



FAO Bev Walton
Cantley with Branton Parish Council

26 May 2025

Dear Bev

Re: Request to Reconsider Access via Brockholes Lane for Local Residents

Thank you for your letter dated 19 May 2025.

As you are already aware from our response to residents, the decision to close the entrance at Brockholes Lane was not taken lightly. As we have already explained in our email to members, due to the significant increase in staff costs and the recorded low usage of this entrance, the business has taken the commercial decision to close the entrance.

Your letter suggests that the Brockholes Lane entrance was a general walk in entrance for residents living in Branton however, we would like to clarify that access to the park through the shop was for prebooked members on foot only. The entrance was not available to non-members, local residents without a valid membership or members arriving by car.

As a business in a tough economic climate, we need the flexibility to be able to close certain areas of the park if footfall is low. We therefore cannot guarantee that the shop will be open every day to serve as an entrance. The park retail store will be open more frequently during the summer season however, there are only two part time members of staff working in the shop. When one goes for their break, the other is left to serve customers, monitor the security of the store, allow schools access as well as having to check in members. Sadly, there have been times when the staff member has been busy serving other customers and we have had guests walking freely in through the shop (some free of charge and without a valid booking). Unless we put a member of staff dedicated to checking memberships in the shop, this will continue. Unfortunately, the increase in national minimum wage and national insurance contributions means that we have had to assess all areas of staffing across the whole park to address efficiency. Just to give you an idea, these increases will cost the business an additional £800,000 a year. As with any business, we need to show growth to our investors and sadly, we must generate a further £800,000 this year alone before we can show any growth. This is incredibly tough given the current economic climate.



As you will appreciate, given that the maximum number of members using this entrance in a day is 7, we cannot commercially justify this.

In addition to the above, members have been parking down Brockholes Lane and on Chapel Lane and walking down Brockholes Lane to gain access to the park. Again, without deploying further resource, this is something we are unable to police and so by closing this entrance, we are supporting the local village who have raised parking in these areas as a major issue.

You may also be aware that Martyn's Law has now received Royal Assent and so, to comply with the legislation and enhance public safety, we must ensure that all entrances and exits are accessible and secure. Sadly, if we continue to open the shop as an entrance, given the limited staff working in the shop, we cannot guarantee that the entrance is secure. As I have said previously, when the shop is busy, it is very easy for the public to access the park via the shop without detection.

We note the points raised in your letter and will address them as follows:

1. Accessibility

We disagree with your statement that the terrain at the main entrance is uneven compared with the Brockholes Lane entrance. There have been significant improvements at the main entrance in the last four years to improve accessibility. We have built a large accessible car park close to the entrance, installed a fully functioning Changing Places room, a full fleet of mobility scooters available to hire by those with mobility issues, added five extra disabled toilets and worked with external groups to ensure our site is accessible for all.

2. Public Transport and Walking

We have recently installed a new bus stop at the Hive entrance and have agreed with First Buses that the new entrance becomes part of their route. We now have buses coming onto our site every hour to pick up and drop off guests. There is no longer a need to walk to and from Hurst Lane to catch the bus. Furthermore, the bus stop at the end of Brockholes Lane is much further away from the park store entrance than the bus drop off point at the Hive to the new park entrance.

3. Environmental Impact

We are not asking or encouraging guests to use a vehicle. As stated above, we now have a bus service that picks up in Branton and drops at the park entrance onsite, we have cycle racks for those cycling to the park and if locals choose to walk in, they can take the short cut down Bell Butts Lane. We have installed EV chargers to promote sustainable lower emission driving, and we are working with Tesla to promote the use of electric vehicles (we are now a designated test drive site for Tesla). If guests choose to drive to the park, that is their personal choice, there are other, more sustainable options are available.

4. Visitor Experience and Site Layout

This viewpoint is down to personal preference as to what guests want to view. Guests accessing via the main entrance can be as equally impressed/interested in the species on that side of the park. The creation of the Hive has enhanced the visitor experience with more shops and restaurants available to our guests and we have exciting species situated near the entrance.

5. School Access

The shop has now been closed for school access, instead, they will now be met by the Education team and escorted through the side gate. We don't have schools on site every day and so we can't offer this as a permanent option for the commercial reasons already provided.

6. Community Sentiment and Communication

For the past two years, we have offered residents a significant discount on their memberships, and we have also issued free tickets to the summer concerts to those who reside on our border as a goodwill gesture.

We have communicated to residents that the entrance would be closing. Notices were also put up at the shop and members were emailed of our intention to close the shop as an entrance. Whilst we appreciate that this has caused inconvenience to some members, we cannot justify the cost of opening this as an entrance to the limited amount of members that use it.

For the reasons stated above, we cannot guarantee the shop will be open every day. We note your suggestion of installing a turnstile system, but these are easily abused, hence why we don't have this system on our main entrance. The only practical and safe solution is to have dedicated member of staff on that entrance which is not a financially viable option for the business at present.



We're sorry that this is not the response you were hoping for and for any inconvenience caused to local residents who are valued members however, sadly, we are not in a financial position to keep the entrance open. We hope this letter explains the reasoning behind our decision.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Yorkshire Wildlife Park". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Yorkshire Wildlife Park