

COUNCIL 10 NOVEMBER 2010**1 Interactive Sign – B1334**

- 1.1 The Town Council has been approached by the county council highways design section regarding a road safety proposal to install an interactive highways sign on the entrance road to the town to the south west of Spital Farm.
- 1.2 County Councillor Jim Lang is to allocate part of the member's local improvement scheme fund to cover the capital costs of acquisition and installation of the sign and will be present at the meeting to give a brief presentation on the scheme.
- 1.3 The location of the proposed interactive sign is shown on the attached plan.
- 1.4 A warranty will be provided but this will not cover accidental damage or vandalism. The county council would require the Town Council to meet any future maintenance costs associated with the interactive sign.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council:

- (i) Consider the presentation and whether to agree to undertake to meet future maintenance costs;**
- (ii) Decide what financial allocation to include in future budgets.**

2 Dog Bylaws

- 2.1 Following earlier consultation on proposed revisions to Dog Control Orders the county council was advised that the Town Council supported additional powers for fixed penalties for fouling and control of dogs.
- 2.2 On the specific issue of excluding dogs from beaches the Town Council resolved that a full year dog exclusion from the beach be supported with the exception of provision in the southern area of the bay between the high and low water marks to the Needle's Eye Point.
- 2.3 There were almost 3100 responses to the consultation with concerns raised for tourism regarding bans on beaches. While majorities favoured fixed penalties and orders for removing dog faeces; keeping dogs on leads; directing dogs to be kept on leads a majority of respondents were not in favour of excluding dogs from land including beaches.
- 2.4 It is unlikely that new orders will be made regarding beaches particularly in the north area but further consideration will be given to Newbiggin and Blyth beaches.
- 2.5 While the majority of respondents were against the exclusion of dogs from areas such as beaches but when narrowed down the responses to those with a Newbiggin post code there was almost an equal split between those in favour and those against a "beach ban".

- 2.6 It is the county council's intention therefore, to propose a change to the existing Dog Control Order implemented by Wansbeck District Council and open up a section of the beach to the south of the bay in Newbiggin as shown on the attached plan. The remaining beach would be subject to exclusion although this would be seasonal i.e. 1st May to the 31st October. A similar arrangement is being proposed for a section of the beach at Blyth and this again would be a seasonal ban similar to arrangements in nearby North Tyneside.
- 2.7 In line with the request from the Town Council officers at the county council advise that it is obviously important that the proposed Orders are seen to be "policed" and enforced and they are in the process of ensuring that front line officers across a number of Services are being trained in the enforcement of fixed penalty notices. The immediate period following the introduction of the Orders, however, will see an increase in publicity and education and front line Officers will be on hand to offer advice to members of the public.

Recommended that the Town Council welcome the proposed compromise arrangements to maintain a seasonal ban for dogs from most of Newbiggin beach.

3 Car Parking Strategy for Northumberland

- 3.1 Northumberland County Council has embarked on a comprehensive consultation exercise to create one policy which is fair and consistent across Northumberland from the range of different parking arrangements it inherited last year. For ease of reference a copy of the Frequently Asked Questions about the proposed strategy is attached at Appendix 1. An online survey is available to respond to the consultation until 17 December.
- 3.2 The strategy will relate only to those 120 car parks owned by the county council providing 9300 spaces and is promoted as a means of placing restrictions on those car parks that need some sort of control through time restrictions to manage use. The county council is proposing to take over all enforcement of on-street parking from the police.
- 3.3 It seems likely that a shoppers' permit at a cost of £15 is likely to be introduced for short stay car parks between 9am-11am and 3pm-5pm similar to the current Morpeth scheme.
- 3.4 The aim of the strategy is to balance the needs of the different stakeholders and any additional costs of the strategy must be met from additional income and the county may be looking for an additional rate of return on its assets. It will not deal with the imposition of parking charges or the level of charges that is for the budget exercise.
- 3.5 There are many competing issues in transport and parking strategy and a car parking model has been devised (Appendix 2) to determine value and convenience of on and off-street parking places.

Members are invited to consider any representations to the consultation.

4 Council Publications

- 4.1 The government is currently consulting on a revised Code on Local Authority Publicity that is primarily intended to limited expenditure on local authority newspapers and lobbyists.
- 4.2 It is intended to have a new single code to ensure proper use of public funds and provide guidance on content, dissemination and timing of publicity. This will be grouped into seven principles that require local authority publicity to be lawful' cot effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity and issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.
- 4.3 All paid advertising, leaflets, newsheets and web sites will be affected and including information from third parties. It is anticipated the restrictions would apply to parish notice boards also.
- 4.4 The Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC) has drawn specific attention to paragraph 28 and the effect on local council community newsletters restricting their frequency to quarterly and limiting non-council information. Publicity is to be limited to information about the business, services and amenities of the council or other local service provider.
- 4.5 The main intentions are laudable but the minute limitation on parish newsletters, notice boards and web sites are unnecessary and may mean that local events cannot be adequately publicised.

Members are invited to respond to the consultation.

5 Memorial Garden and Planting

- 5.1 At the last meeting the Town Council agreed in principle to support a request to facilitate memorial tree planting and provisionally agreed a suitable area for a memorial garden/planting area at the entrance to Long Park opposite the Memorial Park.
- 5.2 Discussions have taken place with officers of Northumberland County Council who agree with the proposal and site subject to the provision of approved standard tree species and minimum specifications for all works, plaques, seats etc. The county council will supply a catalogue and specification and the scheme will be administered by the Town Council. Planting and other works should only take place following written approval including the wording for any memorial plaques and at times agreed by officers.
- 5.3 While it will be permissible to scatter ashes with any tree being planted or within the memorial garden area the 'burial' of boxes or urns will not be allowed nor will any dedicated or exclusive rights be created.
- 5.4 It is hoped that a community group can be encouraged to look after the area and assist with planting and tree and shrub maintenance. The possibility of grant assistance will be explored to help establish the initial garden area and signage

although it is suggested that a start-up budget be provided to get this project established over the winter tree planting season.

- 5.5 It is suggested that a dedication service be arranged with the initial applicant to plant the first tree in February and that similar annual events be considered.

Recommended that:

- i) The memorial garden and tree planting scheme be approved and established at the central site identified;**
- ii) A local voluntary group be sought to assist with maintenance and arrangements;**
- iii) Administration of the scheme in accordance with conditions and specification of the county council be delegated to the Town Clerk; and**
- iv) A start-up budget of £1,000 be allocated.**

Frequently Asked Questions about the strategy

1. Why do we need a new parking strategy?

The unitary authority (Northumberland County Council) came into existence in April 2009. It inherited a range of different parking arrangements from the former district and borough councils. The council felt it was important to have one policy which was fair and consistent across Northumberland.

The County Council is aware that there are very different factors which need to be considered at a local level, and the strategy recommends that further work and discussion is needed to look at local issues.

2. What will the strategy do?

The strategy will set out how parking will be provided in the county and which car parks need controls placed on them. Controls do not necessarily mean charges – time restrictions such as 2 hour maximum stay can also be imposed and the use of permits is also considered e.g. shoppers permits, residents permits and countywide permits. Civil Parking Enforcement is also considered in the strategy. If implemented, the Council would take responsibility for the enforcement of on street parking places which is currently the responsibility of the police. This would provide the council with the capability to target enforcement more effectively take into account local needs and use resources more efficiently.

3. What work has already been done?

The consultation document has been created following a review of car park provision. As part of the review, a full inventory of on and off street car parks owned or managed by the County Council was conducted. This inventory included the number of spaces, current usage levels, current charging (if any), and their condition, together with known traffic management / congestion issues

Every car park which is managed by the County Council has also been reviewed and 'scored'. The car park is scored depending on a number of factors including how well it is currently used, how far away it is from the centre of a town or attraction and who uses it most e.g. tourists, residents or workers.

Residents have been involved in focus groups to decide if this 'scoring' process seemed fair. There is further information on this model in the strategy and the consultation asks for views on this too.

4. What will happen when the consultation ends?

After the consultation, a report will be written to summarise the key issues raised. The council will then finalise the strategy, taking these issues into account and considering any suggestions which have been made.

A revised strategy will then go to the Executive of the Council in Spring for approval before going to Full Council for endorsement.

Once the policy has been endorsed, the final strategy will be published and an action plan will be implemented

5. How can I have my say?

The consultation runs from Monday 27th September until 12 noon on Friday 17th December and during this time we are asking for interested parties to fill in the survey which is online. Click on the link below to view the strategy and respond using the survey.

We will also be attending the three Area Committee Meetings in November to give a presentation on the strategy and members of the public are welcome to attend.

In addition to this, we are hoping to hold a number of meetings across the county which key partners will be invited to.

The consultation document is also available to view in libraries and in the Council's Information Centres. Hard copies of the survey are also available upon request by calling 01670 533038.

6. Why does the strategy not set out charges for car parks?

This strategy is not about how much the County Council charges for car parking. It is about setting up a fair and consistent way for car parks and traffic to be managed effectively.

7. When will charges be decided?

Following this consultation, the strategy will be finalised and go to the Executive of the County Council to endorse. Once endorsed, action will need to be taken on those car parks which have been identified as needing controls placed on them.

Different options for controls such as time restrictions and charges will then be considered. The tariffs set for the car parks will need to be consistent but also take into account local needs.

Charges for car parks need to be taken into account as part of the overall council budget setting process. This means that Full Council will need to agree on the level of charges to be implemented.

8. Why can't all car parks just charge the same?

It would not be fair to charge the same for a car park which residents use every day to go to work, do shopping etc where there is a high level of demand as a car park in a tourist spot e.g. Holy Island which is in high demand at certain times of the year but may only be used on a one off basis.

9. Will all car parks have time restrictions on them?

No. Only those car parks that are identified in the strategy as needing some sort of control placed on them will be considered for time restrictions if the strategy is endorsed following consultation. Time restrictions are used to manage the car park effectively. For example, in the centre of a town, short stay car parks are recommended to allow them to be used by lots of different people wishing to access shops and/or a range of services— the spaces are in high demand.

10. Will the number of spaces remain the same?

The strategy does not affect the number of car parking spaces available.

11. Will there still be free disabled car parking?

There are no plans in the consultation document to charge for disabled car parking although time restrictions are in place in some off street car parks and charging may be considered in the future to allow for improved access to disabled bays.

12. Does the County Council look after all car parks?

No. There are lots of private car parks in Northumberland, for example hospital car parks, train stations, out of town shopping centre car parks and those owned by businesses.

13. How many car parks do we have?

Northumberland County Council manages over 120 car parks which include a diverse range of free and pay and display car parks, together with on street parking places. Altogether there are just over 9300 spaces, of which 94% are currently off street and 53% short stay.

These spaces include provision for cars, vans, motorbikes, motor homes, coaches, heavy goods vehicles and designated disabled parking.

14. What is the difference between on street and off street parking?

Off Street parking is a place where you can park which is not on a road / public highway. Off-Street parking enforcement is carried out by Northumberland County Council Parking Attendants

On-street parking enforcement is carried out by Northumbria Police by their Police Officers or Traffic Wardens. The draft strategy suggests that this enforcement is transferred from the police to the County Council so that enforcement can be tackled more effectively to reflect local needs.

15. What is the shoppers permit?

The shoppers permit is currently free of charge and only available in the former Castle Morpeth Borough area. It enables residents to park in Morpeth town centre, free of charge, in any of the short stay car parks between 9am-11am and 3-5pm Monday to Saturday. There are currently no charges in Morpeth on a Sunday.

The shoppers permit has several aims – to reduce traffic congestion during peak rush hour times, encourage the spread of traffic using short stay off-street car parks, and to support the local economy by encouraging local shopping.

The consultation document suggests that this scheme is expanded across the County and asks for views on this. One permit would be allowed per household and a charge of £15 per permit would be introduced to cover administration costs.

The scheme is only in operation in the Castle Morpeth area at the moment because it was implemented by the former Castle Morpeth Borough Council (originally referred to as a Resident's Parking Permit).