

PARKING IN SEAFORD

REPORT ON CONSULTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Background

In autumn 2005, 27,000 questionnaires were sent to residents and businesses in Seaford, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Telscombe Cliffs and East Saltdean, asking people about their experience of parking problems and seeking their views about possible controls. Road shows were held in each of the coastal towns.

The survey established a significant “pocket” within Seaford town centre where residents felt that they experienced parking problems and would welcome measures to address those problems. The survey also identified other quite widespread concerns about specific parking issues, such as deliveries and parking by blue badge holders, and various local matters. Independently of the survey, a modest number of letters and telephone calls had been received, expressing concern about various parking issues in Seaford.

In the light of the response to the 2005 consultation, a further, more detailed consultation was carried out in the centre of Seaford in January and February 2007. The area covered by the consultation included not only those streets in which a majority of residents had, in the earlier survey, indicated support for parking controls but also streets immediately surrounding which might be affected by displaced parking if controls were to be introduced closer to the centre.

Alpha Parking was commissioned to undertake the consultation and to make recommendations in the light of the findings. Alpha Parking is a consultancy specialising in parking issues and not involved in running parking schemes and, therefore, had no vested interest in the outcome.

An information pack containing a questionnaire was sent to every address in the area and an exhibition was held over two days. Consultation material outlined what form a controlled parking zone (CPZ) might take if it were introduced in particular streets and respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they would wish their street to be included within any CPZ.

Response to Consultation

The consultation attracted a strong reaction throughout Seaford both about the proposals and the consultation process. This was aggravated by problems with the distribution of information packs to some addresses.

These problems were promptly overcome and the consultation period was extended to ensure that nobody was denied the opportunity to express their view. However, campaigns of opposition were organised, petitions were collected and visitors to the exhibition were lobbied and given information about the proposals that was, in some respects, incorrect.

Nevertheless, the consultation did achieve a very high response of 36% for residential households and 55% for businesses. It also elicited over 1150 letters and five petitions. Most (75%) of the letters were standard or slightly adapted pro-forma responses and some individuals submitted more than one identical letter. A synopsis of the response to the consultation is presented in Annex A

Questionnaires were analysed by Alpha Parking. This analysis is set out in their report (Annex B) along with their recommendations. A separate analysis was undertaken of letters (Annex C).

Consideration of Response

Whilst the consultation process did not run as smoothly as planned, suggestions in some quarters that the consultation was flawed are without foundation. There was a very high response and, at a strategic level, a clear conclusion.

There is little appetite in Seaford for parking controls of the type and extent that formed the basis for the consultation. However, whilst most people rejected the proposals that were put forward, few people suggested that there were no parking problems in the town. There were also geographical differences: whilst people living in the outskirts of the town were overwhelmingly opposed to the proposed controls, the picture closer to the town centre and seafront was more finely balanced, with some pockets in which most people supported the proposals for their street.

The over-riding signal from this consultation is that, whilst most people recognise that there are problems associated with parking in Seaford, any solutions must be sympathetic to the character of the town; must be focussed on the areas where the problems arise and must be applied with a "light touch".

Identification of what might constitute an appropriate solution for Seaford requires careful consideration of the issues and weighing of often-conflicting objectives. Unfortunately, the rather febrile climate in which the consultation took place was not at all conducive to calm, objective consideration of the issues and, as a result, the exercise was less productive than it could have been in identifying specific solutions.

However, the consultation does point towards some principles which could guide the development of a more modest and more tailored package of

measures. The Town Council, in its response to the consultation, declared its willingness to be actively involved with the County Council and the District Council to develop a more modest package of measures tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of Seaford. This is key to a successful outcome.

Outline of Way Forward

In the light of the views expressed during the consultation, the recommendations suggested by Alpha Parking and the constraints imposed by operational and financial obligations, the following is proposed as the way forward:

- Resident permits to be introduced in those residential streets in the town centre where a majority of residents want it. Disabled bays unaffected. Hours of control to be 9am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday.
- Areas for permit control to be determined by direct street-by-street consultation (street meetings or similar) undertaken jointly by ESCC and Town Council (provisionally in July).
- Town Council to be invited to comment on two alternative charging structures
 - Option A, First permit £25. Second permit £50. Annual permit only (to keep administration costs low) but refunds available.
 - Option B, Similar total income but with environmental differentials, making lower polluting vehicles less expensive and higher polluting vehicles more expensive (Table 1)

With either option, residents would also be able to purchase day permits for their visitors allowing unlimited parking all day and until 10am the following morning

- Broad Street and immediately surrounding commercial area. Dedicated loading bays to be introduced. Limited waiting to be retained and traders and Town Council to be consulted about pros and cons of 1hr or 2hr (or any other) time limit. Loading ban elsewhere (to control indiscriminate parking by blue badge holders).
- District Council to be invited to review tariffs in car parks with a view to:
 - Achieving lower charges for up to 3-4 hours (and higher charges for longer stays) in some car parks and

- Designating some car parks for longer stay parking with appropriate tariffs.
- A pool of Parking Attendants to be established, employed by contractor (NCP) but specifically familiarised with Seaford with normally two deployed at any time. This would aim to achieve:
 - a more evenly spread and consistent enforcement regime across the day
 - enforcement staff who are more familiar with the particular "culture" of Seaford.
- Town Council to provide a local base (possibly at Town Council offices) for parking attendants to include drying facilities and provision for breaks.
- Town Council to issue permits and provide other local services and make information available from council offices. (However, the peak of permit issue to be handled through NCP personnel in the normal way, possibly deploying a caravan)
- A scheme be developed in partnership with the Town Council to introduce charging on the seafront (and at Splash Point) in conjunction with a permit (issued free of charge) to allow people who live in the town and their guests (and beach hut users) to park on the seafront (and Splash Point) free of charge:
 - Charges 9am to 5pm, seven days a week, 30p per hour (about £2 for a day on the beach)
 - Control of overnight parking
 - Total number of spaces increased
 - A few spaces reserved for occupiers of residences fronting the seafront
- District Council invited to consider charging at the Buckle car park.
- Further work is needed to assess the finances of the scheme (once the extent of resident permit control etc is determined through further consultation). In principle, Town Council would fund any shortfall in scheme finances (from income from Pay and Display tickets in Splash Point in the first instance and then, if necessary, from general funds) but, after any deficit is covered, would retain any surplus income from Pay and Display tickets in Splash Point.

Table 1: Bands for Possible Environmental Discount (Under Option B)

	Vehicle Registered on or after 1 March 2001	Vehicles registered before 1 March 2001	Discount on Annual Permit	
	CO2 Value	Cylinder Capacity	First Permit	Second Permit
Standard	More than 185g/km	More than 1800cc	£35	£70
Discount Level 1	185g/km or less	1800cc or less	£30	£65
Discount Level 2	150g/km or less	1500cc or less	£20	£55
Discount Level 3	120g/km or less	1000cc or less	£10	£45
Discount Level 4	100g/km or less	N/A	£5	£40

Each of the proposed areas is commented on in greater detail in Annex D.