

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 25 May 2023
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Penarth Esplanade Consultation Report
Purpose of Report:	To inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the three phases of public engagement and consultation on the future development of Penarth Esplanade and to recommend next stages of activity.
Report Owner:	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places
Responsible Officer:	Marcus Goldsworthy, Director of Place
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	<p>Officers Consulted:</p> <p>Lawyer – Legal Division</p> <p>Operational Manager Accountancy</p> <p>Members of Penarth Public Realm Project Board:</p> <p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Director of Environment & Housing Services</p> <p>Operational Manager (Property)</p> <p>Head of Strategy, Community Learning & Resources</p> <p>Director of Corporate Resources</p> <p>Ward Members Consulted:</p> <p>Plymouth and St Augustines Ward Members consulted</p>
Policy Framework:	This report is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet

Executive Summary:

- More than £500,000 has been invested in Penarth Pier Pavilion and the Esplanade in the last two years, including refurbishment of the Pavilion, re-painting of street furniture, re-surfacing works, refurbishment of the Cliff Hill Shelter and the refurbishment of existing buildings to create new catering outlets at the entrance to Windsor Gardens and at the Cliff Top Play Area.
- A Report was presented to Cabinet on 23rd June, 2022 that recommended that Cabinet agreed an extension to a number of temporary highway trading licences on a month-by-month basis pending the undertaking of public engagement and consultation on possible external trading arrangements and associated works for the Penarth Esplanade area.
- Due to the importance of this area and the Council's wish for its continued successful role as a high-quality visitor attraction and residential location, it was also proposed that a comprehensive engagement and public consultation exercise be undertaken to establish views from all interested parties as to the longer-term public realm, trading, and associated transportation arrangements
- Consequently, a programme of engagement and discussion began in August 2022 with a series of online polls and the opportunity for people to share their thoughts using an ideas board at Penarth Pier Pavilion. This work continued into September. An online forum for discussion was also launched. The responses to these exercises were considered and a more formal survey exercise ran throughout October.
- In November 2022 a third phase of engagement began with two public drop-in events as well as a series of Focus Groups for residents, businesses, and community groups. These sessions were focussed on seven priority themes that had emerged from the previous two stages: The Beach; Retail / Catering; Seating; Parking; Transport / Active Travel; The Street Scene and Events.
- Participants were asked to consider these themes and offer their feedback in relation to aspects of the Esplanade that they currently value and, where concerns existed, to present potential solutions to support ongoing improvement and development of the area.
- This report summarises the feedback received during the three phases of consultation and sets out recommendations for the next stage of activity.

Recommendations

- 1.** That Cabinet considers the feedback received during the three phases of public consultation.
- 2.** That Cabinet endorses a programme of priority activity, as set out in section 2 of this report, relating to the feedback received during the three phases of consultation, and also approves the production of a longer-term strategic study, including the production of a Place based strategy for the Esplanade, intended as the preliminary part of developing a “Place-Making” Plan for the whole town of Penarth.
- 3.** That the parking bays currently set aside for trading continue to be used for the same on a month-by-month basis whilst options and potential funding for an appropriate engineering solution for the longer term are considered.
- 4.** That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Environment and Housing Services, in consultation with the Director of Place, Chief Executive, the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places to consider requests for any additional temporary licenses for street trading at the Esplanade, pending progress on an appropriate longer term engineering solution for the Esplanade.
- 5.** That in pursuance of recommendations 3 and 4, delegated authority be granted to the Director of Environment and Housing Services, in consultation with the Director of Place, Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places to produce a series of design principles that will guide the continued temporary use of the Esplanade for street trading, pending the implementation of a longer-term solution.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.** To inform Cabinet on the outcomes of the three phases of public consultation.
- 2.** To ensure that the concerns and needs of residents and visitors, and of businesses operating on the Esplanade are reflected and acted upon and that strategic continued improvement of the area is informed by the community mapping that supports Place-Making activity, and that any developments reflect the six Principles that underpin the Place-Making Charter Wales (2020): People and Community; Location; Movement; Mix of Uses; Public Realm and Identity.
- 3.** To confirm that the outcomes of the public consultation support the continuation of licences for trading currently offered within the parking bays set aside for trading (subject to satisfactory quality and design) and that any business on the Esplanade that so wishes may apply for a highway trading licence (subject to quality and design).
- 4.** To allow full consideration to be given to any additional requests for temporary street trading at the Esplanade.

5. To ensure that the continued and any additional temporary use of the street for trading purposes meets design requirements that reflect the important setting of the Esplanade.

1. Background

- 1.1 Since August 2022, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has been speaking to local residents, businesses, and community groups about how to further improve Penarth seafront and the surrounding area.
- 1.2 This began with a series of online polls and the opportunity for people to share their thoughts using an ideas board at Penarth Pier Pavilion (Phase 1 – identifying themes). An online forum for discussion was also launched. These exercises went on to inform the first formal consultation exercise, which launched in September (Phase 2 – survey exercise). A series of in person engagement events were then held over two weeks in November, with one further follow-up event taking place in early January. This Phase 3 activity was carried out across two formats, public drop-in events and invite-based community of interest focus groups.
- 1.3 During phases one and two the majority of respondents agreed that the area’s highlights were its outdoor seating and dining options, the pier, pavilion and access to the seafront. They also agreed that an upgrade in public facilities and more eating and drinking options would improve the area. The comments received via the online forum discussion were consistent with the feedback received on the consultation boards and social media.
- 1.4 As a result, the following five themes were taken into Phase 2 of the engagement exercise: (1) Quality of public facilities, such as the Pier, public toilets, open spaces and beach; (2) Places to eat and drink; (3) Access to the Esplanade/Pier; (4) Outdoor seating options; (5) Convenient parking options / transport.
- 1.5 Launched in September 2022, this second formal online consultation exercise, asked participants a series of questions which included a ranking exercise and the opportunity to submit long-form responses.
- 1.6 Illustrating consistency with the original polls in phase 1, participants ranked the quality of public facilities as being of highest importance, with places to eat and drink a close second. Convenient parking options was ranked least important.
- 1.7 When asked what needed most improvement on the Esplanade, again the quality of public facilities was the highest scoring, with outdoor seating options and places to eat and drink coming in a close second and third respectively. Convenient parking options were again ranked least important, with respondents favouring active/public transport links. These responses were consistent with a further question, asking which new features respondents would like to see at the Esplanade. Reduced traffic at peak times and improved public transport links scored highest.

- 1.8** Finally, within this Phase 2 activity, further feedback was elicited from respondents relating to why they had chosen these options. The most frequent points raised were around pedestrianisation, reduced cars and traffic, better transport links and the existing seating. Many respondents praised the development of the Esplanade thus far, with the outdoor seating and eating and drinking options being a welcome addition. That said, some felt that the existing options were ill-fitting with the Victorian look of the seafront or that drinking and eating options were too expensive.
- 1.9** A series of in person engagement events were then held over two weeks in November, with one further follow-up event taking place in early January. This Phase 3 activity was carried out across two formats: public drop-in events and invite-based community of interest focus groups.
- 1.10** All traders with business premises along the Esplanade were invited to attend one focus group session. Separately all residents of the Esplanade and relevant adjacent addresses were invited to attend another focus session. Due to late delivery of some letters due to Royal Mail strike action, a further session for residents was carried out in January. Finally, local community groups were invited to attend the last in the series of the November focus groups.
- 1.11** The public drop-in events were advertised and promoted via social media channels and the Participate Vale pages. Emails were also sent to Vale Viewpoint and Your Penarth Esplanade subscribers (approx. 5,100 people).
- 1.12** Although numbers attending the public drop-in events were relatively low, (just over 70 people attended across the two dates), the quality of engagement was high. All members of the public who attended had extensive individual interaction with Officers. On entry to the venues, attendees were asked if they had engaged in either, or both, of the previous phases of the consultation and appropriate information was given to them on this basis regarding the priorities emerging from the phased activity to date and the aims of this third phase of engagement.
- 1.13** Attendees were encouraged to address the five priority themes that had emerged from the first two phases of activity and two further themes, Events and The Beach were added to these.
- 1.14** Attendees were informed that the purpose of the phase 3 activity was to take the themes that had emerged from the first two phases of activity and to bring additional levels of detail to any perceived issues and, wherever possible, for respondents to put forward potential solutions to these issues.
- 1.15** Attendees were asked to put their thoughts in writing, using ‘thought bubbles’ that were made available. Attendees also had the opportunity to air their views verbally and to receive some immediate feedback to their concerns and queries.
- 1.16** All attendees across both drop-in sessions took up this opportunity, with many leaving multiple detailed comments and ideas. It was encouraging that along with detailed concerns and complaints about some of the current provision on

the Esplanade, almost all attendees also provided constructive ideas for how these issues could be addressed. Many attendees also took the opportunity to put in writing how much they appreciated the current asset for the town that the Esplanade represents.

- 1.17** The Pier and the sea front more generally are regarded with pride by many local people and this feeling came through strongly in both verbal and written engagement. The people who chose to engage in these sessions were keen to do so because they felt strongly about the community value of the Esplanade, even if some felt that there were current areas of concern. The key issues that were distilled as a result of this final phase are outlined below.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** With the programme of public engagement and consultation now having concluded, a number of key issues have emerged in connection to each of the selected themes. For the purposes of highlighting these key issues within this report these themes have been further condensed to the following strands:

Public Facilities;
Food and Retail;
Parking and Transport Routes;
Events;
Beach/Natural Environment

2.2 Public Facilities:

Across the Focus Groups and the public drop-in sessions, feedback relating to the public realm on the Esplanade reflected an appreciation of the current appearance and feel of the publicly accessible areas of the Esplanade. However, some issues were repeatedly highlighted:

- The Italian Garden was repeatedly referenced as an area in need of maintenance and improved lighting, and as being a space where anti-social behaviour takes place;
- Respondents frequently referenced the desirability of working towards the concept of the Esplanade as a 'destination', to be achieved through more attractive/ consistent surfacing and street furniture;
- Many respondents highlighted the desirability of making free access seating available for people to sit and eat, to complement the existing seating areas available for the consumption of food purchased from the associated catering outlets.

As a result, the key issues to be addressed as part of placemaking activity are considered to constitute the following:

- An audit of future usage of Italian Garden, taking into account access and lighting requirements as well as environmental / biodiversity factors and

matters relating to the general appearance and upkeep of this public space.

- The need for a cohesive visual identity / brand for the Esplanade that highlights the unique assets of the sea front and immediate surrounds.
- An audit of street furniture / seating/ public facilities within the area to ascertain current usage and projected future need.
- An audit of existing pedestrian and road signage to include exploration of the creation of 'gateways' to the Esplanade areas.

2.3 Food and Retail:

Across the Focus Groups and the public drop-in sessions, feedback relating to the food and retail offer along the Esplanade was generally positive, with most respondents offering positive feedback regarding the expanded opportunities for outside dining now available on the Esplanade. Many respondents remarked on the increased vibrancy of the area and supported the continuation of such provision. Some respondents indicated that they had concerns about the safety of the current seating in relation to speeding traffic.

However, some issues were highlighted:

- The contrast between the 'heritage' look and feel of the public realm and the look of the food outlets and associated seating areas. Many negative terms were used to describe these areas with respondents asking for standards to be enforced in these areas;
- Many respondents suggested that they would like to see more 'street food' concessions along the front and/or within the Italian Gardens;
- Some respondents indicated that they had concerns about the safety of the current seating in relation to speeding traffic.

Key issues to be addressed as a priority, subject to available funding, in relation to these concerns are as follows:

- the appearance, design and quality of the existing licensed seating areas, even though they are temporary in nature;
- the potential for additional temporary licensed seating areas to be provided along the Esplanade, albeit balanced against the need to ensure sufficient car parking;
- the potential for a 'design standard approach' to be adopted if such concessions or licensed areas are allowed to continue, either on a temporary or more permanent basis;
- Footway design – a review to be undertaken at the points where trading on the footway is possible to mitigate against potential conflict between pedestrians and patrons and serving staff and to ensure that trading does not occur on the active carriageway.

Key issue to be addressed within a wider timeframe as part of Placemaking activity:

- Investigation of potential for non-temporary food outlets along the Esplanade, including any required alterations to infrastructure.

2.4 Parking & Transport routes

Across the Focus Groups and the public drop-in sessions, feedback regarding the removal of parking spaces for the outdoor seating was less of a contentious issue than expected, amongst both residents and Esplanade traders. Many general respondents expressed a strong desire for the Esplanade to become a pedestrian area (usually with the caveat of vehicular access for deliveries etc). However, this was not the case with residents and traders who remain firmly opposed to pedestrianisation.

A few issues, in addition to the general feedback relating to parking and pedestrianisation, were consistently highlighted:

- Many respondents, both general, and those who attended the specific focus groups expressed a desire for shuttle transport from the town centre and/or the Clifftop Car Park.
- Many respondents noted the challenge of linking the Esplanade through from Cardiff Bay / Barrage and onwards towards Sully and Barry via Active Travel routes.
- Many respondents felt that there should be more signage on arrival at Penarth Train Station and generally within the Town Centre offering information about walking routes and distances to the Esplanade.
- Many respondents felt that the Cliff Top Car Park was not well signposted from both the direction of the Town Centre for visitors arriving from the east, and from Lavernock Road for visitors arriving from a westerly direction.

Key issue to be addressed as a priority, subject to available funding:

- The potential for a shuttle transport service from the Town Centre and/or the Cliff Top car park to be explored, including investigation of potential for this to be offered as a concession.
- The need for an audit of directional signage to the Esplanade and Clifftop car park for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles from various locations, including the town centre, approaches to Penarth and the train stations.

Key issue to be addressed within a wider timeframe as part of Placemaking activity:

- Audit of current traffic flow in and around the Esplanade, including efficiency of current one-way systems, linkages to the town centre and the Cliff Top area, as well as links through to main routes in and out of the town from the east and west.

2.5 Events

Across the Focus Groups and the public drop-in sessions many respondents referenced events on the Esplanade. Most respondents gave favourable

feedback in relation to the Summer Festival events run by Penarth Town Council and indicated that they were pleased to see that the events programme at the Pavilion was now expanding.

However, some issues were highlighted for potential development:

- Those who attended the Traders Focus Group were keen to know how to work in partnership with the Council to create a programme of events, appreciating that the Council alone does not have the resources to deliver this.
- The role of the Town Council in delivering events was generally referenced positively but it was also felt that they could play a more active future role in this area.
- Many respondents suggested that more events should take place in the winter months.
- Many respondents referenced the attractiveness of food-focussed events, and the desire for more activities / events targeted at children/families.

Key issue to be addressed within a wider timeframe as part of Placemaking activity:

- In partnership with Penarth Town Council, audit of current town-wide events programme to include scoping activity in relation to potentially widening provision.

2.6 Beach/Natural Environment

Across the Focus Groups and the public drop-in sessions the importance of the Kymin Grounds was repeatedly referenced as both an important resource and as an important natural environment. The increased use of the beach / water by swimmers and paddle boarders was predominantly seen as a positive development. There were few specific requests for facilities associated with the beach, with respondents appreciating that the high tidal rise and fall means that the introduction of infrastructure on the beach is problematic. Basic washing facilities and drinking water fountains were repeatedly requested.

Key issue to be addressed as a priority, subject to available funding,

- An exploration of the introduction of public drinking water fountains and potentially showering facilities along the Front.

Key issues to be addressed within a wider timeframe as part of Placemaking activity:

- Further audit and continued engagement with current community users of Kymin grounds.
- Scoping of future potential linkages between the Kymin site and the Esplanade.
- Further scoping of potential future uses of the Kymin property.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 Long term:** The creation of a Place-Making Plan for the Esplanade will ensure that any development of the area is assessed within the context of the Place-Making Principles that have been set out by Welsh Government to create a sustainable decision-making framework for the future development of the natural and built environment for the long-term benefit of the communities that will live and work in these spaces.
- 3.2 Prevention:** Improvements to accessibility and highway safety to and within the Esplanade will prevent or reduce the risk of harm to residents in the local community and provide a wider beneficial impact to the environment. Improvements to Active Travel routes will contribute to the health and well-being of the community. Improvements to the local infrastructure will also contribute to the promotion of economic growth and reduce the risk of harm to the local economy caused by loss of local businesses and associated employment opportunities.
- 3.3 Integration:** Any future short and long-term development activity of the Esplanade will have regard to the Council's Corporate Plan, to the Replacement Local Development Plan and to the Vale of Glamorgan Public Service Board's Well Being Plan.
- 3.4 Collaboration:** To deliver the proposed programme of activity recommended within this report, the Council will work closely with Penarth Town Council and with any other relevant external agencies to ensure the maximum success of the proposed initiatives and developments. Consideration will also be given to any implications in relation to the neighbouring authority of Cardiff regarding connectivity with Cardiff Bay.
- 3.5 Involvement:** Engagement and effective involvement of people and communities has underpinned the programme of Public Consultation that has been undertaken regarding the future development of the Esplanade. The inclusion of the creation of a Place-Making Plan in the proposed next steps will ensure that community mapping and engagement will remain at the centre of future activity and will inform both short term activity and the long-term strategy for the area.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** As part of the public engagement and consultation process, public transport, active travel, and transportation in general, including parking, have been reviewed. The Public Consultation programme has enabled respondents to put forward their views and concerns about a number of specific issues including the use of single-use plastics on the Esplanade, water quality and biodiversity assets such as the Beach and the neighbouring green spaces which will be fed back to relevant Officers in relation to Project Zero.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The cost of undertaking the public consultation has been funded within existing budgets but future works, initiatives and specific projects will require additional funding. There is a potential scope for immediate minimal improvements from within existing Neighbourhood Services budgets.

Employment

- 5.2** Proposed improvements to the infrastructure and accessibility of the Esplanade should help to ensure the continued viability of the businesses operating within premises in the area, as well as peripatetic businesses such as outdoor fitness providers and street food vendors, thus supporting local employment opportunities.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** There are no specific legal implications to this report, although any improvements and changes to the public highway and signage will require compliance with the relevant highway legislation and traffic regulations if applicable.

6. Background Papers

None.