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29/9117

Dear Mr Norris

Comments Submitted Regarding Campsite Policy Paper for JMC

The key concern of the campsite paper prepared for the JMC is regarding the policy i.e. whether to allow use of BCA reserves to extend the campsite. This paper purposefully does not deal with the nitty gritty of the day to day running of the site as that is not its purpose or the particular concern of the JMC. This is not a new business but an extension of an existing one that is already very successful financially.

However we thank you for your comments and as you have shown a strong interest in this business I will do my best to answer some of your concerns.

Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA) have 15 years of campsite management experience and have built up a successful business on very little resources. The canal manager has also been a very regular user of campsites around the UK for 25 years, so like yourself, has much knowledge to draw on of how other sites are run.

You show concern that the number of electric hook-ups is too low a proportion. We are starting with a low number and this may well be increased with demand as and when the sites business demonstrates this need. However the business plan is based on 10 hook-ups and even at this level shows the development to be viable.

Your concerns over staffing can hopefully be allayed with further knowledge on our existing systems and our plans for improvements for the new campsite.

The introduction of a specialised campsite booking and management system will significantly reduce the current work load in the office, allowing staff more time to manage the site. There will also be a full time maintenance officer who will be responsible for general campsite maintenance and assisting with the site management.

For evening cover, the call out system to the duty ranger has been in operation for many years and seems to work well. The ranger is often able to answer questions over the phone. Any minor emergency is dealt with the same as for most campsites where numbers are provided to all campers in their welcome pack for local services that they might require.

We already have a late arrival system in place and the camper is also given a full description of the site and location of the pitch. This system has been in place for around 8 years and has proved to be successful. This will be further improved on the newly developed campsite with named areas and pitch numbers.

Staff are trained in customer service and customers enquiries at the reception are given priority. Staff are available 7 days a week throughout the main camping season. The canal centre as a whole is indeed a busy business and the staff resources are shared between the canal and the campsite, but we have adequate staff and volunteers available to accommodate this. If changes in the new campsite show a need for more staff then this will be looked at. If the site showed this demand then equally it would also be providing enough income in the business to support additional staff so this wouldn't be an issue.

In principle the onsite management will remain the same. All campers will be allocated a permit and situated in a specific section of the site, and anyone wanting electric hook up will be issued a pitch. Regular site checks are carried out throughout the day, this will be made easier once the site is divided into sections.

During Farnborough airshow weekends we significantly increase our numbers and run beyond our current normal capacity with additional temporary facilities brought in to deal with this. We have no problem with coping with multiple arrivals and departures at this time.

Although some sites do show people to their pitches this is not the case at all sites. The majority provide a map and pitch number. Our service would probably be a mix of the two depending on if people were new visitors or return visitors for example. The canal centre is open 7 days a week all day to deal with peoples enquiries which is far above many campsites who only have manned offices in the mornings for a couple of hours and again in the evenings.

Plans have already been drawn up for a new toilet block/camping facilities and I can assure you that adequate cleaning has been allowed for to maintain high standards.

Regarding your suggestions over the seasonal tariffs, this is something that many other campsites use and may be something that we will look at in the future. At the moment we try to keep our prices in line with other local businesses to ensure we are competing fairly and appropriately with our competitors.

We thank you for your helpful comments and suggestions and hope this explains some of the detail you were after. If you have formal management experience to share of running a campsite then we would be happy to speak to you further about your thoughts on its management.

Kind Regards

Fiona Shipp

**Canal Manager
Basingstoke Canal Authority**