

Station Car Parking in Scotland
Consultation response on behalf of East Renfrewshire Council

East Renfrewshire Council welcomes the development of a policy into the provision of Parking at railway stations and is pleased to make the following comments and observations in relation to the issues for consideration identified in Annex B.

Suppressed Demand

We see that the issue relating to provision of parking and the servicing of suppressed demand as an extremely complex one and one that requires a greater degree of understanding. In planning improvements to parking at stations it is very difficult to make assumptions on the likely take-up of any new facility as this can be dependent on a variety of interrelated factors such as the distance of alternatives, service frequency, service capacity and the availability of other parking nearby. However it is also fair to say that recent experience has shown that the provision of any new or additional parking at stations have instantly reached their new capacity, suggesting a servicing of suppressed demand. In relation to real time information relating to parking spaces availability we would see that this would be of limited application only to large scale interchange points, rather than at smaller stations, many of which are not manned.

Station Choice

A variety of factors are likely to affect station choice and it is difficult to generalise across the population which factors are most important. For example someone may be prepared to drive an extra mile to a station where they know they will get a seat on a train where as others may drive closer as getting a seat may not be as important as time. Key factors are likely to include parking availability and cost (both at the station and in nearby streets), service frequency, service capacity and the availability/proximity of alternatives. Individuals are likely to weigh up all the factors which are relevant to them and make a choice which maximises their utility against the factors they perceive to be most important. Availability and cost of parking is a very important factor but has to be considered with other factors to gain a fuller understanding. Some modelling of this issue would help aid our understanding.

Overpricing

As the consultation document admits, we do not understand in any detail the price sensitivity and elasticity of demand around car park charging interventions to maximise capacity in shoulder and off peak times. Again we do not believe that we can broadly generalise or make assumptions on the impacts of difference pricing strategy without taking into account the unique characteristics of particular sites. It is also important to consider the parking charges at the key destinations, as someone who can park for free at their destination may be reluctant to pay parking charges at the origin if they deem them to be excessive. It would be worth piloting a variety of charging strategies which examines behaviour if incentives are offered for off peak as opposed to peak parking. However the underlying problem and the reality is that many railway station car parks are already oversubscribed with much of the overspill causing issues in residential streets. This is a wider issue to be considered. Pricing policies which combine parking with ticket price would be particularly popular and there would be an opportunity to try and manipulate demand at sites by creative pricing policies. For example if you have two stations relatively close to one another and one is over subscribed and the other under subscribed, creative pricing may help to manage the demand. It is extremely important that any significant parking provision is matched by a service capacity to meet this extra demand. Parking cannot be looked at in isolation and this is key to gaining a fuller understanding and drive policy development in this area.