

EASTBOURNE PARKING SCHEME ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

1. Need for signs on P&D machines advising hotel guests that they can obtain hotel guest permits.

Hoteliers are encouraged to publicise the availability of permits to their guests at the time of booking and will often issue a permit in advance so that they have a permit when they arrive. We are preparing a map that hoteliers will be able to use to indicate exactly which bays are available for permit holders.

For potential guests arriving without booking, the tariff allows them to park in any bay (other than a permit only bay) for up to 15 minutes for 20 pence while they make enquiries. They would not see any sign on a ticket machine until after they had found a parking place and it is unlikely that a nominal charge of 20 pence would deter them from staying.

The information that could be put on a ticket machine would, inevitably, be limited and, because permits are valid in some bays and not others, limited information could be confusing. For these reasons it is considered that it is best for information about hotel permits to be given through the hotels where full details can be given and any queries can be dealt with.

2. Why can't permit holders park on the seafront?

There is not enough space for everyone and, if there is not to be a general free-for-all, difficult judgements have to be made about priorities. The permit scheme gives priority to residents and overnight hotel guests. Some spaces are for permit holders only and others are available to permit holders on favourable terms (ie not subject to the time limits or charges that apply to others).

But other people need to be able to park in the seafront area, too: diners, conference delegates, theatre goers, shoppers, people visiting the beach and people walking on the promenade. The pay & display parking is intended primarily for these although anyone, including hotel guests, can pay to park there.

3. There will not be enough space for hotel guests in the side roads off the seafront in the summer months

There is no *guarantee* of a space being available but there never was. Other than at the Royal Parade end of the seafront (where circumstances are different and specific action has been taken to address the local problem) the provision for parking by permit holders in streets just off the seafront (together with the few bays on the landward side of the seafront where permits are valid) is sufficient to make the chances of a guest finding a parking place reasonably close a where they are staying much greater than formerly.

4. What action is being taken to address the impact of the vehicles that have been displaced to the area outside the controlled area which is causing problems for hotels and guest houses in this area?

During consultations on the parking scheme, we explained the likelihood that some parking would be displaced into streets that were just outside the scheme and asked residents and businesses whether, if controls went ahead in the next street to theirs, they would wish their street to be included.

A majority of respondents in streets outside the scheme indicated that, even in those circumstances, they would not wish their street to be included.

We will shortly be undertaking surveys of the numbers of vehicles parked within and just outside the controlled area and the information will contribute to a review of the scheme later in 2009. We will also be seeking the views of residents and businesses in the affected areas.

5. The maximum period of stay allowed in the town centre controlled area is 2 hours. This is insufficient and should be extended to 3 or 4 hours.

The time limit in streets closer to the seafront is 4 hours but in most of the shopping streets it is 2 hours.

The reason for restricting the maximum stay is to encourage the greatest possible turnover (so that as many people as possible get the opportunity to park close to particular shops or other premises) whilst still allowing sufficient time for most people to complete most of the business that they wish to do. Anyone staying for longer does, of course, have the option of parking in a car park.

There is clearly, to an extent, a trade off between these two objectives. If people were allowed to stay for 4 hours, fewer people in total could be accommodated.

This issue will be considered in the planned review of the scheme later in 2009 and we will welcome any views from retailers and others.

6. Charges will discourage people from coming into the town centre.

It is frequently claimed that charges will deter people from parking in the town but there is no evidence that charges elsewhere have had that effect. A number of businesses in Eastbourne report increased footfall and a favourable response from customers who welcome the fact that, since the introduction of the charges, it is easier to find a convenient place to park.

7. Why doesn't the income from the scheme go to Eastbourne Borough Council?

All income from on street parking goes to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) because ESCC is the highway authority. Income from Borough Council Car Parks (such as the centre of Hyde Gardens) continues to go to the Borough Council.

The County Council keeps a separate account in respect of on-street parking. The first call on income is to pay NCP and ESCC's own operating costs and then to pay back the set up costs.

NCP is paid on the basis of agreed fixed fees for the various functions that they undertake. These were the result of a competitive tendering process. No commission is paid for issuing more parking tickets (PCNs) and the contract prevents NCP from giving any incentive to their staff based on the number of PCNs issued.

Any surplus income is required by law to be reinvested in local transport infrastructure or services and, if and when any surplus accrues, it would be the intention to discuss appropriate uses with the Borough Council.

8. Parking controls are required in the area around the town centre controlled area

Originally, it had been planned to phase the introduction of the new controls, starting in the existing controlled area, with the rest of the area (the “extension area”) following six months or so later. Within the extension area a majority of residents who responded to consultations indicated that they welcomed the proposed controls. However, in the face of an intense campaign of opposition to the introduction of the scheme (supported predominantly by people living outside the affected areas), the County Council decided to only commit itself to the changes in the existing controlled area without the extension area automatically following.

Following the introduction of the new controls in the town centre, we will be monitoring any impact on surrounding streets and will be noting the reaction of residents and others with an interest in those areas. In the light of this, a decision will be made about whether to bring forward proposals to extend the controls although this is unlikely to be until later in 2009 at the earliest.

9. The size of the text setting out the parking charges on the pay and display is too small.

We will explore the possibility of using a larger font.

10. Public transport is insufficient and as a result many people have no choice but to use their cars to get to and from work in the town centre.

Whilst, for some people, public transport does represent a reasonable alternative to the car, we recognise that for some, it does not.

However, most people do have some choices. For more information about travel choices in Eastbourne, visit the website www.travelchoice.org This site has been created by the County Council to pull together information about public transport, cycling, journey sharing and much more.

Anyone for whom none of the options is suitable and who has no alternative than to drive to work should be able to park free of charge within 10 or 15 minutes walk of the workplace. Whilst nobody welcomes an imposed walk, there are health benefits!

11. Many people are concerned about their personal safety whilst walking long distances having parked their car outside the town centre controlled area.

This is not specifically an issue concerning the parking scheme. People who walk to and from work or who use public transport walk Eastbourne streets after dark and the presence of more pedestrians on the streets can, itself, contribute to an improved sense of security.

Any specific concerns should be raised with the Borough Council or the Police who liaise regularly about public safety issues.

12. There is not enough secure cycle parking in the town centre.

New cycle parking has recently been provided at the railway station and the Council would be interested, in principle, in providing more. If specific locations are suggested they will be considered.

13. Loading bays need to be enforced to ensure they are kept free for collections and deliveries

The scheme introduced more loading bays and the enforcement of loading bays is one of the main priorities of civil enforcement officers. Nobody can guarantee 100% compliance but many people

report that the level of compliance is much improved and that loading is vastly easier than it was. Any specific problems in respect of violation of loading bays should be reported to the Parking Information Centre (contact details below).

14. More Blue Badge Spaces are required close to the shops in the town centre.

The scheme increased the number of disabled parking bays in the town centre and introduced time limits on some in order to increase turnover so that more people can benefit from the facility. Improved enforcement appears to have greatly reduced the abuse of disabled parking bays. In addition to these dedicated parking spaces, blue badge holders can park free of charge in any Pay & Display or shared use bay and with the improved parking discipline that the scheme has brought, more spaces should be available.

If there are specific suggestions as to locations where additional dedicated parking for blue badge holders might be appropriate, these will be considered. Of course, there is only so much space available and any increase in provision for blue badge holders will almost certainly result in a reduction in provision for other uses such as loading or general parking.

15. The yellow lines should be reduced to make room for more parking bays

During the design of the scheme, each yellow line (and each length of loading restriction) was reviewed and, unless considered necessary for reasons of safety, capacity or amenity, it was removed.

However, if there are any specific lengths of yellow line which it is considered could be removed without adversely affecting safety, capacity or amenity, are drawn to our attention, they will be considered as part of the comprehensive review of the scheme which is planned for later in 2009.

16. A map showing the location of all the off-street car parks and the boundary of the town centre controlled area need to be produced.

The Borough Council is preparing to place such a map on its website (and also on the ESCC website). A suite of leaflets is being produced and this will include a map of the type suggested.

It is felt that this will be a more effective means of distributing this information than roadside maps.

17. More cycle lanes are required.

The encouragement of cycling is an important element of the Council's transport strategy for Eastbourne. The Councils are together looking at the feasibility of cycling on the seafront and investigation is also being undertaken of a cycle route along the route of Horsey Sewer.

Illegal and inconsiderate parking is a significant discouragement to cycling and the new enforcement regime should reduce this.

18. On street parking is too expensive.

Charges have applied in Hyde Gardens and Devonshire Place for many years and charges apply in off-street car parks. The extension of charging to more town centre streets affects only a relatively small proportion of the total parking stock in the town centre.

The level of charge in Hyde Gardens has not changed and the level in Devonshire Place has reduced. Broadly, the on-street charges in Eastbourne are in line with charges in other towns and are consistent with charges in car parks.

19. Parking restrictions should not apply on the seafront on Sundays or in Winter Months.

Whilst it would be technically possible to make parking on the seafront free on Sundays or during the winter, it would result in a shortfall in income to the scheme as a whole which would have to be recovered by increasing other charges (such as permits).

Free parking on the seafront would also complicate the hotel permit scheme since some guests would be able to park free of charge and others in the same area would not.

Some argue that it is only reasonable that day visitors should make a reasonable contribution to the cost of the parking scheme.

20. Town centre staff who are now parking outside the town centre controlled area are having to leave home earlier as their travel time to work has now increased.

There is only a certain amount of kerbside space within the town centre and decisions have to be made about how this space can be used most efficiently. The greatest priority under the scheme is given to the needs of business (loading bays and short stay spaces so that as many customers and potential customers as possible can park nearby), residents and hotel staying guests.

If priority is given to these and other needs, it follows that others (principally staff working in the town centre) will have to park further out. Most people can park free of charge within 10 or 15 minutes walk of where they work.

Some people have other choices such as using public transport or journey sharing (see question 10)

21. The new controls have had bad effect on shift workers who arrive early and leave late when public transport services are infrequent .

Everyone's circumstances are different but, in some cases, the options outlined in Question 10 may represent a solution. Some within the hospitality industry report that shift workers have developed their own creative journey sharing/ informal park and ride schemes. Such arrangements can result in cost savings for those involved.

22. Weekly hotel guest permits are needed.

This suggestion will be given serious consideration

Location specific issues

A. Coach bay required to services hotels between 3 and 25 Cavendish Place.

This could be considered as part of the review later in 2009. However, there is a coach bay not far away at the junction of Elms Avenue and Cavendish Place and the creation of a coach bay would result in a loss of parking places.

B. Imbalance of Disabled bays either side of the Pier. More bays to the west of the pier to the East 11 in vicinity of Lansdowne Hotel.

Unlike to the west of the pier, east of the pier the controlled area is a “long finger” with uncontrolled parking immediately inland. However, this could be considered as part of the review later in 2009.

C. West Terrace is now Resident Permit Holders only. Business permit holders should be allowed to park here.

The nature of controls in West Terrace was specifically considered during the development of the scheme and it is considered that, if permit business holders were to be able to park there, it would compromise the protection that the scheme gives to residents.

D. There are not enough spaces for customers visiting the shops and business premises in Grove Road.

The total kerbside space in Grove Road is fixed and, once provision has been made for loading, the amount of parking available for customers is also fixed. The application of a 2 hour maximum stay ensures that there is a turnover of spaces, allowing more customers to park in the course of a day. If the limit were reduced to, say, 1 hour, turnover could be increased but some customers may feel that 1 hour did not allow sufficient time to complete their shopping.

This issue will be considered as part of the review of the scheme planned for later in 2009.

E. Charges in Hyde Gardens appear to have doubled.

In fact, charges in Hyde Gardens have stayed exactly the same! In the only other street in which charging used to apply - Devonshire Place – charges have actually reduced.

F. Police vehicles are continuing to park illegally in Grove Road

This will be taken up with the police.

More Information

For further information, search the ESCC website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk

Or contact the Parking information Centre at:
55 Gildredge Road
Eastbourne
BN21 4QW
Tel: 0845 6801129