

REPORT OF THE BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: CAR PARK OPERATIONS

Introduction

The National Park Authority is reviewing its car park provision :-

- 1 To ensure that the Pembrokeshire Coast Park Authority's (PCNPA) car parks are managed in order to deliver our corporate objectives (linked to our statutory purposes) – i.e. that our car parks are helping to open up access to the National Park for local residents and visitors to the area.
- 2 To provide the best customer experience possible and to ensure that our approach clearly links with other key agencies responsible for car parking locally, especially PCC – i.e. to maximise the opportunities for joint working to in order to create a simplified and more 'universal' approach to car park provision and charging in Pembrokeshire.
- 3 To make it clear that our car parks are under increasing pressure from visitors parking illegally and that we now need a joint response, fully funded, to properly enforce against those who fail to pay or misuse the car parks.

This document has been prepared following the meetings of the Members' Task and Finish group on Car Parks and presents their conclusions for changes in the management of the Authority's car parks for Members' consideration.

At the first meeting of the group the Members reviewed the present operation and performance of the car parks and revenue and costs incurred. The second meeting discussed a wide range of options and suggestions for changing the charging regime.

The current situation

The Authority provides 37 parking sites of which ten are charging car parks used by over 200,000 vehicles each year. The car parks help provide easy access to the coastline and countryside for hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors each year, in turn making an enormous contribution to the local economy. The majority of these car parks were created in the late 1960's and early 1970's and despite regular patch and mend maintenance, some are in need of significant improvement and upgrades to meet customer expectation within a national park. Major capital works have been completed in the past few years in Solva, Poppit and Porthgain with schemes being drawn up for possible improvements in Broadhaven and Saundersfoot in the next few years, with costs typically between £50,000 and £100,000 each.

The current charging rates of £1 for one hour, £3 for up to 3 hours and £5 for over 3 hours were introduced in 2011 at the ten charging car parks - Poppit Sands, Newport Sands, Oriel y Parc, Solva, Newgale, Broad Haven, Little Haven, Freshwater East, Manorbier and Saundersfoot. The £5 rate was removed at Newgale in 2012 to bring charges more in line with the neighbouring Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) car parks. Weekly tickets (£30) and season tickets (£70) are available. Solva, Newport and Poppit are staffed sites, the other car parks are pay & display. Weekly and season tickets can be purchased from local outlets in Little Haven, Newgale and Saundersfoot with 10% commission to the outlet. Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners manage the day to day operation of the car park in Saundersfoot, collecting and banking the cash, checking the machines and collecting litter, again at 10% commission.

Charging can take place from late March until early November and during 2014/15 the car parks generated £348,000 of revenue with costs of £89,000 for salaries, rates and other operational costs. Outside of the charging period the pay & display machine accept donations totaling about £7,000 each year.

After many years of discussion new off-street parking order was finally introduced on behalf of the Authority by Pembrokeshire County Council in June 2015.

Matters considered by the task & finish group

The paragraphs below provide details of the matters considered by the group with the proposals summarized at the end for Members' consideration. However many of these may require changes to the parking order and a full formal consultation and may not be practical to complete in time for the 2016 season.

1. The group initially queried the justification for owning and operating car parks and agreed that car parks were used to provide access to the wider countryside and coast. The provision of car parks is mentioned in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
2. The present charges were compared to those of other car park operators. While most operators charge similar rates, there is a noticeable difference with many PCC car parks, although those are mostly town centre, all year round 'retail' locations, whereas PCNPA car parks are linked to coastal recreational locations.
3. Although an overall increase in charges could be considered in order to keep in line with inflation Members of the group agreed that an increase in charges should not be imposed at this time, but kept under review. Extending the daily charging period to 7pm to be consistent with PCC was considered as possibly something for the future but introducing all year round charges was rejected.
4. As the discount on season tickets was removed for 2015 there should not be any increase to these, nor for residents reserved spaces in Little Haven which have increased in each of the past three years.
5. It was noted that coach charges had remained at £3 since 1989 and an increase to £8, in line with PCC, is recommended. This ticket would be transferable during

the day of purchase between PCNPA car parks.

6. A £2 for two hours was introduced by Solva Community Council during their management of the car park and proved quite successful. Our attendants at Newport and Poppit have often suggested this. Many local businesses have commented that visitors are unwilling to pay £3 for a relatively short stay and as a result rush to get back to the car park within the hour. By introducing either a £2 for two hours charges or a simple £1 per hour up to a maximum of £5 this could satisfy the local businesses and simplify the purchasing of the tickets.
7. Free parking for up to 30 minutes to 'pop to the shop' is provided at Solva, Newgale, Little Haven, and Saundersfoot. Although there are marked '30 minute' bays, these are often abused with people over staying or parking elsewhere and claiming to stay 30 minutes. It may be possible for the P&D machines to print a free ticket with a 30 minute exit time. It is now proposed that a 30 minute free period be introduced with a valid ticket and no return to the car park for two hours, subject to checking that this can be satisfactorily enforced.
8. Local residents' tickets costing £12 were introduced for Solva and Newgale when charging commenced in those locations. Thirty five were issued for Solva and 16 for Newgale last summer. These involve considerable administration with each applicant needing to be verified as a full time resident of the community. Neighbours living sometimes just around the corner, but in another community council area have complained. A number of residents, particularly dog walkers, have indicated that they consider the full season ticket too expensive as they always use the same a car park and none of the others. A solution may be to provide a one site only season ticket at £25 which would be valid in only one of the following car parks – Solva, Newgale, Poppit, Newport, Freshwater East and Manorbier.
9. PCC have introduced a parking passport – a weekly ticket which permits users to park in most PCC car parks without additional charge. It may be possible to extend this to include PCNPA car parks, and negotiations are under way to agreeing terms for next year.
10. PCNPA tickets are transferable between other PCNPA car parks. This was introduced when attendants only sold 'all day tickets', but with machines providing time limited tickets it is no longer so relevant. It is proposed to remove the transferability and encourage people to purchase parking passport tickets.
11. Only three of the car parks are staffed, - Solva, Newport Sands and Poppit. Introducing pay & display machines will increase revenue slightly, and there will be substantial savings with reduction in staffing. Salary costs for car park attendants this year will be approximately £35,000. There will be initial costs to install the machines – approximately £4,000 per machine. However, the attendants provide a wider service than just collecting money by providing information and generally helping visitors over a wide range of topics. There are two long-serving attendants – in Poppit and Solva, and Members may wish to consider offering to help fund the local community councils for a limited period to

retain these officers as local ambassadors on a part time basis.

12. There are a number of larger PCNPA managed sites where there is no charging. The reasons for this are often unclear, but may have included remoteness, difficulty recruiting attendants, limited revenue and uncertain legal issues. The working group identified Amroth, West Angle, and Nolton Haven as locations where charging should be introduced. It is difficult to estimate the potential revenue from each location but these should gross £40,000 or more. Consideration for charging should also be considered at Stack Rocks, St Govans, Penally, Sychpant and Porthgain for the future. Any changes to these would be subject to suitable arrangements on cash collection and enforcement.
13. This year PCC have undertaken enforcement of parking in PCNPA pay & display car parks to pilot the effectiveness and cost of enforcement with the possibility of extending this to include cash collection for all the charging car parks. This Authority has benefited with a visible enforcement presence while PCC acknowledge that the addition of the extra sites has meant a more efficient use of their staff who have been able to make more frequent and repeated patrols in a number of locations. A recent review of the pilot has identified a number of potential benefits to extending the joint working as well as the economies of scale. In particular there are benefits for the users by developing a consistent approach for both sets of car parks. By extending the parking passport and other season tickets to include PCNPA car parks the visitors can pay once, sometimes in advance, and park in many different locations during their stay. In the longer term it may be possible to develop traffic management schemes through differential pricing.
14. Discussions are underway to agree the terms and conditions and timetable for future management of the car parks and to prepare the next off-street parking order, probably late in 2016 ready for the 2017 season, which will incorporate all the agreed changes.

Financial considerations

The proposals are estimated to reduce staff costs by between £15,000 and £35,000 and increase revenue by about £5,000 through introducing pay & display machines at all the car parks. The three additional car parks should raise a further £40,000. This will be offset by any fee to PCC for managing the car parks, revising the off-street parking order and the initial costs of installing new machines, signs etc.

Risk considerations

The introduction of car park charges on new sites is likely to be contentious and may cause some negative publicity. Any delay in producing a new order will impact on additional revenue, possibly into 2018.

Compliance

The off-street parking order will need to be revised and issued for consultation. This is subject to a precise legal and quite lengthy procedure involving costly publication and consultation and approval by both PCNPA and PCC at various stages. Limited staff resources mean that this is unlikely to be completed in time for 2016.

Human Rights/Equality issues

Before proceeding with a number of these proposals an equality impact assessment will be required and consultation with the relevant community councils.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

The proposal should not conflict with the National Park Management Plan and policies for nature conservation, climate change and resource use? Any improvements to the sites will be subject to planning permission.

Welsh Language statement

All signs and correspondence will comply with Welsh Language policies.

Recommendations: Members are asked to consider and approve the following changes as soon as practical and subject to the relevant amendments to the off-street parking order:-

- 1. Increase coach charges to £8 per day;**
- 2. Introduce charging at £1 per hour up to a maximum of £5 at all car parks;**
- 3. Introduce free 30 minute 'pop and shop' tickets in some car parks;**
- 4. Introduce a season ticket valid in a single specified car park at £25;**
- 5. Remove transferability from PCNPA tickets;**
- 6. Install pay & display machines at Newport and Poppit Sands, and offer funding to assist the community councils to employ information ambassadors at Poppit.**
- 7. Negotiate with PCC to include PCNPA car parks in the parking passport and similar schemes;**

Members to agree in principle following proposals, which would then be subject to consultation, discussion and negotiation with relevant partners before being presented to members for approval at a future meeting:

- 8. Install pay & display machines at Solva, and offer funding to assist the community council to employ an information ambassador;**
- 9. Introduce charging at Amroth, Penally, West Angle and Nolton Haven;**
- 10. Negotiate with PCC to prepare a revised off-street parking order in light of the above and to develop a service level agreement to manage the car parks.**

(For further information, please contact Alan Hare, Business & Performance Manager on extension 4810)