University of Aberdeen Car Parking Review

2013-2014

Author: Christopher Osbeck, Travel Plan Co-ordinator
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Background

In September 2009 the University made significant changes to the way it managed car parking at its main Aberdeen campuses. A parking policy was developed which incorporated new parking permits, an online application system and a more robust enforcement system.

Between 2008 and 2011 various consultations were carried out to assess the need for parking charges and to ascertain what type of charging system would best meet the needs of the University community.

In September 2011 the parking system was updated to incorporate parking charges. Daily and annual charging options were made available and the online application system was redeveloped to incorporate daily and annual options.

During 2012 minor adjustments were made to the administrative side of the parking system but no major changes were made.

This review will examine the uptake of daily and annual charging options, the usage of parking facilities and identify any areas of the parking system that are in need of improvement. It will also report on the revenue generated and what it has been used for.

Staff

Permit and Voucher Registrations and Usage
Staff registrations (taken at 01/07/14) were 1,762 which comprised 1,177 daily registrations and 585 annual registrations.

Annual Permits
- Uptake
  The percentage of annual registrations has increased slightly from 31.4% to 33.2% over the last year. This is not of any concern as the availability of daily and annual options provides flexibility to suit the needs of staff and is of no consequence which option is used.

- Issues encountered
  During the course of the year there have been relatively few problems raised with regards to annual permits.
  Cancellations, changes to daily registrations and temporary cancellation due to maternity leave or sick leave were anticipated and administered without any difficulties.

Daily Vouchers
- Uptake
  The percentage of staff using daily vouchers has decreased slightly over the course of the last year from 68.6% to 66.8%. As mentioned in relation to the annual permits, this is of no concern and there is no reason to change the parking system in response to this change in usage.

- Issues encountered
  Like annual permits, problems with daily vouchers have been limited and relatively minor in nature.
  Typical issues which have been raised include damaged or incorrectly dated vouchers and out-of-sight vouchers. In the case of damaged and incorrectly dated vouchers, these have been replaced where possible. Vouchers drifting out-of-sight has been frustrating for users but, with the exception of altering the design of vouchers to include a hook or fold for wedging in windows, which has its own problems, there is a limited amount that can be done to resolve the issue.

Parking Capacity and Usage

The University has 791 staff parking spaces on the Old Aberdeen campus and a further 346 at Foresterhill giving a total of 1,137 spaces[1]. With total registrations of 1,762 the 'oversell' is 55%, which is over the industry standard of 25%. However this assumes that all staff who have registered for daily vouchers purchase and use a voucher every day. In reality this is not the case. Sales of daily vouchers suggest 356 are used on a typical weekday. Assuming all annual permits (585) are being used alongside these daily vouchers we can estimate that 941 spaces are typically being used of the 1,137 that are available. This would represent an 'undersell', or spare capacity, of 20.1%.

To test the figures above, analysis of parking capacity was conducted on a variety of different days at the Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill campuses. Sample days showed spare capacity was typically 26%. Individual campuses returned spare capacity of between 14% and 44%.

While spaces are not always available in the closest or most convenient car park the geographic spread of the campuses is such that parking is generally available within a 5min walk.

During the last year the parking capacity has reduced by 2 spaces at Old Aberdeen. The reason for this reduction was due to the installation of disabled bays. There was no change at Foresterhill.

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[1] To avoid providing an inaccurate or skewed representation; parking for disabled people, drop-off spaces and Hillhead residential parking are excluded from the above figures.

Students

Permit and Voucher Registrations and Usage

Students have similar parking options to staff in that they have access to both annual and daily parking options. Student parking consists of 38 spaces beside the Butchart building, which are available for daily voucher users and a further 50 annual permits. In consultation with AUSA, a criteria based application system was devised to ensure the most appropriate allocation of annual permits. The criteria applied included distance, carer responsibility and alternative travel. The criteria remains unchanged from last year and appears to strike an appropriate balance.

Parking Capacity and Usage

As mentioned above, students have access to 38 spaces at Butchart via daily vouchers and a further 50 spaces via annual permits.

It is assumed that annual permits are utilised all the time since alternatives would be used if the case was otherwise. Daily voucher sales average approx. 45 per day during term time. This suggests that there is a turnover of cars using the spaces at Butchart; in other words that students use spaces at Butchart for part of the day thereby allowing multiple use of a space in a single day. The approx. number of vehicles per space is 1.2. This rate does not seem excessive or suggest the need for an alternative method of administering charging. As with staff parking, analysis of parking capacity was conducted on a variety of different days. Sample days showed spare capacity of between 0% and 58%.

Finances

Charge level

The level of charging, and the intention to implement charging, was selected by the University in February 2011. The start of 2011 has therefore been selected as the starting point for the relative comparison of charging. Comparisons have been drawn between the current parking price, CPI and salary increases.

Daily

Annual
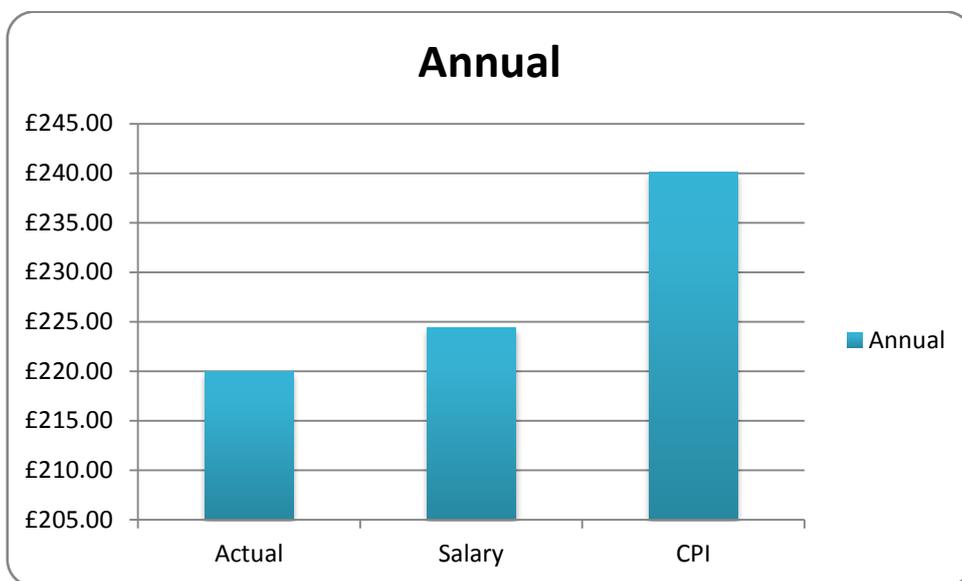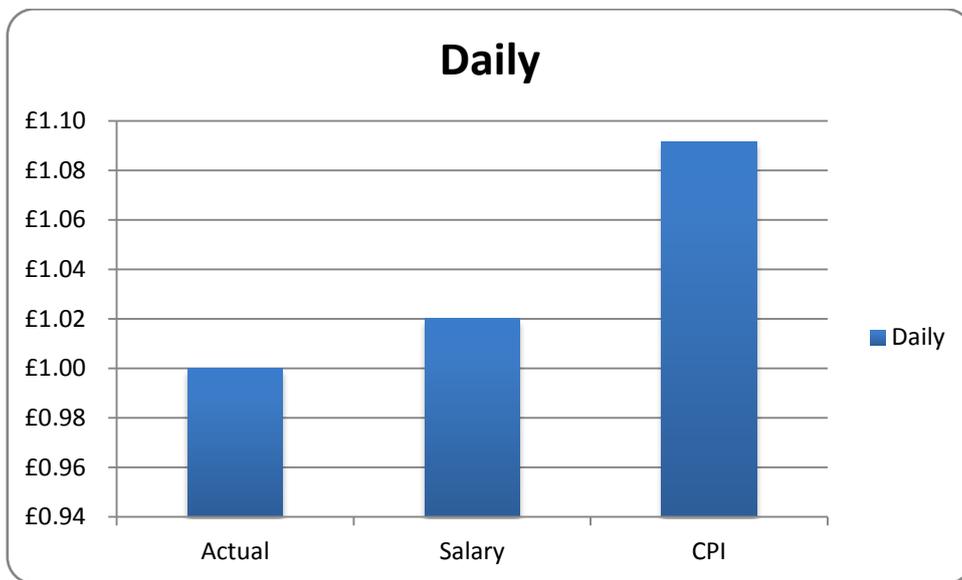
The main purpose of introducing car parking charges was to discourage car use when suitable alternatives were available. The parking price should therefore be reviewed, not only as a direct measure against pay increases and inflation, but also against its ability to discourage car use and in relation to local parking and public transport costs. With all these issues in mind there does not appear to be any reason to increase parking charges at this time.
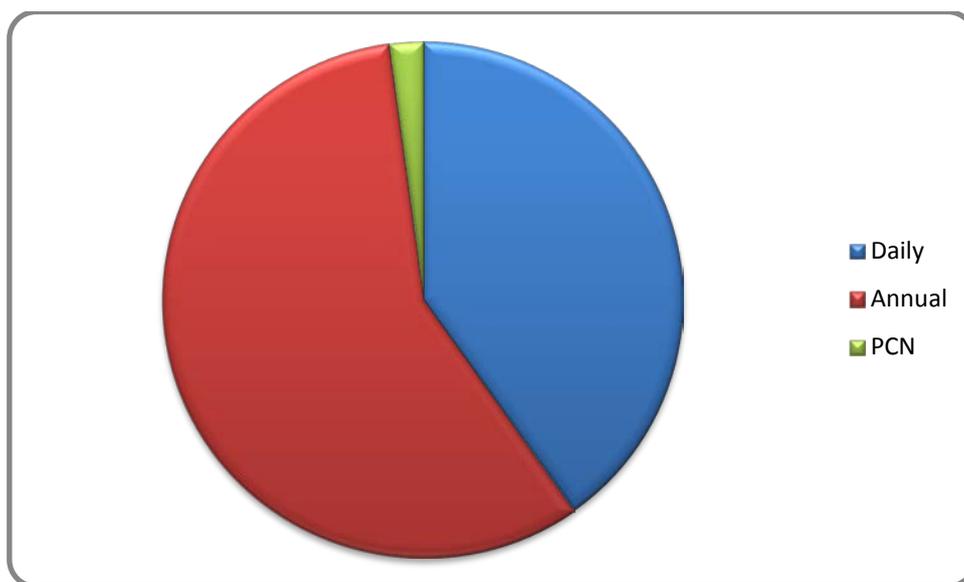
Income

Income from parking charges over the year was £234k.

This comprised:

Daily Vouchers - £94k (40%)

Annual Permits - £135k (58%)

Parking Charge Notices (PCN) - £5k (2%)

Expenditure

The total income of £234k (plus £1k overspend) was used on the following:

Tax - £38k (16%)

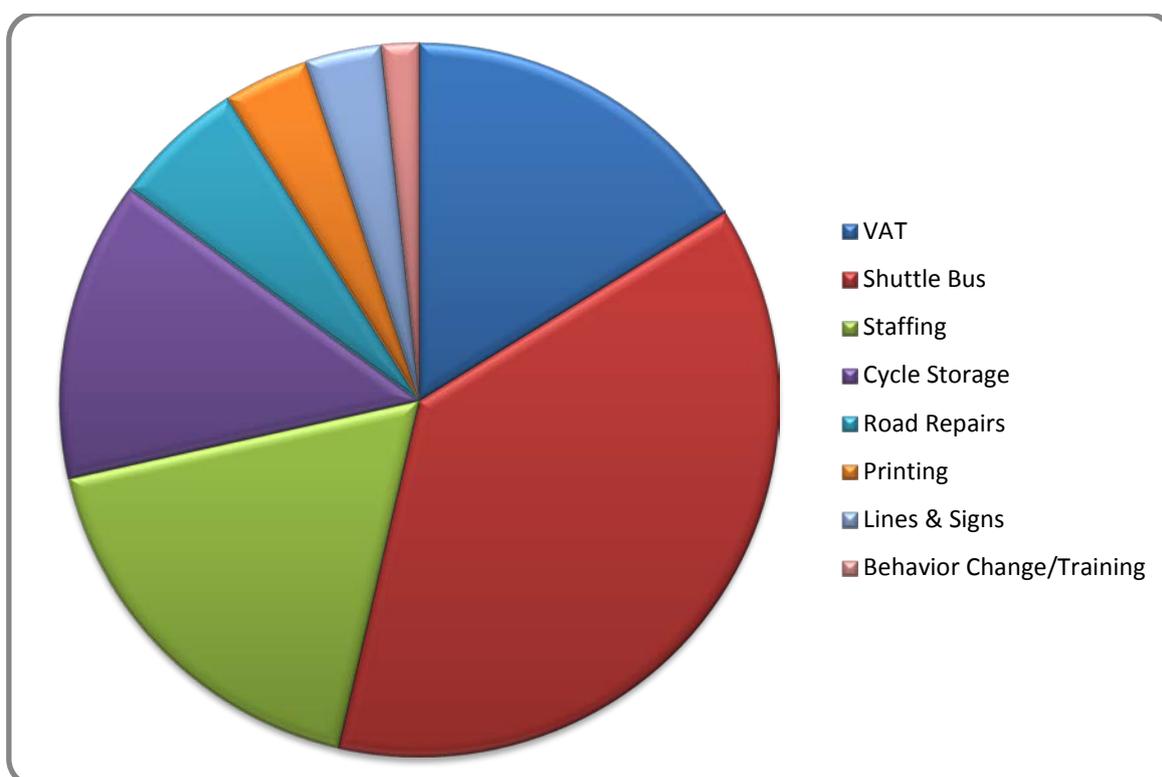Shuttle Bus - £88k (37%)

Staffing - £42k (18%)

Cycle Storage - £32k (14%)

Road Repairs - £14k (6%)

Printing - £9k (4%)

Lines & Signs - £8k (3%)

Training & Behaviour Change - £4K (2%)

Conclusion

In general the parking system at the University works well and balances the need to access sites with the need to reduce emissions and provide a safe campus. The charging level, while relatively low, is proving enough to result in a change in habits and, given the current financial climate, there appears to be no need to change the rate at present.

The availability of spaces is reasonable and no changes are required at this stage to manage supply and demand. The potential impact on parking availability at the Foresterhill site due to the construction of the Rowett building has been considered. If staff using the new building have a similar modal split to those already working on the campus there will be a significant but manageable increase in usage at Foresterhill.

Robust enforcement measures have ensured that spaces are kept available for permitted users and that agreed regulations are followed. While a number of cases have been subject to appeal and/or cancellation the enforcement methods used have generally been reliable and consistent.