



PEDESTRIANISATION

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 13/18

12 FEBRUARY 2018

The purpose of this paper is to summarise developments to date in exploring the options for applying a form of pedestrianisation to parts of the High Street and the Esplanade.

No. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) The inclusion of the Town Centre and the Esplanade in the Town Council's Regeneration Plan was agreed in Minute 48/17 of its meeting of 10 July 2017 along with Boniface Fields and land in Upper Ventnor.
 - b) The relocation of the Island Free School to Upper Ventnor in August meant that the initial focus was on Boniface Fields but intensive internet-based research by the Town Council's Economic Development Officer of hundreds of town centre regeneration schemes in the UK and across Europe with a particular focus on coastal communities continued.
 - c) Along with informal conversations with Isle of Wight Council Officers and the careful development of a traffic plan for the town if pedestrianisation happened – carried out by a qualified resident on a pro bono basis – including discussions with Island Roads laid the preparation for the required Business Case.
 - d) That case was presented to the Isle of Wight Council officers, as requested, in November and a copy is attached to this Report.
-

2) ANNUAL CONSULTATION EVENT

- a) Held this year on 29 January, the usually well attended annual consultation on the coming year's Town Council Budget provided a unique opportunity for sharing the case for pedestrianisation in the second half of the meeting.
 - b) The meeting attracted the largest attendance, at around 130, since the meetings started in 2012 and this year's second half opened with a short film produced for us by Ventnor-based Utility Films on a pro-bono basis showing interviews with the Isle of Wight Council's Director of Regeneration Chris Ashman, the Mayor of Cowes Paul Fuller and Ventnor's Mayor Jason Mack.
 - c) The film, which is available to view on Vimeo [here](#), had received over 2,200 viewings at the time of writing this Report (Wednesday 7 February).
 - d) The film was followed by a more detailed summary of the Business Case presented by the Town Council's Economic Development Officer Nick Cox.
 - e) The Mayor chaired the session and explained that there was still much work to be done on the feasibility of pedestrianising part of the High Street before meaningful consultations were possible and that it was planned to hold those with residents, traders and landlords in April.
 - f) Meanwhile, the Mayor welcomed the start of a conversation on the future of the Town Centre and Esplanade that would continue for several months as the related work was carried out.
-

3) RELATED WORK

- a) There are a number of critical matters that need to be fully explored for the proposals to be developed enough to arrange the series of Consultation meetings.
 - b) The traffic plan that would need to be adopted for pedestrianisation to be adopted is, of course, central to that work. Significant progress with it has already been made and draft proposals are currently under discussion with the Isle of Wight Council and Island Roads on a small number of remaining details.
 - c) If agreement is reached, the next stage will be discussions with the Island's Emergency Services, Southern Vectis and others.
-

d) The other information needed once that work is done is a budget price for the works.

4) RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to assess progress to date and comment on and/or add to the related work.



VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL - 2017

Business Proposal Document for the Pedestrianisation of Ventnor High street and Esplanade

In Partnership with the Isle of Wight Council and Island Roads



Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary for Pedestrianisation.....	2
II.	Rationales for the Pedestrianisation of Ventnor.....	3
	Health Benefits without Road Traffic and Air Pollution	4
	Economic Benefits for Local Ventnor Businesses.....	5
	Social Benefits for the Community.....	6
	Environmental Benefits for the Surrounding Area.....	7
	Major Considerations and Warnings	8
III.	Business Planning for Local Pedestrianisation	9
	Pedestrianisation Options.....	9
	Schematic of Proposed Pedestrianisation in Ventnor.....	9
	Alternative Traffic Flow Work	10
	Pedestrianisation Scheme Costing.....	10
	Local Consultation.....	10
	Conclusions and Advisory.....	11
	Approval and Propositions	12
	Recommendations	13
	References	14

Executive Summary for Pedestrianisation



The purpose of this document is to lay out in summary, the business proposal by Ventnor Town Council to pedestrianise parts of the main high street and seafront. This is a bold initiative but is in line with the Local Strategy Plan for Ventnor developed during 2016, which follows the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced by the Department for Communities and Local Government with respect to planning policies.

The progression to pedestrianise Ventnor supports and builds upon the strategic aims to economically regenerate smaller areas across the Island in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council; and their ambition to make the Island the best place to live, work and do business, as identified in the Island Plan Core Strategy and Regeneration Programme.

Although the proposed pedestrianisation of Ventnor is both financially and logistically challenging at present, it is achievable through partnership collaboration and stakeholder funding. The result would allow local retail and hospitality businesses to economically flourish and collectively improve their contribution towards the Island.

The social and cultural benefits associated with pedestrianisation, in similarity with other towns on the Island and across the UK and Europe, would sustain existing employment and over time create new job opportunities. Improvements to community life and more frequent delivery of cultural events would be expected, and also the prospect of developing a much-needed dusk and night time economy in Ventnor.

While it is essential that this business proposal is realistic and committed to providing an economic return on investment over the next 5 to 10 years, any financial investment of this magnitude for Ventnor to develop its public infrastructure to improve its resident, visitor and tourism economies must have a clear and proven value-add, and provide the expected measurable contribution for both Ventnor as a community town and the Island.

The Ventnor business community – including trades – has fought a hard battle through a number of downturns in the UK economy especially through 2008. Business and tourism has been a hard sell for what was once a thriving and popular seaside resort. A scheme to pedestrianise key parts of Ventnor would extend the retail and hospitality marketplace in which local businesses currently operate; and enable them to attract more people to the area out of 3.2 million tourists that visit the Island annually.

Ventnor businesses have had to compete against major out-of-town retailers providing competitively priced products, shopping convenience under one roof, parking and petrol, and that total shopping experience. In addition, many retailers are doing business on the Internet, of which it is reported will be around 18% of total retail sales in the UK by 2018. The competition is fierce and Ventnor businesses need to fully accept the idea of pedestrianisation and the opportunities it offers if they are to prosper.

The tool of infrastructure pedestrianisation would give retail and hospitality businesses operating in Ventnor that competitive edge in the marketplace, especially in terms of local tourism. It would enable them to improve their merchandising environment and grow the local economy over time by attracting more residents, visitors and tourists. It is an essential urban strategy for any modern-day seaside resort such as Ventnor.

Rationales for the Pedestrianisation of Ventnor

Description of Pedestrianisation



The simplest meaning of Pedestrianisation is the removal of vehicular traffic from city or town streets, by restricting vehicle access to those streets and areas for exclusive use by pedestrians. People walk along a street or through an area rather than travelling in a vehicle. But not at the exclusion of mobility carts, bicycles or even skateboards.

Pedestrianisation is viewed by many UK, European and Developing Countries as a major necessity in urban planning and design in order to create sustainable cities and towns for the future. Whereas in the past, motorised vehicles adapted to pedestrians, that trend has now reversed over recent years. Modern-day towns are now congested with vehicles and with them air pollutant emissions, noise disturbances and grit in the atmosphere.

There are many beneficial reasons for having Pedestrianisation schemes. Primarily pedestrianisation aims to improve pedestrian safety and mobility. Another important benefit relates to the improvement of urban environments. Pedestrianisation does help to substantially reduce pollution and noise by discouraging or restricting street access of non-essential vehicles. Furthermore it encourages people to walk as a mode of transport by making the walking experience more enjoyable through merchandising areas.

Consequently, well-designed pedestrianisation creates a pleasant environment, allowing people to get involved in different economic, social, cultural and tourism activities; and noticeably where such schemes have been introduced, economic growth has followed.

What pedestrianisation is not however, is a nice to have, expensive solution, that is assumed to solve all local merchandising and social problems. The assumption that pedestrianising an area will suddenly bring about more trade and therefore more profit, or create a more socially caring and vibrant community, is both immature and irrational and falls short of any realistic decision-making to develop socioeconomic sustainability.

However, it is clear that over the past 30 years many countries, including the UK, have experienced major benefits incorporating pedestrianisation into their cities and towns in terms of: reducing and eliminating man-made environmental problems; improvements in trading and economic recovery; greater community access, inclusion and integration; and cultural development for both major and minority groups. It is in essence, if planned and designed correctly, a solid and viable value-add solution to modern-day urban planning, community development, environmental enhancement, and economic change and transformation. But it does depend on how businesses utilize their car-free zones.

There are 3 main types of pedestrianisation scheme: 24/7 (Full-Time) pedestrianisation where standard vehicles are restricted at all times into car-free zones except emergency service vehicles, and deliveries tend to occur behind premises; Semi-pedestrianisation or Part-Time, where vehicles are only allowed access at certain times but loading bays are available in front of the retail premises; and Traffic Calming solutions that reduce the flow and speed of road vehicles, and usually accompanied with widening pedestrian walkways and provision of on-street parking. Solution depend on the merchandising area, its capability and capacity, and the purpose of the Pedestrianisation scheme.

Health Benefits without Road Traffic and Air Pollution



In some respects, the UK is fortunate in that businesses do not have to incur large economic losses with regards to the effects of pollution on employees, health expenses or lost productivity which does occur in many other countries. This aspect alone would drive local businesses to have pedestrianisation enforced everywhere, where both heavy vehicles and machinery were operating. Even though the UK does not have a tax on noise and pollution, it does have stringent legislation to counteract and monitor these conditions with severe penalties if abused. However, city and town centres continue to be concentrated highways for heavy and light vehicles passing through every day.

With many young growing families, singles, trades people and retirees living in Ventnor high street and having to put up with the traffic noise, dirt and vehicle emissions – many representing the poorer faction of the town community and some with mental ill-health conditions – future bronchial, asthmatic and allergy conditions can and do occur among local town's people. From a public health perspective, this represents an unnecessary health hazard and potentially an additional monetary burden on public medical services that could have been avoided by introducing local car-free zones.

UK Doctors have attempted to warn the general public and government of the dangers of air pollution and the financial expense necessary to cure such related diseases. In effect, openly stating that less air and noise pollution reduces any related long-term medical conditions, and therefore financial medical expenses. With less motor vehicle traffic through Ventnor town centre and therefore less pollution after pedestrianisation, both physical and mental health risks are automatically reduced.

With the advancement of hybrid and electric vehicles, air pollutants and noise should abate and not present a problem. But this will not be the case for at least another 30 years if the urban structure of Ventnor remains as it is. Many of the town's working people are on low incomes and many families are on benefits and unable to afford a modern hybrid or fully electric car. Many also do not have their own private transport.

Equally important is the safety of pedestrians along the high street. Ventnor town centre has narrow pavements and often heavy vehicles, mainly buses and large delivery lorries, mount the pavements putting people at risk of an accident or even worse getting killed. Many people in Ventnor have witnessed near misses and can collaborate to this fact, and often question why traffic is still allowed through the town centre.

To compound the problem, the high street is often awkward to maneuver especially for heavy vehicles due to the 12 to 15 on-street parking bays that narrow the availability of road space. In addition, vehicle drivers are not always careful on their arrival or exiting the on-street parking bays in the high street. These day-to-day traffic and infrastructure problems will not be eradicated until full pedestrianisation of the high street occurs.

A similar situation exists – specifically during the summer season – along Ventnor's seafront in terms of traffic congestion and erratic parking techniques. Pedestrian safety is low on the retail and hospitality side of the seafront due to road and pavement levels being the same. Often vehicles are seen maneuvering around groups of people, child buggies and mobility scooters. Pedestrianisation of the esplanade is essential for safety.

Economic Benefits for Local Ventnor Businesses



Besides creating a pleasant and conducive urban retail and hospitality environment for shoppers to meander and enjoy, there is concrete evidence – mainly from European communities over the last 20 to 30 years – to show that there is a definite increase in visitor footfall and retail turnover after pedestrianisation. The retail evidence of these facts in Europe, precede any planned pedestrianisation schemes in the UK.

Both statistically and from validated retailing experiences, closing vehicle access into or through a particular trading area, the rate of retail turnover usually increases by about 10% to 15%. Although an average percentage for most towns, some show an increase in trading even up to 40% over a 2-year period after pedestrianisation was introduced.

There are apparent failures where pedestrianisation has not brought about the expected economic benefits for everyone and actually caused more problems for local businesses. In such cases, schemes have been modified to better suit local trading conditions and consumer trends; for example, by only introducing vehicle-free shopping areas during the evenings or weekends. The result being that pedestrianisation has been adapted and tuned to the local trading needs of the community, and transformed from apparent failure to total success within that town and its merchandising areas.

The prime benefits and considerations for pedestrianising parts of Ventnor simply revolve around having a better trading environment for residents and tourists. People would be able to shop and view shop-windows easier and enjoy their shopping and browsing time without any fear from vehicles parked or moving. Conversely, retail and hospitality premises would remain cleaner and more inviting. As town presentation, pedestrian safety, car-free zone retailing, ambience and consumer likeability are vital ingredients in making Ventnor more economically successful and environmentally acceptable, pedestrianisation is the best way forward to improve local economics.

The concept of car-free trading zones in a location like Ventnor that has a large range of cafés, bars, pub-restaurants and high-quality restaurants, opens up opportunities for hospitality proprietors to move on to the street provided they are licensed to do so; thereby taking their products and service offerings out to the public during normal trading hours. Pedestrianised shopping and hospitality environments naturally attracts visitors and tourists. Examples such as Cowes, Ryde, Poole, Basingstoke and York, to name but a few, economically benefit from hospitality venues in pedestrianised areas.

Economically it is not just about global tourism to Ventnor but also about its internal visitor and resident economies that maintain and contribute financially into the local economy. They too, would benefit from less pollution, pleasant car-free retail areas, trees and flower beds, fountains, sculptures and street furniture, and open community spaces.

Ventnor naturally lends itself to pedestrianisation, and its local economy would flourish if more residents and Island visitors came and shopped in Ventnor. As part of the marketing package to draw people to the area, pedestrianisation of the town centre and esplanade would be a viable financial investment and transform Ventnor's future both culturally and economically. This would in turn allow the business sector of Ventnor to contribute more to the Island-wide retail, hospitality and tourism economies.

Social Benefits for the Community



The move away from urban, city and town concrete and soulless jungles has had its heyday and planning authorities have intelligently adopted more imaginative, clever and socially encapsulating designs into their planning processes and implementations.

While Ventnor does not have any 30 to 47-story high-rise residential complexes, it does have similar social problems to those reported living in such circumstances. Of the four LSOA wards that make up Ventnor, 2 have been cited by government statistics as being in the top 20% for severe deprivation of which the town centre is one of them.

This translates into low incomes, low education attainment and often social housing; considerable unemployment, poor credit ratings, and unable to pay for utilities to be replaced or fixed; possible domestic trauma, vulnerable child and adult safeguarding concerns. In reality the problems and impact of poverty on families and individuals has not declined in Ventnor, especially for those who have to live in the town centre that has constant vehicle noise, pollutants and dirt, no greenery or designed community spaces.

The implementation of a well-designed pedestrianisation scheme would have a number of beneficial social impacts for residents living within the town centre such as helping to promote walking as a mode of transport. This already occurs as some people living in the area do not have their own transport, and retail and hospitality premises are close by.

However, people are often put off from walking when walking itself is marred by bad experiences such as heavy vehicle traffic and crowded pavements. This often occurs in the high street and can be difficult for pedestrians when they encounter mobility carts or buggies on the narrow pavements. Consequently, able people tend to step into the road.

There is evidence to suggest that people are walking less than in previous decades and relying more on their private cars instead of public transport or walking. As a result, many people are not having enough exercise. Health specialists suggest that adults should take part in physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day, which can be achieved by walking. Thereby helping to prevent overweight, reducing the risks of heart diseases and strengthening bones. Pedestrianising the high street would provide opportunities to designed walkways for adults and safe playground or activity areas for children.

Pedestrianisation of both the high street and esplanade in Ventnor would serve as a cultural and entertainment platform. Plazas where people meet and greet, not only during ordinary days but also during holidays, events and festive seasons, free of vehicle traffic and safe. Again very achievable through urban landscaping, street furniture and sidewalks. Helping to create a comfortable environment for people to engage in various seasonal and out of season social and community activities. For the residents of the town centre, a feeling of community and engagement and citizenship.

The high street in Ventnor is a dangerous place for both local residents and visitors unaccustomed to the narrow pavements and erratic traffic flows. Having a car-free high street would enable the segregation of people from vehicles, and that includes removing the on-street parking facilities. There is no reason why vehicle owners should not use the main central car park in Ventnor for half an hour rather than congest the high street.

Socially, the health and safety of town centre residents is at the heart of high street pedestrianisation and bringing about a better life and lifestyle for those people. It is not something that they themselves can do and many are trapped in the town environment through no fault of their own. Better social housing for high street families and singles in rural areas would be a solution but rural housing is scarce or non-existent on the Island; and probably many would not take that option preferring town centre convenience.

From a perspective of both social needs and the cultural development of people living in and around the town centre (in reality a deprived community struggling day-after-day to carve out a living for themselves and their children), a well-designed pedestrianisation scheme which was community-oriented and beneficial for the high street would greatly enhance their lives, their lifestyles, integration and invigorate their hidden community.

Likewise increasing the number of community and cultural events that could safely be put on in pedestrianised areas of the town and esplanade would certainly make Ventnor far better place to live, more community-led, and attractive to visitors and tourists.

Environmental Benefits for the Surrounding Area



In terms of environmental outcomes gained by pedestrianising the high street and esplanade, central to the solution is the removal of concentrated air pollutants and noise from these residential areas. Remove the traffic and our environment benefits; and if our natural environment benefits then families will benefit in terms of health and wellbeing.

While the esplanade has equal qualification to the high street, pedestrianisation for this area is more about pedestrian safety, beautification, seasonal usage and an opportunity for the 12 plus hospitality businesses working along the seafront. Individually extending their business offerings but working together to put on seafront events. Collectively developing a more sustainable hospitality and visitor economy along the seafront using their culinary skills and using natural products from the environment.

Therefore, the environmental outcome for the esplanade would be about using local farm produce and dairy products and local seafoods. Building a collective culinary reputation in Ventnor and putting on events within the pedestrianised area along the seafront. Certainly, pedestrianisation of the esplanade would boost local hospitality trade and provide chances for further employment. If managed and organised properly, would also provide out of season business opportunities between October and March.

Primarily the design of pedestrianisation must adhere to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), combining any environmental issues with social and community needs. In turn, balancing the economic demands and environmental needs for the area. In which case, any scheme to pedestrianise the town centre or esplanade would have to combine the components of economic, social and environmental planning.

In terms of the high street and esplanade, the concern is more about their physical environments as opposed to the natural environment surrounding them. The social experience of how people interact, perceive and are happy within a pedestrianised environments. Well-thought-out pedestrianisation schemes will take this into account in their urban design and objectively consider the socio-environment elements.

Invariably when a pedestrianisation scheme is implemented alongside tariffed vehicle parking facilities, there will be more space on the streets for pedestrians but also the planning of additional planting and landscaping of the open-spaces, street furniture, signage and lighting. These additions would help to beautify those car-free zones and create more interesting and pleasing pedestrianised environments. At the same time matching the merchandising needs of local retailers and hospitality businesses.

Major Considerations and Warnings




In reality, although pedestrianisation has produced tangible socio-economic returns, there are several negative aspects that need to be considered that can or may occur:

- Business rates may increase between 5% and even 20% depending on the evaluation of shop and hospitality premises by the Valuation Agency Office. Increases could be challenged by the Isle of Wight Council under their Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.
- Local landlords, perceiving their rented accommodation to be of greater value, raise the rents on their properties and potentially force tenants either into debt or prompted into vacating properties.
- Although the general public may support a pedestrianisation scheme, former experience indicates that the traders and proprietors may form the frontline against the scheme. But after a settling down period, and realizing the benefits, will fully support the scheme after they experience increases in footfall and turnover.
- Surrounding businesses outside of a pedestrianised area can suffer a drop in their footfall and consequently severely affect their turnover. They get forgotten.
- It has been noted that an increase in footfall in a pedestrianised zone does produce an increase in turnover, but not necessarily an increase in retail profit. Overhead costs increase due to storage needs, increases in business rates and possibly rents.
- The majority of pedestrianisation schemes in Europe and the UK have experienced a delay of up to a year in any noticeable economic renewal. After such periods of delay, businesses start to pick up, realizing greater footfall and turnover.
- Selling services or goods to the consumer within a pedestrianised retail and hospitality zone often requires a change of business and marketing practices. Businesses often experience a greater demand for their goods. Consumers tend to browse more and additional staff may be required.
- It has been noted that retailers and hospitality outlets prefer to operate in pedestrianised zones where business can be brisk and profitable.
- Pedestrianisation does attract high-end retailers and invariably high-end visitors. However, this may change the dynamics and purpose of the high street by making products unnecessarily expensive and not matching the needs of the community. This change can inadvertently compel low income families to shop elsewhere for cheaper family products; and note that Ventnor has currently 2 wards in deprivation.
- Ventnor as a whole has a residents' economy – some rich and some poor. Schemes to pedestrianise will need consultation as to the right mix of retail and hospitality to maintain. A degree of control needs to be in place to avoid Ventnor pricing its residents out of the marketplace with high-end products and culinary places.

Business Planning for Local Pedestrianisation

Pedestrianisation Options

 As previously described under the section: Description of Pedestrianisation, three main types of scheme are currently in use, and essentially provide the list for any actions taken for Ventnor in the future. These are as follows:

- 24/7 or Full-Time Pedestrianisation;
- Semi or Partial Pedestrianisation, and
- Traffic Calming Schemes.

There is another option which is to do nothing and simply allow Ventnor to economically struggle on by itself. Watching it ebb and flow year after year and providing no incentive or infrastructure improvements for either retail or hospitality businesses operating locally; or better shopping for the local community or any tangible response to economic regeneration and local tourism.

For this initiative, Ventnor Town Council has unanimously agreed to pursue full-time pedestrianisation of the town centre and esplanade. How this would transpire in terms of sequencing the implementation and supporting project management has yet to be clarified. The town council has been in initial talks with both the Isle of Wight Council and Island Roads, and has at this stage received a positive response to the proposal for pedestrianisation with respect to growing Ventnor's local seaside economy.

The pedestrianisation of Ventnor would be in accordance with the strategic objectives and direction of the Island Core Plan and Regeneration Programme, which in Ventnor's case would come under 'smaller regeneration projects' that would be economically beneficial to the local community, but importantly also contribute to the Island economy.

Schematic of Proposed Pedestrianisation in Ventnor

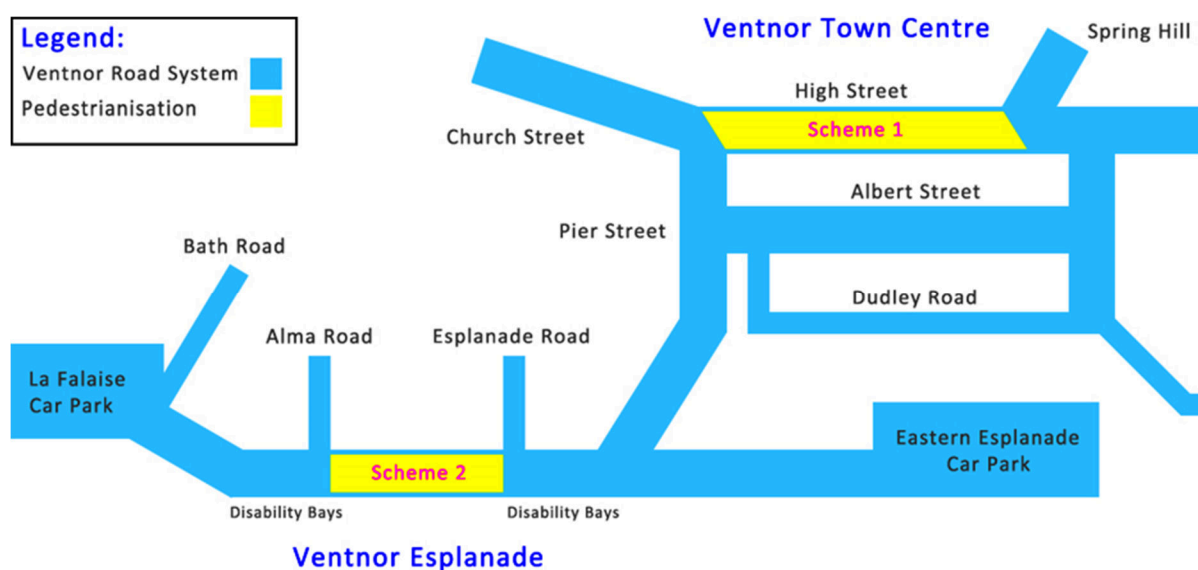


Fig 1: Pedestrianisation schemes for Ventnor town centre and esplanade.

Alternative Traffic Flow Work



Preliminary work on alternative routing of traffic flows to accommodate both the high street and esplanade being pedestrianised has already been completed. This work was undertaken by a staff member of Island Roads who is already engaged in this type of work across the Island, and was completed as a matter of interest and out of their normal working hours. In effect, pro bono work by a specialist in their field. Ventnor Town Council was not charged for this work.

The redesign of alternative traffic flows in and around Ventnor to accommodate the pedestrianisation of both the town centre and esplanade, has been submitted to the following stakeholders for review and future consultation:

Gary Stretch – IOW Highways and liaison between IOWC and Island Roads;
Bill Murphy – Head of Contract Management IOWC; and
Chris Ashman – Director of Regeneration IOWC.

Recent meetings with IOWC have indicated that several Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) need to be in place prior to any pedestrianisation implementation; and a proposed scheme would have to adhere to TRO legislation. Copies of the new traffic flows, road widths and flow decisions, are available from Councillor James Toogood.

Pedestrianisation Scheme Costing



Initial pedestrianisation costs were discussed with Gary Stretch – current engaged with the pedestrianisation extension scheme in Ryde, at a meeting with Ventnor's Town Clerk, Mayor and Economic Development Officer. For both the high street and esplanade, an initial figure of £300K was suggested, with the cautionary advice later that the cost may be closer to £500K for both schemes.

Meeting with Chris Ashman – Director of Regeneration IOWC, raised the point that it may be possible to redirect some of the capital budget planned by Island Roads to renovate Ventnor's road system, to facilitate full-time pedestrianisation in Ventnor. Consequently, it would only be necessary for Ventnor Town Council to secure the shortfall through external funding.

Local Consultation



Provided the proposed pedestrianised schemes are fully backed by Island Roads, Highways, Isle of Wight Council and their Regeneration Programme, Ventnor Town Council will initiate public consultation meetings with local residents, landlords and businesses immediately affected by the proposal to pedestrianise the high street and esplanade. The necessity to be transparent about these schemes, indicating the economic benefits and disadvantages, and how to minimise disruption, will be paramount.

Informal communications with local traders has indicated an approval to the schemes, with the aggregate view that it would put Ventnor back on the map. As well as providing them and their businesses, with a tangible opportunity to better market their businesses, deliver collaborative events, extend on to the high street during trading hours and make their businesses more well know, similar to other Island towns with pedestrianisation.

Conclusions and Advisory



First and foremost is the requirement to economically boost Ventnor so that it becomes a major contributor to the Island economy. This is an important ambition of the Local Strategy Plan for Ventnor in terms of local economic regeneration. By improving the odds through changes in infrastructure such as pedestrianisation, local businesses have the opportunity to really develop for themselves a sustainable and prosperous economy.

The economic, social and cultural opportunities vastly improve with local areas of pedestrianisation. Thereby, and provided the marketing was in place, would attract more tourism to Ventnor, and therefore consumer spending power not just for Ventnor but also at other locations on the Island – much of which would be hospitality venues.

Ventnor suffers from a short summer season of trade. Out of season trading, whether retail or hospitality requires hard graft to maintain and sustain a business. With an alteration in business attitudes and public relations practices to successfully work the pedestrianised areas, Ventnor could easily transform itself from a seasonal seaside town into an ‘all year round’ seaside destination, and therefore enhance its contribution to Island tourism. The initial consultations with the Island Regeneration Team and Island Roads have been promising and supportive.

Pedestrianisation schemes throughout Europe (now over 2000), and the UK, have shown that both retail traders and hospitality owners benefit from such schemes. But, and in many cases studies, there is evidence of a delay of up to a year after pedestrianisation has been completed before there is any tangible economic evidence of renewal. In some cases, the delay can be shorter in terms of a matter of months.

There is a natural adjustment to retail and hospitality practices after pedestrianisation as would be expected, which could account for the delay in economic renewal. More likely however, is the lack of marketing expertise to use collaborative merchant spaces alongside the general public, and the lack of advertising and local public relations.

It would therefore be incumbent upon the local businesses to promote their wares in conjunction with the benefits and characteristics of any designed pedestrianised area. Basically, to sell the convenience, ambience and attractiveness of the pedestrianised area alongside available vehicle parking, to reduce the start-up delay time experienced by many towns with similar car-free trading environments.

Once over the delay period, businesses can then start to work together and put their own mark on their pedestrianised shopping high street; move out onto the street; organise daytime and evening events; focus on bargain and cultural days and holidays; specialise in outdoor cuisine, family events such as food fairs and cooking demos, musical and drama events, adapt shopping days and weekends to specific themes, and so forth.

The marketing and entrepreneurial possibilities of pedestrianisation are unlimited for the business, hospitality and cultural sectors operating in Ventnor, including events put on by local associations, clubs and the community. Probably the most exciting prospect to occur through pedestrianisation would be the development of a more sustainable local visitor and tourist economy that was based on appeal, reputation, value for money and customer-driven excellence.

Approval and Propositions



The following supporting argument for pedestrianisation comes directly from Ventnor Town Council and is as follows:

At the September 2017 Town Council meeting, all councillors approved the concept of local pedestrianisation schemes for both the high street and esplanade as a viable and necessary economic growth incentive for the whole of the Ventnor business community. In parallel to that, and specifically for the many low income people and families living in the high street, to provide a well-designed community space within the pedestrianised area for them to use and enjoy; thereby improving their lifestyle in the town centre and recognizing them as valued citizens of Ventnor. In addition, to improve their wellbeing and health, especially young families with children. By permanently removing the continuous flow of traffic, emission of air pollutants, noise and dirt from the high street through a pedestrianisation scheme. Included in this approval to proceed with high street pedestrianisation would be the long-awaited safety improvements for pedestrians in Ventnor – capable and disabled, who have to compete with moving traffic, bad driving and erratic parking techniques, near misses with heavy vehicles, and narrow pavements.

1. The eventual outcomes and reasons for pedestrianisation need to be made apparent in the hearts and minds of Ventnor's business community and for them to know and fully understand that it is a tool for opportunity and prosperity and not a backward step or a hindrance to their businesses or the community.
2. Eventual outcomes will change over time, and invariably each merchandiser within a pedestrianised area will have their own strategic set of outcomes, some short-term and long-term. Either way, local retail and hospitality sectors must attempt to find common ground using the pedestrianised areas, and be realistic in how to make their individual and collective outcomes achievable.
3. Little can be done to the structure of the town's buildings or shop fronts without considerable disruption and financial investment. The latter would far outweigh the cost of instead, pedestrianising the high street to attract more consumers to Ventnor and therefore develop and enhance long-term local economic sustainability.
4. It will be important to consider the social interaction – positives and negatives, of any proposed design of pedestrianisation for Ventnor; and too the flexibility and ease to perform high quality outdoor merchandising by the local retail and hospitality sectors.
5. Ventnor with its beautiful and rugged environment, integrated with its rich social diversity and cultural expertise, needs to be reflected in the planning and design of the pedestrianisation scheme. Let common sense prevail and the experts advise.
6. The proposed pedestrianisation of Ventnor would be to help the local community in terms of improving its local economy, develop culturally, protect the environment and socially excel. It would also be used to draw local and Island residents and visitors to the area, attract more tourism and improve Ventnor's contribution, as a modern and forward-thinking seaside resort, to the Island-wide economy.

Recommendations



For many years Ventnor has not been seriously considered as part of the Bay Area, and therefore not part of the large projects strategy for external investment or regeneration. This has not been detrimental or diminishing for Ventnor as a whole, but has allowed its Town Council to both define and develop its local economic, social and environmental advancement and modernisation in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council. In terms of small project regeneration, the following recommendations are provided to support the proposal for local pedestrianisation:

Prime Recommendation:

“Ventnor, being part of the Island community, needs to move with the times with regards to local business development, delivering cultural events and improving local social conditions for residents. Consequently, and supported by the benefits already outlined in this document, the recommendation is to pedestrianise both the high street and seafront.”

Supporting Arguments:

1. Given that pedestrians do bring money into local shopping centres that have been pedestrianised – Cowes and Ryde being prime examples, then a similar scheme for Ventnor would naturally improve its local business and hospitality economies.
2. Having a better walking environment within the town centre and seafront would be good for local businesses and help to develop a stronger and united community. In effect the nicer the environment and the better the shopping experience, the more people will spend. This in turn would support Ventnor’s goal to attain a more sustainable economic future, improve employment prospects and develop its retail and hospitality offerings.
3. Pedestrian-oriented retail and hospitality areas would provide a significant impact on reducing different types of pollution by creating car-free zones. The belief that the greater the level of vehicle traffic is evidence of consumer spending is flawed; and research in the UK has indicated that the greater flow of traffic through a retail area, the greater number of vacant shops. Pedestrianisation is a major factor in increasing local retail sales and avoiding local shop vacancies.
4. Shoppers are drawn by pleasant shopping experiences, easy parking, street safety during the day and night, improved air quality and low noise levels. Therefore, the greater the attraction of car-free merchandising areas, the greater the opportunity to secure consumer sales. World-wide, far more pedestrianisation schemes have had a positive effect on retail turnover (49%) than a negative on (2%).
5. The town of Hasselt (Belgium) made its streets friendly to pedestrians and also introduced free transit for residents and visitors into those areas. This improved business, thereby increasing town revenue and allowed the reduction in business taxation rates. Their pedestrianisation scheme reduced car traffic significantly, and improved shop occupation rates and rents.

References

The following reference documents have been used to develop and support this business plan application for pedestrianisation. These documents are available on the Internet.

- **The Pedestrian Pound:**
https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1391/pedestrianpound_fullreport_web.pdf
- **Impact of pedestrianization and traffic calming on retailing:**
<http://publiekeruimte.info/Data/Documents/rc5abtiq/39/Pedestrianization---retailing.pdf>
- **Pedestrianisation a great necessity in urban designing to create a sustainable city in developing countries:**
http://www.isocarp.net/data/case_studies/1130.pdf
- **Union Street Pedestrianisation, Aberdeen:**
<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=5157&SID=2828>
- **How treating pedestrians better will boost the economy:**
<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/how-treating-pedestrians-better-will-boost-the-economy-20150410-1mik45.html>
- **The Economic Impacts of Active Transportation:**
<http://www.tcat.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Economic-Impacts-of-Active-Transportation-Backgrounder.pdf>
- **Pedestrian zone causing problems for businesses on Southsea street:**
<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/travel/pedestrian-zone-causing-problems-for-businesses-on-southsea-street-1-5380764>
- **Pedestrianisation and the decline of the high street:**
<https://aseasyasridingabike.wordpress.com/2013/02/12/pedestrianisation-and-the-decline-of-the-high-street/>
- **Problems for Pedestrians:**
http://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/p_study/prog_s/pedestrian/stage1_pubcon/english/e_problems.htm
- **Pedestrianised towns say - we want cars:**
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/pedestrianised-towns-say-we-want-cars-1122452.html>
- **Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre - Manchester City Council:**
www.manchester.gov.uk/.../id/.../transport_strategy_for_manchester_city_centre.pdf
- **Tenby Pedestrianisation:**
<https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/parking-in-pembrokeshire/tenby-pedestrianisation>
- **Important - Pedestrian Areas and Routes:**
http://www.its.leeds.ac.uk/projects/konsult/private/level2/instruments/instrument049/l2_049c.htm
- **Pedestrianisation works take place in Weymouth town centre:**
<https://news.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/2017/07/20/pedestrianisation-works-take-place-weymouth-town-centre/>
- **Pedestrianisation, cycleways and green space: Future vision to bring Shrewsbury into 21st century:**
<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2017/09/11/pedestrianisation-cycleways-and-green-space-future-vision-to-bring-shrewsbury-into-21st-century/>
- **Pedestrianisation and Disabled People: A study of personal mobility in Kingston town centre:**
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599727010?journalCode=cdo20>
- **New Urbanism – Copenhagen:**
<http://www.newurbanism.org/pedestrian.html>

*** The reference would be too long to include all the documents referred too for this Business Plan.