

Victoria Common- proposed parking charges informal consultation pack



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1. Introduction

In order to provide an income stream to both protect services and facilities within parks, as well as improving parks where we can, BCC is proposing the introduction of parking charges at selected parks.

The proposed scheme at Victoria Common will result in a number of key benefits, namely:

- Visitors to the park will benefit from reinvestment of revenue from car park charging into the park for its ongoing upkeep and future works
- Longstanding traffic management issues can be effectively managed and resolved. e.g. carriageway works on Meeting House Lane to create a safer pedestrian route to the park (see appendix B)
- Improve accessibility by addition of formal disabled bays in the car park
- The presence of enforcement officers can act as a visual deterrent which may deter any anti-social behaviour.
- Park users will be able to use the car park
- Ability for the Parks Service to meet savings targets for 2019/20 and onwards.

The decision to introduce parking charges is not something the council has done lightly – in fact we've held off whilst many other councils throughout the country have introduced charging (see appendix D). As such, BCC is one of the last local authorities in the country to introduce charging on a daily basis and income generated will be reinvested into the respective park to improve infrastructure and maintaining the park to the standards visitors expect.

Crucially, access to Victoria Common remains free – the charges are not to use the park but only to park a vehicle. The park is well served by public transport links to the site and nearby Northfield High Street - buses 18, 19, and 48 stop directly outside the park; buses 19, 37, 61, 63 and 144 stop within a 5 minute walk of the park.

The business case to strategically introduce car parking in 7 identified parks was approved in 2017(see section 4). The selected parks are, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Reservoir, Lickey Hills Country Park, Perry Park, Rectory Park, Sutton Park and Victoria Common.

The original business case set out the case for introducing a parking scheme across the identified parks.

- Generate income to invest in deteriorating car parking facilities
- Generate a sustainable income stream to support and invest in the park
- Benefit the people that use the parks' facilities
- Promote the use of green travel options
- Generate investment in city parks and facilities from users outside of the city boundary.

BCC is facing considerable budget pressures and the Parks Service has a rolling savings target of £200k (2018-19) and £400k (for 2019-20) with a further 180K to be found in 2019/20 following the Budget 2019+ consultation exercise.

Since 2010-11 when austerity measures first came into force, the Parks Service has already seen a **46.95%** reduction in revenue funding resulting in the introduction of rank grass (i.e. grass that has overgrown as a result of a lack of cutting), removal of flower beds, reduction in staffing levels etc. however these saving measures are not enough.

Following a recent survey of LGA member councils, the LGA estimates that

“Between 2010 and 2016, local authorities will have lost 60p out of every £1 they received from central government. By next April the gap between council resources and demand will be £3bn, rising to £8bn by 2025, fuelled by wage inflation and the rising costs of adult and child social care.”

2. Why Victoria Common?

There are visitors to the park who cannot use the car park after 10am as the car park is full, yet the park is empty. The Parks Services carried out a data usage survey over two days in June (see appendix A) and found that only 9% of the vehicles parked at Victoria Common during that period were visitors to the park; the remainder of the vehicles parked were workers in local businesses, shoppers, and parents on the school run.

As the car park at Victoria Common is currently free and the other car parks in Northfield charge for parking, e.g. Grosvenor and smaller car parks along the High Street, this is a likely explanation as to why park visitors struggle to find a space at Victoria Common car park.

3. Victoria Common – background

Victoria Common is one of Birmingham’s many Victorian public parks. It is approximately 21 acres in size and is held in Trust by Birmingham City Council.

The park is managed by the Parks and Nature Conservation Service in consultation with the local community, including partner organisations such as Northfield Eco Centre, Northfield Environmental Forum and Northfield Town Centre Management. A key partner group is the Friends of Victoria Common, established in 2010 with support from Northfield Eco Centre, who take an active interest in the park and promote positive use increased community involvement.

4. Cabinet approved selected parks for the proposed introduction of parking charges.

A business case to strategically introduce car parking in 7 identified parks was approved by:

- Commercialism Board (23 January 2017)
- Trusts and Charities Committee (1 March 2017)
- By Full Cabinet in June 2017 (following call-in by the Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2017) as part of Cabinet Member Report for the introduction of car parking charges to Cannon Hill

The Cabinet Member Decision report for the introduction of parking charges at Cannon Hill mentioned the overall programme of roll-out across the 7 identified city parks and was approved at Cabinet in June 2017 following call-in by the Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was agreed that any decision to introduce charging at other parks e.g. Victoria Common, would be subject to future Cabinet Member approval and public consultation.

List of selected parks

Park	Completion
Cannon Hill Park	October 2017
Lickey Hills Country Park	
Victoria Common	
Sutton Park	
Edgbaston Reservoir	
Rectory Park	
Perry Park	Since original proposal, daily car park usage has decreased significantly, therefore site is no longer considered

Along with the above, Parks will also be exploring the option to introduce parking charges at other sites subject to full due process and consultation.

5. Stakeholder Consultation

The stakeholder consultation took place between March and June 2019. Throughout the stakeholder consultation process we have endeavoured to address any issues and concerns that have been presented and indeed have taken on-board ideas to improve the proposals. For example, we have amended the proposed pricing structure to now include a 50 pence charge for the first hour of parking, as well as introduce a first hour of parking free (7am to 8am when the park opens). Below is the list of key stakeholders, businesses and groups within the park that the project team have consulted with as part of the stakeholder consultation.

- Society of Friends
- Local ward members
- Birmingham Adult Education Centre
- Northfield Grosvenor Shopping Centre
- Northfield Library
- Bournville Village Trust
- Church Road Garages
- Northfield Ecocentre
- Oulsnams Estate Agents
- Victoria Common Friends of Group
- Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

6. Public consultation around the proposals

The public consultation on the proposals will be split into two elements – informal and formal consultations. Feedback from both the informal and formal public consultations will feed the decision making process.

The **informal** public consultation is due to begin on 22nd July and will run for 4 weeks until 18 August. The project team will be hosting two consultation drop-in sessions where park users and residents can speak to members of the project team, discuss the proposals and have any queries answered. Engineers from Birmingham City Council Highway's Team are an integral part of the project team and will be present at the drop-in sessions to discuss the proposed car park designs (see appendix C) and any potential traffic restrictions for surrounding roads.

In order to offer flexibility to park users and residents the drop-in sessions will take place at different times – one afternoon and one evening session.

It is within the **formal** consultation period that consultees can register their formal objections to the proposals – the formal objection period is yet to be determined but again drop-in sessions will be offered to park users and residents. As mentioned, the drop-in sessions will be the ideal opportunity for resident/park visitors to speak to a member of the project team and discuss the proposals for the park. We will be advertising the public consultations (both informal and formal) in the following ways:

- Posters in the park
- Social media
- Ongoing consultation with local Ward Members

Ways to register views around the proposals:

BeHeard – the Council online survey system –

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/VictoriaCommonparking>

- Face to face questionnaires – clipboard exercise within the park on random days throughout the consultation period
- Email victoriacommonconsultation@birmingham.gov.uk
- Drop-in sessions (dates below)

Drop-in session dates

Drop-in session 1: 1st August, 12-2pm

Drop-in session 2: 7th August, 6-8pm

Venue:

Quaker Meeting House

Meeting House Lane

Birmingham

B31 2LD

7. Project Scope

The proposed car park scheme does not include any plans to increase car parking land. We will however, improve the existing car park surface by potholing and levelling and through effective car park design, increase the number of spaces currently available. We will also improve accessibility through formal disabled parking spaces. All surface work completed will use approved materials sympathetic to the site i.e. crushed granite for potholing and grasscrete (a low maintenance substitution for tarmacking and lining) for disabled bays (see appendix C).

8. Proposed pricing structure

The chargeable hours will be from 8am – 6pm, 365 days of the year. The park opens at 7am and so free parking will be available for the first hour of the day (until 8am).

Following feedback from the stakeholder consultation, we have amended the proposed pricing structure to include a 50 pence charge for the first hour of parking.

Proposed pricing structure:

Pricing Structure	Cost
Up to 1 hour	50p
Up to 4 hours	£2
All day	£3
Blue Badge holder **	Free

The proposed pricing structure will be captured as part of the public consultation so park users and residents can have their say.

**Parking for Blue Badge holders will remain free in line with the council's citywide policy on disabled parking.

9. Proposed payment methods

Pay and Display machines – In line with other BCC car parks across the city, the machines we propose to use are Parkeon Strada Rapides. In order to reduce the impact on the natural environment the machines will be solar powered. The machines will be a combination of coin and card and also contactless payments. They are supplied with additional manganese steel shielding around the vault area – this is to prevent drilling and break-in to the cash vault and provides additional armoured protection against mechanical or theft attacks. The shielding is especially hardened and is highly resistant to drilling, sawing and grinding.



Pay by Mobile (Ring Go) – There will also be an option to pay via your mobile phone. This is well used at other car parking sites citywide. Pay by Mobile is the preferred option for those individuals who do not have cash to hand.

There is also a user friendly app that can be downloaded which is well used citywide. Once individuals have registered, the app will store your previous parking location details making future payments a few clicks of a button.

The app also has the added functionality of enabling vehicle owners to extend their parking session remotely rather than returning to their vehicle.



10. Traffic restriction orders (TROs)

As mentioned, the informal public consultation will run for 4 weeks and consist of questionnaires, face-to-face clipboard exercise, BeHeard survey, and email mailbox. We will ask for residents'/consultees' views on the proposals as well as suggestions for traffic restrictions on surrounding roads. Snapshot visits have taken place to establish the impact that school parking has on the area and the potential impact of displacement as a result of the scheme.

The roads surrounding the main entrance to the park already have traffic restrictions due to the park's proximity to Northfield high street. Displacement on roads around the park will be monitored pre– and post-implementation to assess the impact charging may have. Feedback will also be gathered from residents regarding possible traffic restrictions in the future.

Based on this information, a decision will then be made on possible traffic restrictions for surrounding roads.

11. Enforcement

Birmingham City Council has procured a citywide contract with NSL for parking enforcement. The Parks Service successfully uses NSL for enforcement at other sites and proposes to continue this arrangement as charges are rolled out to Victoria Common. Income from Penalty Charge Notices is retained by BCC; BCC pay for the cost of the deployment of their officers. To be clear, Parks will receive the income from the car park charges and the net income from any Penalty Charge Notices will be retained by BCC Highways team as this helps to offset the cost of enforcement.



12. Investment wish list for the site

The Parks Service has an investment wish list for the site which will be funded by income from the charging scheme.

Investment wish list from District Parks Manager for Victoria Common

- Future upgrade and refurbishment of car park and site infrastructure
- Safeguarding heritage features such as the Sons of Rest
- Enhancement of horticultural features at the park including replacement tree planting
- Improved interpretation and information for parks users.

The above wish list can only be funded through income generated through parking charges – there is no scope to make these improvements otherwise.

The revenue needed to complete the above items would release resources currently expended on matters of this sort.



13. Next Steps

The findings from the informal public consultation will be presented in a report to senior management and councillors. The decision will then be made whether to proceed to a formal consultation.

Appendix A – Victoria Common data usage survey

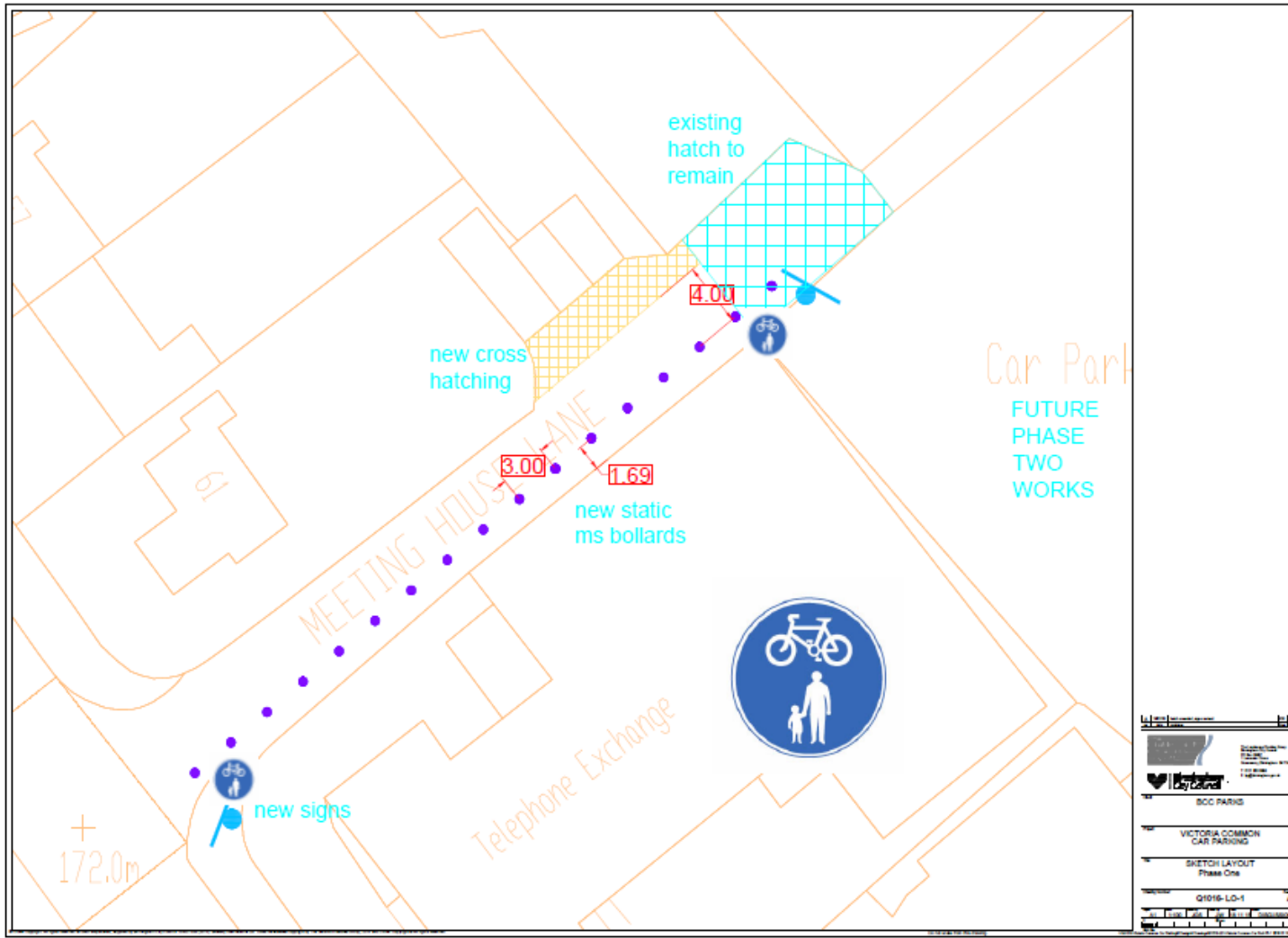
Count of Ref.			Count of Ref.		
Q1. Why are you parking at VC today? ▾	Total		Q2. How long are you parking for? ▾	Total	
Local business	23	48%	< 1/2 hr	7	15%
Shopping	4	8%	1 hour	5	10%
School run	4	8%	1/2 hr	6	13%
Shopping centre via park	4	8%	1/2 hr - 1 hour	2	4%
Park (play area)	3	6%	1-2 hours	2	4%
Library	2	4%	2 hours +	2	4%
Kids at play scheme & school	2	4%	5 hours	2	4%
Dog walker	2	4%	3 hours	1	2%
Kids from nursery & play area	1	2%	4 hours	1	2%
Park & library	1	2%	6 hours	1	2%
Library (staff)	1	2%	All day	19	40%
Visiting local family	1	2%	Grand Total	48	100%
Grand Total	48	100%			

Count of Ref.			Count of Ref.		
Q3a. Is this car park your first choice when you park in the area? ▾	Total		Q3b. Or have you visited other parking sites first? ▾	Total	
Yes	33	69%	(blank)	44	92%
Yes (it's free)	8	17%	Normally park on street	1	2%
Depends where I'm visiting	1	2%	Use Grosvenor when shopping	1	2%
Mostly	1	2%	Sometimes parks on road	1	2%
Varies depending on location	1	2%	Use all parking in the area	1	2%
Nowhere else to park near their house	1	2%	Grand Total	48	100%
Yes for the play area	1	2%			
Second choice	1	2%			
N/A	1	2%			
Grand Total	48	100%			

Count of Ref.				Count of Ref.	
Q4. How many days a week do you use the car park on average? 	Total			Comments 	Total
5 days a week	11	23%		About time re: charging	1
5 days (weekdays)	6	13%		Likes to walk through the park	1
Once a week	5	10%		People will still park here	2
2 or 3 days a week	3	6%		Happy to pay £3 for the day (local business)	2
5-7 days a week	3	6%		Okay with 50p first hour (dog walker)	1
3 days a week	3	6%		From Bromsgrove, used to paying	1
Once a month	3	6%		Grand Total	8
4 days a week	3	6%			
Daily	2	4%			
3-5 days a week	2	4%			
1 or 2 days a week	2	4%			
4-5 days a week	2	4%			
Occasionally	1	2%			
2 days a week	1	2%			
N/A	1	2%			
Grand Total	48	100%			

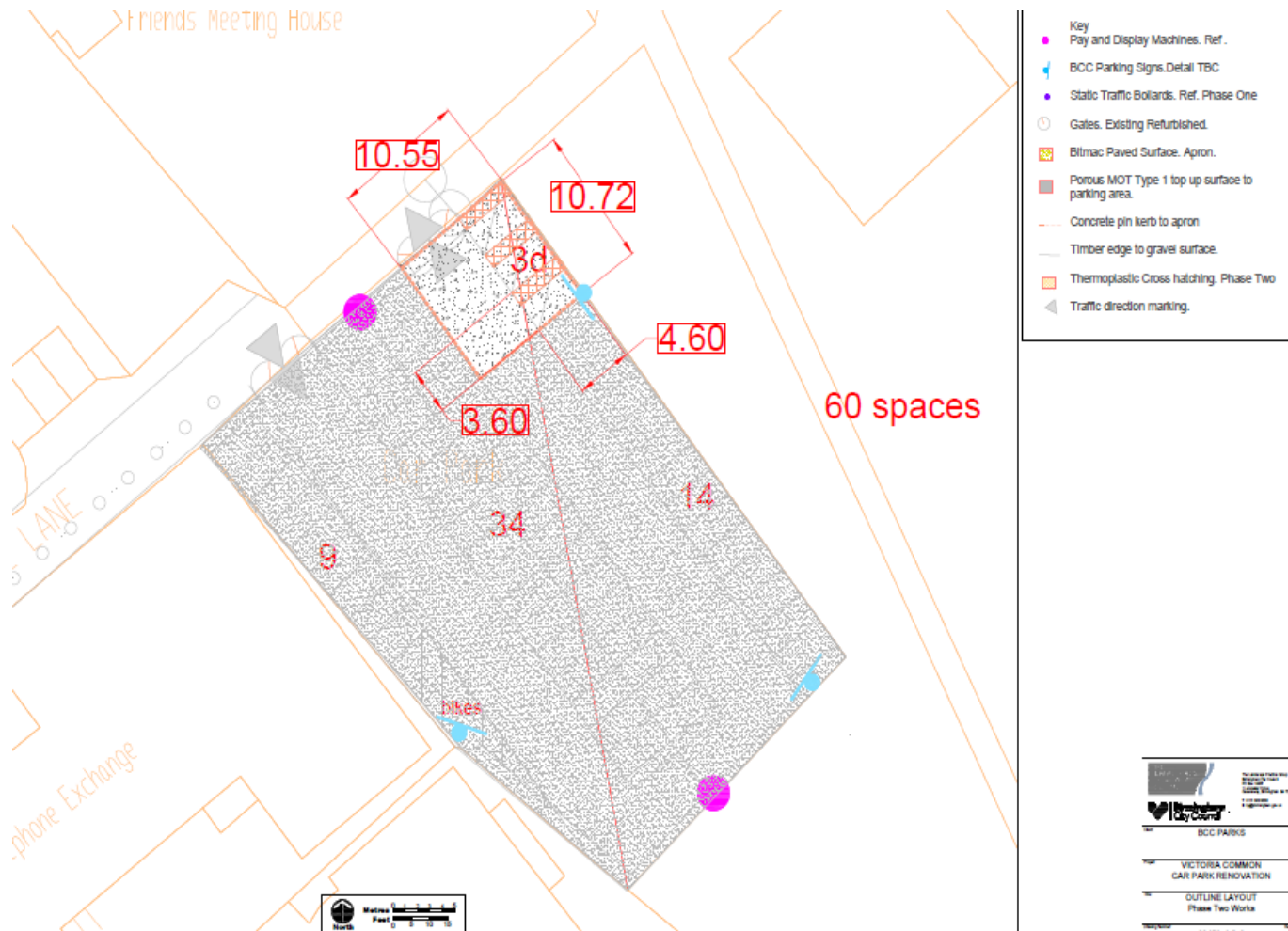
Survey completed over 5th and 6th June at different times of day

Appendix B – Carriageway design

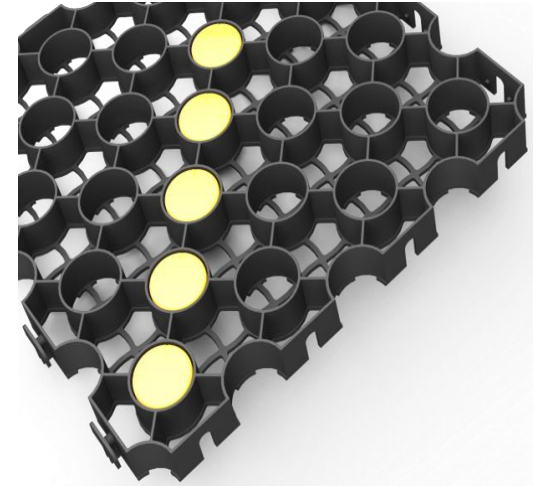


There are existing health and safety/road safety issues at the site as inconsiderate parking along the carriageway forces pedestrians into the path of oncoming traffic. Consultation has taken place with the Trustees of the Birmingham Friends Halls (Society of Friends) who own the carriageway into the park, as improvement works to the carriageway are proposed as part of the scheme. We have received written approval from the Society of Friends for the production of a pedestrian walkway with bollards to prevent inconsiderate parking and to resolve the health and safety/road safety issue.

Appendix C – Car park design



Grasscrete example



(a low maintenance substitution for tarmacking and lining)

Appendix D – Other local authorities that charge

Nearby authorities

Worcester City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fort Royal Park 	£3.60 all day
Worcestershire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waseley Hills 	£2.50 all day
Lichfield District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beacon Park 	£10 all day
Staffordshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannock Chase Country Park 	£2 all day

West Midlands Combined Authority:

Warwickshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burton Dassett Hills Country Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hartshill Hayes Country Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingsbury Water Park 	£3 or £4.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pooley Country Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryton Pools Country Park 	£6 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratford Greenway 	£3 all day
Coventry City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coombe Country Park 	£5 all day
Dudley MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Himley Hall and Park 	£1.90 all day
Sandwell MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lodge Hill Road 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Valley Country Park 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swan Pool 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forge Mill Farm Visitor Centre 	£2 all day
Shropshire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severn Valley Country Park 	£2.20 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snailbeach Mine 	Donation requested
Stratford on Avon DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation Ground 	£6 all day

Other core cities:

Nottingham City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colwick Country Park 	£1.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wollaton Park 	£3 all day
Bristol City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashton Court Estate 	£1.20 all day
Manchester City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heaton Park 	£3 all day
Newcastle City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy Freeman's Park 	£0.40 per hour

Sheffield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graves Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millhouses Park 	£2.00 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hillsborough Park 	£2.50 all day

Prices correct as of July 2019