

Charging for Car Parking at Countryside Sites
(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals to introduce charges for car parking at Beacon Fell Country Park, Preston and Crook o'Lune Picnic Site, Lancaster, and for the making of an associated traffic regulation order which would provide for the enforcement of such charges.

This is a Key Decision and is included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning be requested to give approval for,

- i. arrangements to be made for the installation and commissioning of pay and display machines on the Beacon Fell Country Park, near Preston and the Crook o'Lune, Caton, near Lancaster on the basis as set out in the report now presented, and
- ii. the scale of pay and display charges as set out in the report.

That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport be requested to give approval to

- i. the consultation and other procedures for making the off-street parking places orders under sections 32 and 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to allow the charging for public parking at Beacon Fell and the Crook o'Lune, and
- ii. to make allowance for the provision of Penalty Charge notices and enforcement to be carried out through Lancashire Parking Services,

Background and Advice

On 17th February 2011, the County Council agreed the introduction of car parking charges at Country Parks and Picnic sites as part of the budget proposals.

The County Council has the power to provide off-street parking places under Section 32 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Under Section 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the County Council also has the power to make a charge for car parking and the enforcement of that charge. The procedure for making a car park Order includes requirements for advertising and consultation.

It is considered that Beacon Fell Country Park, near Preston and Crook o'Lune, Caton, near Lancaster have the greatest potential to generate sufficient income to justify investment in the infrastructure and management costs required to make the scheme a success. At Beacon Fell there is a counter on the circuit road near the visitor centre, at Crook o'Lune there is a counter on the car park entrance. These indicate that both sites attract around 85,000 cars each year. The plans for these sites are attached at Appendix 'A'.

Pay and display machines are considered to be the most appropriate way of capturing this potential income stream. Along with the installation of these machines and associated signing, works to prevent or deter displacement parking such as the installation of bollards would be required.

Many visitors are repeat visitors, some visiting almost daily to walk dogs or take part in regular exercise routines, so in order to realise income some means of enforcement would also be required.

There would be a cost associated with enforcement. Lancashire Parking Services, who manage on-street parking, already have contracts to provide such a service and have indicated that enforcement could be carried out at these sites along with cash collection and banking.

The County Council's Ranger service would also be trained to deal with minor maintenance issues such as ticket and coin jams, and topping up of tickets.

Proposed Charges and Charging Hours

It is proposed that car parking charges would be levied every day of the year, including public holidays.

As previously stated, many of our visitors are repeat visitors and often do not spend long periods of time on site. A few visitors may park all day and go for long walks but unlike many National Park car parks this is not the norm.

It is proposed that a flat rate of £1.00 per visit is charged. It is expected that a high level of compliance would be achieved at this rate and it is unlikely to encourage displacement parking or deter those on lower incomes. It is believed that with the high rate of turnover that occurs the levels of income anticipated in the budget proposals would be generated.

An annual season ticket, proposed at £50.00 per year, would be a strong incentive for regular users such as dog walkers to pay in advance, and would provide such users with good value for money.

The charging policy would be reviewed after six months of operation and, if required, amended subject to approval from the Cabinet Member. Periodic reviews would take place thereafter.

Approval is therefore sought for the following pay and display charges:

£1.00 per visit

Annual Season Ticket: £50.00

Charges to apply between the hours of 9.00am and 5.00pm every day of the year, including public holidays.

Holders of blue badges would be exempt.

Penalty charges would be as follows:

A penalty charge of £70 on the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) for higher level contraventions and £50 on the issue of a PCN for lower level contraventions in accordance with the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (Guidelines on Levels of Charges) (England) Order 2007, but discounted by 50% if payment is received within 14 days of the issue of the PCN or within 21 days for PCNs issued by post.

Exemptions would also be made for Lancashire County Council staff carrying out their duties, staff working in the Café at Beacon Fell and the refreshment kiosk at Crook o'Lune along with the usual exemptions for utility companies, refuse collection and repairs.

Consultations

Consultations on the County Council's budget proposals have been undertaken with the Life in Lancashire Panel, the twelve District Councils and two Unitary Councils, Trade Unions, the Youth Council, Business representatives and members of the public.

Subject to the approval of the report, it is proposed to advertise the order which will include consultation with statutory consultees and on site notices. Public information will also be provided at the two sites and to parish councils and other user groups, for example, Friends of Beacon Fell and the Lune Millennium Park User Group.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Numbers of visitors and visitor satisfaction levels may be adversely affected but this is likely to be a short term effect.

Financial

If the introduction of car parking charges is not approved, the potential income identified as part of the budget proposals will not be secured. This initiative is expected to achieve savings of at least £10,000 in 2011/12 (after funding the initial installation and set up costs) and £55,000 in 2012/13 and thereafter.

Projected income

- Numbers of vehicles (at two sites) 170,000 per annum.
- Income (at 40% compliance, £1 per vehicle) £68,000 per annum.

The estimated income is based on a low compliance rate for several reasons:

- There may be some displacement parking.
- At Beacon Fell it is the number of vehicles using the road not the number of vehicles entering the car park.
- At the Crook O'Lune there is a proportion of vehicles that are very short term visitors who use the refreshment concession and then leave the site and it will be difficult to ensure compliance from these customers.

The estimated set up cost is £45,000 and this includes site preparation, installation of pay and display machines and signing.

Ongoing revenue costs:

When the one year warranty on the pay and display machines has expired there will be an annual fee of around £2,250 per annum (£450 per machine for 5 machines). There are also costs associated with the supply of tickets, approximately £442 per year.

Enforcement costs:

Lancashire Parking Services has indicated that enforcement and cash collection may be built in to existing contracts. However they do not currently operate on Sundays, the busiest day on Countryside sites. If we introduce enforcement on Sundays then there will be an additional cost which would be around £6,000 per annum at current prices.

Recovery of charges resulting from penalty notices will be at net nil cost initially. This will be monitored to ensure that it is sustainable.

Any representations made to the Cabinet Member prior to the issue being considered in accordance with the Public Notice of Forward Plans

Name: Organisation: Comments:

Nil.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers**

Paper Date Contact/Directorate/Tel

Nil.

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.