

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held at Meeting Space - Block 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Tuesday, 1 February 2022 at 4.00 pm.

PRESENT

T Thorne (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

C Ball	L Darwin
R Dodd	B Flux
J Foster	G Hill
Jl Hutchinson	J Lang
J Reid	G Renner-Thompson
M Robinson	G Stewart
M Swinbank	A Wallace

OTHER COUNCILLORS

J Watson

OFFICERS

J Blenkinsopp	Solicitor
L Dixon	Democratic Services Assistant
L Little	Senior Democratic Services Officer
R Murfin	Interim Executive Director of Planning & Local Services
J Sharp	Senior Planning Officer

Around 4 members of the press and public were present.

65 PROCEDURE AT PLANNING COMMITTEES

The Chair outlined the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A Watson.

Ch.'s Initials.....

67 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 4 January 2022, as circulated, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

68 **DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The report requested the Committee to decide the planning applications attached to the report using the powers delegated to it. Members were reminded of the principles which should govern their consideration of the applications, the procedure for handling representations, the requirement of conditions and the need for justifiable reasons for the granting of permission or refusal of planning applications.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

69 **21/03855/CCD**

Change of use of car park to area of land to allow individuals to sleep in self-sufficient Motorhomes

Car Park, Benthall, Beadnell, Chathill, Northumberland, NE67 5BQ

J Sharp, Senior Planning Officer advised that his introduction would encompass all three applications at this Committee with separate discussions and decisions being taken on each. A power point presentation was provided related to all three applications and updates provided as follows:-

- Following publication of the agenda a response had been received from Natural England in connection with applications 21/03856/CCD and 21/03858/CCD advising that they had no objections subject to suitable mitigation.
- An additional 2 objections had been received in respect of the Benthall application, planning reference 21/03855/CCD, detailing concerns that the proposal was out of character and it would become a camp site of which they were plenty already; the potential for anti-social behaviour and it would be better to stay where there were appropriate facilities; and questioned how any enforcement would work.

R Murfin, Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services advised that the applications for the three 12 month temporary planning permission would act like pilot schemes which had come forward in response to significant changes in tourism during lockdown and would allow for demand/take up of overnight sleeping in self-contained motorhomes to be assessed and would also inform what management and investment would be required to make any future schemes suitable.

Councillor G Martindale addressed the Committee, speaking as the Chair of Beadnell Parish Council. His comments included the following:

- Beadnell Parish Council supported the trial as a potential part-solution to address issues arising from the proliferation of motorhomes. However

Ch.'s Initials.....

they were concerned that requests for modifications to the proposal were not included as conditions in the report.

- At present motorhomes were prohibited from parking overnight in Beadnell car park with signs advising of this prohibition however these were often ignored especially in the summer months which had resulted in many complaints and adverse comments being received from both residents and visitors. The major reason for complaint was that the motorhome owners were seen to be abusing the car park amenity and getting something for nothing whilst not contributing to the local economy.
- The Parish Council was strongly opposed to any groundworks of a permanent nature and requested that a condition be attached whereby the ground would be repaired and reinstated should the scheme not be made permanent. There had never been any significant damage to the existing ground whilst being used as the overflow car park and they did not believe that any groundworks were required, with the ANOB Officer having the same reservations.
- The Parish Council also requested that the applicant be required to provide additional waste bins in the overflow area as the current four bins were already insufficient during peak months.
- The Parish Council would also like to better understand the criteria by which the success of the trial would be judged and sought assurance that they would be fully consulted on any future proposals following the trial.

E Yarrow addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. His comments included the following:

- He supported the trials as he was a motorhome owner and the UK in general was sadly lacking in motorhome parking/tourism compared to Europe and it was time that the Country caught up.
- Parking along the coast had presented challenges for local people which had been highlighted by staycation. These parking proposals would help control parking along the coast including in Beadnell, which had seen an increase in visitor numbers over the last few years, including motorhome tourists who wanted to park overnight to enjoy the local scenery, facilities and spend money in the local economy.
- A friend from Derbyshire had planned to stay in Northumberland for 3 weeks travelling around the County but had only managed 3 days because there were so few places for short term overnight parking for motorhomes and had then had to move on to Scotland.
- It was a great shame and financial loss to Northumberland that very many motorhome tourists, including those from Europe, drove straight through Northumberland to Scotland where there were assured of a warm welcome and plenty of places to stay.
- He advised of proven benefits of having an Aire (a place for overnight motorhome parking) in any community. From a recent survey of nearly 9,000 motorhome owners, it had been discovered that each motorhome unit spent around £47 per day in a local area on basics such as food, drink and local attractions. This did not include retail spending for presents, souvenirs, parking charges or fuel. Using this formula for 5 spaces over 7 nights per week, 35 weeks in a year, this could generate £57,575 and that was without adding parking charges. In addition motorhomes travelled all year round so this could provide even more income than previously

Ch.'s Initials.....

quoted.

- When motorhomes parked this provided better security for nearby properties, big reductions in vandalism, litter and fly-tipping saving much more expense in clean-ups and security as had been quoted by Northumbrian Water who allowed overnight parking.
- It was common practice for motor homers to clean up an area when they first arrived and then leave without a trace.
- Northumberland was a beautiful county, attracting more and more visitors and the potential for growth must be managed and used to reinvigorate the local economy to help it recover from the pandemic and sustain it into the future. A good way to do this was by establishing Aires for motorhome tourism such as this one proposed in Beadnell.
- By establishing Aires in Northumberland, motorhome users could have a more carbon friendly option to stay in the UK thus cutting their carbon footprint by travelling less miles than going to Europe.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the following information was provided:-

- The groundworks to be undertaken were to the existing access to the overflow car park which was in need of some repair and maintenance work.
- A condition could be added to ensure that details of any signage were requested to be provided and agreed by the Local Planning Authority.
- A condition could also be added to request a bin capacity analysis with details to be submitted of potential bin space to be provided to the Local Planning Authority.
- As the application was only for a pilot scheme for a period of 12 months it was not appropriate to levy the full charge for coastal mitigation for the scheme and only a percentage of this was being requested. If the scheme were to be made permanent then the appropriate charge would be levied.
- There was an existing toilet block in Beadnell, temporary toilet facilities in Bamburgh and no toilet facilities at the Amble site. The application was only for self-contained motorhomes who would not need any public toilet facilities. Bookings would be taken via the website and users would need to sign up to certain conditions. Only self-contained motorhomes would be allowed and once spaces were fully booked any additional motorhomes trying to use the spaces could be moved on. There would be a charge for the use of the places but the information on this was not known.
- The exact details of timings for arrival/departure were not known, however it was thought that currently overnight parking was allowed on the overflow car park at Beadnell and the car parks at Amble and Bamburgh with the stipulation that people could not sleep in their vehicles and therefore the only change was that people could sleep in their vehicles. The intention was not to remove business from caravan/camping sites and was only for those who parked adhoc and did not use proper sites.
- Any application for wild camping would be looked at on a case by case basis.
- It was intended that only stays of one or two nights maximum could be booked.
- It was not intended to provide any type of waste or water facilities as part of the pilot schemes, however it was possible these could be required to

Ch.'s Initials.....

- be provided if the scheme was taken forward.
- The purpose of the pilot schemes was to judge the effectiveness, understand any demand and understand any requirements for infrastructure which might be required.
- Current parking restrictions and charges varied across the car parks. Additional regimes in terms of enforcement and management of the sites would need to be set up.
- The Local Authority had no experience of running these type of facilities and any idea of possible levels of usage which was why the three pilot schemes had been proposed. It was hoped that this provision would allow visitors to stay within Northumberland and to break their journey using local facilities rather than travelling straight through. The different variations of schemes used throughout the Country had been looked at.
- Reactive responses would be provided throughout the pilot to ensure that the true effect of what was required and what had been utilised gave a true picture at the end of the trial period.

Councillor Renner-Thompson proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report with the addition of conditions in relation to bin capacity assessment, signage and restoration of land should the permission not continue with the exact wording of the additional conditions to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee , which was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson.

The majority of Members expressed support for the pilot scheme which they considered would be of benefit to the area and would allow for more regulation for the car parks and areas being used in this manner. It was questioned how and what information would be collected during the trial period and how this would be used to inform the decision on whether to take the proposals forward. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of facilities to be provided, enforcement and the effect on current users of the car parks, however the need for a trial to ascertain exactly what would be required was understood.

A vote was taken on the proposal as outlined above as follows: FOR 14; AGAINST 0; ABSTENTIONS 1.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** permission for a period of 12 months subject to the conditions outlined in the report with 3 additional conditions in respect of a bin capacity assessment, signage and restoration of land should the permission not continue, with the exact wording of these 3 additional conditions to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee and subject to a financial contribution to the Council's Coastal mitigation Service.

70

21/03856/CCD

Change of use of car park to are of land to allow individuals to sleep in self-sufficient Motorhomes

Amble Braid Car Park, Amble Marina, Amble, Northumberland, NE65 0HH

An introduction to the report and powerpoint presentation had been provided as part of the first application on the agenda.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Councillor J Watson, Ward Councillor for the area spoke in support of the application. His comments included the following:-

- Councillor Wallace was right in that the reason the trial was being held was as a result of a Coastal Summit held a number of years ago which had acknowledged the problem of camper vans parking regularly and illegally and recognised that this must be stopped.
- It was stated that the application site was technically in Warkworth and not Amble and that the application had been discussed at both Amble Town Council and Warkworth Parish Council when as a Councillor on both he had taken no part on any discussions.
- The sites were pilots and would be easier to invigilate as currently this was not able to be done as there was nothing illegal about parking a campervan overnight on Amble car park just sleeping in it.
- Sites would need to be booked on the website including registration number and if any campervans parked had not booked then they could be issued with a parking ticket.
- He was not aware of any anti-social behaviour from people using campervans and advised that there was such a location in Warkworth where overnight stays were allowed and he was not aware of any reports of anti-social behaviour being received. The people using the campervans would use their own facilities.
- A lot of the questions asked by Members and the Parish Council would have been answered if they had been party to some of the information which he had viewed but unfortunately this information had not come out as part of the application. This was a pity as it would have provided more details and assurance on how the pilot was going to be run. All the sensible things would be done such as providing adequate waste bins etc. in order to ensure that the Council were able to learn from the pilot.
- The only point he questioned was in relation to flood risk as it there was a risk of flooding then the motorhome would just drive away from the area.
- He had no objections to the application and felt that the Parish Council would not have had either had they been provided with all the information and he encouraged Members to approve the application.

T Barkwill addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application. Her comments included the following:-

- She had previously lived in Durham and Northumberland and currently lived in North Tyneside. She had a static caravan in Northumberland as well as being the owner of a motorhome. She loved living in the North East and was passionate about supporting the economic wellbeing of the region and believed there had never been a better time to recognise the potential income from motorhome tourism. Ownership in the UK had almost doubled over the last two years with large number of people discovering the staycation, advising that this upsurge should be harnessed before people give up on Northumberland and went elsewhere.
- Most motorhome tourists did spend money in the local economy, frequenting local food outlets, testing local produced foods and shopping for everything from clothes to pet treats was enjoyed as well as participating in activities. She had visited Amble last year with her partner enjoying a paddleboarding session, fish and chips and ice cream. If they

Ch.'s Initials.....

had been able to stay overnight they would have also enjoyed an evening meal and drinks at a local restaurant and breakfast the next day.

- Over the last two years a small group, averaging 6 motorhome units, trialled 4 separate overnight stays at local pubs, farms etc in the outlying areas of Northumberland and calculated a group spend which equated to £1,242.39.
- Recently local Councils in Cumbria had created a motorhome tourist route with the aim of drawing motorhomes away from honeypot areas to less populated areas which was reported as working very well.
- At times, public and the media attributed anti-social behaviour to motor homers however, the vast majority not only disposed of their own waste and litter appropriately but strived to leave an area cleaner than when they arrived.
- A group called Motorhomes and Campervans against litter had grown and cleared litter from one end of the UK to the other. The natural surveillance provided by motor homers could deter anti-social behaviour such as boy-racing and fly-tipping.
- Motorhome tourists were happy to be charged and would welcome the revenue used to police an area and would be happy for barriers of car parks to be lowered overnight. The motorhome group CAMpRA were currently advising Durham County Council and other Local Authorities and would be happy to work with Northumberland also.
- The reason campsites were not used all the time, although they were used, was that motorhomes were large vehicles and what owners liked to do was to park within walking distance to towns or villages so that they could walk into the town or village to enjoy an evening meal and a few drinks before walking back and staying in the motorhome. If a motorhome was parked on a caravan site then they would either take their own food or buy from the shop on the site and therefore other local businesses did not benefit.
- In relation to waste disposal a central waste disposal point within Northumberland would be enough, with signage provided giving information on the nearest facility, and to which motor homers would pay typically around £5 to use, This could be provided in central point in a supermarket or petrol station etc.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:-

- The point of the pilot was to judge the impact of allowing overnight stays and to ascertain what would need to be in place if made permanent. It would also allow the impact to be assessed on the operation of the car parks, the numbers who would use such a facility and prevent car parks to be dominated by motorhomes.
- The cost of the overnight stay for a campervan was not a material planning consideration, but would need to be set at an appropriate figure.
- If the pilot was to be expanded it would not be rolled out Carte blanche to all car parks as each would need an individual planning consent and would be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Certain car parks struggled to cope with demand for spaces at peak times and it would be important to spread any facilities to other parts of the County and there would be a strategic led approach to coverage.
- Whether the Council made any profit from the pilot was not a material planning consideration and it was stressed that these were being provided

Ch.'s Initials.....

to facilitate and manage tourism and ascertain the effect on the local economy.

- Re-active enforcement might be required if a motorhome was unable to park in a booked space and this would be worked through during the pilot period.

Councillor Hutchinson proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve as outlined in the report with the additional conditions in related to bins, signage and restoration of land as outlined in the previous application which was seconded by Councillor Flux.

A vote was taken on the proposal as follows: FOR 14; AGAINST 0; ABSTENTIONS 1.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** permission for a period of 12 months subject to the conditions outlined in the report with 3 additional conditions in respect of a bin capacity assessment, signage and restoration of land should the permission not continue, with the exact wording of these 3 additional conditions to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee and subject to a financial contribution to the Council's Coastal mitigation Service.

71

21/03858/CCD

Change of use of car park to area of land to allow individuals to sleep in self-sufficient Motorhomes

Land South West of Bamburgh Castle Car Park, Links Road, Bamburgh, Northumberland

An introduction and powerpoint presentation had been provided as part of the first application.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following information was provided:-

- The suggestion of users being directed to another site should the one they have tried to book was full was a good point and the type of issue looked at as part of the Northumberland Tourist Destination Management Plan. This was a pilot and as such would not be linked to information on other sites as it would be a closed system, but that would be the intention in the future if the idea was progressed.

Councillor Darwin proposed acceptance of the recommendation to approve the application as outlined in the report with the additional conditions related to bins, signage and restoration of land as outlined in the previous applications, which was seconded by Councillor Stewart.

Whilst Members supported the application, it was stated that the behaviour of all motorhome owners was not exemplary with some problems encountered by farmers with indiscriminate parking in entrances to fields etc and a change in national legislation was required in relation to this was required. Members also suggested that if such sites were to be provided in Northumberland then the motorhome community should stop advertising where free sites were as these

Ch.'s Initials.....

invariably caused problems for local communities and necessitated TROs and signage having to be used to regulate usage. The appropriate technology being in place to allow payment in car parks was also highlighted, with large queues to pay reported in certain car parks and payments unable to be made through a downloadable app as there was no mobile signal.

A vote was taken on the proposal to approve the application as follows:- FOR 14; AGAINST 0; ABSTENTIONS 1.

RESOLVED that the application be **GRANTED** permission for a period of 12 months subject to the conditions outlined in the report with 3 additional conditions in respect of a bin capacity assessment, signage and restoration of land should the permission not continue, with the exact wording of these 3 additional conditions to be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee and subject to a financial contribution to the Council's Coastal mitigation Service.

72 **APPEALS UPDATE**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

73 **S106 AGREEMENTS UPDATE REPORT**

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.'s Initials.....