

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**17 July 2007**

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 HAYSDEN COUNTRY PARK – REVIEW OF CLOSURE TIMES**

**Summary**

**This report seeks Member approval to amend the current closure times of the main car park at Haysden Country Park (HCP).**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 At present 3 car parks serve HCP, one on Audley Avenue and two along Lower Haysden Lane. One of these is currently locked overnight, that is the main car park on Lower Haysden Lane. The main car park allows vehicular access to the key facilities on site, namely the toilet block, children's play area and further pedestrian access to Barden Lake and the rest of the Country Park.
- 1.1.2 To date the main car park has been locked approximately 45 minutes after sunset and, therefore, during the lighter summer months often remains open until 22:00. A summary of the existing closure times is shown at **[Annex 1]**. The opening and closing of the gates is carried out under a formal agreement with a local resident.
- 1.1.3 Members may wish to note that the closing/locking of the gates does not restrict other public access to the site, for example entry by foot or bicycle.

**1.2 Current Issues**

- 1.2.1 The main car park has experienced a level of misuse and it is felt that this is not assisted by the facility remaining open late after dark. Problems have included activities such as joy riding, littering and fly tipping.
- 1.2.2 Further to the above, the current closure times at HCP are not consistent with those at the Borough Council's other Country Park, Leybourne Lakes Country Park (LLCP), where the main car park is closed no later than 21:00.

- 1.2.3 Consideration has also been given to the operation of other Country Parks within the Borough and both Manor Park and Trottiscliffe Country Park, owned and maintained by Kent County Council, currently closed no later than sunset.
- 1.2.4 The proposed amendment to the closure times will also reduce the current risk for personnel currently closing the gates, and allow this operation to be carried out in daylight hours.

### **1.3 Proposal**

- 1.3.1 It is proposed that the closure times for the main car park are altered to mirror those currently in operation at LLCP with the facility closing no later than 21:00. A copy of the proposed timetable is shown at **[Annex 1]**.
- 1.3.2 It is appreciated that current users of the site will need to be informed of the changes and, subject to Member approval of the revised closure times, information will be posted on the information boards at the Park. It will then be the intention, over a period of time, to gradually reduce the existing closing times to the proposed levels.

### **1.4 Consultation**

- 1.4.1 The proposal to amend the closure times has been discussed at the HCP User Panel, which was supportive of the changes. The Panel included representatives from Tonbridge & District Angling and Fish Preservation Society, Tonbridge Town Sailing Club and the Environment Agency.
- 1.4.2 The Borough Council's Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership has also been consulted on the report and is supportive of the proposed alterations to the closing times. The Partnership is currently considering what action can be taken to prevent the misuse of car parks generally in the Borough.

### **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 The formal agreement with the local resident who closes the gates on the Council's behalf will need to be amended to reflect the revised arrangements. This is a straightforward amendment with no legal or cost implications.

### **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.6.1 None.

### **1.7 Risk Assessment**

- 1.7.1 The proposal reduces the lone working risk for personnel currently closing the gate, due to the operation now being carried out during daylight hours.

### **1.8 Recommendations**

1.8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that subject to Member comment at the meeting the revised closure times for the main car park at Haysden Country Park outlined in the report be approved.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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