

South Hams Public Toilet Review

The factors which have been considered when assessing options for each public toilet are:

- Water usage – broadly speaking, we have classed footfall for each facility as high, medium or low and this has been determined using annual water costs to give an estimation of use –
High – cost more than £1,500 per annum
Medium – cost between £1,000 and £1,499
Low – cost less than £999.
However, this cannot be used as a guide in isolation and all other factors have been taken into account in reaching recommendations.
- In some cases, where Pay on Entry (PoE) has been considered as an option, Healthmatic, the Council's appointed contractor has reviewed toilet facilities and estimated footfall and, where this is available, this has been used as part of the assessment.
- Value of the consumables used in public toilets have also been used as a guide. This assists when looked at in conjunction with water usage.
- The location of the public toilets, other public toilets or non-Council owned toilet facilities have also been considered.
- The condition of each toilet has also been considered, together with the cost of bringing facilities up to a standard where the Council could justify charging for their use.
- Officers have assessed the viability of PoE systems. This has been based on cost of installation, anticipated income and the resulting pay-back period. The business case typically shows a pay-back period of up to 5 years.
- In towns with more than one facility, there is a requirement to have a consistent approach, to avoid the situation where a PoE is installed at one site which drives up footfall on another site.
- A further consideration is the cost of the District Council running public toilets in relation to transport, labour, fuel etc. A Town or Parish Council is likely to find that it can substantially reduce these costs.

Using the above considerations, the business case for each facility has been assessed and a summary of the context, rationale and key data is presented below in alphabetical order by Town or Parish.

Bigbury

Bigbury toilets are classed as high footfall and are exceptionally busy during the summer months, with water charges at £5,650 per annum. The vast majority of this water usage is during the tourist season. The estimated usage from Healthmatic analysis is 100,000 people per annum. On this basis, PoE was recommended.

The toilets are located in the District Council-run car park and most customers are beach visitors.

At over £32,000 running costs, this is one of our most expensive toilets. It is estimated that PoE income could generate annual income to contribute to these costs of £8,000.

The original proposal to install PoE at Bigbury was considered by the Parish Council, who have responded to say that they would prefer that the income that would have been generated from PoE be generated from parking charges instead, so that customers only have to pay once. Where a public toilet is so intrinsically linked to the car park, this does seem to be a good solution, so is the recommendation to the Executive.

Should the recommendation to review parking charges to generate the required income level be resolved, it will be important to ensure that signs in Bigbury car park highlight this, so that customers know their parking fee is also directly contributing towards the cost of running the public toilet.

Dartmouth – Manor Gardens

Whilst the water costs of £1,350 per annum would put Manor Gardens in to the medium footfall category, it should be remembered that this facility is in a very busy town, so it would be natural to expect higher water costs if it was used as frequently as other town centre toilets. The total cost of running this toilet is £18,270 per annum.

Following the recent large-scale asset transfer to Dartmouth Town Council, where three public toilet facilities were transferred from the District Council, this is the one remaining District Council facility. The other facilities available in Dartmouth are in a better condition.

Due to the value of the building and land, it is recommended that this facility close. It is further recommended that the District Council should retain the freehold but alternative uses for both the land building and are considered, which would generate income for the District Council. Three other public toilets are in close proximity, along with many cafes and pubs in the town.

Dittisham – The Ham

This facility has low footfall, with water costs of £415 per annum and most of the use is concentrated on the holiday period. Healthmatic have estimated footfall at 20,000 per annum.

Due to the higher footfall in summer months it is recommended that PoE is installed so that we are equitable in the way in which all coastal public toilets are dealt with.

The Parish Council has indicated an acceptance of PoE, which will be in the form of two Coinpay units, and the pay-back period on the capital cost will be just over five years.

East Portlemouth – Ferry Steps & Mill Bay

Water costs for the Ferry Steps facility are low at £106.00 per annum but, as this is another coastal location, that is the reason that PoE is being recommended. In addition it should be noted that there is a septic tank at this site, which keeps the water charges down. Septic tank emptying costs were £3,975 last year, which puts this facility firmly in the high footfall category. Healthmatic estimate footfall at 25,000 per annum.

Mill Bay toilet has higher water usage (£508 per annum) but this facility also has a septic tank which brings the facility up to the high footfall category. Healthmatic estimate a lower footfall at this facility than at nearby Ferry Steps, of 15,000 per annum. The building is in need of a new roof and other maintenance work. The original proposal for this building was that PoE should be installed. However, there is no electricity to the building which would mean the PoE would be solar-powered and, due to the tree canopy surrounding the building, it is felt that such a scheme would result in frustration for customers and complaints to the Council, as the system would be unreliable.

Of the two toilet facilities in East Portlemouth, Ferry Steps represents the most economical long-term solution to provide a public toilet service in the parish.

Officers will be meeting with the National Trust in the near future, who own the land surrounding the Mill Bay public toilet, and this will be one of the topics of discussion. Should the National Trust, or another stakeholder, be willing to take on the facility, it is recommended that the stakeholder pay 75% of the total running costs next financial year, with a full asset transfer taking place by financial year 2020/ 21. If this is not achievable, it should close in September 2019.

Holbeton

Due to the low footfall, with water charges of £571 per annum, in this facility, it is recommended that it transfer to the Parish Council or close. Officers met with the Parish Council on 11th September, and the Council are still considering the way forward. There are two pubs in close proximity to the toilets.

Ivybridge – Glanville’s Mill

Water rates for Glanville’s Mill toilets are £7,435 per annum, which would indicate a high footfall. Healthmatic have estimated a footfall of 10,000 per annum.

PoE has been recommended for this facility, partly so that we have a consistent approach to all town centre facilities, and the Town Council has indicated that it has no objection to this approach. The pay-back period is estimated to be 6.8 years which is higher than our target but as stated above it is important to provide a consistent approach across the town centre to avoid driving usage to free facilities and away from PoE sites.

Kingsbridge – Fore Street

Water charges for Fore Street toilets are £1,734 indicating high usage. Although the original proposal for Fore Street was to install PoE, in line with other town centre facilities, the Town Council has requested that the toilets remain free to use, and the Town Council will pay to the District Council the amount that PoE would have generated.

Although there is already a PoE facility at the Quay it is felt, by the Town Council, that these are largely used by visitors to the area, with Fore Street being used mostly by local residents, hence the wish to keep it free for the current time. The use of water supports this theory. Water charges are less than half of that for the Quay, despite the requirement to pay to use.

Kingswear – Higher Ferry and Lower Ferry

Higher Ferry public toilets have exceptionally low use and are closed in the winter months. Water charges are £452 per annum indicating very low usage. These were previously used more but, now that the Higher Ferry has capacity for more vehicles and passengers, those passengers don’t have to wait so long to cross the river so don’t have the same need for a public toilet. However, due to the value of the plot that the toilets are on, and the fact that they are little used, it is recommended that they close permanently with immediate effect and that the land and building are sold by auction.

Lower Ferry public toilets had water charges £1,843 in 2017/ 18. However, the building has been closed for all of this financial year due to a leaking roof, which made the building unsafe to use. The roof is not the responsibility of the District Council and we have been in dispute with the responsible party over the repairs, which are now, however, almost completed. It should be noted that we have received no complaints or comments about the length of time that this facility has been unavailable for use. The building has a restriction on it which means that it can only be used as a public toilet. We have received comments from the Parish Council that indicate they may wish to take on the

asset, but with reduced toilet capacity, providing only one unisex disabled facility. Officers are meeting with the Parish Council for further discussion on 30th November. Should the Parish Council decide not to take on the asset, there are two pubs within close proximity of the toilet building, and it will close in September 2019.

Malborough

Water charges at Malborough are only £334 per annum, which indicates a low footfall. However, the Parish Council has confirmed that it would like to take on the facility with an asset transfer. Should this not have been the case, there is a pub only a short walk from the public toilet building and further public toilets available in nearby Salcombe.

Newton & Noss – Newton Ferrers

Again, water charges indicate a relatively low footfall at £979 per annum. Discussions were held with the Parish Council on 8th November but the PC has subsequently decided against an asset transfer. The toilets are already closed during the winter months and it is recommended that they are closed permanently in September 2019. There is a café close to the toilet building and a pub approximately five minutes' walk away.

Salcombe town centre – Batson Creek, Cliff House Gardens and Whitestrand

The solutions proposed for Salcombe town centre are mindful of the principle that, if PoE is installed in one town facility, it should be installed in all to avoid driving customers to a free facility.

Although water charges for Batson Creek are relatively low for such a busy town (£1713 per annum), PoE has been recommended so that, in Salcombe town centre, both Batson Creek and Whitestrand toilets operate in the same way. This is also consistent with other towns in the District. Although, initially, it may appear that PoE would not be worthwhile for Batson Creek, Whitestrand PoE would not be successful without it, as such a step would drive customers to use the free toilet. Healthmatic have estimated footfall at 25,000.

Although there is space for paddle-gates at Batson Creek, and that is the recommended solution from our contracted PoE provider, Coinpay units should be considered, as these are cheaper to install and maintain, at approximately half the cost of a paddle-gate. This would also reduce the capital pay-back period to approximately eight years, rather than 15.

For Whitestrand, PoE is a clear recommendation. Water charges are £13,459 per annum, which indicate an exceptionally high footfall (estimated at 100,000 per annum by Healthmatic).

The Harbour Board will consider whether it may wish to take on both Batson Creek and Whitestrand public toilets, but the issue is the subject of a workshop to be held on 19th November and it is anticipated that officers will be able to give Members a verbal update on this at the Executive meeting.

There was previously no recommendation made for Cliff House Gardens but further consideration of this has resulted in the recommendation to transfer or close the facility. The building is in need of much maintenance work and, with Whitestrand toilets only a few minutes' walk away, it doesn't seem worthwhile investing in these toilets. Footfall is low for such a busy town (water costs are £603 per annum). The toilet building is on charity land, which precludes a freehold disposal, and its use is limited to recreational or ancillary to recreational. Next door a previous public toilet building has been developed into a takeaway facility, so a complimentary type of business could be considered in the future.

Salcombe periphery –North Sands and South Sands

North Sands and South Sands toilets are recommended for PoE – both are busy facilities in the summer months. Water charges are £2,013 for North Sands and £1,702 for South Sands, which indicates high footfall. Healthmatic have estimated footfall at 25,000 per facility. Installing PoE at these sites will ensure that all coastal locations are treated equitably, with a pay-back period of 4.4 and 4.2 years respectively.

South Brent – Shipley Bridge and South Brent

Both facilities in South Brent have low footfall, as indicated by the water charges of £702 for South Brent and £287 for Shipley Bridge.

South Brent Parish Council has agreed to an asset transfer of the facility within the town, so this one will remain open.

Shipley Bridge is owned by South West Water but leased to Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA). The District Council has no responsibility to dispose of or demolish the building so it is recommended that notice is given to DNPA that the cleaning service will cease in September 2019 and the building will be transferred back to them. DNPA will then have the option to either arrange cleaning or close the facility.

South Huish – Hope Cove

Hope Cove is a busy toilet, particularly during the summer months, and water charges are approximately £1,563 per annum. Although not originally recommended for PoE that is now the case, so that all coastal locations become PoE or equivalent.

South Milton

Water charges for South Milton are £2,017 per annum but much of the footfall is concentrated on the summer months. The original proposal was that the nearby café manager should contribute 75% of the cost of running this public toilet (they already contribute towards winter opening of the facility). However, as the café is leased from the National Trust, officers will also discuss the issue with National Trust officers at a meeting in the near future. It is now recommended that, unless a 75% contribution from one or more of those stakeholders is achieved next financial year, with an asset transfer to be completed by financial year 2020/ 21, it should be closed in September 2019.

Staverton

Water charges at Staverton are only £564 per annum, which indicates low usage, and the facility is already closed during the winter months. Nonetheless the Parish Council is still considering an asset transfer. Should a transfer not take place then the facility will be closed in September 2019. There is a pub across the road from the toilet building.

Stoke Fleming

Stoke Fleming public toilet water charges are £1,622, which would seem to indicate high footfall. However, the use of consumables doesn't support this, so a possible water leak or fault is currently being investigated. There is an alternative public toilet in the playing field but this is only open when there are events on the field. In addition, there is a nearby pub but this has limited opening hours. Stoke Fleming Parish Council has confirmed that an asset transfer is not required so the recommendation is that this facility should close in September 2019.

Stokenham – Torcross

PoE was originally recommended for Torcross toilets due to the high summer footfall. Water charges are £5,787 with most use concentrated in the holiday season. Healthmatic estimate footfall

at 25,000 per annum. However, as with Bigbury, the toilets and car park are intrinsically linked so the same solution seems sensible as it will save the District Council the cost of installing and maintaining PoE equipment. As in Bigbury, the initiative will need to be highlighted by signs in the car park. This recommendation to review parking charges will also give the opportunity to review the overnight parking charge in all car parks along the Slapton line, as this hasn't worked as anticipated. The Parish Council has indicated its support of this proposal.

Strete – Strete Gate

Again, the use of the public toilet at Strete Gate is concentrated in the holiday season. Water charges are £341 per annum. This is another facility which has a septic tank and the costs of emptying this would bring the facility into the high footfall category. It is recommended that the parking charges at Strete Gate be reviewed, as per Stokenham above.

Thurlestone

Water rates at Thurlestone cost £809 per annum, which indicates limited use, and the facility is already closed during the winter months. Nonetheless the Parish Council has requested that the asset be transferred, so the facility will remain open. Should this not be the case then the facility will be closed in September 2019. There is a hotel/ pub located approximately three minutes' walk from the toilet building.

Totnes – Civic Hall, Coronation Road and Steamer Quay

Totnes toilets seem to have a steady stream of high footfall, although this does peak during the summer months. Water charges are £4,404 for Civic Hall, £4,761 for Coronation Road and £4,942 for Steamer Quay. The Town Council has indicated an acceptance of the proposal to install PoE in Totnes, which is the recommended course of action.

In Steamer Quay toilets, a card reader or token system will allow free access for the nearby café staff and ferry office staff. It seems that many of the customers here have arrived in the town by coach or ferry so it is important that we highlight the requirement for payment with local organisations who may bring their passengers to the town.

Ugborough – Bittaford and Ugborough

Both Bittaford and Ugborough public toilets are closed during the winter months and both have exceptionally low footfall. Water charges for Ugborough are £351 per annum and £98 for Bittaford.

Officers met with the Parish Council on 3rd October but a decision on whether an asset transfer will be required has not yet been made. The Parish Council will reconsider the matter at their meeting on 5th December.

Should an asset transfer not take place, there is a pub very close to the facility in Bittaford, plus Glanville's Mill public toilet in nearby Ivybridge. In Ugborough, there are three pubs near to the toilet building.

Wembury

Wembury public toilet has high footfall, with water charges at £4,123 per annum, but largely focussed on the summer months. Healthmatic have estimated footfall at 20,000 per annum which isn't as high as at other coastal locations.

The original proposal was to install PoE at this facility, but we have since determined that the current lease of the building, which is owned by the National Trust, expires in June 2020. As the building is surrounded by National Trust land, it is now recommended that we simply allow the lease to expire.

Should the National Trust require it, we will have an obligation to demolish the building, but it seems more likely that we will be able to negotiate a sum in lieu of this.