
Agenda Item: Third Party Events Report

Meeting Date: 27th January 2025

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

In the summer of last year, Council members were notified of an incident where Witney town Council officers had allegedly refused disabled parking provision for the Witney Carnival event.

Following an investigation, it was determined that officers had correctly refused a proposal due to insufficient detail in the event plan to approve. It was also discovered there was scope for officers to provide more support by working with the event organisers at an early stage to ensure essential services are provided.

Witney Music Festival hold annual event on the Leys and are looking to build on the success of the previous year.

Additionally, officers work hard to facilitate a range of third-party events which are primarily held on the Leys showground.

Current Situation

Disabled parking on the Leys

Officers will ensure all event plans are submitted within given time periods and discussions commence well in advance of the event dates. Officers will scrutinise event plans, obtain additional information where required and proactively work with organisers to achieve a common goal.

The options for disabled parking will be reviewed and supported with safety in mind with a desired outcome that suits both the event organiser and the Town Council. Once approved, a plan will be produced to monitor adherence and successful delivery during the event.

Officers recommend implementing the policy that disabled parking may be permissible for events on the leys, if it is deemed that the correct measures are in place by the organisers. The organisers of the event will be responsible for the safe management of traffic and must provide detailed plans of their proposed parking arrangement to be approved by WTC officers.

Additionally, the new Courtside development contractors have been contacted and asked if their disabled parking spaces could be used for future events if given enough lead time. It is worth noting that the request to use the Leys for additional disabled parking has only come from one hirer.

Witney Music Festival Request

Witney Music Festival have asked if they can extend the time that they occupy the Leys for the Music Festival.

Historically they have had use from **Wednesday to Monday** with performances Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday, the request has come in for use of the Leys showground **Tuesday to Tuesday** with performances on the same days.

This request has come in based on feedback from their Event Management, to improve the safety of the set up and pack down by having the perimeter fencing up first and collected last. This will also help the financial sustainability of the festival by decreasing costs with the removal of Sunday collections. These extra days are only for site building and pack down, and the event will still only be open to public on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th Sunday 8th June.

List of Third-Party Events

Current planned events for 2025:

- **Hatwell's Funfair – 12th – 19th May:** A yearly fairground event, aimed at younger children and families. This event is on a smaller scale than Witney Feast, but still a substantial event for the town.
- **Witney Pride – 24th May:** Witney pride will be hosting their 3rd annual event in May 2024, celebrating the LGBTQ+ community. This event traditionally involves a procession through town, with local stalls set up on the leys.
- **Witney Music Festival – 6th- 8th June:** The festival will take place on the leys in June. The Town Council has developed a close relationship with the festival over the last couple of years and we look forward to continuing to work with them.
- **NEW – Circus Cortex: 24th June – 1st July** New family friendly circus **(TBC)**
- **Witney Carnival – 12th July:** Witney Carnival returns in July 2025. The carnival is organised by Witney Round Table, Witney Lions Club, Witney Rotary Club and the Witney Air Cadets.
- **Oxfordshire Play Association Playday: 7th August** Burwell QEII Field. Annual free playday for children of Witney, this year being held next to Burwell Hall
- **Witney Feast – 8th & 9th September:** A traditional event for the town that dates back as far as 1243! Wilsons Funfair will return this year.
- **Circus Ginnett: 13th October:** A popular touring circus event returning to the Leys this year.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Use of Leys for additional event disabled parking
- b) Biodiversity – Impact of additional cars on the Leys showground during events

Risk

No risk to loss of earnings due to field not being hired for anything else during this period. No other risk associated with damage of ground.

Social Value

Allowing the additional disabled parking on the Leys would allow more people to attend events held there.

By supporting Witney Music Festival, Witney Town Council can look to support the continuation of this festival for years to come.

Financial implications

The 2024 subsidised ground hire for WMF was £2,370 for the Wednesday to the Monday (£395 per day) For the additional days requested, and including the 2% increase to fees, the total subsidised hire would be £3,224 (£403 per day). This represents an additional subsidy of £854 for the hire.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. That WMF are granted additional subsidised let to cover the extra days of use on the Leys.