

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ROYAL PARKS' REGULATIONS

Purpose of this document

This document is the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the changes to the Royal Parks' Regulations and covers the six equality strands: race, disability, gender, age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

Parameters

This EIA is a pre-introductory assessment of the changes to The Royal Parks and Other Open Spaces Regulations 1997.

The changes are:

- Introduction of parking charges in Bushy and Richmond Parks
- Introduction of a 20mph speed limit for motor vehicles within Greenwich and Bushy Parks
- Introduction of an exemption for licensed Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) from the general prohibition on commercial vehicles driving through the Royal Parks
- Making explicit that licensed Hackney carriages ("black cabs") and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) that drive through the Royal Parks may bear advertisements
- Clarification that horse owners who use the Royal Parks are exempt from the general requirement that visitors clean up after their animals
- Clarification of where, in Bushy Park, people may sail a model boat
- An increase in the existing parking charges in Hyde Park, Greenwich Park and The Regent's Park.

The Royal Parks (TRP) acknowledges that it is not possible to fully assess the impact of these changes prior to their introduction. TRP will review the impact of the changes within 18 months of their full implementation.

Aim

Managing the parks is about preserving the environment and protecting wildlife and balancing the needs of different users. Park Regulations set out a code of behaviour for the park environment, which helps to ensure that they can be enjoyed by everyone today and for future generations. The proposed changes seek to maintain and enhance the parks as high quality public spaces for visitors, listed historic landscapes and important ecological sites.

Objectives

- To reduce vehicle congestion and improve the ambience of the parks
- To improve the parks' environment
- To improve parks' infrastructure
- To ensure consistency and equality of service to park users
- To protect park revenues

1. INTENDED OUTCOMES

The intended outcomes are reduced congestion, reduced vehicle speed, improved health and safety in the parks, more consistent enforcement of the park regulations, ecological improvements and increased income for the Agency.

2. KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Park visitors, Local Authorities, GLA, the Police, transport providers and regulators, other statutory bodies, concessionaires and licensees.

3. INTENDED OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

In terms of equality and diversity, the intended outcomes are: to maintain a diverse visitor profile by ensuring that accessibility is maintained and that the parks offer a safer less congested environment for all visitors.

4. CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PARK REGULATIONS

The expectation is that these changes will not put one or more groups of people at a disadvantage through direct discrimination.

The Agency recognises that the introduction of parking charges could present a barrier to those with serious mobility problems who rely on motor access to visit some areas of the parks. TRP seeks to reduce any adverse impact and Blue Badge holders will not be subject to the charge.

On many weekends from spring to autumn car parks in Richmond Park are full from mid morning. Bushy Park too becomes congested and has had problems with overspill parking onto the grass. The opening of the restored water gardens and visitors' centre is expected to increase the number of visitors to the park. The imposition of a charge seeks to change behaviour and reduce congestion. This could, potentially, improve the availability of spaces for those who do not qualify for a Blue Badge but have problems walking distances.

The proposed reduction of speed limits is expected to improve safety, particularly for those pedestrians who are more vulnerable.

Providing access to PHVs will legally allow a wider range of visitors to visit the park by minicab.

5. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

TRP surveys identify the profile of visitors and include information on how they travel to the parks. In Richmond and Bushy parks over 80% use private cars to visit.

In the other Royal Parks that charge for parking (Regent's, Hyde, and Greenwich), there is no evidence that this has been a barrier to particular groups visiting.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS (BME)

TRP considers that the changes to the regulations are unlikely to have a discernibly different and negative impact on BME groups. On parking charges in particular, TRP visitor surveys indicate that BME groups are less likely than other visitors to use a car when visiting Richmond and Bushy Parks.

DISABILITY

TRP wants to ensure that it assists those with a disability or illness who want to visit the parks. For example, in recent years TRP has allocated one car park in Richmond Park for the sole use of Blue Badge holders. TRP can also issue temporary passes for carers who are accompanying those with a disability or to those with short term disabilities who do not qualify for a Blue Badge.

TRP does not consider that the proposed changes will disadvantage those with a disability. In terms of the new parking charges, Blue Badge holders will be able to park for free in any of the visitor car parks. One of the objectives of the charge is to reduce congestion at car parks, consequentially releasing spaces. This could benefit those who do not have a Blue Badge but do have impaired mobility, and wish to drive to the park but currently have difficulty in finding a parking space. Only 2% of those using the car parks in Bushy Park and 4% of those using the car parks in Richmond Park are long-term disabled, compared to the London census profile of 16%.

Allowing Private Hire Vehicles legal access to the parks will provide another transport alternative to those who wish to visit the Royal Parks. TRP is also exploring the possibility of introducing a land train in Richmond Park.

GENDER

TRP believes that the proposed changes to the regulations will not disproportionately affect either gender in a negative way.

While more women than men use the car parks in Richmond and Bushy Parks, TRP believes that the reasonable level of fee will not prohibit any group from continuing to take their cars to the parks.

AGE

In terms of the parking proposals, TRP visitor surveys indicate that in Bushy and Richmond Parks those aged between 30-49 are most likely to use their cars, and those aged under 30 and over 75 are least likely to do so.

Those over 60 who choose not to bring their cars as a result of the imposition of charges can take advantage of the free public transport provided by TfL. Children under 16 can also take advantage of free bus travel within London. While all Royal Parks are accessible by public transport, a few park gates do not have an adjacent bus stop and may involve up to a 15 minute walk to the park boundary. Some, including older people or parents with young children, may not wish to walk this distance. We consider that the proposed fees are set at a reasonable level so such groups can still bring their car and park if they wish.

TRP is re-exploring with transport providers, the possibility of a bus route through Richmond Park as well as a land train within the park.

A higher proportion of people aged over 60 use PHV minicabs in London (12%) than use black cabs (6%). The proposal to allow legal access to all PHVs will particularly benefit this group.

The reduced speed limit is likely to be of particular benefit to vulnerable pedestrians such as the very young and the very old.

RELIGION AND BELIEF

TRP does not collect data on the religion and belief of visitors. It has, however, considered the potential impact of the proposed changes to the Regulations on religion and belief and concluded that they will not have a discernible impact.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

There is no data relating to the sexual orientation of park visitors. Sexual orientation was not included in the 2001 Census, so no figures are currently available which give an accurate breakdown on this subject within the UK population.

The Agency considers that the proposed changes to the park regulations will not have a disproportionate impact on groups of differing sexual orientation.

6. THE ROYAL PARKS RESPONSE

Following consideration of possible impacts and evidence of barriers that the changes could bring, TRP has identified the following steps to take in order to promote equality and inclusion:

1. Review impact of regulation changes within 18 months of their full implementation.
2. Seek to reopen discussions with TfL about improving bus services to and through Richmond Park.
3. Explore the possibility of a land train through Richmond and Bushy Parks.

7. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

TRP will review this Equality Impact Assessment at regular intervals.

8. RESEARCH / EVIDENCE USED

Evidence used included:

- TRP Regulations Consultation 2009
- TRP Visitor Surveys
- Public Carriage Office 2006 Driver Summary
- Peter Brett Impact Assessment on Richmond and Bushy Park Report 2009
- Synovate Report: Profile on Richmond and Bushy Parks Car Park Users 2009