

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 8 February 2008

Report: COACH PARKING IN NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY CAR PARKS

Purpose of the report

1. To review the current arrangements relating to the use of Authority car parks by private coaches.

Strategic Planning Framework

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

- *Best Value Performance Plan objective: "Optimise annual income generation from Authority car parks and toilets and maintain customer satisfaction levels so that at least 80% of users rate them as satisfactory".*

Background

3. At the Policy Development Forum meeting, which discussed external funding, in October 2007 members considered the options for optimising income from Authority car parks and toilets. Whilst the general consensus was that the current charging policies were effective, a number of members expressed surprise that private coaches were able to use our car parks free of charge and asked that the issue be reconsidered by the Finance and Resources Committee.

Current Policy

4. In 1999 a report was considered by the Finance and Resources Committee on income performance and changes to car parking charges. As a result, charging tariffs for private cars were simplified and coach parking was provided free of charge. Previously charges for coaches were a complicated mix varying between £3.50 for two hours on summer weekdays to £9.00 per day at weekends.

5. It was decided to make coach parking free to reflect:

- a. A wish to encourage coaches as an alternative to the private car
- b. The added benefits that this might bring to the local economy
- c. The hope that it would bring coaches into the National Park Authority car parks more readily, providing potential added value to the National Park Centres.
- d. A means of persuading coaches to park in the car parks rather than seeking the alternative (and free) option of on-street parking
- e. The fact that enforcement of coach charges was extremely difficult, with many drivers refusing to pay.

At the time the financial implications of this policy were estimated to be an annual loss of £4,500 car park income.

Other Authorities

6. Our neighbouring Authorities currently levy the following charges for coaches:

- Craven District Council:
Varying charges up to £10 for 4 hours in Skipton and free parking at Settle and Ingleton.
- Richmondshire District Council:
Free parking at all sites
- South Lakeland District Council:
Free parking on a limited number of sites that they have available for coaches
- Lake District National Park Authority:
Same as cars – up to £6/day
- North York Moors National Park Authority:
Free

The Options

7. There are basically two options, we either charge for coaches or we don't. If charges were applied at a rate of £5 for two hours and £10 for a full day (roughly reflecting the tariffs for private cars), we may get an increase in car park income in the region of £5000 . It is however very difficult to give an accurate estimate due to the fact that, at the moment, we do not know how many coaches are using our car parks as we do not issue tickets for them. In addition the compliance rate has historically been low for coaches, and whilst this may be better given our more dynamic approach to enforcement, it will still be an issue.

Conclusion

8. There is the potential to slightly increase income by charging coaches. Coach travellers make use of toilet facilities and currently we get no recompense for this. However there will be an increase in officer time, which is difficult to quantify, in ensuring compliance in terms of rangers, National Park Centre staff and legal staff in following up enforcement action. The difficulty of ensuring compliance should not be under-estimated and it is possible that the time and effort spent on compliance may cancel out income received.

RECOMMENDATION

9. The views of members are sought.

Jon Avison
Head of Park Management

21 January 2008
Background documents: None