

RE: The apparent manipulation of key input data for the financial model of parking charges on the common

Email to the Countryside Group at Surrey County Council and copied to all members of the Cabinet of Surrey County Council and the Chairman of the Trustees, the Chief Executive and the Finance Director of Surrey Wildlife Trust

7 Dec at 10:01

Dear ####,

I'm writing to you to express my deep concerns over what appears to be a clear manipulation of a critical input parameter controlling projected income in the Business Case for parking charges on the commons (link below).

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/160169/Investment-Panel-Business-Case-Car-Park-Charging-across-theCountryside-Estate-Public.pdf

That input is the pre-meter parking numbers at the commons as measured by counters. Any Business Case should include ACCURATE input parameters both for calculating likely income and also to allow for the effects of that plan to be properly analysed and understood once it is in place.

Unfortunately, it is abundantly clear that pre-meter parking numbers have been drastically underestimated. I've attached an analysis of parking numbers based on counter data provided under a recent Freedom of Information request.

It is difficult to come to any other conclusion than pre-meter parking numbers were hugely under reported in the Business Case to hide the likely substantial and negative effect parking charges would have on the general public visiting the commons. Sadly, it would not be the first time that has been attempted. The enclosed report further details what occurred when parking charges were first proposed at Newlands Corner.

The effect of more realistic numbers on income is profound with Revenue from parking charges increasing by almost 75%. For example, Revenue for 2018/2019 would increase from the Business Case level of £196,866 to £342,716.

However, Cllr Goodman is refusing to release the current finances for parking charges citing various problems and that it needs a period of time before total net revenue can be judged. It therefore can only be presumed that income levels are significantly lower than projected in the original Business Case, which already takes into account an initial fall in the Business Case parking numbers due to "local resistance to car park charging".

That means either or both (i) parking levels have fallen catastrophically and (ii) the method of estimating income from parking charges in the Business Case substantially overestimates real income and is fundamentally flawed. Note, that even if meters at Whitmoor common are not operational, cited as an excuse for not releasing current finances by Cllr Goodman, the projected Total Revenue for 2018/2019 would still be £295K.

It is therefore incumbent on the Countryside Estate to publish detailed information on income and parking numbers post charging as soon as possible so that both SCC Cabinet and the general public are made aware of the results and true impact of the parking charge scheme.

It would seem reasonable to request that information is provided after 6 months of operation and should include the following (all income, costs etc, to be provided excl.VAT). All of the information requested below should be readily at hand through normal monitoring and recording of income and costs.

- For each individual commons car park, the number of tickets issued by both credit card and RingGo. Please also state the proportion of those that were paid for by credit card and RingGo so the preferred option for each car park is known.
- The revenue obtained through meter charging for each individual commons car park before any costs, operating or otherwise, are accounted for.
- The total operating costs for the parking charge scheme over all of the car parks during the first 6 months. Please provide the costs in broad overall categories and include any costs paid to District Enforcement. If any costs are based on an annual contract or paid over a year, please include those costs as an averaged amount for the six month period and also include the interest and depreciation accountable during the six months period which, if the Business Case figures are still accurate, should be circa £24K.
- The total number of annual permits issued and the net income from them. For example, if there are costs associated with issuing them, i.e. processing charges made by District Enforcement for issuing annual permits, only the income after all charges have been paid should be provided.

From statements made by Cllr Goodman on the Chobham Commons Preservation Committee FB page it would seem that parking counters are currently in place and operational at the Chobham common car parks. As such, please can you tell me which car parks (over all of the 5 commons) have counters in place and operational. Then, at the same time as releasing the financial data, please also supply the raw data from those counters in the same format as that provided for the FOI data in the attached report.

I look forward to receiving the information requested above in due course, as it will allow a clear and detailed understanding of how the parking charge scheme is working in practice and will further allow the validity of the various assumptions made in the financial models of the Business Case to be tested and better understood.

Kind regards

Nigel Saunders