



Promoting the trading and commercial interests of Bowness, Windermere and the immediate area.

Report on the Future of the Public Toilets in Windermere and Bowness

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Introduction

The Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade were asked by Cllr. John Saunders (Mayor of Windermere) to survey its members as to the future of the public toilets throughout both communities. This survey and results would help the Windermere Town Council decide on their future, bearing in mind the legality and cost of keeping them open.

Methodology

A survey was undertaken by email to all members of the Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade between the 10th and 24th January 2020 asking them the following questions:

1. Taking onboard the above, what would YOU as a business like to see happen to the public toilets in both communities?
2. Would you be willing to allow your business toilets to be used by the public, if practicable?
3. Would you support re-establishing the toilet opposite The Ship Inn, Glebe Road, Bowness?

The membership was asked to forward the survey onto interested parties. Background information as to the locations of the toilets and the legality as to their governance was also included – see Appendix 1.

Of the 52 members surveyed, 19.23% replied. The replies to above 3 questions have been collated into Table 1 below. The Secretary of the Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade oversaw the headings under which each reply should go based on its content.

All recipients who replied to the survey were sent a “thank you” message.

Results

The results of the survey can be found in Table 1 at the end of this report.

Conclusions

Question 1

The responses would indicate that most would like the public toilets to be retained due to the high number of visitors throughout the year. It would appear that there are not sufficient private toilets available to meet demand.

Criticism has been made as to the existing arrangement of one council leasing toilets to another section of the council being typical of the increasing unnecessary and inefficient bureaucracy that is becoming a feature of our public services.

Question 2

Some of the retail businesses would be willing to allow the public to use their toilets. Others have suggested it is just not practicable.

One business has suggested that it may invalidate their insurance!

Question 3

There appears to be split views as to whether the Glebe Road should have public toilets reinstated.

Appendix 1 - Background

I have set out below some background information as to the current situation:

1. Locations of the public toilets
 - a. Broad Street, Windermere
 - b. Baddeley Clock/Gardens
 - c. Adjacent to Quarry Mount Car Park, Bowness
 - d. Rayrigg Road Car Park, Bowness
 - e. Millerground Car Park, Rayrigg Road, Bowness
 - f. Glebe Road/Newby Bridge Road by the National Park Tourist Information Centre, Bowness
 - g. Braithwaite Fold Car Park, Glebe Road, Bowness

2. Legality
 - a. All the above toilets are owned by South Lakeland District Council (SLDC), who in turn lease them to the Windermere Town Council (WTC). Currently the Bowness and Windermere Community Care Trust oversee and manage them on behalf of the WTC.
 - b. There is NO legal obligation for SLDC to provide public toilets, although there may be a moral one!
 - c. The reason in (b) above is why the WTC is leasing them was that SLDC were going to close all but two if nobody came forward.

Table 1

BUSINESS SECTOR	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3
	Taking onboard the information provided, what would YOU as a business like to see happen to the public toilets in both communities?	Would you be willing to allow your business toilets to be used by the public, if practicable?	Would you support re-establishing the toilet opposite The Ship Inn, Glebe Road, Bowness?
Accommodation	Pleased that they are being kept open, happy for them to be retained. Those that have been improved look good even though I personally don't like the styling. Could look at whether we really need them all, for example Baddeley Clock I rarely see used.	Not applicable, we don't have any.	No, there is an established one at the TIC and that is the better location. One is enough for the Glebe though it could be bigger
Retail - Food	No comment	No comment	As a cafe owner in Bowness I do not agree that the council should provide toilets on the Glebe. I think this would take business away from cafes and shops because people would spend more time there supporting chains like Greggs rather than us local folk.
Professional	As a business owner I would like to lend support for keeping / increasing the access to public toilets in Windermere/Bowness.	We would be willing to provide public access to our toilet facilities as part of a collaborative effort by Windermere/Bowness businesses to keep/increase the	We would be supportive of the re-establishment of toilets opposite the Ship Inn, Glebe Rd, Bowness.

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		public's access to toilet facilities in Windermere/Bowness.	
Retail	I believe relative to the number of visitors we receive on busy days there are insufficient toilet facilities. Moreover, there are insufficient signs directing visitors to the facilities that exist. I strongly believe there is a moral obligation of the local and district councils to ensure they are sufficient facilities for visitors bearing in mind the World Heritage Status of the area.	I already allow my business toilet to be used as a public toilet.	I strongly agree with the idea of re-establishing the toilets opposite The Ship on the Glebe. This could be a self-funding enterprise.
Retail	The clue is in the name, Public. They should be run by whoever owns them as a free public service.	As a shop owner it would invalidate our insurance. As for Publican's, I would argue that it would have a negative impact on its clients and increase its own servicing and water rates costs.	I would support the reopening of Glebe Road toilets providing it is at the expense of South Lakeland District Council. In the event it is decided not to reopen but to sell, I would suggest that the money from the sale of property is given to the Windermere Town Council.
Professional	Maintain the toilets but for them to either be free to use or charged by a contactless card reader or equivalent. not everybody carries change in their pockets.	N/A	I would support re-establishing the toilets on the Glebe.
Accommodation	The public toilets are essential in our opinion. There are so many businesses that won't want a procession of tourists using the loos. We accommodate a few requests each day but last year we had just cleaned our loo's and one lady popped in and asked if she and her friend could go, we said yes and they more than 20 jumped off a coach and came in. Used all our hand-towels, soaps and made a big mess just before opening for dinner. Its things like this that put off businesses from allowing passers-by in to use the loo. We are in favour of as many public loo's opening as possible. Only this morning I watched quite a few Chinese visitors pull up at Miller Ground to find the loo's boarded up and		

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	<p>go round the back to have a pee. Not nice for them or us. The toilets need to be clean, stocked and maintained 365 days a year – and charging is of course essential and acceptable.</p>		
Retail	<p>With such high visitor numbers, easy access to good quality public toilets is essential. Existing facilities should be retained and upgraded where necessary. The existing arrangement of one council leasing toilets to another section of the council is typical of the increasing unnecessary and inefficient bureaucracy that is becoming a feature of our public services.</p> <p>A few years ago, I made Tim Farron aware of the ridiculous fact that the council charges VAT on using its public toilets. It then uses council staff to calculate the VAT and make payments to another government department HMRC, who then use government resources to redistribute the money the council have collected! He took this nonsense up with the Treasury who informed him they have to charge VAT as private enterprises can provide public toilets and they could be liable for VAT. Why they cannot simply make council provided toilet exempt is beyond me!</p>	Public access to the toilets within our premises is not practical.	<p>We would support re-establishing the toilet opposite The Ship Inn, Glebe Road, Bowness. We typically pay around £12,000 a year in rates for each of our retail premises. We see little evidence that much of this money is spent supporting the local economy or tourists. Providing adequate public toilets should be a basic requirement for councils.</p>
Tourism	<p>Our company does believe that provision of Public Toilets should be continued. We did provide that facility for public use when we took over the Windermere TIC but that proved extremely difficult because it meant the general public having to walk through a private office area rather than a shop or restaurant area. For our own customers who ask where the closest facility is, then we do allow use of our staff facilities.</p>	We really cannot allow our own facilities to be published as available to the general public.	<p>I would suggest that management of the current facilities is already expensive enough without developing another one opposite the Ship Inn.</p>

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<p>Professional</p>	<p>It is my belief that the public toilets in the area should be taken back under the control of the Windermere Town Council. Funding should be made available from the grant funding already in place. What would be the legal position of the Town Steward if he were to be asked to empty the cash boxes on the Town Councils behalf?</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>If SLDC should or have sold the public toilets in the car park opposite The Ship Inn, Glebe Road, then some if not all the proceeds should be used to build new ones. The main sewage pipe runs either near under the car park, therefore should not be too big a logistic problem!</p>
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