



In March this year, we invited members of the public to comment on a proposal to tackle some of the anti-social behaviour that has become an increasing problem on the site. We have been saddened and frustrated to see repeated evidence of drinking and drug use in our hides, vandalism and litter (including needles and even human excrement) and to hear reports of our legitimate visitors being intimidated.

We realise that, as a remote rural site, it is likely to attract some measure of this type of activity, but the levels have become unacceptable and we want to do more to protect our staff and visitors from this.

We gratefully received a number of emails - and comments on the Summer Leys Facebook Group - in response to the consultation. The majority of these were supportive of our suggestion to close and lock the gate to the main Summer Leys car park overnight (from 19.30 – 05.00 March-October - and if the trial proves successful - 16.30 – 05.00 November-February). **As a result, we will start a 4 month trial on Friday 19th July.**

There were a few concerns raised, which we have considered carefully and we have adapted our trial proposal in the following ways to address these matters.

A number of people felt the timing of the gate closure was too early.

Unfortunately, much of the anti-social activity we are aware of happens in the hours before dusk and so shutting the gate later would not achieve our goal of improving the site for our visitors and staff.

We do realise though that people may sometimes wish to visit later in order to view the wildlife at dusk and to support this we are incorporating into the trial a system of issuing the padlock code to Wildlife Trust members who request it, for further details please email northamptonshire@wildlifebcn.org

Possible knock-on effects to other areas of the site, particularly Mary's Lane, where we have no jurisdiction and access to the site will remain unrestricted.

We understand, and share, this concern and will incorporate these areas in our wider review of the impact of the new system that we are trialling. We will continue to gather feedback and welcome responses, which can be sent to our contact details below.

Process during the trial period

The gate will be unlocked each morning and locked each evening by staff and volunteers using a combination padlock*. The procedure has been thoroughly risk-assessed and each volunteer will be fully briefed to ensure a safe system of working is upheld at all times.

As part of the trial, reserves staff and volunteers will monitor the impacts of this new system on the following:

- levels of anti-social behaviour in the car park area
- parking on Mary's lane
- anti-social behaviour at and near to entry points along Mary's Lane
- unauthorised parking occurring elsewhere (e.g. in front of the closed gate)
- any other issues resulting from the out-of-hours system

We will evaluate any findings throughout the trial to assess whether to continue with the procedure in its current form, make any adjustments, or otherwise. The local police have been notified of the above and will support us by continuing to visit the site regularly and helping to monitor the impacts.



Bedfordshire
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Appropriate signage will be displayed around site to inform visitors of the closing times.

If at any stage during the trial we feel that the safety of visitors, volunteers or staff has been compromised by this procedure, we will immediately cease the gate closure and re-assess the situation thereafter.

We welcome feedback throughout the trial period and all comments can be directed to the contact details below. Or please come and speak to me directly as I am often on site, either helping to clear up after the anti-social behaviour or (preferably) working to improve the site for wildlife.

Anthony Smith
Reserves Officer

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire

Lings House, off Lings Way
Billing Lings
Northampton
NN3 8BE

Telephone: 01604 405285
northamptonshire@wildlifebcn.org