

## Decision Record – Consultation on the Introduction of Car Parking Charges at the Stratford-upon-Avon to Long Marston Greenway

<b>Cabinet Portfolio Holder taking the decision</b>	Cllr Jeff Clarke Environment
<b>Date of Decision</b>	23 January 2015

### Decision Taken

That the Portfolio Holder for Environment approves the proposal for consultation.

### Reasons for Decisions

The Stratford to Long Marston Greenway is currently the only country park site with car parks where no charges are 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 the available spaces, lined and overflow, are all used. A second small car park exists at the mid point towards Long Marston, at Milcote, opposite the second railway carriage café.

In order to realise savings targets it is necessary to consider the introduction of car parking charges at these sites. However, before these are introduced it is considered appropriate to consult on the proposals.

### Background Information

The One Organisational Plan (OOP) requires savings of £300k from Rural Services. Rural Services comprises the Forestry Section and the Country Parks team. However, as the Forestry Section already operate as a business unit, it is inevitable that the larger part of the required savings will come from Country Parks.

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 (Countryside Act 1968) the country parks are free to enter. However, the service already operates commercially, raising approximately 80% of running costs, including staffing costs, as income (£810k in 2013/14). The most significant income stream is 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.

The step changes towards a fully commercial service have been ongoing for the last 20 years. The service has rationalised its holdings, divesting land that does not fit the portfolio, and has externally commissioned much of the service activity to private and third sector organisations (cafes, sailing, jet ski, cycle hire, children's farm, camping and caravan site, and a range of other services from ice cream concessions to donkey rides, miniature railways, pedalos and bouncy castles). Given this existing level of commercialisation, further gains are likely to be hard won.

Although the OOP savings are profiled for years 3 and 4, the services are planning for them now. Progress includes;

- Restructuring the management of Forestry and Country Parks following the retirement of key staff
- Refreshing the Country Parks Business Plan (currently in its final year)
- Protecting current income through effective marketing and working with partners to enhance the visitor offer
- Reviewing rents and concessions to achieve best consideration, but also supporting tenants to ensure their businesses remain viable through turbulent economic times
- Benchmarking all commercial activity, fees and charges with peer services
- Maximising the effectiveness of volunteers, work placements, apprenticeships, and other unpaid labour

These activities are bearing fruit, but it is equally clear that the service still has a very significant challenge to achieve the OOP savings. It is therefore essential that every opportunity for efficiencies and income generation continue to be examined. The introduction of car parking charges at the Greenway is one of these.

**Financial Implications**

Expected that charges will realise £20 to £25000 a year.

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<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Councillor Jeff Clarke

**Checklist**

<b>Urgent matter?</b>	No
<b>Confidential or Exempt?</b>	No
<b>Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?</b>	No

**List of Reports considered** - please include link to report

Link to published proposed decision report:

<https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/cm5/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/645/Meeting/3091/Committee/550/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

**List of Background Papers** - please include a contact for access to background papers

None

**Members and officers consulted or informed**

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Jeff Clarke  
All Strategic Directors  
Legal – Ian Marriott, John Gregory, Ann Belcher  
Finance – Liz Firmstone  
Equality – Minakshee Patel  
Democratic Services – Paul Williams

Communities OSC – party spokes:

Councillors Richard Chattaway, Jenny Fradgley, John Holland and Wallace Redford