

**PUBLIC CONVENIENCE DOOR ACCESS CONTROL PROJECT UPDATE**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council had previously agreed as part of a budget exercise to introduce charging at 16 high footfall public conveniences. This project has progressed over the past few months and at the time of writing there are nine sites where the charging system has been installed. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the project.
- 1.2 There have been a number of implementation issues experienced during the install process and there remain 7 locations to be fitted plus 2 possible additional sites as outlined within this report.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to:

- 2.1 Note the update provided within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether it would be appropriate to defer the remaining site installations until after the summer season to ensure we have further detail on the reliability of the installations. Note that any delay should not impact on the budgeted income target as it is anticipated that this should be achieved from the current sites that are operational.
- 2.3 Agree that the Rothesay Victoriana and Moir Street/Riverside facilities which have now returned to the Council should be categorised as high use and quotes sought for charging installations at these sites.

**3.0 DETAIL**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Council had previously agreed to allocate £100,000 to a door access control project to install charging infrastructure at 16 high footfall public

conveniences on the basis of offsetting some of the costs of providing 60 public conveniences across Argyll and Bute. The provision of public conveniences is a non-statutory service for which the Council receives no specific Grant Aided Expenditure Allocation (GAE) from the Scottish Government.

- 3.2 To help identify high footfall PCs we had previously purchased a dozen counting devices with the intention of rotating these across the estate. The counters provided figures of such a huge variance that the data could not be considered to be accurate, and it was therefore not robust enough to form part of any decision making process. As an alternative, officers utilised the knowledge and expertise of local operatives who are familiar with the PCs in their area (materials used; requirements for cleaning; complaints; damage etc.). This was a straightforward way to establish footfall into three broad categories – high; medium; low.
- 3.3 A procurement exercise progressed and a single return was received from Healthmatics, who are a sector-leading provider of access systems for toilets, parks, recreation grounds and public buildings across the UK
- 3.4 That return was significantly higher than the budget so additional funding was sought and approved from Crown Estate monies. £200,000 was allocated at the October 2022 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, giving a total project budget of £300,000. The total contract value is £270,000, however the Oban North Pier scheme was quoted as a full install but is only a retrofit of a contactless payment option onto the existing system, so a small saving will be made there.
- 3.5 The contract was awarded to Healthmatics. Due to the geographic spread of sites the contract was awarded on a phased basis, with the original intention that the full programme be delivered between September and December 2023. The mobilisation period between contract award and works on site was much longer than we would have liked.

### **Installations**

- 3.6 The contractor mobilised to site at the end of September 2023. There were a number of issues with the delivery of the infrastructure works which prevented the activation of the installed systems before Christmas and delayed the roll-out of the full programme. The issues included the contractor initially delivering the wrong doors and subsequently there were issues with the supporting software.
- 3.7 Defects and snagging issues were worked through in January 2024 and the Phase One sites were activated on a rolling basis at the end of January and beginning of February.

### **System issues**

- 3.8 Over the weekend of 17<sup>th</sup> February customers were paying but were unable to access the facilities. Council staff on site and staff in the project team came in over that weekend to set the systems to free and open each site up to ensure customers could gain access. Due to the significance of the issues the system

was completely deactivated at all sites to eliminate any further inconvenience to the public.

- 3.9 Following these issues we urgently engaged with the contractor and asked them to investigate the issues and provide a reactivation plan.
- 3.10 The contractor advised that the overarching issues were as a result of an unintended software update to the cellular modems which control the doors on each site. This seems to have resulted in communication being lost to the online portal because it caused a loss of data connection. The contractor visited each site and cleared this fault, and locked the routers to a long term support version which they advise means there will be no more of these issues.

### **Reactivation**

- 3.11 Given the scale of the issues, we reactivated the systems on a phased approach, site by site initially, and closely monitored their operation to ensure that we were confident that the system was reliable. The reactivation dates are noted in the below table:

<b>Site</b>	<b>Date</b>
Ardrishaig	26 March
Lochgilphead	2 April
Glenmorag	16 April
Sandbank	16 April
Helensburgh	29 April
Inveraray	29 April
Colintraive	30 April
Tighnabruaich	30 April
Port Bannatyne	30 April

- 3.12 At the time of writing this report (12 June) since reactivation the systems are operating as expected 92.5% of the time. There have been isolated incidents recorded on 1.5% of operating days and the systems have had to be deactivated because of problems on 5.9% of operating days (the latter being across four sites – Ardrishaig, Port Bannatyne, Lochgilphead and Inveraray where the systems were temporarily deactivated.) At the time of writing this report eight of the nine sites are operating and the one site which is not is being attended to by the contractor. The contractor has been responsive to any issues which have arisen since reactivation.

### **Income**

- 3.13 We do not yet have figures for cash collected across all sites as at the time of writing this report it has not all been banked/processed. Across the sites (four) that the cash has been banked, the Council has taken in £3,398. The contactless payments have generated £7,135 as at 30<sup>th</sup> May. Once the system has operated reliably for a season across all sites we will be able to show income per site and model possible future income.

- 3.14 The Oban North Pier site has an existing cash charging system which generated £10,418 last year. In addition we have honesty boxes at a number of other sites, which raised £1,486 in the same period.

### Next steps

- 3.15 The remaining sites identified for installations are:

Area	Site
Lorn	Oban North Pier (contactless retrofit)
	Ganavan
Islay	Bowmore
	Port Ellen
	Bridgend
Mull	Fionnphort
Bute	Chapel Hill (held over from Phase One)

- 3.16 We have asked the contractor to provide a new programme for these installations. Members may wish to take a view on the timing of the next phase given the issues experienced in the first phase. It may be prudent to allow the first phase sites to run for the season at least to have a greater amount of data to assess the overall reliability of the system.
- 3.17 Since the original list was developed, two sites have come back to the Council from third parties – Moir Street (the Riverside in Dunoon) and the Rothesay Victoriana. These are both clearly well used facilities and in addition to the agreed Phase Two sites we have asked the contractor for a quote to install the systems at these sites. In the case of Rothesay Victoriana, any proposal would need to be sensitive to the building's listed status and be appropriate and in keeping with the setting. In addition to charging for access to the toilets we can also look at a charging system for the showers. It is expected that, these additional schemes would be able to be delivered from available funds.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The door access control project is progressing. There have been a number of issues with the installations which the project team has worked through with the contractor. Presently the new systems are operating at over 90% reliability.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – the Council has an existing position to charge for access to high use public conveniences (PCs).

- 5.2 Financial – there is an income target of £70,000 against PCs and given the initial set of income figures from the nine active sites it is expected that this figure should be achieved as long as the system continues to operate reliably.
- 5.3 Legal – none known.
- 5.4 HR – operatives use PCs for welfare purposes – access cards have been arranged and one is placed in each relevant vehicle.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
  - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – none known.
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – the system has a cash payment option.
  - 6.5.3 Islands – none known.
- 5.6 Climate Change – none known.
- 5.7 Risk – there is a reputational risk if the system fails and customers cannot gain access. This is being closely monitored.
- 5.8 Customer Service – the project team are responding to any customer complaints/queries.
- 5.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – the system has a cash payment option.

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