

# TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 3 March 2021

Present: Councillor T Anderson (Chair)

Councillors	P Stuart	C Poval
	H Cameron	J Walsh
	J Johnson	KJ Williams
	C Jones	A Brame (In place of A Corkhill)
	B Kenny	

## 28 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## 29 APOLOGIES

Councillor Andy Corkhill had sent apologies for absence and was deputised by Councillor Allan Brame.

## 30 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

## 31 MINUTES

### RESOLVED –

**That the minutes of the meeting of the Tourism, Communities Culture and Leisure Committee held on 21 January 2021 be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

## 32 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were two questions from the public.

**Question 1** I believe the council are looking at various places on the Wirral to create official Motor Home sites. One area mentioned is the large overflow car park at Station Road, Thurstaston.

I wish to raise the following concerns with any such proposal:

The area around Thurstaston and this part of the Country Park has been overcome with visitors and their vehicles.

The local infrastructure and car park facilities at Thurstaston are already unable to cope with the amount of visitors to this area. More parking spaces are urgently required, so to lose any parking spaces at all will greatly increase the existing problems with traffic flow.

As a member of Thurstaston Caravan Owners Association, whenever I visit the area I regularly witness issues with parking. When people are unable to park in the designated car parks they search for alternatives, such as parking on double yellow lines, on grass verges, along the length of Station Road, or on the private spine road leading to the Dee Sailing Club and often blocking their access requirements.

All of Station Road is very narrow. Any vehicle which parks on the road can create blockages for other traffic. The part of Station Road from the humpback bridge to the Dee Sailing Club has no pavements. All this creates major safety hazards to pedestrians, many with young children. Parking here causes blockages which hamper the movement of the Dee Sailing Club boats, the Caravan Club's visitors and most importantly any urgent or emergency access. This was evident in the recent incident when people needed rescuing after becoming trapped due to Thurstaston cliff erosion.

This is an area of natural beauty and needs environmental protection. There are ongoing problems with nightly antisocial behaviour which Council Officers have been informed about. Additional demands on the Country Park risk adding to these issues, and could lead to environmental damage to the area.

In conclusion Thurstaston already has an established well-run national motor home site, so what are the benefits to the area in creating something similar that will result in the loss of any current parking facilities and that will add to the problems to an area with limited infrastructure?

**A.1.** Wirral Country Park Overflow Car Park is one of the sites included in the proposal presented by the officers for improving the leisure vehicles offer across the Borough. At this stage we are looking for a steer from the Councillors as to what principles to apply when selecting sites and which sites to prioritise short and long term. Business cases for approved sites will take into consideration challenges and risks associated with possible new developments, including their impact on nature, communities and businesses.

The site on Station Road is being considered as Wirral Country Park is a popular leisure vehicle destination in the Borough. Broadening the current offer to reach new target groups while building on the recognition of Wirral Country Park is being viewed as a possibly strong marketing proposition. Due to its unique natural features, it is suggested that the site is developed as an intimate, tranquil leisure vehicle location.

Officers are aware of parking issues and have taken into consideration the site as the front bays of the carpark are scheduled to be resurfaced before September 2021. The £210K proposed capital investment will enable the council to operate all front bays in any weather condition. Based on the assessment conducted - as part of the capital investment application procedure - scheduled improvement is expected to reduce the amount of pressure in the area in terms of parking.

Furthermore sections of the Station Road are currently double yellow line marked and that is considered to be extended and also increased visits of traffic officers will likely further reduce issues with access.

Should the site be approved for business case development, the possibility to operate back bays as hybrid leisure vehicle & carpark site will be considered. This option would cater for more flexibility in case of large events requiring more parking space. In addition, the business case will consider possible impact on anti-social behaviour, disturbance to residence and visitors also associated expenses if suitable solutions are identified.

Wirral Country Park is a flagship country park on the Wirral and an important section of the Wirral Way. It is also the oldest Country Park in England being recognised by nature lovers across the country and abroad. Any business case development linked to the park will have to ensure that environmental priorities are not compromised.

**Q.2.** In principle we aren't against more caravan facilities. However if there is to be more traffic down Station Road then this will exacerbate the issues we are already experiencing with illegal parking and general access to the club. Over the past few years at the sailing club we have traditionally held 2 national sailing events, and an international one that can be every 4 years. We have always had difficulties enabling access for visitors with their extra wide craft down such narrow roads, but recently with the irresponsible and careless parking that has taken place since lockdown, this is likely to make the task of hosting future events much more problematic. While initiatives such as the new signs should help, it doesn't address the issue that the parking capacity is not sufficient for the high demand, which we expect will continue even when lock down easing happens, as the public have really enjoyed the fabulous open spaces. We think it would be irresponsible to add to what can already be an extremely congested area by encouraging motorhomes to attempt such an ordeal, creating friction and even violence between those showing a disregard for the rules and those wishing to enjoy their stay. I personally am a frequent user of motorhome sites in difficult to access areas, but every-one I have visited over the past 20 years have no parking at all on the approach roads, and suitable passing places for towing vehicles. Without such measures in place, we at Dee Sailing Club would be against such a site.

Will WBC be able to guarantee safe passage and access for our visitors and emergency services, and transport of large craft to the sailing club, by ensuring no parking (except in the Car Parks) from Telegraph Road down to the sailing club and take action to stop further decay to the eroding cliffs to protect and create safe passage along the beach for new visitors, given we have already had two serious incidents over the last 2 months?

**A.2.** Wirral Country Park Overflow Car Park is one of the seven sites included in the proposal presented by the officers for improving the leisure vehicles offer across the Borough. At this stage we are looking for a steer from the Councillors as to what principles to apply when selecting sites and which sites to prioritise short and long term. Business cases for approved sites will take into consideration challenges and risks associated with possible new developments, including their impact on nature, communities, and businesses. Through colleagues at Parks and Countryside, officers would be aware of major events held in the area.

Officers are aware of parking issues and have taken into consideration the site as the front bays of the carpark are scheduled to be resurfaced before September 2021. One of the key arguments acknowledged by the Council was the expected improvement of the situation on Station Road. The £210K proposed capital investment will enable the council to operate all front bays in any weather condition. Based on available evidence, planned improvement is expected to reduce the amount of pressure in the area in terms of parking while technology to be used will guarantee a natural impact neutral solution. Furthermore, sections of Station Road are currently double yellow line marked and that is considered to be extended and also increased visits of traffic officers will likely further reduce issues with access.

Should the site be approved for business case development, the possibility to operate back bays as hybrid leisure vehicle & carpark site will be taken into account. This option would cater for more flexibility in case of large events held at Thurstaston requiring more parking space. amount of pressure in the area in terms of parking while technology to be used will guarantee a natural impact neutral solution. Furthermore, sections of Station Road are currently double yellow line marked and that is considered to be extended and also increased visits of traffic officers will likely further reduce issues with access.

Should the site be approved for business case development, the possibility to operate back bays as hybrid leisure vehicle & carpark site will be taken into account. This option would cater for more flexibility in case of large events held at Thurstaston requiring more parking space.

33      **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

**Statement** - I am the site manager for the Caravan & Motorhome Club Site at Wirral Country Park. On hearing that the council are proposing to open a Motorhome Park and one of the sites proposed is the overflow car park at Station Road, Thurstaston. I need to raise a few concerns with the committee as this additional site will cause problems in this already confined and congested area.

Having an additional number of people staying in the area is going to produce more waste, i.e. effluent, foul water. At present we have a major problem with the pumping of sewage from the 3 main occupants, that being TCOA,static site, Wirral Country Park and ourselves. All effluent and it seems alot of the surface water runs into our sewage chamber to then be pumped off site down to Caldy sewage works. The pumping station cannot cope with the large amount of foul water as it is. It tends to overload the pump several times a year, causing raw sewage to back up and sometimes flow onto the site. This apparently is being investigated by the council as to where all the water is coming from, but these investigations have been going on for several years with no outcome, can we be assured that the Motorhome Park will not be emptying into our system, without action being taken to rectify the existing problem.

34      **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

There were no questions from Members.

35      **DEVELOPING LEISURE VEHICLE PROVISION ACROSS WIRRAL UPDATES**

This report sought agreement on developing business cases for identified sites for the Council to develop leisure vehicle provision across Wirral.

At a Councillor workshop, four of the sites: Leasowe Lighthouse Car Park, Woodside Ferry Car Park, Price Street Car Park and Perch Rock Car Park, were identified as a possibility for development by Members. The final three sites: Wirral Country Park Car Park, Derby Pool and the Circus Field failed to reach a consensus. Members acknowledged the commercial benefits of several sites, but also the possibility for residents' concerns and complaints. It was proposed that officers brought these options back to committee, with emphasis on capitalisation and the feasibility for each site. This report should also include a plan (for each site) moving forward, including time scales and relevant data. Members asked officers to propose recommendations based on feedback from the workshop and findings from business cases.

Also requested was a plan to go out and consult with councillors and residents. It was agreed unanimously that residents needed to be consulted and kept informed of developments.

Members discussed the proposals and were informed by the Senior Commercial Manager that the business cases would take into account lessons from sites outside of the Wirral and that the sites could be aimed at different customers. Members also noted that there was a possibility of a restrictive covenant at the Circus Field site. The Chair took each recommendation separately.

The Chair moved recommendation 1 which was to agree to authorise the Director of Neighbourhoods to continue working on developing proposals for the leisure vehicle provision at four potential sites, Leasowe Lighthouse Car Park; Woodside Ferry Car Park; Price Street Car Park; and Perch Rock Car Park. This was seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart and agreed by assent.

Councillor Helen Cameron moved to amend recommendation 2 to instead include a delay in the proceeding of business cases until proof of concept from the first four sites is available. This was seconded by Cllr Jenny Johnson. The amendment was taken to a vote which was lost.

Councillor Paul Stuart moved to agree recommendation 2 which was to agree to authorise the Director of Neighbourhoods to develop a business case for leisure vehicle provision at the Wirral Country Park Car Park site. This was seconded by Cllr Joe Walsh. This motion was taken to a vote and carried.

The Chair moved not to proceed with Recommendation 3 which was to agree to authorise the Director of Neighbourhoods to develop a business case for leisure vehicle provision at the Derby Pool site. This was seconded by Councillor Helen Cameron. This motion was taken to a vote and lost.

Councillor Paul Stuart moved to agree recommendation 3. This was seconded by Councillor Joe Walsh. This motion was taken to a vote and carried.

The Chair moved not to proceed with recommendation 4 which was to agree to authorise the Director of Neighbourhoods to develop a business case for leisure vehicle provision at the Circus Field site. This was seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart then agreed by assent.

The Chair moved recommendation 5 which was to agree to authorise the Director of Neighbourhoods to bring back relevant recommendations on detailed proposals for leisure vehicle provision, following agreed business case developments, taking account of consultation, to a future Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart then Agreed by assent.

**RESOLVED: That**

- 1. the Director of Neighbourhoods be authorised to continue working on developing proposals for the leisure vehicle provision at four potential sites, Leasowe Lighthouse Car Park; Woodside Ferry Car Park; Price Street Car Park; and Perch Rock Car Park.**
- 2. the Director of Neighbourhoods be authorised to develop a business case for leisure vehicle provision at the Wirral Country Park Car Park site.**
- 3. the Director of Neighbourhoods be authorised to develop a business case for leisure vehicle provision at the Derby Pool site.**
- 4. the Director of Neighbourhoods not develop a business case for leisure vehicle provision at the Circus Field site.**
- 5. the Director of Neighbourhoods be authorised to bring back relevant recommendations on detailed proposals for leisure vehicle provision, following agreed business case developments, taking account of consultation, to a future Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee.**

**36 WIRRAL MUSEUMS SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN**

This report outlined the proposed strategic direction for Wirral Museums Service and updated the Committee on the progress of two Capital Programme funded projects. The service plan for Wirral Museums Service built on the achievements of the Wirral 2020 plan, creating more opportunities for our residents, regardless of age or income, to enjoy cultural events and supporting the tourism offer through programming of good quality exhibitions and events.

The Williamson and Priory Service Development Manager spoke to this report and noted that the vision for the Birkenhead Priory site was closely linked with the mission of the Church of England as they have an active chapel on site, and there was a balance between visitors and people using the space for quiet contemplation. The report proposes upgrading visitor facilities and refurbishing the chapter house. The plan could contribute to the regeneration of Birkenhead with a programme of events proposed to be delivered in partnership with organisations in the Priory Quarter. It was noted that the Williamson Art Gallery would be expanded as a vibrant community cultural hub and support local artists and makers. Proposals for the Transport Museum and Heritage Tramway were included.

In answer to Members questions it was clarified that the service had been set to double its income target prior to closing for lockdown, however it is not predicted to achieve more than its income target for 2021/22 due to continuing COVID-19 restrictions. It is also not assumed that the service will get back to delivering over £50k of annual income until 2024.

**RESOLVED: That**

- (1) the plans and aspirations of Wirral Museums Service in the context of the Wirral 2020 Pledges and the emerging Wirral 2025 plan be noted and endorsed.**
- (2) the exploration of opportunities for developments at Birkenhead Priory offered by the investment from central Government be supported.**

**37 COVID - 19 UPDATE**

This report provided an update on surveillance data and key areas of development in relation to Wirral's COVID-19 response and delivery of the Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan and was presented with a 'dashboard' of statistics.

The Chair thanked the staff on behalf of the Committee for going above and beyond and show exceptional dedication to the people of Wirral.

**RESOLVED -**

**That the contents of the report and associated presentation be noted and the ongoing work associated with COVID-19 response be supported.**

**38 2020/21 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING Q3**

This report provides a summary of the projected year-end revenue and capital position for Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee as at the end of Quarter 3 (December 2020) of the 2020/21 financial year. The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic continues to present financial risk due to uncertainty and fluidity in the external environment. The overall financial position for the Council remains challenging, and a number of actions are in progress to mitigate the overall forecast position presented at quarter 3, including limiting spending to essential areas of service delivery only, with Corporate Directors supported to mitigate the risk of overspending.

The Chair proposed for future reports to include line by line accounting of what falls under each headline. This was seconded by Cllr Cherry Povall and was subsequently agreed by assent.

**RESOLVED: That**

- (1) the adverse year-end forecast position presented at Quarter 3 of £9.662m be noted.**
- (2) the impact of funding and expenditure as a direct consequence of Covid-19, including the additional funding sources which have been identified, but as yet, not received be noted.**
- (3) the year-end forecast capital position for Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee presented at Quarter 3 be noted.**

**(4) the Committee's budget headlines be defined and brought to the June committee meeting.**

39 **TOURISM COMMUNITIES CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee. It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The Chair proposed that due to the unprecedented amount of work currently ongoing under this Committee and prevalence of events in the Summer period an additional committee meeting be recommended to full council for the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021. This was seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart and Agreed by assent.

**RESOLVED: That the work programme proposed in this report for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year be noted.**