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| <b>REPORT TO:</b>              | <b>Community Services Committee</b>         | <b>AGENDA ITEM:</b> 10  |
| <b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>        | <b>18 July 2002</b>                         | <b>CATEGORY:</b><br><b>DELEGATED</b>  |
| <b>REPORT FROM:</b>            | <b>Head of Community Services</b>           | <b>OPEN:</b>  |
| <b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b> | <b>Stuart Batchelor<br/>(5820)</b>          | <b>DOC:</b> s:\cent_serv\committee reports\community services\18 july 2002\carpark-sb.doc |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>                | <b>Rosliston Forestry Centre – Car Park</b> | <b>REF:</b> SB/LPB  |
| <b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>       | <b>All</b>                                  | <b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b> CS07   |

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### **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 Members agree the introduction of car parking charges and the application for required orders as identified in the report.

### **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To report on the progress of the development and refurbishment of the car park at Rosliston Forestry Centre and outline the feasibility report prepared by the Rosliston Forestry Centre Executive on the establishment of car parking charges to help fund the ongoing operational costs of the Centre.

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 In 1998 the Leisure Services Committee authorised the establishment of the Rosliston Forestry Centre Executive to consider the options available for the future management of the Forestry Centre site. The Executive consisted of the Chair of the Leisure Services Committee, now Vice Chair of Community Services Committee, the Regional Manager of the Forestry Commission and the Chief Executive of The National Forest Company.
- 3.2 The Executive were responsible for the appointment of Aurora Country Developments Ltd to manage the Centre and over the last 4 years the following attractions have been established: -

Soft play room  
Wildlife Garden  
Lake  
Cycle Hire  
Barn Shop  
Play Area  
Walking the Way to Health Scheme  
Holiday Playscheme Club  
New Deal Trainee Placements  
WEC Trainee Placements  
New Deal Employment Option  
Pegasus Special School Work Placements

Sensory Garden  
Herb Garden  
'RASCALS' After School Child Care Club  
Bird of Prey Facility  
Crazy Golf  
Basketball Court

- 3.3 In terms of numbers of visitors the only indication of throughput is the recorded customers in the café. This accounts for probably about 50 % of actual site users. The figures for the last 5 years are: -

| MONTH     | 1998 | 1999  | 2000  | 2001  |
|-----------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| January   | 453  | 691   | 1446  | 1923  |
| February  | 667  | 558   | 2272  | 2573  |
| March     | 458  | 586   | 4033  | 1500  |
| April     | 754  | 1286  | 4708  | 3598  |
| May       | 638  | 1602  | 4247  | 4992  |
| June      | 690  | 1607  | 5000  | 4989  |
| July      | 1048 | 1504  | 7000  | 5333  |
| August    | 2114 | 1735  | 9000  | 7401  |
| September | 808  | 1189  | 4831  | 2921  |
| October   | 389  | 1259  | 4407  | 2657  |
| November  | 630  | 1300* | 3355  | 2000* |
| December  | 387  | 750*  | 2099  | 1500* |
| TOTAL     | 9036 | 14067 | 52389 | 41387 |

Shaded area indicates period of Aurora's Management \* Estimates

- 3.4 This development of facilities has clearly resulted in a significant increase in the number of visitors but has also resulted in a significant increase in the maintenance cost of the site with the Council and Forestry Commission picking up those costs. These costs are now amounting to in excess of £18,000 per year.
- 3.5 These increased costs and the need to fund the management contract for the Centre, which has principally been funded by external grant aid for the past three years, have highlighted a need to investigate options for generating additional sources of income. One of these is the introduction of charges onto the newly expanded car park, with a proportion of the income generated being utilised to offset these rapidly increasing maintenance costs.

## **Car Park**

- 3.6 The original car park was constructed in 1995 and has proven effective over the last 7 years. It was landscaped and constructed to resemble an urban facility, with formal flower and shrub beds and wooden edging. The original topcoat consisted of a white 3mm to dust limestone, which has resulted in numerous complaints when wet with visitors transferring it into their vehicles.
- 3.7 As it only catered for a maximum of 39 cars it was frequently full during weekends and school and bank holidays, with the only available overflow car parking being within an open field regularly used for other activities. The location of an Arriva bus stop in the car park added to the problems of safety, size and maintenance and the redevelopment of the car park was considered
- 3.8 Due to the factors detailed above the partner organisations decided to improve the car park facilities and, at the same time, following local requests for safe off-road cycling, construct a network of four cycle trails around the site.
- 3.9 The new car park will cater for up to 180 cars with 140 spaces in the main area and additional 40 overflow spaces. It has been designed to better resemble an informal forestry car park, more in keeping with the natural environment of the site.
- 3.10 The project, which has cost over £100,000 was funded through a variety of sources. These included £40,000 from the EMDA Foot and Mouth Recovery Fund, £18,000 from land fill operators WREN, £20,000 from South Derbyshire District Council and £22,000 from the Forestry Commission. A further £12,000 has also been awarded by the Council to match a further £12,000 from other sources to complete landscaping and signage around the new development.

## **Proposed Pricing Policy.**

- 3.11 Based on their experience of owning other sites the Forestry Commission has estimated the likely income that would be generated from the establishment of pay and display car park charges at the Forestry Centre.
- 3.12 Similar facilities on other Forestry Commission sites within West Midlands Forest District generate the following income streams:  
Wyre forest – 150 spaces - £23,000 per annum  
Cannock Chase – 100 spaces - £12,000 per annum  
Both of these sites are located in much larger, mature forests and the charges are set at £1.00 per day.

3.13 At Rosliston Forestry Centre the Executive proposes to set the charges at 50p for an hour and £1.00 for up to the whole day. It is believed that this two tier pricing will not discourage people from visiting the café or the craft units for a short visit and will be recognised as good value to those staying for a longer period. A reduced rate would also be available for people who use the Centre on a regular basis, such as dog walkers, in the form of an annual pass. This would cost £10. Disabled badge holders would be exempt from the charges.

3.14 The other reasons for the pricing are as follows:

- An initial reluctance to pay for parking at a site where previously no charges were levied. This reluctance will diminish with effective policing by the on-site managers who will have a pivotal role in publicising their introduction to assist with facility maintenance and site development.
- Other local sites at Beehive Farm and Chapmans Nursery where no charges are currently levied, but facilities are less extensive and specialised
- 66% of the visitors are repeat visits, and the site being popular with local residents and dog walkers, some of whom visit the site daily

3.13 The annual setting of the car park charges would be the responsibility of the Executive who are currently negotiating the long term management contract with Aurora Country Developments Ltd. The Executive would also agree with Aurora the methods used to police the car park charges; i.e. parking fines and the appropriate orders required.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The estimated income for the first year from the car parking fees is £7,150 (ex.VAT). This is made up of the following:

|                         |                       |              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 100 annual passes @ £10 |                       | 825          |
| School holiday W'kdays  | 20 cars per day @ 50p | 990          |
|                         | 10 " " " @£1.00       | 247          |
| Other weekdays          | 5 " " " @ 50p         | 412          |
|                         | 5 " " " @ £1.00       | 815          |
| Weekends                | 10 " " " @ 50p        | 429          |
|                         | 40 " " " @£1.00       | 3432         |
|                         |                       | <u>£7150</u> |

4.2 The purchase and installation of pay and display meters would be undertaken by the Forestry Commission and the management of the machines and the policing of payment by car owners would be undertaken by the site managers following the granting of the

appropriate order. The cost of operating the machines is approximately £500 per year.

- 4.3 As identified earlier the income from the car park charges will be used towards financing the long term management contract for the site and the increasing maintenance costs due to the increasing visitor numbers.

## **5.0 Corporate Implications**

- 5.1 This proposal would contribute to the Council's objective of supporting the development of the National Forest as Rosliston Forestry Centre is the Forests principle Environmental Education centre and an important part of the tourism infrastructure for the area. The introduction of car parking charges is a key element in ensuring the sustainability of the site.

## **6.0 Community Implications**

- 6.1 The development of Rosliston Forestry Centre over the past three years has seen the establishment of community based activities such as playscheme provision, play areas, sensory garden and volunteer opportunities and a significant increase in visitors. This provision of services to the community can only be continued if car parking charges can be used to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Centre.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

- 7.1 Rosliston Forestry Centre has seen a significant increase in the number of visitors and attractions on the site the Centre Executive see the provision of car parking charges as a key element in ensuring that the site is economically viable and can continue to develop.
- 7.2 The Centre has received over £200,000 of investment in recent years and this capital infrastructure requires maintenance, which car park fees will help to fund.

## **8.0 Background Papers**

- 8.1 File EE 2

