

Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System and Update on Improvements (Community Services, Darren Williams)

Synopsis of report:

The Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system has been in place since the end of March 2021 and this report provides an update on how it has operated, the income generated from the system, and outlines potential future projects which could be funded out of the reserves.

Recommendation(s):

None. This report is for information.

1. Context of Report

- 1.1 In July 2019 as part of the Runnymede Pleasure Grounds (RPG) refurbishment project, it was determined that the installation of the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system should be implemented to maximise income in advance of the redevelopment starting on the site.
- 1.2 A similar system had recently been installed in the new Egham Waitrose Car Park by a company called SAGOSS and a waiver was agreed for a similar system to be installed at the RPG at a cost of £50,000 and an annual maintenance fee of £18,000.
- 1.3 The RPG main scheme was being developed at the time, so the location of the barriers and flow plates required were not agreed until early in 2020 as the layout was amended with changes to the design.
- 1.4 In March 2020, the main RPG project was put on hold at the request of Councillors, but the ANPR element was continued to enable the additional income to be generated from the car park.
- 1.5 At the same time as the project was progressing COVID hit and the RPG had to close which meant that the ANPR installation was put on hold, but all the information for the back-office systems was agreed with Officers. At the same time the company was experiencing problems obtaining the hardware and supplies for the installation. This meant that work on installation did not start on site until the end of 2020, testing started in February and the ANPR went live on 22 March 2021.

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 During the first 2 weeks of operation staff were located on site to assist visitors with the new system. Information was published on the website and social media and notices displayed at the RPG to advise how to use the system. People were encouraged to use the contactless payment option and RingGo. However, cash is also an option for the 2 kiosks on site, with a further option to pay by card on exit. There have been, as with any new

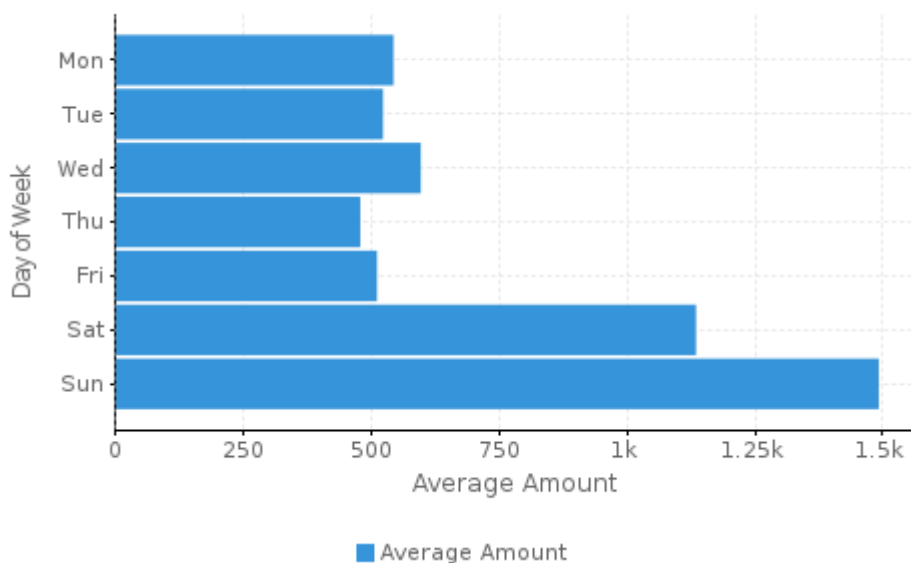
system, some teething problems, for example asking people to pay on leaving rather than when they arrive is something that some still struggle with, especially as many are visitors rather than local residents. There were some initial glitches with the machines, but these were ironed out during the testing phase and over the first couple of weeks of operation.

- 2.2 Over the summer of 2021 we have continued to have staff on site over the weekend to assist people as these are the busiest days of the week and it also helps the café because when staff are not on site their staff are the help point. The use of staff continued until the middle of September as the schools had returned and it was anticipated that usage would drop of as the RPG is dependent on good weather.
- 2.3 The charges for the RPG are in line with other local charges and have remained the same for several years, as set out below:
- 1 hour - £1.50
 - 2 hours - £3.00
 - 3 hours - £4.50
 - 4 hours of more -£6
 - Annual Pass - £50
- 2.4 It is worth noting that car park users do get a free half an hour at the start of their stay so in reality the charge if visitors stay for the full 1 hour 30 minutes is the equivalent of £1 per hour, £1.20 for 2 hours 30 minutes and £1.28 for 3 hours and 30 minutes.
- 2.5 The ANPR system also allows for some customers to be provided with free time periods. All blue badge holders are entitled to 3 hours free parking, plus the 30 minutes initial free period, if applied for in advance. There are also several whitelists. For example, one is set up for members of the skiff and punt club on site. This will allow members free access and egress from the RPG, and for larger events we are also able to provide validation codes to allow free use for that day only which can be time limited i.e. for 1 hour up to all day.
- 2.6 The last 18 months have been challenging for everyone and the RPG was closed for a period in April/May 2020. What did transpire in the summer of 2020 was that usage increased significantly with many other facilities closed and residents looking for places to go. This meant that income from the RPG for 2020/2021 was far in excess of the budget, even without the ANPR system in place.
- 2.7 The figures in table1 show income excluding VAT over the first six months of the last three years as a comparison, with 2021 being the period with the ANPR in operation which it was anticipated would lead to a significant increase in car park income.

	2021	2020	2019
April	20,557	104	10,281
May	15,465	3,053	7,483
June	19,990	15,242	10,131
July	18,578	28,545	17,302
August	23,576	34,858	15,150

September	14,456	19,700	22,500
Total	112,622	101,502	82,847

- 2.8 The income figures show that in the first six months of the 2021 financial year income from the machines has been £112,622 (excluding credit card charges). This is £11,000 ahead of 2020 and £30,000 ahead of 2019, the latter year may be a better comparison. This summer also saw some very poor weather in May and July which had an impact on use and income.
- 2.9 One of the reports from the SAGOSS system shows that 61% of all users are paying by credit card or contactless, 24% by RingGo, and 15% by cash.
- 2.10 In 2017 a report was produced by The Leisure Consultancy in which they estimated the number of visitors to RPG in 2015/2016 was 130,000 per year. This was based on car park usage and income data at the time. The new ANPR system provides a much more detailed analysis of use and over the period April to September 2021 there have been 44,619 cars that have paid for use of the car park. The number of people in each car can obviously vary but the industry norm as used in the 2017 report was 3.33 people per car which would equate to 148,581 visitors. There are 350 blue badge holders at the RPG and there were 3,136 visits over the six month period, which would equate to an additional 10,442 visitors. This would mean that the estimated total number of visitors to the RPG was 159,000 which excludes the 4,184 visits by cars on the white list.
- 2.11 As well as financial reports, the SAGOSS system can also track daily occupancy, income and identify any faults on the payment kiosk. This allows someone logged in to, for example raise the barrier remotely. The kiosks and exit barrier also have help buttons linked to the café on site so the staff there are also able to open the barrier for individual cars if required.



- 2.12 Over the first six months of the year table 2 shows the average income per day at the RPG. These figures include VAT, but it shows that as expected weekends are the busiest times with Sundays averaging just under £1,500 per day and Saturdays just over £1,100. The other days of the week are similar at around £500 per day. The daily income is affected by external

factors such as the weather, holiday periods, bank holidays and any events that may be taking place.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Vision of the Council's Corporate Business Plan 2016-2020 is to have a vibrant Borough with a high-quality environment, where we maximise opportunities with partners to provide services which are highly regarded by local people.
- 3.2 The same document includes the following key priorities:
- To proactively seek opportunities for regeneration in the Borough to assist with place shaping and the enhancement of the built environment e.g., Runnymede Regeneration package which includes Egham town centre, Egham Leisure Centre, and Runnymede Pleasure Ground and
 - To continue maintaining the services in our well-regarded open spaces.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money (where applicable)

- 4.1 The report highlights the income being generated at the RPG from the new ANPR machine and the increases that have been seen should be replicated in future years. This provides much needed income to the Trust to cover operational costs but also adds to the reserve fund which at the end of the 2020/2021 financial year stood at £251,145.
- 4.2 When the main RPG scheme was costed it included improvements to the car park, new café, play area, splash park and new footpaths. Not all these parts of the project can be covered by the reserves, but they could be prioritised over the next three years in order of need and these will be the subject of future reports to this Committee.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The Community Services Committee act as a charitable trustee for the RPG and is required to agree to any changes or projects proposed on the site. In acting as a trustee, the Committee must take decisions solely in the best interests of the charity and must not be influenced by its local authority role.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Council is required to have due regard to its public sector Equality Duty as stated under the Equality Act 2010 and is to have regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - c) foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those who do not
- 6.2 Proposals for improvements will be covered by an Equality Screening Assessment, including for accessibility, in consultation with the Runnymede Access Liaison Group.

6.3 It is likely that improvements will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability.

(For information)

Background papers

None stated.