

Committee(s) Epping Forest and Commons – For decision	Dated 18 January 2021
Subject: Epping Forest Car Parking – Tariff Options for introduced charges (SEF 04/21)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4,11,12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	£170,000
What is the source of Funding?	Local Risk
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Y
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
Report author: Jacqueline Eggleston, Head of Visitor Services	

Summary

The majority (53 %) of Epping Forest’s 4.2 million annual visits arrive by car. The Forest provides 50 car parks offering in the region of 930 spaces free of charge to the public.

Your committee has agreed to introduce charging for car parking within Epping Forest commencing with 14 of the 50 car parks.

This report introduces options for the tariff to be charged.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Decide the tariff to be introduced with the implementation of parking charges at Epping Forest.

Main Report

Background

1. The introduction of parking charges at Epping Forest was approved at your Committee on 16 November 2020.
2. Several studies into car parking have been undertaken in the past and a more detailed options paper for car parking charges was prepared by PMS Consultants early in 2020. These have all been referenced to provide the options contained in this report.

3. Over 50% of visitors to Epping Forest visit daily or weekly. Just under a third of visitors visit very infrequently at less than a few times a year. 53% of Forest visitors arrive by car with the next highest percentage of visitors arriving by foot. ⁱ
4. Weekday parking activity increases by 30% in the summer months and weekend parking activity increases by 50% on average for the majority of the car parks.
5. A study in 2013 calculated that a maximum of 82% of parking spaces were anticipated to be occupied during the peak period during the summer with several car parks projected to operate above capacity. This has since been more than borne out with every car park operating above capacity during the two recent periods of 'lockdown' and honey pot locations reaching capacity on most days throughout the summer but also at weekends heading into winter.
6. Benchmarking has been undertaken to assess charging at a range of public car parks surrounding the Forest. These include car parks next to stations such as NCP, local authority charging on roads and town centre car parks and a range of parks, open spaces and heritage attractions. See Appendix A.
7. Choosing how to align Epping Forest car park charges to one suite of charges or another raises some basic questions about what the charging scheme aims to do.
8. In the report to your Committee on 16 November 2020, the aims of the charges were to:
 - Generate enough income to offset the significant cost of continued car park provision so that the charity's limited resources can be spent on protecting the Forest and improving the visitor experience.
9. Many heritage green spaces such as the National Trust, English Heritage and Royal Parks charge visitors on entry or for car parking to generate income to fund and reinvest in the sites. Adding a charge for parking will help the City to challenge perceptions that management of the Forest is 'free' and that there is no cost to its preservation or management, including the upkeep of over 50 car parks.
 - Reduce the impact of non-Forest users on Forest car parks to free space for genuine Forest users.
10. The number of cars trying to access our car parks regularly exceeds the capacity available especially at peak periods. This is an issue where Forest car parks are located near other facilities with 'pay to park' arrangements such as train stations, healthcare provision or even local high street shops.
 - Better protect the Forest's ecologically sensitive areas by influencing where visitors visit.

11. Around 45,000 vehicles pass through the Wake Arms roundabout in the heart of the Forest each weekday. Tens of thousands of vehicles travel up and down the other roads through the Forest every day. Exhaust pollutants are up to three times higher than the limits set to protect plant health. Car use, particularly in the interior of the Forest should therefore be discouraged where possible, to better protect this ancient woodland for future generations to enjoy.
 - To encourage more sustainable access to the Forest, for example travel by public transport or bicycle, to reduce the impact of harmful vehicle emissions.
12. There are 270,000 homes within a short walking distance of the Forest and we are confident that visitors have excellent alternative means of accessing the Forest other than by car. At least 14 train/underground stations and 16 different bus services offer access points within a 12-minute walk. This was tested in March, during the first period of 'lockdown' in 2020, when for a large part of the time the car parks were closed. The Forest was possibly at its busiest ever with an estimated 1.3 million visits over a 6-week period. Cycling is welcomed across most of the Forest and newly refurbished car parks include cycle parking points. The Charity would like to install more of these in other Forest car parks, which could be funded using revenue raised from car park charges.

Proposals

Tariff Models

13. PMS Consultants were commissioned by the City Corporation to provide advice for a scheme of parking charges. They undertook benchmarking of charges in operation in areas surrounding Epping Forest car parks. (Appendix A)
14. PMS consultants presented a range of options for charging based on the premise of positioning Epping Forest car parks at the lower end of local charging schemes. From a range of five different charging options a preferred option (shown in this report as Tariff A) was presented as being the most cost effective and reflected what users would be willing to pay.
15. Income modelling from the charges reflect the most common length of time visitors spend in the Forest at one to two hours. The revenue raised at these amounts is projected to be sufficient to cover the cost of operating charging in car parks and produce a surplus for reinvestment in the management of car parks, highways, transport or access related expenditure.
16. The option of a free period of parking will not be progressed due to the increased complexity of monitoring and additional administration costs. The experience of similar provisions in other areas has shown that free periods were open to high levels of abuse leading to complaints and appeals where enforcement notices have been issued.

17. In all cases it is proposed that there is no charge made for blue badge holders and motorcycles. A scheme to enable staff and qualifying tenants and contractor registration plates to be registered for free parking will also be included.

18. There are three options presented below for a basic charging tariff:

Tariff A

19. The tariff model presented as the chosen start point by PMS consultants is as follows:

- £0.80p up to 1 hour
- £1.50p up to 2 hours
- £2.80p 2 – 4 hours
- £4.00p Full Day

20. This tariff aims to be competitive with other local facilities, while limiting the impact on Forest users.

21. This tariff option falls below that charged by for example, Redbridge Council, and is comparable to that charged by local authorities in the north of the Forest's environs.

22. It is significantly lower than that charged for access to other green space or heritage sites by charitable operations. Locally Myddelton House Gardens charges £2.50 all day, with average dwell times being in the 1-2 hour range this represents an increased fee for the majority of visits.

23. This tariff option treats the Forest's car park as municipal car parks and does not take into account the value of the Forest as recreational space for leisure and enjoyment.

Tariff B

24. This option takes its basis from the Waltham Forest and Redbridge rates with an enhancement.

- £1.50p up to 1 hour
- £2.50p up to 2 hours
- £4.00p 2 – 4 hours
- £6 Full Day (up to 6 hours)

25. The southern local authorities have higher charging rates than their counterparts in the northern parts of the Forest. This tariff positions charging in Forest car parks at this higher end of tariffs.

26. There is a reduced focus on being competitive with local authorities, while still representing better perceived value than dedicated commercial parking operations such as National Car Parks.

27. This pricing still places the Forest's offer at a lower value than other green space/ heritage offers. However, it adds a premium over municipal comparisons.

Tariff C

28. This tariff is based upon the precedent for parking charges set by heritage organisations, such as the National Trust and English Heritage.
- £3 up to 2 hours
 - £7 all day
29. Many heritage spaces have moved to flat day rate charges. This is much simpler to message than the varied charging options. The higher charges encourage greater dwell time which is of benefit if secondary spend options are created.
30. This option shows confidence in the value of the Forest as an outdoor asset. There is no other fee for access and enjoyment of the Forest. To access most other heritage spaces there is the expectation to pay towards its upkeep and maintenance.
31. A cap on the number of hours per day could be set at 6 hours to prevent commuter parking. However, at £7 this is equal to, or more than other commuter parking areas so is not an incentive to park for commuters. A cap would also restrict those taking much longer walks in the Forest lasting a full day.

Income Projections

32. Annual income at all car parks from these basic tariffs has been calculated based on the methodology used by PMS consultants which was based on a range of surveys undertaken in November 2013 and July/ Aug/ Sept 2019 to count the average number of cars parked at any one time in each of the car parks. This average figure is multiplied by the cost of 2-hour parking at each of the tariffs. Income is projected as follows:

Tariff	Yearly Income
A	£103,151.00
B	£194,372.48
C	£235,630.85

33. This income seems low when compared with annual income taken from comparable country park car parks. This may be based on the data for average car parking which does not take in to account all peak periods, events and other factors that influence peaks in parking. It should therefore be assumed that these are very conservative income estimates.
34. Whilst the majority of people comply with parking charges there are a minority that do not pay. To ensure majority compliance some enforcement and issuing of parking charge notices (PCN) will be necessary.

35. PCN are a necessary tool in the implementation of car park charging but are not proposed to be an essential element of an income target for car parking in Epping Forest and there will be no incentive for the issuing of PCNs.
36. Income from PCN is based on a charge of £100, reduced to £60 if paid within 14 days. This covers the administration cost of issuing and collecting the charge as well as an income to the Forest. A lower charge would not sufficiently cover costs.

Income from PCNs is detailed below on two models based on high assumption of up to 3 PCNs issued daily in every car park. Collecting and administering this scale of charging notices would incur additional costs and should only be built into the scheme once established and if necessary.

Income 3 PCNs per car park per day	Income 2 PCNs per car park per day
£855,400.00	£569,240.00

37. The capital cost for the installation of the equipment and establishment of the scheme is estimated at £170,000 although this may alter following procurement and tender exercises.
38. Approximately £180,000 is held in reserve following an insurance claim for subsidence at South Lodge. Agreement was given for this to be held against a then unspecified building project. Permission is sought to access this fund for up front capital expenditure needed to initiate and support parking charges
39. Annual operating costs are estimated in the region of a minimum of £50,000 which will be offset by income generated but would increase if PCN issuing was needed on a more regular basis. This covers a basic level of additional staffing and licence and operating charges. An additional amount should be set aside in a sinking fund to re-provide future capital costs for replacement, signage and other infrastructure.

Consultation

40. Engagement and consultation with stakeholders, tenants and the public for additional options for charging will take place in January 2021 and feedback from this will inform a further report to your committee in March.
41. Consultation will focus on an option to increase charging in certain car parks according to their capacity (charging more at the most popular car parks); charging according to the day of the week (with increased charges at the weekend when car parks are most used) and options for regular user/ membership scheme offering discounted parking at an annual fee.

Options

42. Three options for the basis of the tariff are presented for your Committee's consideration:

Option A. Agree Tariff A. This option will be cheaper than other local parking provision and will not deter commuters and other non-Forest users.

This option is not recommended

Option B. Agree Tariff B. This offers a range of pricing based on length of stay and is comparable with nearby car parks.

This option is recommended

Option C. Agree Tariff C. This will be a significant leap to a high parking tariff and is likely to create a barrier for many current users.

This option is not recommended

Strategic Implications

43. Car park charging supports the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan objective to provide safe, secure and accessible Open Spaces and services for the benefit of London. Improving car park facilities and accessibility promotes opportunities to value and enjoy the outdoors for recreation, learning and healthy living; and developing a long-term management strategy will help protect the integrity of the environment.

Resource Implications:

44. The estimated forecast budget for the scheme indicates that an in year pay back for operational cost is achievable. Initial capital investment will be met from the £180,000 held in reserve following an insurance claim for subsidence at South Lodge. Agreement was given for this to be held against a then unspecified building project. Permission is sought to access this fund for up front capital expenditure needed to initiate and support parking charges

Legal:

45. Section 8(2) of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 gives the Conservators the power to provide parking spaces on Forest Land in order to improve opportunities for the enjoyment of the Forest by the public. There is also a power to make reasonable charges for the use of parking spaces under section 8(4) of the 1977 Act.

Equalities:

46. Blue badge users will receive free parking for a capped number of hours. Epping Forest is well served by public transport and is accessible by foot from many urban centres, charging is not therefore considered as unduly detrimental to those on lower income. An initial screening exercise of the

equality impact of this decision has been undertaken by the City Corporation. At this stage, it is considered that there are no negative impacts on the protected equality groups.

Charity:

47. Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Climate:

48. The implementation of car park charging can play a role in promoting modal shift to other forms of transport reducing reliance on cars to access the Forest, which in turn should have a positive impact on carbon emissions and air quality.

Conclusion

49. Charging for car parks has been agreed as a necessity in Epping Forest to manage capacity, deter non Forest users that present a direct cost to the charity and to raise enough revenue to maintain the car parks which otherwise are a burden on the charity's finances that could otherwise be spent on protecting of the Forest and its internationally significant natural heritage.

50. This report recommends a charging model that presents an affordable range of charges for motorists whilst discouraging exploitation of the facilities from non-Forest users.

51. Charging will encourage more sustainable visits to the Forest, dissuading car use as far as possible but ensuring that where users choose to visit by car that this privilege pays back into the conservation and protection of the Forest.

Appendix A - Benchmark car park charges

Background Papers

- URS Car Park Study Feb 2014
- Epping Forest Car Parking – Introduction of Parking Charges (28/20b) 16/11/2020

Report author

Jacqueline Eggleston
Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
E: jacqueline.eggleston@cityoflondon.gov.uk
T: 020 8532 5315

