



Parking payments on Ashdown Forest

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2022

As we implement parking payments, members of the public may have questions about the scheme. This document is intended to answer the most frequently asked questions.

BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME

Why are parking payments being introduced?

Ashdown Forest has, for some years, experienced increasing numbers of visitors and decreasing levels of funding. The result has been that we have been less and less able to conserve the Forest and provide open and safe public access. The situation came to a head in 2020/21 during the Covid 19 pandemic when the Forest was heavily visited with considerable impacts.

Despite restructuring the organisation to save money and increase efficiency, Ashdown Forest continues to generate a significant annual deficit and we lack the funds to improve our facilities. Donations from the public through two dedicated charities, funding raising initiatives, grant funding and commercial activities are useful sources of funding but have not bridged the gap or allowed for improvements. Having considered a wide range of alternatives, we believe parking payments will generate a proportion of the income we need to keep Ashdown Forest safe and open for the public.

How did Ashdown Forest reach the decision to introduce parking payments?

At a Board Meeting on 12 July 2021 the Conservators considered the Ashdown Forest Act which states that “... *reasonable charges for the parking of vehicles in the forest*” can be made and decided to explore the potential of a parking payment scheme.

A feasibility study was prepared and presented in September 2021. The Board agreed a full business case and proposal for introducing parking payments should be developed.

A rationale for introducing parking payments, suggestions for how it could be done, and estimates of revenues it could generate were presented in October 2021. The Board agreed to launch a public consultation to help refine the proposal.

The public consultation ran for six weeks in October and November 2021. Its findings formed the basis for recommendations made to the Board.

The Board of Conservators then voted unanimously to introduce parking payments on 31st January 2022 at a public meeting held in Uckfield.

What will parking revenues be used for?

Parking revenues will be used to maintain and improve the Forest as a public amenity. The priority will be to repair our 44 pay-to-use car parks, fixing the potholes, making sure the accesses and exits are clear and generally improving their condition.

Keeping Ashdown Forest safe, accessible and enjoyable for people to visit requires a lot of work. Parking payments will contribute to:

- Maintaining 75 miles of paths and rides and their bridges and culverts
- Keeping fire breaks open to help manage wildfires and responding to wildfires and the threat of wildfires
- Improving access for those with restricted mobility, impaired vision or other difficulties. Such projects will require dedicated fundraising, but once in place, they need to be maintained
- Managing the impacts of growing numbers of visitors
- Engaging with our visitors, answering questions, providing guidance and giving advice and assistance when needed
- Responding to emergencies when people get into difficulty on the Forest and need to be supported, located or receive first aid
- Protecting the Forest by preventing and dealing with encroachments, responding to illegal use, and managing permitted and licensed uses.
- Working with the public and the police to manage dog related incidents including worrying livestock, wildlife and horse riders
- Surveying and managing trees on our boundary and the many miles of Forest roads and tracks
- Responding to frequent fly tipping incidents
- Managing a volunteer team of 130 people who support the Forest throughout the year
- Providing information and interpretation about the Forest
- Providing education to children, working with local schools and other groups
- Maintaining the buildings that make up the Forest Centre – the offices, workshops, shop, picnic site and tables, public toilets, and Education Barn
- Maintaining and replacing our vehicles, and all the tools and equipment needed to manage the Forest

Shouldn't access to Ashdown Forest be free?

Ashdown Forest is common land and under the Commons Act of 2006, an open access space. Ashdown Forest is also governed by the Ashdown Forest Act of 1974 which asserts the public's right of access to the Forest on foot but also provides for the Conservators to set reasonable payments for parking on the forest. The payments are for parking, not for access.

PARKING SCHEME DETAILS

Are parking payments going to happen?

The Board of Conservators voted to introduce parking payments and the County Council approved the payment rates as required within the Ashdown Forest Act. Planning permission for the signs has been applied for and is the remaining element before the scheme starts.

When will parking payments start?

Monday 21st November 2022.

How will people know when parking payments have started?

We will use a wide range of communications to inform people when the scheme will start. This will include notices on our website, social media, and independent media. Signs in the car parks will also make the start date clear.

What will parking cost?

Duration	Fees*
Up to 1 hour	£2.00
Up to 2 hours	£2.50
Up to 4 hours	£4.00
All day	£5.00
Annual parking pass	£80
6-month winter parking pass	£50

Annual and winter parking passes cover two cars from the same household.

The annual parking pass covers a calendar year from the date of purchase. Winter passes are for those who plan to use the car parks between October and March only. You do not need to buy a winter pass if you already have a valid annual pass.

*Fees include transaction costs of purchasing tickets using mobile phone payment systems (such as RingGo) and costs associated with purchasing annual and winter passes. N.B. Direct debits for monthly payments may attract additional costs.

How can visitors pay?

Payment for parking can be made in several ways:

1. Purchase annual (or winter) passes through the parking company's online parking portal (details will be provided on car park signs and our website).
2. Call the parking company to purchase hourly or daily tickets through the Pay by Phone line.
3. Use any one of five selected car parking apps to pay for a ticket.
4. Visit the Forest Centre during working hours to pay by cash.
5. Use one of the two machines at the Forest Centre to pay by card.

Annual passes can be purchased using single payments or annual or monthly direct debits. Monthly direct debit payments may incur administrative and banking costs.

Why are there no parking machines on other car parks?

The Proposal and Business Case investigated placing parking machines in five car parks. Following the public consultation, we decided to install two at the Forest Visitor Centre only. This change takes account of the wishes of visitors to minimise impacts on the beauty and character of Ashdown Forest and concerns around the vulnerability of parking machines to vandalism.

Which car parks will be included in the scheme?

44 Ashdown Forest car parks will be included in the scheme. A map of the car parks is provided at the end of this document.

Will any car parks be closed?

No Conservator managed car parks will be closed to introduce the parking payment scheme.

Are the Millbrook car parks on the A22 included in the scheme?

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) own the land where three parking sites are located:

- Millbrook East car park
- Millbrook West car park
- Vachery layby

On 18th July 2022 ESCC announced that the two Millbrook car parks would be improved, reduced in size and integrated into the Ashdown Forest payment scheme. ESCC will, however, continue to own and maintain these car parks. ESCC also decided to close Vachery layby.

Will Pooh car park be included in the scheme?

Pooh Car Park, also owned by ESCC, will remain outside the scheme.

What arrangements will be made for parents using St John's car park?

Parents will be able to use St John's car park without charge during school and nursery drop-off and pick-up times. We are working with the school to achieve this.

SCHEME MANAGEMENT

How will people know they must pay, how much to pay and how to pay?

Car parks will have three types of signs:

Entry Signs will inform people that they must pay to park (in larger car parks)

Tariff Boards will show how much to pay and how to pay (in all car parks)

Signs placed where people walk from the car parks will remind them of the scheme (in all car parks)

Which parking company will manage the scheme?

Horizon Parking Ltd will manage the parking payments for three years. Horizon has a strong presence in southeast England and will be able to manage the complex needs of Ashdown Forest and its visitors.

Horizon assisted Epping Forest introduce parking payments in May 2021 and were highly recommended.

How will revenues be shared between Ashdown Forest and Horizon Parking?

The estimated costs of management and revenues from parking payments set out that Ashdown Forest will retain 75% of parking revenues. Parking Charge Notice (PCN) fees, when required, will also contribute to the maintenance of Ashdown Forest. The costs of processing PCNs will come from the fee.

How will the scheme be enforced?

The car parks will be patrolled by Horizon's parking attendants with equipment that allows them to detect whether a payment to park has been made. Those who fail to pay may be issued a Parking Charge Notice of around £70, though this reduces if paid promptly.

Will people have to pay immediately they enter a car park?

There will be a 15-minute grace period to allow people to enter a car park to stretch their legs, enjoy the view or buy an ice-cream or coffee without having to pay.

Parking attendants will check vehicles against the system database. If the paid parking period has been exceeded by more than 15 minutes, or a car without a ticket remains in the car park for more than 15 minutes, a Parking Charging Notice may be issued.

What if people park on the roads to avoid paying for parking?

Many people have told us through the public consultation and during meetings and discussions that they want to help protect and support the Forest that they love. We will ask those who try to evade payments to join the majority who are supporting Ashdown Forest by using our car parks to preserve the Forest.

What if mobile phone reception is bad?

Horizon have measured mobile phone reception for providers on all car parks and found it sufficient for mobile phone payment apps to work. Mobile phone signals can, however, vary. As all Ashdown Forest car parks will be under a single parking zone, and as tickets are valid across all car parks, if you cannot find a mobile signal in one place you will be able to find one in a nearby car park. You can pay anywhere on the Forest and then park in any Forest car park.

CONCESSIONS

Will there be any concessions?

There will be concessions for households or individuals claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit or any of the 'legacy benefits' including:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit

Those in receipt of these schemes will be able to purchase a full day ticket for £1 and an annual pass for £5. Concessionary annual passes will cover one vehicle only. Concessionary ticket or annual passes will be available on Horizon's parking portal (details will be provided on car park signs and our website).

Blue Badge holders will park for free when clearly displaying a valid Blue Badge. Licensed horse riders will park for free if they are boxing to the Forest car parks. No other concessions have been agreed.

What about volunteers?

There are many people who support the Forest including volunteers carrying out litter picking, wildlife recording and deer management, as well as youth organisers, organised groups and others. We are working with individuals and groups to facilitate their access when they are supporting the Forest. Waivers for these visitors will be managed in three ways.

GreenList

A 'GreenList' will record vehicle registration plates of people coming for an activity we have agreed to. These groups or individuals will give us advanced notice so we can ensure they are on the list.

Opening car parks

Specific car parks will be opened for parking for agreed events. Parking Attendants will be notified and will not issue PCNs in those car parks for the duration of the event for those attending the event.

Bespoke solutions

Our community of visitors is complex, and a degree of bespoke solutions will be necessary. We will be working closely with Horizon to provide these solutions as and when required.

Conservator managed car parks under the Parking Payment Scheme

