

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
15th June 2021

LJ/2021

9th June 2021

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

AGENDA ITEM 8 – SEVERN PARK – USE BY FUNFAIRS

AIM

1. To consider permitting the use Severn Park for funfairs and similar activities

BACKGROUND

2. The Council has previously allowed travelling fairs to set up and operate from time to time on Severn Park.
3. During March and April 2021, the Council received a couple of enquiries about the use of Severn Park from funfair operators.
4. A decision was made at the time not to permit such activity. The decision was made by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor; councillors were informed (Enclosure 1 refers) and the responses received were supportive of the decision.

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

5. The decision not to permit funfairs for the time being was made by the previous Council and a large number of the current councillors might not be aware of the background.
6. With the potential lifting of covid restrictions on or shortly after 21st June 2021 the Council might want to consider the matter further.
7. A funfair is likely to be an enjoyable experience for those that choose to attend.
8. Income to the Town Council through fees is minimal.
9. We have received complaints from residents close to the area regarding noise coming from Severn Park. Indeed in the past 2 years we have employed an external security firm to lock that gates in the evening to discourage use of the area late into the night.
10. In inclement weather the heavy vehicles can churn up and damage the ground.
11. They tie up open green space for a week or so at a time that then cannot be used for ad-hoc public activity, walking, picnics, dog-walking etc.
12. Generally, funfairs 'park up' for a few days before the event and leave a day or 2 after the event.
13. We provide concessions for a significant fee to traders to operate an ice cream van and a refreshments van. The presence of a funfair might detract from their offering.

14. It is not known whether a funfair has a positive impact on other business locally or whether the money taken at funfairs sees town income taken out of the Town.

15. The activity can take up parking spaces that might otherwise generate income.

FINANCIALS

16. The fees for the commercial hire of Severn Park are £230 per day.

17. Car parking receipts for the first 7 days of June total £4,777, total income for the current financial year to date is approaching £17k.

RECOMMENDATION

18. It is recommended that the Town Council considers how it might wish to respond to requests for the hire of Severn Park for funfairs and other large scale commercial activities.



Lee Jakeman
Town Clerk

Enclosure:

1. Extract from email Town Clerk to all Bridgnorth Town Councillors dated 7th April 2021.

Extract from email Town Clerk to all Bridgnorth Town Councillors dated 7th April 2021

Please be advised that we have recently been approached by 2 different funfair operators to rent part of Severn Park for between 4 and 10 days, at the end of April / Early May.

I emailed the Mayor with the following thoughts:

- While the government guidelines appear to allow this sort of activity to take place, I feel uncomfortable about agreeing it.
- The target date for the relaxing of all social distancing measures is 21 June 2021.
- We current public opinion being to be critical of people travelling to Bridgnorth, this request is unhelpful.
- Furthermore, I am not sure if it would serve the Council well to 'allow the flood gates to open' at the earliest opportunity.
- The funfair will eat up much of the available public space, and that might still be in high demand by residents for dog walking, gentle strolls etc and they may not hank us for having less space to operate in.
- I am also concerned about the length of time that it intends to be on site (12 days) and the nuisance that might cause nearby residents (they might tolerate a long weekend, but anything longer might not be fair to them).
- In addition, we have sold the concessions (ice cream and snacks bar) for a handsome price and the concession holders might not be to happy with competition.
- I am mindful to say that we will not consider any large-scale activity (e.g. funfair on Severn Park) until all social distancing measures are lifted by the government.

The Mayor was in general agreement and I have therefore written the following to each of the fun fair operators:

"Thank you for your enquiry in the use of Severn Park as a venue for a funfair. I regret that we are currently not taking bookings for any such events on Severn Park and I cannot approve the booking requested.

The area of Severn Park has been a valuable piece of open green space throughout the Coronavirus pandemic to residents of Bridgnorth and while there are still some government restrictions it is considered prudent to leave as much of that that space open for exercise, dog and recreational walking. Furthermore, it is not considered at this time appropriate to promote an event that will likely encourage large gatherings.

Once all restrictions have been lifted the Town Council will consider opening up Severn Park for some limited hire."