

# Tidying Uphill Wharf

**By: John Flannigan**  
**Directorate: Place Directorate**

## Background

Uphill Wharf is in a very prominent position in Uphill, Weston super Mare alongside the England Coast Path, the cycleway to Brean and the popular walking route around Uphill Hill. The area in general is attractive and prosperous.

Uphill Wharf contains a significant number of seemingly abandoned items. There are 78 sailing vessels, about 15 trailers and various piles of rubbish. In addition there is a motorbike, 2 cars, a campervan, caravan and 2 box trailers with evidence of some of these vessels and vehicles being lived in. A small number of vessels on the water's edge may be reasonably seaworthy and used but the majority are in various states of disrepair. There are also various other items such as temporary structures built to store materials related to boat maintenance. All these are within the location highlighted on the attached map where North Somerset Council owns the land coloured red with the remaining area being unregistered(Appendix A).

Appendix B contains several photos that illustrate the general state of the site.

Many of the vessels are in a poor state of repair and appear to be abandoned. The vehicles used for rough sleeping and temporary structures for storing materials add to the dilapidated appearance to the area all contributing to a reduction in the local amenity.

We believe there are currently six people rough sleeping at this location.

Due to the complex nature of the site a number of matters need to be resolved before work can start on the site. These include:

- Legal issues
  - Determining which approach to use to lawfully remove boats from the Wharf.
  - Evaluating the risk in removing vessels from land not owned by North Somerset Council
  - Resolving the Right of Way route
- Operational issues
  - Identifying the process to dispose of the boats and other debris
  - How to secure the site once the site is cleared
- Addressing homelessness
  - How will we deal with the rough sleepers
- Financial issues
  - A budget must be identified for this project

- Future management
  - Identifying a willing organisation to take on the permanent management of the site and all subsequent responsibilities and liabilities.

## **Financial implications of tidying Uphill Wharf**

The issues identified above have costs associated with them which are summarised in Table 1 whilst the following provides information to explain these costs.

### Legal issues

In addition to the legal advice fees there is considerable work required to ensure the laws around the notification of vessel disposal are properly followed to ensure we do not have to pay compensation.

### Operational issues

#### *Boat disposal*

The disposal of sailing vessels is outside of the scope of usual Council activity. Subsequently a specialist company, Boatbreakers, was commissioned to advise on disposal costs of the vessels.

They identified that the majority of the boats would require scrapping with little opportunity of selling any vessels to offset our costs.

Disposal of such boats is influenced by their construction material which is mainly fibreglass and not therefore recyclable. Boatbreakers have estimated the total cost to dispose of the vessels at £315k.

#### *Securing the site*

To avoid future repetition of this issue the site will have to be properly secured using steel palisade fencing with appropriate points of entry.

#### *Public rights of way*

In order to fully secure the site, the right of way would need to be diverted around the site perimeter which requires the formal Public Path Order process to be followed.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Estimated cost</b>
<b>Legal fees</b>	£10k
<b>Inventory management</b>	£30k
<b>PROW diversion</b>	£5k
<b>Vessel and other debris disposal</b>	£315k
<b>Secure fencing and gates</b>	£50k
	£435k

Table 1 – estimated costs to create a secure and cleared site

### **Future management**

North Somerset Council does not have the resources to consider managing the site in the future. It would also be more appropriate to leave the management to a third party, such as the local sailing club, who are more geared up to manage such a facility.

However, North Somerset Council only owns part of the land and so there is a risk that the landowner of the other parcel would object to the proposals thereby undoing the work to get to this point. In this context it is difficult to recommend the use of public funds to clear the site for another landowner to benefit from.

### **Rough sleeping**

There are currently six people rough sleeping at this location. Only two of the six people living in the boatyard have boats on NSC land whilst four people are living in vans/boats that are on the unregistered land. It is possible to evict the homeless from our land but unenforceable to do so on the unregistered land where the owner is not traceable.

### **Recommendation**

It is not straightforward to address the community's concerns about the state of the Wharf. This is because there is a variety of complex and costly processes that must be navigated to achieve a tidy, well managed site and in setting up an agreement about future management of the site.

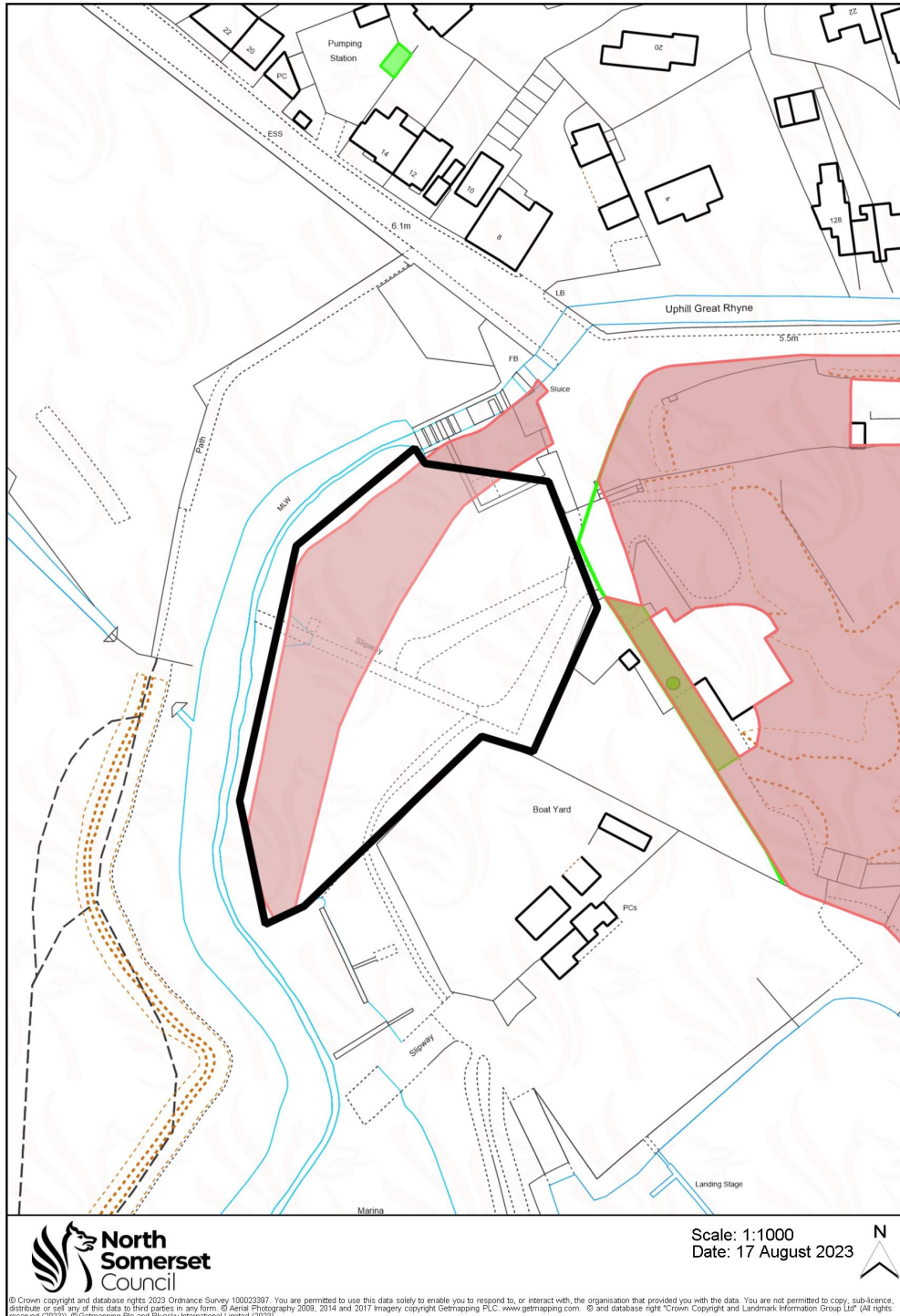
The most significant issue, at this time of significant financial pressure, is the cost to deal with this problem when set against many other Council priorities.

It is therefore recommended that North Somerset Council does not initiate a project to tidy up Uphill Wharf.

## Appendix A – map of Uphill Wharf

Site boundary = thick black line

NSC land ownership = red



Appendix B – photos illustrating the conditions at Uphill Wharf



