

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR YOUTH, FAMILIES & CULTURE FEES AND CHARGES 2017/18 FOR SHERWOOD FOREST COUNTRY PARK**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval of Sherwood Forest Country Park fees and charges for the financial year 2017/18.

### **Information and Advice**

2. Fees and charges at Sherwood Forest Country Park are reviewed annually. Sherwood Forest Country Park will remain under the direct management of Nottinghamshire County Council until April 2018, when the RSPB will assume management of the Park and new visitor centre.
3. Fees and charges levied at Sherwood Forest Country Park comprise:
  - car park charges and car park season tickets
  - hire charges for mobility scooters
  - charges for park trail leaflets and small scale events such as walks
  - occasional 'one off' charges for filming, wood sales etc.
4. Commercial charges in trading outlets are not covered in this report. Charges for school sessions at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre provided by the County's Learning Outside the Classroom team are also excluded.

### **Car Parking Charges**

5. Car parking charges at present are:
  - £3 charge per car
  - £5 during major special events
  - Motorcycles £1 (or if taking up a full space, charged as cars)
  - Coaches and minibuses free
  - Car park season ticket £30 per year.
6. Throughout 2016/17 the car park charge at Sherwood Forest Country Park has been levied daily through the 'Summer Season' (Easter to end of October) plus daily through Nottinghamshire schools' half term weeks, and weekends and Bank Holidays through the 'Winter Season'. Visitor numbers at all outdoor attractions are very seasonal and affected by the day's weather. Site Managers have leeway to drop parking charges at times when

it is uneconomical or impractical to collect - for example in adverse weather conditions. It is proposed that this flexibility continues.

7. Season tickets are a means of encouraging repeat visits. This generates spend in onsite commercial outlets and thus helps to offset the site's running costs.
8. A commercial offer invites customers to 'spend £15 in our shops or catering outlets and claim back your car park fee'. This is to avoid losing business from those tourists who simply want to use the Park for lunch, coffee or afternoon tea. The offer does not apply when the special event parking charge is in force.
9. There is currently no parking charge for coaches, on the basis that coach tours making short stops for coffee or lunches are a useful source of income for onsite catering outlets.
10. It is not proposed to change any of the above arrangements for 2017/18.

### **Special Event Parking Charges**

11. Large scale public events such as the annual Robin Hood Festival can be costly to stage, but attract large numbers (and commercial spend) to the Park. The geography of the Sherwood Forest site makes 'turnstile' entrance charges for events impractical.
12. A special event car parking charge helps to offset costs as well as managing demand for parking spaces. The special event car parking charge was first introduced in 2011. It is proposed to retain the ability to charge a £5 special event charge for large scale events including the annual Robin Hood Festival 2017.

### **Mobility Scooters**

13. Mobility scooter hire currently costs £2 per hour. This was an increase of 50p per hour on the previous year. Given that mobility scooters are necessary to enable physically disabled visitors to fully access the Park, it is not proposed to further increase charges this year.

### **Other Options Considered**

14. No other options have been considered.

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

15. Over 90% of visitors arrive by car, private coach or minibus. The recommendation is to keep the car park charge unchanged at £3 per car.
16. Visitor numbers at all outdoor attractions undergo large variations according to weather, and this can be unpredictable. It is recommended that Park managers retain the flexibility currently allowed, to drop charges on an ad hoc basis when the staff costs of collection are likely to outweigh cash generated.

17. Maintaining mobility scooter hire at affordable levels will prevent cost from becoming a barrier to Park access. Blue Badge holders receive no concessions in the car park charge, paying the same fee as other motorists.
18. Other fees and charges e.g. wood sales, filming fees, and tickets for small scale events are a minor source of occasional income. It is proposed that these continue to be determined by site managers.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. 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 services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, 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**

20. The car park fee is a major source of country park income, but impacts upon the number of customers passing through onsite commercial outlets. Given that visitor facilities at Sherwood Forest Country Park are now ageing and it would not be logical to invest in refurbishment whilst awaiting the expected opening of a new Visitor Centre in April 2018, keeping the car park fee at its current level will avoid a decline in visitor numbers (and commercial income) through 2017/18.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

21. No increase in mobility scooter hire costs will assist mobility impaired and physically disabled visitors in enjoying access to the Park.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That fees and charges at Sherwood Forest Country Park, and the car park charging period, remain unchanged for the 2017/18 financial year.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Youth, Families & Culture**

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

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### **Constitutional Comments (SMG 15/12/16)**

22. The Committee has responsibility for country parks. The proposals set out in this report fall within the remit of this Committee.

### **Financial Comments (TMR 15/12/16)**

23. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 20 of the report.

### **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.

Fees and Charges 2016/17 for the Country Parks Service – report to Culture Committee on 26 January 2016 (previously published)

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

All.

C0920