

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Consultation response from Unison



21 February 2018

Thank you for consulting Unison and our members on the **proposed changes to the use of vehicles and the Travel and Subsistence scheme at Peak District National Park Authority.**

Whilst there are wider changes to the Travel and subsistence scheme which affect all Unison members, the focus of our response and the clear focus of our members concerns are on the proposed revision of use of PDNPA vehicles for commuting and other use of vehicles which would be classed as 'personal use' (in particular where an individual currently has a PDNPA vehicle assigned to them as part of their role).

The proposals contained within this consultation directly and disproportionately affects and disadvantages several people and posts who currently have Authority vehicles assigned to them and who are currently able to use the Authority vehicles for their personal commuting. Many of these people have already been adversely affected through restructure exercises that changed and downgraded posts within the new structure. (In these circumstances where there is a salary change, a limited amount of salary protection is available as part of the Managing Change policy). Here the proposal is not to compensate those individuals who benefit from the use of Authority vehicles for that loss of benefit. The proposal represents a 'double whammy' to their reward package. (The Authority should consider the cumulative effect of this on staff and the effect on staff morale). It is Unison and our members strong view that the use of the Authority vehicle is a benefit in kind, and has a cash value to the individual, and the removal of that benefit should be compensated in the same way a downgrade in salary is treated.

Where an individual is currently assigned an Authority vehicle and they use it for personal use (if only for the commuting element) this is part of the reward package for their role. Both Unison and its members understand there are tax implications where 'personal use' of vehicle takes place. This consultation proposes that the use of the Authority vehicles for commuting is removed. This would financially disadvantage staff involved by either necessitating the purchase/running of an additional vehicle or finding and funding alternate travel arrangements. This would also result in reduced efficiencies of people being able to go direct from home to the relevant and varying areas of the National Park.

We have the following questions:-

- 1. One option would be for all concerned to pay the appropriate tax due. Will PDNPA give the option of the individual paying the tax liability for the personal use of the vehicle should the individual employee wish to continue using it for personal use ?**

If an individual employee would like an indication of the potential tax liability of continuing to use an assigned vehicle for solely commuting to work purposes please could they contact Philip Naylor (01629 816366 (Ext. 366) or Philip.Naylor@peakdistrict.gov.uk).

- 2. Where (1) above does not apply, we strongly believe compensation should be made for the withdrawal of the use of the Authority vehicles for personal use (in the same way a downgrade in salary would be covered in the Managing Change Policy). It is in PDNPA's gift to give equivalent compensation for this loss in benefit in kind. Will PDNPA compensate those individuals who currently have Authority vehicles assigned to them ? Will PDNPA consider aligning this with the managing change policy in terms of years protected ?**

The Resources Management Meeting (RMM) report, which is due to be considered on 6th March, asks for consideration to be given to the potential hardship that some employees may experience as a result of the proposed changes (i.e. the loss of access to an Authority vehicle and “free” fuel to undertake private commuting to work mileage). The outcome of these considerations will be shared after the meeting.

It should be noted that access to an Authority vehicle in order to undertake private (i.e. commuting to work) mileage is not considered a contractual issue or a benefit in kind.

- 3. In respect of the proposal to revise the mileage claim allowance from 40p to 45p (to reflect the HMRC stated recompense) Unison welcomes that revision. Given the Authority recognises the importance of the HMRC benchmarked rate, will the Authority commit to this rising in line with HMRC stated recompense into the future ?**

From 1st April 2018, it is proposed to match the PDNPA mileage rate to the HMRC mileage rate. Linking to the HMRC mileage rate in this way could result in both increases and decreases in future mileage rates paid.

- 4. Will the Authority conduct an impact assessment on the effect of additional travel Co2 emissions and additional time driving brought about the changes proposed in this consultation so the effect on the environment and employees time can be fully considered ?**

The carbon impact of the proposals is not available as the alternative transport arrangements to be used by employees currently commuting to work in Authority vehicles are not known.

It should be noted that many existing vehicles in the Authority's fleet do generate relatively high CO2 emissions.

- 5. Neither Unison or its members support the reduction in protection from 3 years to 2 years where a persons 'base' is changed and results in additional travel. Unison asks that this remains as 3 years to more reasonably compensate rather than erode these conditions. Other than an existing cost, what is the justification for downgrade ?**

This change aligns our excess travel allowances with the 2 year period for salary protection which takes effect from 1 April 2018.

- 6. How many employees will be affected by changes in their assigned base ? When will they be notified ?**

We don't know exactly how many staff this will effect although we expect numbers to be limited. We will be asking line managers to confirm whether or not their employees should have more than one base ie. they spend 40% of their working time at another location. Where it is established that an individual should have more than one base, we will consult with those individuals on contractual arrangements.

We look forward to your consideration and responses to the above.

Thank you.

Unison Reps PDNPA.