

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Car Park Charges Consultation and Making of a New Car Park Order

Date: 9 January 2025

Author: Property Services Manager

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

To review the consultation feedback and seek approval to commence the procedure to amend the Council's current Civil Enforcement Off Street Parking Places Order 2020.

Key Decision

This is a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) Approval is given to commence the statutory procedure to amend the Gedling Borough Council (Civil Enforcement Off Street Parking Places) Order 2020 in order to:**
 - 1a) Introduce parking charges at Gedling Country Park between 8am and 6pm daily.**
 - 1b) Introduce a cashless payment option across all Gedling Borough Council's Car Parks**
- 2) Approval is given for a permitting system to be introduced, for a fee, for regular uses of the park, the fee and administration of the scheme to be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.**

3) Approval is given for Friends of Gedling Country Park and associated volunteers to park without a charge.

4) A capital budget of £12,000 funded by reserves is established (as set out in section 4.4).

1 Background

- 1.1 Pursuant to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (“1984 Act”), the Gedling Borough Council (Civil Enforcement Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2020 (“the Order”), contains regulations relating to the use of and conditions on which the Council’s car parks subject to the Order may be used and allows the enforcement of those conditions of use and parking restrictions.
- 1.2 The procedure for making and amending traffic regulation orders (‘TRO’) made under the Act is set out in the Local Authorities’ Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Before making or amending a TRO the Council are required to consult with a number of organisations/persons set out in Regulation 6.
- 1.3 Anyone wishing to object to the proposed TRO can do so within 21 days beginning with the date of the publication and the Council must consider all objections before making the TRO.
- 1.4 A TRO must be made between 21 days and two years following the publication date of the notice of proposals.
- 1.5 On 3rd October 2024, approval was granted to commence the consultation on the proposed amendments to the current Off Street Parking Places Order. These proposals included introducing parking charges at Gedling Country Park and introducing a cashless payment option across Gedling Borough Car Parks.
- 1.6 The Council therefore began to prepare for the consultation by carrying out the following:
 - i) Displaying notices of the proposal in all Gedling Borough Council Car Parks.
 - ii) Issuing letters to 30 other local authorities or government bodies.
 - iii) Displaying the information on the Gedling Borough Council website advising how consultation feedback can be provided on the proposals.
 - iv) Posting consultation details on the Gedling Country Park

Facebook page.

1.7 The Council received 75 written responses by email and post and all of these related to the introduction of parking charges at Gedling Country Park. 68 of these raised concerns or objected to the proposal and 7 were positive about the introduction of the charges.

1.8 The written responses have been carefully considered as part of the consultation process. There are several reoccurring themes or concerns within the responses and these have therefore been categorised as per the below

1.9 **Regular Users**

The main objection to the proposed charges was that it would prevent regular users or dog walkers using the Country Park on a daily basis. The majority of the feedback was from people who use the park up to two times per day. By implementing a charge of £2 per day this would cost those users up to £730 a year which would prevent them using the park as often. A number of people have therefore requested that a permit system is implemented. The Council agrees a permit system is reasonable suggestion and therefore permits shall be available for regular users to purchase for a set price. The Council is currently looking into this and full details on how to purchase a permit will be available on the Gedling Borough Council website once the system is ready.

1.10 **Charging Hours**

A number of queries were raised as to the hours that the £2 charge will apply, taking into account the feedback received from the consultation and the fact that a lot of users of the park are regular dog walkers, the £2 rate will be applicable between the hours of 8am and 6pm. This will allow the early morning and evening dog walkers the opportunity to continue to walk their dogs without paying for parking if outside of those hours.

1.11 **Local Congestion and Impact on Surrounding Areas**

Several respondents, particularly those living in nearby areas such as Spring Lane, expressed concerns that the new parking fees could result in visitors parking in residential streets, as was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. On street carparking has been restricted on adjoining residential streets, through TROs implemented in 2021. Double yellow lines prevent on street car parking on the majority of adjoining streets where this was problematic at the onset of the pandemic.

The charge of £2 is still very reasonable for the facilities available and the Council therefore do not think this would discourage the majority of visitors from using the car park. We are however working closely with the County

Council who are responsible for the surrounding estate roads and will be monitoring this situation closely.

1.12 Payment Methods

Concerns were raised throughout the consultation that there would only be one payment method for the £2 parking charge. The Council can confirm that there will be an option to pay by cash, card, app or phone at Gedling Country Park.

1.13 Impact on Events and Volunteers

There is a clear concern that the parkrun events, which rely heavily on volunteer participation, will be negatively impacted. Volunteers and participants fear the additional costs associated with parking will lead to reduced participation or force people to stop volunteering. A review has been carried out of other park run events in the Nottinghamshire area and 40% of these also charge for parking. Fees vary between £1.50 and £2 and therefore the proposed cost of £2 is in line with other Parkrun events.

It is recommended that Friends of Gedling Country Park Volunteers will continue to receive free parking.

1.14 Support for Parking Charges

Although the majority of the consultation responses were against the proposal. A number of respondents expressed support for the introduction of parking fees, with the understanding that the funds would be used to maintain and improve the park.

Gedling Country Park is a flagship green space for the Council with large areas of open space, footpaths and wildlife for all to enjoy with stunning views over the surrounding areas. It is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and has consistently retained its “green flag” award status which recognises well managed parks and green spaces. The park has previously been awarded ‘Much Loved’ status from the Fields in Trust, for being recognised as one of the top 4 parks in the East Midlands in the UK Best Park competition.

The costs of maintaining the park in terms of grounds maintenance and a dedicated full time Park Ranger is around £180,000 per year. This is a significant cost to the Council and by implementing a parking charge this will assist with maintaining and improving the park and facilities on offer.

2.0 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that:

Approval is given to commence the statutory procedure to amend the Gedling Borough Council (Civil Enforcement Off Street Parking Places) Order 2020 in order to:

- Introduce parking charges at Gedling Country Park between 8am and 6 pm daily.
- Introduce a cashless payment option across all Gedling Borough Council's Car Parks

A permitting system for regular uses of the park be introduced, for a fee to be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Approval is given for Friends of Gedling Country Park and associated volunteers to park without a charge.

A capital budget of £12,000 is established to purchase two new pay and display machines for Gedling Country Park.

If approved the infrastructure for facilitating payment will need to be procured and the notice displayed in accordance with statutory process. It is expected that charging will commence in the Spring.

3 Alternative Options

3.1 An alternative option would be not to introduce parking charges at Gedling Country Park and continue to use existing revenue budget for ongoing maintenance of the current 250 car park spaces and other infrastructure at Gedling Country Park, but this would limit the extent of further developments and/or major repairs due to a need to borrow. For example, the upper car park is now experiencing major problems with potholes and resources are being switched from other repairs budgets to address the issue.

3.2 Another option would be to cease the grounds maintenance and infrastructure repairs at the park effectively letting it grow wild. Considering the park is a flagship green space and is recognised as one of the top 4 parks in the East Midlands, it would be the Council's preference not to adopt this option.

3.3 An alternative option would also be not to introduce the pay by app cashless option and instead install new card readers on all Pay and Display machines. This option is significantly more expensive in comparison and would still incur maintenance costs and cash collection

costs.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Usage figures for vehicles entering the Car Park over the past 3 years are as follows:

Year	Number
2021/22	225,502
2022/23	213,289
2023/24	218,306

- 4.2 Based on the above figures, it is possible to make an assumption on projected income if parking was introduced at Gedling Country Park. Vehicle usage is likely to drop if charges are introduced and therefore assuming a 50% reduction in vehicle numbers, the likely income could be up to £200,000.
- 4.3 Introducing a cashless payment option through procuring a Pay by Phone system would incur a cost to the Council. The cost of this service would be 2.5% of the income received and this covers banking/merchant costs. Income from Pay and Display for 2023/24 was circa. £92,000. If we assume 50% of these users change to pay by phone moving forward, the cost to the Council would be £1,150.
- 4.4 There would also be a requirement to procure two new Pay and Display machines at Gedling Country Park for those still wanting to pay for parking using cash. The cost of these is £12,000. This can be funded by reserves in the first instance, the reserve will be replenished by income generated from parking charges in the first year.
- 4.5 If parking charges are introduced, these will need to be enforced. The cost of enforcement is taken from the income received from the PCN so there is no direct cost implication for the Council.
- 4.6 Any costs incurred for installing card readers onto some of the existing car parking machines will be met from the car park income generated.
- 4.7 The council does not currently have a sinking fund for replacement of the assets within the park. This will be required as the assets start to age. Good practice would suggest that the Council needs to start planning for this eventuality by setting aside in excess of £150,000 per year (café building worth £1.5m; viewing platforms worth £500k; car parks worth £700k. It is therefore proposed that any excess of income over expenditure in each financial year is added to the asset replacement sinking fund.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The procedure for making and amending traffic regulation orders ('TRO') made under the Act is set out in the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Before making or amending a TRO the Council are required to consult with a number of organisations/persons, publish a notice of intent in a local newspaper and have copies of the proposed order available for inspection. As set out in this report, this consultation process has now been carried out and a summary of the responses contained at paragraphs 1.9 to 1.14 above.
- 5.2 A TRO must be made between 21 days and two years following the publication date of the notice of proposals. Within 14 days of making the order another notice must be published in a local newspaper setting out certain information as required by Regulation 17. Anyone wishing to object to the order can, within six weeks following the making of the order, apply to the High Court to question the validity of the order or of any of its provisions.
- 5.3 Regulation 17 also requires the Council to take appropriate steps for ensuring that adequate publicity about the order is given. This may include displaying a copy of the notice of making of the order in all of the Council car parks.
- 5.4 Once a TRO has been made, and before it comes into force, the Council must ensure that appropriate signs are placed in each affected car park which provide adequate information about the effect of the order. The signs must be maintained for as long as the order remains in force. The current signage displaying details about the current parking conditions must be removed, Regulation 18.
- 5.5 A TRO must be made between 21 days and two years following the publication date of the notice of proposals.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The Council's car parks include provision for disabled parking which will remain unchanged by the new Order.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 The proposed introduction of charging at Gedling Country Park provides an incentive to encourage active travel and public transport use supporting the Council's Net Zero 2030 ambitions.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – EIA
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – CIA
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Consultation Responses

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 Report to Leader – Off Street Parking Order – 3 October 2024

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 The costs of enhancing the park and maintaining the assets at their current high standards in the long term can not be found from revenue and would have to be funded from borrowing, if affordable, which would add further ongoing costs to the revenue budget at a time when wider affordability is an issue.
- 10.2 Introducing a parking fee at Gedling Country Park will not only contribute towards the maintenance of the park but also encourage park users to explore other transportation methods which will help reduce carbon emissions and air quality of the area.
- 10.3 By introducing a cashless payment option you are providing any car park users throughout the borough a wider variety of options, this makes it easier for people to pay for parking and may encourage more people to use Council car parks as they won't be restricted to cash only.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer