

Briefing Paper – District Car Parking

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This briefing paper sets out changes implemented at the Plympton Ridgeway car parks, the process undertaken to implement changes, why these changes were implemented and initial insights following the changes.

2. Process

- 2.1. On 7th July 2022 Cabinet approved for consultation to be undertaken on the Parking Modernisation and Environmental Plan, a plan which contained a wide range of proposals which included requiring motorists to register for their free parking in district locations. The public were consulted on these proposals from 19th July 22 to 10th September 22.
- 2.2. On 10th November 2022 Cabinet approved changes set out within the Parking Modernisation and Environmental Plan, which included the requirement motorists to register for their free parking in district locations.
- 2.3. Whilst a number of changes to fees and charges were to be implemented from 1st December, changes to district car parks were expected to be implemented from April 23.

3. Why were changes proposed?

- 3.1. Short stay parking at district locations is critical to supporting local businesses and shops that thrive on short stay high turnover parking. Motorists who overstay, sometimes for long periods, can make finding parking difficult for other motorists, impacting on local shops and businesses. In the absence of systems to manage free parking it is exceptionally difficult for officers to ensure appropriate and fair use of free parking.
- 3.2. Systems to manage the use of free parking are now common place, such as requiring someone to register their car to obtain free parking. These systems are effective as they ensure people operate within the allocated free parking. This approach was also recommended as we know it works. Plymouth first adopted this approach in Crownhill district car park in 2011 and along Embankment road, St Judes in 2013. Following the introduction of these systems motorists have found it easier to park and visit local shops and businesses.

4. What was and was not changed?

- 4.1. The Council re-affirmed it's committed to supporting free parking in district centres and, following the new system, all parking remains free in all short stay and long stay car parks at the Plympton Ridgeway.

- 4.2. The short stay car parks at the Plympton Ridgeway have applied a maximum stay of two hours for more than fifteen years. Under the changes all of the Plympton Ridgeway short stay car parks have been increased from two to three hours maximum stay, giving all visitors to the shops and businesses an additional hours parking time. The period to which the short stay maximum stay applies has not changed, the restriction applies from 8am to 6pm daily.
- 4.3. Blue Badge holders have received additional support where we now give We Blue Badge holders an additional hour's stay. This means a Blue Badge holder can now park for up to four hours in short stay car parks.
- 4.4. Motorists using the short stay car parks are now required to register a free parking session using one of a number of terminals that have been installed in the car parks. This involves entering their registration number into a terminal. There is no ticket to display in the car, all sessions are 'virtual' so once registered the motorist can just go about their business.
- 4.5. Motorists registering for a free parking session may come and go as they wish during their free session without the need to re-register. Upon expiry of a three hour session a motorist cannot obtain a further session until two hours has passed.
- 4.6. Anyone wanting to arrive before the 8am maximum stay restriction applies, such as someone attending an appointment, can register their session before 8am and it will still start at 8am.
- 4.7. Unlike many other city district locations, the Plympton Ridgeway has a number of long stay car parks, which allow people to park without restriction and without payment. This has not been changed.

5. *How did we implement the change?*

- 5.1. We phased the implementation of these systems across district locations, staggering the start dates, which enabled us to provided dedicated staff to each to engage and support customers with the changes.
- 5.2. We adopted a supportive approach, focusing on helping and supporting motorists, with no enforcement activity undertaken at this early stage. The focus being ensuring awareness and familiarisation with the new systems.

6. *What challenges did we have?*

- 6.1. Whilst details of the changes were advertised and publicised, and staff engaged customers in the car parks, there was some incorrect information on social media in respect to what was and was not changing. In response to this we released further communications to ensure that people had the correct information.

6.2. In preparing for the change an error was made where the small Mudge Way South long stay car park was signed as a short stay car park. We apologised for this error and the car park was reverted to a long stay car park within 48 hours. During this 48 hours there was available spaces within other long stay car parks, however we accept it would have been an inconvenience for someone who may have had a preference to park in the Mudge Way South car park.

7. Initial Impact

7.1. We understand parking can be a very emotive subject and therefore it is important conclusions and assessments refer to actual facts and data when seeking to understand the impact of these changes. The new systems installed record the number of registered parking sessions, such information was not previously available.

7.2. Figure 1.1 details the number of weekly parking sessions since the system went live, through to, and including, week 23 (week starting 5th June). Figure 1.2 illustrates the number of short stay sessions at both the Ridgeway and Mudge Way short stay car parks.

Figure 1.1 – Comparison of registered short stay parking sessions

Week	Week Starting	Ridgeway Parking Sessions	Comparison to Week 1	Mudge Way Parking Sessions	Comparison to Week 1
1	17 th April	4415	N/A	5,802	N/A
2	24 th April	4767	7.4%	6,262	7.9%
3	1 st May *	4417	0%	5,750	-0.9%
4	8 th May *	4415	0%	5,642	-2.8%
5	15 th May	4481	1.5%	5,806	0%
6	22 nd May	4457	1%	5,747	-1%
7	29 th May *	4181	-5.3%	5,553	-4.3%
8	5 th June	4657	5.5%	6,106	5.2%
9	12 th June	4,788	8.4%	6,321	8.9%
10	19 th June	4,467	1.2%	5,824	0%
11	26 th June	4,741	7.4%	6,160	6.2%
12	3 rd July	4,496	1.2%	5,882	1.4%
13	10 th July	4,516	2.3%	6,213	7.1%

* Week contained bank holidays

7.3. The data shows that following the introduction of the system there has been no sustained or significant reduction in motorists registering to use the short stay car parks, numbers of visitors have remained relatively consistent over the three month period.

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