

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 October 2022
Subject:	Coastal Country Parks - Parking Strategy

Summary:

This report is on the development and revision of the car parking strategy at the six (6) County Council owned car parks on the East Coast and within the Coastal Country Park.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited:

- (1)** to review and comment on the contents of this report; and,
- (2)** to endorse the recommendations of Officers to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Economy for further development and implementation.

1. Background

On 6th September 2021, the Planning and Regulation Committee approved the parameters of an off-street parking order to cover the six County Council owned car parks in the Coastal Country Park area, being:

- Huttoft Car Terrace
- Marsh Yard and Moggs Eye
- Anderby Creek
- Wolla Bank, and
- Chapel Six Marshes

For a number of years, the sites had suffered from poor and inappropriate parking, leading to congestion and obstruction and poor visitor experience. The sites also suffered with high levels of “wild camping” motorhome owners, especially at Huttoft, and who often stayed for a number of days, creating litter and waste concerns and parked inappropriately using multiple car spaces to align side on to the beach. The previous

byelaws in operation at the site were found to be ineffective in managing and enforcing against these behaviours.

In order to regulate and manage the large numbers of vehicles wishing to use the car parks it was agreed to introduce an off-street parking order which will enable a charge for parking to be made within the times specified, and for a penalty charge notice to be issued for any contraventions of the regulations set out in the order. Thus, whilst there will be no physical restriction on vehicles entering the car parks, it became possible to issue a penalty charge notice to any vehicle parked therein between 10pm and 6am. The car parking charges apply to all vehicles using the car parks between 10am and 5pm daily, between Good Friday and the end of October and the scale of charges is:

- Up to 1 hour £1.00
- Up to 2 hours £2.00
- Over 2 hours £4.00

The off-street parking order also specifies a maximum length of vehicle (6.0m) which is permitted to use the car parks.

In introducing these charges at the six sites officers carefully considered the options that were available for methods of payment. Unfortunately, due to the secluded nature of the sites and the persistent vandalism and damage that occurs, it was not an economical option to install machine-based methods such as card payments or cash. Theft is a further consideration for cash-based machines but, as we have already had significant vandalism and removal of the signage regarding the car parks and the vandalism at Huttoft (arson of the new building and gluing of the toilet door locks), it is evident that other infrastructure would be similarly targeted. The experience of the issues the Chapel St Leonards parish Council has had with the infrastructure in their car park has also contributed to the decision.

Finally, after receiving feedback from local groups, a permit scheme was introduced to enable the long-held tradition of night fishing to continue to take place at the sites, although, the complexity of developing such a scheme specifically for residents was not considered to be possible.

2. Analysis

Since the introduction of the order and the implementation of charges on Good Friday 2022, and until 31st August 2022, APCOA the operating company have generated the following statistics:

		April 15th - 31st August 2022			
	Pay by Phone Transactions	Pay by Phone Income	PCN's Issued	PCN Income	APCOA Costs
Wolla Bank	1,898	£4,547.00	103	£2,199.00	

		April 15th - 31st August 2022			
	Pay by Phone Transactions	Pay by Phone Income	PCN's Issued	PCN Income	APCOA Costs
Huttoft	10,688	£29,164.00	251	£5,440.00	
Moggs Eye / Marsh Yard	5,116	£14,241.00	233	£4,980.00	
Anderby Creek	11,326	£31,303.00	304	£6,735.00	
Chapel Six Marshes	2,266	£5,234.00	123	£2,944.00	
Total	31,294	£84,489.00	1,014	£22,298.00	£54,448.16

Table 1: Pay by Phone Transactions

		April 15th - 31st August 2022			
	Parked without payment of parking charge	Vehicle exceeds length permitted	Parked in a closed car park	Other PCN's	Total
Wolla Bank	91	1	0		
Huttoft	221	17	10		
Moggs Eye / Marsh Yard	223	0	1		
Anderby Creek	256	3	12		
Chapel Six Marshes	114	0	2		
Total	905	21	25	63	1014

Table 2: Parked without payment of parking charge

3. Complaints & Feedback

As with the implementation of any scheme of change and especially, where charges are concerned, it was inevitable that there would be some degree of challenge to the scheme. In the case of implementing charges generally there has been an acceptance that the modest charge implemented was appropriate in off- setting the rising costs in managing the sites alongside the desire to invest in the Coastal Country Park Area however the overwhelming compliant and feedback has been on the difficulties in the usage of the “pay by phone” system which requires the visitor to use a mobile device to pay for a parking ticket. This can be achieved on a smartphone by downloading an app. or visiting the APCOA website online. It is also possible to pay by text, so it is possible to pay from any form of mobile phone.

Payment may also be made by visiting the website prior to accessing the site but will not guarantee a parking space on arrival.

Despite each site meeting the required minimum standards for the introduction of pay by phone systems, it is evident from the complaints and feedback made that many people struggled to engage with the technology, were unable to download the app., were unable to access sufficient mobile reception to make a text payment or the system in some way failed to operate properly leading to missed payment or frustration. Much of the feedback requested that pay machines are installed due to these problems and that phone systems were discriminatory against elderly visitors not well versed in the technology or for those who did not own a mobile phone or other device.

Whilst initially recommendations have been cautious against the use of payment machines, it is now apparent that without their usage a number of visitors had either left the site or had stayed without payment and run the risk of a penalty charge notice being applied. It is recommended by officers that two machines are now installed at the two busiest sites of Huttoft and Anderby Creek. This will be funded utilising some of the profit made from the ticket and penalty charge notice incomes.

In conjunction with this it is recommended that the scheme be amended by introducing a single site code to cover all six sites which will enable any ticket purchased to be transferable between the sites meaning it will be possible to buy a ticket at either Huttoft or Anderby Creek but to then park at one of the four other sites where a physical machine will not be present. Pay by Phone options will remain at all six sites.

Representation had also been made that a resident's pass should be reconsidered. Whilst it remains a difficult concept to determine, what constitutes being a "local" resident, officers believe it would be possible to introduce a seasonal pass for a discounted rate that would be an attraction to multi-visit users that could be made available to all as opposed to being limited to a specific geographic area.

4. Conclusion

Despite the relative success of the scheme and the broad acceptance that charges are appropriate, it is apparent that some visitors have been disadvantaged through the limitations of the operating system and the occasional technology difficulties experienced at the sites.

Officers therefore recommend that the following alterations are made:

- The installation of two physical cashless payment machines be made at Huttoft Car Terrace and Anderby Creek (pending feasibility in terms of power supply). These will operate on "roaming, multi-sim technology" enabling them to connect to the system on the best available reception.
- The alteration from six unique site codes to having one single site code covering all six sites.
- The provision of a seasonal pass at a value matched to that of the currently available night fishing permit (Currently £50 but being reviewed)

5. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The impact of the scheme will be that the payment system will be more inclusive, allowing a greater section of the community to be able engage appropriately. In particular, the proposed changes will benefit those less conversant in the usage of app. technology for payments or for those without access to a mobile phone.

There is no risk in the changes to site codes or to the introduction of a seasonal pass however there is a risk in the provision of the hard infrastructure form the potential for vandalism and consequential uplift in management costs.

6. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Coastal Country Park - Coastal Access Car Parking Charges - Potential Fishing & Residential Permits	Agenda for Planning and Regulation Committee on Monday, 6th September, 2021, 10.30 am (moderngov.co.uk)

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