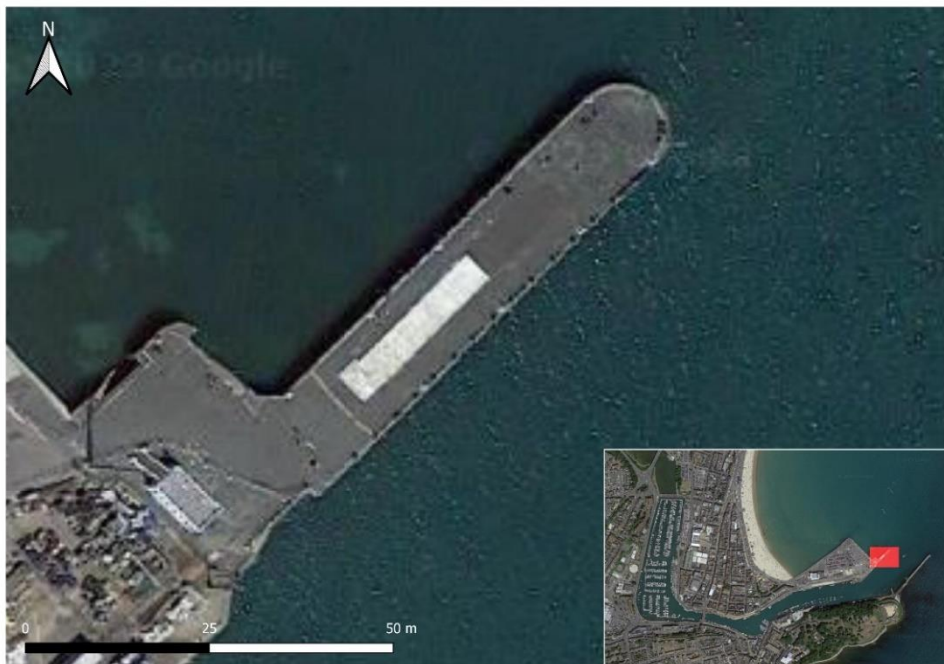


Weymouth Pleasure Pier



Proposal for regulating access, enhancing public safety, & managing antisocial behaviour

Ed Carter
Weymouth Harbour Master
12 July 2023

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Background

The Pleasure Pier at Weymouth is situated at the eastern point of the Weymouth Peninsula and was constructed in 1931 by the Great Western Railway to service the ferry terminal that existed at that time. The pier no longer has trains running onto it and is now only used for access by pedestrians. A recent structural survey, conducted in October 2022, found that *“the pier is still considered to be in a generally moderate condition with no risk to its structural stability, especially given its current use.”*

The pier, along with the Peninsula area and car park is included within the Statutory Harbour Authority Land Area, and consequently is patrolled and maintained by Weymouth Harbour.

The pier is enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike, providing panoramic views of Weymouth Bay. Anglers are regular users. The pier is a good place to fish for beginners and experienced anglers, providing the opportunity to catch Mackerel, Gar, Wrasse, Pollock, and even Squid at the right time of year.

This proposal details the issues currently being faced by Weymouth Harbour in managing the safe use of the Pleasure Pier and outlines the proposal to install a gated entrance to regulate access to the area. The goals are to enhance public safety and increase footfall, to protect harbour and other enforcement workforces in the fulfilment of their duties, and to retain and maintain a popular Weymouth landmark for the enjoyment of all, by primarily managing and removing the extant risks posed by highly intrusive levels of anti-social behaviour.

Duty of Care

Harbour authorities have a range of statutory and non-statutory duties and powers relating to marine operations. For a harbour authority, these duties include a duty of care to those using the harbour, which means they have an obligation to conserve and facilitate the safe use of the harbour, as well as a duty of care against loss caused by the harbour authority's negligence.

Under health and safety legislation, employers are responsible for managing health and safety risks in their businesses. It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who might be affected by their work activities. Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

The Dorset Harbours Strategy identifies that *“It is vital that the harbours are safe places for people to live, work and visit and there are a number of ways to maintain and improve safety including following the Port Marine Safety Code which sets out the national standard for Port Marine Safety. It is essential to help maintain and improve safety by ensuring the infrastructure is safe.”*

The issues currently being faced at the pier, if not tackled in an appropriate and timely way, put Weymouth Harbour in conflict with the statutory duty of care for harbour users, the responsibility towards harbour staff, and its own identified strategic goals.

Public Safety

The pier has several areas of consideration regarding public safety. The pier itself, while structurally sound, is an aging structure and regular monitoring is required to ascertain new

and developing risks. The railings around edge of the pier, shortly to be replaced, are rusting and loose in places where they attach to the wooden edge beams.

Predominantly due to the flow of vessel traffic, swimming from the piers on either side of the harbour entrance is prohibited. Fishing from the inside of the piers is also prohibited, as the casting of fishing tackle poses a risk to passing vessels.

Jumping and diving from the pier is also an activity that carries very high risk. In the harbour entrance, there is the risk that a person in the water could be struck by a passing vessel. On the north (Weymouth Beach) side of the pier, the water is very shallow and jumping into this area poses the risk of severe injury. The area immediately to the north of the pier is also a Seagrass bed, and disturbance to this fragile habitat from persons or vessels is actively discouraged. There are three sets of steps, which enable access from the pier top to the water. These steps are no longer in use, and access to these steps, except in an emergency, is prohibited.

After the act of jumping from the pier into the deeper water of the harbour entrance channel, to regain access to the pier top persons must climb or swim through underneath the pier, to access the steps on the north side. The concrete beams, while structurally sound, are covered in barnacles, and have areas where metalwork is exposed. The risks of injury, entrapment, and the potential for drowning underneath the pier are subsequently compounded.

Antisocial Behaviour

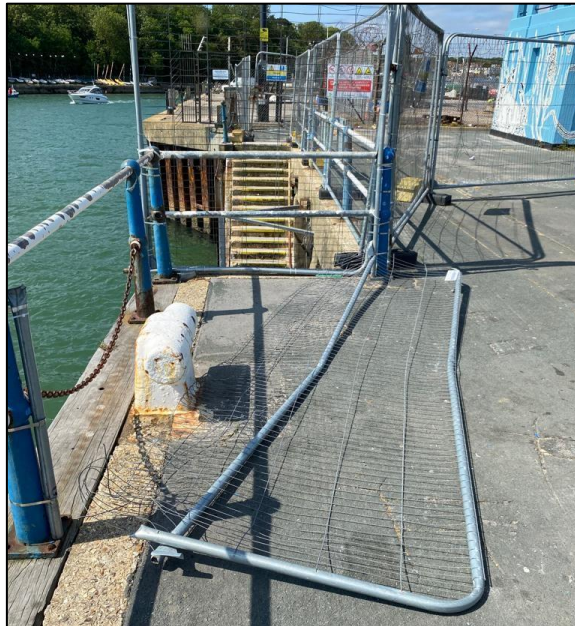
Due to the perception of being 'out of sight', the Pleasure Pier has become a frequent venue for anti-social behaviour. Located at the tip of the Peninsula car park, the pier is away from the busy and popular public areas of Weymouth, and areas of the pier are shielded from general view. The perpetrators of the behaviour are typically within the age range of early to late teenage years, occasionally with young adults being involved.

The Harbour Team respond frequently to reports of jumping from the pier, and anti-social behaviour. The team are frequently met with verbal abuse, and the refusal to cooperate with requests to cease activities and move elsewhere. Recently a member of staff in a patrol vessel had items thrown at him while he attempted to communicate with persons jumping from the steps.

Since the start of the good weather following Easter this year, harbour staff have attended over 40 notable and recorded incidents at the Pleasure Pier. During periods of school holidays, the required presence of harbour staff, often assisted by Police Officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Community Safety (CSAS) Officers is an almost daily occurrence. The strain on the resources of an already extremely busy team is huge and has a detrimental effect, not only on the level of service and duty of care we provide to other harbour users but also has an observable negative effect on the mental health and wellbeing of the staff engaging with the continuing abusive, aggressive, and threatening behaviour.

Items of rubbish, usually brought by groups of the offenders, are set on fire. Life rings are frequently removed and deliberately hidden or thrown into the sea. This life-saving apparatus is critical rescue equipment and interfering with LSA puts lives at risk. Harbour staff are also put at further risk when retrieving the life rings from below the pier. To maintain safety in this situation, two persons are deployed, often with a support vessel, which constitutes a large and repetitive strain on resources.

Heras fencing that has been deployed to try to deter persons from accessing dangerous areas has been repeatedly damaged and/or torn down. This in turn must be replaced, at a cost not only in materials but also staff time.



The anti-social behaviour is often fuelled by drug and alcohol abuse, with drug taking paraphernalia, and broken glass from bottles of alcohol being found and cleared up by harbour staff on a very regular basis and causing a persistent risk to the public.

In a recent discussion with a Targeted Youth Worker for Dorset Council, the issues that are being reported were highlighted:

- Peer-on-peer abuse (fighting, bullying)
- Violence (reports of weapons being used)
- Sexual assaults (peer-on-peer)
- Substance misuse (predominantly alcohol and cannabis)
- Young people being approached by adults from the car park
- Theft of items from each other
- General ASB (vandalism, graffiti)
- Abuse towards adults/members of the public

The following statement from the Dorset Council Community Safety Team outlines their concerns:

19 June 2023

PIER JUMPING ISSUES WEYMOUTH

Reports continue to be received by the Dorset Council Community Safety Team via our CSAS patrol officers on almost a daily basis and especially throughout the weekends and summer season. The reports consist of young people jumping into the Weymouth Harbour area from the pavilion pier and causing ASB in the general area, both are intrinsically linked. This has been an issue for many years and the Dorset Council Community Safety Team have a concern that a serious injury or worse could take place at the location with the current behaviours that are being witnessed almost daily and especially during the summer season.

Concerns

- *Our concern is that either a serious injury or death may occur to those individuals' pier jumping and causing ASB in close proximity to the water.*
- *Those that intentionally jump from the pier may be at risk of serious injury or death due to the vessels entering and leaving the harbour one side, and rocks and low water levels the other side. Debris has in the past been thrown into the water which may cause a further risk of injury to those jumping in, or entering the water to recover them, or to vessels passing by.*
- *Agencies (CSAS officers) who are in attendance to challenge the behaviour are being met with aggression and as such may suffer injury because of a physical confrontation on the pier.*

However, if nothing is done young people will continue to gather cause ASB and jump from the pier location, CSAS resources are already stretched, and agencies cannot be ever present. Enforcement, education, and regeneration need to be considered. But as previously mentioned this has been going on for years and will not stop/reduce until new measures are implemented.

To that end CST supports any preventative measures the harbour team can implement such as installing a gate/signage etc to safeguard youths and visitors and also agencies dealing with incidents

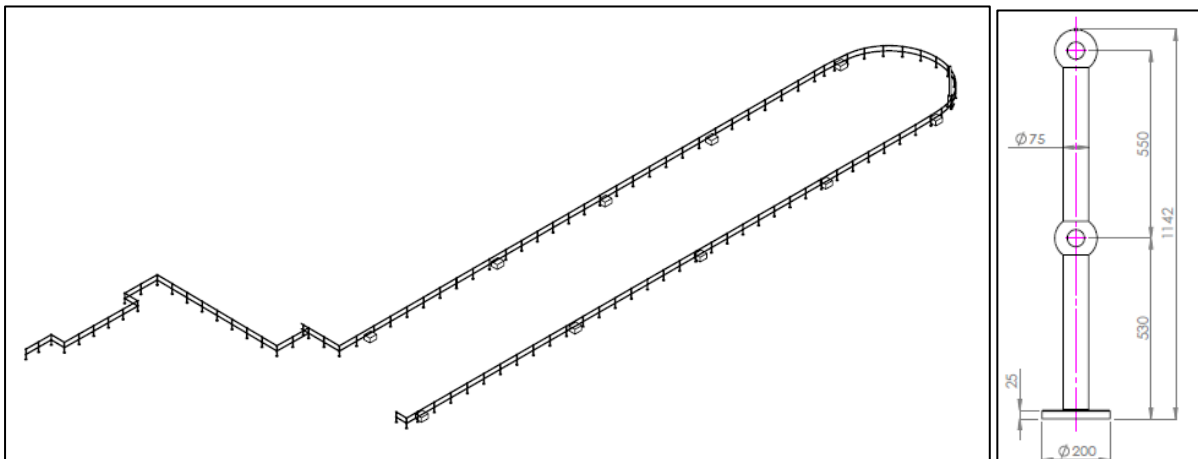
Yours Sincerely

Martin Wickenden
Community Safety Officer
Weymouth & Portland
Dorset Council

Pier Railings

The railings surrounding the pier are the first stage in keeping the public safe. As highlighted in the October 2022 structural survey, *“the varying condition of the handrails along the top of the pier combined with the poor condition of the supporting timbers makes it unsuitable for safe public access.”*

Replacement of the railings is about to take place. Following a design and tender process, a contractor has been appointed, and installation is scheduled to commence at the end of July.



The railings are being replaced around the entire edge of the pier. Across the top of the emergency access steps, where previously there was only loose chain, the railings will be installed right across the top, with clear, vandal-proof signage in place to notify people of the dangers, and that access down the steps is prohibited.

Signage has been redesigned to encompass ISO 7010 compliant hazard symbology, along with current Dorset Council and Weymouth Harbour branding. These new signs will be fitted as the railings are installed.



Anti-Climb Fence & Gate

Need & Proposed Use

Weymouth Harbour works closely with Dorset Police and the Dorset Council Community Safety Team in policing the pier, and through consultation with Social Workers and Crime Prevention Officers we continue to explore all options to manage anti-social behaviour.

However, despite the best and continued efforts of all agencies, it is considered only a matter of time before a serious, potentially life-threatening injury is sustained, or a fatality occurs, due to the continued high level of anti-social and irresponsible behaviour that is demonstrated at the pier.

Currently, while offenders are regularly moved on from the area, the offenders swiftly return, often within a matter of hours or minutes, as officers continue with their duties and move to other locations. This level of engagement, and the resources currently required to manage safety in this area are not sustainable and takes all officers away from duties elsewhere.

Further to a visit from Debbie Oldfield, a Crime Prevention Officer with Dorset Police, Debbie said *“Following my visit to Weymouth on the 2nd of June in response to the anti-social behaviour that is occurring on the pier, I fully support the need for a gate to be installed.”*

All agencies involved in the management of the pier are united in the idea that a coded-access gate and suitable anti-climb fencing would be a huge benefit, by providing a direct and clear consequence to the actions of the offenders, in enabling us to remove, and keep removed, the primary perpetrators. By identifying when activities are patently unsafe, and the instructions of officers tasked with enforcement and safety management are not being followed, by the act of closing the pier the problem elements can be effectively and quickly removed, with the pier being re-opened when it is judged that the risk has subsided. This clear message that not only will the ongoing behaviour not be tolerated, but that swift and decisive action will be taken, will provide a much-needed deterrent. The installation of the gate and fence will greatly assist in the fulfilment and enforcement of the Weymouth Anti-social Behaviour Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2022.

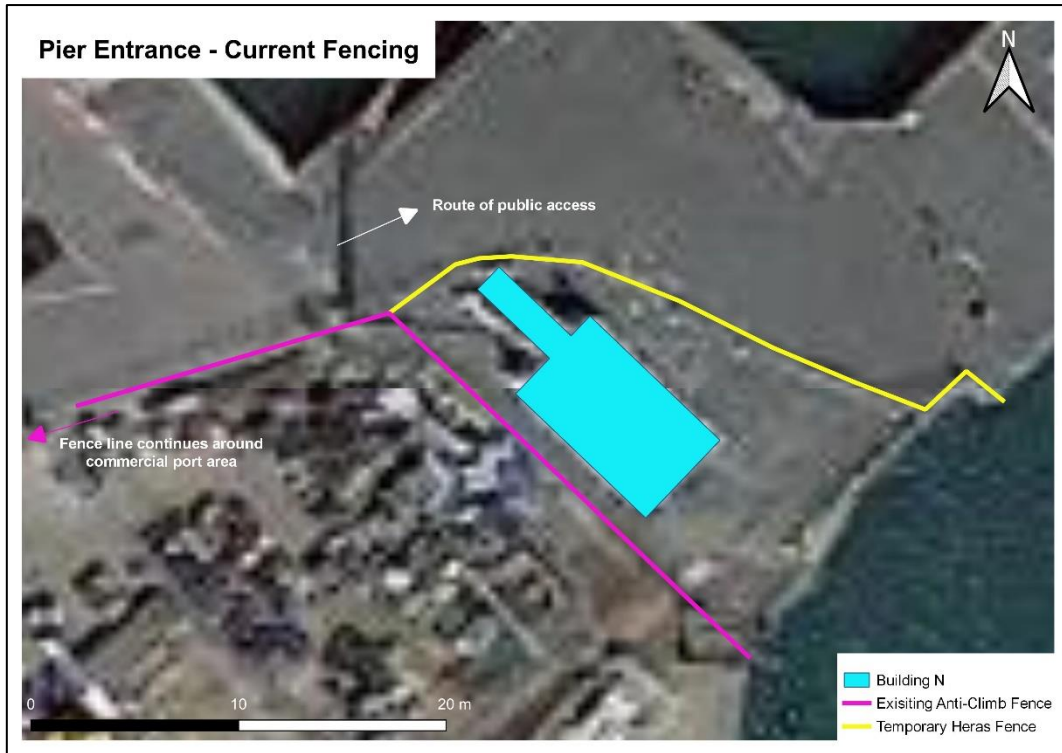
To reduce the impact of a temporary pier closure, it is proposed that to allow bona fide users, such as the Weymouth Angling Society, to continue to enjoy the area in a safe and responsible manner, a system can be put in place that will allow the controlled communication of the gate code. This will provide authorised persons continued access to the pier, even when it has been closed due to continuing anti-social behaviour.

In future, there may also be the requirement, predominantly due to bad weather during winter months, to close the pier for a period to further protect public safety. This will be considered, and a framework drawn up that stipulates in what level of adverse weather conditions it would be dangerous for members of the public to access the pier, and to subsequently require a temporary closure.

Design & Placement

The entrance path to the pier is located at the eastern extent of the commercial port area. Access to the port area is restricted to unauthorised persons for several reasons, movement of vehicles such as lorries and forklifts, areas for the storage of commercial marine hardware, and unguarded quay edges. During the period that cross-channel ferries were visiting Weymouth the fences also provided border security. Currently, the fences primarily maintain the secure and safe operation of both harbour and commercial berth holder assets and property.

At its connection to the peninsula the pier is at its widest, approximately 30m, and the existing and ageing anti-climb fence crosses 23m of this area, securing the port area. This existing fence is scheduled to be replaced in the upcoming delivery of the Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project, expected to be completed by Spring 2024.



A building at the shore end of the pier is an old public lavatory facility, known as Building N.

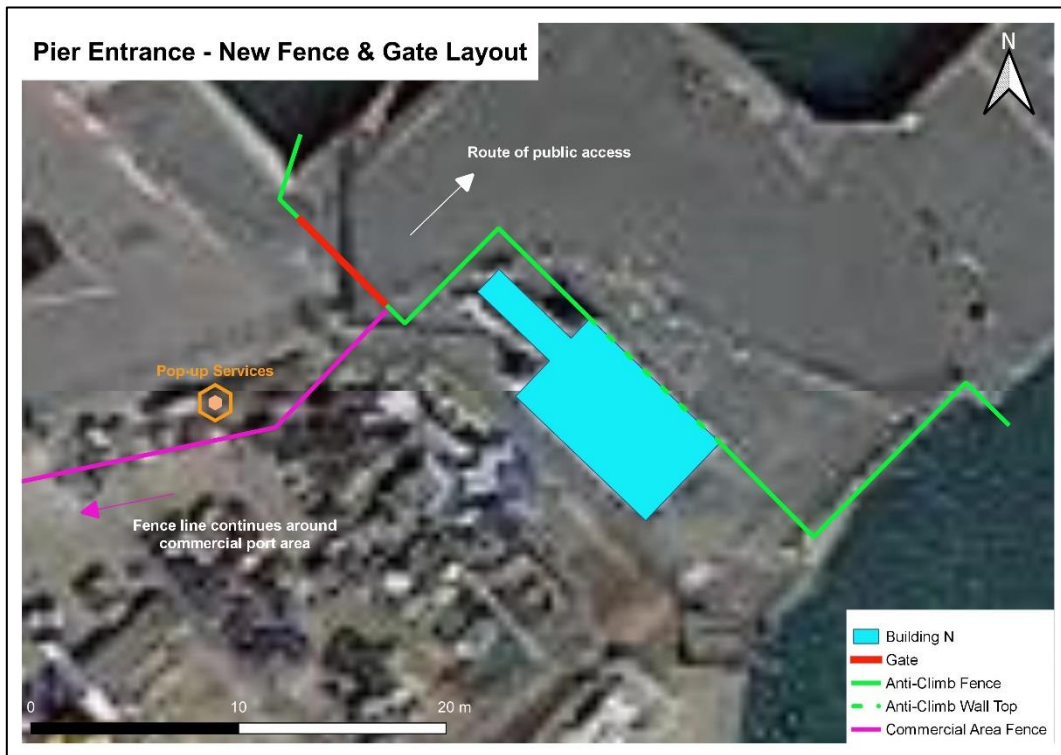


A mural was painted on the building by a local artist in 2022 for the Weymouth Town Council Art Trail, as part of a wider beautification project. To protect the mural, the original proposal was that decorative heritage fencing would surround the building. However, due to the increase in anti-social behaviour and damage to the building, and to try to discourage the building becoming a focal gathering point for such behaviour, temporary Heras fencing had to quickly be installed to prevent access. With the installation of new fencing, the additional Heras fencing will no longer be required.



Following the installation of new fencing, Building N will be repurposed for commercial use and options are being considered.

To this end, the building will remain within the restricted access commercial area, however, as shown below, to provide a larger public area and to bring the mural back into the public domain, the eastern wall of the building will be encompassed into the fence line, with anti-climb structure continuing along the wall top. To prevent access around the fence when the gate is closed, the fence will extend out a short distance over the wall edge.

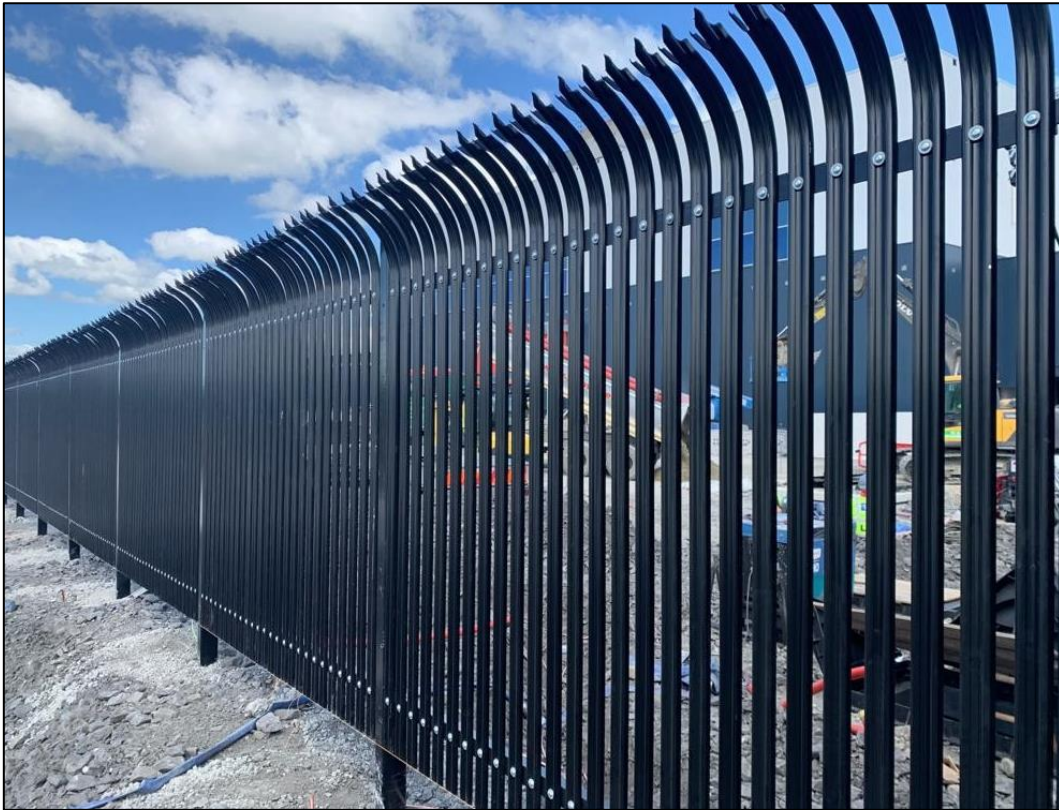


Specification

Following discussion and advice from a specialist manufacturer, it has been recommended that the fence product Stronguard™ SL2 is installed. Stronguard™ SL2 is a heavily tested, robust palisade fencing system (LPS 1175 Issue 8 B3 security rated) that has been created to meet the high-security requirements of police facilities, airports and ports, data centres, high-risk schools, utility plants, critical national infrastructure, and industrial and commercial premises. Due to its palisade structure, Stronguard™ SL2 is flexible to its installation environment and ground conditions.

The anti-climb element of the fence is formed by curved 'pales' at the top of the fence line, in place of the more traditional barbed or razor wire. The 2.4m high fence is available in marine

grade finish, and in a range of colours, making the fence more aesthetically sympathetic for a public area.



The fence will be fitted with a manual swing pedestrian gate, that can be secured using a padlock.

Full design and costing of the proposal will be sought through a tendering process, in line with Dorset Council policy.

Requirement for Planning Permission

Part 12 Class A of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 defines permitted development as:

A. The erection or construction and the maintenance, improvement, or other alteration by a local authority or by an urban development corporation of:

(a) any small ancillary building, works or equipment on land belonging to or maintained by them required for the purposes of any function exercised by them on that land otherwise than as statutory undertakers

In the above context, reference to any small ancillary building, works or equipment is a reference to any ancillary building, works or equipment not exceeding 4 metres in height or 200 cubic metres in capacity.

As such, the planned installation of a 2.4m high fence and gate falls within the scope of Part 12 Class A and does not require Planning Permission.

Encouraging & Increasing Public Footfall

Anti-social behaviour and activities thrive in urban areas that are away from the general public, and the perpetrators of such behaviour naturally gravitate to places where they believe their

activities are shielded or hidden from general public view. By making the pier a more pleasant and safer destination, public footfall will be encouraged, and as the pier becomes busier, the individuals and groups that are the primary source of the anti-social behaviour will naturally find the area less appealing.

Beautification

Utilising funding available to Weymouth Harbour through the Community Infrastructure Levy, and supported by harbour reserves, it is planned that the same local artist will return to the pier to install more artwork. The raised pad in the centre of the pier will be levelled and a low ramp installed to provide access for all, and a mural painted on top.

Benches and bait tables situated on the Weymouth Bay side of the Pier will encourage walkers and anglers, Dorset residents, and visitors to spend more time at the pier.

SeaHives, structures designed to provide aquatic life with surfaces and shelter where they can settle, grow, mature and breed, sponsored by Weymouth Town Council, the Weymouth Sealife Centre and with funding from the National Lottery, were installed underneath the pier in 2022. Information and engagement displays, with a QR code link to proposed underwater cameras will enable people to view the SeaHives in safety, and to learn about the wealth of wildlife to be found in the surrounding waters, without causing disturbance to sea life or habitat.

Pop-up Services

To further increase footfall in the area, it is proposed to find an external business to operate a mobile coffee shop, or similar. A unit, as is commonly seen at markets, fairs, festivals, and the like, would be self-sufficient, quick, and easy to get to site, and will not require on site power or water supplies.

The optimum placement for this would be at the eastern corner of the car park, immediately prior to the pier entrance, on the car park side of the gate, as indicated on the previous design.

Pop-up services like this are increasingly popular, and with the customer base of the Pavilion car park to draw upon, people will be attracted to the area, and subsequently the pier.

If this proves as popular as hoped, then it will be discussed whether a more permanent café-style business, within its own building, is appropriate.

Summary

The Pleasure Pier in Weymouth is currently facing significant challenges related to public safety and anti-social behaviour. These issues not only jeopardize the safety of the public and officers tasked with enforcement, but also disrupts the enjoyment of the pier and harbour.

Anti-social behaviour is on the rise at the Pleasure Pier. Persons engaging in such behaviour cause disturbances, damage property, and exhibit aggression towards staff and other members of the public. This behaviour creates an unpleasant environment for those who wish to enjoy the pier and deters people from visiting the area.

To address these pressing issues, this proposal details the plan to install an access gate with anti-climb fencing at the entrance of the pier. This gate would serve several purposes. Firstly, when needed it would regulate access to the pier, allowing only authorized users to enter. This would help ensure that individuals who engage in dangerous or anti-social behaviour are

prevented from accessing the pier. By controlling access, the gate would provide a significant boost to public safety and help prevent accidents and injuries.

The gate would assist the enforcement of the Weymouth Anti-social Behaviour Related Public Spaces Protection Order. This order aims to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all visitors by prohibiting certain behaviours and empowering authorities to act against offenders. With a gated entrance, it would be easier to monitor and enforce compliance with this order.

In addition to these benefits, the gate would also allow for temporary closure during adverse weather conditions or ongoing safety risks. This flexibility ensures that the pier can be closed when necessary to protect harbour users from hazards such as storms or other safety concerns. It would provide a level of control that is currently lacking and help prevent accidents or injuries that may arise due to unsafe conditions.

Overall, installing an access gate at the Pleasure Pier in Weymouth would significantly enhance public safety, deter anti-social behaviour, and protect harbour staff and enforcement officers in the delivery of their duties. A gate would effectively manage and reduce the risks associated with jumping and diving from the pier. It would create a more pleasant and secure environment for everyone to enjoy the pier while relieving the strain on resources required to manage these issues.