

Report considered by Cabinet on 14 April 2016

Stratford to Long Marston Greenway: introduction of car parking charges

Recommendation

That Cabinet approve the introduction of parking charges, as detailed in the report, at the Stratford to Long Marston Greenway.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members will recall that the matter of car parking charges at the Stratford upon Avon to Long Marston Greenway ('the Greenway') came before them at their meeting on 16 July 2015. The report summarised the public and partner consultation carried out on the proposal to introduce car parking charges. At that time, Cabinet requested further analysis on the likely income that would be derived from the introduction of charges.
- 1.2 Warwickshire's Country Parks comprise 5 parks and 3 greenways (dismantled railway lines used for walking, cycling and horse riding). As envisaged by the enabling legislation (The Countryside Act 1968) country parks are free to enter. However, the service already operates commercially, raising approximately 80% of running costs, including staffing costs, as income (£869,000 in 2014/15). More than half of all income is derived from car parking (day charges and permit sales) and the power to charge for parking is set out in Section 43 of the Countryside Act. Other sources of income include rents, concessions and licences, retail, angling, events, and education.
- 1.3 The Stratford to Long Marston Greenway is an anomaly in that it is the only site with a WCC owned car park where parking charges are not currently levied. The Greenway has 2 car parks. The larger one at Seven Meadows Road, at the Stratford-upon-Avon end of the Greenway, has 24 lined spaces and a larger overflow area. On clement weekend and holiday days, all spaces, lined and overflow, are used. A second small car park exists at the mid-point of the Greenway towards Long Marston, at Milcote, opposite to the second railway carriage cafe.

2.0 Parking income analysis

- 2.1 Following the comments made at the July meeting and in order to provide more robust income projections, traffic counts were undertaken over an extended period at both Greenway car parks. This count data, together with visitor surveys providing information on dwell times, was supplied to the

Warwickshire Observatory for analysis. The Observatory report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

2.2 The count data was collected between August 2015 and January 2016. This was averaged across high and low season and for weekday and weekend days. It is inevitable that there is some skew on the data due to weather as this is always the most significant influence on outdoor leisure. For example, the Winter period was very wet, but also correspondingly mild. Similarly, the counts missed the Spring and early Summer which typically sees the very busiest days.

2.3 The average count data was then applied to two potential parking tariffs:

- The first starting at 50p for the first hour, rising by 50p each subsequent hour, to a maximum of £3.00 for all day.
- The second starting at £1.00 and again rising 50p each hour to £3.00 all day.

In both cases, the proposed permit price is £36.00 per annum (derived by the Country Parks multiplier of 12x day rate).

2.4 Two factors were then built into the income projections. Firstly, a percentage for displacement (those users choosing to park elsewhere or use a different site for their outdoor leisure). 20% was applied to the lower 50p first hour tariff and 25% displacement to the £1.00 first hour (reflecting greater likely displacement at the potentially higher tariff).

2.5 The second factor was for those visitors choosing to purchase 'good value' annual parking permits. This was set at a usage reduction of 30% for both tariffs. This significantly reduces the revenue projection from day payments. It should be noted that 30% take up of permits is higher than at other country park sites, however this was chosen to reflect the situation at the Greenway which is known to have a body of regular users, including dog walkers and cafe regulars.

2.6 Having applied these adjustments, the analysis provides two estimates for gross annual income from the combined car parks;

50p - £3.00 tariff = **£27,880**

£1.00 - £3.00 tariff = **£44,241**

Additional modelling to reflect higher charges (with an increased likelihood of displacement) has not been undertaken.

3.0 Option selection and implementation

3.1 The Observatory analysis demonstrates that the two Greenway car parks can make a significant contribution to Country Parks income, and hence contribute to the savings required under the Council's One Organisational Plan.

- 3.2 The projections set out in the report and summarised at 2.6 are gross values and a net figure would be dependent upon additional costs associated with administering the proposed charges including the collection of cash. The preferred management solutions for both car parks is to use a contractor; including supply of all necessary hardware and consumables, the services of uniformed patrol personnel to patrol at random times and the issuing of excess charge notices following warning tickets for a first time offence. Discussions will be held with WCC's on-street parking contractors to establish whether this is something that could be provided for within the existing contract. Early discussions with a local parking company indicate these services can be procured on the basis of 40% of gross income, or 50% of gross income to include opening and closing of the Seven Meadows car park. As part of the arrangement, the company would provide all parking machines, signage and sundries within the contract, i.e. at no additional cost. Taking the £1.00 first hour tariff, the Parks Service would therefore expect to achieve **net income** between **£22,120** and **£26,545 per annum**. At the 50p first hour tariff, projected net income would be between **£13,940** and **£16,728**. It is however possible that formal procurement could achieve even better value, i.e. with WCC keeping a greater proportion of receipts.
- 3.3 Neither of the potential tariffs is considered 'out of kilter' with other parking tariffs around the town. For example the nearby car park serving the recreation ground and the butterfly farm is £1.00 per hour, but with an annual permit fee of £500.00, reflecting proximity to the town amenities and hence commuter parking.
- 3.4 The issue of parking charges resulting in displacement parking in local residential streets was a central concern expressed by residents at Cabinet in July 2015. However, whilst there is known to be a small number of commuters / shoppers, who currently use the Seven Meadows car park, these cars are more likely to either displace closer to town, or to become a permit holder. Similarly, although the consultation detailed at the July Cabinet meeting highlighted residential parking as an issue, much of this was attributed by respondents to local schools and commuters parking some distance from the Greenway car park. The majority of Greenway users will require the convenience of a dedicated car park to unload children, dogs, bicycles, pushchairs. Newcomers travelling in for their leisure will undoubtedly follow Satnav. directions or brown tourist signs. Regular users can avail themselves of well-priced annual permits, and the country parks service will promote these.
- 3.5 There is considerable local interest in parking at this location both from volunteers and users of the facility and local residents and there is quite clearly a need to balance the delivery of additional income so as to deliver savings targets whilst not setting charges at a prohibitive level. It is therefore recommended to introduce charges based upon an initial charge of £1.00 per hour, rising in 50 pence increments to a maximum of £3.00 all day alongside annual parking permits at £36.00.

- 3.6 The Country Parks Service acknowledge that the volunteer group at the Greenway have been doing excellent work in managing the Seven Meadows car park locally via a locking and unlocking rota. The current proposal to introduce parking charges is a response to budget and savings challenges and not in any way a reflection on the effectiveness of these volunteer efforts.

4.0 Impact of the proposals

- 4.1 **Finance.** Country Parks, in common with many of the discretionary services offered by the Council, are subject to significant savings challenges under the Council's One Organisational Plan. Car parking is the largest income stream for country parks and the introduction of car parking charges at Stratford Greenway will help to meet those challenges and protect services for the future. Based on experience of parking charges at other amenity sites and the analysis provided by the Warwickshire Observatory, at the £1.00 first hour tariff, a conservative gross revenue estimate of £44,241 would be achieved resulting in **net annual income** between **£22,120** and **£26,545**.
- 4.2 **Equalities.** An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for the proposals and is found at Appendix 2. None of the stipulated groups were considered to be affected any more than the general populace. In common with other country parks, a 20% discount is available for permits on production of a Blue Badge. Drivers increasingly expect to pay for parking at managed amenities and the modest tariff together with the availability of 'good value' permits does not unreasonably disadvantage those benefiting from a discretionary service.
- 4.3 **Environment and Health.** There is no intention to surface more parking area with asphalt and the infrastructure required is therefore limited to pay and display signage and pay machines. The environmental impact is therefore low. The greenways have a positive impact on health by providing venues for traffic free walking, running, cycling and horse riding. Although it is asserted that parking charges may deter or displace some users, it is also possible that some users will choose to walk or cycle rather than arriving by car. Usage levels at other greenways without the benefit of dedicated car parks, and/or those with paid parking nearby, suggest there is no deterrent effect.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Stratford Greenway, in common with our other country parks and greenways, is a popular and highly regarded public amenity provided by the Council.
- 5.2 Whilst car parking charges are something that clearly evokes strong public reaction, it is also the case that all monies received are used to offset running costs and hence to protect the service, and this is something that will be further communicated to service users if/when charges are introduced. Use of the Greenway will remain free for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Only

those users choosing to leave a vehicle will incur a charge. Reasonably priced annual permits will be promoted for regular users.

- 5.3 In order to protect and sustain these popular services for the future it is expedient to introduce car parking charges at Stratford Greenway, in common with other amenities, as part of an ongoing drive to make these services self financing. Subsequent changes to the fees introduced will be considered as part of the established arrangements for reviewing fees and charges across the County Parks portfolio.

Background papers

Petitions, letters of support and objection, EIA

Supporting documents

1. Portfolio Holder report & decision of 23 January 2015
2. Cabinet report 16 July 2016

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication

Councillors:

Cllr Clarke, Clark, Johnson, Boad, Lea

Local Members:

Cllrs Rolfe, Fradgley, Brain, Seccombe.

Introduction of Parking Charges at Stratford Greenway

February 2016

Background

In 2015, Cabinet deferred any decision on the report to introduce car parking charges at the Stratford-upon-Avon to Long Marston Greenway car parks to allow for more detailed information on the financial aspect of the proposal to be presented.

Country Parks have subsequently sought to ascertain a more comprehensive picture of car park usage at the two sites along the Greenway in order to estimate, with greater confidence, the likely income from the introduction of parking charges.

The following report presents the findings of this research.

Methodology

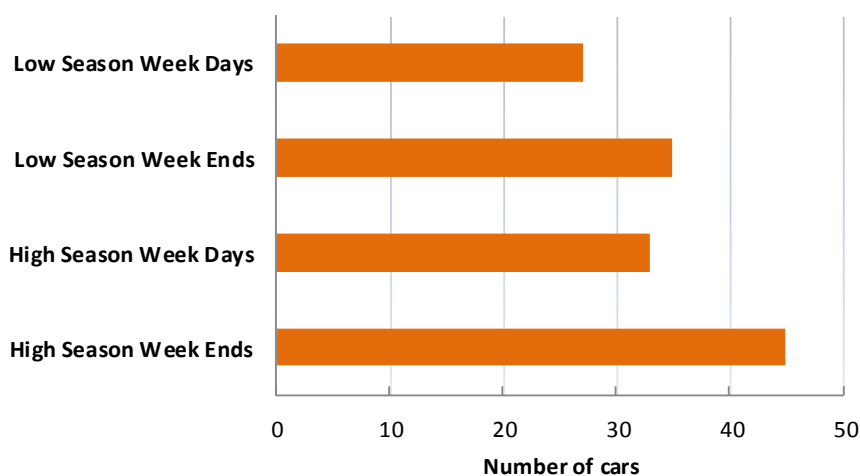
There are two county council car parks along the Greenway; the main Seven Meadows car park off the A4390/Seven Meadows Road close to Old Town in Stratford and the much smaller Milcote car park about 4 miles away by road. Parking capacity at the two sites is approximately 120 and 12 respectively.

Between August 2015 and January 2016 regular site visits were made to both car parks. During this period the number of cars present, along with the day, date, time and weather conditions were recorded. Additionally, a number of visitors were surveyed on site at both car parks to assess the typical duration of visits.

Results

The data was adjusted for seasonality, holiday periods, and time of day to produce the following summary of car visitor usage.

Figure 1 Average number of cars at Seven Meadows car park during site visits



High Season – April to September inclusive and all school holidays

Low Season – October to March inclusive

Figure 2 Average number of cars at Milcote car park during site visits

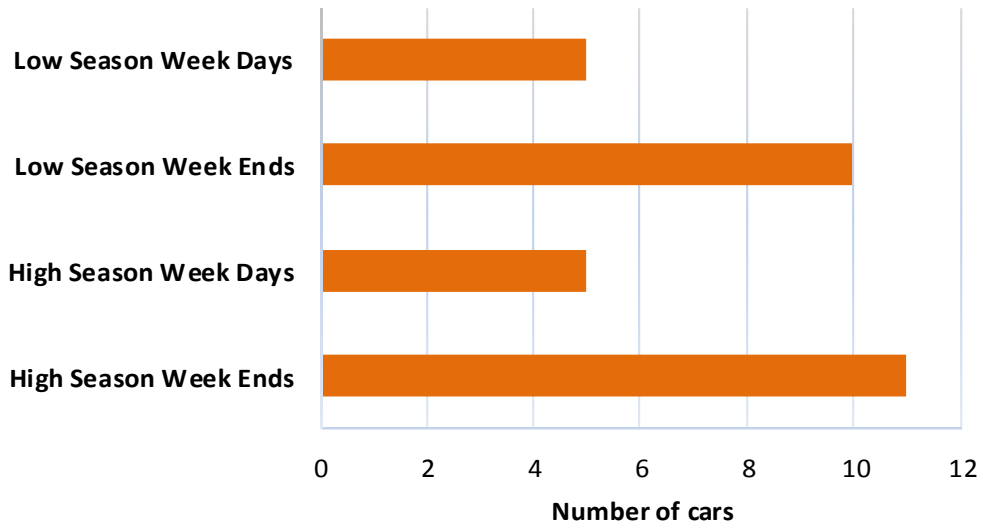


Figure 3 Duration of visits to Seven Meadows car park

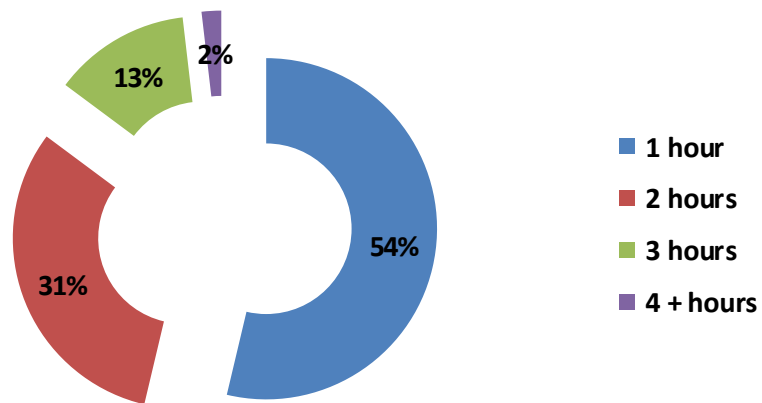


Figure 4 Duration of visits to Milcote car park

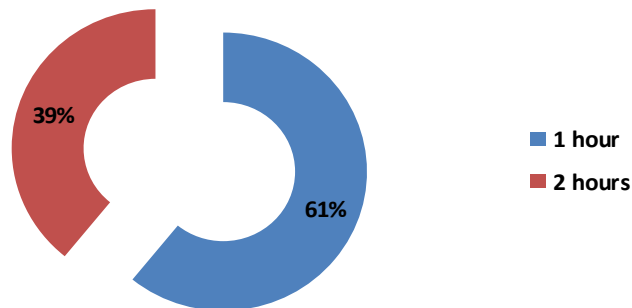
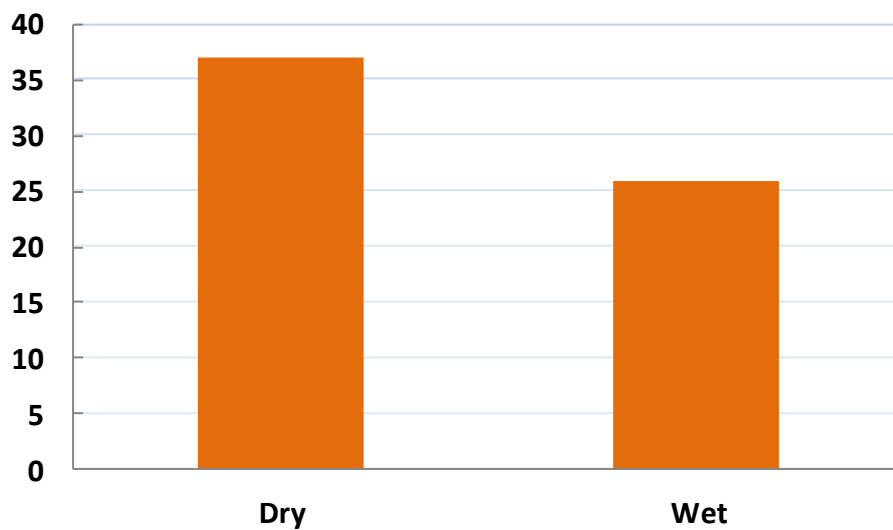


Figure 5 Average number of cars at site visits to Seven Meadows during dry and wet weather conditions



Key Points

- Unsurprisingly, weekends in both high and low season are the most popular times for visitors to use the Greenway car parks.
- At Seven Meadows car park, weekends during low season see on average around 25% fewer cars compared with weekends during high season.
- Weekdays, at Seven Meadows car park, during low season typically see around 20% fewer cars compared with weekdays during high season.

Parking Charges at Stratford Greenway

- On average, across both seasons, weekend parking at Seven Meadows is around 25% higher weekdays.
- The Milcote site shows very little seasonal variation; weekend use is similar during both high and low season and weekday averages across both seasons are the same.
- Wet weather conditions appear to reduce average car numbers by around one third at Seven Meadows but slightly less at Milcote.
- The autumn and early winter of 2015 was widely recognised as being mild but wetter than average which may have had a bearing on the number of low season visitors.
- Overall, the majority of visitors who were questioned were staying for a period of 1-2 hours. This would indicate that, if parking charges were introduced, the majority of visitors would be paying at an hourly rate.

Estimated Income from parking charges

Estimated income from parking charges at Greenway car parks are set out below. Two scenarios are presented, one using the tariffs set out in table 1 and another using the higher tariffs set out in table 3.

Table 1 Option One Parking Tariffs at Greenway car parks

Duration	Tariff
1 hour	50p
2 hours	£1.00
3 hours	£1.50
4 hours	£2.00
All Day	£3.00
12 month permit	£36.00

Table 1 indicates the proposed parking tariffs at the Greenway car parks. Based on observed parking trends from other sites, some initial reduction in visitor numbers is to be expected. Additionally, some regular visitors are likely to take up the option of an annual parking permit allowing them to park without charge when they visit.

Parking Charges at Stratford Greenway

Using the data collected by Country Parks, an estimate of the potential income from the introduction of parking charges has been calculated. Estimates have incorporated the following and been applied to the above parking tariffs:

- The number of days and hours available for charging during both high and low season
- Average daily car numbers
- An adjustment for potential drop in visitor numbers following the introduction of parking charges.
- An adjustment for the take up annual passes where income from onsite charges is replaced with income from the sale of parking passes.

Table 2 Estimated income summary based on parking charges set out in table one

Car park	All current users -no displacement or permits	After 20% displacement – no permit holders	After 20% displacement and 30% take up of annual permits		
	Income from parking charges	Income from parking charges	Parking charges	Permit sales	Total income
Seven Meadows	£38,362	£30,689	£21,482	£1,836	£23,318
Milcote	£7,440	£5,952	£4,166	£396	£4,562
Total	£45,802	£36,641	£25,648	£2,232	£27,880

Table 3 Option Two Higher Tariffs at Greenway car parks

Duration	Tariff
1 hour	£1.00
2 hours	£1.50
3 hours	£2.00
4 hours	£2.50
All Day	£3.00
12 month permit	£36.00

Table 4 below shows the estimated income for the parking tariffs set out in table 3. A higher displacement value of 25% is incorporated into the calculations to reflect the potentially higher reduction in visitor numbers from the increased tariffs.

Table 4 Estimated income summary based on parking charges in table 3

Car park	All current users -no displacement or permits	After 25% displacement – no permit holders	After 25% displacement and 30% take up of annual permits		
	Income from parking charges	Income from parking charges	Income from parking charges	Permit sales	Total income
Seven Meadows	£66,863	£50,147	£35,103	£1,728	£36,831
Milcote	£13,428	£10,071	£7,050	£360	£7,410
Total	£80,291	£60,218	£42,153	£2,088	£44,241

Conclusion

The available data regarding car park usage at the Greenway suggests that currently visitor numbers are relatively stable but subject to some variation during high and low season, weekends/weekdays and when weather conditions are wet. The majority of users appear to be short stay (1-2 hours). The above estimates are based on current usage data but have been adjusted for some reduction in visitor numbers as well as take up permit parking following the introduction of parking charges.

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Parking Charges at Stratford Greenway

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ ANALYSIS (EqIA)

Stratford Greenway Parking Charges Consultation

Equality Impact Assessment/ Analysis (EqIA)

Group	Rural Services
Business Units/Service Area	Country Parks
Plan/ Strategy/ Policy/ Service being assessed	Country Parks – provision of car parking and charging on the greenway
Is this is a new or existing policy/service? If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment	Existing service, but introduction of charging is new at this site
EqIA Review team – List of members	Paula Cheesman Stuart Ikeringill Craig Williams Minakshee Patel
Date of this assessment	15/1/15
Signature of completing officer (to be signed after the EqIA has been completed)	
Are any of the outcomes from this assessment likely to result in complaints from existing services users and/ or members of the public? If yes please flag this with your Head of Service and the Customer Relations Team as soon as possible.	YES /
Name and signature of Head of Service (to be signed after the EqIA has been completed)	Phil Evans
Signature of GLT Equalities Champion (to be signed after the EqIA is completed and signed by the completing officer)	Phil Evans

A copy of this form including relevant data and information to be forwarded to the Group Equalities Champion and the Corporate Equalities & Diversity Team



Form A1

INITIAL SCREENING FOR STRATEGIES/POLICIES/FUNCTIONS FOR EQUALITIES RELEVANCE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, PROMOTE EQUALITY AND FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS



High relevance/priority



Medium relevance/priority



Low or no relevance/ priority

Note:

1. Tick coloured boxes appropriately, and depending on degree of relevance to each of the equality strands
2. Summaries of the legislation/guidance should be used to assist this screening process

Business Unit/Services:	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																													
	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Gender Reassignment			Pregnancy/ Maternity			Marriage/ Civil Partnership (only for staff)					
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consultation on the introduction of parking charges at Stratford Greenway			x			x			x			x			x			x			x			x			x			
Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g. child poverty for example or our most geographically disadvantaged communities? If yes please explain how.																											NO			
Are your proposals likely to impact on a carer who looks after older people or people with disabilities? If yes please explain how. Potentially could be, but no detail until we have results from consultation with the public																											YES			

Form A2 – Details of Plan/ Strategy/ Service/ Policy

<u>Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining</u>	
(1) What are the aims and objectives of Plan/Strategy/Service/Policy?	Warwickshire’s country parks and greenways are free to use and this was envisaged by the enabling legislation (Countryside Act 1968). However, at all sites with a minimum level of service provision, a car parking charge is levied for visitors leaving vehicles on site. The introduction of pay and display at the Greenway is part of the business & savings plan for Warwickshire’s country parks – the premise being that those benefiting from the facilities contribute towards their upkeep
(2) How does it fit with Warwickshire County Council’s wider objectives?	It ensures resources and services are targeted effectively and efficiently whether delivered by the local authority, commissioned or in partnership, and are part of the savings plan required for Country Parks service delivery.
(3) What are the expected outcomes?	That the public accept need to introduce charges and this will enable us to become self-funding as a service and meet our savings targets. It will also enable us to continue with the upkeep and maintenance of this greenway in the future.
(4) Which of the groups with protected characteristics is this intended to benefit? (see form A1 for list of protected groups)	Should benefit all protected groups for access to the greenway.
<u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u>	
(1) What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the plan/ strategy/ service/ policy?	We have an existing portfolio of charged car parking at other sites and this provides a consistent approach across the County. Expenditure is required to maintain the car park and the greenway, e.g. maintenance to keep the car park pot-hole free, and in response to customer complaints due to the fact that the site is well used.
(2) Have you consulted on the plan/ strategy/ service/policy and if so with whom?	Consultation plan being agreed. Once portfolio holder decision is made, we are planning to consult with greenway users using a method of face to face interviews on site and direct communication with community representatives and interested parties.

(3) Which of the groups with protected characteristics have you consulted with?			
<u>Stage 3 – Analysis of impact</u>			
(1) From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group which could amount to discrimination? If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.	RACE n/a	DISABILITY Impact to be assessed as part of consultation process	GENDER n/a
	MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP n/a	AGE n/a	GENDER REASSIGNMENT n/a
	RELIGION/BELIEF n/a	PREGNANCY MATERNITY n/a	SEXUAL ORIENTATION n/a
(2) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?	Will be assessed as part of the consultation process		
(3) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (this should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)	Permits will be introduced with a 20% discount for blue badge holders in line with our other parks and as part of the service currently offered.		

(4) How does the plan/strategy/service/policy contribute to promotion of equality? If not what can be done?	Applies consistently across the service to everyone
(5) How does the plan/strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not what can be done?	Permit scheme enables good value permits to be bought and also still retains a discount of 20% for those with a blue badge specifically for disabled.
(6) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes how can they be overcome?	no
(7) What are the likely positive and negative consequences for health and wellbeing as a result of this plan/strategy/service/policy?	People may choose to come less often if they have to pay for parking
(8) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact on population health? (This should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)	By offering good value annual and 6 month permits which can be bought at anytime of the year, and are valid from the date of purchase.
(9) Will the plan/strategy/service/policy increase the number of people needing to access health services? If so, what steps can be put in place to mitigate this?	no
(10) Will the plan/strategy/service/policy reduce health inequalities? If so, how, what is the evidence?	no

Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review & Monitoring

If No Further Action is required then go to – Review & Monitoring

(1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.

EqIA Action Plan

Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments
Updating EIA after consultation	Paula Cheesman	After consultation		
Introduction of permit scheme (if approved)	Carole Lea			
Monitoring of usage (if approved)	Craig Williams	12 months after implementation		

(2) Review and Monitoring
State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:

‘An Equality Impact Assessment/ Analysis on this policy was undertaken on (date of assessment) and will be reviewed on (date three years from the date it was assessed).