
PAY & DISPLAY PARKING

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

Executive Committee

8 June 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report examines the current scope of Pay & Display operations in the Scottish Borders and proposes a number of changes to standardise these.
- 1.2 The report also provides feedback on the recent suspension of Pay & Display in the run up to Christmas 2020.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee agrees to:**

- (a) **Standardise the daily operational period across Pay & Display car parks at 08.30 to 17.00.**
- (b) **Pay & Display operating days being Monday to Saturday, but with the specific exceptions detailed in (c), (d) and (e) below.**
- (c) **Buccleuch Street, Melrose additionally operating on a Sunday.**
- (d) **St Abbs Car Park additionally operating on a Sunday.**
- (e) **Edinburgh Road, Peebles operating on a Saturday only.**
- (f) **Standardise tariff bands across all Pay & Display car parks as:**
 - **Up to 2 hours**
 - **Between 2 to 4 hours**
 - **Between 4 to 6 hours**
 - **Over 6 hours (in any one day)**

And that a separate daily charge for buses and coaches can still apply in those car parks that provide that facility.

- (g) Set costs for the proposed tariff bands as follows:**
- **50p** for up to 2 hours
 - **£1.50** for between 2 to 4 hours
 - **£3.00** for between 4 to 6 hours
 - **£5.00** for over 6 hours (in any one day)
- (h) Set a standardised charge of £40 (with a reduced charge of £20 if payment is received within 10 days) across all towns for any surcharges / Excess Charges / Irregular Parking Charges that may be incurred.**
- (i) Improved signage in existing Pay & Display car parks including emphasising the ability to pay by smart phone.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Councils are responsible for the management and regulation of both on and off-street parking in their settlements, other than in areas that are privately owned and maintained.
- 3.2 Pay and Display parking has operated in the Scottish Borders since the early 1990's in certain off-street car parks. The number of car parks operating under Pay and Display has fluctuated over the years. At the moment the scheme operates in five towns:
- Galashiels (High Street, Ladhope Vale, Hall Street, Stirling Street and Stirling Place car parks)
 - Hawick (O'Connell Street, Walter's Wynd, Health Centre, Cross Wynd and Allars Crescent car parks)
 - Melrose (Buccleuch Street car park)
 - Peebles Edinburgh Road (Eastgate) (Sat only), Greenside and Swimming Pool car parks
 - St Abbs (Harbour car park)*

* The car park at St Abbs is operated by the Harbour Trust on behalf of the Council.

In addition, the car park at the Heart of Hawick operates exclusively for disabled badge holders only.

- 3.3 The rationale for introducing Pay & Display operations was and remains, to encourage the turn-over of vehicles, particularly in busy town centre car parks, thereby helping to stimulate the local economy.
- 3.4 The main revenue from Pay & Display is generated from the purchase of parking tickets that allow users to park for an allocated period of time, but additional revenue comes from surcharges/excess charges/irregular parking charges when applicable.
- 3.5 The ticket price; penalty charge payment level and operational period for Pay & Display parking can be set locally by Members. There is currently a variation in some or all of these aspects from town to town and in certain locations from car park to car park.
- 3.6 At its meeting of 17 November 2020 the Executive Committee authorised the Director of Assets and Infrastructure to undertake a review of the scope of pay parking; the current charging regimes and charging times for Pay & Display parking and asked that a further report is brought forward within a 6 month period.

4 FEEDBACK FROM SUSPENSION OF PAY & DISPLAY DECEMBER 2020

- 4.1 The Executive Committee of 17 November 2020 agreed to temporarily suspend Pay & Display parking operations between the 1 December 2020 and 4 January 2021, with the intention of providing a boost to the ability of towns to attract local shoppers in the lead up to Christmas. The measure

appeared to be generally well received by both car park users and local traders.

- 4.2 Parking Attendants continued to undertake periodic checking of the car parks during the suspension period in order to monitor and report back on the impact of the temporary suspension on parking behaviours. Details of the findings is provided in Appendix B.
- 4.3 The main change identified was that car parks were significantly busier than in previous months as well as in comparison to the previous December when Pay & Display operations were in place. This was most evident in Galashiels and Melrose with some car parks under half-full in December 2019 but approaching full capacity at times during the suspension period. Significant increases were also found in Hawick car parks but 2 of the 3 Peebles car parks showed the opposite trend.
- 4.4 Parking Attendants, however, also reported that a very high percentage of those parking in car parks during the suspension period were spending the whole working day there. This was evidenced across all four towns with incidences of up to three quarters of individual car parks being occupied by all day parkers.
- 4.5 Infringements such as parking over two bays; and parking in bus bays were noted to be considerably higher during the suspension period. There were also a number of complaints from residents permit holders who found it much more difficult to find a space over the suspension period.

5 CHARGING REGIMES AND TIMINGS

- 5.1 The ticket price; penalty charge payment level and operational period for Pay & Display parking can be set locally by Members. There is currently a variation in some or all of these aspects from town to town and in certain locations from car park to car park. A summary of the current regimes is provided in Appendix A
- 5.2 The majority of car parks that operate pay and display do so on a Monday to Saturday inclusive basis. There are, however, two exceptions to this. Firstly Edinburgh Road (Eastgate) Car Park in Peebles which operates only on a Saturday and secondly Abbey Car Park in Melrose which operates seven days a week.
- 5.3 There are fairly specific reasons for the two car parks that operate out with the standard Monday to Saturday operations.
 - The Abbey Car Park in Melrose operates seven days a week to reflect the fact that the car park remains very busy, and in need of turn-over, on a Sunday.
 - Edinburgh Road, Peebles is Saturday only as it is felt that weekday parking would put additional pressure on on-street parking such as the High Street and may discourage visitors to the town. In addition, the Area Forum sub-committee that considered this subject in 2013/14 wanted to facilitate the use of public transport – particularly Mon to Fri commuting to Edinburgh; and there was a belief that if the car park was

free all day Mon-Fri then this would be a help in encouraging commuters to take the bus to Edinburgh.

In order to continue to allow this flexibility it is not proposed to fully standardise this aspect of the current Pay & Display.

- 5.4 There are currently two distinct charging time periods across the region. In Galashiels and Melrose car parks the time period is 09.30 to 17.00, while in Hawick and Peebles the operating times are 08.30 to 17.30.
- 5.5 It is recommended that the operating period is standardised to 08.30 to 17.00 across all Pay & Display car parks.
- 5.6 Pay & Display operations also differ in terms of the level set for Surcharges/ExcessCharges/Irregular Parking Charges. In Galashiels, Hawick and Melrose this is set at £20 (with a reduced charge of £10 if payment is received within 10 days). In Peebles, however, Members increased this a number of years ago to £40 (with a reduced charge of £20 if payment is received within 10 days).
- 5.7 Noting that the £20 charge has not changed since the introduction of Pay & Display in the Scottish Borders over 25 years ago and may no longer be seen as a deterrent by some it is recommended that a standardised charge of £40 (with a reduced charge of £20 if payment is received within 10 days) is adopted across all towns.
- 5.8 The greatest variant across the towns is the number of tariff bands and the level of those tariffs. The lowest number of tariff bands is two in some Galashiels car parks and the highest is nine in the Hawick car parks. Cars are able to park for up to 4 hours for 20 pence in Greenside and the Swimming Pool car parks in Peebles, while in the more central car parks in Galashiels staying over 3 hours incurs a charge of £5. The full range of tariff bands and charges is outlined in Appendix A.
- 5.9 It is considered beneficial to standardise and reduce the number of tariff bands. It is suggested that there should be four bands going forward and that these would be set at:
 - Up to 2 hours
 - Between 2 to 4 hours
 - Between 4 to 6 hours
 - Over 6 hours (in any one day)

A separate daily charge for buses and coaches would still apply in those car parks that have that facility.

- 5.10 Standardising the cost for each band across towns is slightly less straightforward for a number of reasons:
 - There is a wide range of costs from town to town
 - There can be a deliberate differential between car parks in the same town to encourage drivers to use outlying car parks for longer stays and provide greater turn-over in busier town centre ones.

5.11 Notwithstanding 5.10 above there is a desire to standardise the tariffs across all car parks in the main towns. It is therefore proposed that the minimum charge would be set at 50 pence rising to £1.50 for 2 to 4 hours, then £3 for 4 to 6 hours and £5 for in excess of 6 hours in any one day. The intention being that this set of charges would encourage shorter stays, stimulate turn-over and aid local businesses.

5.12 Obviously any changes that affect car parks where the operation is in conjunction with a third party will need to be agreed in advance with those parties.

5.13 Should the proposed changes be agreed it is anticipated that it will be a minimum of 6 months before they can be implemented. As the proposals involve changing prices and operating times there needs to be statutory consultation (with 28 days for objection) followed by public consultation (further 28 days). Each of these needs to be advertised in the local press followed by a further notice making the Order. With press notice periods this exercise alone can be expected to take 3 months. Thereafter the two most time-critical elements are the machine calibration and ticket supply. Suppliers for both these activities have previously quoted a minimum 8 week lead-time from the provision of information; albeit it may be that this could be brought down slightly through negotiation. In addition to the preparation time required for SBC officers to collate the information and prepare the artwork it would be intended to go through a procurement exercise for the ticket supply to ensure best value for the Council.

5.14 Other requirements such as sign design, manufacture and erection should be able to be delivered simultaneously and within the above timescale.

ACTIVITY	Mth 1	Mth 2	Mth 3	Mth 4	Mth 5	Mth 6
Prepare documentation	■					
Advertise Statutory Consultation		■				
Statutory Consultation		■	■	■		
Advertise Public Consultation			■			
Public Consultation			■	■	■	
Publish Amended Order				■		
Prepare documentation and artwork				■		
Machine calibration				■	■	■
Procurement of Tickets				■	■	■
Supply of tickets					■	■
Sign Design				■		
Sign Manufacture & Erection				■	■	■

6 SPECIFIC ISSUES

6.1 The Council works with a partner "RingGo" in providing customers with the facility to pay their parking charge via smart phone. The use of RingGo has increased over the years since it was introduced in 2013 and this is a trend that is likely to be continued with fewer people using cash in their everyday transactions. Currently the RingGo service is provided at a small additional cost to the vehicle owner who pays 20p per transaction, but can also opt in to receive two text reminders at 10p per time. The only charge relayed to the Council as part of the RingGo service is a banking fee percentage. This is currently 5.8% of the fee paid by the user. Please note, however, that the contract provided by RingGo is currently up for renewal.

- 6.2 It was observed that many customers do not read the details on the car park signs and that the signs could be simplified and made clearer making good use of visual aids where possible.
- 6.3 The current charging regime in the central Galashiels car parks of up to 3 hours for £1 and £5 for over 3 hours was introduced to discourage all day parking and stimulate turn-over. In practice it leads to widespread illegal meter feeding by users (i.e. users go back towards the end of the first 3 hour period remove their ticket and purchase another 3 hours at £1 thus saving up to £3).
- 6.4 The disparity in charges between car parks in Peebles causes confusion for some users. In Galashiels this seems to be less of an issue with customers appearing to grasp the rationale that parking close to the centre of town is at a more premium rate.
- 6.5 An issue exists with car park users who have not used their full time allocation leaving their tickets on the machine so it might be used by someone else. As well as being illegal under the scheme this results in the machines becoming sticky with adhesives from the tickets and requires the machines to be cleaned on most visits.
- 6.6 Those parking in the Swimming Pool car park in Peebles currently get a rebate of the minimum 20p charge from the swimming pool on the use of those facilities. It would be the intention to adjust the rebate to 50p should it be agreed to set that as the new minimum tariff going forward, but discussions have yet to take place in that regard.
- 6.7 Other issues that officers will be considering going forward are:
- Increased bay size (spaces are tight in many car parks as cars are typically becoming larger)
 - Increased number of disabled bays
 - Electric vehicle charging provision
 - Providing dedicated spaces for camper vans
 - The potential for expanding P & D to other towns in the Scottish Borders
- 6.8 With respect to the final bullet point above there has not previously been an appetite from other towns to introduce pay and display parking. It was trialled in Kelso a number of years ago but proved very unpopular, with locals boycotting the car parks involved, and was discontinued. In Jedburgh there is a specific and understandable concern from High Street traders that the introduction of pay and display in town centre car parks would lead to visitors bypassing the town centre for the out-of-town woollen mills where there is free parking.
- 6.9 At the previous Executive meeting, Officers were also asked to look into the possibility of providing card payment facilities in existing P & D carparks. Initial investigation into this has highlighted that it is far from straightforward and probably cost-prohibitive.
- 6.10 There is a requirement to set up a Payment Service Provider and Merchant Bank and for the machines to sync with the network provider and back office. We are advised that there are compatibility issues between our

machine supplier Metric Group Ltd and the payment service provider. This is not insurmountable but would require an accreditation piece of work that could cost anywhere in the region of £20,000 to over £100,000 and the work could take up to a year to complete.

6.11 In addition to this, and as well as adapting the existing machines, they would require to be either hard wired into a Local Area Network or have individual Modem connections. The cost indications for this aspect of providing card payment facilities is outlined in 7.1 (d)

6.12 As outlined in 6.9 through 6.11 there are a number of complications and significant cost implications associated with providing a card payment option at the Councils Pay and Display machines. As RingGo already provides a cashless payment method to customers it is not recommended proceeding further with card payment facilities at this time.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

There are costs implications associated with the report but it is not possible to quantify all aspects of these.

- (a) Any changes to the tariff bands; parking charges and excess charge payments will impact on the profitability of the scheme. With a number of unknowns it is very difficult to quantify this to any level of accuracy but it is anticipated that it will have a positive impact on surpluses.
- (b) There is a direct one-off cost associated with changing tariffs and/or bands as this will require a recalibration of the payment machines. The current charge for doing this is £90.50 + VAT which with 17 machines would equate to £1,542.75 ex VAT.
- (c) In addition to (b) there is also, under the current contract with RingGo, a charge of £106 for a new zone and £52 for a tariff charge. The changes proposed would amount to £884. It should be noted that the current operator has indicated that they will waive these charges. If however the contract were to be awarded to another operator there may be cost implications in this regard.
- (d) The cost of sign changes is estimated at £160 per sign so for 17 signs would be £2,720.
- (e) The costs of advertising the proposed changes in four local papers on the three occasions will be dependent on the size of the advert but is expected to cost between £1,200 and £1,800 ex VAT.
- (f) The costs associated with providing card payment facilities are as follows (please note that this incorporates the software configuration requirements costed at (b) above):

- LAN Upgrade* £29,507 ex VAT
- 4G MODEM Upgrade** £39,991.63 ex VAT

With either option there will be ongoing banking charges

* with LAN option SBC would need to arrange the laying of CAT 5 data cables to the machines from a router.

** 1) Signal surveys (£193.50 per site) are recommended to ensure there is sufficient signal strength to allow card payments.

** 2) Wireless logic SIMS required (£6.50 per machine per month minimum 24 month contract)

N.B. This would be in addition to the accreditation investigation discussed in section 6.10, that is estimated to cost between £20,000 and £100,000 plus.

7.2 Risk and Mitigations

It is believed that the changes being proposed will bring positive benefits to Pay & Display operations by introducing clearer and more consistent parameters for users and assisting operatives in undertaking their duties. Any potential for negative impacts can be mitigated through careful monitoring of the service following the changes.

7.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken in regards to the content of this report and no adverse findings have been observed requiring a fuller IIA to be undertaken.

7.4 Sustainable Development Goals

It is not felt that the recommendations in this report will have a material impact on any of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

7.5 Climate Change

The recommendations in this report do not make significant changes to the current Pay & Display regime. As such they do not provide opportunities to mitigate and/or enhance the activity in terms of climate change impacts.

7.6 Rural Proofing

There are no rural proofing impacts resulting from this report.

7.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

7.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications will be consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

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Signature

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