

BLAKENALL AND BLOXWICH LNP

23RD OCTOBER 2006

BLOXWICH CEMETERY, FIELD ROAD

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership regarding the vehicular access to Bloxwich Cemetery.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Local Neighbourhood Partnership is asked to consider the findings relating to investigations of alternative barrier access.
- 2.2 The Partnership is asked to take into full consideration the comments made in paragraph 4.4 of this report in reaching any decision in relation to the previous recommendation.

3. Background

- 3.1 At your meeting on the 9th September 2006 it was resolved:-

"That costings be provided to the next meeting of the LNP for the provision of a barrier at the entrance to the cemetery (with card key pass) for both a barrier that sinks into the floor and a more conventional 'raise arm' barrier. Furthermore that when costing such a provision, that it be taken into account that 'card key' passes should be made available not to just Blue Badge holders, but anyone who visits the cemetery on a regular basis and finds the current restrictions difficult, providing they can produce a Doctor's note verifying the individual's circumstances."

- 3.2 A letter has subsequently been received from the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) as a result of them being contacted by a disabled user of Bloxwich Cemetery. The Council accepted the offer of the DRC to provide a conciliation service to the Council in order to explore the possibility of finding a resolution that may be acceptable to the Authority and disabled vehicle users. However, a further letter dated 6th October 2006 has subsequently been received from the DRC stating that due to internal reasons, there will be a delay in providing the mediation service.
- 3.3 A public meeting was held at the Deaf People's Centre on the 11th October 2006 at which the Walsall Disability Forum gave a presentation outlining its findings resulting from a recent inspection of the Cemetery. Certain suggestions were made which included the erection of an automated barrier, the provision of vehicle passing bays and the adoption of a one-way system. These are currently being considered by officers and it is hoped that a verbal response can be given at your meeting.

- 3.4 There is also a meeting of the Walsall Disability Forum planned for the 31st October 2006, at which further discussion on their suggestions is due to take place.

4.0 Investigations

- 4.1 The Council's Engineer's have confirmed that the cost of a rising arm barrier erected in place of the existing manual barrier situated adjacent to the chapel will be in the region of £4,750. The cost of a sinking ground barrier is estimated to be approximately £12,000.
- 4.2 Both types of barrier may be susceptible to vandalism particularly in this relatively remote location. We have been advised that, of the two types of barriers, the pop-up/sinking ground barriers have less of a track record for reliability.
- 4.3 The Access Officer has advised that any "card key" passes are issued to Blue Badge holders only, irrespective of the type of barrier installed. The Blue Badge system is recognised as a universal system to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted in any provision for disabled vehicle drivers/passengers. It is recommended that card keys be issued to Blue Badge holders by Bereavement Services.
- 4.4 In considering whether an automatic barrier improves accessibility the LNP is asked to consider some drawbacks resulting from the withdrawal of the appointment system:
- As was explained at your previous meeting, any barrier of this type may not always be totally reliable and may be prone to vandalism. Therefore any malfunction could lead to both inconvenience and the possibility of loss of vehicle management control. Any failure of the barrier at weekends, bank holidays or early evenings could be particularly acute as the cemetery is only manned on a mobile basis. Also, at weekends and Bank Holidays the main entrance gates will now have to be left open to enable access by disabled visitors to the barrier. This could lead to congestion from other vehicle users who will now also have access into the cemetery to park up to the internal barrier.
 - It should be noted that any automated barrier will result in a loss of vehicular management within the site. For example, if at busier periods a number of vehicles are accessed through the barrier there is every possibility that damage to graves and verges will reoccur. This potential problem will be exacerbated at weekends when there may be greater vehicular traffic as the main entrance gates will have to be left open. Furthermore, the present arrangements allow for a certain amount of security for visitors using the appointment system as there is always a member of staff on duty to open/close the barrier. Should an automated barrier be installed mobile cemetery patrol staff will no longer be necessarily on site when visits take place by blue badge holders.
 - The LNP should be mindful that there is a risk that should an automated barrier be installed whilst alleviating to some extent the concerns of disabled visitors, it could result in damage to graves by virtue of the fact that on site internal traffic management will be lost during certain times of the week.

4.5 Accordingly, the LNP is asked to indicate:

- whether it wishes to request installation of an automatic barrier,
- the preferred type of barrier,
- whether it wishes to contribute to the cost of an automatic barrier; and
- if so what amount this may be.

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