

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CIA/31/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness

Date: 14 September 2017

Report Title: Parking & Enforcement

Report By: Director of Community Services

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report follows discussions with Members and the Inverness BID. It includes a request by BID for additional pay & display parking in the City Centre; the impact fifteen minute "Free" parking could have in the City Centre; and a request to review seven day enforcement operations. Members are reminded that any policy changes must be consistent across the enforcement area which is now unitary and covers the complete Highland Council geography.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to:
- agree the advertising of amendments for the pay and display spaces listed in item 3.5 subject to funding being sourced;
 - agree a one year trial of a 15-minute Free parking period, subject to funding being sourced as detailed in section 4;
 - note the position on seven day enforcement and charging as detailed in section 5; and
 - note the Loading/Unloading clarification and Dispensation Policy detailed in section 6.

3. Additional Pay & Display Parking

3.1 Following representations from Inverness BID, officers attended a walkabout with BID members to review their suggestions for an increase in short stay parking availability in the City Centre. Numerous locations were visited and suggestions for additional Pay and Display parking were discussed.

3.2 List of BID proposals:

1. Millburn Road - 6 bays near Lochgorm;
2. Upper Strothers Lane - Convert Loading Bay to 4 Pay & Display;
3. Church St - North End – West side - Convert Loading Bay to 3 Pay & Display;
4. Church Street – Middle – Remove Taxi Rank, reduce loading on East side – 4 Pay & Display;
5. Academy Street, from Rose St southeast – Reduce Loading Bays to provide 4 Pay & Display; and
6. Castle Street – Extend into Motorcycle Bays 4 Pay & Display.

These proposals would facilitate an additional 25 Pay & Display bays within the City Centre.

These would be £1 short stay 1 hour bays generating approximately £60,000 per annum.

It would cost some £35,000 to provide Pay & Display Machines at all these locations.

Introduction of any new Pay & Display bays would reduce the level of loading provision for these locations requiring a more stringent enforcement protocol to maintain loading access for customers and businesses servicing premises.

3.3 It should be pointed out that any increase in vehicles as a result of this provision would impact on environmental pressures and congestion within the City Centre.

3.4 The nine pay & display bays which had existed in Queensgate & Union St pre 2007 were removed as part of the City Centre Streetscape project to reduce the number of circulating vehicles and ensure the provision of loading and public transport spaces. The re-introduction of any Pay & Display spaces in the main quadrangle of Union St/Mid Church St/Queensgate could be detrimental to overall congestion and could make the city less attractive by increasing delays caused by vehicles “hunting” for limited spaces.

3.5 Of these 6 proposals from Bid, the Service would recommend the advertising of the increase in pay & display parking spaces at:-

1. Millburn Road - 6 bays near Lochgorm – reducing loading capacity;
2. Upper Strothers Lane - 4 bays – reducing loading capacity;
3. Church St - North End – West side – 3 bays – reducing loading capacity; and
6. Castle Street – Extend into Motorcycle parking 4 bays - Alternative motorcycle parking provision would need to be allocated.

This would increase the number of Pay & Display bays in the city centre by 17No. raising approximately £50K per annum. The amendment of these bays would be subject to the statutory process of consultation. The cost to implement would be approximately £25K and a funding source would need to be identified.

4. Fifteen Minute Free parking periods

- 4.1 Inverness BID has suggested that we consider a “Free” parking period within the City Centre of 15 minutes to allow drivers to nip into businesses for services and support “Click & Collect” activity. They state that this has been very successful in Perth.
- 4.2 This proposal is only practical in Pay & Display spaces as we can manage the free period by issuing a 15 minute free ticket. It would not serve any practical purpose in off-street car parks as the distance from them to adjacent services is usually too great to make the 15 minutes practical and may in fact lead to more drivers receiving Penalty Charge Notices for overstaying.
- 4.3 The introduction of a 15 minute free period in Perth was done on a trial basis for 1 year and has now been established as standard practice in Perth City Centre. This has proved popular with businesses in Perth however it has also led to some practical problems which would need to be addressed in Inverness, such as:-
1. ticket Machines require adapting at a cost of £100 per machine to issue a free ticket – Total £1700 to convert Inverness machines;
 2. it has been evidenced in Perth that these can be abused by individuals continually refreshing the 15 minute free ticket, which increases the enforcement burden;
 3. there are regular occurrences of individuals maliciously requesting free tickets from the machines leading to large numbers printed and left on the roadside; and
 4. it has greatly increased the volume of tickets needed by Perth Local Authority both for increased use and to cover wastage.
- 4.4 To combat misuse of any “Free” period offered, the service strongly recommends that ticket machines are replaced with modern facilities that require drivers to input their vehicle registrations to secure a free ticket. It would require a capital investment of some £85,000 to replace the 17 suitable City Centre machines.
- 4.5 It should be pointed out that any increase in vehicles as a result of this provision could impact on environmental pressures and congestion within the City Centre.
- 4.6 A short term suggestion would be to trial the “Free” period for 12 months with the minimal intervention to re-programme the existing machines at a cost of £1700. This could be met from the current service budgets.

5. Seven day enforcement

- 5.1 Members have asked the service to investigate making Pay & Display parking free on part or all of a Sunday. Currently THC charge for off-street parking on a Sunday, as agreed by committee in 2014 as part of Budget reviews.

Members have already agreed several amendments to Sunday parking regarding permit streets and these are in the process of being implemented, see **Appendix 1**.

- 5.2 We do not currently charge for on street parking on a Sunday. In truth this does not benefit City Centre visitors to any great deal as without a time limit via purchasing a ticket the short stay spaces are occupied for extensive periods preventing turnover and reducing availability. This is counterproductive by actually limiting access for all users. Officers have qualified this by regular observations on street on Sundays.

It would be of greater benefit to all users if City Centre on street parking was managed by charging on a Sunday to ensure that adequate turnover is maintained and therefore increasing accessibility to parking.

- 5.3 Enforcement is carried out 7 days per week as many parking restrictions are in place for safety and traffic management reasons and we have staff available to respond if issues arise. Any attempt to remove this would only lead to a repeat of historical abuses that the service was established to address.

If parking restrictions were to be lifted then they must be amended formally by advertising them, thus removing the need to enforce them. We are obliged to enforce all contraventions equally and transparently to ensure the sustainability of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement and the credibility of enforcement activity.

- 5.4 If Highland Council were to remove off-street parking charges on a Sunday this would require to be applied across the Council and would increase budget pressures of between £125K and £200K per annum.
- 5.5 The service will continue to monitor current Parking restrictions and their suitability and will propose to amend their provision where necessary. If Members or the public identify the need to alter restrictions we welcome their input at any time. All restrictions should be fit for purpose to cater for current traffic management issues and are subject to review location by location.

6. Loading & Unloading - Dispensations

- 6.1 Questions have been asked regarding Loading & Unloading in the City Centre and clarification on the current position is provided below.
- 6.2 The complete enforcement protocol used by our officers is freely available for the public to view and is available online at:
http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/16715/highland_council_enforcement_protocol

This Protocol is an operational document and, although comprehensive, is provided to ensure transparency in the enforcement activities of The Highland Council.

- 6.3 Anyone loading or unloading has 30 minutes to complete the operation. The loading activity must be continual with activity witnessed within any 10 minute period. Our officers will always try and discuss a situation if a driver is present however if a vehicle is unattended then they have no choice but to process a contravention and issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN).
- 6.4 In the absence of a vehicle driver, the normal procedure for enforcing Loading bays requires an officer to continually observe a vehicle to ensure that loading/unloading is not taking place. The accepted observation periods are 10 minutes for liveried vehicles and 5 minutes for private vehicles.

However in Highland we offer a standard 10 minute observation period for all vehicles.

- 6.5 If drivers are undertaking an excessive loading requirement they may request an extension period and this is referred to as a "Dispensation".

The Dispensation Policy is available at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/16852/parking_dispensation_policy

We currently offer dispensations for vehicles that are undertaking additional loading activity in loading bays and the attached document details this policy. A Dispensation is not provided to allow free parking in loading bays but to allow extended loading activity only. A user may request up to an hour in a location to complete the activity or we can offer 2 hours, split between an hour from 8am to unload plus an hour from 5pm to load, for example, if shop fitting is taking place on site.

Dispensation is also offered in Permit Holder bays subject to the attached policy.

Where long-term non loading parking activity is required (such as construction access) in a bay, then a suspension process may be used which is chargeable. This is a new procedure which the service is currently finalising.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Resource - Budget pressures require that funding be identified before agreeing resource commitment.
- 6.2 Legal - Amendment of Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – No implications.
- 6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - Increase in short stay parking will impact on vehicle numbers with possible implications for increased congestion and pollution levels.
- 6.5 Risk - No implications.
- 6.6 Gaelic - No implications.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 29 August 2017

Author: Shane Manning, Principal Officer, Traffic & Parking

APPENDIX 1 – Previously Agreed relevant local amendments

1. Inverness Portland Place: reduce the amount of permit parking, transferring some 25m of existing permit bays to free parking - 2hours max stay - 8am to 6pm Mon - Sat. Also Introduce a Disabled Bay - 3hour max Stay all on the North side of the road.
2. Inverness Duncraig St – Eastern Length Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
3. Inverness Queen St: Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
4. Inverness Muirton St: Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
5. Inverness Broadstone Park: Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
6. Inverness Southside Road: Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
7. Inverness Celt Street: Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.
8. Inverness Ness Bank: Reduce the current 7 day Permit restriction to Mon-Sat 8am-6pm.