



21st July 2016

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE

THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (RUFFORD COUNTRY PARK) (CIVIL ENFORCEMENT – OFF STREET PARKING PLACES) ORDER 2016 (3242)

CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the objection received in respect of the above Traffic Regulation Order and whether it should be made as advertised. The order being required to enable the effective enforcement of parking charges within the Country Park

Information and Advice

2. Rufford Abbey Country Park is owned and run by Nottinghamshire County Council and functions as a visitor attraction for both residents of Nottinghamshire and visitors to the County. This historic country park contains the remains of a medieval monastery, extensive native woodland, lake and gardens, as well as visitor facilities such as a café and shop. The park is located adjacent to the A614, approximately 2 miles south of Ollerton.
3. The principle of charging for car parking at Rufford Park is well established and charges have been made at the country park for over two decades. These charges are reviewed annually and are influenced by service income targets, and the level to which customers are “price sensitive” in what is increasingly a competitive leisure market, served by other local providers (e.g. National Trust and Forestry Commission). The charges currently consist of either a daily parking fee or an annual charge for a season ticket and are levied on cars and motorcycles; however coaches and minibuses are exempt from the charges. Car parking is chargeable daily throughout the main visitor season (April, or Easter if earlier, to the end of October) and on weekends, bank holidays and Nottinghamshire school holidays during the low season (November to end March, or Easter if earlier). The fees and charges to be made for the Country Parks Service during 2016/17 were approved by Culture Committee in their meeting on 26th January 2016 and remain at the same level as 2015/16.
4. The car parking fee at Rufford Country Park is currently applied by charging drivers on entry to the car park, however this system requires at least three members of staff (to cover both entrances and provide relief for breaks) and does not offer any opportunity to vary the car parking rates. Currently there is a daily charge, which is applied to each eligible vehicle unless the driver has a season ticket. A ‘pay and display’ method of collecting parking fees would enable variable charges to be applied (such as, for example, a lower charge for stays

of 1-2 hours duration). The ability to vary car parking charges offers the opportunity to make shorter visits to Rufford Country Park more attractive, which may increase visitor numbers and potentially turnover in visitor facilities such as the café.

5. As such Nottinghamshire County Council's County Parks Service is proposing the installation of pay and display machines or similar autonomous systems in the public car parks at Rufford Country Park. The savings achieved through staffing costs are expected to offset the investment in the 'pay and display' machines within three years.
6. In order to manage the revised parking arrangement within the Country Park a Traffic Regulation Order is required. This order is required to legally set out formal parking regulations which will apply throughout the park. These will enable Civil Parking Enforcement Officers to issue Penalty Charge Notices, if necessary, for contraventions such as non-payment of charges or parking in undesignated areas. The Order will facilitate the effective enforcement of parking charges within the Park and ensure that parking takes place in appropriate areas, avoiding damage to grassed verges and other areas not suitable for parked vehicles. It will also prevent vehicles from parking in a manner which adversely affects the movement of traffic within the Country Park and reducing or preventing congestion by more effective management of parking. The extent of area where the proposed order would apply is shown on the attached drawing number H/04078/2248/2.
7. The statutory consultation and advertising were carried out between 13th April 2016 and 13th May 2016. The document packages were held at Ollerton Library and County Hall with copies of the notice erected at a number of locations in the area.

Objections Received

8. During the advertisement period one response was received, which is considered to be an outstanding objection to the scheme proposal. As a formal decision of Rufford Parish Council this objection must be reported to Nottinghamshire County Council's Transport & Highways Committee, in line with the procedures agreed in the Transport & Highways Committee Report "Objections to Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders" dated 12th July 2012.
9. Objection – Rufford Parish Council
Rufford Parish Council objected to the Order on the basis that a Pay and Display system, whilst it may work at normal times, would not be effective at busy weekends and bank holidays because it would not monitor and control the volumes of traffic entering the park. In addition the Parish Council members consider that the introduction of Pay and Display would increase on-street parking, particularly on May Lodge Drive and Rufford Lane, caused by visitors to the park trying to avoid paying parking fees.

Response – Rufford Parish Council

The Country Parks Service recognises the importance of proactively managing parking at Rufford Country Park to both protect vulnerable parkland and facilitate the unobstructed movement of vehicles within the park. At times of high visitors' demand for parking, such as at bank holidays or special events, car parking will continue to be managed by the current 'pay on entry' system; with staff actively managing vehicle numbers. The payment collection mechanism being used on each day will be clearly signed.

The method of collection of car parking charges ('pay and display' or similar system, rather than 'pay on entry') is not expected to affect visitors' behaviour in terms of increasing numbers seeking to avoid the charges. The potential opportunity to offer a range of car parking prices in future, more closely aligned to visitors' length of stay is expected to make parking within the park more attractive.

Other Options Considered

10. Other options considered relate to the extents of the area to which the Order would apply. The decision to apply the order to the whole park reflects the need to manage parking patterns to ensure the safe operation of roads within the park and the avoidance of damage to parkland.

Comments from Local Members

11. County Councillor John Peck did not comment on the proposals.

Reason for Recommendation

12. The recommendations represent the most appropriate way to effectively and pro-actively manage car parking within the park to reduce costs to the service and offer the potential for more flexible pricing strategies in the future.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

14. The installation of an autonomous system to collect car park charges, is estimated to cost in the region of £60,000 and would be funded through the Country Parks Service car parking revenue budget for Rufford Country Park. The cost of implementing the Traffic Regulation Order, including signing, is estimated at £1,000 and will be funded from the same budget.

Crime and Disorder Implications

15. Nottinghamshire Police has raised no objection to the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is **recommended** that:

The Nottinghamshire County Council (Rufford Country Park) (Civil Enforcement – Off Street Parking Places) Order 2016 (3242)

be made as advertised and objector notified accordingly.

Tim Gregory
Corporate Director, Place

Name and Title of Report Author

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 19/05/16)

16. Transport and Highways Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (RWK 19/05/2016)

17. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 14 of the report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

All relevant documents for the proposed scheme are contained within the scheme file which can be found in the Major Projects and Improvements Team at Trent Bridge House, Fox Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

Rufford ED County Councillor John Peck