
Woodgate Valley Country Park – proposed parking charges informal consultation pack



Contents

<u>1. Introduction</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2. Why Woodgate Valley Country Park?</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>3. Woodgate Valley Country Park – background</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>4. Selected parks for the proposed introduction of parking charges</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>5. Investment wish list for the site</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>6. Stakeholder consultation</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>7. Public consultation around the proposals</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>8. Project scope</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>9. Proposed pricing structure</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>10. Proposed payment methods</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>11. Traffic restriction orders (TROs) for roads surrounding the park</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>12. Enforcement</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>13. Next steps</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>14. Informal and formal consultations</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Appendix A – Other local authorities that charge</u>	<u>13</u>

1. Introduction

In order to provide an income stream to both protect services and facilities within parks, as well as improving parks where we can, BCC is proposing the introduction of parking charges at selected parks.

The proposed scheme at Woodgate Valley Country Park will result in a number of key benefits, namely:

- Improve the car park surfaces where necessary
- Improve accessibility to the park e.g. installation of formal disabled parking bays
- Manage the incidence of displacement parking for residents who live in close proximity to the park (site dependant)
- Investment opportunities to improve the park can be funded e.g. Memorial Woods, renewable energy projects
- Additional income will allow for greater reinvestment in parks infrastructure, such as new outdoor gym equipment, play areas etc and this is one of the Cabinet Member for Environment's priorities.
- On-site enforcement of the car parking charges may decrease the amount of anti-social behaviour
- Net income used to improve the park and overall visitor experience e.g. potholing, fence repairs.

The decision to explore parking charges is not something the council has done lightly – in fact we've held off whilst many other councils throughout the country have introduced charging (see appendix B). As such, BCC is one of the last local authorities in the country to introduce charging on a daily basis and income generated will be reinvested into the respective park to improve infrastructure and maintain the park to the standards visitors expect. Crucially, access to Woodgate Valley Country Park remains free – **the charges are not to use the park** but only to park a vehicle.

Birmingham City Council is facing an increasingly challenging budget position. As part of the City Council budget for 2022/23, Street Scene & Parks has been asked to make a significant contribution to the saving. To mitigate the impact of potential reductions in grounds maintenance of parks and open spaces we are looking at opportunities to generate income. The income from the proposed parking charges will be ringfenced and reinvested into the park for the maintenance of the car park/s, additional security and general park improvements, thereby protecting existing services.

The APSE State of Public Parks 2021 report states:

“Funding for our parks is once again at a tipping point with the loss of parks funding in further decline from £500 million lost between 2010 and 2016 to a further £190 million in 2021. A total of £690 million over the past decade.”

2. Why Woodgate Valley Country Park?

Woodgate Valley Country Park is a popular leisure destination attracting visitors to the Hole Farm Trekking Centre and Woodgate Valley Urban Farm. The park also has a Visitor Centre and café.

The car park that serves the park needs improvement works and as highlighted in Section 5 (Investment wish list) the District Parks Manager has identified a list of other areas around the site that require investment, only achievable through the income from the proposed parking charges.

Implementation of parking charges will help generate essential income which can be invested in the infrastructure of the country park to improve the overall visitor experience and safeguard it for the future.

3. Woodgate Valley Country Park – background

Woodgate Valley Country Park is a 450-acre area of countryside in the centre of Bartley Green and Quinton. There are many mixed, mature hedgerows, meadows, woodland, and small ponds. The Bournbrook runs through the park. The park is designated as a country park and a Local Nature Reserve.

4. Selected parks for the proposed introduction of parking charges

Cabinet approved the Cabinet Member Report for the introduction of car parking charges at Cannon Hill Park, in June 2017. The Full Business Case that accompanied the report drew reference to the further roll-out of the parking charges scheme to other parks on a scheme-by-scheme basis subject to a business case for each project.

A new Cabinet Member Report titled *Capital funding bid for the proposed introduction of car parking charging across selected BCC parks* was approved by Cabinet on 6th September 2022. Woodgate Valley Country Park is one of 5 parks included in the Cabinet Report; the other parks within programme are:

- Lickey Hills Country Park

- Sheldon Country Park
- Rectory Park, and
- Sutton Park.

The Cabinet Report and accompanying Full Business Case sought approval to facilitate the strategy for introducing car parking charges to the selected parks by requesting the capital funding in advance and seeking approval to begin consultations for each scheme.

The informal consultation for the Woodgate Valley Country Park scheme is now open and we seek feedback from park visitors, nearby residents, businesses, stakeholders and ward members – the results of the informal consultation will then be included in the Full Business Case for the scheme. The implementation of the proposed charging scheme at Woodgate Valley Country Park will be contingent on the outcome of this consultation and approval of the individual Full Business Case for the scheme (which will then trigger a **formal** 4-week consultation on the proposed parking charges (formal consultation dates TBC)).

List of selected parks

Phase 1	Informal consultation dates
Woodgate Valley Country Park	7th November – 4th December 2022
Lickey Hills Country Park	7th November – 4th December 2022
Sheldon Country Park	7th November – 4th December 2022
Phase 2	Informal consultation dates
Rectory Park	2023 (dates TBC)
Sutton Park	2023 (dates TBC)

5. Investment wish list for the site

The Parks Service has an investment wish list for the site which will be funded by income from the charging scheme.



Investment wish list from District Parks Manager for Woodgate Valley Country Park

- Improve access around the site
- Grazing field fencing and boundary security improvements including anti-scramble measures
- Improvements to grass pitches
- Refurbishment of Visitor Centre including roof
- Upgrade site furniture throughout the site
- Improve signposting throughout the site.

The revenue needed to complete the above items would release resources currently expended on matters of this sort.

6. Stakeholder consultation

Following Cabinet approval on 6th September 2022, we are now in a position to re-open discussion with the stakeholders at the same time as the informal public consultation for the proposed parked charges and discussions with stakeholders will continue throughout the course of the project.

Based on feedback from a previous feasibility data collection exercise, we have taken on-board suggestions to improve the proposals. For example, we have amended the proposed pricing structure to now include a 50 pence charge for the first hour of parking as well as introduce a first hour of parking free (7am to 8am when the park opens, the proposed charges will apply from 8am to 6pm). Below is the list of key stakeholders, businesses and groups within the park that the project team will be consulting with as part of this stakeholder consultation.

- Woodgate Valley Urban Farm
- Woodgate Valley Country Park Consultative Committee
- Councillors Kerry Brewer & Bruce Lines (Bartley Green)
- Councillor Jack Deakin (Allens Cross)
- Hole Farm Trekking Centre
- Woodgate Valley café
- Councillors Sam Forsyth & Lauren Rainbow (Quinton)
- Councillors Miranda Perks & Jamie Tennant (Weoley & Selly Oak)

7. Public consultation around the proposals

The **informal** public consultation is due to begin on 7th November and will run for 4 weeks (until 4th December). The project team will be hosting consultation drop-in sessions (a face to face and virtual) where park users and residents can speak to members of the project team, discuss the proposals and have any queries answered.

In order to offer flexibility to park users and residents the drop-in sessions will take place at different times – one afternoon and one evening session (see details below).

The drop-in sessions will be the ideal opportunity for resident/park visitors to speak to a member of the project team and discuss the proposals for the park. We will be advertising the public consultation in the following ways:

- Posters in the park
- Social media
- Ongoing consultation with local Bromsgrove ward members

As part of this informal consultation we will be seeking views on:

- The proposed parking charges
- Proposed pricing structure
- Proposed parking times
- Our commitment to ringfence income and reinvest into the park
- Traffic management surveys pre- and post-implementation of the proposed charges, to establish the extent of displacement parking as a result of the implementation and to provide an evidence base for traffic restrictions (where applicable)
- Traffic restrictions to be introduced post-implementation.

Ways to register views around the proposals:

- BeHeard – the Council online survey system – (click on the link below)
[Woodgate Valley Country Park - informal consultation on proposed parking charges - Birmingham City Council - Citizen Space \(birminghambeheard.org.uk\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/citizen-space)
- Face to face questionnaires – clipboard exercise within the park on random days throughout the consultation period. The questionnaires can also be collected from (and returned to) the park Rangers
- Email woodgatevalleyconsultation@birmingham.gov.uk

- Call 07500 882961
- Consultation sessions (dates below)

Consultation session 1 (virtual)

Monday 14th November, 12:00-13:30

Venue: Microsoft Teams ([Click here to join the meeting](#))

If you have trouble accessing this link, please contact woodgatevalleyconsultation@birmingham.gov.uk

Consultation session 2 (drop-in)

Monday 21st November, 19:00-20:30

Venue: Visitor Centre, Woodgate Valley Country Park, Clapgate Lane, B32 3DS

8. Project scope

The proposed car park scheme does not include any plans to increase car parking land. We will, however, improve the existing car park surface by filling potholes and levelling (and resurfacing where needed). We will also improve accessibility through formal disabled parking spaces. All surface work completed will use approved materials sympathetic to the site i.e. crushed granite for the potholes and/or EcoGrid (a low maintenance substitution for tarmacking and lining).

Subject to approval of the individual scheme Full Business Case, implementation of charging across the selected parks and ongoing management of car parking charges will remain the responsibility of Birmingham City Council.

9. Proposed pricing structure

The chargeable hours will be from 8am – 6pm, 365 days of the year. The park opens at 7am and so free parking will be available for the first hour of the day (until 8am).

The proposed pricing structure will include a 50 pence charge for the first hour of parking.

An economic assessment has been completed for the proposed charging structure at Woodgate Valley Country Park, exploring parking charges in the nearby locality (see Appendix B). The proposed pricing structure we will consult on is as follows:

Pricing Structure	Cost
Up to 1 hour	50p
1 to 4 hours	£2.20
All day (4 hours+)	£3.30
Coach parking	£16.50
Season ticket (annual)	£52
Blue Badge holder **	Free

**Parking for Blue Badge holders will remain free in line with the Council's citywide policy on disabled parking.

We will ask stakeholders, residents and park users views on the proposed pricing structure as part of this informal consultation.

10. Proposed payment methods

Pay and Display machines – In line with other BCC car parks across the city, the machines we propose to use are Parkeon Strada Rapides. In order to reduce the impact on the natural environment the machines will be solar powered. The machines will be a combination of coin and card and also contactless payments. They are supplied with additional manganese steel shielding around the vault area – this is to prevent drilling and break-in to the cash vault and provides additional armoured protection against mechanical or



theft attacks. The shielding is especially hardened and is highly resistant to drilling, sawing and grinding.

Pay by Mobile (RingGo) – There will also be an option to pay via your mobile phone. This is well used at other car parking sites citywide. Pay by Mobile is the preferred option for those individuals who do not have cash to hand.

There is also a user-friendly RingGo app that can be downloaded which is well used citywide. Once individuals have registered, the app will store your previous parking location details making future payments a few clicks of a button.



The app also has the added functionality of enabling vehicle owners to extend their parking session remotely rather than returning to their vehicle.

There is a 1p transaction fee for parking via the RingGo app and an 11p transaction fee for parking via the RingGo landline. SMS reminder messages are charged at 30p (SMS reminders are optional).

11. Traffic restriction orders (TROs) for roads surrounding the park

The project team is mindful of the potential impact of displacement parking on residents that live near the park. Following discussions with our BCC Highways colleagues and subject to approval of the individual scheme Full Business Case, we will undertake traffic management surveys (of specific roads around the park) before and after the implementation of charging. The data from the traffic management surveys will determine the impact displacement parking has on the surrounding roads and will result in more effective restrictions using an evidence-based approach. We will then undertake a **formal** 4-week consultation on the proposed restrictions at which point any objections can be registered.

12. Enforcement

Birmingham City Council has procured a citywide contract with NSL for parking enforcement. The Parks Service successfully uses NSL for enforcement at other sites and proposes to continue this arrangement as charges are rolled out to Woodgate Valley Country Park. Income from Penalty Charge Notices is retained by BCC; BCC pay for the cost of the deployment of their officers. To be clear, Parks will receive the income from the car park charges and the net income from any Penalty Charge Notices will be retained by BCC Highways team as this helps to offset the cost of enforcement.



13. Next steps

The outcomes of this informal consultation will feed the scheme's Full Business Case and the proposed introduction of charges will be contingent on the outcomes of this consultation and approval of the Full Business Case by Birmingham City Council. This approval will then trigger a **formal** 4-week consultation on the proposed parking charges (dates TBC).

14. Informal and formal consultations

This informal consultation is a necessary stage in the process so that the feedback from visitors, stakeholders and residents on the proposals are included within the individual scheme Full Business Case. The decision to proceed to the next stage (formal consultation) is dependent on the outcome of this informal consultation and approval of the Full Business Case.

The 4-week formal consultation is a legislative requirement and is triggered by the advertisement of the Parking Places Order to introduce parking charges. It is at this point that visitors, stakeholders and residents can lodge their formal objections to the proposals. An objection report listing the objections received and the responses will then be presented to the Cabinet Member for Highways for their approval.

Appendix A – Other local authorities that charge

Nearby authorities

Worcester City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fort Royal Park 	£5 up to 6 hours
Worcestershire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waseley Hills 	£3 all day
Lichfield District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beacon Park 	£10 all day
Staffordshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannock Chase Country Park 	£2 all day

West Midlands Combined Authority:

Warwickshire County Council (constituent member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burton Dassett Hills Country Park 	£3 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hartshill Hayes Country Park 	£3 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingsbury Water Park 	£3 or £4.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pooley Country Park 	£3 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryton Pools Country Park 	£6 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratford Greenway 	£4 all day
Coventry City Council (constituent member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coombe Country Park 	£5 all day
Dudley MBC (constituent member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Himley Hall and Park 	£3 all day
Sandwell MBC (constituent member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lodge Hill Road 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Valley Country Park 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swan Pool 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forge Mill Farm Visitor Centre 	£2 all day
Shropshire Council (non-constituent member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severn Valley Country Park 	£2.30 all day
Stratford on Avon District Council (non-constituent member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation Ground 	£10 all day

Other core cities:

Nottingham City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colwick Country Park 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wollaton Park 	£5 all day
Bristol City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashton Court Estate 	£4 all day
Manchester City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heaton Park 	£3 all day
Newcastle City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy Freeman's Park 	£0.40 per hour
Sheffield City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graves Park 	£3 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millhouses Park 	£3.60 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hillsborough Park 	£3.60 all day

Prices correct as of October 2022