

<b>Community and Leisure Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	5 March 2025
<b>Report Title</b>	Overnight vehicle issues at locations across Sheppey
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Committee are asked to approve overnight charging at Shingle Bank (including the areas of green opposite), and Shellness Road.</li> <li>2. Refer the additional costs stated at 2.20 to Policy and Resources committee for approval for the first year of operation.</li> <li>3. Discuss the overnight charge amount and refer to Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council for approval in fees and charges.</li> <li>4. Agree the times charges will be applied.</li> <li>5. Decide on the type of vehicle that charges will apply to.</li> <li>6. Refer to Joint Transportation Board, the requirement to add traffic restrictions along Marine Parade and Shellness Road.</li> <li>7. Note the Petition opposing charges at the Shingle Bank and dismiss it in favour of charging.</li> </ol>

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 As a follow up to the report of 11 December 2024, this report updates Members on the public consultation results from the survey around overnight parking at Shingle Bank, Minster and Shellness, Leysdown.
- 1.2 It identifies potential solutions and Members are asked to debate the issues and consider the options. A clear steer is needed to inform the traffic regulation orders.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In recent years, a number of complaints have been received from members of the public, Borough and Parish Councillors, regarding the presence of a large number of motorhomes, campervans and caravans parked along the Shingle Bank 'sea defence' in Minster and at Shellness in Leysdown.
- 2.2 The Shingle bank sea defence has become a popular location for visitors in large motorhomes, many of whom park for several days, but some of which can be present for weeks if not months. This is contributed to further by those without permanent homes and effectively 'living' in caravans in these areas plus vehicles left for storage.
- 2.3 Complaints cover the imposing nature due to the volume that stay for long periods, to environmental impacts due to lack of toilet/sewer provision and a lack of capacity for those wanting to visit during the day.
- 2.4 An area of off-street parking at Shellness, next to the sea wall has also been popular with those looking for overnight stays.
- 2.5 Enforcement of this long-term parking demands a considerable resource from the Council, who must balance this resource against other statutory service demands.
- 2.6 To date, a considerable amount of expenditure has been used on installing and maintaining physical measures to create a width restricted access to the main section of the Shingle Bank and other bollard restrictions at Shellness. This has reduced the number of vehicles at their peak, however regrettably all of these measures have been met with varying degrees of vandalism by those wishing to continue to gain access to this area.
- 2.7 Based on the above, the Committee debated the following options in their December meeting;
  1. Keep the parking arrangements at one, two or three locations the same as now (free to use).
  2. Implement an overnight charge for all vehicles at some or all of the locations.
  3. Ban and restrict access to parking at locations permanently.
- 2.8 Members approved a public consultation and this ran between 17 December 2024 and 9 February 2025. A total of 1204 responses were received, the full details of which can be found in Appendix I, but the key points are summarised below;

- 1204 responses – 47% entered ME12 as a postcode. Whilst not all entered a postcode, just 35 entered a postcode outside of Swale registering at just 2.9% of responses. Entries were received from as far away as Bristol.
- 87% of respondents said they were not overnight users of the Shingle bank or Shellness.
- 47% voted to implement overnight charges for all vehicles at Shingle Bank. 26% wanted the parking arrangements kept the same and 26% wanted to restrict access to the bank permanently (day and night).
- 48% voted to implement overnight charges for all vehicles at Shellness. 30% wanted the parking arrangements kept the same and 22% wanted to restrict access to parking permanently (day and night).
- Due to potential displacement issues, 52% of respondents said we should also implement an overnight charge at Barton's Point car park, 32% said this should remain unchanged and 16% wanted a permanent ban.
- The most popular time period for charging was between 8pm and 8am at 41%. This was followed by 9pm-9am (23%), all day charging at 21% and 10pm-10am at 15%.
- The most popular amount to charge was £10 per night (54%) followed by £20 per night (25%) and £15 per night (20%).
- When asked which type of vehicles should be permitted to park overnight 49% said only motorhomes and campervans with internal toilets, 35% said individual cars should also be allowed and only 15% said caravans should be permitted.

2.9 The relevant Town and Parish Councils were also consulted, and their comments can be seen in the consultation section of this report and appendices.

2.10 With the outcome suggesting that overnight charges should be installed at all three locations, we need to consider the next stages, which include a timeframe for implementation, the costs, and the actions needed to put the operation into place.

2.11 In order to charge overnight, Off-Street Parking Places Orders need to be put in place. These need to follow a strict Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process which includes a formal consultation period consisting of advertising the proposals (both at the location and in local newspapers), considering consultation feedback and then installation of infrastructure.

2.12 The TRO process will take approximately 13 weeks, which would take us to sometime in June for final implementation if approved tonight. This timeframe assumes limited formal objections that could be managed under officer

delegation. Should a large number of objections be received, a further committee report would be required.

- 2.13 The December report talked about the complications of enforcing overnight charges such as the impact of vandalism on successful enforcement, staff safety and the costs of operation versus the predicted income were all considerations.
- 2.14 Due to the remote locations, Pay and Display units are not recommended. RingGo, the cashless parking solution we use for our main car parks could be utilised. Tests need to be conducted for mobile signal strength, and signage needs to be robust, tamper proof and highly visible to be effective for enforcement. A suitable budget (suggested at £3,500) for set-up is therefore recommended and on-going funds for replenishment can be covered from income generated.
- 2.15 For staff safety, our civil enforcement contractor would risk assess the new locations. Staff already adopt body worn cameras and enforcement staff would attend in pairs when visiting the locations. The level of incidents would be monitored in the initial period and further mechanisms such as security back up may be needed.
- 2.16 The Committee asked officers to look at CCTV provision in the vicinity. Site investigations have been conducted and it is proposed that two cameras are installed on nearby lampposts at the Shingle Bank (one at White House end and one at the entrance to Bartons Point. These streetlights are KCC assets and permission is being sought and the relevant load testing undertaken. The recommendation is to utilise temporary deployable cameras to start with to test feasibility. We can utilise one existing camera and would need to purchase another at £2,500 and cover the costs of installation. Ongoing costs of £400 per year would need to be met for each camera to cover SIM card provision.
- 2.17 CCTV provision at Shellness is harder to implement as there are no existing KCC lampposts or power in the vicinity. We are investigating potential solutions, but costs are likely to be much higher due to the need to supply power to this remote area.
- 2.18 It is difficult to estimate the likely income that would be received from charging for overnight parking, as we have no way of knowing if all of those currently using the locations would pay an overnight charge, suggested as £10 per night in the consultation results.
- 2.19 Additional hours of enforcement would need to be purchased. A trial is suggested with an additional 60 hours of enforcement per month to cover the locations. This would cost circa £1900 per month or £22,800 per year.
- 2.20 Therefore, in summary the suggested costs for year 1 that would need to be considered would be;

<b>Description</b>	<b>Cost (£s)</b>
CCTV camera (Shingle bank)	3,400
Implementing the traffic orders	1,200
Additional enforcement (all locations)	22,800
Signage (all locations)	3,500
Removal of concrete blocks (Shingle bank)	1,500
General repairs to the surfacing (Shingle bank)	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£37,400</b>

- 2.21 Other considerations need to be made, in particular the issue of potential displacement to other areas, a subject touched upon above. The green areas opposite Shingle Bank are opened for overspill parking during the summer months. These would be vulnerable to the same issues experienced on the Shingle Bank should they be left without restriction. It is therefore recommended to implement the same restrictions as the Shingle Bank for these areas, but only for the period that the car parks are opened.
- 2.22 Barton's Point car park is an interesting consideration. Protection against displacement would be needed for the car park; however, the Council is considering its options for future operation of the site. Ecological surveys are currently being finalised, prior to the decision coming back to the relevant committee. We therefore do not want to impact on future options by implementing an overnight charge at the current time. Operational considerations would be made with the existing operator of the café.
- 2.23 There may also be displacement of parked vehicles onto the highway of Marine Parade and therefore traffic restrictions along the length of the road would need to be considered, including the formal process for an On-Street Traffic Regulation Order.
- 2.24 Illegal encampment legislation is complicated, and lengthy court processes are required which often deliver low level penalties that do not deter future breaches. However, it may be necessary to use these powers for some vehicles as we lead up to the implementation of charges.
- 2.25 The consultation suggests that the Off-Street Parking Places Order should stipulate that only motorhome or campervans with internal toilet facilities should be allowed to stay. This is very hard to enforce as there is no national database to verify vehicle specifications, and officers could not check this detail whilst making enforcement visits. It is therefore recommended that Members agree that charges apply to all vehicles.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 The Committee are asked to approve overnight charging at Shingle Bank (including the areas of green opposite), and Shellness Road.

- 3.2 Refer the additional costs stated at 2.20 to Policy and Resources committee for approval for the first year of operation.
- 3.3 Discuss the overnight charge amount and refer to Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council for approval.
- 3.4 Agree the times charges will be applied.
- 3.5 Decide on the type of vehicle that charges will apply to.
- 3.6 Refer to Joint Transportation Board, the requirement to add traffic restrictions along Marine Parade and Shellness Road.
- 3.7 Note the Petition opposing charges at the Shingle Bank and dismiss it in favour of charging.

#### **4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

- 4.1 To not approve overnight charging at one or all of the locations. This is not recommended as public consultation suggests people want charges implemented and the current issues that have led to a large number of complaints will not be resolved.
- 4.2 Implement charges at Barton's Point. This is not recommended whilst the review of operation continues.
- 4.3 Permanently restrict access to these locations. This would eradicate all issues but will restrict other users during the day time.

#### **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 Members of the public have contacted the Council directly over the last few years. This has increased recently with concerns over the issues overnight parking has created.
- 5.2 A petition consisting of 488 signatures has been received by the Council opposing any proposal to levy charges at the Shingle Bank and this was seen at the September committee.
- 5.3 The Community and Leisure Chair attended Sheppey Area committee on 19 September 2024. The details of the discussions are provided in the link at the bottom of this report. Subsequent meetings have had updates.
- 5.4 Minster Parish Council were approached to state their formal position. Officers attended a Parish Council meeting and the Clerk confirmed in writing the following (full letter at appendix II);

- A permanent ban on caravans at the Shingle Bank
- A chargeable parking scheme for vehicles between 10pm and 6am.
- Cars would be exempt and can stay during this period.
- The charge should be £15.
- The green area opposite be included
- Barton’s Point car park should not be included but considered at next tender.
- Support for CCTV.

5.5 Leysdown Parish Council discussed it at their meeting of 28 January 2025. Their formal position (Appendix III) is;

- Even split between Cllrs and residents of banning parking altogether and charging overnight.
- They raised concerns about inappropriate parking, human waste, the speed of the road next to the parking area, lack of enforcement.
- If these issues were mitigated then overnight charging would be supported, if not a complete ban would be their preference.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This report cuts across a range of corporate plan priorities in Community, Environment and Running the Council.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>The report details that Members need to weigh up the costs of, implementing an overnight charging scheme (costs of maintaining signage/enforcement against likely income) or permanently restricting access.</p> <p>The main report suggests the costs for year 1.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Each option requires the support of legislation to implement whether that be Civil Enforcement Act, Environmental Protection Act</p> <p>Each option would also require on-going procurement of services or repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>Traffic Regulation Orders operate in the proposed way;  <i>Swale Borough Council (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”) in exercise of its powers under Sections 32 and 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, (“The Act of 1984”) and the Traffic Management Act 2004 (“Act of 2004”) and of all other enabling powers, with the consent of the Kent County Council in accordance with Section 39(3) of the Act of 1984 and after consultation with the</i></p>

	<i>Chief Officer of Police in accordance with Part III of Schedule 9 of the Act of 1984, hereby makes the following Order.....</i>
Crime and Disorder	Reports of anti-social behaviour have contributed to the raising of this matter at committee.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Reports of inappropriate use of the locations such as littering and disposal of human waste need to be considered. Any plans to encourage overnight use of the locations need to be considered from a planning and ecological basis.
Health and Wellbeing	Those opposed to overnight charges state that they use the locations for leisure pursuits that improve their health and well-being. However, the congestion at the site may restrict others from enjoying the space.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	Some of those located at the Shingle bank or Shellness may be vulnerable adults due to their housing situation.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Enforcement operations will need to be risk assessed by the contractor.
Equality and Diversity	The use of the locations is expected to be for everybody. Balancing the uses is a difficult decision for Members to consider.
Privacy and Data Protection	No issues recorded.

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Public Consultation results
- Appendix II: Minster Parish Council response to consultation
- Appendix III: Leysdown Parish Council response to consultation

## 8 Background Papers

8.1 [Sheppey Area Committee September 2024](#)

8.2 [Community and Leisure Committee – December 2024](#)