

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

15th February 2018

Report of the Head of the Head of Property and Regeneration Simon Brennan

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

Cymmer

PROPOSED INCREASE IN CAR PARKING CHARGES AT AFAN FOREST PARK 2018/19

Purpose of Report

- 1 To seek Members to approve an increase in the parking charges at Afan Forest Park and to incorporate the car park into the Councils off-street parking order.

Executive Summary

- 2 To agree an increase in parking charges at Afan Forest Park and to incorporate the car park into the Councils off-street parking order.

Background

- 3 Afan Forest Park(the facility) comprising the former Visitors Centre and Café (main building) ,car park, toilet/shower block and outside paths and grounds etc. as approximately shown edged in Black on the attached plan 1 was run as an operational facility under the control of the Head of Streetcare Services.
- 4 The adjoining Museum is leased to and operated by South Wales Miners Museum with the basement room in the main building leased to and operated by Afan Valley Bike Shed.

- 5 Members will recollect that as part of the 2015/16 Council Saving Budget it was agreed to reduce the running costs budget at Afan Forest Park by £200,000 to a break even position.
- 6 This meant that the facility would close unless a suitable operator was found to run the main building.
- 7 After a successful tender exercise a suitable operator was chosen which has allowed the facility to remain open as a visitor attraction.
- 8 Responsibility for the facility transferred from the Head of Streetcare to the Head of Property & Regeneration as part of this process.
- 9 The main building is now leased to Cedar Tearoom Limited with the basement room continuing to be leased to Afan Valley Bike Shed for which market rents are received by the Council. The adjoining Museum remains leased out to South Wales Miners Museum for which a small ground rent is received.
- 10 However the Council retains responsibility for the day to day operation and running costs of the car park, toilet/shower block and outside grounds etc.
- 11 The income from the car park as approximately shown coloured Grey on at attached Plan 1, helps to sustain the facility.
- 12 Some years ago solar powered Pay and Display machines were installed in the car park. However due to the high level of tree cover they do not work consistently resulting in a loss of parking income as visitors are unable to pay. As there are no Council staff on site it is not possible to collect the parking fees in an alternative way.
- 13 Two new electric powered Pay and Display machines have now been installed within the car park.
- 14 However it is also clear that many visitors are choosing not to purchase a ticket due to the lack of on-site enforcement.
- 15 This has resulted in an anticipated small budget deficit for the facility this financial year of circa £5,000.

16 For the Council to meet its commitments within the original FFP to balance the budget and to continue to ensure the sustainability of the facility, the following are proposed:

A Increase the car parking charges

- The increase in car parking charges will assist in ensuring a balanced budget thereby assisting in the continued development of this popular visitor attraction.
- Current charges are £1.00 all day at the facility. There is no season permit available at present.
- The current car park users visit the facility for a variety of reasons. This determines how long they stay in the car park.
- Many are short stay of no more than one hour (to go for a short walk or frequent the businesses in the main centre) whereas others that stay longer to take full advantage of the facility and other attractions nearby, including walking and cycling/mountain biking etc.
- It is therefore important to reflect this in the increased parking charges and also seek to ensure that existing businesses in the main building are not adversely affected.
- It is also important to ensure that as far as possible increased parking charges align with other such facilities in the area.
- The table below sets out current car parking charges as comparison:

Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre	£1.00 all day
Rhyslyn Car Park (NRW owned)	Free of charge
Glyncorrwg Mountain Bike Centre.	£3.00 per day
Margam Country Park charges	£4.90 per car
Gnoll Country Park charges	£2.00 per car Proposal to increase car parking charges to: £2.50 four hours

	£3.50 all day £52 season ticket
Coed Y Brenin Centre, Dolgellau (very similar to Afan Forest Park and run by NRW)	£1 one hour £3 three hours £5 all day
Bike Park Wales, Merthyr Tydfil	£8 day ride pass per person (free parking)

- The proposal to increase car parking charges at the facility was included as part of the Councils general consultation on parking as follows:
- “that the daily car parking charges are increased to £1.00 for up to one hour, £2.50 up to 4 hours and £4.00 for all day use from 1st April 2018”
- The proposed increase for parking has, perhaps unsurprisingly, received some negative through the consultation process. Replies show concerns that the proposed increase was too steep and would discourage visitors/tourism from using the facility and the surrounding area and those that do would find other places to park in the surrounding residential areas.

Other comments included for the introduction of a season ticket like at the Gnoll Country Park.

- Accordingly it is proposed that the daily car parking charges are increased to:

£1.00 for up to one hour,
£2.50 for up to 4 hours
£3.50 for over 4 hours.

The introduction of a season ticket at a cost of £52 (£1.00 per week) from the same date

The three existing businesses within the main building will be provided with up to a maximum of three free transferable season parking tickets for its staff. The changes to be

implemented with effect from 1st April 2018 or the earliest possible date thereafter.

B that a report be taken in due course to Streetcare and Engineering Cabinet Board to consider whether or not to extend the Councils off-street parking order to include the car park at the facility

- Effective enforcement can then be undertaken on an ad-hoc basis by the Councils parking enforcement officers.
- Charges have been in effect at the facility for several years now and there has not been any displacement from the car park to the access road or main highway. No control measures outside of the car park are proposed at present.
- If visitor parking on the access road becomes problematic then an order for double yellow lines could be progressed.
- Free parking is currently not permitted for any event in Afan Forest Park and should an off-street parking order be implemented that situation will continue, with the off-street parking order applying 7 days a week.

Financial Impact

- 17 Updated and/or additional signs would need needed at the facility the cost of which would be met out of the operational budget.
- 18 An amendment to the off-street parking order requires the proposal to be placed in a local Newspaper, a contribution towards the cost of circa £1500 may need to be met out of the operational budget.
- 19 Whilst site income will be retained with the operational budget the monies from any parking fines would be retained by Parking Services to assist with the cost of ad-hoc visits and appeals.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 20 A screening assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been

determined that this proposal does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Workforce Impact

- 21 Ad hoc enforcement visits, although limited, will be a demand on the Councils Parking Services.

Legal Impact

- 22 Any changes to Car Parking charges and amendment to the Councils off- street parking order will require a decision in that regard to be made by Streetcare and Engineering Cabinet Board.

Risk Management

- 23 The budget for the facility needs at a minimum to break even to justify the future sustainability of the facility bearing in mind the ongoing climate of austerity as well as providing funds to undertake improvement works.

Consultation

- 24 The Council has consulted on the proposal to increase car parking charges, with brief details set out in item 16 above.
- 25 The local member has been consulted and is generally supportive of the proposal.
- 26 The 3 on site businesses have been consulted. Whilst not unsurprisingly they have some concerns about potential adverse effect on their businesses, acknowledge and generally support the proposal

Recommendation

- 26 It is recommended that:
- a) Members confirm their agreement to the increase in Car Parking Charges as set out within Option 2 namely that car parking charges are increased to £1.00 for up to one hour, £2.50 for up to 4 hours and £3.50 all day, and increase the cost of a season ticket to £52.

- b) That the charges proposed be referred to the Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board for acceptance and included in the legal order to be advertised. Any observations and objections will be referred to a future Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board.
- c) Streetcare and Engineering Cabinet Board be asked to include the Afan Forest car park in the Off-Street Parking Order.

27 These to take effect from 1st April 2018 or the earliest possible date thereafter.

28 These would be subject to approval being granted by Streetcare and Engineering Cabinet Board.

Reason for Proposed Decision

29 To protect an important income stream which supports the running of the park.

Implementation of decision

30 The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

31 Appendix 1 - Plan showing the extent of the facility and the proposed area to be included within the off street parking order.

Background Papers

32 None

Officer Contact

33 For further information on this report item, please contact:

David Phillips, Strategic Property & Valuation Manager,
Tel: 01639 686980
E-mail: d.phillips@npt.gov.uk

