

Forestry England Temporary Car Park Closure (Ogdens)

Email response from Forestry England (New Forest Recreation Manager):

During the winter months, access to Ogdens car park was heavily affected by the condition of the residential track and use of the Farm. To be honest, I visited and struggled to get through the mud and water in a 4-wheel drive vehicle. At this point, we decided we would close the car park for safety reasons and direct people to use the larger HCC Abbotts Well car park. At this point, Covid-19 restrictions meant we closed all of our car parks. We had also been receiving a number of complaints from residents about late night anti-social behaviour in the car park by groups of youths gathering and causing disturbance. At the point of government guidelines changing with regard to outdoor recreation, we began a phase of reopening car parks. However, for varying reasons, some car parks did not reopen, as outlined in the attached email. This is still the current situation.

Ogdens remained closed to break the pattern of antisocial behaviour, whilst our core staff have been focused on managing the huge influx of visitors over the past few weeks at more key sites and enforcing key priority activities such as no BBQ's and no fires, verge parking and gateway blocking.

From a recreation management point of view, the Recreation Management Strategy has had 2 public consultations in recent years and now has 22 key actions confirmed. If you aren't familiar with this I would advise you to review the actions on the National Park Authority website. The RMS will set out the strategic direction for the management of recreations in the New Forest. The top action people asked the RMS to look at was "ensuring facilities such as car parks, walking and cycling tracks are in the right places to both protect rare wildlife and provide better experience for people – a spatial strategy"

Ogdens, along with every car park across the New Forest will be looked at as part of this plan and to Forestry England, it would make sense to close small, isolated car parks when there are larger, more robust car parks a few hundred meters away, as with Ogdens. However, no decisions at this stage have been made, which is something I wanted to reassure of you of in terms of communications with the PC and the fact remains that Ogdens is currently closed to help us manage our Estate efficiently and focus resource and priority during these unprecedented times.

Whilst the car park is closed we would ask everyone to park responsibly, not to park on the verges but to use alternative car parks in the area.

Email (part of, personal sections removed) from Cllr Heron in response to a complaint about the closure of the car park:

Decisions as to the closure of car parks on the Crown lands are a matter for Forestry England. While there is a right of public access to the Crown lands, there is no requirement or obligation upon Forestry England to provide or keep open car parks and they are at liberty to close them without consultation. In normal circumstances Forestry England usually only close car parks for operational or health and safety reasons, or seasonally to protect ground-nesting birds. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation there may be additional reasons for specific car park closures,

I do appreciate that the closure of a convenient car park, particularly where it offers a local walk on relatively flat ground may be upsetting. However, regardless of the reasons, it is not appropriate to park on verges or trackways. In addition the Abbot's Well there are car parks

available at Hyde and Gorley Commons which offer relatively flat walks, and numerous others opportunities within a short drive of the Parish.

Being able to readily enjoy the beauty of the New Forest is one of the great privileges of living in such a wonderful place, but this does not confer the right to park in a specific location. I do not know the reasons for the closure of the Ogdens car park but following your email I have written to the Deputy Surveyor seeking this information. I would ask that until such time that Forestry England determine that it is appropriate to re-open the Ogdens car park that you find an alternative location to enjoy the Forest and refrain from parking outside of those car parks that are open and available for use.

The Parish Council will publicise details of the consultation as soon as we have been informed, if you have further queries in the meantime please address them to the landowner (Forestry England), with a copy to the Parish Council if you would like us to know your views.