

Bawdsey Quay/Ferry Rd/Amenity Site

Problems relating to this area

The Quay and Ferry Rd have long been discussed by residents and the Parish Council because of issues of overcrowded parking, overnight stays by campervans and ever increasing damage to the roadside/river bank. These are particular problems during the summer months, when the number of visitors increases dramatically. The quay and the short stretch of road fronting the river, are naturally regarded as idyllic places to visit by all age and family groups, day-trippers, holiday makers and residents alike

Views expressed over the years by residents vary a good deal – some want parking restrictions, some wish to leave things as they are; some wish to see repairs to the banks, others are happy to let them be in spite of the effects of parking. Various attempts have been made by the Parish Council to address these matters, but there have never been sufficient resources to deal adequately with them.

Through the summer there are safety concerns arising from unrestricted car parking right next to where people are sitting, environmental damage to the banks and the impact of refuse being left next to overflowing bins, all of which have a generally deleterious effect on everyone's enjoyment. This was once a fairly brief summer phenomenon, but is now steadily extending into other parts of the year as well. In fact, local policy on tourism is to increase visitor numbers during other seasons of the year.

Economic considerations

The area is developing its own economy – the ferry attracts increasing numbers of visitors who travel back and forth between old Felixstowe and Bawdsey Quay, to get meals and drinks, buy fish, or just stroll and sit by the river. The Boathouse Café near the Quay is thriving, well used by locals and visitors alike. Trips on the river are offered as well the ferry crossing. The radar museum nearby has contributed to the increase in those who know about and visit the area, as has the arrival of the PGL holiday centre at Bawdsey Manor. The increase in cyclists coming to the quay has been noticeable. The steady increase of housing at Melton and Martlesham will continue to bring more people within easy distance of these riverside attractions. We are told that campervans share information about areas like this where they can camp for free, and their numbers certainly increased last summer. Between three and six campervans, some quite large, were present through the summer season, some staying for several nights. Campervans occupying layby and bank space meant far fewer car spaces. Car parking on occasions extended right back up the road towards the amenity car park entrance.

Addressing the issues

While there are currently no actual statistics to support the above comments, there is ample anecdotal experience from parishioners, councillors and visitors that with each passing year

these problems are increasing, more so in the last two years. An analysis of the information from the Bawdsey radar speed camera indicates a very high number of vehicle movements.

The Parish Council notes the varied comments it has received from residents over the years, but believes it has, in conjunction with SCDC and SCC, a responsibility to address the issues raised above, taking the view that improvements can be made that would actually increase people's enjoyment of the area, without upsetting those who wish to see as little change as possible.

Proposed improvements

It is fortunate that there exist drawings and outline costings that were prepared by the County Council Highways Dept at the time of the proposed visitor centre on the amenity site (2014-15). This scheme represented a carefully thought out way of dealing with the parking and erosion of the river bank problems, and indications of how parking in the existing car park might be improved and thus better used. While referring to possible yellow lines, it presents a more organised approach to parking rather than moving into the realm of legal restrictions. The Parish Council would like to see as much of this scheme put into place as possible, with some slight additions to respond to more recent concerns:

- White lines showing parking on the quay need renewing, and a block of parking spaces (herring bone pattern?) should be added in the central area
- An additional layby alongside the river shown on the plan should be established as far as the width of the bank allows for parking cars, and surfaced with permeable material, with a second smaller one nearer to the Quay
- Protection of remaining sandy/grassed area next to the river could be through oak posts and curbing; sand and grass banks reinstated as far as possible
- Access to the steps down to the beach should be clearly established
- Disabled spaces should be rethought and marked in light of the above suggestions
- Clearance and surfacing to allow campervan spaces at the entrance to the amenity site; as much clearance as possible within the carpark to increase parking spaces available (as per original drawings)
- Signage on quay and laybys to indicate no overnight camping, sites where campervans can park

Future use of the tin chapel

The advent of a grant for a feasibility study of the tin chapel adds another dimension (and complexity) to any consideration of changes to the amenity site car park. The exciting possibility of giving this derelict building a future useful life must mean that for now changes and improvements to the car park area must not preclude possible major changes at some later date to allow access to the chapel site, parking reasonably close to it, etc. Fortunately, changes and improvements in the current scheme for the car park would not prevent such future developments. (The most recent improvement, the clearing of the pond, and clearing of trees and scrub close to it, makes the west end of the site more attractive for

possible use as a family area, and leaves more space for parking elsewhere) Any improvements to parking in the area generally would help to make use of the tin chapel more financially viable.

Conclusion

Bawdsey Quay and the river bank are very attractive places to visit, but can easily become overcrowded and overwhelmed by vehicles, so that the tranquillity and atmosphere of being by the river are lost. For a relatively modest outlay, as indicated by the plans drawn up, simple and effective steps can be taken to relocate parking in a way that causes less overcrowding on the quay, does less physical damage to the banks and increases use of the car park itself. Visitors can then relax and enjoy all that a riverside visit and ferry point can offer.