

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DELIVERY AND DISCOVERY

SUBJECT: PCNPA MANAGEMENT OF CAR PARKING SITES

Purpose of Report

To seek member approval for Officers at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) to enter into discussions with other local agencies involved in providing car parking facilities as a means of reducing operating costs and improving service delivery.

In addition, Members are asked to approve a formal request to Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) for the scope of the Authority's existing Parking Order to be amended and expanded to cover additional sites in order to improve localised enforcement.

Introduction/Background

The Park Authority operates 48 car parks throughout Pembrokeshire as well as having an interest in a range of sites where parking also takes place. Officers are keen to explore opportunities for a more 'joined up' approach to parking arrangements throughout the National Park that will improve service co-ordination and, ultimately, the visitor experience for residents and tourists alike.

In particular, Officers at PCNPA are keen to explore opportunities for more consistent service standards in terms of charging, litter collection, signage and site maintenance. There may also be opportunities to co-ordinate resources relating to money collection, ticket machine upgrading, staffing and enforcement. However, for any service goals to be 'unlocked' PCNPA Officers first need the approval of Members to enter into non prejudicial open discussions with PCC and other local agencies regarding opportunities for joint management arrangements.

Comparisons

Vehicular parking plays an important role in the accessibility and quality of the experience for visitors to the National Park whether they live locally or are from further afield. Anecdotal evidence from this season suggests that there is increasing pressure being placed on areas of the National Park through increased parking. PCNPA's focus, as outlined in our car parking policy, is to 'spread the pressure' on key 'hot spots' but this can only be achieved through a joint approach with PCC and other key agencies, such as the National Trust, or 'problems' may just be displaced to other areas of the county.

Similarly, customer expectations in relation to parking are changing. The 2011-12 annual visitor survey, undertaken by PCC, highlights that *"parking is the main negative issue in the region"* and that local organisations *"may want to consider elements such as the cost and flexibility of parking: offering hourly tariffs alongside day tariffs and consider portable tickets so that a day ticket offered in one location is*

valid in another.” The Park Authority is keen to explore the above recommendations with a range of local organisations.

Options

An ‘Off Street Parking Order’ was originally prepared for the Authority by Dyfed County Council in 1991 which applied to just eight car parks and set out the charges and charging periods. Since then the demand for car parking, the traffic management implications, the cost of providing and maintaining parking, and the legislation have changed and the Authority now needs to review its approach in order to effectively manage car park sites so that they meet the changing demands of residents and visitors alike.

As a result, PCNPA needs to amend and expand the scope of its existing legal powers (‘Off Street Parking Order’), which are now over 20 years old, so that Officers of the Authority have greater autonomy to deal with certain parking infringements ‘on the spot’ (such as illegal overnight parking). This process will require the direct assistance of the Highways and Legal Teams at PCC who have been extremely helpful to date in advising Officers of the Park Authority.

It is envisaged that a number of opportunities exist for service improvements by PCNPA entering into more formal joint management arrangements with PCC (primarily through ‘economies of scale’) and, in particular, the need to review and expand the Authority’s enforcement powers is vital to tackling issues that have a negative impact on local communities.

However, there are also opportunities for working more closely with other partners, as well as local communities, to explore arrangements for greater ‘community ownership’ in relation to car parking. For example, the Authority is undertaking a trial arrangement with Saundersfoot Harbour Commission to provide greater autonomy and flexibility in the management of car parking at a local level.

Ultimately, in order for Officers to ‘unlock’ some of the benefits of alternative management arrangements in relation to car parking we are seeking the authority of Members to hold non prejudicial discussions with various partner organisations, particularly with PCC, in order to explore a range of options.

Financial considerations

It is envisaged that opportunities for joint working will create efficiencies by sharing the cost of providing key services across a number of agencies in relation to car parking (such as money collection, site maintenance and enforcement) as well as allowing the Authority to expand or improve certain services in a way that it simply couldn’t achieve alone (e.g. more co-ordinated pricing structures, flexible tickets, etc).

Risk considerations

We know that customer expectations in relation to car parking are changing and that the volume of correspondence relating to people parking illegally at sites where PCNPA has an interest has increased in recent times. Consequently, there are a number of ‘drivers’ for PCNPA exploring ways to manage car parking provision in new and more flexible ways and to improve our powers of enforcement.

Compliance

The management of car parks has a direct impact on the Authority meeting both its statutory purposes and 'well-being duty'.

Human Rights/Equality issues

There are a number of issues relating to the accessibility of car parks and the equity of certain services relating to parking. By entering into discussions regarding joint management arrangements the Authority is afforded an opportunity to review both its approach to car parking provision and to ensure that our policies are consistent with those of other organisations providing parking facilities across the county.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

Parking provision is an important part of the 'visitor offer' but needs to be managed carefully in order to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between providing opportunities for people to enjoy the National Park without having a detrimental impact on its special qualities. Consequently, by 'joining up' services with other organisations in Pembrokeshire it is hoped that PCNPA can limit environmental damage and support more sustainable transport options in-line with the National Park Management Plan and LDP.

Welsh Language statement

The opportunity to review car parking services will allow PCNPA to ensure that our approach continues to comply with the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme.

Conclusion

PCNPA operates 48 car parks throughout the National Park as well as having an interest in a range of sites where parking also takes place (e.g. on land that is leased by the Authority). These sites provide a vital component of the Authority's approach to opening up access to the National Park but they need to be managed carefully in order to minimise damage to the local environment.

There are potential opportunities to create a more 'joined up' car parking service in Pembrokeshire through PCNPA working more closely with a range of partner agencies including PCC. It is envisaged that opportunities for joint management arrangements may allow PCNPA to 'unlock' a range of potential benefits in terms of visitor management, environmental protection and sustainable transport.

As a result, Officers are seeking the approval of Members to begin non prejudicial exploratory discussions with key local agencies with the explicit aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local parking services, particularly in sensitive areas of the National Park.

In particular, the Authority is keen to work closely with PCC to amend and expand the scope of our existing legal powers in order to tackle parking infringements more effectively and more swiftly.

Recommendation

To seek member approval for Officers at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) to enter into discussions with other local agencies involved in providing car parking services in order to explore opportunities for cost savings and/or improved services.

In addition, Members are asked to approve a formal request to Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) for the scope of the Authority's existing Parking Order to be amended and expanded to cover additional sites as a means of improving localised enforcement.

Background Documents

PCNPA Car Parks Policy – Formally adopted by the NPA – Dec 2008

*(For further information, please contact *)*

Author: James Parkin – Director of Delivery & Discovery

Consultees:

PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

CAR PARK MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the mechanism and rationale for the application of parking charges by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. The policy will set out what charges will apply, if any, and the appropriate length of stay at each location.

The Authority operates 48 car parks to help provide access to the National Park under its second statutory purpose. The majority of car park users are visitors during the holiday periods who use the car parks to get access to the beaches, foot paths and other sites within the National Park. The Authority recognises that many local residents use the car parks for their day to day activities, business, shopping, school visits as well as recreational trips.

An off street parking order was originally prepared for the Authority by Dyfed County Council in 1991 and applied to just eight car parks and set out the charges and charging periods. Since then the demand for car parking, the traffic management implications, the cost of providing and maintaining parking, and the legislation have changed and the Authority now should now provide a overarching policy in order to effectively manage its car parks.

2. Key Principles

By managing The Authority will achieve effective management of the car parks by applying the following key principles

- 1.** The need to provide access to and encourage enjoyment of the national park
- 2.** The need to manage traffic and visitor numbers to minimise the risk of damage or deterioration to the landscape
- 3.** The need to assist other appropriate organisations to manage traffic and traffic flows including both on-street parking and other car parks
- 4.** The need to encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport, including public transport
- 5.** The need to manage demand effectively
- 6.** The need to support and encourage the local economy
- 7.** The nature of parking location and its users, i.e. urban shopper/business, residential, rural town shopper, beach/visitor
- 8.** Comparison with other providers in the locality
- 9.** Operation, maintenance and improvements being funded by parking income
- 10.** Enforcement as a last resort to encourage good practice

2.1 Provision

In addition to the 48 PCNPA owned car parks, there are numerous others throughout the National Park provided by PCC, National Trust and other individuals. The Authority is unlikely to consider acquiring further property for car parking but may work in partnership with other landowners to ensure appropriate parking provision.

The Authority may designate car parking spaces for specific types of user depending on the local need; e.g. spaces reserved for disabled users, reserved spaces for specific users, coach spaces, etc.

2.2 Traffic & Visitor Management

Significant numbers of visitors concentrating in a small area can put pressure on the environment and one method of spreading the pressure is to encourage car parking away from the sensitive sites. This may be achieved by varying the management regimes of both PCNPA car parks and where possible, car parks operated by others. By varying the size, opening periods and charging, PCNPA will encourage visitors to make more use of alternatives including other car parks, park and ride schemes, public transport and pedestrian or cycling options.

2.3 Assisting other organisations

By using its parking policies, PCNPA can assist other organisations, particularly the Police and PCC, to provide integrated traffic management schemes. PCNPA will consult other parking providers and relevant statutory bodies about charging and enforcement practices.

2.4 Encouraging more sustainable transport

Over 90% of visitors arrive by and use cars for their journeys in Pembrokeshire. The National Park Management Plan encourages the use of public transport and PCNPA will use car parking provision to encourage sustainable transport by linking with public transport and provision of park and ride schemes.

2.5 Managing demand

The demand for parking reaches a peak during the bank holiday and main school holiday periods and demand in key locations sometimes exceeds the availability of parking spaces. The use of different charges and charging periods may encourage visitors to move to less crowded locations and use other forms of transport and therefore reduce traffic congestion.

2.6 Support and encouragement for the local economy

In delivering its purposes the PCNPA has a duty to foster the socio economic well being of local communities and the provision of car parking may contribute to local businesses and tourism operators. PCNPA will endeavour to ensure that its car management policies do not place communities at unreasonable disadvantage.

2.7 The nature of parking location and its users,

In providing car parking and implementing parking policies PCNPA will take into consideration the location of the car park and the use. The design, maintenance, charges and charging periods may differ between urban and coastal, primarily short stay and longer stay, alternative parking, etc.

2.8 Comparison with other providers in the locality;

Charges should take into account other providers in the locality and other similar local authorities. Charges need to take some account of charges made by other similar local authorities to ensure we are neither competing unfairly with other providers nor discouraging visitors from making a trip or return visit to Pembrokeshire. PCNPA will review other providers in order to provide a consistent approach to users of car parks in the County.

2.9 Operation, maintenance and improvements funded by parking income

Parking charges will not be set purely in order to generate income. The Authority provides parking facilities at 48 locations but charges in less than a quarter of these. The income from parking will be used to provide a quality standard service at all its car parks and to extend and enhance access provision to the National Park.

There is a need for parking areas to be well maintained, with appropriate lighting and good visibility, to provide a safe and secure environment for motorists and their vehicles. Provision must also be made to accommodate specialist vehicles equipped to meet the needs of the less able.

Income from parking charges enables limited patrols by officers, and helps to reduce car crime and vandalism, giving added confidence, especially to vulnerable users.

2.10 Enforcement as a last resort to encourage good practice

One of the Authority's statutory purposes is to enhance enjoyment of the National Park. The car parking management regime will ensure car park users are aware of the conditions and charges through information boards and signage. Users will

be encouraged to make the correct payment and penalty tickets will only be issued as a last resort for refusal to comply.

3. Charging

3.1 Charging

Charges for car parking need to take account of the above principles. The Authority will install pay & display machines in its car parks, which are capable of multi rates, period and seasonal charging. Each car park will include a short period charge to suit those users on a brief shopping trip or visit. Longer stay periods will be available with charges set to either encourage more frequent movement in a shopping location or to encourage longer stay for traffic management purposes. Charges may also be varied according to the season and range from no charge, to a standard all year rates depending on the location and service provided. Parking tickets will not be transferable to other locations.

The local charges will be clearly displayed in each car park, and on the pay and display machine and will be advertised locally. Any new off-street parking order will also require extensive advertising for changes in charges.

Charges will be adjusted in line with inflation when appropriate within the coinage accepted by the pay & display machines and the cost of any advertising.

3.2 Charging Period

The time period to which charges will apply will generally be standardised in line with other local car park providers and will be applied on every day of the week. This will enable free parking outside of these times, allowing better use of the facilities during periods when parking pressure is reduced. Seasonal and local variations may be applied in some areas.

3.3 Weekly Tickets

Weekly tickets may be purchased at all car parks to encourage visitors to make use of them for the duration of their stay. Weekly tickets will be charged at a rate equivalent to five times the full daily rate but do not guarantee a parking place. They will not be transferrable to other PCNPA managed car parks.

3.4 Seasonal Tickets

A seasonal ticket may be purchased from the Authority. Although this ticket will not guarantee a parking place, it will alleviate the necessity for users to repeatedly purchase a daily ticket. These will be of particular benefit to local residents who regularly use the car parks. These will be charged at the equivalent of fifteen times full daily charge and may be used in any PCNPA managed car park.

3.5 Reserved Bay Tickets

The Authority will not provide reserved parking except in Little Haven, where permanent, full time residents may apply for a reserved space. Only a limited number of spaces are available and these will be provided only for residents with no off street parking on their premises at the time of its original construction. The cost of a reserved space will be twenty times the full daily rate. The reserved ticket is not valid in any other car park. An area of the car park will be reserved for season ticket holders, but individual spaces will not be allocated and spaces are not guaranteed for the ticket holder.

4. Disabled Parking

It is important to recognise the very real needs of the disabled within this policy. However, there is concern, shared by the Disabled Access Group, regarding the extent of abuse of the disabled badge system. There is also an inconsistent approach amongst the car park operators. In order to minimise abuse 'blue badge' holders will be subject to the same charge as other users, both within designated disabled bays and other bays at each location. When the 'blue badge' is clearly displayed an additional hour stay will be allowed. Each location will provide an adequate number of disabled bays, and parking meters will be made accessible to wheelchair users.

5. Social Inclusion

This policy has been written taking appropriate account of the Council's adopted Anti-poverty Statement and Criteria for Decision Making on Charges. It should be recognised that the poorest in society cannot afford to own a car. The Local Transport Plan identifies that 1 in 4 families in Pembrokeshire do not have use of a car. It is not considered practical, at this time, to offer reduced parking charges to reflect a customer's ability to pay, e.g. by offering a reduced charge to those on income support.