



## Report to Leader (Sports and Leisure portfolio)

<b>Decision Date:</b>	12 March 2021
<b>Reference number:</b>	SL01.21
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Country Parks Car Parking Charges</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	Councillor Clive Harriss
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	Andrew Fowler, Head of Country Parks and Green Spaces
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	Denham; Iver; Stoke Poges & Wexham;
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p>Approval of the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the removal of off-peak seasonal charges across all three parks</li><li>• an increase of 10p on the peak tariff (which will now apply year-round)</li><li>• a £10 increase to the annual permit charge</li><li>• removal of the separate charge for minibuses or coaches, to simplify the system for visitors and to acknowledge that these vehicles are unable to use some of our car parks.</li></ul>
<b>Reason for decision:</b>	The recommended changes will, if implemented, provide the increase in income required to offset increasing costs as well as simplifying the charging structure for customers.

### 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 In order to fund improvements to the visitor experience in the Country Parks and to maintain their future financial viability the Country Parks team are recommending an increase in parking charges.

- 1.2 It is recommended that the changes are put into place in June 2021 and it is projected that this increase will generate an additional £68k for the parks versus 2019/20 income.
- 1.3 The parking charges will be comparable with other offers and annual permits will still provide exceptional value for money.

## **2. Content of report**

- 2.1 Currently, all parks charge for parking dependent on the length of stay and whether the visit is in a peak or off-peak period with peak times categorised as 1 March – 30 September inclusive.
- 2.2 We also offer annual parking permits which cover all three Country Parks and can be bought online or from the visitor centre. This costs the customer £50 for one car, plus £10 per additional car or for amendments/replacements of a permit.
- 2.3 Since the previous change to parking charges in 2017, there has been significant investment into the parks. We have put in additional disabled bays and extra toilet facilities in Black Park, and carried out significant path works in the Temple Gardens in Langley Park. We also continue to invest in maintenance of the sites including fencing repairs, litter collection and bins, tree works and have incurred increased cleaning costs due to increases in visitor numbers.
- 2.4 The existing and proposed charges are shown below

	<b>Existing</b>		<b>Proposed</b>
	<i>Off peak</i>	<i>Peak</i>	<i>All year</i>
<b><i>Black Park</i></b>			
Earlybird	£2.70	£2.70	£2.80
2hrs	£2.70	£3.70	£3.80
2-4hrs	£3.50	£4.50	£4.60
4hr+	£4.50	£5.50	£5.60
Minibus	£8	£8	Dependent on length of stay as above for all vehicles
Coach	£13	£13	Dependent on length of stay as above for all vehicles

<b><i>Langley Park &amp; Denham Country Park</i></b>			
0-3hrs	£2.70	£3.70	£3.80
3hrs +	£3.50	£4.50	£4.60
Minibus	£8	£8	Dependent on length of stay as above for all vehicles
Coach	£13	£13	Dependent on length of stay as above for all vehicles
Annual Permit	1 car £50	2 cars £60	1 car £60 2 cars £70

- 2.5 We have looked at parking charges for similar locations/offers in Buckinghamshire and neighbouring counties. These are highly variable, ranging between simple two tier charging (per half and full day) and complex hourly charging with peak and off-peak times.

<b>Park name</b>	<b>Full day parking charge</b>	<b>Annual Permit charge</b>
Wendover Woods	£10	£62
Virginia Water/Windsor Great Park	£10/£12 (weekday/weekend)	£85
Burnham Beeches	£3	£180
Moors Valley Country Park	£10-15 (depending on season)	£62
Dinton Pastures	£6	£150

Our proposed new charges sit at the low/middle end of the spectrum for an all-day stay. Similarly, the proposed increase in costs of an annual permit still offers excellent value for money, at the equivalent of £1.15 per week for a single car or £1.35 per week for two cars.

- 2.6 Customers can continue to pay for their parking via our on-site machines with card/cash, via RingGo or permits via our website. Our policy for blue badge holders will remain the same, with parking offered free of charge providing the badge is clearly displayed.

### **3. Other options considered**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Keep seasonal tariffs and only implement 10p increase across all charges	- Visitors will only see a 10p increase, no matter the time of year they visit	- Increase in income will not be in line with the increasing costs we face - Potential to push more visitors into the traditional off-peak season, which does not allow the parks team time and space to deliver important maintenance and conservation of the site. - Potential to push more visitors into the traditional off peak season which does not allow habitat time to recover.
Apply full permit charge for any additional cars	- Doubles the income from permits	- Likely loss/ displacement of visitors, with associated loss of income overall - Negative customer reaction - Impact on secondary spend at cafes from regular visitors

### **4. Legal and financial implications**

- 4.1 If our recommendation is approved we will need to update the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and have to publish a change notice. This will need to be drafted by legal services and published in a local newspaper at least 21 days prior to the change in tariff ‘going live’ in the parks.
- 4.2 The recommended option would require the following implementation costs.

Item	Cost
Pay & Display signage in car parks	£400 (one off cost)
Software change to tariff machines/RingGo	£1,000 (one off cost)
Advertisement fees for public notice	£1,300 (one off cost)
Card transaction fees*	£18,562 (annual cost)

\*based on 70% of visitors switching to card payments or RingGo for payment. It should be noted that these costs are levied regardless of tariff amount.

- 4.3 The table below provides a summary of the projected income resulting from the recommended changes, in comparison with previous years.

	Pay and display (gross)	Permits (gross)	Total carpark income (gross)	Increase/Decrease
2018/19 income from all car parks	£605,622	£120,235	£725,867	n/a
2019/20 income from all car parks†	£570,796	£124,125	£694,921	£30,946
Projected income 2021/22*	£621,238	£141,780	£763,018	£68,097

† we have not used figures from 2020/21 which have been skewed significantly by COVID-19

\*assumes tariff change on 7th June 2021

## 5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 This proposal relates to the corporate priority of improving our environment.
- 5.2 The recommended option will protect the financial viability of parks and ensure they are maintained in a way that continues delivering high quality, safe green spaces with significant physical and mental health benefits to our local residents and communities.
- 5.3 Visitors are able to pay for how long they stay rather than an all-day flat fee and as set out in the narrative, the all-day charge offers value against other local and similar offers. Permits provide regular visitors with a significant reduction on the daily tariffs, offering excellent value for money.

## 6. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

- 6.1 Date local members were consulted: January 7<sup>th</sup> 2021  
Deadline for responses given: January 19<sup>th</sup> 2021

- 6.2 Views were sought from local members by Charlotte Newberry, Customer, Commercial and Development Lead Officer for the Country Parks. Responses were received from Cllr Wendy Matthews, Cllr Trevor Egleton, Cllr Paul Griffin, Cllr Luisa Sullivan, Cllr Guy Hollis, Cllr Ray Sangster and Cllr Duncan Smith.
- 6.3 Members feedback was mixed, with some agreeing that we need to be looking at the pressure an increased number of visitors is having on the parks and one member commenting that in the future parking charges could be increased further especially at Black Park. Other members stated that they did not support an increase during the current pandemic due to the amenity and wellbeing value of the Country Parks.
- 6.4 Two members raised concerns over car park increases forcing visitors to park on adjacent roads. Over the past year, the Country Parks Team have worked with highways and enforcement colleagues to implement temporary traffic regulation orders on Black Park Road, Billet Lane and Denham Court Drive which prevent parking on the road or verge.
- 6.5 Other feedback and suggestions included future consideration of a residents' card scheme and how this may be applicable to the Country Parks, provision of additional bicycle racks at Black Park and the need to improve access points and footpaths/parking areas immediately outside the Country Parks as well as continuing to enforce against illegal parking on adjacent roads and verges.

## **7. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 7.1 We have discussed the need to increase charges with our tenants/partners and detailed our proposed changes. They have not opposed the charges and this proposal is not deemed to have a negative impact on their income or their relationship with the Country Parks team.
- 7.2 The decision will be communicated to our tenants via a scheduled meeting, where we will outline the decision taken, the background information, potential impacts for them and how we will be communicating with our visitors.
- 7.3 The decision will be communicated to visitors through signage within the parks, our social media channels and website as well as the legal process of notification in local newspapers and on site.
- 7.4 All internal staff in the Country Parks Team will be briefed on the decision so will be able to deal with any queries from the public while out on site or via the telephone/email. The contact centre will be made aware of new charges.

## **8. Next steps and review**

- 8.1 Following the decision being made, the communication plan and appropriate legal documents and process will be undertaken in regard to the proposed change.
- 8.2 If approved, once changes have been implemented, we will monitor the impact on visitor numbers and permit holder numbers.

## **9. Background papers**

- 9.1 None.

## **10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).