

BLAKENALL AND BLOXWICH LNP

6TH SEPTEMBER 2006

BLOXWICH CEMETERY, FIELD ROAD

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership on progress relating to the trial arrangements for vehicular access in Bloxwich Cemetery.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership are asked to note this report and to agree to receive a future report detailing the feasibility of improving vehicular access for visitors who rely on their vehicles for mobility and have a Blue Badge

3. Background

- 3.1 At your meeting on the 23rd March 2006 it was resolved:-

"That the current restricted vehicular access at Bloxwich Cemetery be extended for a further 6 months and that a press campaign be initiated to help inform the people of Bloxwich, who have a physical or sensory impairment, of the details of how the scheme operates and restrictions that apply."

It has also been noted that at your meeting in July you requested that a sign be placed in a prominent location at the Cemetery indicating the measures.

4.0 Progress With The Trial

- 4.1 Since the LNP received the previous report, the continuation of the arrangements for vehicles has been successful in terms of reducing any damage to graves and grass verges in the Cemetery.

- 4.2 During April, May, June and July of this year, the average number of appointments made by Blue Badge holders was as follows:-

Wednesday	-	7
Saturday	-	5
Sunday	-	1

- 4.3 However, there have been a relatively small number of complaints from Blue Badge holders who are not in agreement with the restrictions as they presently stand, and who perceive that the additional adjustments to meet

their needs do not adequately access the restriction of access to vehicles which they rely on for mobility.

- 4.4 Council officers have recently met at the cemetery with a group of Cemetery visitors who are in possession of Blue Badges in order to explore their concerns. This meeting was both cordial and constructive, but the visitors were anxious that further adjustments be made to the trial access arrangements to meet their mobility needs.
- 4.5 The group asked if the Council could explore the possibility of providing a remotely controlled or automatic barrier which would permit access for their visits without a prior appointment and /or introducing a “one way” traffic flow system enabling access for all.
- 4.6 Both of these options are currently being explored and it has been agreed that the visitors would be kept fully informed of the outcome of these investigations. Also the visitors wanted to raise their concerns at a Local Neighbourhood Partnership or Community Action Group meeting, to seek possible support for introducing access improvements.
- 4.7 Arrangements are currently in hand to display additional signage at the Cemetery as requested at the July meeting.

5.0. **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 It is extremely important that the Council balance the needs of cemetery visitors and that any access restrictions introduced to deter visitors from damaging verges and graves do not disadvantage visitors with mobility difficulties. Our priority is to manage the cemetery for the overall benefit of all visitors.
- 5.2 Great care has been taken to introduce measures which seek to address the needs of Blue Badge holders, in consultation with the Council's Equality and Diversity Team and reasonable adjustments have been introduced to try to meet these needs through the prior appointment system for access for Blue Badge holders, and ordering of additional benches to enable visitors to rest as they walk around the site.
- 5.3 The Council is committed to exploring alternative means of improving access in consultation with service users. It is accepted, however, that there are conflicting needs to balance regarding vehicular restrictions and the outcome of the trial may not be to the liking of every visitor.

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