

CAR PARK CHARGING FAQ'S

WHY ARE YOU INTRODUCING CHARGES FOR PARKING IN THE FOREST?

The introduction of car park charges has the following four aims:

- 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.

Epping Forest is a registered charity. Managing a busy Forest with 4.2 million visits each year, alongside internationally important nature and heritage conservation assets is a demanding exercise which costs £4.5 Million to run each year, without the support of local taxation. Most of the charity's funding comes from the City of London Corporation's philanthropic resources but the charity also generates income and seeks alternative sources of funding.

- To reduce the impact of non-Forest users on Forest car parks to free space for genuine Forest users.

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. The internally recognised statutory protections that cover many parts of the Forest prevent the expansion of car parks.

- To better protect the Forest's ecologically sensitive areas by influencing where visitors visit.

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.

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 2020, during the first period of 'lockdown' 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.

ARE ALL FOREST CAR PARKS INCLUDED?

In this first phase of charging, there are 14 car parks proposed. However, over future years charges may be applied to more Forest car parks.

- Wanstead Flats: Centre Road, Alexandra Lake & Jubilee Pond.

This will tackle vehicle displacement from resident parking zones and commuter use.

- Leyton Flats: Hollow Ponds, Boathouse & Eagle Pond.

This will tackle commuter use and the displacement from hospital car parks by hospital visitors and NHS staff and contractors (where charges apply).

- Chingford Hub: Bury Road, The Caddie House (Chingford Golf Course), Connaught Water, Barn Hoppitt (including seasonal overflow) and Connaught Tennis Club.

This will tackle commuter use at Bury Road and Chingford Golf Course car parks and prevent consequent displacement to Barn Hoppitt, Tennis Club and Connaught Water.

- High Beach: Pillow Mounds, Generals Ride & High Beach Visitor Centre.

This will tackle the over capacity use of this area.

HOW HAVE YOU DECIDED ON THE CHARGES?

We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise and calculated the cost of provision to provide a range of suggested tariffs that will be presented to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) for decision in January 2021. There are three options for the basic tariff ranging from below town centre charging points to a 'heritage attraction' higher tariff.

From January we will be consulting and engaging with stakeholders, tenants and the public on variations to the tariffs which consider location, peak times and regular visitors. We will use the feedback to consider ways to address particular concerns. The results will feed into the report presented to EF&CC in March. If you would like to take part in this consultation, it will be made available on our website in January and we will promote its launch on social media and by emailing correspondents.

COULD A VOLUNTARY CHARGE BE LEVIED INSTEAD?

This has been tried at many other green spaces, including our sister site Burnham Beeches. Donations there were very low and as a result voluntary charges were replaced by a formal charging system.

I VISIT THE FOREST TWICE A DAY TO WALK MY DOG, CAN I BUY A PERMIT FOR ANNUAL PARKING?

A significant number of visitors make multiple daily visits to Forest car parks. One of the proposals we are consulting on is to operate a supporter scheme which includes an annual parking permit. This provision would be subject to a 'cap' on the length of stay to prevent it becoming an attractive option for non-Forest users, such as commuters.

I HAVE A BLUE BADGE. DO I HAVE TO PAY TO PARK?

Parking will remain free for Blue Badge concessions. Marked bays for blue badge holders have been audited and provides enough provision on peak days. However, on implementation of the scheme this will be monitored, and additional marked bays can be laid out if there is increased demand. Blue badge holders can also park in regular bays, suitable for their needs, if no marked bays are available.

I RIDE A MOTORCYCLE. DO I HAVE TO PAY TO PARK?

Proposals are currently that parking motorcycles will remain free of charge.

HOW WILL I PAY FOR MY PARKING?

Due to the isolated location and nature of the car parks, payment by cash at conventional machines will be highly susceptible to theft. Cashless payment systems have been adopted by many local authorities and car park operators with success. Proposals outline two types of payment options:

- Pay by Phone – Telephone call or via web application.
- Pay & Display Machine – Card payment only.

WILL VEHICLES BE TOWED?

There is currently no intention to tow vehicles as a parking enforcement measure. Parking penalties will be managed through penalty charges.

WHAT WILL THE PENALTY CHARGES BE?

Penalty charges are part of the benchmarking exercise to be decided at Committee.

WHAT WILL THE INCOME BE SPENT ON?

Many heritage green spaces such as the National Trust, English Heritage and Royal Parks charge visitors 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 50 car parks. All the income provided by car park charges, less the costs of maintaining the scheme, will be reinvested in the Forest.

WILL THERE BE A REVIEW PROCESS?

There will be a review of the Car Parking Charging Scheme after 12 months of operation. The tariff and penalty charges, as with all other fees and charges across the Forest, will be reviewed annually in January each year, from 2022.

WILL RESIDENTS BE AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT PARKING?

The car parks proposed for charging in phase one are either not adjacent to residential housing or Residents Parking Zones (RPZ's) are already in place. In the south of the Forest it has been the introduction of RPZ's around underground and overground stations that has displaced commuter parking to the Forest.

We will continue to liaise with local authorities on car park charges implementation and improved sustainable transport options.

HOW WILL THE CAR PARKING SCHEME BE MANAGED?

The practical operation of the car parks will be subject to a tender exercise and finalised over the coming months.

ISN'T THE FOREST IS SUPPOSED TO BE FREE?

Some observers believe Queen Victoria gave a 'gift' of Epping Forest to the public and the Forest is often referred to as 'the People's Forest'. The reality is that Queen Victoria's dedication to the public at the official opening in 1882, was simply recognising the City's purchase of the Forest.

Epping Forest had been privately owned for the 300 years prior to the Epping Forest Acts of 1871, 1878 & 1880 but remained subject to the requirements of Royal Forest

Law between 1217 and 1878. The sale of Forest Law rights to raise funds for the Crown from the 1850s fuelled damaging encroachments of the Royal Forest of Epping and facilitated the felling of much of neighbouring Hainault Forest. The City Corporation supported a landmark case in 1874 which halted enclosures, before purchasing much of the Forest prior to 1878, settling the boundaries of the Forest in 1882.

Others believe that the introduction of charges is contrary to the undertakings given in the narrative to the Epping Forest Act 1878 that the City of London Corporation was willing to meet the costs of managing Epping Forest.

Managing Epping Forest for public access, heritage, land and nature conservation is an expensive undertaking. In addition to meeting the initial £30 Million purchase costs, the City Corporation has funded the costs of managing Epping Forest for the benefit of London and the nation from its own philanthropic resources since 1878 without support from national or local taxation. Nevertheless, while the Forest has always been free for public access on foot or by public transport, since its earliest days the City Corporation has levied charges, from licencing beer stalls, donkey rides and photographers to charging for football matches and entry to The Wanstead Park Grotto.

Some 142 years on, acting as a charitable trust, Epping Forest operates in a much changed environment, whether it be the growth of the suburbs and the populations surrounding the Forest, new legislative requirements around heritage, nature conservation and public safety, the cost of managing the Forest has grown significantly.

Despite improved income from a range of estate charges to tenants, wayleave holders and activity providers, additional income is now required to maintain a safe, conserved and accessible Forest.

The principle of public access on foot and by bus or train remains true to this day, however, the Trust needs to continue raise income from a range of charges, which are entirely invested in the management of the Forest.

The Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880 pre-date the invention of the motor car in 1886. Recognising the need to manage the post-1950s growth of car ownership, and subsequent car parking pressure at Epping Forest, the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 granted additional powers to Epping Forest to provide car parks and to charge for car parking.