicks Lane, Harrington Close and Holmwood Gardens (which acts as an informal feeder into a significant estate). This compounded issues in this area.



*Harrington Road looking North of Barkfield Lane*



*Harrington Road looking South of Barkfield Lane*

Additionally outside Woodlands School itself parking is restricted by 'School Keep Clear' markings along much of its length and a 20mph zone is in place. Parking however now occurs regularly outside on the opposite (eastern) side of the road. The challenge here is that this creates issues of visibility splays from Ennerdale Road being interrupted and cars parking on footways in the vicinity of the school and crossing patrol. This is compounded to the south of the school crossing patrol by the curvature of the road and similar drop off issues.

While we have not consulted Woodlands School in this study, it does appear that there is a case to create a route long TRO on one side of the whole Woodlands Road/Harrington Road corridor, at least from Barkfield Road to its junction with Tarn Road. The side of the carriageway it is appropriate to restrict may vary, since demand for day to day parking varies along its length, but it is felt that this area is worthy of further investigation and analysis, including consultation with the school.



*Woodlands Road looking from Wicks Lane towards Woodlands School*



*Pinchpoint at School Crossing Patrol, South End of Woodlands School*



*Woodlands Road looking towards Kirkdale Road*

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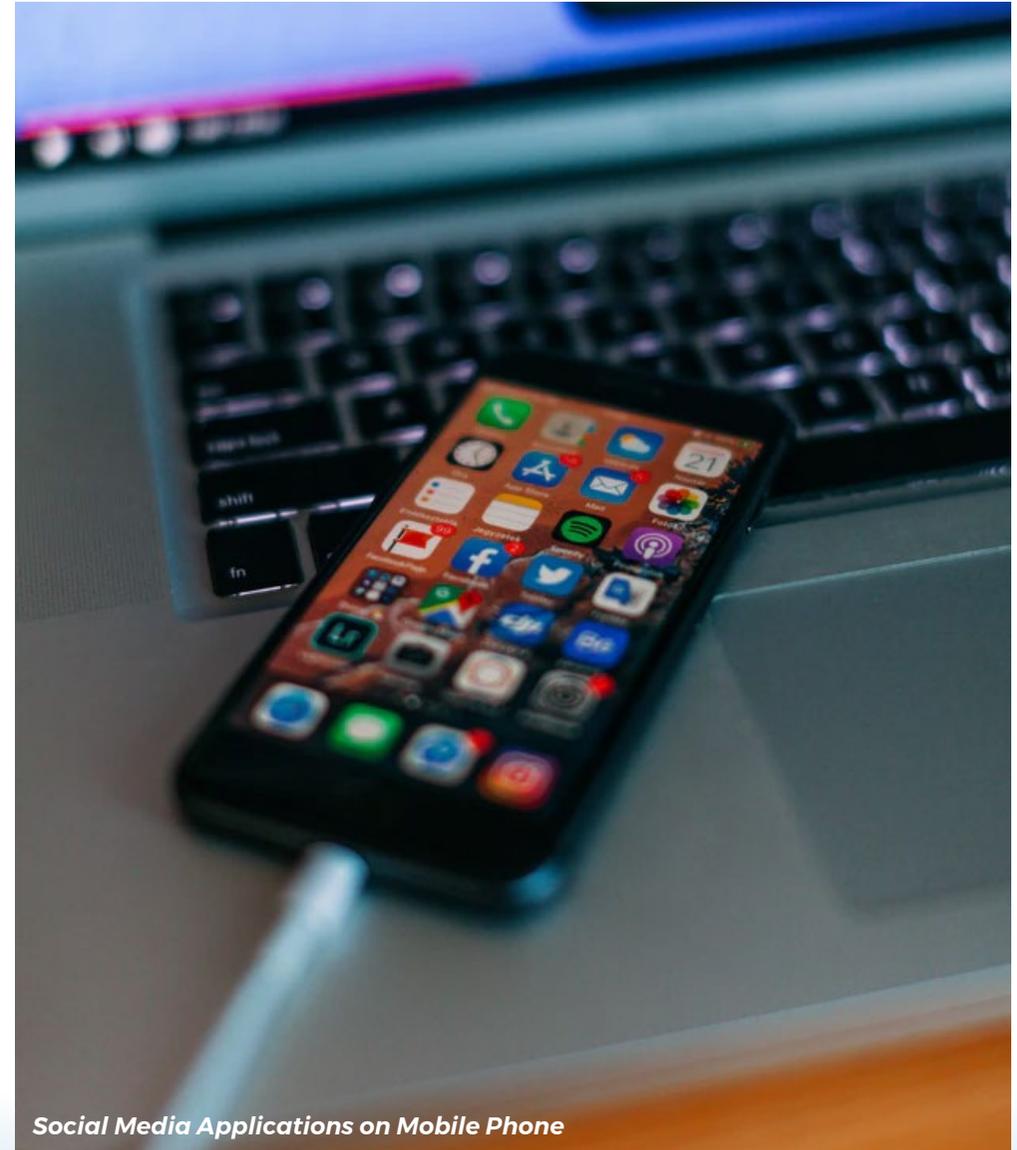
## Media Campaign / Methods

A key reason for the increase in attractiveness of the Sefton Coast over recent years has been both an upgrade in its offer (perhaps evidenced most strongly by the profile raising that Antony Gormley's 'Another Place' has created at Crosby Beach) but also the increased attention given in both printed and social media.

Media in particular can create both positive attraction (for example Coronation Street mentioning visits to the coast does make people more likely to come) and negative challenges (such as social media 'influencers' encouraging people to come at times when the authority is asking the opposite).

Whilst this is not a media study and messages from both Sefton Council and its partners along the coast have to be very carefully co-ordinated traffic and transport advice and support needs to be an increasingly key part of any ongoing and sustained strategy. Clearly 'active travel' messages will need to come first, then 'management' ones in relation to access and parking.

It is suggested that further attention is given to this area with relevant communications specialists.



## Crosby - New and Amended Traffic Regulation Orders

Discussions with parking enforcement officers, and management revealed a number of issues relating to parking and enforcement around the Crosby and Waterloo area.

They have reported that due to limited staffing resources, on the busiest days their focus is drawn to parking along the Serpentine and Burbo Bank Road North, where they observe overflows from the Burbo Bank Car Park. They reported that many of the issues relate to the enforceability of issues in the Coastal Park area, where there are fewer TROs in place, those that are in place are not located where issues exist, or do prohibit the parking behaviours that contribute to issues (such as blue badge holder parking on no waiting restrictions).

Parking at the Crosby Coastal Park, whilst comparable to the capacity at Burbo Bank, does not attract the same volumes of users, but could help alleviate the issues observed across these areas, in conjunction with other measures, such as improved wayfinding and signage.

The measures proposed have therefore been identified to consider existing issues identified through observations and discussions with officers/stakeholders, but also in anticipation of increase traffic in the area due to proposed and ongoing schemes (such as refurbishment of the CLAC) that are expected to increase visitor numbers and traffic in the area.



## Coastal Park Access Road Corridor

Parking at the Crosby Coastal Park, whilst comparable to the capacity at Burbo Bank, does not attract the same volumes of users, but could help alleviate the issues observed across these areas, in conjunction with other measures, such as improved wayfinding and signage.

Officers also reported issues with blue badge holder parking along the access road. Blue badge holders are currently permitted to park for up to three hours on the existing 'no waiting' restrictions. This can reduce the access road to one-car width, requiring vehicles to give way. This can cause tailbacks around the car parks and bring traffic to a standstill.

Figure 15: Diagram Concept Layout for Cambridge Road



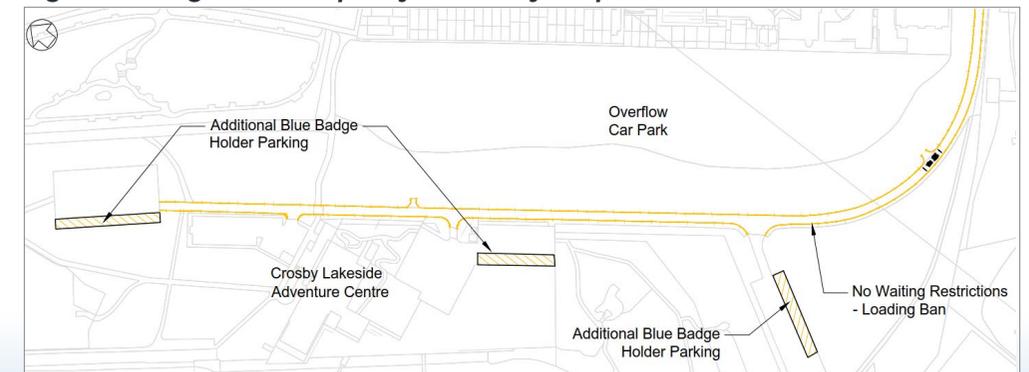
## Coastal Park Access Road/ Brunswick Parade/ Cambridge Road

They also reported similar issues around the entrance to the coastal park, along Cambridge Road at its junction with Cambridge Road and Brunswick Parade. They have observed occasions where on street parking can impede traffic flows and delay or prevent access to the coastal park access road.

It is therefore proposed to implement TROs at Cambridge Road, Brunswick Parade, and the Coastal Park Access Road Junction. Loading bans would be used to limit impact of blue badge holder parking around this junction, with no waiting restrictions provided along the southern section of Cambridge Road so as to not impact upon on-street parking for local residents.

Again, additional blue badge holder parking would be provided within the Coastal Park car parks to increase the supply of blue badge holder parking in the area.

Figure 16: Diagram Concept Layout Crosby car parks



## Crosby - Mariners Road Corridor Junction Improvements and TROs

Mariners Road has been identified as an area of concern due to the absence of parking restrictions (aside from some localised waiting restrictions at junctions). This area attracts significant volumes of visitors due to the availability of free parking, and satellite navigation system directions which direct traffic to this area for 'Crosby Beach' searches.

No traffic regulation orders are in place along Mariner's Road, leading it to become 'double-parked', even during quieter periods of the day. This causes obstruction of the footways and/or restricts the carriageway so that only one vehicle may pass.

It is therefore proposed to Implement TROs, in the form of no waiting restrictions, on one side of Mariner's Road to improve the safe and effective flow of traffic and to minimise footway parking. Loading bans are not considered to be suitable given the residential frontages on each side of Mariner's Road. Providing additional blue badge holder parking in the car park would encourage blue badge holders to park here and minimise parking on no waiting restrictions.

### Junction Amendment - Mariners Road / Warren Road

The junction of Warren Road and Mariner's Road is offset from the Mersey Road/ Bridge Road mini roundabout. Queues on the entry to the roundabout from Warren Road obstruct right turning traffic from Mariners Road. Reconfiguration of the roundabout to include a Mariner's Road arm could be beneficial to operation on peak days.

As well as the widespread presence of parked vehicles, the pedestrian environment along Mariner's Road can be poor. The existing junction provides limited facilities for pedestrians and crossing of the Burbo Crescent junction is approximately 40m, with no pedestrian refuge.

There is therefore an opportunity to rationalise this junction as part of the works and improve the pedestrian environment, complete with tactile crossing facilities for the blind or partially sighted.

Figure 17: Diagram Concept Layout for Mariners Junction

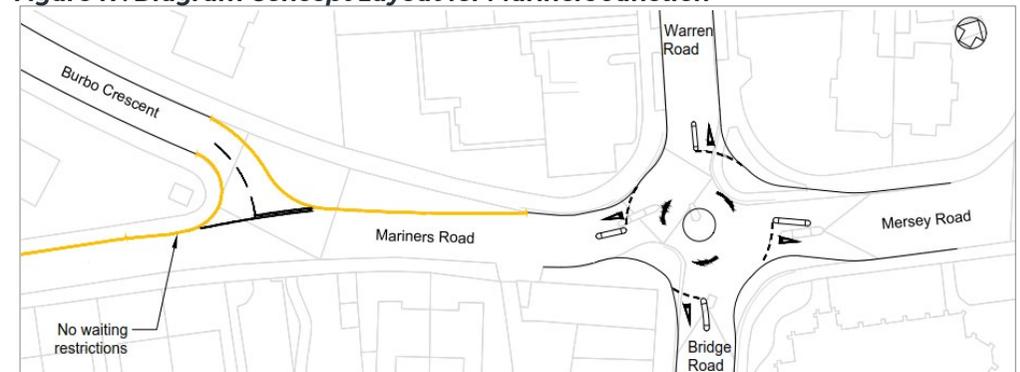
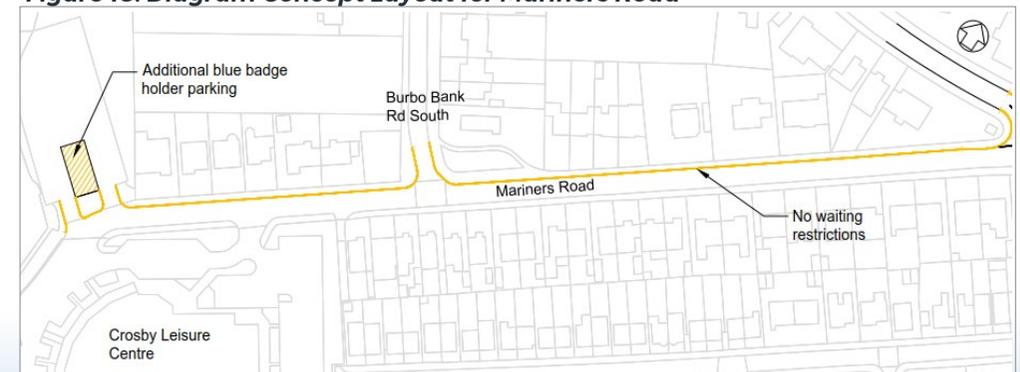


Figure 18: Diagram Concept Layout for Mariners Road



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## Crosby - Local Junction Signage Improvements to Crosby Coastal park

In addition to the comments regarding strategic signage across the Sefton Coast, there are opportunities to improve signage in the Crosby area that could more effectively direct traffic to existing car parking and away from problem areas. In preparation of this study, WSP has reviewed the signage on site, assessing the availability and clarity of signage on key routes from the strategic road network.

In particular, this review has considered the quality of wayfinding signage to Crosby Beach, Another Place, and Crosby Coastal Park.

**Figure 19** overleaf presents existing and proposed local routes for drivers travelling to the area from Moor Lane A565. Currently there is very limited signage up to the A565/ Coronation road Junction in Crosby. From this point a limited number of signs direct visitors to Antony Gormley's Another Place at Burbo Bank Car Park.

Despite having comparable journey times from this point, no signs refer to the parking available at the Crosby Coastal Park, reference to the facilities and attractions associated with the CLAC, or that the Coastal Park also provides access to Another Place. Signage relating to these attractions at this location, along with clear and prominent signage (detailing the number of available parking spaces at both Burbo Bank and the Coastal Park) would better distribute traffic to suitable locations and reduce traffic heading to existing problem areas, such as the Mariner's Road corridor adjacent to Crosby Leisure Centre.

The A565 Moor Lane/Moorland Avenue Roundabout in particular is another key decision point for drivers on the network that currently provides no signage relating to attractions on the coast.

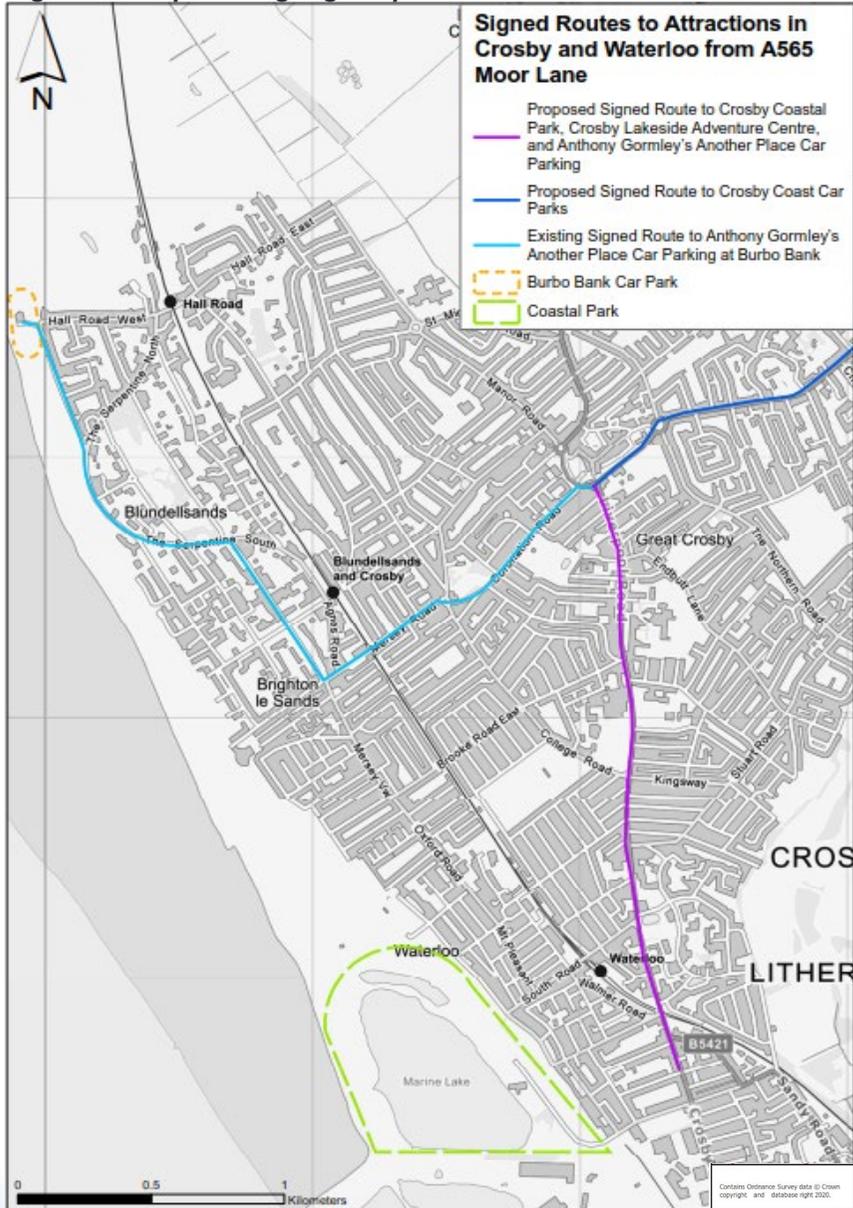
It is therefore considered that there is potential to significantly improve the quality and clarity of signage.

The issues relating to signage and wayfinding can be summarised as follows:

- Satellite navigation systems are routing traffic to unsuitable locations for 'Crosby Beach' and 'Another Place' searches;
- No reference to tourist attractions in the Crosby & Waterloo area on the Strategic Network;
- No reference to tourist attractions in the Crosby & Waterloo area on the A565;
- This lack of signage is likely contributing to a reliance on Satellite Navigation systems for visitors from further afield;
- Key junctions on the network provide little to no signage relating to local attractions;
- No reference is made to the Crosby Coastal Park across the signage in the area;
- Existing signage on the local network is not prominent or provided at sufficiently advanced locations on the network; and
- Existing signage does not reference the quantity of available car parking at key locations.

Given the above, it is considered that the Crosby area would benefit significantly from a detailed signage review and the introduction of improved wayfinding signage. Discussions should be held with Highways England to discuss the potential to introduce signage from the strategic network, to limit the reliance on satellite navigation and to distribute more evenly the impact of traffic in the area, away from the Leisure Centre area and directing greater volumes of traffic towards the Crosby Coastal Park as a gateway to the rest of the Crosby and Waterloo coastline and support the offering at the CLAC.

**Figure 19: Proposed Signage Improvements**



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## **Crosby – New Access to Overspill Parking**

Providing an access earlier on the access road to overspill areas would limit traffic along the access road further north, and reduce reliance on turning areas within these car parks that can become congested. This access would also limit the impact of parked vehicles on the access road at the busiest times.

## **Management of Overspill Car Park**

Whilst an overspill parking area is available opposite the Crosby lakeside Adventure Centre, and is understood not to reach capacity even on the busiest days, it is often only opened later in the day once it is clear that the coast will be experiencing hot sunny, weather. Parking officers are required to bring this to the attention of council colleagues who then provide the key to open the overspill car park up. This chain of communication can result in delays to opening the overspill parking. Often it is then too late, resulting in significant overspill parking on unrestricted streets such as Brunswick Parade and Cambridge Road. Inconsiderate on-street parking arising from this, in turn, contributes to operational and access issues for the surrounding roads.

It is therefore advised that Sefton consider these working practices and new methods of working to ensure that the overspill parking are can be opened at the earliest opportunity to respond to peak demands before the impacts of parking on surrounding roads are felt.



*Lakeside Adventure Centre Overspill Car Park, Crosby*

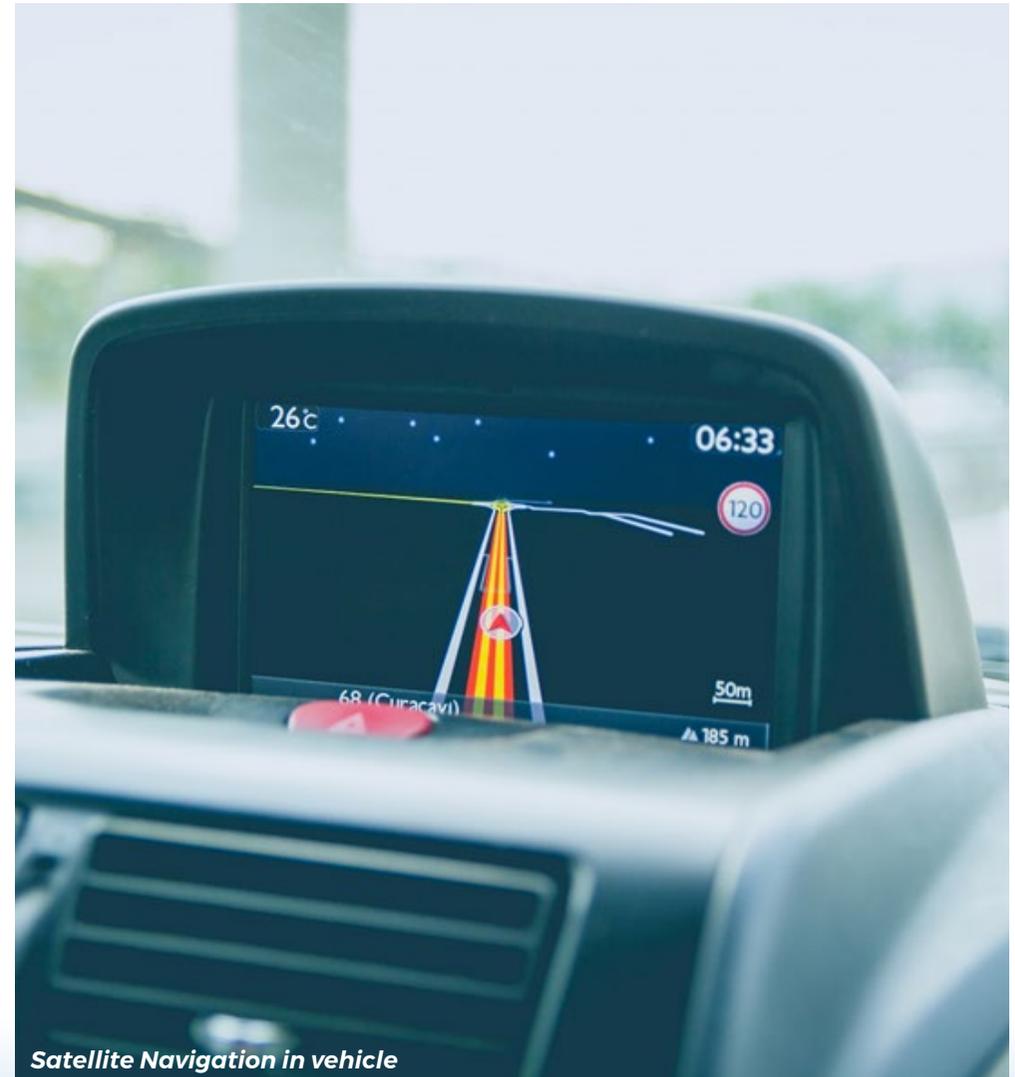
## Satellite Navigation

As has been identified and reported in the CGAP, Satellite Navigation systems are routing drivers to unsuitable locations and/or focusing issues around small geographical areas. It is likely that this has been exacerbated over the course of the past 12 months by an increase in visitors from further afield, less familiar with the locality, and therefore more prone to use Satellite Navigation systems to travel to the coast.

Searching for 'Crosby Beach' in the 'Google Maps' tool currently routes drives along Mariners Road to the Crosby Leisure Centre Car Park. Clearly, it is not one location – access to the beach can be facilitated in a number of ways from many locations.

Similarly, searching for 'Another Place' will route drivers from Mersey Road, to Burbo Bank Road, via Agnes Road. Again, a search for 'Car Park Crosby' sends drivers to the free car parking adjacent to the leisure centre.

It is therefore considered that this issue may be encouraging a concentration of traffic in these locations. Relocating these digital identifiers could assist in relieving these areas of extraordinary volumes of traffic. For example, routing searches for 'Crosby Beach' and 'Another Place' to the parking available at the Crosby Coastal Park.



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### **Mariners Road Car Park - Charging and/or Length of Stay Restrictions**

The Mariner's Road Car Park is currently provided free of charge. This could be encouraging visitors searching for free parking to head to this location in favour of Burbo Bank or the Coastal Park. Introducing charges here may help reduce demand. However, it is noted that this is a popular location for local residents and dog-walkers throughout the year. It might therefore be more appropriate to introduce a length of stay restriction to discourage longer-stay parking by visitors wishing to spend a day at the coast, whilst also still facilitating use by locals.





**T**HE SUMMARY

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The Sefton Coast is a beautiful place and needs to be continually and dynamically managed in a careful manner to make sure it stays that way at all times. The year 2020 saw an unprecedented challenge that can only be seen as an extreme and exceptional circumstance, that is hopefully a rare event. We have to continue to plan for the less extreme, but still highly pressured days that occur along the Sefton Coast each year and create a multitude of transport challenges. Most of these focus around parking. While a general shift towards both non-car modes and less environmentally damaging vehicles is occurring the physical impact of parking demand, both at the point of parking and on the network will need to be managed for years to come.

While the extreme days of demand that occur along the Sefton Coast can be devastatingly difficult for some it is important to put these into perspective in terms of actual number and in terms of the overall numbers of residents critically affected. The most important and overriding factor for Sefton Council to consider is safety – with it being imperative that critical access routes for emergency services are kept viable at all times. This requires the ability to manage and effectively enforce key corridors.

Away from this it is easy to put suggestions that have little or no hope of being implemented for economic, environmental or management issues. The complexity of the coastline means that there is equally no one perfect solution that will 'cure the issue'. This report proposes a series of measures that could be developed further as part of a dynamic balanced plan for the coast within a realistic timescale starting now and lasting up to 5 years. This will need to be continually reviewed, but is felt to be appropriate, deliverable and acceptable. Partnership and communication will remain key throughout this process, since no one organisation can be expected to work alone on such challenges. Transport and access needs to be carefully regarded as a critical element of any ongoing plan for wider management of the area by all parties.

The measures proposed within this report comprise a range of scales and costs and are subject to their own delivery challenges that will only be fully understood with further investigation and appraisal work. The Action Plan, appended to this report, highlights these relative costs and summarises the potential deliverability challenges. Notwithstanding that, there are wider considerations that will affect the council's ability to implement these measures. In particular, they should be seen in the context of budget and funding constraints and the competing interests between localities, and other areas of need in the wider borough. In other words, the traffic management issues in Sefton are not isolated to the areas considered within this report. It is therefore important that the Action Plan is viewed as a range of potential measures, from which key priorities could be identified, taking into consideration the competing needs of other areas of the borough, ensuring that budgets are allocated appropriately based on need and priority.

This report should be the start not the end. Problems will undoubtedly still occur even if all 'solutions' are implemented. The aim is to reduce the conflicts and challenges through realistic management of impacts, rather than talk about solutions that won't or can't happen.



**A**

**APPENDIX A - SUMMARY ACTION  
PLAN**

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# SUMMARY ACTION PLAN

This summary action plan is provided to record the key measures proposed in this report and place them accordingly against one another. This needs to be dynamically and continually reviewed as a 'living document' with the wider coastal management plans;

Area	Action	Key Responsibility	Other Stakeholders	Timescale	Cost	Key Delivery challenges
Across	Coastal Active Hubs	Sefton Council/ National Trust/ Sustrans	-	5 years	££	Cost and funding, public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Across	Strategic Access resigning including VMS strategy	Sefton Council	Highways England	2 years	££	Negotiations/ discussions with Highway England, Cost and funding,
Across	Vehicle Removal Truck	Sefton Council	-	2 years	££	Funding challenges and identification of partnership/ shared ownership arrangement
Across	Media Campaign/Use	Sefton Council/ Tourism	National Trust	1-5 years	£	Funding, ownership, and ongoing management
Across	Loading Restrictions Throughout	Sefton Council	Residents/ Businesses	2 years	£	Public consultation and engagement with stakeholders, particularly local business whose operations could be impacted.
Across	Satellite Navigation Destination Review	Sefton Council	Google and other Map Data Providers	1 year	£	Engagement with stakeholders Identification of suitable locations to balance destinations across the coastline
Formby	Rebalancing car parks National Trust	National Trust	Sefton Council	3-5 years	£££	Cost and funding, planning and environmental considerations, public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Formby	One Way St Luke's Church Road	Sefton Council	Landowners/ Residents	3 years	£	Cost and funding, public consultation and engagement with stakeholders

Area	Action	Key Responsibility	Other Stakeholders	Timescale	Cost	Key Delivery challenges
Formby	Freshfield Station Overflow Car park	Sefton Council/ Merseytravel	Residents	2 years	£	Engagement with Merseytravel who may not be receptive
Formby	Woodlands Road/Harrington Road TRO	Sefton Council	Residents/School	2 years	£	Public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Formby	Resigning access to key Car Parks	Sefton Council	-	1 year	£	Funding
Ainsdale	Promenade Car Park	Sefton Council	-	2 years	££	Cost and funding, public consultation and engagement with stakeholders, planning and environmental considerations
Crosby	Expansion of existing parking to provide overspill	Sefton Council	-	4 Years	£££	Understanding future demand, environmental considerations, and developments plans in the area
Crosby	Mariners Road Junction Improvements	Sefton Council	Residents	3-4 Years	££	Cost and funding
Crosby	Local Signage Review	Sefton Council	Highways England	2 Years	££	Cost and funding , Stakeholder engagement
Crosby	Provision of Additional Blue Badge Holder Parking	Sefton Council	Local Disability/ Accessibility Groups	1-2 Years	££	Cost and funding , Public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Crosby	Mariner's Road TROs	Sefton Council	Residents	1-2 Years	£	Public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Crosby	Coastal Park Corridor TROs	Sefton Council	Residents	1-2 Years	£	Public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Crosby	New Access to Overspill Parking	Sefton Council	-	1 Year	£	Funding
Crosby	Mariners Road Car Park Charging/ Restrictions Review	Sefton Council	NSL	1 Year	£	Public consultation and engagement with stakeholders
Crosby	Overspill Management	Sefton Council/	NSL	1 Year	£	Identifying responsibilities and effective communications methods



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