

ALMOST WILD CAMPSITE

Presented by the Head of Parklands

SUMMARY

The Almost Wild Campsite project was created with the aim of regenerating a plot of land within Spitalbrook, Broxbourne, which was being used by "holiday plots" under annual licenses. This new accommodation and experience offer was to create an "Almost Wild" area that individuals and groups could experience getting back to basics and learn new bushcraft skills, and complimented the Park's other accommodation options.

RECOMMENDATION

Members note: (1) the report.

BACKGROUND

- 1 For many years and before the Authority owned the land, plots were leased out to individual people to enable them to house a static caravan or use the plot for tenting on a holiday-let basis, which produced an annual income in the region of £9,300. The area and plots had become run down with the statics on site being in poor condition, as were the plots themselves due to a build-up of waste and general overgrown vegetation. The site and plots had no mains services and had become neglected.
- 2 In 2016 a proposal was put forward on the back of growing popularity in the outdoor camping market to create a "wild campsite" in the area adjacent to Spitalbrook. After considering the business plan officers decided to create the site with funding from the Open Spaces revenue budget.
- 3 Work started on clearance of the site in late 2016, beginning with the removal of the existing caravans and the accumulated rubbish, and tree works. In total the reinstatement works required to restore the site to a usable clean condition came to circa £25,000.

ALMOST WILD SET-UP COSTS

- 4 During the winter of 2016/17 the Ranger team along with contractors worked to

transform the site into the Almost Wild Campsite we see now. These works included the installation of two composting toilets, potable running water for cooking and drinking, a covered area for eating and to hold courses, track maintenance and improvements. All in all the total set up cost of the Almost Wild Campsite was £48,500.

- 5 The site welcomed its first visitors in April 2017 and was open for 39 days through the summer.

TRADING HISTORY

- 6 The Almost Wild Campsite operates from Easter until the end of September at weekends and on bank holidays, within the permitted usage policy of 60 days in any rolling 12 month period. It was decided not to apply for full campsite registration as the implications this would have on the site would mean the "almost wild" aspect could be lost.
- 7 Year on year trading figures are set out in the table below.

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Booking Income	£14,600	£22,500	£27,000
Onsite Sales	£1,500	£1,300	£1,600
Site Hire	£800	£1,200	£400
Total Income	£16,900	£25,000	£29,000
Total Expenditure (including staff costs)	£11,900	£17,200	£19,100
Net Profit	£5,000	£7,700	£9,900

These figures are against a net income target of £16,500.

Site hire income is down this year due to the third party hirer having to cancel some events due to a clash with some events the Authority held around the same dates, this will not happen in future.

- 8 Bushcraft and other courses are delivered by a third party company called Tinder Sticks; they hire the site from us for each event and this currently brings in an income of £50 per site hire.
- 9 The site has also been hired out for a wedding and promo photographs.

WAY FORWARD

- 10 As can be seen, income is up year on year, however the percentage of bookings to pitches during the season varies based on the number of days the site is open in any particular year.

The table below shows the average occupancy against potential occupancy over the year in relation to the number of days the site is open, a good average for a campsite is 35% and above.

If the site was full to capacity 85 people would be on site at any one time.

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Number of Days Open	39	67	52
Potential Bookings (no of people)	3315	5695	4420
Actual Bookings (no of people)	984	1480	1477
Average Occupancy of Season	30%	26.5%	33.5%

Differences in days open

2017/18 - Reduced opening season due to late opening caused by works to site.

2018/19 - Season extended due to a few poor weekends weather wise (within the 60 days over the 12 month period).

2019/20 - Due to a late Easter.

- 11 Officers are currently reviewing the management of the site, giving due consideration to the return of the small venues to Authority management which includes the three current campsites, so it is worth considering if the Almost Wild Campsite is added to these and becomes part of the Dobbs Weir offer.

ENHANCEMENTS

- 12 Works have been undertaken this year to improve and weather proof the main track way to assist refuse collections and vehicles needing to access the site to empty the toilets.
13. The main improvements that could be considered on site are outdoor showers at £1,800 each, plus an additional canopy area for courses etc at £3,500.
- 14 If opening hours were increased then the site would require a site licence and this in turn would mean that toilets and showers would be required to meet the standard. The fear here is that the site would lose its "Almost wild" feel, but may widen its appeal to a broader audience.
- 15 Officers are considering changing the opening weekend to the weekend closest to 1 April unless Easter falls before and that would take priority.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17 At this stage the only financial implications that are known would be if the decision was made to install either the outdoor shower(s) and/or the additional canopy area and this would equate to £7,000 for two showers and a canopy.
- 18 Exact costings should the decision be taken to transfer operational responsibility to the Dobbs Weir campsite are as yet unknown until constructive discussions are able to take place with the current management of the facility.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 19 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 20 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 21 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 22 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

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BACKGROUND REPORTS

None