

**CAR PARKING CHARGES
– LEE VALLEY WHITE WATER CENTRE**

Presented by the Corporate Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper seeks approval to implement car parking charges at the Lee Valley White Water Centre (LVWWC).

The LVWWC has grown in popularity since opening in 2011 and now receives circa 700,000 visitors per annum. Approximately 40% of visitors participate in activity with the remaining 60% of visitors visiting the café and surrounding parkland.

The growth in visitor numbers, particularly in summer months, has reduced car park availability for participants resulting in significant parking issues, cases of a negative customer experience and additional staff and operational costs to try and manage the issue.

Members approved paper E/548/18 on 22 February 2018 to implement car parking charges at the LVWWC and planning permission was granted by Broxbourne Borough Council. The Lee Valley Leisure Trust Ltd did not finalise the agreement and the scheme was never introduced.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, like all leisure attractions the LVWWC is currently closed to the general public, but from the start of the new season in April the Authority will have to implement measures to manage visitor numbers to provide a safe environment for its visitors and comply with a likely new normal and adhere to government guidance.

In order to assist in managing visitor numbers and to manage the historic parking issues on site, this paper recommends the introduction of car parking charges ahead of any reopening to the general public using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems as implemented elsewhere in the Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Members Approve:
- (1) implementation of car park charges at the Lee Valley White Water Centre via an Automatic Number Plate Recognition system as set out in paragraph 13 of this report;
 - (2) the charges as set out in paragraph 8 of this report;
 - (3) installation of Electric Vehicle Charging points (subject to site survey); and
 - (4) waiving of the Authority's Financial Regulation 571 as set out in paragraph 20 of this report.

BACKGROUND

- 1 The LVWWC has 422 hard surface car parking spaces, 30 of which are designated blue badge spaces. The hard surface car parking is clearly marked, but the current unsupervised nature of the management of car parking typically results in the capacity being reached quickly and visitors using areas of the site not designated for parking, such as the access road which causes operational and health & safety issues.
- 2 Due to the nature of the activities and the location of the venue, the majority of participants in paddle sports, including rafting, arrive to the venue by car. The venue's website and booking processes promote use and availability of public transport, and for rafting, car sharing is common, but for canoeing, kayaking and swift water rescue training participants, public transport options are often impractical.

The nearest train station to the venue is Waltham Cross which is a 1.1 mile walk from the venue and is within the Oyster card zone and on the London Stansted to Liverpool Street line, as is Cheshunt station which is a 1.5 mile walk through River Lee Country Park. The venue is also well served by six regular local buses which directly connect to surrounding towns including Waltham Abbey, Epping, Loughton and Debden.

- 3 Since opening in 2011, the venue has expanded its range of activities and products. There have also been significant investments including:
 - expanded decking area;
 - more changing;
 - the Pavillion;
 - the Terrace Bar;
 - café and kitchen improvements including launch of the new café in winter 2017/18;
 - large sports beach area and inflatable park;
 - a free to use, small play beach;
 - complementary play area installed in 2016.

These investments, new activities / products and the increased number of large scale events has led to a significant rise in visitor numbers: from 155,000 in 2011 to more than 700,000 in 2018/19.

- 4 Visitors come to the venue to take part in water based activities as well as to attend events, and visit the cafe bar and terrace. As a free to use car park it is also used by visitors to the adjacent River Lee Country Park, nearby retail outlets, and the local train station, and as a consequence this leads to capacity issues at peak times.

Since April 2015 the use of the car park has been regularly monitored and various methods to manage the car park have been trialled. In May 2017, the Lee Valley Leisure Trust Ltd (LVLT) trialled a locally managed manual charging solution, which included charging for visitor car parking with exceptions:

- pre-booked activity participants;
- staff;
- contractors; and
- British Canoeing colleagues.

The process was managed well, with the undesirable back-up measure of requiring use of the adjacent showground site in River Lee Country Park for overflow car parking not required as it has been in previous years. An external company was employed to manage the stewarding solution and although £17,000 was taken in income from charging £2 per car to park all day, there was an overall net loss from managing the car park of £18,000.

The arrangements during summer 2017 were a temporary measure to ensure there was adequate space for pre-booked users. Due to the previous operational success of the car parking management solutions installed at Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre (LVHTC), Lee Valley VeloPark (LVVP) and Lee Valley Ice Centre (LVIC), the intention was to introduce a more formal solution at LVWWC.

Members approved paper E/548/18 on 22 February 2018 to implement car parking charges at the LVWWC and planning permission was granted by Broxbourne Borough Council. The LVLT did not finalise the agreement and the scheme was never introduced.

- 5 Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, like all leisure attractions the LVWWC is currently closed to the general public, but from the start of the new season in April the Authority has to implement measures to manage visitor numbers to provide a safe environment for its visitors and comply with a likely new normal and adhere to government guidance. All the local car parks have charges in place and it is likely that upon re-opening visitors may not choose to travel via public transport routes unless they have to, which could result in further pressures on the venue's parking facilities.

PROPOSAL FOR MANAGING LEE VALLEY WHITE WATER CENTRE CAR PARK

- 6 It is proposed to introduce formal car park charging at the LVWWC on a three year arrangement via an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system similar to that at the LVHTC, LVVP and LVIC where visitors pay via app, phone or online by entering their number plate and being charged according to the length of their visit.
- 7 As at the LVVP and LVHTC the car park is proposed to be free to pre-booked activity participants of LVWWC for a period of up to four hours, with charges implemented for non-participants/visitors following a short grace period to allow drop-off.
- 8 Proposed charges are as follows:

Staff & British Canoeing Staff & Team Members

Time	Cost (£)
All Day	£0

Activity participants / visitors spending more than £5 in café

Time	Cost (£)
0 to 4hrs	£0
4hrs to 8hrs	£2
8hrs to 24hrs	£25*
Each additional 24 hr period	£25

General Visitors

Time	Cost (£)
20 mins drop off / grace period	£0
20 mins to 4hrs	£2
4hrs to 8hrs	£5
8-24hrs	£25*
Each additional 24 hr period	£25
Blue Badge Holders	£0

* This charge is to discourage customers leaving their car in the car park overnight, this approach has been successful at the other Authority venue's with ANPR systems.

The above charges are separate to that implemented in the open spaces car parks and are in line with the car park charges at the other Authority leisure venues. Any permits purchased for the Authority's open spaces car parks would not be valid at LVWWC as is the case at all the Authority Leisure Services Contract (LSC) venues. The wider car parks around River Lee Country Park are currently out to tender for an operator to manage the car parks, but the car park at LVWWC is separate and will come under a separate operational management regime when the new LSC commences.

- 9 The installation of the equipment and machinery requires significant investment and to set up a system for parking charge notices (PCNs) and the appeals against such notices which is fully compliant with national regulations. It is proposed that this service, including any enforcement action if necessary, is installed and operated on the Authority's behalf by a third party company that can absorb the capital investment and ensure compliance with the appropriate legislation. This is consistent with the approach at the LVHTC, LVVP, LVIC (which are now on rolling one year contracts) and the open space car parks with such systems operating.
- 10 The LSC and Non-LSC venues transferred back to the Authority from the LVLT on 1 April 2020 after the five year contract with the LVLT expired on 31 March 2020. For the 6 LSC venues:
- LVWWC;
 - LVHTC;
 - LVVP;
 - LVIC; and
 - Lee Valley Athletics Centre (LVAC);
- this is an interim position which was due to finish on 1 April 2021. The interim position will now continue to 1 October 2021 at the earliest, but the proposals within this paper have been discussed with officers from GLL to ensure that any solution proposed meets their requirements as the winning bidder to be the long term operator of the Authority's six LSC sporting venues.
- 11 Proposals have been submitted by 2 organisations:
- Parking Eye, who manage the parking charges at the LVHTC and LVVP; and
 - Gemini, who are GLL's preferred parking charges supplier.

CP+ who manage LVIC car park charging have not been approached as they do not offer the same financial arrangement, as the CP+ preferred model is that they provide the capital but then keep all revenue from the car park until capital is repaid.

- 12 Both proposals included the provider covering:
- the capital costs of the install;
 - providing a managed solution with the venue retaining all car park ticket revenue; and
 - the provider retaining all income from Parking Charge Notices (PCN) which is again consistent with other Authority agreements for its managed car parks.

As an added benefit the Gemini proposal offers the install of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points (subject to site survey) at their cost with a 50% revenue profit share.

See Appendix A to this report for each proposal overview.

- 13 The two proposals received offer the same financial arrangement with

Gemini's proposal having the added benefit of offering regular car park patrols, EV charging points and being the preferred supplier of GLL. This report recommends that the Authority accept the Gemini proposal.

- 14 Due to the current venue closure there is a window of opportunity before the start of the season to implement the charges and associated system which will ensure a consistent approach is taken to the season and assist in the management of social distancing measures and operational restrictions set out by government to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Gemini have indicated a lead-in time of six weeks once a proposal is accepted. Target date for install is April 2021.
- 15 A Communications Plan for this project has been produced similar to that where parking charges have been introduced at other sites across the Authority. This includes the provision of Question & Answer documentation for venue colleagues, visitor/customer communications across LVWWC marketing and public relations platforms and wider Authority communications platforms, on site signage, and appropriate stakeholder engagement and process for managing complaints.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17 Capital investment will be provided by Gemini as detailed in paragraph 12 of this report.
- 18 The Authority will receive 100% of revenue from car park fees and Gemini will receive 100% of income from PCNs. Based on surveys and data gained from the manual parking solution trialled in 2017 it is estimated that there will be a net revenue benefit to the Authority of circa £40,000 from parking revenue in a full operational year.

Each venue has a different demand on their car park depending on the location, proximity to other amenities and nature of activity, but by way of comparison the table below displays the number of visits by car in an average year and income received from car parking at the other Authority sports venues.

Venue	Number of Car Visits	Income Received
LVVP	48,000	£34,000
LVHTC	66,500	£10,000
LVIC	45,000	£12,000

- 19 Gemini will provide the capital investment to install the EV charging points and the Authority will receive a 50% share of revenue profit. Further detail is being obtained to inform revenue projections in this respect.

- 20 Whilst the Authority will not incur any costs, only income, from this contract the value is high enough that the Authority's Financial Regulations state a Request For Quotes or Invitation To Tender process be conducted. For that reason, the Authority will require its Financial Regulation 571 to be waived.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 21 Many staff at LVWWC cycle to work or use public transport. Staff and volunteers that do have to use cars will not be charged for parking in line with other Authority venues.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 22 Gemini are required to comply fully with legislation and good practice relating to enforcement of car parking charges and PCNs and have a proven track record in doing so.
- 23 Planning permission for the original scheme was granted in 2018 by Broxbourne Borough Council. In the revised scheme there are less machines required, signs can all be situated in the already agreed locations and permission was granted for three years. Broxbourne Borough Council, at the time of this report being published had not replied as to if a new application would be required or not. If a new application is required and Members approve the recommendations within this report Authority officers will action as required. If planning is required this may affect the implementation timeline but officers will update if there is an issue in this regard.
- 24 As detailed within this report, GLL have been consulted in developing this proposal. Novation clauses will be included within the proposed three year agreement with Gemini to allow the agreement to pass to GLL once the contract with the Authority for the LSC venues is signed.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 25 There is reputational risk for LVRPA associated with poor car park management, either through poor implementation of the process, or through the enforcement of charges and PCNs. Gemini have supplied references and GLL have also provided positive feedback.
- 26 Communications messaging will be proactive to minimise negative public relations associated with parking charges at an Olympic legacy venue. It will focus on the positive reasons for needing car parking management, i.e. coping with the increased number of visitors on site due to its success.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 27 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in

this report.

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BACKGROUND REPORTS

None

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee	E/548/18	Car Parking Proposal at Lee Valley White Water Centre	22 February 2018
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APPENDIX ATTACHED

Appendix A	Proposals Summary
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LVRPA	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
LVWWC	Lee Valley White Water Centre
LVVP	Lee Valley VeloPark
LVHTC	Lee Valley Hockey & Tennis Centre
LVIC	Lee Valley Ice Centre
LVAC	Lee Valley Athletics Centre
PCN	Parking Charge Notice
ANPR	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
GLL	Greenwich Leisure Ltd
LSC	Leisure Services Contract
LVLT	Lee Valley Leisure Trust Ltd (trading as Vibrant Partnerships)
EV	Electric Vehicle

Proposals Overview

The proposals provided by both companies offer:

- Car park management proposal by experienced and compliant provider.
- Capital investment in infrastructure (cameras, hardware, software and associated works).
- Retention by the Authority of 100% day to day car park income.
- Retention of PCN income by provider.
- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras for enforcement, and relevant compliant signage.
- A solution to reduce / remove touch screen terminals but ensure visitors undertaking activity or spending more than £5 in café to enter their car registration to receive 4hrs free parking.
- Monitoring and management of permits for staff, visitors, contractors on an Exemption List.
- Cashless payment solutions.
- Processing of PCNs.
- Management of appeals process.
- Site specific management information.
- Financial reporting.
- Vehicle movements reporting.

The proposal provided by Gemini offers the additional benefits of:

- Regular in person patrols for busy months e.g. summer / events.
- EV charging points.
- Agreement to turn system off for major event days.

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