

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES****FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16 FOR THE COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN ESTATE SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the proposed fees and charges for the Country Parks and Green Estate Service for the financial year 2015/16.
2. To consider the issue raised in a petition received in relation to the season ticket charging policy in 2014/15.

**Information and Advice**

3. Fees and charges are reviewed annually and are influenced by the rate of inflation, service income targets, market forces, and the level to which customers are 'price sensitive' in what is becoming a very competitive leisure and tourism market, also served by other providers across the County, such as the National Trust, Forestry Commission and Thoresby Estate.
4. Fees and charges levied by the Country Parks Service comprise car parking, hiring for mobility scooters, filming fees for commercial companies (infrequent) and events on parks.
5. Commercial charges in trading outlets (catering and retail at Rufford and Sherwood) are not covered in this report. School sessions at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre provided by the Environmental Education team and in the Rufford Crafts Centre (Arts Service) are also excluded.
6. The proposed charges for 2015/16 for the Country Parks Service are set out below:

**Car Parking**

7. The car park charging policy has been reviewed throughout the year to assess the opportunity to generate extra income and thus reduce the overall revenue costs across the Country Parks and Green Estates portfolio.
8. There is a strong case to extend the current charging periods at both Rufford and Sherwood Country Parks, bringing them in line with many other local and regional

attractions of a similar size and offer. It is not proposed to increase the actual daily charge, however.

### **Car Parking policy and charging proposals at Rufford Abbey and Sherwood Country Parks 2015/16**

- the standard car parking charge to remain at £3 per car per whole day for all cars
- free concession for coaches and mini-buses will be retained
- the charge for motorcycles will remain the same at £1 per bike per whole day and a charge of £20 introduced for overnight stays (as a deterrent to overnight 'camping' which is not permitted under the byelaws and for which we have no facilities)
- peak period charging will be introduced from 3 April (Good Friday) to 1 November and all Nottinghamshire school holidays where charging will be in place every day
- the standard £3 charge will apply to weekends and Bank Holidays throughout the year (except where the special event charge applies)
- parking will be free on weekends at Sherwood in January, February and March except for the weekends either side of the February half term break
- **Appendix 1** shows the current charging schedule and **Appendices 2 and 3** indicate the proposed charging periods and charges for 2015/16 for Rufford and Sherwood respectively
- season ticket of £25 per calendar year will be increased to £30 (but will include entry to events when an additional charge applies). Season tickets for Rufford can also be used at Sherwood
- mobility scooter hire to be increased from £1.50 to £2.50 per hour to help defray the increased costs of maintenance and repair
- a special event charge of £5 per car to be made for premier events, including, but not exclusively, The Robin Hood Festival, Earth and Fire Ceramics Festival and the 1940s week-end.
- the special offer redemption scheme at Rufford and Sherwood where the £3 car park fee is refunded on a purchase of £15 or more (except when the special event fee is in force) will remain.

### **Car Parking at Bestwood Country Park and Cotgrave Country Park**

- no daily car parking charges to be levied as there are no visitor facilities on site.

## **Other fees and charges**

### **Filming Fees**

- a filming fee at Rufford Abbey if the footage / photography is to be broadcast, printed or used for commercial purposes will be charged at £250 per full day or £175 per half day (3 hours). There is no charge for amateur, educational or 'not for profit' uses
- a filming fee donation at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre (as the Council does not own this site) for short filming sessions (less than an hour on site), with only minimal input from staff, will be £50. For longer sessions, requiring greater input from staff, a fee of £200 will be charged.

### **Firewood**

- to increase the charge from £75 to £80 per trailer, when wood is available at any of our sites and continue the charge of £5 per net of logs.

### **Public Events**

- various smaller public events are held within Country Parks, ranging in size from guided walks to living history days. On occasions, charges may be made for activities within these, eg: for trail leaflets. Such charges are outside the scope of this report.

### **Memorial Items**

- to maintain charges for benches and plaques installed at Rufford Abbey within a range of £250 to £850, dependent upon the nature of the memorial item.

## **Petition received in relation to charges for season tickets**

9. A petition of 46 signatures was presented to Full Council at the meeting on 18 September 2014 requesting that free entry to major events for season ticket holders be reinstated. The petition has been forwarded to Culture Committee for decision. This report recommends that free entry to major events is reinstated for season ticket holders while increasing the cost of the season tickets by £5 to £30. It is believed this still represents very good value for money.

## **Other Options Considered**

10. Charges are kept under review throughout the course of the year and reflect a balanced approach between generating income and retaining visitor numbers at our sites.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

11. The recommendation to keep the majority of car park charges unchanged but to increase charging periods is made in the light of a review of non-charging days and the potential to increase parking income. The increase of £5 on the current season ticket cost of £25

(and to reinstate access to events within the price) still represents excellent value for money for regular visitors including dog walkers.

12. It is felt that the new proposals provide a balanced approach in relation to charging for parking and the potential that charging has to depress spending in on-site commercial outlets.
13. It should also be remembered that visiting outdoor attractions such as country parks is heavily influenced by the weather. On good days, car parking demand at Rufford, for example, is very high. In such cases, the parking charge period is a method of helping to manage undesirable peaks and troughs of demand, by encouraging visitors to come midweek and off peak if they can.
14. Whilst it would be logical to also remove free parking for coaches, there is a concern that with some 300 plus coaches per year calling at Sherwood Forest and Rufford Abbey, trade in catering and retail outlets would be affected, and tourists would go elsewhere. As the free parking is an attractive incentive to coach operators, it is therefore proposed to retain free parking for coaches.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. 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.

## **Implications for Service Users**

16. The revised charging regime is in line with local competitor pricing.

## **Financial Implications**

17. The charging schedule set out in this report will support the Service to operate within its revenue estimates for 2015/16. It is estimated that the new charging strategy will generate in excess of £60,000 profit.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

18. As part of the process of making decisions and changing policy, public authorities are required by law to think about the need to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics (as defined by equalities legislation) and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

19. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a means by which a public authority can assess the potential impact that proposed decisions / changes to policy could have on the community and those with protected characteristics. They may also identify potential ways to reduce any impact that a decision / policy change could have. If it is not possible to reduce the impact, the EIA can explain why. Decision makers must understand the potential implications of their decisions on people with protected characteristics.
20. An EIA has been carried out on the implications of increasing the charges and to date there is minimal evidence that these will have a disproportionate impact on any particular group of park visitors/users. However, the impact of the charges will be kept under review and if it is evident that these have a longer term disproportionate impact, there is built-in flexibility to the procedures to make any appropriate changes.
21. The EIA is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for protected groups when considering this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) the charging regime as set out in the report is adopted for 2015/16
- 2) car parking charges be kept under review and feedback from users of the service be monitored to assess the overall impact of the changes.
- 3) the lead petitioner is informed:
  - a) that the cost of season tickets will be increased by £5 to £30
  - b) that free access to major events for season ticket holders will be reinstated
  - c) that a report will be presented to Full Council for the actions to be noted.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families and Cultural Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Linda Hardy  
Visitor Services Manager  
T: 01623 821328  
E: linda.hardy@nottsc.gov.uk

## **Constitutional Comments (LM 17/11/14)**

22. The recommendations in the report fall within the terms of reference of the Culture Committee.

### **Financial Comments (KLA 17/11/14)**

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

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

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.

Equality Impact Assessment

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0526