

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Communities Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	10 th December 2020
TITLE	Update - Parking Review
AUTHOR	Dafydd Wyn Williams, Head of Environment Department
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Gareth W Griffith
PURPOSE	To update the Committee on the progress to date

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Councillors elected to the Parking Task Group:

Councillors: Angela Russell; Annwen Hughes; Kevin Morris Jones; Gethin Glyn Williams

Officers supporting the Task Group: Dafydd Williams (Head of Environment Department); Ceri Hughes Thomas (Parking and Street Works Manager); Gwenan Huws Tomos (Parking Team Leader).

1.2 At the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 July 2019, it was resolved to establish a Parking Task Group to consider the need to increase income, along with the new challenges and opportunities that have arisen since the last parking strategy was established in February 2015. Copy of the minutes are in **Appendix 1**.

1.3 A report was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 7 February 2019, which provided considerable detail about the current arrangements in place for parking management. In this report, an explanation was given of the financial challenge posed, namely an increase in income of £450,000 (by 2022/23), more than the current level in order to meet the savings target imposed on the Environment Department, as well as meet the increase due to inflation. In the report dated 4 July, it was explained that the element of doing away with the free parking offer over the Christmas period had been refused, therefore, the financial sum that would need to be addressed in addition would be approximately £400,000.

1.4 The decision as the Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish the Parking task group was '*assessing possible options to increase income from car parks and at the same time to assess whether it is possible to do so without increasing parking costs for Gwynedd residents.*'

How has the Task Group approached its work?

1.5 The Task Group has met on five occasions and in the meantime, officers have been undertaking research at the request of the Task Group in order to develop ideas, understand what others are doing and ensuring that what we propose as options is practical.

1.6 A number of aspect with an element of co-dependency needed to be considered, and by now, the Task Group has had an opportunity to discuss, challenge and come to a conclusion on the vast majority of these.

1.7 The Task Group has attempted to cope with the field of work in a logical and thorough way and it must be said that there was much more to consider than anticipated by the task group at the start. The Task Group has decided, in order to assist the reader more than anything else, to set out their update report per subject. Under each heading, an outline will be provided of the Task Group's main considerations and conclusions, as follows:

- **What has changed since the last parking review?**
- **Considerations to change the Parking Fees model**
- **Christmas Parking**
- **Disabled Parking**
- **Residents' Parking**
- **Enforcement**
- **Contracts with other bodies**
- **Opportunities [working with other enforcement units, more sites, more contracts]**

2. WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THE LAST PARKING REVIEW?

2.1 Over five years have passed since the current operational parking strategy was adopted. The Task Group has seen for itself a number of changes that have occurred during this period, which has had a considerable impact on our communities in the context of parking. We have seen an increase in the use of **electric vehicles**, and are likely to see an additional increase in use. Therefore, we need to prepare our car parks for this requirement. In general, much less use is made of **cash**, with a number of people now paying for everything by card and not using cash. We have seen substantial development in technology, and there is a need to consider whether there are any advantages of using more technology when managing parking.

2.2 Gwynedd is such a beautiful county, and a vast majority of it is located within the National Park. The County, and Snowdonia in particular, has been marketed considerably, which is done for the benefit of our economy. The increase in visitors has brought with it challenges in the context of parking. More **outdoor events are held by commercial and community companies, which attract droves of people into our destinations**. The character of some of our communities has changed with an increase in the use of **houses and holiday homes for holiday accommodation** managed via platforms such as AirBnB, etc.

2.3 In general, there are more vehicles on our roads, and the number of vehicles seems to be increasing with a number of families having a number of vehicles, with no provision for parking them. There is also an increase in the use of **motorhomes** with a number of companies now hiring such vehicles. See the report on Motorhomes in **Appendix 2**.

Electric Vehicles

2.4 There is an increasing demand to be kinder to our Environment, and the way in which we travel certainly contributes substantially to carbon emissions, and therefore to global climate change.

2.5 The vast majority of our vehicles use fossil fuel. The technology used by these vehicles has improved vastly to decrease their emissions, but at the same time, the demand for them has also led to a huge increase in vehicle numbers. This has led to an overall increase in carbon emissions throughout the country.

- 2.6 One way of reducing carbon emissions is to use vehicles that do not emit carbon. The vehicles that are currently available are powered by electricity, although hydrogen technology is also available.
- 2.7 It is anticipated that there will be a significant increase in the number of electric vehicles on our roads between now and 2030. Graph 1 shows the predictions made by SP Energy. A copy of the full SP Energy report can be found at:

https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/userfiles/file/Electric_Vehicle_Uptake_Forecasts.pdf

Graph 1: Predicted increase in electric vehicles across Britain.

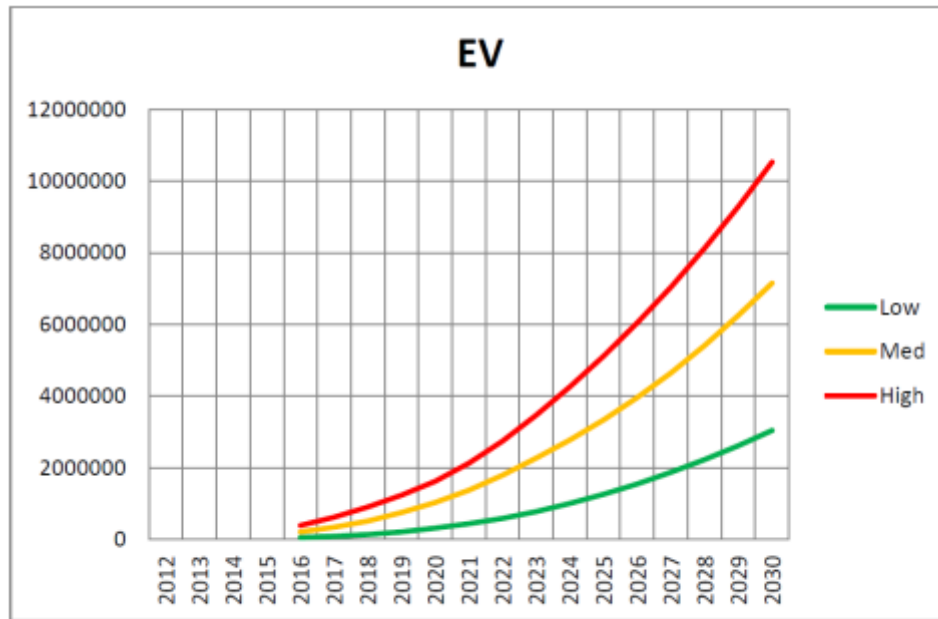


Figure 1: Government forecasts for the uptake of EVs

- 2.8 An additional income target of £50,000 has been set for the Environment Department to meet by collecting income from a charging points located in our car parks. The Environment Department has submitted a bid for £636k from the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund, but it has not yet received a response. The Cabinet has approved £456K towards the scheme. The intention is to install charging points in 23 locations during 2020/21. The challenge now is to set a fees structure for charging points that enable turnover and effective use. The Environment Department has looked to other Counties and private companies to outline options.

Cash

- 2.9 In general, fewer people use cash and more people are using card and contactless facilities. Pay and display machines that accept either cash or card payments, or both, are available. The costs of such machines have dropped substantially over the past two years. Such machines need a phone connection to the bank, and as the mobile phone network has improved in Gwynedd, this in addition has made establishing machines that allow people to make card payments, more viable. See information is in **Appendix 3**.

- 2.10 The Department is facing quite substantial costs from paying companies to collect cash from the pay and display machines, totalling approximately £60,000 per annum. In addition, there are risks that cash is left in our machines and on occasions, people damage the machines and steal the money. This of course raises a question as to whether card-only pay and display machines should be installed, or to install cash and card payment provisions.
- 2.11 The Task Group discussed this matter at some length before reaching a conclusion that it was premature to install card-only machines. Possibly in the future, when we are confident that there is no real demand for cash payment provisions, we could step back from that at the time. It is expected for cash collection costs to reduce as it would not need to be collected as often, as less cash would be in the machines due to the increased use made of card payments. On the point regarding cashless parking fee payments, the Task Group was of the opinion that the parking fees could be increased annually in line with inflation, rather than increase every 5 years or more. A five-yearly increase is often a substantial leap, and a smaller annual increase would be an alternative option and would be easier for people to accept.
- 2.12 The Department has also progressed during the period of the Task Group's work to establish a provision where it is possible for people to make payments over the phone. This is very advantageous as people can pay for a longer period of parking over the phone, without having to visit the car park. Those who have parked receive a text message when their parking period is almost up, so that they have the option to extend the period or leave.
- 2.13 The Task Group is very satisfied that large steps are being made by the Department to establish options in addition to cash payments for parking.

Events

- 2.14 We have seen a substantial increase in the number of outdoor events and also in the size of those events over the past five years. See **Appendix 4**.

Summary of the increase in events

- 2.15 This increase has brought with it a substantial impact on some of our communities, with some seeing an event of quite a substantial size every weekend. The residents in these villages are concerned that the streets on which they live are being used as car parks for the participants and supporters of these events. Very often, there is insufficient capacity for all visitors to the event, and consequently, people park their vehicles inconsiderately and create hazardous situations. As a result, the department receives a number of complaints, but is also criticised by many when enforcement steps are taken in an attempt to deal with the situation.
- 2.16 The Task Group acknowledges that there are positive economic elements to holding events. The Task Group has also concluded that event organisers should be given a clear message that they are responsible for ensuring that the size of the event corresponds with the parking capacity available at the destination where their event is being held. There is a need to be completely clear with event organisers that it is unacceptable to use residential areas as capacity for the participants and supporters of their events.

Second homes and Holiday Accommodation

- 2.17 A substantial increase has been seen nationwide in the number of residential units being used for holiday accommodation purposes. Platforms such as AirBnB; Booking.com, etc. make it easy for the owners of holiday units to market their properties and easy for people to book those properties. Furthermore, there is a general increase in the number of people who decide to stay in this country for their holidays, rather than go abroad, due to the uncertainty surrounding Brexit and the cost associated with overseas travel. Statistics from a company called AirDNA (a company that gathers information about holiday accommodation that advertise on platforms such as AirBnB and Home and Away) shows that a substantial increase has been seen in the number of holiday accommodation over the past years. The statistics show an increase of 915% in the whole property listings available between January 2017 and September 2019 in Gwynedd.
- 2.18 To the detriment of this increase, there are economic, environmental and social side-effects (including parking matters). The Task Group has been given to understand that some residential streets in the County where holiday accommodation is located suffers a substantial impact on parking capacity for local residents. Very often on streets that have restricted capacity for permanent residents, let alone visitors, 3-5 vehicles can park on the street in order to stay in one terraced house.
- 2.19 The Task Group is aware that parking cannot be managed on residential streets where no restrictions are imposed, and it is not possible to differentiate between those who are staying in holiday accommodation on the street and permanent residents. The Environment Department is leading on a piece of work that is investigating how to get better control on the misuse of residential units for holiday use - the main output of the work will be to attempt to identify what mechanism can be used in an attempt to manage the use of residential units for holiday use.
- 2.19 In an attempt to justify and strengthen any recommendations deriving from the research, the research will be conducted in relation to the impact of holiday accommodation on communities; this research will be carried out in the form of a residents' questionnaire, with parking being a specific matter that will be addressed.

Motorhomes

- 2.20 A substantial increase has been seen over the past five years in those who travel around in their own or a hired motorhome
- 2.21 Whilst the users of motorhomes choose to use bespoke sites established for their use, a large number also choose to stay overnight on streets, on roads and in car parks. A number stay for a night, before moving on; whilst others choose to stay for longer periods.
- 2.22 The Environment Department and the Economy Department have erected 'No overnight parking' signs in many locations where complaints have been received, and this has proved successful on the whole. The Task Group is satisfied with these arrangements, subject to the departments' continued monitoring.
- 2.23 The Task Group is eager for the Department to re-establish bye-laws that existed on lay-bys adjacent to the road, to enable them to take enforcement steps against those who use them to park their motorhomes overnight. See Summary in **Appendix 5**.

3. CONSIDERATIONS TO CHANGE THE PARKING FEES MODEL

Bands

- 3.1 The parking strategy adopted in February 2015 set five specific bands to designate car park types in our County. The bands established at that time were as follows:

The current banding criteria for Gwynedd destinations are as follows:

Banding	Criteria
Band 1	More than 350 retail shops.
Band 2	Between 100 and 350 retail shops + main market towns.
Band 3	More than 50 retail shops and other businesses and towns and villages impacted by the holiday season, coastal, historic and leisure / entertainment destinations.
Band 4	Fewer than 20 retail shops and other businesses OR more than 50 retail shops and other businesses and towns and villages impacted by the holiday season, coastal, historic and leisure / entertainment centres.
Band 5	Fewer than 20 retail shops and other businesses and no substantial seasonal impact.

- 3.2 During the Task Group's discussions, there was agreement that the City of Bangor should not be differentiated compared with the remainder of the destinations (Towns) in the County. In reality, the only difference between Band 1 and Band 2 is the enforcement periods, and so the Task Group felt that the enforcement period of Band 1 and Band 2 should be consistent, from 9.00am until 5.00pm in short-stay car parks, and for 24 hours a day in long-stay car parks.

The proposed banding criteria for the centres of Gwynedd are as follows:

Banding	Criteria
Band 1	Sub-Regional Centers and Urban Retail Centers (Providing the best range of services, employment opportunities and access to public transport)
Band 2	Local Retail and Service Centers (providing for the essential service needs of their own population and surrounding rural catchment areas, together with some employment and retail opportunities. They have a good degree of accessibility by public transport to the higher tier Centers)
Band 3	Seasonal Car Parks

Short-stay and Long-stay Car Parks

- 3.3 The Task Group acknowledged the importance of short-stay car parks for those who need to pop-in quickly to a destination and ensure turnover in parking spaces. The cost per hour of short-stay parking spaces is higher than long-stay spaces in order to encourage those who wish to stay in a destination for a longer period of time to park further from the centre, as well as encourage them to stay for a longer time, for the benefit of the local economy.
- 3.4 The Task Group did not agree with the way that long-stay and short-stay car parks were designated, i.e. their distance from the 'high street'.

- 3.5 There was an appreciation that annual passes were available for parking in long-stay car parks only, and it was accepted that the principle that using short-stay car parking spaces for the whole day would affect turnover, had the potential to have a negative impact on local businesses and would certainly affect the level of parking income.
- 3.6 Nevertheless, the Task Group was of the opinion that it was possible for 'some' short-stay car parks to transfer to long-term car parks seasonally. This has been trialled on the Marian car park in Dolgellau, where the car park is a short-stay car park from March until the end of October, but becomes a long-stay car park from November to the end of February. This of course enables people to use their annual pass in the car park during the long-stay period when the town and the car park are much quieter. See the **Appendix 6** which includes a number of facts to consider before proposing the scheme to each area.

Fees Structure

- 3.7 The Task Group has spent a considerable amount of time getting to understand the structure of the existing pay and display fees structure and how they correspond with the bands and duration of stay. The Group is of the opinion that the fees structure is good, but relatively complex, and has therefore asked whether it can be simplified.
- 3.8 The current fees structure is included in **Appendix 7**.

Current Fees Structure

- 3.9 The Task Group was of the opinion that the fees structure for short-stay car parks was fine, but felt that there were too many payment options for long-stay. A new and simplified fees structure is suggested for long-stay car parks as follows, and bands 3 and 4 would be most affected by the fees increase. It should be noted that these car parks are those that serve visitors and are subject to seasonal changes. See the New Structure in **Appendix 8**.

Pay and display fees - options

- 3.10 The use made of our car parks can change from year to year and the income being generated reflects the change in use which relates to the weather, more often than anything else. This year has been a complete exception with almost no use being made of our car parks due to the restrictions that came into force with the COVID-19 crisis.
- 3.11 The Task Group is completely aware of the fact that income levels need to be increased, and that this needs to achieve an additional £400,000 to the existing level by 2022/23. The Task Group acknowledges that very few options exist to raise income levels to such an extent, unless the pay and display fees are increased. To this end, the Task Group asked the officers to be modelling how much additional income could be generated should the fees be increased somewhere in the region of between 5% and 20%. See the results below (based on the current fees structure):

	5% INCREASE	
	NET	GROSS
Worst Case	96,874	116,248
Likely Case	105,525	126,630
Best Case	114,310	137,172

	10% INCREASE	
	NET	GROSS
Worst Case	193,747	232,497
Likely Case	211,049	253,259
Best Case	228,621	274,345

	15% INCREASE	
	NET	GROSS
Worst Case	290,621	348,745
Likely Case	316,574	379,889
Best Case	342,931	411,517

	20% INCREASE	
	NET	GROSS
Worst Case	387,494	464,993
Likely Case	422,099	506,519
Best Case	457,241	548,690

- 3.12 The Task Group is of the opinion that consideration should be given to increasing the fees level by 10% in order to meet the fees increase required by the Council as there is potential to generate between £193,747 and £228,621 (Net) of additional annual income. The Task Group is of course aware that there the additional income needs to be identified by 20/21. Following the COVID-19 crisis, the Task Group is not of the opinion that the parking fees level should be increased until 1 April 2021 at the earliest.

Annual Pass

- 3.13 The Parking Task Group is of the opinion that the annual pass offers value for money for those who invest in the offer. The pass, which is £125 for a full year, allows holders to park in any long-stay car park in the County. The Task Group acknowledges that many local residents invest in these passes, and consequently, the Task Group is not of the opinion that the fee for an annual pass should be increased excessively, only in line with inflation. To this end, the Task Group is of the opinion that increasing the fee for an annual pass to £140 from 1 April 2021, is reasonable. This opens the potential to use the pass in more car parks referred to in part 3.7 of this report. It is felt that the value for money is greater and on average, daily parking costs continue to be less than 40p for those who invest in such a pass.

Residents' Pass

- 3.14 The report submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 7 February 2019 referred for the first time to a residents' pass. This pass enables residents of a village or town to purchase an annual pass for the long-stay car park located closest to their property. The current cost of this pass is £60. Thus far, 213 residents' passes have been sold. The Task Group was of the opinion that the pass was a good idea, but that consideration should be given to changing the criteria so that businesses and those working in a destination can purchase an annual pass at a cheaper rate, but in the understanding that it only enables them to park in one specific long-stay car park. It is felt that this will be beneficial for many of our residents who work or run a business in destinations but who do not need the flexibility to park in any long-stay car park in the County.

Increasing or reducing fees for communities if they wish

- 3.15 The Task Group is aware that many communities have now taken advantage of increasing parking fees in their community. A percentage of the fee increase is paid directly from Gwynedd Council to the Town / Community Council to be used for their own activities. To date, nine communities have taken advantage of this scheme, namely:

- Aberdyfi
- Barmouth
- Blaenau Ffestiniog
- Harlech
- Llandannwg
- Porthmadog
- Caernarfon – request to commence in April 2020 (on hold)
- Bala - request to commence in April 2020 (on hold)
- Dolgellau – request to commence in April 2020 (put back)

- 3.16 The Task Group is of the opinion that this scheme is valuable and that it should be retained as part of the strategy. The Task Group is also of the opinion that it should be highlighted that a percentage of a fee reduction (where it is expected for the community to shoulder the income loss), or fee increase (where the community receives the financial benefit), is flexible and open for the community to choose.

Christmas Parking

- 3.17 Gwynedd Council has offered free parking in all pay and display car parks over the Christmas period for around 12 years. At present, the parking strategy outlines that free parking will commence two weekends before Christmas and will continue for about a fortnight. There is no time restriction, e.g. free parking commencing after 11am has been a part of the scheme in the past, which is contrary to nearby Councils.
- 3.18 The Environment Department had proposed the free parking over Christmas scheme as a saving for the Council; because the loss of income is approximately £45,000 per annum. The Council refused this proposal as a saving, outlining that this was an important incentive for local businesses.

- 3.19 The Task Group acknowledges the importance of free parking over the Christmas period, but it appears that there is room to improve the arrangements. Many destinations are complaining that the workers that arrive at the destinations early in the morning take advantage of the free parking and park in the spaces located closest to the Town centre. This of course means that the most conveniently located parking spaces are not available for shoppers later on in the day, and this may undermine the benefits of offering free parking.
- 3.20 The Task Group discussed many options to attempt to overcome the problem of workers occupying spaces all day. The most sensible option was to commence the free parking period mid-morning, rather than all day, i.e. to commence the period around 10.30am or 11am.
- 3.21 The Task Group was also of the opinion that many visited our main destinations during the period prior to Christmas, but that January was a very quiet time. The Task Group was eager for consideration to be given to offering free parking in January, and possibly reduce the period prior to Christmas so that there would be no financial impact.

	Options - Free Parking Periods	Estimated loss of income
A	1 week before / after Christmas	22,500
B	28 - 31 December + the first week in January	37,283
C	The First Week in January only	24,426

Disabled parking

- 3.22 Every Gwynedd Council pay and display Car Park offers free parking for disabled people, specifically for blue badge holders.
- 3.23 The Task Group is aware that discussions have been held in the past which consider whether blue badge holders should be charged a fee as everyone else, or that a specific scheme is available for them to purchase a permit.
- 3.24 The Task Group is of the opinion that the scheme, as it currently stands, is suitable. The Task Group acknowledges that the lives of blue badge holders are difficult enough without having to consider the task of having to fetch a pay and display ticket from a machine. In addition, on the grounds of road safety, there is an argument in retaining the free parking for blue badge holders as they are entitled to park on double yellow lines for a period of up to three hours. This could possibly undermine road safety for other users.

Residents' Parking

- 3.25 The residents' parking scheme was discussed, along with the consultation process that happens before the scheme is implemented on specific streets. The Task Group accepts that there is a need for the vast majority of the residents of a street or area to be supportive of such schemes before restrictions can be imposed. The Task Group also acknowledges that such schemes need to be self-financing, therefore, residents who take advantage of such schemes need to pay an annual fee.

- 3.26 The Task Group is of the opinion that the current scheme for residents' parking is fit for purpose and that those arrangements should continue. Having said that, the Task Group is of the opinion that the annual fees should not be increased more than the increase required to meet inflation during the period.

Enforcement

- 3.27 When Gwynedd Council adopted the responsibility for parking enforcement in 2010, 15 enforcement officers were being employed. Now, we have eight enforcement officers. The Traffic Management Act 2004 outlines that the fines being collected through parking enforcement is for the purposes of funding the enforcement team and the support it requires.
- 3.28 The existing cost of the enforcement team is £196,000 (18/19) and £380,000 (18/19) of fee income is collected annually. Annual overtime costs are approximately £9,000 and this due to the availability of officers to ensure core presence on occasions.
- 3.29 Seasonal appointments to these posts are difficult due to the investment in training and mentoring required. The sickness absence level of the team is relatively high, and these officers need to be out in all weathers and of course, they occasionally receive verbal abuse and, on occasions, physical abuse, due to the nature of the job.
- 3.30 The Task Group has asked officers to outline the size of the team they require to ensure accessibility and support. The Task Group is of the opinion that detailed consideration should be given to the overtime payments and to consider whether it would be better to appoint an additional officer.
- 3.31 The costs associated with appointing a full-time additional officer would be £28,000 per annum (including pension and tax). Indeed, this additional resource would reduce the need for overtime payments and would make a valuable contribution towards the strategic objectives of the team, e.g. raise customer service standards by addressing problematic locations urgently, increased attendance during events in order to ensure safety and the like.

Opportunities [working with other enforcement units, more sites, more contracts]

4. SUMMARY

Consideration	Cost (one-off)	Cost (annual)	Income	Observations
Charging points (electric vehicles)	£750,000	£30,000	£50,000	One-off cost to establish the charging points, then an annual maintenance cost
Cash	£350,000	£15,000	£0	Cost of new card machines, phone connection costs
Events				A matter of ensuring the safety of communities only
Holiday homes and houses for holiday accommodation				A matter to consider as part of the work on the control of Holiday Homes
Motorhomes				Better enforcement needed for the benefit of communities and safety
Changes to pay and display parking fees			£400,000	Average income figure
Annual Pass			£140 each	Cost to be in line with inflation
Residents' /Business Pass			-£30,000	Need to understand the impact on income
Christmas Parking			-£10,000	Is there a cost to free parking in January??
Disabled parking			Free	To remain the same
Residents Parking			£50 and £80 and to increase in line with inflation	Cost to be in line with inflation
Enforcement				Additional cost to meet from enforcement income / fines
Total			£420,000	

APENDICIES

APPENDIX 1	Community Scrutiny Committee Minutes 04.07.19
APPENDIX 2	Motorhomes Report
APPENDIX 3	Cash Report
APPENDIX 4	Events
APPENDIX 5	Off Street Order
APPENDIX 6	Year Ticket
APPENDIX 7	Current Fee Structure
APPENDIX 8	New Fee Structure