

Harrys Field – Update following September 2020 Parish Meeting

1. Environmental Health (NFDC) – response from team:

Both smoke and noise nuisance are dealt with under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under this legislation noise or smoke may become a statutory nuisance based on factors such as the frequency, degree and duration of any noise or smoke and how it affects local residents. Certainly residents should not have to close windows during the summer because of burning nearby.

I received three complaints over the summer and spoke with the site owner/operator on several occasions to give advice. I was advised that only dry wood provided by the site owners could be burnt in the fire pits, and that someone was always on site to deal with unacceptable noise, particularly late at night.

As part of our procedure we ask residents to keep diaries detailing the factors outlined above. This is an important part of our evidence gathering process and if diaries are submitted showing the potential for statutory nuisance, monitoring would be carried out. Neither complainant submitted diaries but in one case the complaint was submitted just before the end of the camping season.

If further complaints are received next year, the same procedure would be followed. If nuisance is established an Abatement Notice would be served, however certainly in the case of noise, I must advise that as camping is a permitted use of the land (for 28 days, or longer if the increase is continued) some noise would be expected; it is only where this is judged to be unreasonable that action may be taken.

If residents approach the Parish Council in the future you may like to ask them to make a complaint direct to the District Council, by ringing 02380 285411 or e-mailing EandR@nfdc.gov.uk. They would need to give their address (which would be kept confidential) and they would be asked to keep diaries, with monitoring if prolonged problems were reported despite our discussions with the site owner.

2. Enforcement (NFNPA) – response from Steve Avery

I write further to your recent email and note the concerns of residents regarding the operation of Harry's Field Campsite. To answer your four points directly:

1. 28 days in any one calendar year is the normal time a campsite is allowed to operate without the need for planning permission. As you know, the Government extended that to 56 days for this calendar year only. We do not know if Government intends to carry forward this extra allowance into 2021, but if not, then it will revert to the 28 days.
2. We have no control over how a 28 days' campsite is used which includes no control over the number of pitches provided.
3. We can liaise with NFDC's Environmental Protection Team but we do not have any powers ourselves to regulate these 'pop up' campsites other than the 'nuclear' option of progressing an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights, which could be parish based and/or apply across the whole of the National Park (see more about this below).
4. Our enforcement team have been in contact with residents and we can monitor the use of the site for compliance with the 28 days but we do rely on the help of residents to do this.

Re your other points:

- If associated equipment is left in situ on site, then each day it is there counts towards the 28/56 days. The 28 days covers all uses so any use as a car park would have to be included within the 28 days.
- The use of adjoining land for bell tents as part of the campsite could mean that it is all considered as a single planning unit and we can look into this further.
- We have not consented the installation of any permanent facilities such as showers or toilets although Martine may recall Lucie's email from 2017 (below):

Harrys Field – I am satisfied that the site operates under the permitted development 28 day temporary use rights and there has been no material change of use of the buildings at the site. The porta-loos have been removed from the land used for camping when not in use and stored under tarpaulin and this is considered to be de minimus and not a breach. An existing toilet facility within part of one of the buildings has been replaced and campers are allowed to use it along with an outside tap and sink – the building has not been fully converted and there is no material change of use. The rest of the outbuildings at the site were in use for agricultural storage at the time of my visit and no shower block was found in any of the buildings.

I hope your meeting with the owner of Harry's Field is productive (do let me know how it goes) and I would of course be very happy to join you at a future parish council meeting to discuss the matter further if you think that would be helpful.

3. Site Owners

Cllrs Dolphin and Sevier met (virtually) with the site owners to review the issues raised by residents. The Clerk was present to take notes.

The owners confirmed that they were operating within the guidelines relating to the pandemic – so there were less pitches on site than normal to enable them to maintain social distancing. The owners had additional cleaning costs and provision of PPE which meant revenue was less than a normal year.

Cllr Sevier raised the issue of smoke – the owners confirmed that they limit the number of fire pits, the location of the fires and materials burnt. If a fire is lit outside of the permitted areas or times, the owners do extinguish them as soon as they are able.

Cllr Dolphin queried whether there had been complaints in previous years – the owners were not aware of any.

The owners confirmed that the site is manned 24 hours a day and that the policy is quiet after 10.30pm and curfew at 11pm – at which time the owners tour the site and ask for any noise to stop.

They do not consider that any rubbish outside the campsite or behaviour of people can be attributed to the campsite residents – they consider that the people staying at their site are well behaved. The forest is available to all and so not all visitors to the area will be staying at the campsite. The campers all receive a newsletter prior to their stay and a physical copy when they arrive, detailing all the information about the area and the NPA.

Cllr Dolphin arranged to visit the site on Tuesday 13th October.

4. Water Pressure – Cllr Sevier spoke to a visiting engineer (Bournemouth & Hants)

- Pipes - they are old (70 years old) and made of galvanised iron - they are old and they can get furred up - and that causes problems. He also said - that there can be problems with pressure - with swimming pools and watering gardens and generally more water used in the summer. *Note: we are right at the end of the line from the water works.*

- What do we do - we ask for a 'pressure test' on the pipes - there is a legal level of pressure we are entitled too. We have to specify the roads where there is problems - so that is up Frogham hill to the crossroads - to the chapel - to the top of Blissford Hill and to Abbotswell. He said there is a 'cap end' on the end of Abbotswell road. They will send out an Inspector to do the checks - and he explained how it was done.
- He also said the pipes into houses can also be furred up and with individual houses they check the pressure outside and then in the house.

The Parish Councils role is to make sure our residents get their services - we can take this on if members and residents are in agreement at the meeting. We need a pressure check now and one next summer to understand the issues, not waiting until the campsite is open.