

15 November 2005

Parking review backs the city centre

A draft report of the Council's Parking Strategy, published today, emphasises supporting the city centre.

For the strategy, 1000 phone surveys, as well as car park and on-street utilisation surveys, and workshops for traders, businesses, retailers and carers have taken place.

The Strategy will now go out for public consultation before a final report to the Council Executive in March - though some initiatives are being fast-tracked. Key elements include:

- Better marketing and signing of city centre parking – the first new signs will be in place by Easter.
- An annual review of pricing and maximum length of stay for on-street pay and display parking – lengths of stay have already been increased to 3 and 4 hours in the city centre, half-hour shopper parking in suburban shopping centres will convert to 1 or 2 hours from 14 December.
- Putting in place more on-street shopper parking in and near traditional shopping streets, to supplement the successful initiatives in, for example Morningside, Newington and Raeburn Place
- Continuing the programme of new Park + Ride sites. Use of the new sites at Ingliston and Hermiston is growing fast. Every weekend up till the end of December, the Park + Ride bus services from these sites will be free.
- New business and traders' permits, making it easier to conduct business in the city centre controlled parking zone
- A possible underground car park in the vicinity of George Street
- Reviewing the possibility of free on-street parking on Saturday afternoons and after 5.30 p.m. on weekdays, though the report notes potential problems in relation to how this would affect parking availability for residents, their visitors and shoppers
- Introducing yellow line controls on main bus routes on Sundays
- Initiatives to help manage the ever-growing demand for residents' parking permits. Possibilities include limiting numbers issued per household one or two and lower prices for small cars
- Allowing loading and unloading by goods vehicles in residents' bays
- Lobbying the Scottish Executive to allow graduated charges for parking tickets, with lower charges for overstaying in a pay and display space and higher penalties for illegal waiting in areas where it causes most difficulty, for example, at junctions and in bus lanes. This change can't be implemented

news release

locally, so it is recommended that discussions begin with the Scottish Executive to change penalties on a Scotland-wide basis.

A theme running through the strategy is seeking to ensure that parking enforcement is fair, reasonable and transparent. To this end, the report recommends changes to the way the parking enforcement contractor is rewarded. These changes include using two new indicators: customer satisfaction surveys and surveys of compliance with parking regulations. The contractor would be directly rewarded for higher levels of customer satisfaction and compliance.

Extensive survey work for the review has produced some interesting, and perhaps surprising, results. For example, though two thirds of respondents to a telephone survey felt that it was 'difficult' to park in the city centre, only a quarter of people surveyed at the time they actually parked on street came to the same conclusion. Furthermore, 87% of the telephone survey respondents said they were usually able to park in their first choice of car park. These results are backed up by counts carried out by the Council. These found that, at the busiest times on a typical weekday, there are around 1500 spaces in off street car parks in the city centre, and another 1500 available spaces on street.

People were also questioned on their attitudes to parking enforcement. 64% of Edinburgh residents agreed that 'parking and loading restrictions should be strictly enforced'. Only 16% disagreed. When asked about enforcement in bus lanes at peak times, 87% of drivers agreed that parking restrictions should be 'strictly enforced'.

Cllr Andrew Burns, Executive Member, Transport for the City of Edinburgh Council said:

"Residents, businesses, retailers and visitors all have legitimate parking needs, and balancing them is no easy task with the limited kerb space in central Edinburgh. But these wide-scale recommendations will make a real difference for all these groups: for example, extended on-street parking hours, new parking for traditional suburban shopping streets, and the proposed underground parking near George Street would bring substantial benefits for retailers, residents, and visitors."

Jos Bastiaensen of Helios Fountain in Grassmarket added:

"The Old Town of Edinburgh is an excellent place to shop and eat out, as it has many small independent traders, offering goods and services not easily found elsewhere. The recent actions of the Council, and the further actions they have proposed, will help in making the City Centre and the Old Town more user-friendly and accessible."

ends

Media Contact: Vicki Mowat, Media Officer, Telephone: 0131 469 3510