

Introduction of Charges for Car Parking in the Pentland Hills Regional Park

Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee

29th November 2011

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval to commence the statutory procedure to make the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders to allow parking charges to be introduced at selected sites within the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

2 Summary

- 2.1 It is proposed to introduce charges for car parking at four sites within the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Of these, three are located within the City of Edinburgh Council administrative boundary. Income generated would be used solely to sustain visitor and countryside management services provided by the Regional Park Service. The Committee is requested to instruct the Director of City Development to initiate a Traffic Regulation Order process required to implement the parking charging scheme at the Council owned sites as detailed in this report.

3 Main report

Background

- 3.1 The Pentland Hills Regional Park is facing significant financial challenges and is therefore required to realise operating efficiencies and new sources of income to sustain service. A new income stream from parking charges could be an important element in the longer term financial sustainability of the Service.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 18th December 2009, the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee requested that the introduction of car parking charges be considered. At a subsequent meeting, held on 14th January 2011, the Joint Committee considered the feasibility of charging and requested that an informal consultation exercise be carried out.

- 3.3 The results of the informal consultation were reported to the Joint Committee on 22nd July 2011 (see Appendix 1). Consultation activities included: direct mailing to 284 individuals, organisations and other stakeholders; articles in the Pentland Beacon newsletter and on the Regional Park website; information and response forms placed in visitor centres; issue of consultation forms to visitors during ranger patrols; and presentation to the Regional Park Consultative Forum on 11th February 2011.
- 3.4 Following consideration, the Joint Committee decided in principle to proceed with car parking charges and requested that the matter be referred to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee to request that the required statutory Traffic Regulation Order process be initiated.

Proposed Scheme

- 3.5 It is proposed to introduce car parking charges at Threipmuir, Harlaw, Bonaly, and Flotterstone car parks. Flotterstone car park is owned by Midlothian Council. Separate Committee approval is being sought for a Traffic Regulation Order at Flotterstone with Midlothian Council.
- 3.6 The areas to which parking charges would apply are shown in Appendices 2 -4. Charges can only be levied for parking on Council owned property.
- 3.7 Parking would be managed by way of coin operated pay and display ticket machines located within each car park. No other traffic control measures, such as barriers or yellow lining, are proposed initially, these generally being incompatible with the local landscape character.
- 3.8 Clear signage will be provided to indicate that parking charges apply, but that all revenue will be used directly to support visitor and environmental management services provided by the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Parking charges will be clearly presented as a way to support the continued stewardship of the Pentland Hills.
- 3.9 Initially, a flat rate of £2 per visit / day would be applied. This would apply to all lengths of stay and all motorsied vehicle types. This level of charge is broadly comparable with charges currently applied at other UK countryside sites (Appendix 5).
- 3.10 It is proposed that a season ticket scheme would be introduced along with charging. Purchase of a season ticket would allow frequent visitors to support the Regional Park by making a contribution to parking charges without incurring the higher annual costs of purchasing daily tickets. The initial cost of a season ticket would be set at £52 / annum. This is the equivalent of the cost of two visits per month paying the £2 charge. For people visiting more frequently, this represents a significant saving. For daily visitors this equates to a charge of approximately 14 pence / visit.
- 3.11 Visitors displaying a Blue Badge would be exempt from charges (see section 4, Equalities Impact).

- 3.12 Complimentary passes for windscreen display would be issued to people visiting to carry out volunteer or conservation activities within the park. Complimentary passes will be issued at the discretion of the Regional Park Service, would be time-bound and not transferable. Those who would qualify for complimentary passes include: Voluntary Rangers while on duty under the supervision of the Park Service, Friends of the Pentlands while carrying out conservation activities at Harlaw Wildlife Garden, Bonaly Country Park and other locations, and other conservation groups while carrying out tasks.
- 3.13 School/youth groups travelling by minibus or coach to attend environmental educational activities delivered by the Pentland Hills Ranger Service will be exempt. Charges will apply to all other vehicles bringing groups.

Main Issues

- 3.14 The informal consultation results indicated that 23% of respondents were in favour, 38% were against, and 39% were neither clearly for or against charges. This suggests that charges are likely to be unpopular with a significant proportion of visitors. However, the proportion of those in favour or neither clearly for or against, suggest that many understand why charges may be necessary. Clear information about how the income is used for the benefit of the area will be produced and circulated throughout the Regional Park.
- 3.15 There is a risk that some parking displacement will occur. This could be both problematic and helpful. Problematic displacement may arise where visitors choose to park on access roads and verges outwith the areas where charges apply. These are often privately owned and provide operational access for farming and other land management operations. If people on the other hand choose to use other car parks where charges do not apply this may relieve some of the peak pressure at the most popular sites. It is difficult to predict the actual level of displacement that might arise. It is proposed to monitor displacement once the scheme is introduced and introduce further management measures as required.
- 3.16 A purely voluntary scheme based on donations is unlikely to realise significant income. It is proposed therefore that the charges be compulsory. Compliance with the compulsory charge will be encouraged by explaining and promoting the fact that charges are used directly to look after the places that people come to visit. Charges will be presented as an opportunity to support the work of the Regional Park. The level of compliance will be monitored and additional enforcement measures only considered if necessary.
- 3.17 Other issues include security of machinery, safety during cash handling operations and maintenance and servicing of equipment. The informal consultation identified strong opposition to using a commercial operator to manage the scheme. The Regional Park would therefore work with City Development to manage the scheme with support from the existing parking operations management within the City of Edinburgh.

Flotterstone - Co-ordination with Midlothian Council

- 3.18 In order to introduce car parking charges at Flotterstone, Midlothian Council will need to make a separate TRO. This is being progressed simultaneously. It is proposed however that assuming the TRO for Flotterstone is made; the scheme across all four sites would be managed as a single operation. The initial cost of installing a pay and display machine at Flotterstone would be met by City of Edinburgh Council, and all income generated would accrue to the Regional Park budget held by the Council as the managing authority for the Regional Park. All machinery installed at Flotterstone would remain the property of City of Edinburgh Council.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Indicative costs and estimated income were set out in the Joint Committee Paper of 22nd July 2011. Initial capital costs are estimated to be £25,000. Annual revenue costs and income are estimated at:

Estimated annual income:	£35,040
Annual Operating Costs:	£5,350
Estimated net annual income:	<u>£29,690</u>

This is based on a scenario of a £2 charge, 30 cars per day per site, and a compliance rate of 40%. The actual level of net income may vary depending on actual % compliance and car park usage (see background paper).

5 Equalities Impact

- 5.1 The equality impact pre-assessment scored a 3 which does not require a full assessment to be carried out.
- 5.2 In addition to generating additional revenue, one beneficial effect of introducing charges may be to encourage more visitors to walk, cycle or ride into the Regional Park. While this is a viable choice for able bodied people, people with limited mobility may have no practical alternative to the car. Application of charges may therefore unfairly discriminate against people with physical disabilities. It is proposed therefore that charges would not apply to people displaying a blue badge at any of the car parks.
- 5.3 As detailed in Section 3 above, school/youth groups visiting for ranger led activities would also be exempt in order to minimise the cost to young people of participating in environmental educational activities.
- 5.4 The charges as currently proposed would apply to 4 of the busiest car park parks in the Regional Park. There are 13 car parks in total in the Regional Park, distributed evenly around the Park boundary. Nine will continue to be available free of charge. This will maintain alternatives for people on lower incomes who might otherwise find the £2 charge a deterrent to visiting the Regional Park.

6 Environmental Impact

- 6.1 All charges or contributions would be used to maintain and improve the environmental quality and visitor facilities in the Regional Park. Introduction of parking charges is likely to encourage some visitors to travel to the park by non-motorised means, making a contribution towards a reduction in CO₂ emissions from transport.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The introduction of parking charges will provide an important new source of income to sustain countryside management services within the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Although charges may be unpopular with some visitors it is anticipated that with careful explanation visitors will be willing to support the Regional Park in this way. The scheme would be monitored and issues such as parking displacement and compliance monitored following implementation.
- 7.2 It is proposed that the scheme be formally reviewed two years after implementation to assess whether it should be continued or extended to cover additional locations.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended the Committee:
- a) approve the scheme in principle as described in this report for the introduction of parking charges within the Pentland Hills Regional Park;
 - b) requests that the Director of City Development commences the statutory procedure to make the necessary Traffic Orders to allow parking charges to be levied at Threipmuir, Harlaw and Bonaly car parks;
 - c) notes that Midlothian Council will be simultaneously seeking to commence the statutory procedure to make the necessary Traffic Orders to allow parking charges to be levied at Flotterstone car park.

Mark Turley
Director of Services for Communities

Appendices	<p>Appendix 1: Informal Consultation Summary Report</p> <p>Appendix 2: Proposed Charging Area - Threipmuir</p> <p>Appendix 3: Proposed Charging Area - Harlaw</p> <p>Appendix 4: Proposed Charging Area - Bonaly</p> <p>Appendix 5: Example Parking Charges at Other Sites</p>
Contact/tel/Email	<p>David Jamieson (Parks and Greenspace Manager, 0131 529 7055)</p> <p>Alan McGregor (Regional Park Manager, 0131 445 3383)</p>
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>Relevant to the following National Outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe. 2 We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people. 6 We live longer, healthier lives. 10 We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need. 11 We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others. 12 We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations 13 We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity. 14 We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and Production. 15 Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.
Background Papers	<p>Introduction of Car Parking Charges – Informal Consultation Report: Item 6 Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee, 22nd July 2011.</p>

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Car parking Charges in the Regional Park

Informal Consultation Summary Report

Following the informal consultation 115 responses were received and an assessment was made of the main points. Whether responses were broadly in favour ; neither clearly for / against; or firmly against.

This analysis showed that: 23% of respondents were for; 38% were firmly against; and 39% were neither clearly for / against.

Within the 39% that were neither clearly for / against, the majority expressed concerns and support for charges was typically conditional on certain conditions being met.

Example Parking Charges at Other Sites

Forestry Commission

Glentress

£1 for 1 hour

£3 per day

Alice Holt Forest

£1.10 up to 1 hour

£2.20 up to 2 hours

£3.20 up to 3 hours

£4.50 up to 4 hours

£6.00 all day

National Trust for Scotland

Grey Mare's Tail (Tweedsmuir)

Flat rate £2

Free for NTS Members

Linn of Dee (Braemar)

Flat rate £2

Free for NTS Members

Lake District National Park

Brockhole

Winter: Flat rate £2

Summer:

£1.50 up to 1 hour

£2.50 up to 2 hours

£3.20 up to 3 hours

£4.50 up to 4 hours

£6.50 up to 12 hours

£25:00 weekly