

Report of the Walberswick Car Parks Ltd (WCPL)
Annual Parish Meeting, 17 April 2024

WCPL operates as a private company registered at Companies House with the purpose of operating the two beach car parks on behalf of the Walberswick Common Land Charity. 100% of the operating profit of WCPL goes to the WCLC. In addition to its core purpose of being a main source of financing to WCLC, WCPL also operates in order to limit any need of visitors to the Village from parking on the streets, to provide ample parking for customers of local businesses and to provide free parking for village residents. We also do our best to keep up the maintenance and cleanliness of the car parks including providing rubbish and dog waste receptacles to limit littering by beach visitors.

The WCPL has a volunteer board of Directors of village residents, separate from WCLC. I would like to thank the WCPL directors -- Jane Hamilton, Hannah Sutton, Debbie Tipple, Bill Willison and Rita Woodcraft – for all their time and effort. We have one year-round employee, Debbie Klussman, who is our business operations manager. Debbie, who lives in Reydon, joined us after our long-time business operations manager, Victoria Cowley, left at the end of 2023. We would like to acknowledge and thank the terrific work that Victoria has done.

In the year 2023, WCPL covenanted £40,500 to WCLC. This was somewhat less than the previous two record-breaking years. This was a result of poorer weather, fewer visitors to Walberswick and higher expenditures associated with business rates and necessary maintenance. Nevertheless, this amount is very significantly greater than covenants in all years prior to the installation of the payment machines and year-round operation.

In November 2023, the WCPL was hit, like many small businesses in the UK, with the shock decision of Barclays to de-bank us. Barclays never explained its decision, but we are aware that it was partially driven by the bank's desire not to have to deal with small cash-based businesses and Barclays' actions nation-wide to debank small charities, small businesses especially in rural areas and some parish councils. In finding a new bank, we found it impossible to gain an account if we continued to require cash-based services and therefore took the difficult decision to stop operating pay and display machines and move entirely to parking fees on-line. Our car park customers have adjusted well to this after some initial teething problems, although a few have been unhappy about using cash. This is unfortunate but it is simply impossible for us given the banking situation.

Looking forward, we are hoping for better weather in the spring and summer as we have had a slow start to 2024 with poor weather. Major maintenance has already been done this year including that to help control water runoff from the Cliff Field track. We are providing a small part of the Ferry Road car park to Suffolk County Council Highways Department to set up their operations to repair the river walking path up to the Bailey Bridge which has long been a priority of the village.

Presented by: Josie Bassinette, Chair, WCPL