



RYDE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICER REPORT

Committee:	Community Planning Committee
Date:	Tuesday, 7 October 2025
Report Author:	Annette Steed – Project Officer
Report Title:	Ryde Beach Accessibility – End of Season report 2025
Context:	This report includes a summary of the Beach Accessibility actioned in 2025 and outlines a request for the funds required for 2026.

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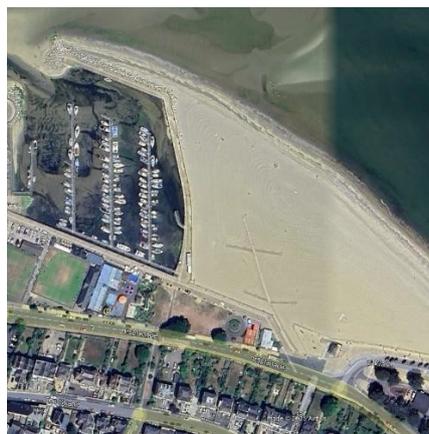
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1. SUMMARY OF EXISTING BEACH ACCESSIBILITY PROVISION

BOARDWALK

Construction:

An additional 130m of boardwalk was commissioned from NaShers, who once again stepped up and produced all boards ahead of the deadline in early March. This now brings the total length of boardwalk to 330m – which incidentally can be seen from space! (Or at least on google earth!)



Usage:

The boardwalk was used extensively by people of all ages and physical abilities from May Bank Holiday, as well as spectators and the RAF Falcon Parachute team during Armed Forces celebrations on 29th June! It has shown to be an essential addition to make the beach accessible for all!



Storage:

Storage in the outdoor basement of No 11 St Thomas Square (No 11) worked well as the van can get close access down the ramp. We aim to use this again for over-winter storage.

Installation:

Each boardwalk section measures 1m x 1.8m and, while one person can carry a single board, the overall process is demanding: loading 330 sections into a van, offloading, and positioning them on the beach. Teams of two staff take turns to complete the installation and removal, which highlights the importance of allocating sufficient staff hours in the budget.

We haven't yet found a more efficient way to manage the installation and removal of the boards each season, so staff time continues to be built into planning. This year, the budget was exceeded when the boards had to be lifted and re-laid after the sand was levelled, and the additional hours involved are still being calculated.

Events:

There have been no events requiring the removal of the boardwalk from the beach this year. The Armed Forces Day celebrations made the most of it in fact and used it to roll out a canon onto the beach as well as a platform for fans to meet the RAF Falcon Parachute team.



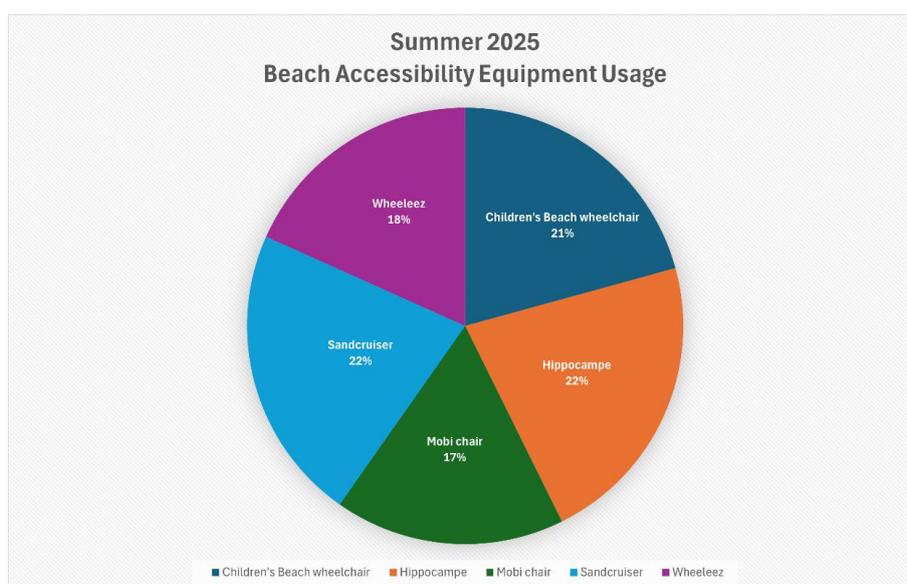
EQUIPMENT



There was no change to our provision this year and RTC once again offered a Mobi-Chair (floating water chair), Hippocampe (beach wheelchair), Wheeleez beach rollator, Stabilo Positioning Cushion alongside the Lifeguards' two beach and one sea wheelchairs.

The equipment was available free of charge from 1st July – 1st September and managed by the Lifeguards. They collected the equipment from storage (Canoe Lake), did handovers to users and washed down the chairs before storage at the end of each day.

- This year, equipment bookings rose from 57 to 82, representing a **44% increase**. The number of users also grew from 29 to 40, a **38% rise**. On average, each user booked equipment slightly more often, with the rate increasing from 1.97 to 2.05 bookings per user: an uplift of around **4%**.
- The chairs were used fairly equally across all bookings with the Sandcruiser & Hippocampe in the lead with 22% of bookings



Hiccups & Response

- We received a complaint about a chair only having a lap belt but no harness. As harnesses have to fit individuals very securely, it is not in our remit to provide a range of sizes, and we will be amending our website to clearly state that users are to bring their own harness for use in the chairs.
- Following the Lifeguards permitting the use of their child’s wheelchair to be used off-site for a few weeks before the start of summer, and the chair not being returned until the very end of the season, it was agreed that usage would have to be restricted to our beach sites. Not only did this incident impact on the availability of the chair for other users, it is also a very expensive piece of equipment to be entrusted to members of the public who don’t understand its value — both in terms of cost and the service they provide to the community.

CHANGING PLACE TOILET

The temporary seasonal unit was so successful, we extended its opening from 1st May until 30th September 2025.

Over this time, we are happy to report that there was no vandalism on the unit. There was a small repair needed on the door handle and soft-close mechanism at the end of the summer, which was addressed very quickly by AMP Hire.

The second year (of the two-year contract) comes to an end on 30th September 2025, and we’ve received confirmation that we can renew the contract for 2026 on the same basis and cost as this year.

An option to purchase the unit has also been put forward, which would relieve the time-pressure surrounding the refit works on Eastern Gardens Toilets, but also provide us with a repositionable option once the refit has been completed; maybe to be sited near Appley toilets or within the boundaries of No 11 St Thomas Sq. See point 3 for financial implications.



MEDIA COVERAGE

Feedback has again been very positive. Especially when sharing posts on Facebook groups such as Wheelchair Accessible Places and Activities.

In June, we also had the pleasure of hosting a team from VisitEngland, led by Lady Victoria Borwick, Chair of VisitEngland, alongside Claire Ford, Regional Development Lead, David Curtis-Brignell, Chair of Visit Isle of Wight and Will Myles, Managing Director.

The NaShers team were also in attendance and rightly commended for their outstanding work on the extensive 320m of boardwalk – a real highlight of our efforts to improve beach access.

It was incredibly encouraging to hear Visit England’s positive feedback and enthusiasm for our Beach Accessibility provision.

Annette

Thank you so much to you and all your great team of volunteers, I so enjoyed meeting everyone and congratulations on such a great and simple idea to make the beach accessible.

Hundreds of people come up with all sorts of expensive ideas to help accessibility and you – with your great team of volunteers have made the beach accessible to all age groups, enabling families to visit, whether they have a pram or have mobility issues, everyone can now join the fun. I thought the idea of making little pods at the end was very sensible, so that people do not have to be wheeled into the sand

I also thought your additional vehicles, so that people could be wheeled into the sea or onto the sand were also excellent

I know you have to take it all up again when the winter comes, but congratulations to you and all your willing volunteers – all happy to come out in this heat and demonstrate their great team work. I was so pleased to see it all being used.

I know that our accessibility team will certainly be very interested, and impressed!

Thank you again for all the work that you have put into achieving this

Victoria

Following discussion with Lady Borwick and Will Myles, and with their strong recommendations to do so, we will be applying to Blue Badge Access Awards and the Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Awards to bring recognition of our efforts to a wider regional and national audience.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For 2026, the aim is to at least cover the ongoing costs attached to the Beach Accessibility provision, such as:

- Year 3 of the Changing Place unit contract,
- Annual maintenance,
- Insurance
- Labour for the installation & removal/storage of the boardwalk etc.

Until feedback shows an appetite for more equipment, we feel that there is no immediate need to purchase any additional wheelchairs or equipment.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds that are needed to run the Beach Accessibility in 2026:

1) Renewal of Changing Place unit contract.	£10,970
2) Annual wheelchair maintenance	£1,000
3) Insurance	£214
4) Labour (in-house) to handle boardwalk	£2,800
TOTAL A	£14,984

Alternatively, the purchase of the Changing Place unit as a longer-term investment would be £30,000.

- The unit was purchased by AMP Hire in 2023 and let to us for approx. £10,000/pa since
- After two years of use, it shows no signs of wear
- As an asset, it would prove useful and cost-effective to use alongside existing facilities before/during refurbishment work, or as an alternative to public toilet provision in town
- If no longer needed once Eastern Gardens Toilets have been refurbished, it can be sold on to recoup some of the cost

The costs would therefore be:

1) Purchase of Changing Place unit	£30,000
2) Annual wheelchair maintenance	£1,000
3) Insurance	£214
4) Labour (in-house) to handle boardwalk	£2,800
TOTAL B	£34,014

4. OPTIONS

There are two options for the third-year provision, they are as follows:

A) Fund the required year 3 running costs, in full, from the 2026/27 budget, totaling **£14,984.**

OR

B) Purchase the Changing Place unit for £30,000 and fund the running costs of £4,014, totaling **£34,014**

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Officer recommendation is:

To approve **Option B**, which is to purchase the Changing Place unit and secure this asset for future use.

And

Fund the running costs of the Beach Accessibility for 2026 from the 2026/27 budget

Total Cost: £34,014