

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

13TH February 2006

RESIDENTS PARKING PERMITS/FACILITY CHARGES

Purpose of report

To consider the policy relating to the provision of residents parking permits for Authority car parks and the feasibility of charging for use of the Authority public conveniences.

Strategic Planning Framework

The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

Background

At the November 2005 Finance and Resources Committee meeting, officers were asked to prepare a report for the next meeting of the committee to allow members to consider the policy on parking permits for residents of the National Park and the options for charging for use of the Authority public conveniences.

The issue of residents passes was last considered by the Authority at its meeting in May 2002 when members resolved that : *'No action be taken on the introduction of a charge for resident's parking permits currently provided free of charge to residents of the national park'*. Charging for public conveniences has not formally been considered by the Authority before.

Residents Permits

In 1985 the National Park Committee resolved to issue free passes to residents whose homes lay within the national park boundary, and that policy has remained unchanged since that time.

Legal Position

The Authority uses powers granted to it under Section 12 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to provide parking facilities. In addition, Section 90 of the Act enables the Authority to charge for parking. It can certainly be argued that providing free permits for residents is permissible in so far as it could be considered to foster economic and social wellbeing of local communities. However, neither would it be unlawful, or indeed illogical, to charge both residents and non residents alike.

It should perhaps also be noted that under the Countryside Act 1968, the Authority has power to provide car parking in conjunction with country parks, picnic areas and camp sites and Section 43 of that Act provides that the Authority can make reasonable charges for such services. It also, however, states that the Authority should make as freely available such services to non residents of the Park as residents. In other words, if we were using powers under the 1968 Act, it is considered that it would not be permissible to issue free permits to residents only.

Number of permits

There were 10236 dwellings recorded in the 2001 census and the Authority issues over 7000 permits that run from Jan – Dec of each year. These permits include free residents passes, chargeable business/annual permits and free permits to Officers and Members. A thousand or so of these are replacement permits when car changes are made and there are further passes issued for the agreed concession for parking at Joss Lane, Sedbergh. This concession is under consideration by South Lakeland District Council and, if replaced, will lead to a fall in YDNPA passes issued. It is, therefore, estimated that the number of residents passes issued will be around 5500.

Potential Income from Charging for Residents Passes

Appendix 1 attempts to estimate possible revenue from residents passes at various charging levels, and also notes the increased administration that would arise when receiving payments.

Appendix 2 shows the policies adopted by South Lakeland, Richmondshire and Craven District Councils, the Lake District and North York Moors National Parks.

Conclusions

There can still be no doubt that the issue of free passes for the past twenty-one years has been a bonus for many residents and there is also no doubt that the withdrawal of that bonus and/or the introduction of charging would be very unpopular. The Authority should consider the issue within the context of it's overall charging policies and current financial situation.

There are a number of options open to the Authority:

1. Leave the existing system unaltered.
2. Leave the passes free from charge but restrict the usage to one car park.
3. Remove the free pass totally and expect users to pay and display or purchase an annual pass at the fee of £75 (the same rate as an annual business/visitor pass).
4. Replace the free pass with a chargeable pass.

Options 1 and 2 (see Appendix 1)

These, obviously, would be the most popular policies with users but do not:

- reimburse the Authority for any administrative costs when supplying the current passes
- Increase car park income

Option 3 (see Appendix 1)

This appears to be the most effective option in revenue terms and would make significant contributions to car park income revenue levels although it would be extremely unpopular.

Option 4 (see Appendix 1)

Whilst this, also, would be unpopular, dependant on the level of charges it would be possible to recoup both the additional and existing administrative charges that residents passes incur.

Looking at the charges made by neighbouring authorities and national parks (see Appendix 2), and taking into account legal, logical and financial issues advice given, it is considered that a charge of £25 would be appropriate for residents passes and that this charge should be introduced from April 2006. This still represents good value to residents when compared against the annual Business/Visitor pass at £75 and charges elsewhere. To assist in the management of on-street parking, it is considered that free passes, restricted to a specific car park be allocated on a case by case basis to residents where there is no practical alternative off-road parking and where on road parking creates a traffic and visitor management issue.

Charging for use of toilet facilities

It is generally considered, and relayed to the public, that the Authority's car park charges are made to firstly cover the cost of all the facilities provided, including the public conveniences, and secondly to contribute to the Authority's programmes of work. Whilst there will be people who use those conveniences without having paid such a charge it is considered that the vast majority will have paid car parking charges. The main exception being those that arrive by coach for which there is no current parking fee.

Section 87 of the 1936 Public Health Act actually prohibits local Authorities from making a charge for the use of urinals, although some Authorities do so. There is, however, no restriction on charging for the use of toilet cubicles (for men or women). A number of authorities have concluded that it is indefensible to discriminate between the genders, and that it may be inconsistent with equal rights and human rights legislation. This has led at least one authority to abandon its plans to pay for service improvements to public lavatories by charging for entry to a small number of them in areas frequented by tourists.

The Authority could therefore, subject to it's consideration of the issues raised above, fit coin operated locks to each cubicle door at each convenience. The authority has approximately 60 cubicles and an approximate estimate of the financial implications is:

60 locks @ £600	£36000
Additional cash collections	£31000
Repairs	£ 4000
Total costs	£71000

It is very difficult to estimate the usage but if it is taken that 202740 number of car park tickets are sold with an average occupancy rate of two/car and that 60% of those use the cubicles; a charge of 20p should provide an income of £48.6k.

At an entry fee level of 20p it is estimated therefore that the year on year management and maintenance costs of such a system would at best provide a net income of approximately £13k.

Whilst this represents additional income for the Authority the management of such a system should not be underestimated and it is considered that this level of income is not worth the additional trouble. In addition it should be noted that it may be considered necessary to revisit car parking charges in order to reflect the fact that toilet facilities are charged for separately and that there is no budget provision for the initial installation within 2006/07 budgets.

On balance it is considered that the most effective and equitable means of charging for toilet facilities is through the car park charging mechanism.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Residents passes:

It is recommended that from April 2007 resident's passes are:

- (a) provided to residents of the national park at a charge of £25 per pass and
- (b) free passes, restricted to a specific car park, are issued on a case by case basis to residents where there are no other off road alternatives and where there are traffic and visitor management issues to consider.

2. Charging for Public Conveniences:

It is recommended that no separate charge is made for the use of public conveniences and that the cost is recognised within the car parking charges.

JOYCE WHITLEY
CONTRACTS MANAGER

Background documents: Authority report May 2002 'Residents Passes'

12th January 2006

Free passes are issued, by application form, to residents whose homes lie within the national park boundary, and where there is doubt as to location the appropriate Area Ranger makes the judgement as to whether the residence is within the boundary or not. The small cost of administering the present passes is approximately £900 for the purchase of the permits and it takes just a couple of minutes for our officers to issue. Currently passes run from Jan-Dec for convenience of the customer but should a charging system be resolved then it should move to financial years April-March.

Chargeable passes would incur a considerable rise in the cost of issuing passes:

- A receipt would need to be issued for money paid for each pass
- Evidence of criteria would need checking
- There would need to be some form of numbering and stock control system for an audit trail
- The money would need to be banked and would, therefore, need conciliation each day that payment is received. This would entail a variation to the cash collection contract which may increase that charge if it raises money collected above the cash collection insurance limit, and above the limit acknowledged to be safe for two persons to deal with. Similarly, depending on the amount of monies held overnight(s) within YDNPA premises it may affect the insurance premium paid by the Authority for cash held.
- There would be additional duties for the Finance & Resources Dept, as payments would need to be entered onto journals in order to bring the revenue onto the Authority accounts.

Estimates of possible revenue from the introduction of charges for residents parking

1. Option 3 – remove the free pass and rely on pay and display revenue – 50% (2750) paying £2 per week = £286k – VAT = income of approx. No increased admin costs and the saving of permit printing.
2. Option 4 - Replace free residents passes with chargeable passes. An assumption has been made that 50% of the current pass holders will apply for a chargeable pass.

Income at various charging levels after the effects of VAT and additional admin costs of £7k are taken into account.

At £ 5/pass estimated income £5745
At £10/pass estimated income £17447
At £15/pass estimated income £29149
At £20/pass estimated income £41751
At £25/pass estimated income £52253

Appendix 2

Craven District Council currently makes the following charges for resident's passes: £20 for 3 hours per day or £100 for all day all year or £55 for all day 6 months of the year. (Review due March 2006)

South Lakeland District Council issue free permits to residents for on-street parking rather than in their car parks. This entitles a resident to park in a zone, which may have four or five streets, but does not guarantee a space. Permits for the car parks are chargeable and may increase to £250. (Review due March 2006).

Richmondshire District Council does not have a specific residents pass. There is a £40 pass available to all (residents/non residents). The pass is valid for all day parking at all ten of their car parks.

Lake District National Park charge £150 for one car at one car park, £200 for 1 car at all car parks, £300 for any car at one car park. (For those households with more than one car).

North York Moors National Park has an annual residents pass at a cost of £25 with restriction to a nominated car park. This charge has been effective for some years but may be subject to review this year.