

# Inclusive Blue Space

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**Beach Access Project**





## The journey



# Beach Access Project





<https://youtube.com/shorts/MC2UB6nN5GM?feature=share>



# Beach Access Project



# Current landscape

- UK Beach access standards are minimal and not enforced
- No blue space access guidance (compared to green space)
- Beach access provision is highly variable across the UK
- No ownership of Beach Access by national and local authorities



## Beach Access Project



# Vision

- “enhance and improve beach access and blue space to enable people with medical/mental health conditions and disabilities to play a meaningful and active role in beach life and blue space.”



## Beach Access Project



# Rational behind the project

- **24%** people in the UK had a **disability** in the 2022/23 financial year.
- **Almost 50%** of the UK population have a **long-standing health problem**; **20%** reported being limited in activities because of a health problem
- **“There is also little provision for people with physical or sensory disabilities to access safe outdoor blue space.”** Environment Agency 2024
- Those with **longstanding health conditions or functional limitations** often have **less physical access** to good-quality Green and Blue Space.”



## Beach Access Project



# Beach access survey (June – Sept 30<sup>th</sup>)

## 1071 responses to the survey

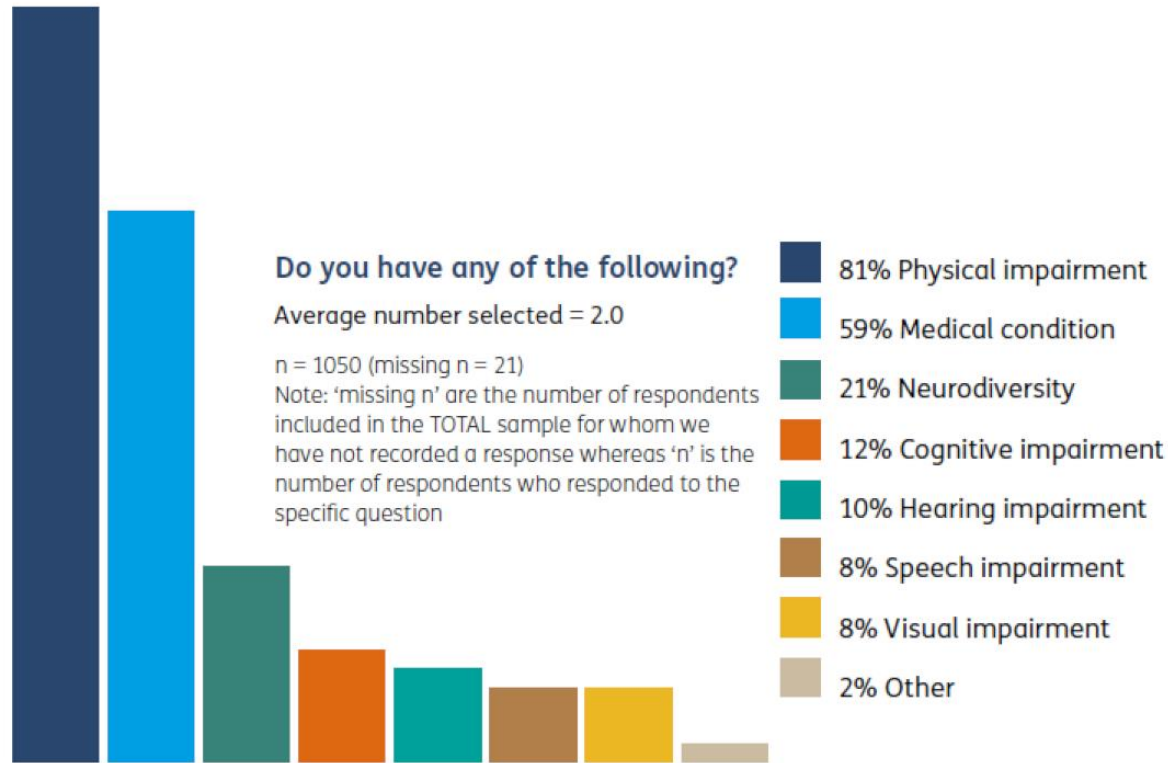


Figure 2: Types of impairment or condition reported by respondents (%)



# Beach Access Project

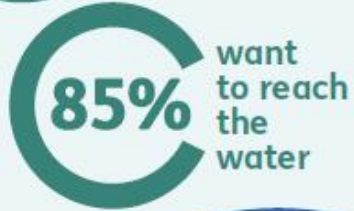


## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Key findings:

*What the survey shows*

#### Demand for access is high



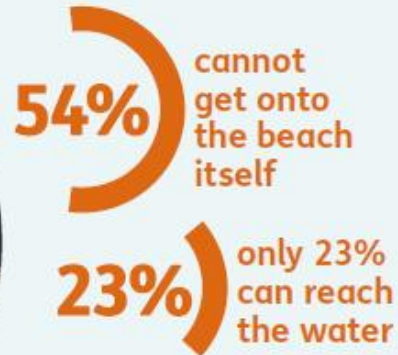
Right: powerful example of an inaccessible beach.



#### People are visiting but not participating



#### Access is limited



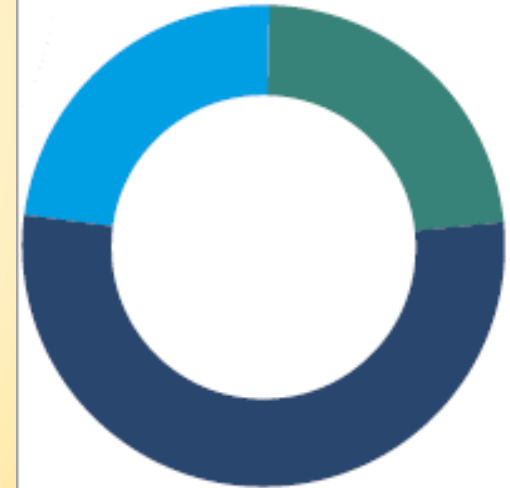
#### Access would change behaviour



There is a clear gap between the demand for access and the reality of what is currently possible.

When you last visited the beach were you able to get to the water's edge or into the water?

- 54% - No, it was difficult to access the beach
- 23% - No, it was difficult to access the water
- 23% - Yes



# Beach Access Project



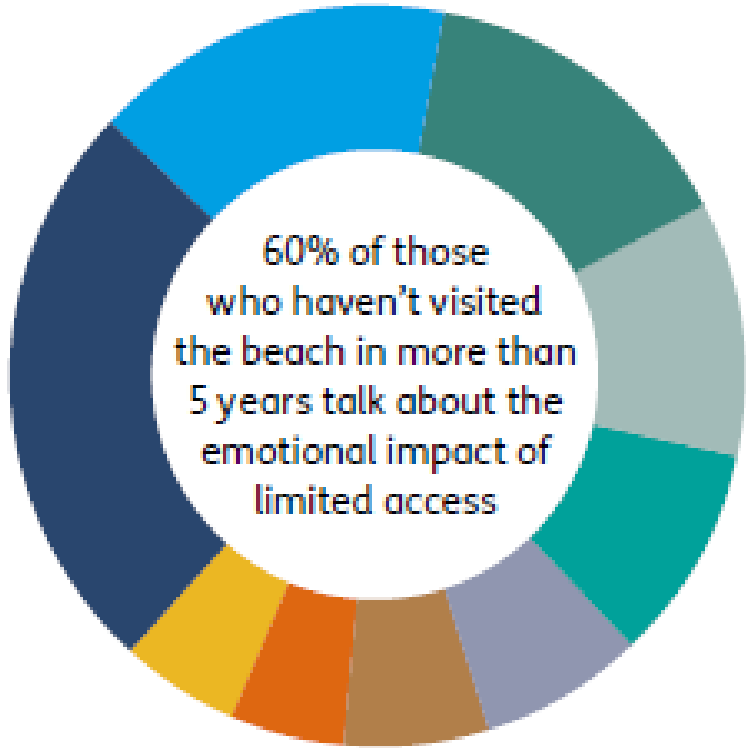
# Beach Access Survey Results

- Current provision
  - **8%** beaches had beach matting or boardwalk
  - **8%** beaches had changing facilities with hoist
  - **16%** beaches had beach wheelchairs
  - **3%** beaches offered support from beach staff
- What would improve beach access
  - **90%** beach matting / boardwalk
  - **72%** beach wheelchairs
  - **65%** Accessible toilets and parking
  - **73%** Access to beach activities
  - **55%** staff support
  - **38%** shower changing with hoist



## Beach Access

# The Emotional Impact



**Figure 13 – Factors influencing beach experience among respondents (%)**

Coded n = 958



25



# Beach Access Project



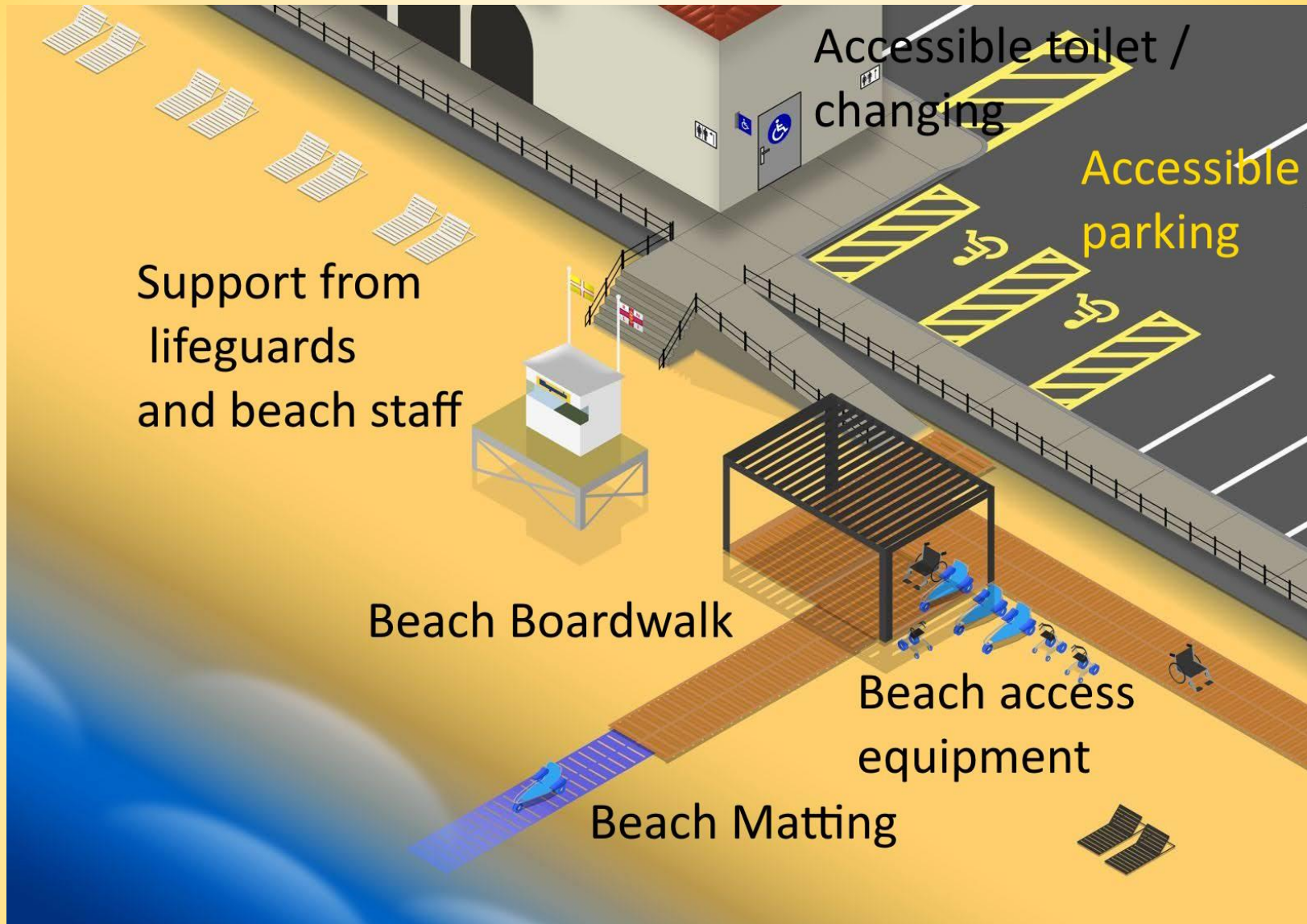
# When you last visited the beach, tell us what made your visit enjoyable / not enjoyable.

- Its never enjoyable really as my brothers can go in the water but I sit there watching
- *I can only stay on a promenade. I'd like to get onto the beach and to the water.*
- Sand on the prom that gets into the wheels. No access onto the beach
- *Frustrated that I had to rely on husband to help get around due to manual chair struggling on sand.*



## Beach Access Project





Support from lifeguards and beach staff

Accessible toilet / changing

Accessible parking

Beach Boardwalk

Beach access equipment

Beach Matting



Beach Access Project

# Beach Access Project



# Dorset : Inclusive Blue Space Capital of the UK

- The team
  - Beach Access Project
  - Dorset Coastal Forum
  - Dorset Council
  - Dorset National Landscapes
  - National Trust Purbeck



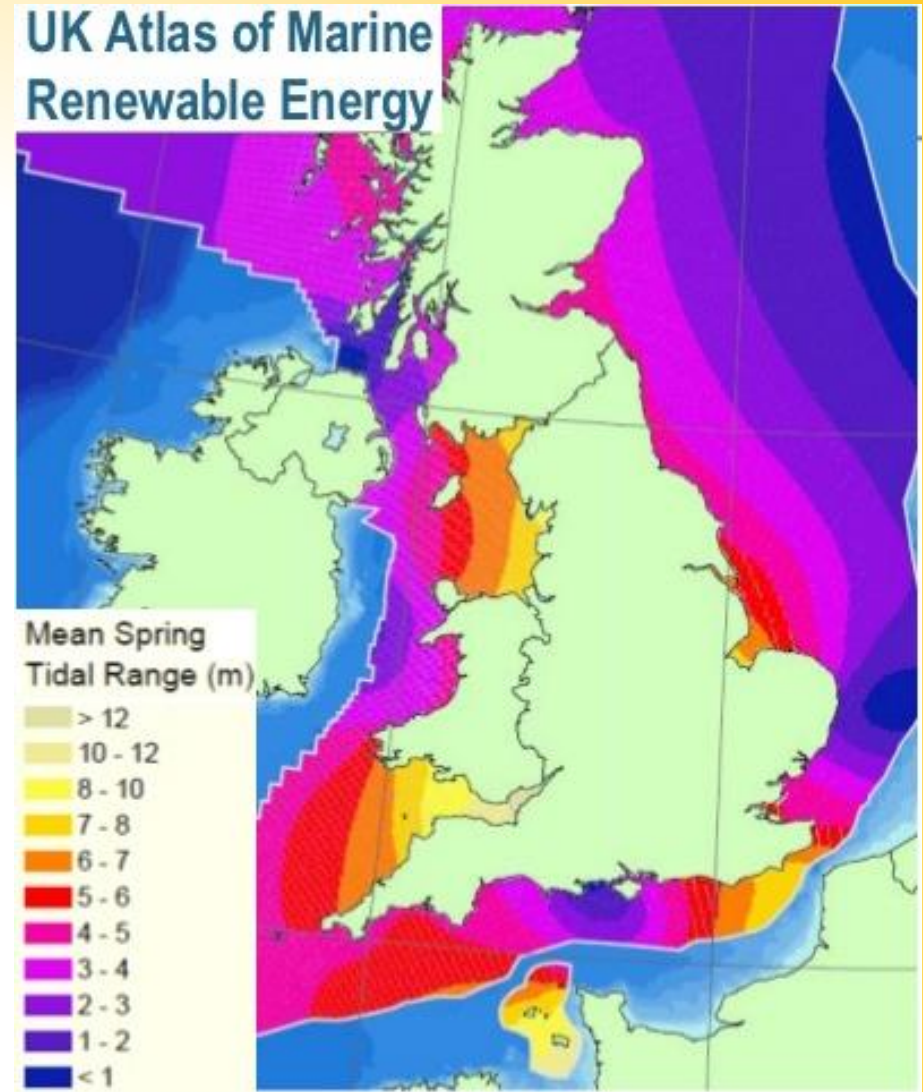
Purbeck



Beach Access Project

# Why Dorset?

- Lowest tidal range in England
- An amazing community of passionate blue space advocates
- Premium tourist area with World Heritage Status
- Well managed beaches and coastal resorts
- Two enormous low tidal harbours
- Numerous well managed rivers and lakes
- Premium watersports destination



# Beach Access Project



# Beach access incorporates

- High quality Pre visit information
- Accessible public transport
- Easy access into the water
- Accessible activities
- signage / multi format information
- Lighting, CCTV



# Beach Access Project



# Critical human catalyst

- Blue space is inherently harder to access than green space
  - Flow, tides, currents,
  - Temperature, pollution
  - Transition from GREEN (YELLOW) space to BLUE space
- We need to provide **physical support** to enable people to access the water. **E.g. lifeguards, beach staff, instructors.**



## Beach Access Project



# Project objectives

- Enhance access to beaches and blue spaces
- Provide access to blue space activities
- Embed access and inclusion into coastal planning
- Champion sustainable and inclusive tourism
- Integrate Blue Spaces into Health and Wellbeing Strategies
- Improve access to nature and the marine environment
- Create a replicable model



## Beach Access Project



# Weymouth beach access project



# Beach Access Project





<https://youtu.be/-THUZBeIPd4>



# Beach Access Project



# Moving forward

- **23 April: “Dorset the inclusive Blue Space Capital Of the UK”** was launched.
- **16 May: Funding from Dorset Council** to extent the beach access at **Weymouth Beach**
- **18<sup>th</sup> May: Beach access survey report “A Coast for All”** was launched House of parliament sponsored by APPG on **Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature**
- **Summer 2026 Weymouth beach:** Beach Access into the water Pilot Project in partnership with Surf Life Saving GB Weymouth



## Beach Access Project

