

12. CAR PARKS REVIEW: CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

1. Purpose of the report

To update the Authority on the outcomes of the Byelaws and Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation and seek approval to continue the process to implement the 2021 Car Park Review.

Key Issues

- **The Authority needs to generate more income to meet increasing inflationary pressures and due to a flat cash grant settlement from government. The increased charges will support the operation of the facilities they serve but overall the management of the facilities remain a net cost to the Authority.**
- **Car parking charges should be seen in the context of the wider work the Authority is undertaking to promote sustainable transport and address transport issues within the National Park.**
- **The Authority approved the implementation of tariff changes and the inclusion of 13 additional chargeable car parks (P&R April 2021).**
- **The Authority approved the regular review of the parking tariff on 1st April every three years, starting in 2024.**
- **The implementation process includes consultation processes that are set out for both the Byelaws and the Derbyshire TRO. A number of responses have been received to the consultation, the majority objecting to the proposals, especially the additional chargeable car parks.**

2. Recommendation(s)

- 1. That the consultations feedback and officers' responses to that feedback are noted.**
- 2. That the processes to implement the proposed increase in charges and the introduction of charging to the additional proposed car parks as approved are continued, by requesting DEFRA to confirm the amended Byelaws and requesting DCC to make the TRO (subject to its own approval processes).**

3. How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

The provision of car parking within the National Park for visitors supports the PDNPA in providing a sustainable, welcoming and inspiring place for all. The majority of the car parks are associated with facilities and land that the Authority manages for visitors to use free of charge. This includes the multi-user trails, North Lees Estate and public toilets. Car parks provide a sustainable source of income to offset the management costs of the Authority's assets and an important contribution to achieving income targets.

The car park infrastructure provided by the Authority and others helps to manage traffic flow within the park, reducing the incidence of verge-parking and resultant damage to roadside flora.

4. Background

On 30 April 2021 the Authority, through Programme and Resources Committee, agreed to alter the tariff and to include an additional 13 car parks within the chargeable portfolio. It is estimated that this would bring in an additional income of £220,316 (see Appendix 1 and 2).

The income that the Authority receives from car park charges helps to offset the cost of providing the car parks and the sites that they service, most notably the Monsal, High Peak and Tissington Trails, North Lees Estate and the public washroom facilities.

Amending the Byelaws and TRO requires public consultation, this was carried out simultaneously from 19th October 2022 for 1 month. The consultation followed the process and the level of detail required to form the notices and Order, as well as writing to the statutory consultees. Both were advertised within local papers, within the car parks and on the Authority website.

DCC have indicated, based on the number of respondents, that they will need to go back to Committee for approval to make the TRO. The Secretary of State for DEFRA will need to confirm the Byelaws before they come into force.

5. Agreed Proposals and Consultation Feedback

The agreed proposals are to:

a) Increase the current tariff.

Appendix 1 shows the agreed tariffs.

b) Increase the number of Authority pay and display car parks

The car parks proposed for the introduction of charges have been assessed as economically viable, including for putting the machines in, managing them and enforcement. The sites were also assessed by the machine supplier as suitable for the solar powered machines including card payment. The initial set up costs are estimated at £112,700. Income projections show that this should be recouped in twelve months.

Appendix 2 identifies the car parks where the introduction of charges will be economically viable and the potential gross income that could be achieved from each site, based on the average revenue per space achieved in 2019/20. The car parks serve our Trails and North Lees Estates with a number of others in popular locations.

Consultation Feedback

The consultations for both the Byelaws and TRO are now complete, responses were collated by the Authority for the Byelaws and Derbyshire County Council for the TRO. The numbers received were Byelaws 42 responses, TRO 123 responses, some responded to both consultations. Most responses objected to the proposals under both consultations.

Many of the respondents made more than one point in the response, with some attributing these to specific car parks. In analysing the responses to the consultations there are a number of key themes that came out of the responses, there were many detailed comments around these key themes. Site specific response numbers are given in Appendix 3.

The key themes, and officers' views on and responses to the points raised, are as follows:

a) An increase in on road parking, especially around the newly chargeable car parks.

- *On road parking in villages could annoy the locals*
- *In the countryside this can cause damage to the verges and the environment*
- *On road parking can cause narrow roads and safety issues for pedestrians and restricting emergency vehicles*
- *Charging in some locations will cause issues for businesses and/or residents*

Derbyshire Police have no objections regarding the car park proposals.

The Highway Authorities for each car park have been consulted with, and Derbyshire County Council have noted the potential for verge parking at the majority of the sites, at that this already happens at a number of the sites.

To mitigate for any additional on road parking it is proposed to undertake additional communication at the sites to highlight how parking fees are spent and the negative impact of verge

parking. Previously targeted engagement and PR led to an increase of 29% in parking fees at the Hollin Bank Car Park. In addition, on road parking will be surveyed prior to charges being implemented and afterwards to assess the impact, if significant change is identified then further targeted PR will be undertaken, with other actions reviewed.

b) The Countryside access is important for people's mental and physical health.

- *Introducing charges prevents people accessing the countryside*
- *Charging is not in line with the statutory purposes of the National Park*

The Authority provides a number of facilities to visitors enabling them to access the countryside for mental and physical health. This includes the provision of 34 miles of former railway line as multi-user trail, 17 toilet blocks, 44 car parks, 13 of which will remain free to use, all of which need to be maintained, cycle hire, Visitor Centres, campsites, litter clearance etc.

The additional car park revenue will be used reinvested within the estates and help to maintain visitor facilities to enable people to access and enjoy the countryside.

c) The current cost of living crisis is not the right time to be implementing changes to charges.

- *Charges will present barriers to poorer people coming, this may have an impact on the diversity of people visiting.*
- *The charges will mean that people will go elsewhere.*

Available information and research¹ indicates that car parking charges are not a barrier to low income and diverse audiences accessing the National Park.

The charges apply between 9am and 6pm daily and this is not proposed to change. This gives the opportunity to access free of charge outside these hours. The car parks remain free for all blue badge holders, and there are weekly and annual permits available to all users that will significantly reduce the parking cost for regular users.

d) Has the business plan for new car parks and machines been fully worked through?

- *The cost of installation and operation will be far more than the revenue received.*

There were a lot of comments regarding the business plan for the implementation of charges within the additional chargeable car parks. This was clearly developed and included within the Committee Report on 30th April 2021, this shows based on P&D car park usage that implementation costs are likely to be recouped within 12 months, and that the ongoing machine and enforcement costs are small in comparison to the likely P&D income.

- *The tariff has not been fully thought through, the charges should be lower, residents shouldn't pay, some increases are more than others, motorbikes should be charged the same as other vehicles, motorbikes should be free.*

The tariff and charges were based on the current tariff with a few amendments to make it more user friendly at the machine. This means some charges have been increased more than others to ensure there is "user differentiation" with the charges. The annual pass has been increased, this is in line with other local providers and represents 12 visits within the year to break even.

A number of comments were made about motorbikes and the separate charge, this is the same as the current tariff that has an all-day charge for motorbikes.

- *Some methods of payment exclude people e.g. those without cards or mobile phone. There isn't the mobile signal to support card or phone payment.*

¹ Improving the Ethnic Diversity of Visitors to England's Protected Landscapes and Peak District National Park Authority Diverse Audience Plan work

It is proposed to have the majority of machines as card only, as the signal testing undertaken by the machine provider showed that all sites are viable for card payment. Cash payments result in increased costs and risk of vandalism/theft and is therefore not proposed for any new machines. Pay by Phone could be implemented across all existing and new sites, however there will be some networks that do not work in the rural area.

- *The car parks are in poor condition or don't have the services to be suitable for charges.*

The additional revenue will be reinvested back into the estates the car parks serve, which will include the car parks. All car parks are maintained to the same standard whether chargeable or not.

e) Issues outside the control of the National Park Authority

- *There are too many car park providers within the area, and it is hard for users to understand, especially with annual permits.*
- *No public transport options to the new car park areas, as an alternative to car use.*

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

6. Financial:

The addition of pay and display car parks requires significant investment, this is estimated at £112,700. This figure may have changed since calculation in April 2021 and there has been significant inflation since.

The Corporate Property Asset Management Plan 2020 highlighted a backlog of maintenance associated with the Authority's build infrastructure. Car park income is critical to fund ongoing maintenance liabilities, enabling the Authority to continue to provide the facilities that are essential to our visitors and local communities. If the recommendations are not approved/implemented in order to provide the required funds then the backlog of maintenance is likely to continue to increase. No other comparable source of additional income has been identified.

7. Risk Management:

There have already been significant delays to the processes as the TRO process is managed through Derbyshire County Council (DCC), and as such relies on Officer time of a third party.

There is a risk that, due to the objections, DCC's Committee will not approve implementation of the TRO, and/or DEFRA will not confirm the Byelaws, or will require a public inquiry.

Charging for currently free car parks has a risk as visitors may choose not to use the car parks and use road side spaces instead. This is not a safe possibility at some locations. This is also a risk with increasing the tariff. This was highlighted as a risk during the 2016 car park review but those concerns were not borne out.

The P&D machines all require planning permission, there is a risk that planning permission is not granted for some or all of the machines. Planning applications have been submitted, with the relevant fee. This is an additional cost and timescale to the implementation process.

8. Sustainability:

The proposed, new pay and display machines will be solar powered, and where possible card only machines will be installed to reduce the need for regular vehicular visits for cash collection and maintenance. The new machines are all mobile enabled so ticket levels and other maintenance issues can be monitored remotely, therefore reducing and managing vehicular visits.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

Annual and weekly permits are available that significantly reduce the cost of parking for regular users. The charges apply between 9am and 6pm daily and this is not proposed to change. This gives the opportunity to access free of charge outside these hours.

The proposed P&D machines will be installed with consideration to those with mobility limitations. There is no impact on many of the protected characteristics described in the Equality Act 2010, however for Disability, parking for blue badge holders will remain free of charge and access to disabled parking bays will be protected through the enforcement of restrictions. Some parking providers charge for blue badge holders, however, in order to support visits to the park by under-represented audiences.

10. Climate Change

The proposal does not directly contribute to the Authority's role in climate change or the carbon net zero targets. The machines will be managed remotely as outlined in the sustainability section.

11. Background papers (not previously published)

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Agreed New Tariff Increase

Appendix 2 – Agreed Additional Sites

Appendix 3 – Level of Response to Consultation

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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