

# SANDBANKS COMMUNITY GROUP – BCP SEAFRONT STRATEGY RESPONSE

Sandbanks, despite its world-famous reputation, has had little to no investment in facilities and public realm improvements for decades. A crumbling Pavilion, shabby beach huts, 1950's style promenade seating and no evening beach restaurant offering, in addition to being blighted by congestion, Sandbanks is due a major over-haul to bring it into the current decade and to future-proof it for residents and tourists alike. This response to the Draft Seafront Strategy addresses some of these issue and more.

## References:

- A. [BCP Seafront Strategy 2021](#)
- B. [Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan](#)
- C. [BCP local plan](#)
- D. [PHC Aquatic Management Plan](#)
- E. [Sustaining Poole's Seafront](#)
- F. 1986 Act of Parliament.
- G. [Poole Bay Beach Management Scheme](#)

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This document forms Sandbanks Community Group's (SCG) strategic response to the BCP Seafront Strategy 2021 at Reference A. Our response also considers References B to G to ensure cohesion.

2. This document will detail the principles the SCG are working to and our assumptions. Although the strategy at Reference A takes a geographical approach, our strategic vision will encompass the full Sandbanks area as one community before detailing our vision and proposals in the areas to be considered by BCP. We welcome BCP's wide consultation on the strategy.

## PRINCIPLES OF SCG RESPONSE

3. We have worked to the following principles:

- a. Provision of a constructive response to proposals using a positive and collaborative tone.

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- b. We have provided recommendations for an alternative or enhanced vision/strategy to meet the needs of all users to our area including residents as appropriate.
- c. We have employed a consultative approach with SCG and other stakeholders.
- d. We believe in using this as an opportunity to assist BCP with planning for success and will offer a range of suggestions to meet all expectations of Sandbanks being a premium world-class destination but also a sustainable home for its residents.

### **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 4. Our response is underpinned with a range of assumptions that allow us to look to a sustainable future for Sandbanks as a multi-use community, destination, and site of historical, geographical and environmental importance:
  - a. Sandbanks as a community has undergone a significant demographic and cultural shift in the last 5 years which has been accelerated by Covid. Changes include, more permanent residents (including young families), a positive cafe/restaurant scene which is used by residents throughout the year, and more home-based workers (with attendant pressures on infrastructure such as broadband and street parking). We believe that these trends are more likely to continue over the next 5-10 years than reverse post-Covid.
  - b. Hotel room demand both locally and across the UK has increased significantly and is expected/assumed to continue post-Covid. The three main Hotels in Sandbanks will be even more valuable assets to the community for the foreseeable future. Development of the Haven Hotel as a new hotel – rather than lost to residential development as currently proposed - would be particularly important and is referred to later in the document.
  - c. UK-based holidays have become and will potentially remain more popular with Sandbanks being a premium destination choice - this has been as a result of Covid (which may remain endemic and often worse in other countries, potentially impacting people's appetite for overseas travel). Moreover, climate change and its attendant factors may increase home-based holidays. The strategy needs to take this into account. Increased use of Air BnB lodgings also increases headcount in the area.
  - d. The way Sandbanks is used has shifted. Local infrastructure and facilities have not kept pace with the changes and this needs addressing as a matter of urgency. There are more evening visitors, the harbourside beach (Whitley Lake) has increased vastly in topographical size over the last decade and is a popular destination but not yet recognised by BCP as a beach nor afforded appropriate amenities.
  - e. Watersports in both Whitley Lake and Poole Bay are evolving to include more kite surfing, kayaking, paddle boarding, electric powered hydrofoils and wing foiling which are activities that compete for space with traditional windsurfers, jet skiers and other boats.

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f. Across the UK, an outdoors café culture has grown since the introduction of a smoking ban in enclosed public spaces. Enjoying outdoor dining has extended beyond those who smoke and with the advent of Covid 19, increasing numbers of people feel more comfortable with accessing outdoor catering facilities year-round. Alongside this, stakeholders expect demand to be at least 20% higher than pre-Covid levels.

### **STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS**

5. We have approached the following important stakeholders to Sandbanks Community on the BCP Strategy:

- a. Rick Stein Restaurant, Oriel Restaurant and The Caff
- b. Hotel Groups in the Area
- c. Wessex Water
- d. Representatives of the water sports activities on harbourside beach
- e. RNLI

6. There is a broad consensus amongst SCG and other stakeholder as follows:

- a. There is a critical shortage of facilities for both residents and visitors. More restaurants, café/bistros and updated, useful public realm facilities are required to complement the Seafront Strategy vision and turn Sandbanks into a realistically sustainable destination for visitors and community for residents. All catering stakeholders and many residents have a strong enthusiasm for extending outdoor dining further.
- b. Local hotel accommodation is in short supply and of poor quality for the needs of the increased demand of today and the future. The quality and supply issues are out of congruence with the reputation Sandbanks has held onto despite a physical decline of the area. Stakeholders estimated a minimum 20% increase in demand<sup>1</sup> as the ongoing need.
- c. Stakeholders felt BCP's proposed development of the Pavilion and Car Park could add significant opportunities for enhanced facilities (although it should be noted that SCG's response to the car parking proposal is heavily caveated around the need to tackle congestion and transportation issues).
- d. Naturally, the catering stakeholders felt that restaurants and bistros should be managed by private enterprise, and this view is also supported by SCG as private enterprise at Sandbanks has consistently proven to be more popular with residents and visitors alike. In addition, unique offerings add to the ambience of the area.
- e. All stakeholders hold a strong belief that the provision of more facilities will reduce anti-social behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> Than pre-Covid levels.

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- f. All stakeholders stated there was a strong need to cut traffic congestion so that staff and customers can arrive at appointed times but also so utilities and support companies/facilities such as Wessex Water and the emergency services can access Sandbanks in a timely manner.
- g. Consultation with Wessex Water in particular highlighted a clear need for closer cooperation between the BCP Planning Department and the providers of infrastructure requirements.
- h. For both Wessex Water and the water sports companies, the adoption of the harbourside beach area by BCP as a designated bathing and water sports area would pave the way for both establishment of purpose-built facilities but also regular monitoring of water quality in this area.
- i. It transpires that key water monitoring points were decided 20 years ago and have not been altered to reflect the changes to beach and water use. Sampling points do not include Sandbanks Beaches or Shore Road Beach. To maintain the desire for BCP to be a world-class destination, correct sampling and collation of data including its interpretation is key to managing water quality. Impact Data needs to be established that accurately reflects water quality which will give beach users confidence.

### PUBLIC REALM

- 7. As outlined in the introduction, we have taken a collegiate approach to the area and, for the public realm our strategic response includes the Sandbanks promenade, seating, lighting, Pavilion development, landscaping, children's play area and other user amenities (both in the sea and seafront).
- 8. Key public realm considerations:
  - a. Most public realm facilities are used year-round by visitors (local and tourists from further afield) as well as local residents and we wish to avoid a deadening of the offer 'off season'.
  - b. Amenities such as the Pavilion and playpark must be designed to be sympathetic to the local environment, sustainably built, attractive, useful and designed and built in consultation with their planned primary users and associated stakeholders. Ideally, the Pavilion development should make best use of the dual aspect of the building and infrastructure to allow for a destination restaurant, cafes and shops that can also use the outside space.
  - c. Anti-Social Behaviour: Commonly seen and steadily increasing anti-social behaviour in and around the public realm areas have been commented on by many residents and stakeholders including:
    - i. Football playing in the carpark.
    - ii. Car and motorbike 'meets' in the carpark.

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- iii. Littering (including glass alcohol bottles, laughing gas canisters, dog faeces, disposable barbecues).
- iv. Congregation, drinking, littering around the harbour wall by the Haven Hotel and young people diving from harbour markers and jetties away from RNLI cover.

Ways to address these could be:

- v. Provision of a designated, signposted and adequately lit beach football area.
- vii. A ban on outdoor alcohol use in the area (as seen at St Ives) other than in sanctioned licensed areas such as outdoor restaurant seating.
- viii. Provision of well-lit beach-side evening café facilities to encourage appropriate socialising.
- ix. A ban on the use of disposable barbecues.
- x. Provision of purpose-built water-use facilities such as pontoons to allow diving and jumping and sea-swimming within designated areas under lifeguard supervision<sup>2</sup>.
- xi. Renovation of access to area around Haven Point to make it easier to access for persons of differing abilities and therefore less of a hidden spot for anti-social behaviour.

d. We note the strategy desire to make the most of an 'expanded village offer' with sustainable and long-term solutions. As a supplement to this response, we will provide examples of successful offers at other seaside resorts and communities. However, we also note successful BCP redevelopments that could be brought to bear when considering Sandbanks landscaping such as the Hunger Hill development and Barbers Piles.

e. Haven Point. We have also observed seafront areas missing from BCP's vision. The public realm space around Haven Point requires better access, facilities and recognition of the historical value of the area and its important position at the entrance to Poole Harbour. Development of this area (note the public access points and not the Haven Hotel) would add to the attractiveness of the destination and address anti-social behaviour seen there. The following measures are encouraged:

- (1) Creation of a public park at the Haven Point providing appropriate interpretation about the Harbour entrance, views across the Purbecks and to Old Harry and Brownsea Island, safe and designated fishing, safe access to the beach and visitor facilities such as cafes or space for kiosks.
- (2) Provision of a water taxi service for cyclists and pedestrians to link Poole Quay to Sandbanks and possibly Studland.

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<sup>2</sup> Subject to RNLI Lifeguard approval.

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- (3) Collaboration with the National Trust and Brownsea Ferry Company to reinstate the ferry service from Sandbanks to Brownsea Island.
- (4) Redesign of the public toilets to make the provision feel safer, cleaner and more accessible.

f. Pavilion. The design concept of the current Pavilion encourages thoughts towards this facility lending itself to having pop-up shops, cafes and a destination restaurant. We would also like to see it include a community hall (multi-functional space) or similar community amenity since no such facility currently exists on the peninsula. We support use of the facility that takes advantage of the dual aspect of the building. In addition, outdoor, year-round seating, well-lit to allow use in the evenings is supported.

g. Crazy Golf. The crazy golf is a fairly popular attraction but this could be because there is virtually no other entertainment available in this area. We support renovation of this area to reflect some excellent examples elsewhere in BCP but with the strong caveat that the design must be sympathetic to the local area and sustainable given the exposed nature of the location.

h. Playpark. The playpark has been a sadly neglected area and the work done on it in 2019 seemed to only be for stone placement rather than an upgrade to the facilities for its users. A redesign is badly needed that allows children to use it from Early Years, right up to teenagers. Noting the area is used by local children and not just visitors, we recommend children are consulted on what they would like to see in this area and, again for the design and facilities to reflect the area, be appropriate for the exposed nature of the facility and sustainable.

i. 1986 Act of Parliament. SCG supports formal review and consultation on whether the 1986 Act of Parliament will continue to serve us for the future.

j. Beach Office and Yard. We support changes to the beach office and yard so they better support the public realm facilities and maintenance there of.

## TRANSPORT

9. Congestion is a significant issue for Sandbanks, and it is felt it would be an error to assume it is only a problem for high points of the year and does not need a strategic sustainable solution. We have seen cancelled public transport services, ferry passengers stuck in Studland and residents, carers, delivery drivers, boat owners etc not able to reach their homes or destinations. Without serious intervention and mitigation, the problem will only get worse. Access for carers, emergency services, businesses and residents is being compromised significantly. The key to many of the congestion, illegal parking and other traffic related issues on Sandbanks is to control the flow of traffic onto the peninsula at the busiest times to prevent traffic (other than resident related and ferry traffic) coming onto the peninsula when there is nowhere to stop or park. This was trialled with mixed success this year and some valuable lessons learned. We would support a longer term approach to managing access onto Sandbanks at the busiest time.

Other suggestions to ease congestion in Sandbanks are:

- a. Easing car traffic off the peninsula via signalised controls at ferry, car

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park and pedestrian crossings whilst holding car traffic accessing the peninsula 'back'.

- b. Investigate redesign of existing roundabout junction.
- c. Redesign of through traffic lanes, particularly at the roundabout and between the car park and the existing through traffic lane on Banks Road.
- d. Look at the possibilities of congestion charging/APNR and bus/residents 'gateways'. Priority access for residents and ferry through-traffic.
- e. Increased parking fees (for non-locals) and parking fines.
- f. Removal of parking on Panorama Road to create a bus lane.
- g. Removal of parking on Banks Road (from existing roundabout to Shore Road Tesco) to avoid parallel parking hold ups and '3 point turns' as cars facing the wrong way (as highlighted by Morebus).
- h. Look at signalised contraflow system to allow traffic off the peninsular when busy (see successful use in Lincoln at Pelham Bridge).
- i. Look at possibility of a signalised roundabout/road closure scheme at Shore Rd/Tesco junction or Haven Road junction, to turn traffic away before gridlock/car parks are full.
- j. Remove the parking at the car park entrance to re-instate the previously successful car park slip lane.
- k. Suggest 'greener' ways to travel to Sandbanks via electric 'beach' buses or buggies, 'noddy trains', e-bike and cargo bike hire schemes etc. Transport hub for connection to Sandbanks using redundant/under-utilised spaces in the Ward such as Beach Road carpark.
- l. Sponsored, logo-endorsed green transport options.

10. We support endeavours for more environmentally sound use of the community by residents and visitors. This will need encouragement through re-allocation of carriageway space to support walking and cycling with increased safety via:

- a. Improvements for walking and cycling including new segregated cycle lanes, wider and level pavements/promenades with priority over side junctions (LTN 1/20 standard).
- b. SCG supports the Draft LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) which currently lists Sandbanks as a 'primary' route.
- c. Encourage funding from Visit England and DfT for the peninsular to be part of a cycle 'tourist trail' (like the Camel Trail in Cornwall) and Sustrans, as the peninsular forms part of National Cycle Network (NCN) 2
- d. SCG would encourage the redevelopment of FP120 for

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pedestrians at Haven Point, from the ferry terminal to the beach as part of any site redevelopment.

e. Access to Shore Rd restricted to buses, cycles and walking only (with residential access). Shore Road car park could be re-designated as a sustainable 'drop off/pick up' hub for beach buses/hire schemes etc.

f. Continued maintenance of year-round dog walking access to Sandbanks Beach.

g. Improved and sustained beach access to persons of differing abilities.

h. Formal consultation on improving pavement widths to accommodate access for persons of differing abilities.

11. SGC supports measures to control speeding on the peninsular including:

a. Establishment of APNR cameras to support local authorities with identifying anti-social and dangerous road users.

b. Traffic calming measures where appropriate (preferably road narrowing and attractive wooden planters/posts rather than speed pillows/humps)

c. 20mph throughout Sandbanks as part of the '20 is Plenty' Campaign

d. Re-surfaced carriageway to slow cars down and provide a 'sense of place' (as at Seaview Point and Horseshoe Common)

12. Visitor carparking is an issue that needs to be addressed on a long-term strategic basis. Providing more parking would bring in more cars, something SCG and BCP are keen to avoid because it does not help to solve congestion issues. SCG would prefer to see reallocation of some car parking space to allow for development of other facilities, services and public realm improvements:

a. SCG only supports the BCP proposal of a two-story car park if:

i. Other congestion in Sandbanks factors are first mitigated.

ii. The design is sympathetic to and enhances the area such as green roofing (planting etc) or a roof top facility.

iii. No more car parking spaces are provided than are in place now to allow for better development of the remaining public realm space. We do not support more parking spaces for cars.

iv. There is provision for better bike parking, electric charging points and better pick up and drop off facilities for BCP approved bike and scooter rentals.

v. The space created be used imaginatively, for example to re-route Banks Road into the space to allow for an enhanced 'village offer' in the current retail space opposite the car park.

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- b. SCG supports increased parking fees for non-locals or reduced parking fees for locals.
  - c. SCG supports a dedicated parking area for locals and workers.
  - d. Carpark redesign should include secure cycle storage (CCTV, bike lockers/hangers etc)
  - e. SCG supports ANPR fines, clamping and towing for illegally parked cars.
13. Road Parking requires additional attention to include:
- a. Re-allocation of Parking Spaces outside Rick Stein's/Caff/Oriel/Tailor Made  
SCG supports a proposal to reallocate the legacy (from the Post Office) 20 min parking spaces outside Rick Stein's with:
    - (1) A permanent loading bay at the 'Tailor Made' end with the post box moved to this location.
    - (2) 2 'blue badge'/disability bays.
    - (3) Removal of the remaining parking to allow for a temporary trial 'parklet' and seating to extend the outdoor seating offering for Rick Stein, Oriel and the Caff. If successful, the pavement could be widened and more permanent structures (awning/umbrellas) to provide shelter and heating, constructed. Informal discussion with stakeholders is positive with a desire to carry this forward.
14. SCG supports all efforts from BCP and private enterprise to encourage public transport to the beach including:
- a. Water taxi and pontoon either beach side or harbourside
  - b. SCG supports enterprise such as electric 'beach buses', nobby trains, golf carts, park and ride schemes, bike hire schemes etc
  - c. Bus stops should be sympathetically designed and placed, have green roofs and attractive seating/waiting areas
  - d. 'Gateways' from public transport main drop offs (Shore Road and Sandbanks Beach) should be attractive and pedestrian friendly (boardwalks?)

## INFRASTRUCTURE

15. Coastal Defences. SCG are surprised that harbourside coastal defence is not currently in the Draft Seafront Strategy and feel this important issue needs to be included with suggestions to mitigate long term flood risk:
- a. Current sea wall is over 100 years old, is crumbling and the adjacent pavement has sink holes in places which have been temporarily repaired numerous times.

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b. SCG supports any carriageway re-design which includes rebuilding of the harbourside wall from North Haven Yacht Club to East Dorset Sailing Club

c. Safeguarding and maintenance of natural defences such as the sand dunes is supported but in a managed fashion, so they do not become venues for anti-social or criminal behaviour, nor encroach on existing property boundaries and pathways.

16. Footpaths. No footpath on Sandbanks currently allows full accessibility for persons of differing abilities. SCG urges BCP to consider seafront access as part of their Seafront Strategy to include:

a. Enhanced access to the beach from Mid-Way path (FP 86) via mitigation or removal of steps.

b. Improved access to the Harbour & Seaplane and Poole Harbour interpretation boards through establishment of accessible footpath surfaces at FP 82.

c. Removal of steps and insertion of enhanced accessibility to Poole Harbour from Old Coastguard Road on FP 109.

d. Establishment of accessible footpath surfaces at FP 87, FP 84 and FP 83.

e. Total redesign of FP 120 and surrounding infrastructure to provide accessibility to the beach from Haven Point.

16. Water and Sewerage. Development at Sandbanks is creating significant pressure on the sewage system, and we have identified that there is no legal requirement for BPC and Wessex Water to communicate on planned developments and their requirements for sewage needs. SCG support ongoing efforts to improve the communication and collaboration with all water and sewerage stakeholders to aid water safety, data transparency and interpretation, consideration of the load on the system and maintenance of the eco-system.

17. Whitley Lake/Shore Road. The beach and dunes at Whitley Lake have grown significantly over the past few years and this area is now a 'destination'. Water sports usage is huge, with a particular increase in families and paddle boards (historically a wind surfing/kite surfing destination). However, there is no infrastructure at all to support this increased use. SGC would like to suggest that Whitley Lake is known moving forwards, as 'Sandbanks Lagoon' and support the following:

a. Provision of pontoons and storage facilities for the Watersports Academy who are currently based across the road (and other providers as required/if possible).

b. Sympathetic infrastructure (toilets/showers/changing/storage) at Whitley Lake to support the water sports offering and recent change of leisure uses seen over the last five years.

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- c. An improvement to the road layout/use of Shore Road between Banks Road and Jazz Café to allow for safer walking and cycling and a sense of 'arrival'. Access for residents and blue badge holders only.

18. Beach-side. SCG have observed (along with confirmation from the RNLI) that various safety measures, put in place by BCP Council, have been lacking in 2021. The 6-knot speed restriction buoys have been placed very far out, and there are less of them, which has led to them being ignored by many motor craft users. In addition, the usual roped-off RNLI-supervised swim/'no craft' zones at the Pavilion beach and Sandbanks Hotel beach have been minimal and had no ropes this year. With sea-swimming becoming ever more popular, and an increase in motorised sports (jet skis, pleasure boats, fliteboards etc) SCG would welcome and support the following safety measures:

- a. Roped-off swim zones (no motorised craft) at the Pavilion beach and at Shore Road (Sandbanks Hotel). These could incorporate some fun additions such as anchored swim platforms/pontoons (subject to lifeguard advice).
- b. Roped off (no motorised craft) bay at the Haven beach.
- c. Many more 6 knot speed restriction buoys, placed closer together and slightly closer to the beach than in 2021.
- d. 6 knot speed restriction buoys to be kept in place all year round to protect winter swimmers.
- e. Dedicated motorised craft entry/exit roped/buoyed lanes at several points (as in the Med).

## **SPORT, LEISURE, EVENTS AND GENERAL TOURISM**

19. Hotels. Stakeholder consultations revealed a clear need for ongoing hotel provision at Sandbanks which has increased relative to five years ago with a concomitant increase in the commercial value of destination hotels. This is exacerbated by the ongoing effect of pandemic which has seen a 20% increase in future demand for hotel rooms. As such, SCG supports sympathetic development of Haven Point to include the following:

- a. Re-development of the Haven Hotel site to include ground floor public amenities (café, retail, restaurant), mixed use to include flats and a boutique hotel to include swimming pool and restaurant open to non-residents.
- b. Alternatively, SCG supports the development of a hotel in its entirety. Any redevelopment of the Haven Hotel should allow for public access by foot from Haven Point to the beach.

20. Haven Point. Haven Point is a key strategic and historical site in Sandbanks, in addition to being the entrance to Poole Harbour, the world's second largest natural harbour. The area is often crowded with pedestrians, cycles, motor vehicles and buses. There are no pedestrian crossings and the immediate area/public realm is unattractive and uninviting. SCG supports the reallocation of space to create 'Marconi Park' (or similar). A beautiful park with suitable planting, seating, history boards/statue of Marconi (to highlight his connection with Haven Point). This could include removal of the existing 1 hr parking at

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Ferry Way car park with the creation of a small number of disabled parking bays to the rear of the 'park'. Space at Haven Point is currently shared by:

- a. Haven Hotel
- b. Ferry Way Short Stay Car Park
- c. Small promenade with seating
- d. Slipway
- e. Car and Passenger ferry service to Studland (including ticket shed)
- f. Pier and kiosk for foot passenger ferry to Brownsea (currently unused)
- g. Small car park for ferry/National Trust/Brownsea staff with a public toilet facility, café and beach shop (rarely open out of season) nearby

21. SCG would also welcome the reinstatement of a taxi boat service to Brownsea Island and Poole Quay from Haven Point. Foot passengers will bring economic benefits to the area including footfall for local restaurants, water sports and retail outlets.

22. Events and Sport. SGC welcomes the beach sporting events such as beach volleyball championships, handball etc. These tournaments bring economic benefits to the area often out of summer holiday peak season. We would encourage the promotion of Sandbanks to university sports teams or example. SCG feels the area at the far Eastern end of the Sandbanks Promenade could be developed as the 'Beach Sports Zone' with the addition of changing and toilet facilities. This usage would encourage grass roots sports.

23. Due to the nature of the beach being almost uniquely residential in the area, large scale events are not supported by the whole community as they bring little benefit and cause considerable environmental nuisance. As such, events like Sandfest are not optimal. If there is a perceived need for these events, it is felt there should be a tangible benefit to the community<sup>3</sup>.

### **OTHER**

24. Seafront Strategy proposals such as wayfinding additions and interpretations are, in part supported. Wayfinding for very local facilities such as waste disposal areas and toilets is strongly supported. Wider geographical wayfinding infrastructure is felt to be largely nugatory given access to digital maps on smart devices etc.

25. Interpretation is seen as valuable, particularly to highlight important geographical, historical, and eco-logical areas of interest; albeit not supported as a sole initiative without other factors being considered to improve the area. This could be usefully co-created with a public realm outdoor learning space.

### **CONCLUSION**

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<sup>3</sup> Such as a community compensation payment as recently demonstrated by filming in the area.

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26. The Seafront Strategy for Sandbanks should focus on but not be exclusive to:
- a. Long term solutions for congestion, access and parking.
  - b. Improved facilities offering for visitors and residents including independent cafes, restaurants and retail.
  - c. Improved public realm including seating, lighting, landscaping, parks.
  - d. Recognition of Whitley Lake as a beach and destination area requiring suitable facilities.
  - e. Promotion of sustainable transport and access.
  - f. Retention of a hotel facility at Haven Point.
  - g. Improved water safety/zoning.
  - h. Long term flood defence strategy.