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| **Report to:** | Coastal Visitor Cabinet Member Reference Group | **Date of Report:** 14th September 2023 |
| **Subject:** | Response to WSP Report - Sefton Coast Visitor Traffic Study |
| **Purpose/Summary** |
| This paper follows on from previous discussions and outlines the Council’s public-facing response to the Study.  |

**Background**

1. In December 2020, WSP completed a study into traffic issues on the Sefton Coast between Seaforth and Ainsdale. The report was commissioned in response to the unprecedented increase in visitor numbers along the coast, following the end of the first lockdown phase of the management of the Covid-19 pandemic in England, and the problems that these visitor numbers gave.
2. The WSP report considered what the underlying issues are, what the extent of the issue is and what might be practically done about it, taking into account social, economic, environmental, and regulatory parameters.
3. The report was never going to present the solution, rather it was intended to indicate a number of measures which could be considered to assist and ease the issues around traffic on the coast.
4. The focus of the report was the three key parts of the Sefton Coast which had been most affected – Crosby /Waterloo, Formby and Ainsdale.
5. The report detailed location specific issues, data and evidence, enforcement, role of National Trust and looked at some examples of best practice from elsewhere in the Country.
6. Commonly suggested solutions were discussed including:
* Park & Ride
* Area Wide Parking Restrictions
* Use of Schools / Other Areas of Land to Provide Additional Parking Capacity
* One Way Streets / Traffic Management
* New Car Parks
1. The issues and opportunities were summarised before solutions and ideas were outlined and a summary action plan proposed. This paper focuses on the summary action plan and the Council’s response, including the aspects the Council has agreed to explore further. The purpose of a public-facing response at this time is to document this and provide something to communicate to the public.

**Response**

1. The action plan was split into “across”, referring to overarching actions, and then into Formby, Ainsdale and Crosby for geographically specific actions. Suggested timescales were put against each action.
2. **Overarching Actions**
3. Coastal Active Hubs (5 years) – developing and using amenities hubs at key points/coastal gateways on the coast, which include core amenities such as toilets and cafes, as a ‘carrot’ to attract people to where they can be most effectively accommodated and managed.

Improved concessions have been introduced at Crosby and Ainsdale-on-Sea. These have proved very popular, and together with improved marketing and signage appear to be effective at encouraging people to these locations. The Council will continue to explore and develop this approach further.

1. Strategic Access resigning including VMS strategy (2 years) – A strategic review of signing at principal access routes to Sefton and Coastal gateways to: appropriately promote all gateways; assist effective traffic management; direct people towards visitor hubs; and assist messaging on busy and extreme days.

Signage to Waterloo /Crosby has been reviewed and is in place. Signage to Formby / Ainsdale has been assessed and will be implemented for summer 2024. Additional Variable Message Signs have been utilised at key locations, and suitable messages strategies deployed. This appears to have assisted in managing traffic and easing pressures. The Council will continue to explore the deployment of fixed and portable VMS signs for this purpose.

1. Vehicle Removal Truck (2 years) – Investigation of "Tow-Away Zones” to address illegal parking.

The Council has investigated the implementation of a trial “Tow-Away Zone” in Formby but has been unable to identify suitable in-borough contractors/facilities able to support implementation. It is not proposed to do any further work on this option at this time.

1. Media Campaign (1-5 years) – Development of communications campaigns, coordinated with other stakeholders, to better support traffic and visitor management, and improve the visitor experience (e.g. by directing/encouraging them to areas with capacity and facilities to meet their needs).

Over the last 3 years, coordinated campaigns have been developed with a range of key stakeholders. These have been increasingly successful in terms of reach and delivery of key promotional and warning/deterrent messages. The Council will continue to develop this approach.

1. Loading Restrictions Throughout (2 years) – Adding loading restrictions to areas with existing waiting restrictions, so as to reduce the observation time necessary before a Parking Control Notice (PCN) can be issued.

The Council has considered this and concluded that it cannot be justified in terms of cost of new markings and signs against the small advantage it would bring for speedier issue of PCNs.

1. Satellite Navigation Destination Review (1 year) – Working with Satellite Navigation system providers to remove/relocate unhelpful digital identifiers within their systems.

The Council has sought to achieve this and will continue to do so.

1. **Formby**
2. One Way St Luke’s Church Road (3 years) - To create a very local one-way circulation around St Luke’s Church Road area.

The Council has explored this, including discussing it with Merseyside Police and other Stakeholders, and concluded that issues of vehicle movement around this area do not justify the introduction of one-way traffic that would impact on all residents.

1. Freshfield Station Overflow Car Park (2 years) - Proposal to make a 40 / 70 space car park on former bus turnround area.

The Council has explored this and concluded that the cost and difficulties with delivery outweigh the limited benefit that might be gained. This area is not in the Council’s ownership, and it would provide a relatively small car park remote from the coast.

1. Woodlands Road/Harrington Road TRO (2 years) - To create a route long Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on one side of the whole Woodlands Road/Harrington Road corridor.

The Council has considered this, including discussing it with Merseyside Police and other Stakeholders, and concluded that that issues at this location do not justify such action.

1. Resigning access to key Car Parks (1 year) –

The Council is picking this up as part of the strategic review of signing at principal access routes to Sefton and Coastal gateways, referred to above. A successful Variable Message Signage strategy has been developed and implemented for Formby, and refreshed permanent fixed signage has been assessed, discussed with the National Trust, and will be implemented for Summer 2024.

1. **Ainsdale**

Construction of Promenade Car Park (2 Years) – Construction of an off-beach car park, providing additional and all-year parking capacity at Ainsdale-on-Sea.

The Council agreed to progress the development of a 250-space car park and identified funding to deliver this in 2023. Unfortunately, the combination of rising construction costs and ecological complexities have resulted in the project being paused, and the funding of improved toilet provision prioritised. The Council has agreed to progress a masterplan approach for this coastal gateway/visitor hub.

1. **Crosby**

Expansion of existing parking to provide overspill (4 Years) - Provision of additional parking capacity at Crosby Lakeside.

The Council has considered this and does not consider that demand at this location justifies the provision of additional capacity at this time. The report identified that even on the busiest days, the existing overspill car parking does not reach capacity. However, this will continue to be monitored.

Overspill Car Park Management (1 Year) – Improving the management of overspill parking to ensure it is opened as soon as it is needed.

The Council’s Green Sefton service will continue to manage this as effectively as it can, recognising that resources are limited, and staff will be subject to competing demands on the busiest days.

New Access to Overspill Parking (1 Year) – relocation of the overspill car park entrance closer to the Cambridge Road entrance into the site.

The Council has considered this and concluded that this is unnecessary as the current entrance is suitable.

Mariners Road Junction Improvements (3-4 Years) – Reconfiguring the junctions of Warren Road, Mariner’s Road, Mersey Road and Bridge Road, to reduce queueing on busy days.

The Council does not currently have the funding or capacity to develop and deliver a scheme at this location. Subject to funding being identified, the Council may consider progressing this to design stage in 2024.

Mariner’s Road TROs (1-2 Years) – 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.

The Council will consider this alongside consideration of the introduction of charges on the Leisure Centre car park (see below).

Mariners Road Car Park Charging/ Restrictions Review (1 Year) - Introducing charges on the Mariners Road / Leisure Centre car park, to help reduce demand.

This car park is used by Leisure Centre Users and local residents/dog walkers throughout the year. It is therefore important to understand any unintended consequences of introducing charges on this car park (e.g. increased on-street parking, reduced patronage etc.). The Council will therefore explore this in conjunction with the Leisure Centre Operator.

Local Signage Review (2 Years)

The Council is picking this up as part of the strategic review of signing at principal access routes to Sefton and Coastal gateways, referred to above. Permanent fixed signage was reviewed and implemented in 2023.

Provision of Additional Blue Badge Holder Parking (1-2 Years) – Provision of additional Blue Badge holder parking within Coastal Park car parks, to reduce the impact of on-street Blue Badge parking.

The Council has considered this and feels that whilst there is little specific demand for this, it will continue to monitor provision/demand. The potential for Blue Badge parking at Crosby Leisure Centre will be considered as part of the Crosby -specific actions (e) and (f) above.

Coastal Park Corridor TROs (1-2 Years) - Implement TROs at Cambridge Road, Brunswick Parade, and the Coastal Park Access Road Junction.

The Council has considered this, including additional monitoring during 2022, and has concluded that additional restrictions are not required at this time.

**Summary**

1. Traffic management and parking issues in Sefton’s coastal areas are difficult to fully address. In several locations, they are heavily weather dependant and change on a day-to-day basis. Since commissioning the WSP report in 202, and during 2022 and 2023 in particular, the frequency of significant issues occurring has reduced, with fewer “very bad” days than at the peak in 2020. This does not mean that there aren’t still problems, and some “very bad” days, or that we should not continue to seek to address these issues, but it does highlight the difficulties in justifying allocating significant resources to something which may occur once, twice, or several times a year, when there are traffic management and parking issues that are occurring much more frequently elsewhere in the borough.
2. The Council has seen a significant reduction in resources and budgets since 2010 and seeks to manage its remaining resources to address issues and demand most effectively across the whole borough. This includes addressing demands and issues which range from those that are sporadic, seasonal, and constant.
3. This report is intended to demonstrate that detailed consideration has been given to all of the suggestions within the WSP report, and that those considered most beneficial/feasible are being progressed.