

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

THE ROYAL PARKS

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE RESULTS OF THE
PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO
THE ROYAL PARKS REGULATIONS**

January 2010

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Section 1: Introduction

The Royal Parks (TRP) is an Executive Agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Park activities are regulated under The Royal Parks and Other Open Spaces Regulations 1997 (as amended).

The Agency proposed a number of changes to the Regulations as set out in Annex A. The changes were intended to maintain the effective management of the Parks. The last time the Regulations were substantially revised was in 1997 (although there have been some minor amendments since then).

The Royal Parks carried out a formal public consultation on these proposals between 30 January and 1 May 2009. The Agency wrote to over 150 representative groups and key individuals explaining the process and how to participate. In addition, information was placed on park notice boards, park offices, on the Agency's website, in key local libraries and in the press.

A draft impact assessment was published at the time of the consultation. This has been revised in light of comments received and further research. This is at Annex B.

Section 2: Summary of responses

Around 2000 formal responses were received about the proposals during the 13 week consultation period.

A detailed analysis and summary of the responses is at Annex C together with information on the petitions received. The vast majority of responses related to the proposal to introduce parking charges in Richmond and Bushy Parks.

Key headlines

Of those who responded:

- 83% supported the reduction of the speed limit in Greenwich Park and 79% supported the reduction of the speed limit in Bushy Park;
- 82% supported allowing Private Hire Vehicles into the Royal Parks;
- 84% opposed the introduction of parking charges in Richmond and Bushy Parks;
- 59% opposed a maximum stay for parked cars in Richmond and Bushy Parks.

Section 3: Government's Response and Next Steps

The Government welcomes the support from the majority of respondents for most of the proposals, but notes the strong opposition to the introduction of parking charges in Richmond and Bushy Parks, and the resistance to a maximum six hour stay in all car parks in Richmond and Bushy Parks.

A range of comments were made about the parking proposals. We particularly note the concerns about the impact that charging could have on the roads surrounding the parks, on the quality of the park visit, that a charge would be a disincentive to visit the park altogether and about the level of public transport provision to the affected parks.

In light of such concerns, the Government commissioned traffic consultants, Peter Brett Associates, to carry out some additional research on the likely impact of charging for parking within these parks. Their findings suggested that charging, at the rates proposed, would be unlikely to lead to displacement parking. However, the report concluded that the imposition of a maximum stay – originally proposed as a way of addressing potential commuter parking in specific locations – if applied to all parking areas in the parks, could lead to parking being displaced onto surrounding streets. The Government has, therefore, decided not to pursue the proposal for a maximum stay in all car parks across both parks. Instead, it will explore how to deal with the potential for commuter parking in a more targeted way.

In addition, the Government commissioned further independent research to examine who was using the car parks, following concerns that those on lower incomes would be less inclined to visit the parks in future if parking charges were introduced. The research revealed that those in the highest socio-economic groups were disproportionate users of the car parks in Richmond Park (56% AB compared to 30% in London as a whole and 46% in adjacent post codes) and Bushy Park (55% AB compared to 40% in adjacent post codes). In contrast, those from the lowest socio-economic groups were less likely to visit Richmond Park's car parks (2% DE compared to the London average of 16% and 13% in adjacent post codes) and Bushy Park's car parks (5% DE compared to 14% in surrounding post codes).

While the report also noted that both parks were already served to an extent by public transport, the Agency intends to reopen discussions with Transport for London about the possibility of taking a bus route through Richmond Park and is exploring the possibility of a land train within both parks.

The Government accepts that introducing parking charges will not be popular amongst those who are used to paying nothing to park. Nevertheless, the Government considers that the fees are set at a reasonable level, and compare favourably with those at other local car parks and at similar amenities. Parking charges have been in place for several years at all of the other Royal Parks with public parking provision. Introducing such charges in Richmond and Bushy Parks is intended to discourage private car usage, with the beneficial impact that this can have on the park environment and the experience of people enjoying the park. The rates are set at a level that is intended not to be punitive to those who are determined to drive to the park, while still providing an incentive for visitors to use other means of travelling there. Fewer cars queuing to enter car parks would improve the ambience of the parks and the quality of a park visit. Having reflected on all the evidence, the Government has decided to introduce parking charges at the rates proposed: £1 an hour in Richmond Park up to a maximum of £3, and £0.50p an hour in Bushy Park up to a maximum of £2.

The Government plans to proceed with the proposal to reduce the speed limits in Bushy and Greenwich Parks from 30mph to 20mph. This proposal was broadly supported by respondents, including local MPs. The Royal Parks will consider road engineering solutions to aid enforcement.

The Government plans to proceed with the proposal to allow Private Hire Vehicles licensed by the Public Carriage Office to enter the Royal Parks on the same terms as Hackney Carriages (or “black cabs”), and to permit both types of licensed vehicle to carry advertising. The Government notes that both measures were broadly supported and does not consider that making this concession will lead to an overall increase in traffic within the parks.

After considering the responses to the consultation, we plan to present the proposed changes to Parliament. The Government will also take the

opportunity in the Order to clarify the position in terms of where a model boat may be sailed in Bushy Park, that horse owners are not required to clean up after their animals and to increase parking charges in those Royal Parks that already charge for parking.