

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

CABINET

31 MARCH 2015

BLUE BADGE PROPOSED CHANGES

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult on proposed changes for the future provision, improvement and operation of Blue Badge parking in Bridgend County Borough.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 Making better use of our resources and help vulnerable people stay independent are important themes in the Council's Corporate Plan - Improvement Objectives.
- 2.2 Car parking provision (and in particular Blue Badge parking) along with Shopmobility facilities to varying degrees promote accessibility, equal opportunities allowing older people and people with disabilities to live with dignity and independence supporting the strategic themes.

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2010, the Welsh Government gave notice of its intent to comprehensively reform the Blue Badge scheme over a phased period of five years with the purpose of creating a fairer and more consistent scheme. The major drive being to "crack down on motorists who misused the scheme". Welsh Government "A Modern Blue Badge for Wales Action Plan January 2010".
- 3.2 Recent reforms as a result of consultation include the process for the issue of Blue Badges as well as incorporating stronger security features into the actual design of the Blue Badges. This results in changes to the operation of the scheme by the Council for the residents of Bridgend County Borough.
- 3.3 Through the process of reform, the Welsh Government will continue to introduce changes to the scheme that will need to be implemented by Welsh local authorities. Some aspects of the reforms include:
 - Introducing an improved IT system to administer the Blue Badge scheme, including the production of Blue Badges on behalf of local authorities in Wales
 - A newly designed secure Blue Badge
 - Giving local authorities additional powers to reduce fraud and tackle misuse
- 3.4 Welsh Government issued new guidance on Blue Badge issue & operation which states that:

- Users must never give the badge to others to allow them to have the benefits of the parking concessions
- Users must never copy the badge or attempt to alter the details
- The badge remains the property of the issuing local authority
- The issuer can ask for the badge to be returned if it is being misused.
- It is a criminal offence for anyone to misuse the badge, and doing so could lead to a £1,000 fine

3.5 The Council currently issues in the region of 3,500 badges per year on a 3 year cycle.

3.6 Figures obtained from the Resources Directorate (1st March 2012 - 24th February 2015) indicate that there were 10,882 Disabled Parking Badge holders registered within the County Borough, of which 60% were awarded to those who are automatically eligible.

Anyone over two years old automatically qualifies for a Disabled Parking Badge if they:

- are registered blind
- receive a War Pensioner's Mobility supplement
- receive Personal Independence Payment (PIP) - (PIP available from 8 April 2013 will gradually replace the previous automatic criteria of the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance):
- Mobility Activity 1, descriptor f (12 points) or
- Mobility Activity 2, descriptors c, d, e or f (8 points)
- have received a lump sum benefit from the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme (within tariff levels 1-8) and have been certified as having a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking
- Those awarded tariff 6 - Permanent Mental Disorder of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

3.7 Appropriate parking is an important factor in ensuring that the disabled and mobility impaired have equal and equitable access to services and attractions. Currently all disabled people who have a blue badge can park free of charge in all Council car parks throughout the County Borough.

3.8 There are currently a number of measures which assist in providing equitable access, particularly for those who are participants in the Blue Badge Scheme. These include:

- Reserved spaces for Blue Badge Holders in off-street car parks in convenient locations;
- Guidance on the proportion of disabled parking spaces within new parking facilities;
- Some on-street parking provision in town centre locations;
- The ability to park on double yellow lines for up to 3 hours, as long as no obstruction is caused;
- Shopmobility scheme operated within Bridgend Town Centre.

- 3.9 In providing parking either at ground level or in multi-storey car parks. The Council incurs both capital and ongoing revenue costs which the Council must source from its own funds.
- 3.10 To-date the Council has decided that a concession is applied in its off street parking for persons displaying their Blue Badge in regard to unlimited waiting for no fee.

4. Current Situation/Proposal

Blue Badge Usage

- 4.1 A survey in 2012 on Blue Badge holder usage highlighted that of the 150 Blue Badges exhibited 22 were being used fraudulently.
- 4.2 If the above survey is representative, it would indicate that 15% of Blue Badges currently being used to gain free parking and occupy reserved disabled spaces may be being used by individuals who are not entitled to those benefits. This clearly reduces the spaces available for genuine Blue Badge holders, and in instances where this is identified the matter is raised with the issuing section within Bridgend County Borough Council.

Car Park Provision

- 4.3 The Council currently owns and operates the following pay and display car parks in Bridgend and Porthcawl:

Bridgend

Short stay - 671 spaces in 5 no. car parks

Long stay - 613 spaces in 5 no. car parks

Porthcawl

Short stay - 95 spaces in 1 no. car park

Long stay - 2140 spaces in 2 no. car parks

- 4.4 The current number of marked disabled parking spaces in these car parks is as follows:

CAR PARK LOCATION	Current number of disabled spaces
BRIDGEND	
Exist Rhiw	14 (8 fenced off)
Recreation centre	9
Bowls hall	2
Leisure Pool	0
Brackla 1	5
Brackla 3	4
Tondu Road	5
Tremains Road	3
PORTHCAWL	
John Street	6
Hillsboro	12
TOTAL	68

- 4.5 A snapshot of car park utilisation which was undertaken in March 2012 is attached as **Appendix 1**. This snapshot identifies over utilisation of existing marked disabled parking bays in some of both long and short stay car parks in Bridgend and Porthcawl.

Proposals

- 4.6 In order to meet the recommended standard of disabled spaces (6% of the total spaces) and apparent demand for disabled parking, it would seem appropriate to increase the number of disabled parking spaces in accordance with the table below:

CAR PARK LOCATION	Current number of disabled spaces	Proposed No of spaces (percentage of car park)	Additional disabled spaces proposed
BRIDGEND			
New Rhiw (When built)	15	15 (6%)	0
Recreation centre	9	9 (6%)	0
Bowls hall	2	6 (6%)	+4
Leisure Pool	0	3 (6%)	+3
Brackla 1	5	24 (6%)	+19
Brackla 3	4	8 (6%)	+4
Tondu Road	5	7 (6%)	+2
Tremains Road	3	3 (10%)	0
PORTHCAWL			
John Street	6	10 (10%)	+4
Hillsboro	12	21 (6%)	+9
TOTALS	61	106	+45

- 4.7 As can be seen from the above table it would seem appropriate to provide approximately an additional 45 disabled parking bays to go some way to improve accessibility provision as well as meet recommended standard for disabled spaces in our car parks.
- 4.8 In the current financial climate and proposed enhanced provision, the Council should reconsider its position in regard of the concession for persons displaying entitlement through the use of their Blue Badge. In this respect it is proposed that persons displaying their Blue Badge in a Council provided car park pays the same amount as other users of the facility. However, a concession of an 'extra hour' parking on whatever time they purchase. This proposal was part of the public budget consultation exercise carried out over a six week period during October and November 2014. Introduction of a parking charge for Blue Badge Holders in our off-street car parks received 58% support.
- 4.9 In order to facilitate changes to the concession it is recognised that the pay and display machines would need to be Equality Act compliant. It has been identified that new machines as well as signage and ancillary works will need to be undertaken to permit the revised concession to be implemented.

4.10 Implementing charging for blue badge holders for off street car parking is estimated to generate £165k, as set out and approved in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect upon Policy Framework and Procedural Rules.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1 It is the duty of the Authority to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment on any proposal. The Authority has a published procedure which ensures the appropriate Protected Characteristics are safeguarded. A full assessment to the Authorities published procedure "Guide to Equalities Impact Assessment" will be carried out which also involves consulting with relevant stakeholders.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The cost of the proposed works will be financed from an earmarked reserve held for this purpose.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that:

Cabinet gives approval to consult with relevant stakeholders on the proposals contained within the body of the report and that a further report is presented to Cabinet to consider and agree a way forward.

Mark Shephard
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES
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Contact Officer: Kevin Mulcahy, Group Manager Highways
Telephone: 01656 642535

Background Papers:
Equalities Impact Assessment Toolkit

Appendix 1

Bridgend Short Stay

Car Park	Disabled Usage	Total Usage	Actual Spaces Available	Total % Usage	Disabled % Usage
Rhiw	36	190	271	53%	10%
Rec Centre	13	68	122	59%	11%
Bowls Hall	0	8	37	21%	0%
Brackla 3	31	96	126	76%	25%
Tremains	0	12	17	41%	0%
Totals	79	375	573	56%	12%

Bridgend Long Stay

Car Park	Disabled Usage	Total Usage	Actual Spaces Available	Total % Usage	Disabled % Usage
Leisure Pool	3	28	40	71%	8%
Bowls Hall	3	46	52	89%	5%
Brackla 1	7	102	387	26%	2%
Tremains	3	22	36	61%	12%
Tondu	4	105	105	100%	4%
Totals	20	303	620	49%	3%

Porthcawl Short Stay

Car Park	Disabled Usage	Total Usage	Actual Spaces Available	Total % Usage	Disabled % Usage
John Street	33	63	95	66%	35%
Totals	33	63	95	66%	35%

Porthcawl Long Stay

Car Park	Disabled Usage	Total Usage	Actual Spaces Available	Total % Usage	Disabled % Usage
Hillsboro Place	43	115	340	34%	13%
Rest Bay	5	27	1800	1%	0.2%
Totals	48	142	2140	7%	2.2%