

**Derbyshire County Council
Improvement and Scrutiny Committee
Communities, Culture and the
Environment**

**Review of the Car Park Charging Policy
at Countryside Sites**

January 2010

**Report of the Improvement and Scrutiny
Committee Working Group**

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

1.1 The Communities, Culture and the Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed to review the car park charging policy at our Countryside sites at the November 2009 Committee meeting.

It was noted that the review needed to be undertaken swiftly as it would be preferable to implement any policy changes ahead of the peak season in 2010.

A working group was established to lead the review and met twice to discuss the issues and consider evidence before formulating a series of recommendations.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

Recommendation 1

A consistent charging policy at our countryside car parks should be introduced. The minimum tariff should be charged at £1 for up to two hours for private cars and £2.50 for lorries and coaches for up to two hours. Users displaying a valid Blue Badge will not be charged for parking on these sites.

Recommendation 2

Any income generated from the car park charges scheme at Countryside sites is made available for car park maintenance and improvements.

Recommendation 3

The Willington car park season ticket could be purchased on a quarterly basis at the cost of £65 per quarter or £250 annually.

Recommendation 4

It be noted that displacement issues are being considered with the Highways Division and yellow lines have, or will be, laid down to reduce this problem.

Recommendation 5

A publicity campaign should be implemented prior to the introduction of the new charging policy and countryside staff should be briefed on the benefits and rationale behind the scheme.

All publicity of the proposed scheme should include the following elements:

- a) DCC charges compare favourably with other organisations' schemes throughout the County;
- b) Income generated will be expended on maintaining and improving car parking sites
- c) Charges will be imposed on all visitors thereby ensuring that Derbyshire Council tax payers are not subsidising visitors from outside the County;
- d) The presence of CPE officers would enhance the security of the sites;
- e) As charges are made per vehicle this supports the County Council's stance on promoting alternative sustainable forms of transport.

Recommendation 6

It be noted that Countryside Services plan to buy in an additional 20 hours enforcement officer time per week and it is recommended that:

- a) Enforcement officers do not operate on a set time rota for inspections wherever possible;
- b) Attempts are made to have more inspections on high-use days as opposed to set times through the whole year.

Recommendation 7

Where possible ticket machines will be electrically-powered although it be accepted that solar-powered machines will have to be installed where there is no electricity supply.

2. Background and Context

Derbyshire County Council owns and maintains numerous car parks at Countryside sites across the County. Currently the charging system at these sites is mixed with some sites being free whilst others are pay and display or payment is made via an honesty box.

Charges vary dependent on location and methods for collecting and enforcing the charges are not particularly robust. These arrangements mean that there is currently a significant shortfall in the potential income which could be generated from these sites, and furthermore, the system is not as fair and equitable as it could be, particularly where honesty boxes are in operation.

It was therefore suggested that the Communities, Culture and the Environment Scrutiny Committee undertake this review to consider alternative charging and enforcement policies for our countryside sites.

It is important to note that all figures contained within this report are derived from reasonable assumption and cannot be guaranteed.

Equalities issues

The review considered the potential equalities issues in relation to charging for car parking at our countryside sites. It was noted that, as charges were already in place in many of our car parks, the impact on people using these sites will be minimal.

The proposed introduction of charges at Willington could impact on service users who are unable to fund the £250 per annum permit. This was considered by the working group and it was agreed that it is important to allow people to buy quarterly season tickets and introduce a daily rate to minimise the potential impact.

The review also considered blue badge holders who are currently not charged to use our countryside sites where charges are in force. Comparisons with other, similar car parks illustrated that blue badge holders are not usually charged for parking. Therefore the review confirmed that the current position in relation to blue badge holders should continue.

3. Key areas and findings of the Review

3.1 Current countryside site parking charges and enforcement

At present there is a mixed approach to charging for parking at our countryside site car parks. A number of these car parks are free whilst others make a charge which is collected either by honesty box or via pay and display parking machines. Charges vary depending on location. The current approach generates an income of £107,813 (2008/09) for the Authority which is used to offset the cost of providing services (£89,000). The costs involved in collecting charges are met within existing budgets.

The current approach does not maximise income generation for the Authority and, importantly, does not ensure a fair and equitable service across the County. Officer knowledge suggests that honesty boxes are often not used by site visitors and this, together with the variation in charging policy across our sites, means that some of our residents and visitors are subsidising the service whilst others are not.

3.2 Income potential

The Countryside team has engaged the services of RTA Associates, the consultancy which supported the Authority in implementing Civil Parking Enforcement, to consider potential income generation from our countryside car parks. The figures produced show three different charging band options and are based on estimates as income is dependent on a variety of different, unpredictable factors such as the weather.

The table below indicates the three charging options considered for use at our countryside sites:

Rate	Charge Band A	Charge Band B	Charge Band C
Up to 1 hour	£0.50	£0.70	£1
Up to 2 hours	£1	£1.20	£1.50
Up to 4 hours	£2	£2.20	£2.50
All day	£3	£3.50	£4
Season ticket	£25	£35	£50

Each of the charging bands would generate additional income for the Authority as follows:

Option	10% under	Estimated	10% over
Charge Band A	£15,013	£111,900	£227,800
Charge Band B	£36,165	£153,724	£287,875
Charge Band C	£92,621	£226,465	£409,179

NB – These figures show *additional* income after deducting existing income (£108,000) and operating costs (£89,000)

The review working group considered these options in relation to current charges in place on those countryside car parks where we charge for parking. It was noted that the honesty box approach which is in place on a number of our car parks is £1 and where pay and display is in force the charges vary but compare favourably to other countryside car parks operated by private organisations or other authorities.

It was agreed that the Authority should balance the desire to minimise impact on site visitors against maximising potential income to fund service delivery and improvements. For this reason the working group agreed that Charge Band A should be adopted **with the exception** of the charge for the first hour. It was agreed that the entry level charge should be £1 for up to two hours which compares favourably with other countryside car parks (e.g. Peak Park currently charge £1.20 for up to 1 hour, a full list of local car park charges can be found in Appendix B). The charges for lorries and coaches were agreed as follows:

Up to 2 hours	£2.50
Up to 4 hours	£4.00
All day	£6.00
Annual season ticket	£50

Recommendation 1

A consistent charging policy at our countryside car parks should be introduced. The minimum tariff should be charged at £1 for up to two hours for private cars and £2.50 for lorries and coaches for up to two hours. Users displaying a valid Blue Badge will not be charged for parking on these sites.

The financial model shows an additional £111,900 income from Charge Band A *without* the recommended minimum charge of £1 as agreed in this review. The working group agreed that it would not be necessary at this stage to request a revised figure based on the change in entry level parking charges from £0.50 to £1 as this would incur costs for the consultant's time and any revised figure would be in excess of £111,900 of additional income.

In order to generate this level of additional income the Authority is advised that it would be necessary to enforce parking charges on our countryside sites. The implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement by the Authority during 2009 provides the opportunity for the Authority to roll out enforcement to our off street car parks subject to:

- i. making the necessary legal orders to cover the car parks under sections 32 and 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984;
- ii. employing the approved contractor, who has already been selected via a competitive tendering process, to manage the enforcement of payment, the issuing of penalty notices and their subsequent pursuit, if unpaid, by means of the Partnership Agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council;
- iii. including the management of car parks in the Partnership Agreement currently in place between the Authority and the District/Borough Councils for the management of parking enforcement. Countryside car parks would thereby be covered by the existing enforcement policy which includes the level of penalty charges in place;
- iv. employing a contractor to manage the collection of cash from machines, banking and first line maintenance;
- v. the Authority's Parking Manager undertaking the management of enforcement.

3.3. Costs of implementing CPE on countryside car parks

Implementation of the recommended approach to charging at our countryside car parks will involve the purchase of pay and display machines and accompanying signs.

A number of sites will also require works to improve security, prevent illegal parking and deter parking on adjoining highways. This will include the marking out of bays on some sites, the lining of access roads and adjacent highway and, in one instance, the installation of CCTV. Officers estimate that this work will cost £143,000.

Officers further recommend a number of improvements to the car parks at Elvaston, Middleton Top and High Peak Junction in order to extend the number of all weather parking spaces available, thus increasing potential income. These improvements are estimated to cost £125,000. There would also be a one-off cost for legal orders which officers estimate to be £5,000

Summary of one-off set up costs:

Mandatory work	£143,000
Recommended work	£125,000
Legal orders	£5000
Total	£273,000

The working group were informed that any funding required to implement the scheme would be sourced through the Environmental Services Department revenue budget or through Invest to Save if the criteria is met.

3.4 Ongoing revenue costs

It is estimated that the revenue cost of managing the system excluding cash collection will be £40,000. The current estimate for contracting out the cash collection is £49,000 although the working group were informed that tenders for an alternative contractor will be sought as it is likely to result in a lower cost for this service. Even at the estimated £49,000 for cash collection, the ongoing total revenue costs would be £89,000 which leaves an estimated surplus of £219,731 income over expenditure per annum.

The Enforcement and County Court Income received under the scheme would be administered by the CPE Partnership and would be used to offset the costs of the Partnership managing the scheme on behalf of the Countryside Service. On the basis of the financial model, it is estimated that there will be a surplus of income over expenditure of £5,450. This is based on 'buying-in' 20 hours additional CPE enforcement time per week to manage the countryside car parks.

3.5 Delivering an improved service

The working group noted that wherever new parking charges are introduced it is likely to cause some concerns or issues with people using the service. In this case however, the introduction of car parking charges has already been in place in most of the identified countryside car parks for some time. There are only two car parks which are currently free of charge to use which would incur new parking charges under the proposed policy (High Peak Junction and Willington).

The working group felt that it is important that any income generated through the countryside car park charging policy should be directed back into improved service and delivery. This would help to improve service delivery and to clearly identify the need to introduce and enforce car park charges at our countryside sites. It has been noted earlier in this report that a number of improvements to car parks would be necessary before the implementation of CPE and it was agreed that

income generated from the scheme should be put directly back into countryside car park maintenance and improvement.

Recommendation 2

Any income generated from the car park charges scheme at Countryside sites is made available for car park maintenance and improvements.

A number of other service improvements were noted by the working group who agreed that the introduction of a County-wide countryside car park charging policy was important for a number of reasons:

- To ensure a fair and equitable service across the County
- To improve and maintain our countryside car parks including improved bay marking and surfaces
- To ensure that visitors from outside of the County contribute to the upkeep of countryside sites
- To improve security through a visual, uniformed presence at sites, many of which are isolated.
- To maximise income generation which can be directed to service delivery and improvement

3.6 Inclusion of sites

It is noted that not all of our countryside sites are suitable for the introduction of car park charging. Many of our sites are either too small, remote or lightly used to make charging a viable option. A full list of sites and recommended charging positions is attached as Appendix A.

The recommended charging levels will introduce a standardised approach across Derbyshire with the exception of the rate for the season ticket at Willington. This site is heavily used by commuters using the adjoining train station and it is recommended that a higher season ticket price is adopted. It was agreed that this should be made available on a quarterly basis to help with the cost and the County-wide standardised daily rate will also be available for people not wishing to buy a quarterly or annual ticket. A small administration charge should be applied to the cost of a quarterly ticket to cover the cost of processing the ticket four times a year. Permits should clearly state that reminders will not be sent to car park users and it is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that they display a valid permit.

Recommendation 3

The Willington car park season ticket could be purchased on a quarterly basis at the cost of £65 per quarter or £250 annually.

3.7 Displacement parking

The working group were concerned about the potential for people to use local streets adjacent to our car parks to avoid paying to park. This issue was discussed with countryside officers who have considered this possibility and have factored the costs of introducing yellow lines on residential streets where appropriate into the financial model outlined in this report.

This issue would be monitored as CPE is introduced onto our countryside car parks and joint work between the Highways and Countryside teams will ensure that any problems can be addressed.

It was noted however, that as most of the sites already incur car parking charges, and many of the sites are remote, it is not anticipated that that dispersion onto local streets will be a significant issue.

Recommendation 4

It be noted that displacement issues are being considered with the Highways Division and yellow lines have, or will be, laid down to reduce this problem. Ongoing monitoring will ensure that any displacement issues can be addressed.

3.8 The potential detrimental effects of charging at countryside sites

The working group considered the potential for any negative impact in introducing the recommended car park charging policy at our countryside sites. One concern was that people may choose not to continue to enjoy the countryside sites across the County. This was considered by the working group who requested evidence from the countryside team in relation to this issue.

The working group were informed of a recent publicity scheme at many of the sites which informed visitors of the proposed introduction of a standardised charging policy. Very little feedback was received by our countryside officers in relation to these notices which is probably indicative of the fact that charges are already in place at many sites. It was also noted that, in order to comply with the Road Traffic regulation Act 1984, Traffic Regulation Orders would be printed in local press and people would have the opportunity to voice any concerns at that time.

Evidence was considered from other areas where new charging policies had been introduced but there is little comparable evidence given that:

- i. this scheme is specific to countryside sites only, and
- ii. charges are already in place on most of the sites

It was agreed that a co-ordinated publicity campaign prior to the introduction of the scheme would be beneficial in order to inform the public of the rationale behind the introduction of the new policy.

Recommendation 5

A publicity campaign should be implemented prior to the introduction of the new charging policy and countryside staff should be briefed on the benefits and rationale behind the scheme.

All publicity of the proposed scheme should include the following elements:

- f) DCC charges compare favourably with other organisations' schemes throughout the County;
- g) Income generated will be expended on maintaining and improving car parking sites
- h) Charges will be imposed on all visitors thereby ensuring that Derbyshire Council tax payers are not subsidising visitors from outside the County;
- i) The presence of CPE officers would enhance the security of the sites;
- j) As charges are made per vehicle this supports the County Council's stance on promoting alternative sustainable forms of transport.

3.9 Enforcement of the charging policy

The review considered evidence from countryside officers relating to the enforcement of the new charging policy. It has been noted earlier that the recently-implemented CPE across the County allows for enforcement on our off-road sites, subject to meeting the necessary legal requirements. The financial model is based on 20 hours additional CPE officer time as per 3.4 above.

The working group considered the best use of the 20 hours per week and agreed that wherever possible it is important to alternate the days on which CPE staff visit sites. This will prevent people from contravening the parking restrictions on days which it is commonly-

known that CPE officers will not be visiting the site. It was also agreed that the rota for visits should be intelligence-based to maximise impact so that officers are visiting car parks at peak times on peak days.

Recommendation 6

It be noted that Countryside Services plan to buy in an additional 20 hours enforcement officer time per week and it is recommended that:

- c) Enforcement officers do not operate on a set time rota for inspections wherever possible;
- d) Attempts are made to have more inspections on high-use days as opposed to set times through the whole year.

In relation to the pay and display machines it was noted that the solar-powered machines are prone to mechanical failure during the winter months as the ticket paper can become damp. Therefore it is recommended that electrically-powered machines are utilised wherever possible.

Recommendation 7

Where possible ticket machines will be electrically-powered although it be accepted that solar-powered machines will have to be installed where there is no electricity supply.

3.10 Travellers

The working group were concerned about any potential problems with illegal encampments on our car parks following improvements to surfaces. This issue was discussed with countryside officers and it was noted that, with the exception of Shipley Country park, travellers were not a significant concern at present.

4. Review Conclusions

The review examined the evidence supporting the implementation of new parking charges and enforcement procedures, and considered the potential issues or concerns which may arise if the new policy is agreed.

In conclusion the working group considered that a new policy should be adopted in order to ensure a fair and equitable countryside parking charge and enforcement regime which covers the whole of the County.

It was noted that all but two of the countryside sites currently charge for parking at a comparable level to the proposed levels in the new policy and therefore there would be a minimal impact on residents and visitors using these sites. The main change would be in relation to the enforcement of these charges which, in many cases, would move from an honesty box to pay and display parking. The use of enforcement officers will ensure that parking charges are applied fairly to all countryside car park users and will have the added benefit of additional site security.

The adoption of the new policy is the main recommendation to come out of this review. A series of additional recommendations set out in this review are intended to address some of the potential concerns/issues which may arise from the implementation of the proposed policy.

5. Acknowledgements

The working group would like to thank the following people for their input into this review:

Chris Coombs, Countryside Service Area Manager, Environmental Services

Mike Ashworth, Deputy Director, Environmental Services

Members of the public who have responded to consultation notices at countryside car parking sites

Hayfield Parish Council

Appendix A

Current and proposed charging policies at Countryside sites

Car park name	Current position	Recommended position
Hayfield	Charged via pay and display	Charged via pay and display
Grin Low	Charged via honesty box	Charged via honesty box
Middleton Top	Charged via honesty box	Charged via pay and display
Black Rocks	Charged via honesty box	Charged via pay and display
Cromford Wharf	Charged via pay and display	Charged via pay and display
High Peak Junction	Free	Charged via pay and display
Eddlestowe	Free	Free
Highoredish	Free	Free
Darley Dale	Free	Free
Elvaston main car park	Charged on entry	Charged via pay and display
Elvaston staff car park	Free	Free
Elvaston stables car park	Free	Free
Shipley Coppiceside	Charged via honesty box	Charged via pay and display
Shipley (Mapperley)	Charged via honesty box	Charged via pay and display
Shipley Woodside	Free	Free
Shipley staff car park	Free	Free
Willington	Free	Charged via pay and display
Grassmoor, Birkin Lane	Free	Free
Grassmoor, Chapman Lane	Free	Free
Williamthorpe, Old Mansfield Road	Free	Free
Holmewood	Free	Free
Locko Lane	Free	Free
Tibshelf Common	Free	Free

Timber Lane	Free	Free
Tibshelf Ponds	Free	Free
Pinxton	Free	Free
Pleasley	Free	Free
Poulter Country Park x 2	Free	Free
Peter Fidler	Free	Free
Stockley Pond	Free	Free
Rowthorne	Free	Free
Inkersall	Free	Free
Newbridge Lane	Free	Free
Brimington Wharf	Free	Free
Mill Green	Free	Free
Renishaw	Free	Free

Appendix B

Car park charges locally

Costs	DCC proposed	Peak Park	Notts County parks	Yorkshire Dales N Park	Chesterfield centre	Chesterfield fringe	Derbyshire Dales	Amber Valley	High Peak
Up to 1 hour		£1.20			£1.00		£1.00	£0.40 - £0.50	£0.6 - £1.00
Up to 2 hours	£1.00			£2.20	£2.00	£1.20	£1.50	£0.60 - £0.70	£1.00 - £1.60
Up to 3 hours					£3.00		£2.50		
Up to 4 hours	£2.00	£2.50				£2.50	£3.50	£1-£1.50	£2.00-£3.00
All day	£3.00	£3.50	£3.00	£3.20	Increase at £1 per hour	£5.00	£4.50	£1.90-£2.30	£2.20 - £5.00
Season ticket (resident)	£25.00	£10.00	£15	£30			£200		
Season ticket (visitor)	£25.00	£25.00	£25	£75			£200		
Season ticket (senior citizen)	£25.00	£12.00	£12						
Blue badge	Free	Free							

