

Diversity impact assessment

TITLE: Parking Charges at Country Parks

DATE: 13th February 2024

LEAD OFFICERS: Janet Davies and Michael Edwards

1. Summary description of the proposed change

What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?
How does it compare with the current situation?

It is proposed to implement a charging regime for visitor parking at Medway's Country Parks. A charge of £2.50 per day for vehicles and £9 per day for coaches would apply to Riverside Country Park, Capstone Country Park and, subject to planning permission, any new country park coming forward at Deangate Ridge. An annual season ticket priced at £60 would be available for visitors to purchase. Payment for parking would be made via Pay & Display machines (card and cash) and RingGo, with season tickets purchased via the Council's website. Blue Badge holders, motorcycles, Council staff based at Deangate Ridge and users of Deangate Ridge indoor bowls club would be exempt from the parking charges.

These new fees, if agreed, would generate income, which the Council could use to assist with budget pressures by allocating any surplus to highway and environmental improvements, and off-street parking infrastructure.

2. Summary of evidence used to support this assessment.

Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user.

Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

An assessment of the feasibility and viability of introducing parking charges has been undertaken, supported by a detailed financial and operational strategy for charging implementation and risk mitigation. Due consideration has been given to ensuring regulatory compliance, for example with Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended. Data indicates that Capstone and Riverside Country Parks generate, on average, 31,400 vehicle movements per month.

The proposed charges have been benchmarked against the charges for parking in Country Parks levied by Kent County Council and the charges levied for town centre parking by Medway Council. Existing charges for parking at Country Parks operated by Kent County Council range between £1.50 per day and £3.00 per day Monday to Fridays and between £2.00 and £4.00 per day at weekends and Bank Holidays.

An informal consultation process has not been undertaken. Prior to implementation, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) would need to be produced and would be subject to a statutory consultation period of 21 days for respondents to consider and provide feedback.

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3. What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	No	No	No
Disability	No	No	No
Gender reassignment	No	No	No
Marriage/civil partnership	No	No	No
Pregnancy/maternity	No	No	No
Race	No	No	No
Religion/belief	No	No	No
Sex	No	No	No
Sexual orientation	No	No	No
Other (e.g. low-income groups)	Yes	No	No

4. Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

Low Income Groups: People on low incomes may be impacted by the proposals. They may not be able to afford car parking charges.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

The following actions have been identified to mitigate against the adverse impact for low-income groups:

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- Blue badge holders are exempt from payment (when displaying a valid badge), motorcycles and cycles are also exempt.
- A parking season ticket will be available for purchase, which will offer parking at a reduced cost per day for frequent visitors.
- Appropriate communications in advance of implementation will ensure appropriate lead-in time for visitors to prepare to pay for parking.
- Signage will be clear and consistent across all parks, aligning with statutory guidance.
- The Council will actively promote alternative forms of transport, car-sharing and active travel for visitors to our Country Parks. This will include identifying opportunities for improving access by bus, which would be of particular benefit to those in receipt of Concessionary Travel.
- The new charge will be reviewed on an annual basis to make sure it is appropriate and consistent with the facilities provided and other Country Parks in neighbouring authorities.
- Surplus funding could be used to ensure good standards of maintenance and improved facilities at the Council's Country Parks, which would benefit all users.
- The Council will promote public open spaces and other recreational facilities that can be accessed by car without a requirement to pay for parking.

6. Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Ensure effective communication of the new parking charges including the Council's webpage and social media channels	Parking Business Manager	One month prior to implementation
Ensure mechanisms for the purchase of season tickets are established and operational	Parking Business Manager	One month prior to implementation
Ensure on-site signage is in place to advise of new charging regime	Parking Business Manager	One month prior to implementation
Promote alternative forms of transport, car-sharing and active travel for visitors, and investigate opportunities for access by bus	Sustainable Transport Manager	March 2025 (review)
Promote public open spaces and other recreational facilities that can be accessed by car without a need to pay for parking.	Greenspaces and Access	March 2025 (review)

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	Programme Manager	
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7. Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

Subject to consideration by Cabinet, and Council, the recommendation is to implement new charges for parking at the identified Country Parks in Medway, alongside the action plan detailed in section 6.

The Council's Communities Equalities Officer has been consulted and involved in the decision. The Council has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty (Sect 149 2011) to show due regard to the duty and show due regard to mitigate any negative impacts that may affect people with protected characteristics under the Act.

8. Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

Date of authorisation