

Barton's Point Covered Walkway – Sheppey Area Committee

Background

The former rifle range at Barton's Point, Sheerness is now a multi-use coastal park facility, with the earliest part dating from the turn of the 20th century. An unusual and, now unused, feature of the former facility, is a protected walkway between the two ranges, road and seashore to the north. The long stretch of protective and dog-legged brick walling, in parts was added to by reinforced concrete roof slabs supported on one side by the wall, and the other by metal posts to provide an open-sided covered walkway.

Whilst the brick walling is largely intact and appears in the main to be structurally sound, many of the concrete roof panels and supporting metal posts are now missing and a number of those still surviving are in poor and potentially dangerous condition.

Swale Borough Council have secured the structure with security fencing and is now considering options.

Any potential intervention will be limited to the protected walkway itself and would not include the surrounding structures that have been historically associated with it, e.g. gun battery bases, surviving bases of the target walls and ammunition stores etc.

It should be noted that whilst the structure is not listed, it is of local heritage interest and as such, the primary aim would be to retain it in some form and bring it back into a safe condition and good standard of appearance, where it can be enjoyed and its historical function properly understood by users of the coastal park.



SBC has identified the following 3 Options:

Option	Specification
One	Demolition with floor slab retained
Two	Removal of roof slab and metal stations only
Three	Full restoration works to structure

Estimated prices have been provided by contractors as follows:

Options	Cost
One	£30,000
Two	£10,000
Three	£200,000 – £250,000

Initial considerations indicate option 2 would seem the most sensible/pragmatic way forward taking into account both heritage preservation and financial constrictions. Existing budgets could cover the cost of implementing this option. It should be noted that option 2 does have the risk of the wall coming down in parts during the roof removal.

Minster Parish Council considered the options at their August 2021 meeting. The clerk confirmed the discussion was centred around retaining as much of the whole structure as possible to benefit a future bigger scheme that could regenerate the area.

Further options that have been suggested, are to retain or replicate just a small section of the roof structure to the walkway and/or to add in history interpretation boards to inform visitors of the previous but given financial constraints this would only be feasible if we can attract some additional funding.

The area committee is asked;

- Which of the options would be your preference?
- Would the Committee be prepared to allocate funding (on top the £10k SBC contribution) to support the further options in the last paragraph?
- Would the Committee consider seeking third party contributions?